

SALVATION AND THE WILL: HUMAN AND DIVINE COOPERATION IN THE
THEOLOGIES OF MARTIN LUTHER AND MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR

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DECLARATION

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee

ABSTRACT

“Salvation and the Will: Human and Divine Cooperation in the Theologies of Martin Luther and Maximus the Confessor”

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The Lutheran tradition is arguably defined by the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, a view of salvation understood primarily—though not exclusively—as extrinsic and forensic in character. In contrast, the Eastern Orthodox tradition has been often characterized by the doctrine of *theosis* (or deification), understood as a process of ontological transformation culminating in union with God. These distinctive perspectives represent theological developments and divergences between Eastern and Western Christianity over several centuries. Recently, an attempt at rapprochement between the doctrines of justification and *theosis* was made by Finnish Lutheran theologian Tuomo Mannermaa. The so-called “Finnish School” of Luther research has been criticized for its reading of Luther, and questions have been raised by critics whether or not a concept such as *theosis* can be truly claimed to be present in Luther and to what extent these two accounts of salvation can be reconciled. This thesis will argue that while distinct, justification and *theosis* find a point of contact in certain commitments, namely a distinctive attention to the human will and a profoundly Christological account of redemption. To this end, this thesis will bring Luther into a critical conversation with Maximus the Confessor as a significant figure in the development of the Orthodox understanding of *theosis* and of the will. Comparing Luther and Maximus on the will as central to these two figures’ construal both of the human situation after the fall and of Christ’s work of salvation will allow the identification of common concerns reflected in the two doctrines and will argue for their compatibility.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Martin Luther, Primary Works:

LW	<i>Luther's Works: American Edition</i>
WA	<i>D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe</i>

Maximus the Confessor, Primary Works:

Ad Thal.	<i>Quaestiones ad Thalassium</i>
Amb.	<i>Ambigua</i>
Car.	<i>Capita de caritate</i>
Disputatio	<i>Disputatio cum Pyrrho</i>
Ep.	<i>Epistulae</i>
Myst.	<i>Mystagogia</i>
Opusc.	<i>Opuscula theologica et polemica</i>

Other Primary Works:

ACO	<i>Acta Counciliorum Oecumenicorum</i>
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
CCSG	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca</i>
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
PG	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus: Patrologia Graeca</i>

Where possible, published translations of non-English texts are used. Except where otherwise noted, the English language texts of Maximus are taken from as follows. Where necessary, either pagination is given in the English language version, or reference to the *Patrologia Graeca* when provided within the body of the English text.

Ambigua in Maximus the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua, Volumes I and II*, ed. and trans. Nicholas Constas. Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, 28-29 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

Capita de caritate in George Berthold, *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985).

Disputatio cum Pyrrho in Saint Maximus the Confessor, *Disputations with Pyrrhus*, trans. Joseph P. Farrell (Waymart, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2014).

Epistulae in Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London: Routledge, 1996).

Mystagogia in George Berthold, *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985).

Opuscula theologica et polemica in Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London: Routledge, 1996).

Quaestiones ad Thalassium in Saint Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ. Selected Writings from Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert L. Wilken (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003).

Introduction

Martin Luther occupies a unique position in ecumenical theological endeavors. On the heels of a surge in Luther scholarship coinciding with the fourth centenary of the Lutheran Reformation, much has been written to situate him contextually as more than a mythicized rediscoverer of the Gospel. Rather Luther has been well-established as an heir to the Western medieval theology that helped shape him. As a result of this contextualization (and the ecumenical movement of the twentieth century itself), an “ecumenical Luther” has emerged. One result of such an ecumenical project was the work of Tuomo Mannermaa and the so-called Finnish School of Luther research, the most significant contribution of which is an attempt at establishing rapprochement between Luther’s doctrine of justification and the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of *theosis*. Such an ambitious project has been particularly vulnerable to critique in that these two accounts of human salvation differ in their understanding of whether salvation is an ontological process or a forensic declaration.

Notwithstanding its contributions to scholarship, the work of the Finnish School has significant methodological and interpretive issues that this thesis will evaluate. It will be the position of this thesis that justification and *theosis* do not correlate in the ways that the Finnish School proposes. Despite the flaws of the Finnish School, Mannermaa’s proposals offer a necessary corrective and opportunity for fresh engagement with Luther’s theology. Our assessment of the Finnish School will provide an occasion to take critical elements of both Luther’s theology and of *theosis* and closely examine the concerns and commitments that provide the foundation for the development of both doctrines. Doing so we will demonstrate that while not so easily correlated, these doctrines, representing the development of theological thought in both the East and the West, are not unsympathetic and share core convictions regarding the person of Christ as defined by the Council of Chalcedon that address questions of humanity’s ability to cooperate in salvation, and of the nature of the human will in relation to God.

Although it is widely recognized that Luther and his fellows had a significant knowledge of patristic sources, few attempts have been made to bring Luther into direct conversation with more mature Eastern fathers.¹ The suitability of Maximus the

¹ One notable attempt in this area is the work of Knut Alfsvåg, whose monograph on Christological apophaticism grew out of a paper comparing Luther and Maximus the Confessor. See Knut Alfsvåg, *What No Mind Has Conceived: On the Significance of*

Confessor as a conversation partner with Luther is in no small part due to his role (according to Hans Urs von Balthasar) as “*the philosophical and theological thinker who stands between East and West...[who] reveals how, and from which directions, these two come together.*”² Indeed, some decades after the publication of von Balthasar’s *Cosmic Liturgy*, a renaissance of interest in the Confessor has led to new translations of his works and research by both Eastern and Western theologians. Most significant for this work, however, is his place as an authority on *theosis* and his extensive treatment of the question of the human will and its engagement with the divine will. In attempting to identify a rapprochement between Lutheran and Orthodox theological convictions, Maximus’s firm grounding of *theosis* within the context of his Christology likewise helps to address Protestant (and perhaps more broadly, Western) reticence towards the concept.

The question of to what degree, if any, human beings cooperate in salvation creates the problem that Luther seeks to solve by characterizing salvation as justification. Luther understands the will to be radically unfree in its relationship to God and after the fall incapable of desiring what is good or godly. This means that cooperation in salvation is seemingly not a possibility at all for him. Maximus is much less drastic in his treatment of the will, although it remains just as critical a category in understanding the human condition and the nature of salvation. For him this intrinsic part of our specific creaturely nature is severely impaired by sin, but not irreparably. Cooperation is possible, to the degree that human nature has been restored by the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Christ. It is in their common Christological commitments that a point of contact is found in the degree to which and the way in which humanity cooperates with the divine. Likewise, strong parallels in their visions of a transformed will give insight into how justification and *theosis* can both be seen as having a non-competitive cooperation as their goal that is manifest in a life in Christ.

In my first chapter, I will provide a brief background on *theosis* and its perceived tensions with Lutheran soteriology. I will then introduce the claims of the Finnish School and some of the primary critiques levied against it. Far from being an exhaustive account of the Finnish School’s scholarship, this chapter will familiarize us with the attempts

Christological Apophaticism (Leuven: Peeters Publishing, 2010) and Knut Alfsvåg, “God’s Fellow Workers: The understanding of the relationship between the human and the divine in Maximus the Confessor and Martin Luther,” *Studia Theologica* 62 (2008): 175-93.

² Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), 23.

made to correlate justification with *theosis* and to identify the latter as a theme in Luther's theology. Understanding scholarly critiques of these attempts at rapprochement, we will be able to proceed with my own proposal for points of contact between the doctrines of justification and *theosis*.

In order to avoid the methodological issues of the Finnish School, my treatment of Luther in chapter two will do two things. First, it will engage a reasonable breadth of Luther's works, with particular attention to his hallmark works, *The Bondage of the Will* and his *Commentary on Galatians*. By doing so I will identify the areas I have chosen for comparison between Luther and Maximus (namely human freedom and (in)capacity to cooperate in one's salvation and the human will's posture before God) as important themes of his theology. Additionally, I will contextualize these themes, as historical concerns for the theological tradition he inherited. The purpose of such an exposition is not primarily to argue for the influence of the scholastics or mystics on Luther as theologian. Rather, it is the question of human capacity to contribute to one's own salvation or cooperate with grace and the place of role human will which I will situate as particularly Western concerns that Luther attempts to address. This is to say that in the course of this chapter, I will show that Luther's primary purposes in elucidating justification are motivated by concerns that do not reconcile with the Finnish School's claims, but which provide points of contact with Maximus's treatment of *theosis* and of the will.

In chapter three I will introduce Maximus the Confessor as a representative of the Eastern Church, for whom salvation is primarily characterized as *theosis*. In exploring his soteriology, the will is shown to be a critical component of the human creature, and its restoration immensely significant to the work of salvation. In expounding on the nature of willing, Maximus advocates dyothelitism and proposes a human will in Christ that is completely natural and does not operate deliberately as do the wills of every other human creature, which are cut off from the divine will. Thus, the way in which Christ wills provides a vision for the restored will of the creature and an increasingly divinized life.

Having established justification and theosis as distinct accounts of salvation that are nonetheless united by an emphasis on the role of the will in salvation, in chapter four we will see that Maximus and Luther both consider the transformation of the will as something to be understood Christologically. Both Luther and Maximus have also been vulnerable to criticism over what role humans play in their salvation. In accessing these

shared criticisms and their shared soteriological purpose, it is possible to see that Luther does imagine the will as being transformed by sharing in the life of Christ whose will is perfectly free, and that Maximus similarly understands Christ's freedom in the proper orientation of his human will towards God.

Chapter five continues to explore the way in which both Maximus and Luther share a vision of the transformed will within their soteriological frameworks, supported by their common Chalcedonian Christological commitments. A life in Christ becomes an image of the life of Christ, as the human will becomes fully open to the divine will and willingly, naturally, the human being participates in God's life. Likewise, in response to Lutheran reticence towards *theosis* on account of maintaining the distinction between the creator and the creature, we see that the transformation of the will described by both Luther and Maximus in strikingly parallel terms involves the conservation of the human and divine natures, rather than the obliteration or absorption of the humanity. Lastly this chapter will address Luther's understanding of the justified person as *simul iustus et peccator* as a point of divergence between the two thinkers in how one can understand the Christian before glory.

Finally, we will return to the Finnish School in chapter six to review how its observations about Luther's employment of Christology and its implications for sanctification provide relevant points of comparison with the doctrine of *theosis*, despite it being a substantially different account of salvation from justification as Luther understands it.

1. First Attempts at Rapprochement: The Finnish School of Luther Research

The Finnish School of Luther interpretation has its genesis in the work of Tuomo Mannermaa, who at the time of his death was emeritus professor of ecumenical theology at the University of Helsinki. Mannermaa's project reinterprets the Lutheran doctrine of "justification by grace through faith" in light of the Eastern Orthodox emphasis on *theosis*, or deification,³ a patristic doctrine that, Mannermaa argued, is consistent with Luther's writings on the subject of justification.

1.1 The Orthodox Doctrine of *Theosis*

The doctrine of *theosis* is a characteristically Eastern Christian way to speak of the nature of salvation. Whereas in the West discussion of deification, when it is engaged at all, is often consigned to mystical theologies, *theosis* is for Orthodox theologians "the very essence of Christianity," being the "ineffable descent of God to the ultimate limit of our fallen human condition, even unto death—a descent of God which opens to men a path of ascent, the unlimited vistas of the union of created beings with the Divinity."⁴ The diversity of terminology with which it is discussed is a witness to both the extensiveness of its application in Orthodox theology and the nuance with which it is employed. "It is a transformation, union, participation, partaking, intermingling, elevation, interpenetration, transmutation, commingling, assimilation, reintegration, adoption, recreation."⁵ Its most technical definition, however, is the classic stumbling block to western theologians: that through *theosis* one becomes like God, and participates in the divine nature.⁶ Orthodox thinkers typically cite Irenaeus as providing the foundational insights that would eventually crystalize into the concept of *theosis*. While the term itself is not employed until coined by Gregory Nazianzen (who apologizes for his "boldness" as to use a term not found in scripture),⁷ Irenaeus rehearses the concept in regard to soteriology,

³ The Greek *theosis* is translated both deification and divinization. In this study the former will be used as it stresses becoming like God, rather than being made divine.

⁴ Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 97.

⁵ Daniel B. Clendenin, "Partakers of Divinity: The Orthodox Doctrine of Theosis," *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37, no. 3 (September 1994): 374.

⁶ Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 97.

⁷ Donald Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation: A Study of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge, MA: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979), 180. Winslow observes

immortality, analogy to the incarnation of the Logos, and teleology. He writes that “God is He who is yet to be seen, and the beholding of God is productive of immortality, but immortality renders one nigh unto God”;⁸ and elsewhere, “For it was for this end that the Word of God was made man, and He who was the Son of God became the Son of man, that man, having been taken into the Word, and receiving the adoption, might become the son of God. For by no other means could we have attained to incorruptibility and immortality, unless we had been united to incorruptibility and immortality.”⁹ Writing against “gnostic” forms of Christianity, Irenaeus writes of “the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself.”¹⁰

The concept of deification is in these early sources grounded in Christology, its potential grounded in the reality of the Incarnation and tied intimately to the person of Christ. The Alexandrian theologians Clement, Origen, and Athanasius, continue to crystalize the concept that the incarnation of the Logos occurs so that all humanity could be drawn up into the mystery of his personal divinity. Clement is the first to use the language of deification (*theopoïoumenoi*).¹¹ In addition to rooting this concept in the incarnation of Logos, he emphasizes the grace in God’s loving paternity. The soul, for Clement, has no primal capacity for deification, but rather it is the consequence of the gift of salvation. The language of divine and gracious activity that makes deification possible is employed by Clement and subsequent writers to distinguish the Christian concept from similar pagan ones.¹² In the *Stromata* Clement writes that one “who listens to the Lord...will be formed perfectly in the likeness of the Teacher—made a god going about in the flesh.”¹³ By the end of the fourth century (when Nazianzen coined the term), the Christological emphasis of the language ensured that *theosis* would be understood contextually as primarily to do with the communion of the hypostases in Christ’s person.

that Gregory often employs apologetic language when speaking about *theosis* to his congregation.

⁸ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 4.38.3 in ANF 1:522.

⁹ Ibid., 3.19.1 in ANF 1:448.

¹⁰ Ibid., 5.Pref in ANF 1:526. Lossky renders this: “God became man in order than man might become God” in Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 97 and elsewhere. This exact wording is however not found until Athanasius (*On the Incarnation* 54:3). See Irenaeus in PG 17.1120 and Athanasius in PG 25.192B.

¹¹ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 6.9 in ANF 2:497.

¹² See: G.W. Butterworth, “The Deification of Man in Clement of Alexandria,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 17, no. 66 (January 1916): 157-69.

¹³ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 2.16 in ANF 2:553.

Thus, in Cyril's language the deified flesh of the incarnate Christ becomes "Life-Giving flesh."¹⁴ This new way of being is increasingly qualified so that by the sixth century Pseudo-Dionysius speaks of it as "attaining likeness to God and union with him so far as is possible."¹⁵

Key to Dionysius's crucial qualification of this "likeness to God" (viz., "so far as is possible") is not only a rejection of pantheism, but also an insistence on the apophatic nature of any discussion of participation in the divine life, as God himself is "beyond all being and therefore incomprehensible and inexpressible."¹⁶ These contrasting emphases on human accessibility to God on the one hand, and God's transcendence of all creaturely capacities on the other, reflect the challenge of articulating how humans can be understood to partake of God while maintaining divine transcendence. As Orthodox theology developed, the distinctions between God's essence and energies came to be invoked to address just this problem, by allowing for "two different modes of divine existence, in the essence and outside the essence."¹⁷ "Wholly unknowable in his essence, God wholly reveals himself in his energies."¹⁸ Taking classic form in the work of the fourteenth-century theologian Gregory Palamas, the Orthodox recognize a distinction (*diadrisis*) between essence and energies in God. The Fifth Council in Constantinople (1351) subscribed to Palamas's teaching that the energy of God is uncreated, that deity (*theotis*) may properly refer to both God's essence and his energies,¹⁹ and that humans may both experience and participate in God's energy – though not in his essence.²⁰ Thus, "Palamism" seeks to affirm both God's transcendence and God's availability to commune

¹⁴ Cyril of Alexandria, *Sermon 142 on the Gospel of Luke* in Robert Payne-Smith, *A Commentary Upon the Gospel According to Luke by St. Cyril of Alexandria* (Oxford: 1859), 664-9.

¹⁵ *hē de theōsis estin hē pros theon, hōs ephikton, aphomoiōsis te kai henōsis*, quoted in Normal Russel, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 2004), 5.

¹⁶ Thomas Anastos, "Gregory Palamas' Radicalization of the Essence, Energies, and Hypostasis Model of God," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 38, no. 1 (1993): 335-36. Maximus the Confessor similarly writes that the divine nature cannot be (properly) perceived, conceived, or expressed. See Idem, *Various Texts on Theology* 4:19 in G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware, eds., *The Philokalia* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), 189-90.

¹⁷ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 73.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Essence receives priority over energy, however, as energy proceeds from essence.

²⁰ Kallistos Ware, "God hidden and revealed: The apophatic way and the essence-energies distinction," *Eastern Churches Review* 7, no. 2 (1975): 129-30.

with the creation: God is simultaneously hidden in his essence and revealed in his energies. It is the “external” or “outward facing” mode of the divine energies in which human beings partake, and not in the divine nature itself. Nevertheless, this participation is understood to be profoundly intimate. “All that God is, except for an identity in *ousia*, one becomes when one is deified by grace.”²¹ Interpreting the early fathers through the lens of Palamas, modern Orthodoxy refines the relationship between soteriology and anthropology so that *theosis* becomes the *telos* of humanity, the attainment of which is manifest in grace as the most intimate possible relationship consistent with preserving the ontological distinction between Creator and creature.²²

1.1.2 Tensions with Lutheran Soteriology

Theosis, even when understood as a grace-infused process, can seem quite foreign to the Lutheran understanding of redemption because of the latter’s firm situation in the Western tradition, specifically in the Augustinian prioritizing of judicial and legal analogies in soteriology. This favoring of legal analogies is found as early as Tertullian and comes to prevail in the West through Anselm who puts forward the satisfaction theory of atonement, and Aquinas who indirectly refutes the Eastern distinction between essence and energies as (in the words of a modern scholar) “nonsense from an Aristotelian point of view.”²³

The very term “justification” – the watchword of Lutheran soteriology – belongs to the terminology of legal analogies for salvation. The language of justification comes from the law court and presupposes that the individual has transgressed God’s law and is thus guilty of its violation. In the face of such violation, justification refers to the guilty party’s acquittal: the judgment of God upon the individual, such that she is declared to be righteous. To be justified is thus, for Luther, to be acquitted of the guilt of one’s sins. It is the declaration and the work and favor of God behind it that is critical here. Luther writes,

²¹ Amb. 41 in Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 267.

²² Norman Russel, “Theosis and Gregory Palamas: Continuity or Doctrinal Change,” *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (2006): 357.

²³ Joost van Tossum, “Deification in Palamas and Aquinas,” *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (2003): 369.

The other kind of righteousness is the righteousness of faith, which does not depend on any works, but on God's favorable regard and his "reckoning" on the basis of grace. Notice how Paul dwells on the word "reckoned," how he stresses, repeats, and insists on it...and he asserts that righteousness is not reckoned to the [one who works], but that it is reckoned to the [one who does not work] provided he has faith.²⁴

From this insistence that the acquittal is entirely independent of (even in spite of) any contribution on the part of the individual, Luther's understanding of justification is designated as "forensic." The legal decree of innocence is entirely for Christ's sake. Thus, Luther's innovation is not that one is justified by grace (which was a matter of consensus in the Western, Augustinian tradition), but the *sola fide*: that one is justified by faith *alone*, and thus "by grace *apart from works of the law*." The characterization of Luther's position as being "justification by grace" is insufficient because it misses the crux of Luther's concern. The medieval church did not deny that grace was at work in salvation. Thomastic teaching provided for a prevenient grace that gave the individual the ability to be contrite and to cooperate with God, thus meriting God's favor.²⁵ The ambiguity regarding the relationship between human and divine action in this process left considerable room for interpretation in later scholasticism. The question of merit developed in the nominalist tradition of William of Ockham (1285-1347) and reached Luther particularly through the later Ockhamist, Gabriel Biel (1420-1495). Ockham was optimistic about the ability of the human being to make moral choices by natural ability (*faciendo quod in se est*) that might be God-pleasing and thus receive (without, strictly speaking, meriting) an infusion of grace (*meritum de congruo*).²⁶ Subsequent cooperation with God's grace by human beings whose will had been strengthened in this way merited God's reward (*meritum de condigno*). The conflation of anthropology and soteriology that results from the assertion that one can in this way dispose oneself to grace by natural means opened the Ockhamists up to charges of semi-pelagianism. In any event, the whole scheme was unacceptable for Luther, who struggled with the question of how one could be sure they were doing what was necessary to receive that initial infusion of God's

²⁴ LW 33:270-1.

²⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I-II.111.3.ad.2.

²⁶ Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei. A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification from 1500 to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 170.

grace. Justification, he determined, must be independent of *any* human effort (and thus independent of works of the law) if it is to be truly gracious. It is therefore for Luther secured exclusively by faith in Christ. Importantly, however, he is equally insistent that sins are forgiven *propter Christum*, not *propter fidem*; that is – and crucially – for Luther faith is not a work that earns salvation.²⁷ Faith justifies only because it grasps Christ who is present in faith and the source of the believer's righteousness. In other words, it is not any righteousness that is intrinsic or inherent in the individual, but rather an alien righteousness (*justitia aliena*) by which the individual is declared righteous.²⁸ It is Christ's own righteousness that is regarded and imputed, that is, freely given, to the sinner as if he were one with Christ.

Luther's interpretation of justification separates it from sanctification (that is, the effects of God's Word in a person, particularly spiritual growth, or increase in holiness) so that the two are distinct (though inseparable) from one another. He writes: "Justification and sanctification are related like cause and effect and from the presence of the effect we may conclude that the cause is at work."²⁹ Sanctification for Luther involves the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer so that the Spirit becomes the substance and the motivation for holy living. Such a division differs from what would become the official Catholic understanding, wherein justification is "not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man";³⁰ it also departs from the Thomist interpretation of the gospel as a "new law."³¹ Luther distinguishes between law and grace in order to prioritize the objective work of God in Christ (who comes to destroy the accusatory power of law rather than as the new law-giver) and highlight that the law is fulfilled outside of us (*extra nos*) by Christ's obedience. The law in this new schema has primarily the spiritual utility of inducing despair at one's inability to fulfill its demands, thereby driving the sinner to seek grace, which is the righteousness of God.

While the exact nature of the relationship between justification and sanctification is contested in classical Luther studies (reflecting Luther's inconsistencies on the matter),

²⁷ Ibid., 14.

²⁸ Bernard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology. Its Historical and Systematic Development* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 258.

²⁹ Sermon of 22 June 1544, on 1 John 3:13-18 quoted in Ewald Plass, ed., *What Luther Says* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), 2:723.

³⁰ Council of Trent, Session 6, "Canons Concerning Justification, 13 January 1547," in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Trent to Vatican II*, ed. Norman P. Tanner, vol. 2 (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990), chap. 12.

³¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I-II.106.2.

Luther's use of the terms *favor* and *donum* provides an important framework for interpretation. *Favor*, the favor of God is equated in his 1522 preface to Romans with *gratia*, the gracious disposition of God towards an individual.³² *Donum*, the gift of God, is nothing other than Christ himself, Christ being present in faith as he is its object. *Favor* is prioritized by the discussion of justification in the later Lutheran confessional document, the Formula of Concord (1577). The Formula's prioritization of favor and grace results from its insistence with Luther that Christ was (first) "delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification" so that there might (then) be a gift to be given. "For everything that comforts, that offers the favor and grace of God to transgressors of the Law is, and is properly called, the Gospel, a good and joyful message that God will not punish sins, but forgive them for Christ's sake."³³ The gift that is given is Christ himself, in and through the Gospel. This initiation of relationship by God in Christ makes sanctification the proof of justification by faith for the authors of the Formula. W. F. Besser describes the relationship between the two as a natural rhythm:

In justification Christ gives Himself to man; in sanctification man gives himself to Christ. In justification man receives; in sanctification he gives. It is like the double action of the lung, inhaling and exhaling. There is no exhalation without previous inhalation. First justification, then sanctification. The two are indissolubly connected.³⁴

In this understanding, *favor* and *donum* correspond to justification and sanctification in their ordering: one is justified because she has been shown the favor of God and subsequently receives the gifts of Christ which foster holiness.

1.2 The Claims of the Finnish School

As his geographical location at the meeting point of Eastern and Western Christianity suggests, Mannermaa's impetus for an interpretation of Luther's writings more

³² LW 35:369-70.

³³ Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration V.21 in Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 585.

³⁴ As quoted in Plass, *What Luther Says*, 2:723.

compatible with Orthodox thought lay in ecumenical interests, specifically the dialogues between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church that took place in the late 1970s. Ecumenical dialogues in various countries have acknowledged the reformers' interest in patristic sources (though often filtered through medieval Augustinian thought), and as a result "the ecumenical dialog between Lutherans and Orthodox has given impulses to the study of patristics."³⁵ The fathers provided common touchstones across confessional lines, which in the case of Mannermaa led to his exploration of Luther's texts on justification in search of Orthodox themes, particularly of *theosis*, which he treats as an Eastern parallel to the doctrine of justification by effectively correlating the two. Mannermaa claims that the ontological breadth of Luther's theology has been neglected in favor of what he labels an "ethical-relational" emphasis in traditional interpretations of his doctrine of justification. Against this tendency, he argues that Luther's understanding of justification posits a "real-ontic" union of the believer with Christ, the key to understanding which lies in the Orthodox doctrine of *theosis*. Mannermaa's interpretation, based in a correlation of this "real-ontic" union in Luther with Orthodox categories, favors what he terms an efficient rather than forensic view of justification.

In the efficient view of justification that Mannermaa defends, Luther is seen to understand Christ as "both the *favor* and the *donum*, without separation or confusion" so that "Christ (both his person and work), who is present in faith, is identical with the righteousness of faith."³⁶ This emphasis on Christ's personal presence means that "the concept of *deificatio* is at the very heart of the Reformer's doctrine of justification."³⁷ As Mannermaa argues in his 1989 treatise *Der im Galuben gegenwärtige Christus*, according to Luther, "justification is not merely a new ethical or juridical relation between God and a human being. When a human being believes in Christ, Christ is present, in the very fullness of his divine and human nature, in that faith itself."³⁸

Of particular significance for Mannermaa's argument is a sermon Luther preached at Christmas 1514.³⁹ In this sermon on the incarnation, Luther describes a reciprocity in the

³⁵ William Schumacher, *Who Do I Say That You Are?* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock 2010), 20.

³⁶ Tuomo Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith: Luther's View of Justification* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 5.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

³⁹ See WA 1:20-9.

relationship between the human and divine that Mannermaa points to as evidence of a “theological ontology” in Luther’s early work.⁴⁰ The sermon connects the *kenosis* (of the Logos) to the *theosis* of the human being:

Just as the word of God became flesh, so it is certainly necessary that the flesh become word. For the word becomes flesh precisely so that the flesh may become word. In other words: God becomes man so that man may become God. Thus power becomes powerless so that weakness may become powerful. The Logos puts on our form and manner, our image and likeness, so that it may clothe us with its image, its manner, and its likeness.⁴¹

William Schumacher identifies two ways in which this sermon is foundational for Mannermaa’s “discovery”: first, its continuity with the teaching of the Eastern fathers of the church, and second, its continuity with Luther’s later theology.⁴² Although the similarity to Irenaeus’s formulation is striking, Mannermaa is unable to demonstrate a context in which Luther would have become familiar with Irenaeus’s writings by 1514, as they are foreign to Lombard and the scholastic theology on which Luther had most recently lectured. Likewise, he fails to contextualize the Irenaeian parallel, and does not distinguish between the early patristic language and the more robust philosophical reflections on *theosis* that developed subsequently. Of course, Mannermaa recognizes that the mere fact that Luther would describe salvation in terms analogous to those of the Eastern fathers is not significant enough to carry his argument. Instead, he argues that Luther’s adoption of this language in structuring his soteriology is intentional rather than incidental or haphazard. Mannermaa boldly asserts that “the structure that is the object of our interest here permeates every aspect of the reformer’s thinking all the way to his final commentary on Genesis.”⁴³

To successfully claim that this thread runs throughout Luther’s works, Mannermaa turns to Luther’s *Commentary on Galatians* of 1535, a later text that is widely considered to be key to Luther’s theology. Schumacher identifies the importance here for

⁴⁰ Tuomo Mannermaa, “Theosis as a Subject of Finnish Luther Research,” *Pro Ecclesia* 4, no. 1 (1995): 43.

⁴¹ WA 1:28: 25-32 quoted in Mannermaa, “Theosis as a Subject of Finnish Luther Research,” 43.

⁴² Schumacher, *Who Do I Say*, 43.

⁴³ Mannermaa, “Theosis as a Subject of Finnish Luther Research,” 43.

Mannermaa of a particular reading of Luther's Christology as crucial to finding the anthropological "intersection point" of justification and *theosis*. Mannermaa emphasizes that for Luther the Word in assuming flesh does not take on a neutral human nature, but precisely sinful human nature. In this way Christ becomes the *magnus peccator*, such that Luther imagines the mission given to the Son to "...be the person of all men, the one who has committed the sins of all men."⁴⁴ The construal of Christ as in this way "submerged" in a human nature that is sinful *per se* is arguably a departure from Luther, who certainly affirms Christ "did not become an angel or another magnificent creature; he becomes man," but avoids qualifying the nature assumed as a sinful one, saying as in a sermon of 1537 on John 1:14, "he ate, drank, slept, waked, etc.; but was not born in sin as we were."⁴⁵ Nevertheless, this move allows statements from Luther that describe imputation to be interpreted in ontological terms.⁴⁶ For example, Mannermaa cites the *Commentary on Galatians* 2:20 to argue that Luther critiques the scholastic view of sin by maintaining that Christ bridges and overcomes a chasm within his two natures, so that the holiness of his divine nature swallows up the sinfulness of his human nature: "For the theology of the sophists is unable to consider sin any other way except metaphysically...but the true theology teaches that there is no more in in the world, because Christ, on whom, according to Isaiah [53:6], the Father has laid the sins of the entire world, has conquered, destroyed, and killed it in his own body."⁴⁷ For Mannermaa it follows then that faith, which justifies, is the individual's union with Christ and a participation in his victory over sin that is made possible by a "real" sharing in his person and thus in his benefits. When Luther says that faith justifies by "taking hold and possessing...this treasure, the present Christ," Mannermaa interprets this to indicate a "real" (i.e., ontological) possession, so that the law not only *is* not applied, but does not apply.

Mannermaa critiques an understanding of imputed righteousness found in the Formula of Concord, which is typical of later Lutheranism, on the grounds that it is in conflict with Luther himself. The key text to which he objects is the Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration III, which addresses "The Righteousness of Faith." The intention of the Formula on this matter is to assert (against the Anabaptists) that grace exists prior to any

⁴⁴ LW 26:280.

⁴⁵ LW 22:104.

⁴⁶ Mannermaa, *Der im Glauben gegenwärtigen Christus* (Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1989), 25; cf. WA 40I:437.

⁴⁷ LW 26:285 quoted in Schumacher, *Who Do I Say*, 43.

transformation within the believer and is thus something that is “outside of us” (*extra nos*).⁴⁸ However, Mannermaa argues that Luther, who did not formulate his account of justification with the Anabaptist alternatives in mind, did not separate the realities of justification on the one hand and Christ’s indwelling in the believer on the other. Moreover, Mannermaa even finds a confessional thread of support for his argument, in that the Formula itself rejects the claim that it is not God that dwells in the believer but only the gifts of God.⁴⁹ As Mannermaa interprets the text, the Formula thus upholds the idea that it is the divine essence and not merely the gifts of God that inhabit the believer when it. Ironically, despite his disagreement with the priority of forensic justification in the Formula, Mannermaa interprets this reference, which gives high praise to Luther’s Galatians commentary on the matter of justification and the *inhabitatio Dei*,⁵⁰ as giving this commentary “a status of final authority,” which he will exploit without the lens of the confessions that recommend it.⁵¹

Beyond his concerns with the Formula, Mannermaa takes a polemical turn against what he views as a misconstrued account of Luther’s ontology in later Lutheran theology. This perceived misconstrual is the reason for his repeated insistence on a “real” union. Mannermaa indicts Herman Lotze (1817-1881), who, while largely unread today, influenced many modernist philosophers and, with them, many nineteenth-century interpreters of Luther’s theology. Lotze is credited with significant contributions to neo-Kantianism in Germany, which influenced many German scholars. The nineteenth-century neo-Kantians deemphasized both theoretical reason and Hegelian synthesis in religious thinking, which they reframed in terms of practical reason and morality in line with the moralistic interpretation of religion developed by Kant in texts like the second *Critique* and *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. In Lotze’s system, a being is defined not as an individual (i.e., a being-in-itself), but rather as one that affects and is

⁴⁸ Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration XII.10 in Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 657.

⁴⁹ Ibid., III.65 in Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 573.

⁵⁰ Ibid., III.28-29 in Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 566-7: “Likewise, too, although renewal and sanctification are a blessing of our mediator Christ and a work of the Holy Spirit, they do not belong in the article or in the treatment of justification before God but rather result from it since, because of our corrupted flesh, they are never fully pure and perfect in this life, as Dr. Luther writes in his wonderful, exhaustive exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians.”

⁵¹ Tuomo Mannermaa, “Justification and *Theosis* in Lutheran-Orthodox Perspective,” in *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 27.

affected by other beings (i.e., a being-in-relationship). Under this paradigm, justification is an external but necessarily relational event, where Christ's presence in faith impresses itself on the human conscience and will. Against this perspective, Mannermaa understands himself to be reestablishing a properly theological ontology in line with Luther's own thinking rather than working in a framework skewed by such neo-Kantian philosophical commitments. In this regard, the Finnish School acknowledges the importance of philosophical context, and rightly criticizes neo-Kantian readings of Luther that ignore his medieval philosophical and metaphysical worldview. Mannermaa ascribes the hostility of leading German Luther scholars to his interpretation of Luther to the ongoing influence of this Kantian framework.

Because Lotze understood being to be determined by relationship, faith could only be understood as a matter of engaged wills (i.e., two wills externally encountering each other in the address of God through the Gospel and the faithful response of a human being) rather than as a genuinely ontological encounter. The problem is that such purely forensic (i.e., external or imputed) understandings of justification risk being "on the verge of making this righteousness fictional."⁵² The juridical language of the Formula of Concord also enables such a perception of a mere "personal-ethical" relationship with God "so the presence of Christ in faith has been understood in the category of outward causality."⁵³

Needless to say, Mannermaa is not the first to critique the idea of a purely forensic understanding of justification. Similar sorts of critique have been undertaken by a number of other Lutheran theologians, particularly by Karl Holl in Tübingen and subsequently others, including Wolfhart Pannenberg. Mannermaa's distinct contribution to a critical assessment of the doctrine of justification is the idea that it describes an "essential, ontological relationship with God."⁵⁴ This is distinct from Holl's understanding, which is not substantial in this way but is rather a matter of will, meaning that Holl understands justification in terms of a type of psycho-emotional transformation, while Mannermaa insists that it must be substantial, having (as already noted) a "real-ontic character" that renders it something more than the believer's subjective experience of God, or God having a purely extrinsic effect on the believer.⁵⁵

⁵² Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2:294.

⁵³ Ibid. 26-27.

⁵⁴ Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 88.

⁵⁵ Mannermaa, *Der im Glauben gegenwärtige*, 189.

Mannermaa views the doctrine of the communication of attributes or idioms (*communicatio idiomatum*) as crucial for understanding the supposed role of *theosis* in Luther. The communication of attributes is used in Luther's theology to address the nature of the hypostatic union of human and divine natures in Christ, and, more specifically, to answer the question of whether one can assign properly divine attributes to Jesus's human nature. In line with the Chalcedonian definition, according to which each nature in Christ retains its own properties and together are united in the one hypostasis (or person) of Jesus Christ, it is possible to predicate certain properties of one nature onto the person of the other when speaking about the concrete subject of Jesus.⁵⁶ This understanding of the communication of attributes as a formulation of how the human and divine interact in the person of Christ is extremely important in Luther's thought. The grounding in the Christological metaphysics of Chalcedon is critical as it allows Luther an appreciation that in Christ God is not impassable, and that there is a dynamic union of the two natures. Because Luther understood the soteriological intent of the communication of attributes formulation, he is able to break with scholastic tradition that tends to treat the exchanges between the natures and the person as simply verbal predication. Rather, in Christ humanity and divinity could engage and were no longer unyieldingly incommunicable.

Luther employs the language of the *communicatio* in his understanding of the "joyful exchange" that takes places between Christ and the sinner. While the phrase "happy exchange" (*commercium admirabile, frölich wechßel*) is not used by Luther himself, it identifies a theme in Luther in which Christ takes what is "proper" to the sinner, and in exchange sinners receive Christ's righteousness, which is "alien" to them. "Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness, just as I am your sin. You have taken upon yourself what is mine and have given me what is yours. You have taken upon yourself what you were not and have given to me what I was not."⁵⁷ When Luther speaks of this exchange, however, he does not mean to ascribe to the relationship between Christ and the sinner the type of union that is shared between the *Logos* and the human nature within Jesus. Here the analogy is entirely one of verbal predication. Mannermaa is intentional in addressing the concern that the doctrine of *theosis* elides the ontological distinction between Creator and

⁵⁶ For a detailed exposition, see Stephen Need, "Language, Metaphor, and Chalcedon: A Case of Theological Double Vision," *The Harvard Theological Review* 88, no. 2 (April 1995): 237–255.

⁵⁷ LW 48:12–13.

creature: “God does not stop being God and man does not stop being man. Both retain their substances, i.e., they are at all times in the union realities existing in themselves.”⁵⁸ It is perhaps awkwardly expressed to say that God and the human creature are “realities existing in themselves” within this union. Nevertheless, this extended manifestation of communication of idioms, analogous to the hypostatic union, thus maintains a distinction between the creature and the Creator.

For Mannermaa, to be saved by faith is to be saved through this extended notion of communication of attributes, that is, by participating in Christ through what he calls a “real indwelling,” where the presence of Christ by faith manifests in the believer “to impart his divine life, love, and holiness.”⁵⁹ It is inside this relationship that the so-called “happy exchange” occurs. The essential righteousness of God, which is possessed by Christ intrinsically owing to his identity as the divine Son, is given to the believer, who is united to Christ, in exchange for their sin. Mannermaa makes the point that it is God’s *essential* righteousness that is donated by and through Christ and not Christ’s *personal* righteousness. While it is not immediately clear what is at stake for Mannermaa is making this particular distinction, it seems likely that this is an attempt to create a conceptual framework for stressing the compatibility of Luther’s views with the Orthodox doctrine of *theosis*. In *theosis*, the individual is understood to participate in the divine energies, and as God’s righteousness (which is presumably identical with Christ’s intrinsic righteousness as “truly divine”) is an attribute of God in which human beings can participate, it is categorized as an “energy.” This would potentially make more explicit that the donation in question has the effect of *theosis*, but Mannermaa does not explicitly state that this is his intent. In any event, he sees in Luther a defender of this understanding of donation, in that for Luther, Christ does not possess a “neutral” human nature but rather “the sins of humankind are not only imputed to Christ; he “has” the sins in his human nature.”⁶⁰ The transformation that is effected by Christ’s indwelling is that “through faith, in which Christ is a real presence, man begins in accordance with the Golden Rule to love both God and neighbor.”⁶¹ This is particularly significant for Mannermaa, because if faith is participating in God through the indwelling Christ, then

⁵⁸ Mannermaa, “Theosis as a Subject of Finnish Luther Research,” 43.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Mannermaa, “Justification and *Theosis* in Lutheran-Orthodox Perspective,” 29.

⁶¹ Mannermaa, “Theosis as a Subject of Finnish Luther Research,” 44.

(following the Orthodox correlation of participation with the divine energies) it necessarily means participating in the qualities of God as well.

Luther understood a need for God to make an individual “nothing” before regenerating him. Not insignificantly, Luther’s understanding of this “nihilizing work” of God on the human is also addressed by the idea of the indwelling of Christ. For Luther, God’s nihilizing work means destruction of the individual’s constant efforts to justify himself. Only then could the individual have the “capacity for God” (*capax Dei*), that is, become capable of receiving God and his goodness. In this context, Mannermaa argues the type of *theosis* that springs from God’s nihilizing work is properly a theology of the cross. “Theology of the cross” is a concept introduced by Luther toward the end of his Heidelberg Disputation against scholastic theology (1518), where he contrasts it with a “theology of glory.” The former for Luther proclaims an “alien righteousness” that points to Christ’s work on the cross as the only way of salvation, while the latter proclaims a “proper righteousness” that depends on human ability and reason. Mannermaa writes, “The participation that is a real part of his theology is hidden under its opposite, the *passio* through which one is emptied.”⁶² The indwelling of Christ in the individual necessitates that it is the whole Christ – that is, the Christ who empties himself of glory in both the incarnation and in the crucifixion – who is given. “One must pass through this agony and, ultimately, through the cross in order to achieve a true *cognitio sui*. Only in this way is one made *vacuum* and *capax Dei*.”⁶³ The cross, where it appears in Mannermaa, is predominantly tied to this self-emptying or kenotic action, one event with the incarnation and likewise only meaningfully experienced by participation in Christ’s kenosis.⁶⁴

Moving beyond the person of Mannermaa, Simo Peura, bishop of Lapua since 2004, represents a second generation of the Finnish School, having completed his dissertation “More than Human? Deification as a Theme of Martin Luther’s Theology from 1513 to 1519” under Mannermaa in 1990. This work identifies themes of ontic unity

⁶² Tuomo Mannermaa, “Why is Luther So Fascinating? Modern Finnish Luther Research,” in *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 10.

⁶³ Mannermaa, “Justification and Theosis in Lutheran-Orthodox Perspective,” 39.

⁶⁴ It is worth noting that this ascription of extreme passivity to human beings again puts him at odds with the anthropology presented in the Formula of Concord (article 2) and its presentation of free will in the believer where “God makes willing persons out of the unwilling.”

purportedly found in Luther's early lectures and writings, especially the *Dictata super Psalterium* of 1513-1516 and (following Mannermaa) Luther's Christmas 1514 sermon.⁶⁵ Peura's ecumenical sympathies lie in dialogue with the Catholic Church. Peura develops a robust understanding of the relationship of the sacraments to the idea of union with Christ characteristic of the Finnish School, in part shaped by his understanding of the relationship between *signa* and *res* in sacramentology. Yet this focus does not lead to any significant revision of Mannermaa's proposals. Instead, Peura builds significantly on the conceptual groundwork laid by his teacher and colleague.

Peura engages in the philosophical ontology necessary to make his case, correctly interpreting Luther as engaging with the medieval philosophical tradition of which he was heir rather than reading him through a post-Enlightenment lens. Peura assumes (following, with Luther, Thomas's Aristotelian understanding) that God's essence is identical to his attributes. These attributes of God, identified in the *Dictata* as truth, wisdom, goodness, power, and life, are personified in Christ.⁶⁶ On this basis, Peura believes Luther to conclude that having Christ, who instantiates the divine attributes in human form, is the same as having God. In other words, receiving mercy or receiving God's name in baptism is to be united with God so as to partake in the divine nature.⁶⁷ Peura thus identifies Christ, in whom also the invisible things of God are present, albeit hidden, as the vehicle for God's self-communication. Christ, the Word, reaches "the interior of man," and so *theosis* is understood as ontologically possible by virtue of the presence of that Word in the individual.⁶⁸

Peura builds upon Mannermaa's proposals by arguing that it is the essential attributes of God, discussed above, that are integral to the experience of salvation rather than the historical actions of Christ. This is not to say that these actions are insignificant for Peura, but rather that his focus is the subjective justification of the individual rather

⁶⁵ Peura does not seek to justify this choice of texts, which come before his "exegetical breakthrough" of justification by grace through faith that resulted from his lectures on the Psalter (beginning 1513) and Romans (1515-16). In fact, he only engages post-breakthrough Luther in any significant way in the Heidelberg Disputation and his sermon, "Two Kinds of Righteousness," both from 1518. This favoring of an immature Luther obviously raises questions about the capacity of the Finnish School to establish Luther contextually vis-à-vis his fully developing understanding of justification

⁶⁶ Simo Peura, *Mehr als ein Mensch? Die Vergöttlichung als Thema der Theologie Martin Luthers von 1513 bis 1519* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1994), 47-49.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 50.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 62.

than an objective reality that subsequently is applied to the individual. Rather than prioritizing *favor* in such a way that justification results in Christ being present in the believer as *donum*, Peura believes that the gift is antecedent to favor. Justification occurs because of the presence of Christ in the believer, that is, the gift of faith. He argues that

The whole person of the Christian is favored by God, since the gift purifies the Christian from sin and opposes it. Unless the gift continuously labors to expel sin, the Christian cannot receive favor in God's judgement... Thus, the gift is always a permanent condition of grace and of God's favorable intention.⁶⁹

Luther's fear that any personal righteousness might be assumed to be at work in the believer's justification is not a concern for Peura, as in his interpretation the grounds for divine favor remain alien to the individual. Instead, both grace and gift result from the presence of Christ and not from human effort. While a departure from classical Lutheran formulation, in which the death of Christ is stressed the ground of justification, Peura attempts to accentuate the proximity and "reality" of Christ in the act of justification, arguing that Luther "is well aware of the concept of participation as well as divinization."⁷⁰ His view on Luther's understanding of the distinction between *favor* and *donum* suggests that union with Christ (*donum*) precedes the grace of being made justified (*favor*). Despite discussion of logical ordering, Peura maintains Mannerman's assertion that "grace and gift presuppose each other," thus inseparably linking justification and sanctification.⁷¹ God, he says, "lets a human being receive faith and truth so that he is truthful in front of God, and not as a mere being, but as God's child and a god."⁷² By relating the indwelling of Christ with both *favor* and *donum* in adoption, Peura seeks to highlight their common nexus in union with Christ despite their distinctiveness.

Peura's work is distinctive for its stress on God's particular work of gifting, both of himself and of creation. It is this donation that allows for the existence of creation itself, although any distinction between the different ways in which human beings may be

⁶⁹ Simo Peura, "Christ as Favor and Gift: The Challenge of Luther's Understanding of Justification," in *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 58.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 51.

said to participate in God's life as created and as redeemed is not apparent. According to Peura, "Luther underlines that a created human being is able to exist only under the condition that God lives in him and makes him a partaker of God's own life. Thus, our whole existence is based on God's presence in us: we live through God, from God, and in God."⁷³ This emphasis on the act of creation and its preservation as dependent upon God attempts to demonstrate again that there is a primordial gift that initiates a relationship in which Christ can then be comprehended through faith. At the same time, no explanation is given for why this giving on God's part (*donum*) is to be understood as prior to a gracious will (*favor*) such as would merit there following a creation or a divine self-donation.

1.3 Critiques of the Finnish School

As this last point suggests, certain elements of the Finnish School's reading of Luther raise questions. The attempt at rapprochement between the Eastern and Western traditions by correlating justification with *theosis* has been met with contention among other Lutheran theologians, particularly in Germany and the United States. For example, William Schumacher questions whether the ontological connection Peura posits between the sign and the thing itself (*signum* and *res*) is a philosophical possibility for Luther even in his early work, given the influence of Nominalism on his language through Ockham and Biel.⁷⁴ Dennis Bielfeldt also expresses hesitation concerning the likelihood that *theosis* can be ascribed to Luther on the basis of the *Dictata*:

I believe that Peura correctly perceives that significant deification imagery does occur within the *Dictata*. However I am not as sanguine as he that divinization plays such a central role in the document...if we allow the concept of deification to be broad enough so as to be discerned in the *Dictata*, we may have no good reason not to discover it in the texts of other late medieval thinkers.⁷⁵

⁷³ Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 88.

⁷⁴ Schumacher, *Who Do I Say*, 63.

⁷⁵ Dennis Bielfeldt, "Deification as a Motif in Luther's *Dictata super psalterium*," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 28, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 404.

Peura believes that the tropological interpretation of text, according to which “what is said about Christ is applied to the believer,” lends hermeneutical credence to the notion that Luther would conclude from the historical incarnation of Christ a corresponding “*deificatio hominis*.” But Bielfeldt goes on to cast doubt on the idea that Luther’s hermeneutics in the text would lead him to develop the paradigm of Christ’s threefold coming (in the incarnation, in the sacraments, and at the last judgment) as one in which “Christ’s presence in us...describe the realization of salvation in the life of the Christian.”⁷⁶

More broadly, Carl Trueman acknowledges the use of the language of union in Luther’s works, but notes that it is not exclusively or even frequently that of specifically ontological union, as would be requisite of a concept comparable to *theosis* in the Orthodox understanding. He concludes that the selective use of texts by the Finnish School is problematic in its inability to demonstrate a plausible historical context for their interpretation. Trueman’s study of the contexts in which Luther employs “realist” language demonstrates that in Luther’s mind real unity does not suggest the kind of ontological transformation that would be indicative of *theosis*. He uses the example of Luther’s conception of the Eucharistic presence, in which the bread and wine remain bread and wine in their substance, while Christ’s presence is in, with, and under them. Such a model, he argues, in which the “simple” elements remain but are efficacious because of what is attached to them, namely the promise of God, provides a better framework for interpreting Luther’s understanding of what happens to the believer in justification than does the Orthodox language of *theosis*.

While this critique rightly holds them accountable for their lack of attention to broader theological context in their claim that Luther’s understanding of union with Christ is broadly comparable to *theosis*, it does not directly challenge the prioritizing of grace and gift in justification. Trueman’s review of “real” union as a concept in Luther might well be employable in Peura’s argument by highlighting that the effectiveness of promise is a function of its union with some substantive reality (e.g., the word with bread, or Christ with the sinner). It nevertheless stands that Peura arguably misses Luther’s intent, as Trueman summarizes:

⁷⁶ Peura, *Mehr als ein Mensch*, 62.

To move from language which speaks of the real presence of Christ by faith in the believer to an understanding of salvation based upon some notion of transforming divinization or *theosis* is thus a not inconsiderable leap and needs to be established on foundations of contextual reading of the said language in the narrower context of the Luther texts within which it occurs and the wider theological and historical context of Luther's own life and work.⁷⁷

Besides the contextual issues associated with the proper interpretation of Luther's "realist" language, Trueman also documents the variety of Luther's use of analogies, such as that of the marriage union of a bride and groom in *The Freedom of a Christian*. Trueman argues that while this analogy undoubtedly has mystical (and thus unitive) dimensions, its force in Luther's argument is still primarily legal. He concludes that although considerations of union are undoubtedly at work in Luther's writings, they cannot be made to conform in any straightforward manner to the model of *theosis*.

A further line of critique, highlighting Mannermaa's and Peura's eisegetical tendencies, is found in Timo Laato's in-depth study of Luther's treatise, *Against Latomus*. Mannermaa claims that Luther developed the concept of real-ontic union with Christ in this text in particular.⁷⁸ Yet Laato observes that Mannermaa "does not deal with that work in detail; he does not even quote it."⁷⁹ This treatise, written in 1521 in response to Louvain professor Jacob Latomus, centers on Luther's paradoxical assertion that "every good work is sin" and engages how grace and the gift are brought together with the reality of sin, so that the superiority of grace is revealed. Although Luther's understanding of the relationship between *favor* and *donum* in this text may not be as simple as Laato presents, he rightly identifies how important it is for Luther that grace (i.e., *favor*) be understood as having priority. Laato returns to the more traditional emphasis in Luther studies on the reformer's location of the basis of divine favor in the objective historical event of the

⁷⁷ Carl R. Trueman, "Is the Finnish Line a New Beginning? A Critical Assessment of the Reading of Luther Offered by the Helsinki School," *Westminster Theological Journal* 65, no. 29 (2003): 239.

⁷⁸ Timo Laato, "Justification: The Stumbling Block of the Finnish Luther School," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (October 2008): 327-346.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 329.

crucifixion and resurrection rather than in the subjective justification of the individual (where she is infused with grace). He quotes Luther as saying,

[Christians] could have their security in grace, not because they believe and because they have faith or the gift, but because they have these by the grace of Christ. For no one's faith will endure if he does not rely on Christ's own righteousness and if he is not protected in his care.⁸⁰

Laato's point is that Luther's historical concern – identifying Christ as the one who fulfills the law on our behalf – is central to his understanding of justification. Divine favor is the grace that is obtained by Christ's fulfillment of the law on the cross. As Laato summarizes, "The Christ who dwells in the heart (*donum*) is none other than the Christ who died on the cross (*favor*)."⁸¹ Laato argues against Mannermaa that the priority of God's favor in relation to God's gift is not simply exegetical, but also logical, since the gift, as a sign of God's favor, must point backwards to that which it represents. Christ can only subsequently be given as a gift (*donum*) and dwell in the heart through faith because he has previously merited perfect righteousness on the cross (*favor*). Laato quotes extensively from *Against Latomus* to demonstrate that Luther prioritizes *favor* over *donum*:

Luther says just the opposite of what Mannermaa claims. Union (*unio*) with Christ is not enough to calm the heart. Not the gift (*donum*) but the grace (*favor*) "really produces true peace of heart." Grace is "a greater good than healing brought about by righteousness, which we have said comes from faith." A Christian would "rather—if it were possible—want to be without the healing brought about by righteousness than without God's grace." The reason is that the gift is only an inner good whereas grace is an external good.⁸²

Laato thereby identifies a crucial flaw in both Mannermaa's arguments, inasmuch as Mannermaa incorrectly believes faith (understood in terms of the *donum* of real-ontic union) to be the grounds of justification. As seen previously, the presence of Christ in

⁸⁰ Ibid., 333; Cf. LW 32:239-240.

⁸¹ Ibid., 332.

⁸² Laato, "Justification: The Stumbling Block," 340.

faith potentially protects this interpretation against the suspicions of works righteousness, yet it proves far from in keeping with the reformer's commitment to locating justification objectively in the historical work of Christ. It also sits poorly with Luther's insistence that the forgiveness of sins is given *propter Christum*, not *propter fidem*. Additionally, Laato shows that Luther's primary concern in *Against Latomus* is the condition of the individual before God: the gracious disposition, which is described in the treatise as being more desirable than the subjective experience of the "inner good." Peura's conclusion that Christ, the Word, reaches "the interior of man," such that *theosis* may be understood as being ontologically possible by virtue of the presence of that Word in the individual, seems to constitute a departure from both Luther and from the Orthodox understanding of *theosis*.⁸³ Beyond this, Peura's conclusion of how one partakes in God is itself flawed, as the philosophical framework (accepted by Luther) in which God is identical to his attributes is incongruent with the distinction made by Orthodox theologians between God in his essence and God in his energies.

As noted above, Peura is the first in the Finnish School to overtly reference the role of the sacraments in creating this union with Christ. "Christ is given to the baptized as well as the personal faith through which he receives Christ."⁸⁴ He describes God as being bound "ontologically to a sinner and is one with him through his whole earthly life, if he adheres to Christ in faith."⁸⁵ This discussion of Christ's sacramental presence presents the occasion for drawing an analogy with Christ's presence in the believer in faith (albeit one that falls short of *theosis*, for reasons Trueman demonstrates); however, it also gives a further example of the Finnish School's failure to acknowledge Luther's priority in centering justification in the atoning death of Christ. In this discussion Peura leaves unaddressed the matter of promise as *verbum externum* (i.e., as external or the proclaimed word) in the sacramental act. Luther's emphasis on the *verba externa* is a response (firstly and more concretely) to contemporary "enthusiasts," who believed that by means of inner revelation they could receive the Holy Spirit, and (secondly and more generally) to concern about how one can be sure of God's will. Luther illustrates the significance of the external word when commenting on Psalm 119, writing, "In this

⁸³ With respect to the former, Luther in his *Large Catechism* regards "having" God in terms of faith, since "to have a god is to have something in which the heart trusts completely." See Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 387.

⁸⁴ Peura, "Christ as Favor and Gift," 53.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

psalm David always says that he will speak, think, talk, hear, read, day and night constantly – but about nothing else than God’s word and commandments. For God wants to give you His Spirit only through the external word.”⁸⁶ For Luther, the Holy Spirit only works through this external word, that is, through the scriptures (and their proclamation) and the sacraments. Priests are thus called “ministers of the word” in recognition of their role in effecting this external proclamation.⁸⁷ Peura’s attempt to interpret the sacraments as an example of the way in which the believer is united to Christ disregards that the grace they communicate is for Luther necessarily tied to the verbalized declaration of God’s promise, that is, the gospel of grace. The grace and favor of God is channeled to the believer through the sacraments because they are signs that declare the forgiveness of sins. These then certainly do contain Christ as *donum*, but he comes sacramentally as *donum* because he is first *favor*. As was the case with Mannermaa’s exegesis of *Against Latomus*, Peura’s claim fails to convince because while Luther asserts that the primary thing at work in the sacrament is the promise of God pointing to his *favor* shown on the cross, Peura prioritizes the *donum* (in this instance, Christ given in the sacrament).

Timothy Wengert also critiques the Finnish school on this point. He recognizes that Luther describes the certainty of one’s salvation as being related directly to the external nature of the word: “This is why our theology is certain...we do not depend on our own strength, conscience, experience, person or words but depend on that which is outside ourselves, that it, on the promise and truth of God, which cannot deceive.”⁸⁸ A forensic declaration of justification is a certain one because the word is external and objective. More than being sure of this *information* about God’s disposition towards us, the gospel is shown to be effective and comforting precisely in the fact that *Christ* is outside us and operates for our good independently of (and thus above) our ability. For Luther the externality and objectiveness of Christ’s working for our good is firmly rooted in his salvation history. For Wengert, as for Laato, Mannermaa’s emphasis on Christ’s person over his work shifts the focus away from the crucifixion and resurrection in a way that is inauthentic to Luther.

The devaluation of the *verbum externum* and the shift of emphasis away from the obedience of Christ and the cross cause both of Wengert and Laato to associate Mannermaa with Andreas Osiander (1498-1552) who argued that righteousness is not

⁸⁶ Plass, *What Luther Says*, 3:1359.

⁸⁷ “*Ministratores verbi in fidem remissionis*” in WA 1:631.33f.

⁸⁸ LW 26:387.

based on Christ's sacrifice but on the divine nature of Christ dwelling in the sinner. It is against Osiander that the Formula of Concord cleanly defines *inhabitatio Dei* as belonging to sanctification and *iustitia Dei* as belonging to justification.⁸⁹ While Mannermaa and his school claim a disconnect between Luther's own intentions and the interpretive lens of the Formula, Wengert highlights the significance of the Formula's refuting of Osiander's position:

By insisting on the centrality of the equivalent of theosis in Luther's thought, the Finnish school has constructed a curious historical conundrum. How can one properly construe Luther's influence in the sixteenth century, given the rejection of Osiander's reading of Luther by an overwhelming majority of his contemporaries in favor of a forensic understanding of justification? How can one argue that Luther was such a brilliant teacher if nearly all of his closest students completely misunderstood his teaching on justification by faith...?⁹⁰

Indeed, as much as Mannermaa rightly draws attention to the influences of neo-Kantianism on nineteenth-century and later Luther scholarship, he does not address the question of why if *theosis* were, as he claims, a persistent theme in Luther's writing, there was virtually no recognition of this fact a mere decade after his death.

1.4 Conclusion

The proposals of the Finnish School provide occasion for significant reflection on the character of Luther's thought on justification, specifically how the relationship between *donum* and *favor* crystalize in his writings. However, the Finnish reading of how Luther prioritizes the two and understands their relationship to faith proves problematic. Other foci usually identified as critical for Luther, such as the theology of the cross, promise, or the *verbum externum*, are conspicuously sidelined. Mannermaa and his associates' inability to recognize the distinction between *donum* and *favor* is indicative of a regular failure to contextualize Luther's writings adequately and to identify what is at

⁸⁹ Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration III.54 in Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 571-72.

⁹⁰ Wengert, *Defending Faith: Lutheran Responses to Andreas Osiander's Doctrine of Justification, 1551-1559* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 3-4.

stake for him in the particular texts they examine. This is especially evident in Mannermaa's engagement with Luther's *Commentary on Galatians*. Mannermaa fails to yield to Luther's intended purpose as outlined in the preface to the text, in which he explicitly states his intention to distinguish between law and gospel under the framework of active and passive righteousness. Much of his focus in the commentary is, correspondingly, on the importance of receiving the latter through faith in Christ rather than seeking the former. Mannermaa, however, is inattentive to this wider framing. He picks up the text where it speaks of Christ "bearing the sins of all human being in the human nature he has assumed," but ignores the definitive role of the cross in Luther's exposition. He instead treats the incarnation as Luther's primary focus, and thus prioritizes participation in Christ's person (viz., being united ontologically to Christ) rather than Christ's death as that which atones for sin. While Luther himself claims that the distinction between law and gospel "is necessary to the highest degree; for it contains a summary of all Christian doctrine,"⁹¹ Mannermaa does not even acknowledge it.

The distinction between *donum* and *favor* is likewise indicative of the Finnish School's trend of disregarding thematic intent of Luther's argument. Mannermaa's prioritizing of gift over grace makes the gift prerequisite for the individual's reception of grace. While Mannermaa's reversal of the two may not as such jeopardize the priority of Christ in the work of redemption, it does move the pivot of justification away from the death of Christ and to the present moment in which Christ is joined to a believer through faith. This shift arguably fails to correspond to Luther's increasing conviction that justification is forgiveness that is declared—a declaration that is possible because the favor of God is already manifest and evident in the life and death of Christ. To emphasize an ontological transformation as the gift that affords favor would make the word of God's verdict acquitting the sinner not creative but merely descriptive. While Mannermaa expresses concern that forensic justification may be "fictional," his alternative risks rendering God's declaration unproductive.⁹²

At the same time, it would be untrue to deny that Luther employs terminology reminiscent of *theosis*. As Mannermaa demonstrates, there are real similarities between the Orthodox language of deification and aspects of Luther's writings on the incarnation and the communication of attributes. Nevertheless, these similarities are not demonstrable

⁹¹ LW 26:115-117.

⁹² Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2:294.

priorities for Luther, and what similarities in language there are seem closer to early patristic formulations than to the Palamite understanding of *theosis* in terms of the distinction between essence and energies. Despite these failures by Mannermaa and the Finnish School to demonstrate that *theosis* is a significant thematic thread throughout Luther's writings, however, the common Christological commitments found in Luther and the Chalcedonian tenets that relate to discussion of *theosis* do provide points of contact between the two traditions. Specifically, these include the healing of the human will as a critical part of the human nature assumed in the incarnation, and how the communion of the human and divine hypostases in Christ point to a what a human nature that is divinized looks like. These will be explored further below. First, however, it will be necessary to set the stage through a more thorough explanation of Luther's doctrine of justification on the one hand, and Orthodox thinking on the other.

2. Salvation in Martin Luther: Justification

While Luther's Reformation theology is popularly hailed as revolutionary, it is well-established that Luther is heir to the schools of medieval thought that preceded him and is influenced (to varying degrees) by their methods and suppositions.⁹³ Of course, if Luther's theological concerns are fundamentally particular to the medieval West, one ought to look to this context to determine what exactly Luther is engaging, if not *theosis*. What is at stake for Luther in his account of salvation as justification is the answer to questions of whether and in what way the human being is capable of contributing to her own salvation, and what is the nature of her will. Indeed, the concept of the will in general or "free will" in particular crystalizes in response to these questions. As such, Luther is heir to a tradition grappling with how to construe the relationship between divine and human activity in salvation. This theological concern lingers in the West as a legacy of Augustine's anti-Pelagian works, which dominated reflection on the nature of grace and salvation in Western Christian thought from the fifth century onward.⁹⁴ In the context of these theological considerations, we see that the will, and specifically the question of a "free will," is not something ancillary to questions of grace, but substantive of an anthropology that recognizes the incapability of the human person to contribute to their own salvation, and the need for God's gracious intervention. At the same time, the lived human experience of willing and choosing begged the question, "To what degree humans can cooperate with grace and what can they contribute to salvation?"

⁹³ It is not the intent of this chapter to provide a comprehensive account of Luther's relationship to scholasticism, nominalism, and the *via moderna* in the forging of his unique contributions to theology. Such work, however, such as was spearheaded by Heiko Obermann, further supports and contextualizes our claims. See Heiko Obermann, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000); Theodor Dieter, *Der junge Luther und Aristoteles* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001); 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: Luther-Agricola-Society, 1994).

⁹⁴ As such, the concerns that animated the sixteenth-century Reformation are not far removed from the questions that occupied earlier scholastic theologians, beginning with Peter Lombard (c. 1096-1160), whose work serves as a critical starting point for understanding both the investments and the grammar of theologians in the late Middle Ages because of his universal recognition among western theologians. Luther's continuity with the scholastics helps to situate him as a proper heir of western theology and, specifically, of western questions concerning the potential for human and divine cooperation in salvation.

In a way the groundwork for the doctrine of justification lies in early difficulties with the question of free will and becomes thrust again to the forefront by Luther when faced with the same questions.

In this chapter, we will see that Luther's determination that salvation is by justification, that is, primarily an external declaration of God's forgiveness and independent of human contribution or cooperation, is the result of these questions. In the process we will see that Luther's preoccupation with human (in)capacity and whether one can cooperate with grace situate him as a proper heir of Western theology and, specifically, of Western questions concerning the potential for human and divine cooperation in salvation. As such (apart from the difficulties with the Finnish School which we have seen), justification proves too conceptually distinct from *theosis* to be considered analogous. These concerns over human potential to cooperate with grace and the freedom of the will provide, however, points of contact with which we can engage Maximus on human and divine cooperation (if not in sinful humans, then in Christ), and what it means for a will to be free.

This context is largely the well-rehearsed story popularized by Heiko Obermann, arguing for meaningful continuity between the medieval theologians and Luther. In the intervening years since Obermann's groundbreaking work, Luther's indebtedness to the mystical traditions in the West has been explored as well. This influence of mysticism on Luther's speech will be introduced in this chapter and the importance of its imagery for Luther seen in subsequent chapters. In reviewing Luther's context, I will show the will to be a critical consideration from the time of Augustine (and of Maximus), which shapes a medieval discussion of one's natural capacity to cooperate with grace. It is this discussion that Luther then rearticulates as a matter of the will and its bondage. In considering the fallen will's inability to will rightly and thus the incapacity of human beings to contribute to their salvation, Luther details the necessity of salvation to be by justification, an act of God prior to the human being's ability to be changed by (or, to whatever degree possible, cooperate with) grace. In reviewing Luther's medieval context and how he changes the conversation from one of natural potential and ability to one of posture and relationship with God, I will provide a framework for understanding whether there is for him any room for human cooperation in salvation (as *theosis* might be understood to require), if only within the hypostatic union of God and humanity in Christ.

2.1.1 Luther's Context I: Early Western Development of the Concept of the Will

It would require a dedicated work of its own to do justice to how the will comes to be a key theme in Western theology and to influence the development of doctrine leading up to Luther. Here, in order to establish the debate over the relationship between human volition and salvation that Luther inherited, we will broadly see how the question of the will relates to the question of the will's freedom and of the (in)ability of the human being to cooperate with God in salvation help shape soteriology.

The concept of the will appears to crystalize largely in response to questions of whether or not it is free. According to Michael Frede, the classical Greeks did not have a clear concept of free will. While neither Plato nor Aristotle spoke of such a faculty, the Stoics subsequently came to understand *boulēsis*, a rational desire, to be what motivates one's actions and makes one thus responsible for them.⁹⁵ Specifically, this appears to have been a rational desire for what was determined to be good. In Aristotle, the word "choice" (*prohairesis*) is used to refer to something that is up to us, a particular kind of willing. The virtuous person would choose that which is good. The unvirtuous person, in contrast, who did not choose what was good, was not acting on their *boulēsis*, but rather on their irrational impulses.⁹⁶ The Stoics developed this thought so as to define a virtuous person as one who could not do other than choose the good. Free will did not refer then to a faculty all humans possessed, enabling good, rational choices, but rather to a rare phenomenon belonging to one whose mind had access to "free will," being influenced by that which directed them to the good.⁹⁷

It is Christian thinkers that would somewhat eagerly take up the question of a free will. The concept receives a less-than systematic treatment until Origen of Alexandria (c. 184- c. 253). Outside of scriptural references to a "will," the early Christians appear to have thought of the will in terms of self-determination (*autoexousia*). This allowed them to speak coherently on God's righteous judgment and accountability for one's actions.

⁹⁵ Michael Frede, *A Free Will: Origins of the Notion in Ancient Thought* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 2-9.

⁹⁶ Frede, *A Free Will*, 19-30. Despite this, it would be incorrect to claim that Aristotle had a concept of "free will," as the unvirtuous person proves incapable of choosing what is rational, despite the choice being up to them. See Susanne Bobzien, "Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics III.1113b7-8 and Free Choice," in *What is Up to Us? Studies on Agency and Responsibility in Ancient Philosophy*, eds. Pierre Destree et al. (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2014), 59-74.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 79-81.

Clement of Alexandria, for example, claimed that it was entirely “up to us” whether to choose good and to become like God, while it was up to God to ignite in us the will (*to boulēthēnai*) do so.⁹⁸ In this regard, the ancients appear to have conceived of the will in a way similar to that popular in the present day, namely, as a faculty for decision-making. Perhaps following Clement, Origen provides the first detailed argument for a free will. Origen addresses the reality that humans are affected by their surroundings and circumstances, and thus make choices accordingly.⁹⁹ He addresses the inequality of opportunity apparent among humans in *On First Principles*, formulating his cosmology that creation of bodies was an opportunity to correct primordial mistakes made by the *logikoi* created by God that had grown cold and fallen away from him.¹⁰⁰ Thus Origen’s doctrine of creation is linked to his desire to defend free will against a Platonist backdrop without undermining God’s justice. Humans possessed free will and the circumstances of their physical existence must be the result of their (mis)use of free will.¹⁰¹ Origen’s account of free will combated Christian fatalism, asserting that “it is our own doing whether we live rightly or not, and that we are not compelled, either by those causes which come to us from without, or, as some think, by the presence of fate.”¹⁰²

After Origen, it is Augustine who primarily shapes considerations of the will in the West. Despite the prominence of the will as a subject in his writings, he employs both formal and informal definitions and revises his conclusions throughout the course of his corpus. As such, despite his prolific influence on the subject, he leaves no systematic account of how he conceives of the will.¹⁰³ Augustine initially speaks of free will in much the same spirit as Origen had. In responding to the Manicheans, he defines the will as “a movement of the mind, no one compelling, either for not losing or for obtaining something.”¹⁰⁴ Likewise he writes that “every one also who does a thing unwillingly is compelled, and everyone who is compelled, if he does a thing, does it only unwillingly. It

⁹⁸ Matyas Havrda, “Grace and Free Will According to Clement of Alexandria,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 19 no. 1 (2011): 39.

⁹⁹ Frede, *A Free Will*, 102-124.

¹⁰⁰ Origen, *On First Principles* I.4.1 in ANF 4:256. A more detailed account of the Origenist doctrine of creation will follow with Maximus.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, II.9.5-6 in ANF 4:291-2.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, III.1.6 in ANF 4:305.

¹⁰³ The subject of the will in Augustine is an exceedingly complex topic as it is so fundamental to his writing yet also so unsystematically dealt with. For a detailed framework of how Augustine understands the will, see Han-Luen Kantzer Komline, *Augustine on the Will: A Theological Account* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

¹⁰⁴ Augustine, *Concerning Two Souls* 10.14 in NPNF 4:102-3.

follows that he that is willing is free from compulsion, even if any one thinks himself compelled.”¹⁰⁵ In forming such a definition, Augustine initially intends to refute both Manichean dualism and to seat the responsibilities for one’s actions with the individual rather than allowing God to be considered culpable.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, responsibility for one’s action depends on her being able to choose it. “Wherefore whatever these souls do, if they do it by nature not by will, that is, if they are wanting in a movement of mind free both for doing and not doing, if finally no power of abstaining from their work is conceded to them; we cannot hold that the sin is theirs.”¹⁰⁷ In spite of this, however, Augustine increasingly qualifies and limits human freedom.¹⁰⁸

Augustine’s stance towards free will shifts away from claims of self-determination during the Pelagian controversy.¹⁰⁹ The essence of the controversy is found in Pelagius’s reaction to Augustine’s prayer, “Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt.”¹¹⁰ For Pelagius, that God would command something implies that the human is able to obey it. Thus, the first clause, “give what Thou commandest,” was nonsensical. Pelagius’s optimism regarding the capacity of human beings after the fall to obey God and choose the good did of course not negate the importance of grace. He agreed that grace aided human obedience, only denying that it out of necessity precedes obedience. In response to Pelagius, Augustine maintained that the fall had fundamentally impaired all of humanity. According to Levering, whereas previously Augustine had considered grace “a reward for human assent,” he comes to believe it to be sinful to assume that God’s foreknowledge of us is due to something worthy in us.¹¹¹ The monergistic understanding

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ The Manicheans, followers of Mani (ca. 216-276) espoused a dualistic worldview. They believed in an evil first principle and claimed that humans (as embodied creatures) are incapable of not sinning.

¹⁰⁷ Augustine, *Concerning Two Souls* 12.17 in NPNF 4:105.

¹⁰⁸ Jesse Couenhoven, “Augustine’s Rejection of the Free-Will Defence: an Overview of the Late Augustine’s Theodicy,” *Religious Studies* 43, no. 3 (2007): 280.

¹⁰⁹ Recent scholarship has sought to avoid over-simplification of the Pelagian position. Dominic Keech interprets the Pelagian controversy as an extension of the Origenist controversy, and thus a defense of Origen and Christian Platonism. See Dominic Keech, *The Anti-Pelagian Christology of Augustine of Hippo, 396-430* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). While Augustine’s treatment of the will extends well beyond his anti-Pelagian writings, it is the specter of this controversy in particular that haunts the discussions of free will and human participation in salvation in the West.

¹¹⁰ Augustine, *Confessions* 10.29.40 in NPNF 1:153.

¹¹¹ Matthew Levering, *Predestination: Theological and Biblical Paths* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 47-49.

of salvation he developed is evident in *On the Predestination of the Saints*, in which the gift of faith is only given by God. “Faith, then, as well as its beginning and its completion, is God’s gift; and let no one have any doubt whatever, unless he desires to resist the plainest sacred writings, that this gift is given to some, while to some it is not given.”¹¹²

John Rist correctly observes that for Augustine it is impossible to cleanly separate philosophy and theology. A “philosophical” question such as the freedom of the will is impossible to address without addressing theological questions such as the operation of grace.¹¹³ Indeed, it is perhaps not an exaggeration to say that the entire Western Christian tradition after Augustine struggles to coherently speak of the will purely philosophically. Rowan Greer observes that Augustine “introduces a novel distinction between ‘free will’ (*liberum arbitrium*) and ‘will’ (*voluntas*). He repeatedly uses the expression ‘the free choice of the will,’ and in this way treats the relations between the two terms as correlative with motive and act. That is, ‘will’ is a way of speaking of what motivates our ‘free choices.’”¹¹⁴ Though Augustine exhibits diverse and at times inconsistent opinions on the will even after his engagement with Pelagius, he persuasively holds in tension the apparent freedom of humans to choose for themselves and also the necessity of God’s grace for salvation. For theologians going forward, this tension would not prove easy to maintain. His lasting impression of sin as not simply an act of the will, but as an involuntary and unnatural act (in line with his understanding of evil itself as a privation of the good), allowed room for interpretation of the experience of human agency so long as God remained the effective cause of salvation.

2.1.2 Luther’s Context II: The Scholastics on Natural Capacity

Peter Lombard became aware of both Pelagian and semi-Pelagian inclinations through Augustine. He draws principally on two sources in the Augustinian corpus, the *Retractiones* and *De Haeresibus ad Quodvultdeum*, and uses them to present a succinct

¹¹² Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints* 16 in NPNF 5:506.

¹¹³ John M. Rist, “Augustine on Free Will and Predestination,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 20, no. 2 (October 1969): 420.

¹¹⁴ Rowan A. Greer, “Augustine’s Transformation of the Free Will Defence,” *Faith and Philosophy* 13, no. 4 (October 1996): 479.

image of Pelagianism. He gathers that the Pelagians taught that one could obtain salvation apart from the help of grace, that God rewards with grace according to merit, that humans are capable by their free will of avoiding sin (viz., by fulfilling the law), and that humans are not sinful from birth.¹¹⁵ Lombard rejects these teachings, but also proceeds to reject the teachings of the Manicheans and Jovinian.¹¹⁶ This is significant, because while the Pelagians attributed to the will significant agency in matters of salvation, Lombard sees the Manicheans and Jovinian as both denying it any agency whatsoever.¹¹⁷ In this context, Lombard takes the position that an individual always has the ability to sin or not, arguing that all these thinkers misrepresent (albeit in different ways) the condition of the human will and of human ability. In engaging them, Lombard address the question of *potentia hominis ex suis naturalibus*, namely, the extent of the human being's ability (*potentia*) to do good by his own powers (*ex suis naturalibus*), apart from grace.

At the time of Lombard's writing, there remained no significant consensus on the question of human beings' natural ability with respect to good works. Within the confines of dogmatic commitments that over the centuries the church had made to the necessity of grace and the existence of free will, there was still room for speculation. Those who thought that good works were possible considered them to be within man's potential *ex suis naturalibus*, but not as contributing to salvation. The latter group thought that the "good" performed by pagans was meritorious either in some temporal sense or had the potential to become spiritually meritorious subsequent to baptism. Among the early scholastics existed the idea that an act *de genere bono* could be performed based on a virtue, but not contribute to salvation. Some believed that such an act required a gift of grace that preceded justification.

Lombard describes the nature of sin and grace in terms of Augustine's "four states of man."¹¹⁸ In *On Rebuke and Grace*, Augustine had posited that a prelapsarian (*ante peccatum*) person possessed the ability to either sin or to not sin, but required a gift of grace to do good. In the postlapsarian, unregenerate state (*post peccatum, ante reparationem gratiae*), by contrast, a person is unable to avoid sin and does not possess

¹¹⁵ Peter Lombard, II *Sentences*, d. 28, cc. 1-2.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., d. 28, cc. 3-4.

¹¹⁷ Jovinian (died ca. 405), a critic of Christian asceticism attacked by Jerome and formally condemned by councils at Rome (390) and Milan (393), taught that the baptized cannot sin. See David Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy*, 93.

¹¹⁸ Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 122-128.

the gift of grace that would allow good works. The justified person (*post reparationem ante confirmationem*) has the potential, by the help of grace, to not sin. The eschatological, final state (*post confirmationem*) sees human beings as no longer able to sin, again by virtue of a divine gift of grace.¹¹⁹ To explain how the will remains free in all these states, Lombard drew a distinction between freedom from necessity, which can be applied to all four of Augustine's categories, and freedom from sin (*vera et bona libertas*), which only applies to the categories *post reparationem*.¹²⁰ It is this second type of freedom that is purely the result of grace, and Lombard identifies this freedom from sin (*libertas a peccato*) with the freedom to perform good works (*libertas ad bonum*).¹²¹

What follows in Lombard is a description of the grace that frees human beings to do good works. He distinguishes between a prevenient grace that prepares an individual's will to desire the good (*gratia operans*) and grace that assists in the performing of the good (*gratia cooperans*), citing Augustine's view that God both prepares and assists the will in doing good works.¹²² Landgraf notes that Lombard would not have subscribed to the idea of a grace that does not justify, an idea that arises only in later centuries.¹²³ McGrath similarly reminds that grace for the medieval theologian is not a disposition of God towards the human being but rather a "supernatural substance" infused into the soul.¹²⁴ Therefore, for Lombard both types of grace, the prevenient *gratia operans* and the subsequent *gratia cooperans*, may be characterized as justifying. The prevenient grace prepares the will for good works, and therefore justifying grace for Lombard necessarily precedes good works that are meritorious.¹²⁵ Given his indebtedness to Augustinian categories and definitions in his treatment of grace and its relationship to the human will, we can conclude that what Lombard brought to medieval Western theology was a confidently anti-Pelagian understanding of human agency and the role of works as they pertain to salvation. Lombard established an understanding of the relationship between

¹¹⁹ Lombard, II *Sentences*, d. 25, c. 6. Cf: Augustine, *Treatise on Rebuke and Grace* 33-35 in NPNF 5:471-91.

¹²⁰ Lombard, II *Sentences* d. 25. c. 8.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., d. 26. c. 1.

¹²³ Artur Michael Landgraf, *Dogmengeschichte der Frühscholastik (Die Gnadenlehre: Regensburg, 1952)*, 1:51.

¹²⁴ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 170.

¹²⁵ However, other non-meritorious (mundane) good works can be performed through free will alone. Thus, one can even possess knowledge of goodness before receiving the *gratia operans*, but such knowledge apart from the gift is not sufficient to obtain salvation.

works and salvation in which the human person has no natural ability to merit salvation apart from the help of an unmerited gift of grace.

Thomas Aquinas's (1225-1274) treatment of virtue and sin is of particular significance for understanding development of justification. Denis Janz argues that the most significant shift in the intervening years between Lombard and Aquinas was the emergence, first, of the idea of grace as a "supernatural habit," and, second, the conviction that possessing that grace was humanity's "supernatural end."¹²⁶ This shift seems to represent a natural progression in scholastic thought, since already in Lombard grace is understood not only as that which frees the will to good works but also as that which makes such works meritorious.¹²⁷ The gift of grace, in short, functions as a kind of gift that enables human beings to progress in virtue, such that they have an increasing potential to do God's will and to not sin, until finally no potential to sin exists any longer.

Janz thus identifies *habitus* as a category that is important for understanding the later stages of medieval theology, although it is not one that Luther will pick up on in his telling of justification. Aquinas relies heavily on Aristotle's categories of "potentiality" and "actuality" in referring to human ability. Brian Davies rightly understands Aquinas's use of the Latin *habitus* as signifying "disposition" rather than the rather innocuous translation of "habit."¹²⁸ One's own behavior, affections, and the like can be directed and trained for Aquinas, and he understands virtues as "habits" in this sense.¹²⁹ Aquinas further discusses the intellectual and appetitive relationships of virtue to the soul yet does not entirely surrender Augustinian perceptions of virtue to Aristotle. He upholds Augustine's characterization of virtue as "a good quality of the mind, by which we live righteously, of which no one can make bad use, which God works in us, without us."¹³⁰ This reverential deference to Augustine requires Aquinas to differentiate between his previously defined "natural" virtues and "infused virtues."¹³¹ While he follows Aristotle in holding that "naturally known principles of both knowledge and action" are trainable by the intellect (that is to say, subject to and submissive to free will), he insists with

¹²⁶ Denis Janz, *Luther and Late Medieval Thomism* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1983), 44.

¹²⁷ For a detailed exposition on this development, see Bernard Longeran, "Saint Thomas' Thought on *Gratia Operans*," in *Theological Studies* 3, no. 4 (December 1942): 533–578.

¹²⁸ Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 225.

¹²⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I-II.55.1.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, I-I, Q.55, A.4. This differs from Aristotle's opinion that the morality is inherent in the human beings.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* I-II.55.4.

Augustine that God alone is the “efficient cause” of the “theological” virtues, namely faith, hope, and love.¹³² Because it is these latter virtues that incline humanity to its supernatural end, which lies beyond its natural ability, they must be infused by God.¹³³

The question of whether man can do any good *ex suis naturalibus* is taken up by Aquinas first in his study of Lombard in which he affirms that humans have the capacity to do either good or evil. He does hold both that meritorious works (here meaning those helpful to salvation) are impossible without divine grace, and that God (as the primary cause of all good) is able to and does originate non-meritorious works in and among humans.¹³⁴ Along these same lines, in the *Summa Theologica* Aquinas suggests the necessity of grace for every morally good act proportionate to human nature. He does, however, ascribe to human natural ability certain virtuous tasks enumerated by Lombard, such as building a house, planting a vineyard, and having friends.¹³⁵

It is clear that Aquinas stresses both the priority of grace and its absolute gratuity. He teaches that the disposition of the will to accept the gift of grace is itself a gift, and that there is nothing that one can do to prepare oneself to receive it or to merit it. According to Davies, it is crucial to remember that for Aquinas God is not simply the primary cause of grace being received by a person, but its only cause. “In his view, grace is the result of God’s action in me drawing me to himself. It is not just a help to me acting on my own. It is where I am wholly the end product of what God is doing. And, for this reason, Aquinas insists that *only* God is the cause of grace.”¹³⁶

While remaining firmly committed to the priority of grace for any type of merit, Aquinas cautiously navigates the issue of free will as it cooperates with grace. The manner of cooperation is envisioned by Aquinas as a matter of congruency between the work of the Holy Spirit and the free will of the individual. Thus, while God is the source and immediate cause of both the disposition towards grace and the reception of grace, a “congruent” merit is attained by the individual by virtue of the fact that her free will has by its own power acted in a manner analogous to a will directly moved by the action of the Holy Spirit.¹³⁷ Here, too, however, Aquinas teaches that even this act of free will is

¹³² Ibid. I-II.62.1.

¹³³ Ibid. I-II.52.4.

¹³⁴ Lombard, II *Sentences*, d. 28, a. 1.

¹³⁵ This list of acts is borrowed from the anti-Pelagian *Hypognosticon*, which was at the time attributed to Augustine.

¹³⁶ Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 267.

¹³⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I-II.114.3.

the result of grace. Thus the intention of this doctrine is clearly not to teach that salvation is merit-based outside of God's action and influence, but rather that it is always the product of grace acting on the human will and assisting it. Aquinas here follows closely the reasoning of Augustine against Pelagius that "it is his own gifts that God crowns, not your merits."¹³⁸ Nevertheless, as Ozment points out, it is also important for Aquinas that "saving charity must be a voluntary act arising from a disposition man *could* call his own."¹³⁹ Thus, while grace originates from outside the individual, the grace that is received is not simply the manifestation of God's power working in her but affects the individual's capacity for righteousness. And this, in turn, would seem to imply that although the theological virtues are gifts of grace, they come to belong to the human individual properly.

Thus, while Aquinas takes the reality of sin seriously, the introduction of the Aristotelian categories into his anthropology envisages a humanity whose nature is not so damaged by the fall as to be incapable of being improved by proper inclining of the will. Jennifer Herdt describes this inclining: "Reason and will are thus formed in tandem through habituation; the will must learn to conform reliably to reason's grasp of the good."¹⁴⁰ Insofar as Aquinas acknowledges this human potential, his anthropology stands in tension with the Augustinian perception of postlapsarian human incapacity for good – that the human is a slave of sin (*servus peccati*).

Crucially, according to Aquinas, whatever the incapacity of the human person *ex suis naturalibus* in performing good works, the grace afforded to help the individual is such as to enable her to fulfill the requirements of the divine law. This is an important point for Aquinas, who views the law as that which dictates how humans progress to their final end, which is perfection and beatitude.¹⁴¹ While Aquinas inserts from Aristotle an understanding of sin as that which is contrary to the dictates of reason, he holds as well to Augustine's understanding of sin as that which is against the divine law.¹⁴² In presenting

¹³⁸ Augustine, *On Free Will and Grace*, 15 in NPNF 5:450.

¹³⁹ Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 31.

¹⁴⁰ Jennifer Herdt, *Putting on Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 25.

¹⁴¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I-II.21.1.

¹⁴² "Original sin is the privation of original justice, and besides this, the inordinate disposition of the parts of the soul. Consequently, it is not a pure privation, but a corrupt habit." Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I-II.82.1.

this dual conception of sin, Aquinas addresses the duality of human existence, speaking of sin as it relates to both (natural) human reason and (revealed) divine law. Although God is the origin of human reasoning, after the fall this reasoning is affected by sin. It fails to incline towards the good according to the “original justice” of the human person, in which her actions are rightly subordinated to her intellect, and that, in turn, to the will of God.¹⁴³ Aquinas holds that the law cannot be fulfilled without grace, but, again, differentiates between those acts which can be performed by free will (albeit without merit), and those which are considered meritorious because, by grace, they can be fulfilled according to God’s intent (that is, for the perfection of humanity and the attainment of beatitude). As will be seen, the futility of the human attempt to perform good works in order to fulfill the law is a frequently overlooked commonality between Luther and Aquinas. While Aquinas understands the “law of the New Testament” as the Holy Spirit himself, and a law of freedom, if this is forgotten, then the “new law” given by Christ will create just as many obstacles to human salvation as the law of the Old Covenant. Without grace to make his efforts meritorious, the human being’s failing inclinations will confound his attempt to do good, and his motivation apart from grace remains corrupt.¹⁴⁴ Luther’s assessment of this characteristic of the law (and his consequent rejection of such a concept as a “law of the New Testament”) will follow.

Luther rejected this characterization of the Gospel as “new law.” This rejection was shaped by his context in the scholastic school of the *via moderna*, whose roots lie in the thought of the English Franciscan William of Ockham (c. 1280-1349). The exact character of Luther’s relationship to Ockhamism and the Nominalist school nearly synonymous with Ockham’s name is the subject of much discussion, and an exhaustive review of it is beyond the scope of this survey. These three designations – Ockhamism, the *via moderna*, and nominalism – are often used interchangeably in Luther scholarship, perhaps misleadingly; moreover, elements of the *via moderna* as it existed in the sixteenth century have been anachronistically attributed to the fourteenth-century school of Ockham.

¹⁴³ Ibid. I-II.95.1.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. Ia IIae, Q107, A.4.

In a time of what Warren Quanbeck identifies as “eroding skepticism” regarding the foundations of human knowledge, Ockham proposed a new epistemology.¹⁴⁵ The judgment of the Nominalists was that universal concepts (e.g., “humanity”) are nothing more than names (*nomina*) used to designate classes of particular objects (whence the derivation of the term “*nominales*” for members of this school). This determination was made in opposition to realists like Aquinas and other luminaries of the *via antiqua*, who considered universals as having substance *ante res* (i.e., prior to individual, existent things). Thus, for Ockham, there is no “common essence” from which particulars arise.

In the context of theology, his “razor,” insisting on maximum parsimony in explaining phenomena, severed the older scholastic synthesis of faith and reason, which had allowed for rational knowledge of God apart from direct divine revelation. Thus, that which theologians know to have been revealed by God need not be assumed knowable by natural reason as well. Ockham was convinced that human reason could not come to any certain knowledge of God (i.e., faith) without revelation, because the human will is not inclined toward God by nature. Theology is then entirely an enterprise of faith, and not at all of scientific or natural knowledge.¹⁴⁶ Ockham correspondingly stressed the authority of the Bible and its inspiration, which the theologian is capable of engaging with her natural knowledge after having been infused with faith: “Faith makes theology accessible to natural knowledge...and makes natural knowledge accessible to theology.”¹⁴⁷ Ockham’s insistence on the primacy of scripture mirrors Luther’s own later convictions, writing that one need not believe what is not contained in the scriptures. He also taught that the infusion of faith that allowed intellectual assent to the revelation of the scriptures is a supernatural virtue – a *habitus* created in the soul at baptism. Faith is then firstly a gift of grace by which then the will may “virtuously demand” the intellect to believe what has been revealed to it.¹⁴⁸

The weight of Augustine’s anti-Pelagian legacy made it a matter of theological principle in the West that merit cannot cause grace, and that salvation cannot result

¹⁴⁵ Warren Quanbeck, “Luther’s Early Exegesis,” in *Luther Today. Martin Luther Lectures*, vol. 1, ed. Gerhard L. Belgum, (Decorah, Iowa: Luther College Press, 1957), 42.

¹⁴⁶ Harry Klocker, “Ockham: A Note on Knowledge on Certitude,” *Ilfiff Review* 40 (Winter 1983), 41-43.

¹⁴⁷ Gordon Leff, *William of Ockham: The Metamorphosis of Scholastic Discourse* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), 358.

¹⁴⁸ William of Ockham, *Quodlibetal Questions* IV, q. 6.

without infused grace. Recognizing that the economy of salvation nevertheless seemed to require particular human acts (e.g., fulfilling the ethical requirements of the law, participation in the sacramental life of the church, etc.), Ockham developed the concept of a covenantal relationship (*pactum*), in which God has freely bound himself to bestow grace upon human beings, provided that they fulfill certain preconditions. This seemed to assure both the priority of God in supplying grace and God's faithfulness in engaging the human will in the process of salvation. In this way, good works only have an influence on salvation because God has previously established a covenant by which God wills to reward them. Ockham's system depends on human beings being free moral agents, able to willingly adhere to divine law.¹⁴⁹ However, good works that are rewarded according to the *pactum* are not meritorious for eternal life. Only good works done in faith, that is, by human beings who have already received an infusion of grace that cannot be earned, are genuinely meritorious. Good works performed under the *pactum* (i.e., apart from the infusion of grace) are understood as habits which one can attain by one's own powers. While they are not objectively worthy of eternal life, they are, under the terms of the *pactum*, rewarded by God with congruent merit (*meritum de congruo*).¹⁵⁰ Ockham thus distanced himself from Pelagianism by specifying that "Pelagius held that grace is not in fact required in order to have eternal life.... but that an act elicited in a purely natural state merits eternal life condignly. I, on the other hand, claim that such an act is meritorious only through God's absolute power accepting it [as such]."¹⁵¹ That grace and merit converge in such a way reflects Ockham's (Augustinian) commitment to the principle of divine sovereignty, but at the cost of significant ambiguity whether or not the human being can prepare herself to receive grace *ex suis naturalibus*.

This ambiguity resulting from Ockham's *pactum* is apparent in the theology of Gabriel Biel (c. 1410-1495). Biel was professor of theology in Tübingen and an influential figure in the transmission of Ockham's philosophy to Luther. Although a teacher according to the *via moderna*, Biel rejected some tenets of Ockhamism, resulting in a theology with a complex pedigree. For example, Biel agreed with Aquinas against

¹⁴⁹ Ockham, *Quodlibetal Questions* III, 14, 15.

¹⁵⁰ Here we see a distinction between condign and congruent merit in Aquinas: From an ethical perspective, the reward given on account of a condign merit can be considered obligatory because established obligations have been met. In the case of congruent merit, no reward is obligatory because there has been no expectation of it. Thus reward for the latter depends on the giver's graciousness rather than on justice and fidelity.

¹⁵¹ Ockham, *Quodlibetal Questions* VI, q. 1. art. 1.

Ockham that original sin entails both the absence of original righteousness in postlapsarian humanity and also the corruption of fallen human nature by concupiscence.¹⁵² As to whether the human being can prepare herself to receive grace, Biel adopts the position of the early Franciscan theologian Alexander of Hales, according to which all people have known God in some way and have sought from God knowledge of faith. He also agrees with Scotus that humans are capable of loving God without the assistance of grace (i.e., *ex suis naturalibus*), teaching that this love of God is deemed meritorious through God's generosity in the *pactum* and thus merits a reception of congruent grace. Additionally, Biel emphasizes that this movement towards God is properly motivated by love of God, rather than fear of God: having repented out of love of God, the individual becomes worthy of eternal life through a subsequently received infused habit of grace by which the individual is joined to God.

Biel's optimism regarding the human potential to love God *ex suis naturalibus* led him to the conclusion of Ockham's *pactum*: Biel supposed that because the human being is by her own free will able to love God above all else and to avoid sin, God must grant merit *de congruo*. He writes:

By removing the obstacle [by which we fail to receive grace] and by a good movement toward God elicited by the power of free will, the soul can merit the first grace *de congruo*. The proof for this is as follows: God accepts the act of a person who does what is in his power as a basis for the bestowal of the first grace, not because of any obligation injustice, but because of his generosity. Now when the soul removes the obstacle by ceasing from the act of sin...it does what is in its power. Therefore God, because of his liberality, accepts this act of the removal of the obstacle and of the good movement toward himself and infuses grace into the soul.¹⁵³

Here Biel conjoins anthropology and soteriology by making the question of the human being's natural ability critical to justification in a way different from Ockham's understanding of *meritum de congruo*. Whereas for Ockham the gift of grace through the

¹⁵² Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 122, 130.

¹⁵³ Biel, *Collectorium*, II Sent., d. 27, q. 1, a. 2, cnoel. 4 (K) quoted in Harry J. McSorley, *Luther: Right or Wrong? An Ecumenical Theological Study of Luther's Major Work, "The Bondage of the Will"* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1969), 200f.

pactum remains free, Biel interprets the scholastic axiom *facienti quod in se est Deus non denegat gratiam* to mean that God is *obliged* to give grace to the individual who avoids sin. In this way, he posits a causal relationship between justifying grace and a person's natural capacity and will. Biel takes Aquinas's language of the *gratia gratis data* (which in Aquinas is nearly indistinguishable from God's primarily causality in all human action) and appeals to Thomas as supporting his own view. Oberman summarizes: "when the term *gratia gratis data* is used [by Biel], it is thoroughly naturalized and barely distinguishable from man's natural endowments."¹⁵⁴

2.2.1 Luther's Early Writing

Luther's early lectures display his familiarity with scholastic treatments of theology and philosophy and the methods of the Nominalists. Both his earliest extant sermons and his marginalia on Lombard's *Sentences* and similar texts likewise demonstrate his indebtedness to the *via moderna* and his early awareness of the Ockhamists' theological positions. At the time of his lectures on the *Sentences* (1509-10), Luther conforms to the opinions of Lombard regarding the necessity of grace for a human being to accomplish a good work, and the inability of the human being to avoid sin and fulfill the law without the help of grace. McSorley identifies Luther's understanding of merit at this time as "fundamentally Catholic."¹⁵⁵ *Ex suis naturalibus* the human being cannot prepare herself to receive grace apart from the gift of grace. Thus, Luther's notes from this period reflect the Augustinian anthropology promulgated by Lombard himself, in which God "crowns his own gifts" when rewarding human beings.¹⁵⁶ This suggests that Luther's intellectual indebtedness to the *via moderna* at this point in his career is limited, but the question is difficult to answer with certainty. McSorley warns that one should not expect much self-sufficient thinking in Luther as a young student. This being the case, the extent to which he agreed with or rejected Biel's particular theology at this early stage is unlikely to be apparent from his writings from this period. It is noteworthy, however, that his earliest surviving sermon suggests some capacity for contributing to one's own

¹⁵⁴ Heiko A. Oberman, *The Dawn of Reformation: Essays in late Medieval and Early Reformational Thought* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 1992), 138-139.

¹⁵⁵ Harry J. McSorley, *Luther: Right or Wrong? An Ecumenical Theological Study of Luther's Major Work, "The Bondage of the Will"* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1969), 219.

¹⁵⁶ "Nil deus in nobis praeter sua dona coronat." WA 9:72, 27.

salvation,¹⁵⁷ and that in another early sermon, Luther says that free will can “by itself be sufficient for salvation.”¹⁵⁸ This seeming belief in the human being’s natural ability to remove any obstacle to grace arguably demonstrates some proclivity towards Biel’s type of nominalism, a position which in his “*Resolutiones*” on the Leipzig disputation (1519) he professed to be among his previous errors.

However, where McSorley warns not to look for too much self-sufficient thinking in this early Luther, Volker Leppin identifies influences leading to a gradual transformation in Luther’s use of medieval hermeneutics and increasing orientation towards insights into justification.¹⁵⁹ Among these, the sermons of Johannes Tauler, a German mystic, impressed on Luther the importance of repentance in the Christian life. Likewise, the influence of Augustine’s theology in the monastery appears to have influenced his reading of Paul early on. Leppin argues that much of Luther’s reform was not a protest against the theologians that came before him, but rather was thus rooted in medieval piety and mysticism such as had been recommended to him by his superior, Johann von Staupitz.¹⁶⁰ In Tauler one finds a truly passive righteousness taught, in which humans bring nothing acceptable to their relationship with God. Even the desire for God is framed as not pious work but properly as the dereliction of selfish concerns.¹⁶¹ Luther takes careful note of this concept that one ought not to put their trust in their own works. Likewise in the university, Luther’s openness to the idea that one might not be able to keep the commandments of God by her own strength is demonstrated as early as September 1516, when Bartholomäus Bernhardi chose as his topic this very idea, taken from Luther’s lectures.

During this period of Luther’s transition into a theologian in his own right, a significant marker is his lectures on Romans, which he gave 1515-1516. This was Luther’s second exegetical series, the first having been his *Dictata super Psalterium*, beginning in 1513. Both lectures are generally taken to hint at Luther’s nascent reformational concerns, while not entirely eschewing his earlier Ockhamist views.¹⁶² The

¹⁵⁷ This sermon on Matthew 7:12 from between 1510 and 1512 says that the “talent” given to us is our potential (“*possibilitas nostra*”). WA 4:591, 31.

¹⁵⁸ “...*liberum arbitrium...solum sufficere posset ad salute.*” WA 4:31, 11f.

¹⁵⁹ Volker Leppin, *Martin Luther: A Late Medieval Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 19-31.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁶¹ Volker Leppin, “Mysticism and Justification,” in *The Medieval Luther*, ed. Christine Helmer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 185f.

¹⁶² Steven Ozment engages this topic in *Idem*, *Homo Spiritualis* (E.J. Brill, 1969), 87-216.

subject matter of Romans, however, makes apparent Luther's evolving understanding of human ability and the role of the will. The dominant motif of Luther's Romans lectures is the question of righteousness (*justitia*). Luther sets out to contrast the *justitia Dei* and the *justitia carnis*:

The chief aim of the Apostle in this epistle is to break down all human righteousness and wisdom, and, on the other hand, to establish, increase and magnify sins and follies which do not exist (that is, we do not recognize their existence because we are deceived as to our righteousness), to make us know that they do exist, that they are many and great, and that to destroy them completely, Christ and His righteousness are, indeed, necessary for us.¹⁶³

Luther understands Romans as demonstrating the true nature of human beings, particularly the struggle between God's righteousness and that of the flesh. He determines that God does not desire to save humans by their own righteousness (*justitia domestica*), but "through a righteousness and a wisdom from without (*extranea*).” Luther argues that without God's help, human beings are only capable of sin by nature. The “good” that one accomplishes without the help of grace is not motivated by will for the good, but out of self-love.¹⁶⁴

Luther here limits the term “good” to that which merits salvation – what Augustine refers to as the *vera bona*.¹⁶⁵ While he does not deny the existence of civil righteousness that human beings can affect apart from grace, this is distinct from “goodness” and “righteousness” as theological categories.¹⁶⁶ In short, he draws a distinction between such a civil state and the state of the human being *coram Deo*. The phrases *coram Deo* and *apud Deum* occur frequently in the lectures and provide a point of reference for Luther's understanding of the epistle's purpose and doctrine. The individual acting by her own righteousness, the righteousness of the flesh, is for Luther incapable of not sinning apart from faith. However, Luther's understanding of why human beings after the fall cannot avoid sin *ex suis naturalibus* demonstrates a critical shift in his frame of

¹⁶³ LW 25:15.

¹⁶⁴ “...*Deus Impios etiam in bonis operibus sinit peccare.*” WA 56:502, 24.

¹⁶⁵ Harry J. McSorley, *Luther: Right or Wrong? An Ecumenical Theological Study of Luther's Major Work, "The Bondage of the Will"* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1969), 68-72.

¹⁶⁶ WA 56:234, 10ff.

reference concerning these themes from the position developed previously. As demonstrated by his employment of the terms *coram Deo* and *apud Deo*, Luther's Romans lectures now show an interest in the relational aspect of the human being vis-à-vis God. Nature is not being engaged conceptually as a self-contained substance, as was typical in scholastic theology. Instead, its status is constituted entirely by its relationship to God. Human nature is therefore corrupt to the extent that its relationship with God is compromised, and "sin" is a relational posture *coram Deo*. Luther does not entertain the question of the human being's inability to avoid sin in the same way that Aquinas had (viz., by positing the potential for development of supernatural habits), because in his view to be able to incline one's self towards particular actions and develop a *habitus* does not change the state of the human's being. The unregenerate person's actions all flow out of his sinful nature.¹⁶⁷

2.2.2 Luther's Break with the *Via Moderna*: An Increasingly Bound Will

Luther's evolving understanding of the human being's natural ability in the mid-1510s is grounded in an anthropology increasingly removed from the commitment to philosophical universals characteristic of the scholastics. Correspondingly, they appear increasingly pessimistic. Luther's *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* (1517) is unique in that rather than critiquing scholastic methodology (as was not uncommon among his contemporaries), Luther levied an attack on what he understood to be errors in doctrine. It is not surprising that this re-evaluation of scholastic theology follows closely behind his first extensive exegetical works. The disputation begins as a rhetorical defense of Augustine against accusations of exaggeration in responding to Pelagius. This theological emphasis on Augustine, particularly in regard to anthropology and the nature of grace and sin, sets Luther's critiques apart. Luther does not distinguish between the Thomists and devotees of the *via moderna* like Biel in his criticisms, but instead proceeds to critique what he takes to be scholastic doctrine as a whole, maintaining a position of the fallen human being's radical slavery to sin. He thus rejects any claim that human nature has the potential to do good by its own power. He does not consider the fallen human being to be positioned in such a way that she can choose between sin and grace. Instead, he adopts a perspective in which grace "does not 'elevate' man's natural efforts

¹⁶⁷ McSorley, *Luther: Right or Wrong*, 68-72.

(which are motivated by self-love), but it brings about a ‘new creation’ in which the natural man ‘dies.’”¹⁶⁸ For Luther, far from human beings choosing between sin and grace, it is the case that either sin or grace always dominates the whole of the human being – including especially her choosing – so that to suggest that an individual can will herself towards either sin or grace underestimates the power of both.¹⁶⁹

Luther does not, however, reject the claims of the scholastics in general, or of the *via moderna* in particular, entirely. For example, even well after his break with Rome, in his brief academic *Disputation Concerning Man* (1536), he accepts certain basic definitions, agreeing with Aquinas and Scotus that the human being is a rational animal, composed of both body and soul, and that reason not only separates the human being from other animals but also is to be counted “the most important and highest in rank among all things, and in comparison with other things in his life, the best, and something divine.”¹⁷⁰ Further, he maintains the longstanding view that by virtue of this natural union of body and soul, the human being in herself occupies a type of liminal space. That is, being proper to both the spiritual and the material world, the human being is not a bystander to the cosmic drama, but rather the stage on which it is played out and on which God accomplishes his purposes: “The whole creation which is now subject to vanity [Rom. 8:20] is for God the material for its future glorious form.”¹⁷¹

Thus, in consideration of basic ontology, Luther does not depart significantly from the scholastic understanding of the human being. However, he finds the scholastics’ philosophical assessment of the human condition significantly lacking. He writes:

In spite of the fact that it [the soul] is of such great majesty, it does not know itself *a priori*, but only *a posteriori*. Therefore, if philosophy or reason itself is compared with theology, it will appear that we know almost nothing about man, inasmuch as we seem scarcely to perceive his material cause sufficiently.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ Janz, *Luther and late Medieval Thomism*, 26.

¹⁶⁹ “That the whole man and every man, whether he be king, lord, servant, wise, just, and richly endowed with the good things of this life, nevertheless is and remains guilty of sin and death, under the power of Satan.” LW 34:139.

¹⁷⁰ LW 34:137.

¹⁷¹ LW 34:139.

¹⁷² LW 34:137.

Here, one might argue, is evidence of Ockham's influence on Luther in regard to the necessity of revelation. While natural knowledge (which in his *Disputation Concerning Man* is equated with philosophy) successfully identifies the nature of the human being in ways that can be abstracted and universalized, theology denies that the abstract human being exists. Luther thus retains the Nominalist conceptual apparatuses of the *via moderna*, while rejecting older scholastic ideas about universals. Rather he sees theology as both identifying the particular concrete state of the human beings, and as defining them relationally.

Luther's divergence from the scholastic tradition in this regard manifests his insistence that human beings be considered concretely and relationally. While the scholastics understood the powers of the human soul as operating naturally and somewhat autonomously, for Luther the soul never exercises its abilities in isolation. Rather, it is relationship that defines human nature and its status before God. Whatever the capacity of the human will, its operation is determined by the influence of some power beyond itself. In this way, as Lohse describes, he considers human ability "existentially within the context of a total anthropology."¹⁷³ Luther emphasizes the contingency of human beings and the constant active sustaining of all created being by God, thereby denying to humans any intrinsic properties by which they might sustain themselves. "Not even the so-called natural gifts and activities [of human beings] are to be understood apart from this activity of the Spirit."¹⁷⁴ These natural gifts are rather identified as being just as contingent upon God's activity as anything else in the created order. In doing so, Luther makes it impossible to define or discuss human ability and capacity apart from the human being's relationship to God. "Being" was upheld by the scholastics as the basic philosophical category, although not applied to creatures in just the same way as it was to God. By contrast, Luther insisted that biblical teaching made it impossible to affirm that humans have any being in or of themselves. To categorize and discuss both God and humans with regard to their manner of being is thus inherently misleading, creating a distinction according to which God risks being conceived of as simply a human being "writ large." Rather than having being in themselves, humans have their being in God; it is therefore their relationship to God in whom they have their being that defines them. "Genuine

¹⁷³ Bernard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 47.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 236

metaphysics would have to proceed from the principle that creatures are creatures which dare not be absolutized in their being. They are not self-contained.”¹⁷⁵

For Luther, then, God is defined according to God’s absolute independence and freedom, and the human being is defined according to her absolute dependence on God.¹⁷⁶ This relational definition encompasses more than the traditional scholastic understanding of human beings as body and soul, and their not existing in and of themselves. Instead, Luther identifies human beings strictly in terms of relationship to God, which concretely always takes one of two forms: either rebellion against God or submission to God. The state of living in rebellion he calls living in the flesh, and the state of living in submission to God he calls living in the spirit. In *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520), Luther explores this distinction as he develops the concept of justification by faith. He does so in part by defining two modes of being, spirit and flesh, as simultaneous realities in a paradoxical Christian life. He writes:

Man has a two-fold nature, a spiritual and a bodily one. According to the spiritual nature, which men refer to as the soul, he is called a spiritual, inner, or new man. According to the bodily nature, which men refer to as flesh, he is called carnal, outward, or old man...[B]ecause of this diversity of nature Scriptures assert contradictory things concerning the same man, since the two men in the same flesh contradict each other, “for the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh,” according to Galatians 5 [:17].¹⁷⁷

Because these modes of existence encompass the whole human being, the fleshy individual has no ability to liberate herself by free will from her own state of sin.

Theodor Dieter writes of this as not just a point of divergence with the *via moderna*, but perhaps more significantly an escalation in the way Luther understands what is expected of the will in fulfilling God’s law.¹⁷⁸ For Luther, the commandment to

¹⁷⁵ Walther von Loewenich, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976), 69-70.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 150ff.

¹⁷⁷ LW 31:344.

¹⁷⁸ Theodor Dieter, “Luther as Late Medieval Theologian,” in *Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology*, ed. Robert Kolb et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 36-37.

love God with all one's heart and mind and strength requires the entire human person to be always and entirely engaged in such love. This is, of course, for him demonstrably impossible as sinful desires remain, even in the believer. In his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*, Luther thus attacks Biel's claim that it possible for humans to fulfill this commandment *ex suis naturalibus*. However, Luther and Biel are imagining differently what is required in order to fulfill the commandment. Such an "extreme" measure of love would be outside of the human's natural ability for Biel as well. Rather, he imagines that to "love God over all" is an act of the will that does not necessarily include the whole person.¹⁷⁹ Whereas Biel imagines that love such as the commandment requires is an act of the will, Luther cannot imagine an act of volition in isolation from the whole human person. Further, if grace is required in order to fulfill the law (with which Biel would agree), then the will cannot be free.

2.2.3 Luther's Nascent Hamartiology

Luther's anthropology as it emerges in the late 1510s and early 1520s thus entails the rejection of scholastic inclinations to identify sin according to the quality of a human work, that is, as the condition that prevented works from being meritorious. For the scholastics this sinful condition deprived humanity of original justice, disordering the relationship in which human reason was subject to God, the lower powers of the human being subject to her reason, and the body subject to the soul.¹⁸⁰ In this condition, "the good of the natural inclination...is diminished by sin...but is not entirely destroyed."¹⁸¹ Luther instead understood "sin" as a state of being that describes the whole person and not just her works. This state is one of "unbelief, the lack of trust in God, the absence of love for God...the desire to set oneself in place of God, not allowing God to be one's God."¹⁸² Luther emphasizes the complete effect of sin on the human person. The

¹⁷⁹ Though, as Dieter points out, Biel has previously defined the account of the great commandment in Matthew 22:37-8 to include the use of one's physical body in service of God.

¹⁸⁰ "The punishment of original sin is that human nature is left to itself, and deprived of original justice: and consequently, all the penalties which result from this defect in human nature." Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II.7.7.

¹⁸¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II.85.4.

¹⁸² Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 250.

intellectual powers and the will of human beings are completely under the power of sin, so that human desires are naturally directed away from rather towards God:

Since these things stand firm and that most beautiful and most excellent of all creatures, which reason is even after sin, remains under the power of the devil, it must still be concluded that the whole of man and every man...is and remains guilty of sin and death, under the power of Satan.¹⁸³

Luther considers these natural inclinations, the nature of “the flesh,” to be such that human beings have “neither correct precept nor good will.”¹⁸⁴ However, despite its comprehensive effects, sin does not destroy human nature as understood ontologically in terms of the standard scholastic definitions. Thus, the rational powers of the soul are not destroyed, but rather corrupted. Nevertheless, when Luther refers to these being “under the power of Satan,” he underscores that the control exercised over the human being’s will is not her own. For Luther, the severity of sin dictates that there is no potential to do good *ex suis naturalibus* in the human person.

If the higher abilities of the soul are so corrupted by sin, Luther concludes that knowledge of God is only possible by faith and the gift of grace. As he writes in his *Disputation Concerning Man*, “those who say that natural things have remained untainted after the fall philosophize impiously in opposition to theology.” This thesis is immediately abutted by an assertion that “the same is true of those who say that a man ‘in doing what is in him’ is able to merit grace and eternal life.”¹⁸⁵

2.3.1 Luther’s Mature Understanding of Human Capacity

Luther’s mature assessment of the potential of the human will is fleshed out in his engagement with the great Dutch humanist, Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536). Although a canon regular of Saint Augustine, his disinclination for clerical duties, combined with his skill in Latin and reputation as a scholar, were such that he received a dispensation from priestly obligations that permitted him to accept a post as secretary to

¹⁸³ LW 34:139.

¹⁸⁴ LW 31:11.

¹⁸⁵ LW 34:139.

the bishop of Cambrai and later continue his studies at the Universities of Paris and Cambridge. Despite Erasmus's disengagement from the religious life, his experience of the abuses and general ignorance of the clergy contributed to some sympathy for Reformation causes. As the Reformation gained momentum, however, Erasmus endeavored to remain independent in an increasingly partisan atmosphere, writing primarily in Latin and Greek and avoiding popular engagement. Although he wrote defending Luther's piety and his teaching against those who had rarely read for themselves what he wrote, as a humanist, Erasmus's concern was primarily for the integrity of scholarship and a relative freedom in education.¹⁸⁶

As Erasmus sought to distance himself from heretics, he became less sympathetic towards Luther following the debate at Leipzig in July 1519, where Luther did not repudiate the charge of his being a Hussite. Moreover, he became concerned with the effect that Luther's outspokenness would have on church and society.¹⁸⁷ Luther appealed to him in a letter of April 1524, "I beg that meanwhile, if you can do nothing else, you will remain a spectator of the conflict...that you publish no book against me, as I shall write none against you."¹⁸⁸ Despite this appeal, Erasmus attacked Luther's views in his polemic *Discourses or Comparisons on Free Will* in September of that same year.

The subject is one on which Erasmus genuinely disagreed with Luther. The issue of free will was for Erasmus a peripheral one, which could be debated dispassionately while demonstrating to observers that he had not given himself over to the Reformation. By contrast (and in line with Luther's understanding of the pervasive effects of sin, as discussed above), it was a pivotal matter for Luther.¹⁸⁹ At Heidelberg Luther had called "free will" something that exists "in name only"¹⁹⁰ Likewise, he said that all human actions are damnable unless done through the power of God.¹⁹¹ But Erasmus's *Discourses or Comparisons on Free Will* is a response in large part to the position Luther laid out in his *Assertio*, in which he had written:

¹⁸⁶ E.g., in a letter to Elector Frederick of Saxony, found in Preserved Smith, *Luther's Correspondence and other Contemporary Letters* (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Publication Society, 1918), 1:179-181.

¹⁸⁷ Gottfried G. Krodel, "Luther, Erasmus and Henry VIII," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 53 (1962): 74.

¹⁸⁸ Smith, *Luther's Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters*, 2:230.

¹⁸⁹ Luther referred to it in reply as "my jugular."

¹⁹⁰ LW 31:40.

¹⁹¹ LW 31:246-7.

I was wrong in saying that free choice before grace is a reality only in name. I should have said simply: free choice is in reality a fiction, or a name without reality. For no one has it in his own power to think a good or bad thought, but everything (as Wycliff's article condemned at Constance rightly teaches) happens by absolute necessity.¹⁹²

Erasmus takes issue with the word "necessity," maintaining instead that God is capable of acting on and affecting anything but chooses not to do so, as the scholastics had taught.¹⁹³ Erasmus argues along traditional scholastic lines, supposing a metaphysic of the "natural" and the "supernatural" rather than Luther's preferred dualism of "spirit" and "flesh." In other words, Erasmus's focus was on God's determination to act or not in a certain way, while Luther's interest was in the divide between flesh and spirit within the human being that, in his view, made fallen human actions sinful as a matter of necessity. Luther accentuates this point when in his response to the *Diatribes* he writes, "This is the cardinal issue between us, the point on which everything in this controversy turns. For what we are doing is to inquire what free choice can do, what it has done to it, and what is its relations to the grace of God."¹⁹⁴

Erasmus discloses his position at the beginning of his *Diatribes*. He notes that the majority of the church fathers do not support Luther's opinion regarding free will, even though he knows that "Luther does not acknowledge the authority of any writer... but only listens to the canonical Scriptures."¹⁹⁵ Regarding the teaching of the Scriptures, however, Erasmus casts doubt on Luther's interpretation over that of the church fathers. "If it is so clear, why have so many outstanding men in so many centuries been blind and in a matter of such importance?"¹⁹⁶

How can it be believed that for more than thirteen hundred years [the Holy Spirit] would have concealed this error in his Church and not have found anybody among

¹⁹² Gordan E. Rupp and Philip S. Watson, *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 13.

¹⁹³ The word "necessity" is absent from the German edition of Luther's *Assertio*. See WA 7:446.

¹⁹⁴ LW 33:35.

¹⁹⁵ Rupp, *Luther and Erasmus*, 42.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

so many saintly men worthy to be inspired with the knowledge of what these people claim to be the chief doctrine of the whole gospel?¹⁹⁷

According to Erasmus, there is a consensus among the fathers and the scholastics in counting free will as one of the natural abilities of the soul, akin to reason. Like reason, free will was thought to be a quality weakened and corrupted by sin, but not lost entirely. Erasmus does not pretend, however, that there is agreement even among the scholastics as to the exact capacity of the will and its nature. He believes that the human being retains some capacity after the fall to know and obey God, with the soul able to lean towards either the carnal or towards the spiritual. He defines free choice (*arbitrium*) with this parity in mind. “By free choice in this place we mean a power of the human will by which a man can apply himself to the things which lead to eternal salvation, or turn away from them.”¹⁹⁸ By offering this definition, Erasmus attempts to avoid the appearance of Pelagianism. Indeed, Erasmus did not set out to identify precisely what the role and capacity of the will was. As Luther had categorically denied it any role at all in achieving salvation, he only had to demonstrate that it had some such role. “In the beginning and at the end of the process of salvation stood God’s action, but in between human beings also contributed something.”¹⁹⁹

Erasmus is acutely concerned with maintaining a moderate position, one that neither suggests Pelagianism, nor tends towards the opposite extreme of determinism that he associates with Luther. He writes, “After his battle with Pelagius, Augustine became less just toward free choice than he had before. Luther on the other hand, who had previously allowed something to free choice, is now carried so far in the heat of his defense as to destroy it entirely.”²⁰⁰ Volker Leppin notes that the question for Erasmus is one of God’s consistency if not God’s righteousness.²⁰¹ Not unlike Pelagius’s issue with the logic of God commanding something that he must grant, Erasmus wonders why God would instruct his people to repent if they had no such ability. It is in both navigating the

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 46.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 47.

¹⁹⁹ Walther von Loewenich, *Martin Luther: The Man and His Work* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), 268.

²⁰⁰ Rupp, *Luther and Erasmus*, 90.

²⁰¹ Volker Leppin, “Deus absconditus und Deus revelatus: Transformationen mittelalterliche Theologie in der Gotteslehre von ‘De servo arbitrio’,” *Berliner Theologische Zeitschrift* 22 (2005): 56-7.

divide between salvation by grace alone and salvation by works, and in comparing the seemingly inconsistent witness of scriptural texts concerning the freedom of the will, that Erasmus presents a hybrid of the two options. He proposes the following: “these passages, which seem to be in conflict with one another, are easily brought into harmony if we join the striving of our will with the assistance of divine grace.”²⁰² Erasmus imagines the will as *synergos*, a “co-worker” that “cooperates with the action of grace.”²⁰³ Such cooperation is, moreover, itself made possible by a gift of grace, redirecting the corrupted human will towards God. Erasmus even grants that grace is “itself sufficient for all things and has no need of the assistance of human will.”²⁰⁴ Nevertheless, he considers the weight of evidence to suggest that God’s self-determination is to engage the will in a cooperative manner to work salvation in the individual. Inevitably the underlying continuity of thought between the scholastics and Erasmus is that meriting salvation is a task proper to the human being. Like the scholastics, he distinguishes between merit *de congruo* and *de condigno*, and he thinks of the gospel as evangelical counsels to aid in fulfillment of the law.

Luther’s response to Erasmus sets out immediately to demonstrate the inability of the human being to save herself. This inability stems from the severity of sin’s effect on the whole human person. Luther’s choice of title, *De servo arbitrio*, is drawn from Augustine, establishing him firmly in the camp of Augustinian doctrine regarding sin and grace. Luther considers freedom, properly understood, as belonging to God alone. A truly free will would be able to do anything, he reasons. At the same time, he denies that God’s will is arbitrary, arguing rather that it is consistently good. Luther grants that human beings have a degree of freedom in circumstances regarding civil life and works of the law. An individual can choose to behave according to what he knows of God’s law or not. However, “good works do not make a good man.”²⁰⁵ These good works can be performed with bad motivation. In particular, Luther supposes that most good works are self-directed and therefore idolatrous. Herein lies Luther’s rejection of Aristotle’s understanding of a natural potential for virtue. If one is preoccupied with improvement for his own sake or in the hopes of attaining reward or avoiding punishment, then his goal

²⁰² Rupp, *Luther and Erasmus*, 74.

²⁰³ Gerhard O. Forde, *The Captivation of the Will: Luther Vs. Erasmus On Freedom And Bondage* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 24.

²⁰⁴ Rupp, *Luther and Erasmus*, 81.

²⁰⁵ LW 31:361.

(and his god) is nothing more than himself.²⁰⁶ On this basis Luther argues that “doing works of the law” is not the same as “fulfilling the law.” The moral observance of the law is motivated by sin, as one is compelled by self-preoccupied fear or ambition to meet divine expectation. However, the spiritual observance of the law consists in love. What humans call “free will,” properly understood, is, he believes, just “self-will,” which is nothing more than bondage to the devil.²⁰⁷ It is only “free,” he maintains, with respect to worldly matters: “We know there are things free choice does by nature, such as eating, drinking, begetting, ruling....”²⁰⁸ In this sense, Luther’s position is not a simple determinism; Forde compares the freedom regarding mundane things in Luther to an addiction: “We all do what we want to! That is precisely our bondage.”²⁰⁹

Even in those cases where one appears to have it within her power to truly choose or reject something, these choices do not prove autonomy or an unimpaired will in regard to those things. Graham White observes Luther’s interest in the inconsistency of the consequences of human actions when commenting on Ecclesiastes not long after writing *De Servo Arbitrio*.²¹⁰ Luther takes solace in the fact that those things that are “below him” (in the Preacher’s language, “under the sun”) remain also under God’s control and influence. In daily living, there ought to be a faithful optimism in living out one’s vocation in the present moment.²¹¹ In this text, Luther teases out the ways in which God’s higher purposes intertwine with those mundane things over which humans exercise some degree of control. Luther supposes a great deal of hidden contingency in apparently mundane actions such that while still eschewing determinism, God’s purposes cannot be derailed by human choice. For this reason, he follows his list of things free choice can do by nature with the caveat that apart from grace the human remains still under God’s “general omnipotence” and is carried, with all things, in an “infallible and necessary course.”²¹²

²⁰⁶ Dieter, *Der junge Luther und Aristoteles*, 48.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ LW 33:240.

²⁰⁹ Forde, *The Captivation of the Will*, 37.

²¹⁰ Graham White, Luther on Ecclesiastes and the limits of human ability,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 29 (1987):180-94.

²¹¹ Ibid., 181.

²¹² LW 33:240. One might imagine here God’s omnipotence as a ship that carries its passengers with the current to its destination regardless of how much or in what direction they walk on its deck. That is not to say, of course, that what one does on the ship does not matter, but that as Luther continues in the same passage, “what man does as he is thus carried along is nothing, in the sense that it is worth nothing in the sight of God.”

To whatever extent a person has freedom in this way in matters “below him,” in matters “above” Luther acknowledges no freedom at all, however superficial. Instead of acting freely on her own account, the individual is either governed by God or by the devil. He writes: “In relation to God, or in matters pertaining to salvation or damnation, a man has no free choice, but is a captive, subject and slave either of the will of God or the will of Satan.”²¹³ Luther employs a simile of the will as a beast being ridden. While this was not an original analogy, Luther presents it in a unique way.²¹⁴ In Luther’s version the riders are God and Satan, and the beast has no choice of which rider it will have. Luther does not present either of these riders as coercing the will from without, but rather as exercising as a total, spiritual, inward influence. The will is therefore ridden, but it is not forced. Yet the result is the complete mastery of the will by one or the other power: “If Satan rides, it goes where Satan wills. If God rides, it goes where God wills. In either case there is no ‘free choice.’”²¹⁵ While Erasmus imagined cooperation with God as a precondition for salvation, Luther imagines it as salvation’s result. This salvation in Luther entails liberation from unnatural bondage to Satan so that happy obedience to God can follow.

2.3.2 Luther on Righteousness

Luther not only breaks from the scholastic tradition as he knew it, but also shifts to a significantly different conceptual focus for his theology. Luther’s ultimate disagreement with his scholastic predecessors is over whether or not a human being can keep the law and love God above all other things by nature alone. For him such a possibility would deny the stain of original sin and make grace superfluous. Luther considers it to be the *opinio Pelagiana* that one can merit a “first grace” through any work.²¹⁶ For Luther, such is the impossibility of fulfilling the law that he conceives its role as that of an unforgiving taskmaster that drives humanity to Christ. In this regard no distinction is made between kinds of good works. Luther centers the issue on common standing before God, repudiating the value of any personal righteousness. “For if

²¹³ LW 33:70.

²¹⁴ McSorley identifies its origin in Pseudo-Augustine (*Hypomnesticon* III.xi.20) but demonstrates it being widely used among the Scholastics. See McSorley, *Luther: Right or Wrong*, 335ff.

²¹⁵ Forde, *The Captivation of the Will*, 58.

²¹⁶ “*Huius autem erroris tota substantia est Pelagiana opinio.*” WA 56:502.

someone is not a murderer, adulterer, or thief, and abstains from external sins...he would swear...that he is a righteous man.”²¹⁷ Here again, Luther’s concern is the reality of slavery to sin and the absolute inability of the human will to change its posture towards God. “Religious speculations and holiness by works are two consequences of a single human desire—the desire for an unbroken and direct communion with God.”²¹⁸ Sin both causes and constitutes the critical break in the human being’s relationship with God. Being completely consumed by her sinful nature, the human being is entirely dependent on faith and grace as gifts, for salvation.

That there is no contribution by the individual to her own salvation is confirmed by Luther in his presentation of faith. For Luther faith does not procure justification. Faith is rather the form in which justification comes to the individual. God freely gives faith, and that same faith is in effect salvation and justification.²¹⁹ Faith then cannot be construed as a work. This further distances Luther from the scholastic anthropology. Luther considers faith to be contrary to nature, since the whole human nature is sinful and opposed to God. Later in his career, in his *Disputation Concerning Justification* he writes: “It is up to God alone to give faith contrary to nature, and ability to believe contrary to reason. That I love God is the work of God alone.”²²⁰ Because the will is in bondage by nature, justification by works is an impossibility. For Luther the righteousness of faith is the antithesis to justification by works.²²¹ Luther emphasizes the “alien righteousness” of Christ, which is imputed to the believer by faith.

In his later Galatians lectures, which preceded his two disputations on justification in 1536, Luther distinguishes this righteousness further. *Iustitia activa* is accomplished by Christ, while *iustitia passiva* is received by faith in Christ.²²² Divine righteousness (that is, the merit belonging properly to Christ) is given to sinners through imputation.²²³ These two form a corollary to Luther’s distinction between the law and the gospel. This essential dichotomy of Luther’s thought distinguishes between two opposite works of God: the law shows humankind its sin, and the gospel shows humankind its savior in

²¹⁷ LW 26:310.

²¹⁸ von Loewenich, *Theology of the Cross*, 20.

²¹⁹ Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology*, 261.

²²⁰ LW 34:160.

²²¹ “*Altera est fidei iustitia quae constat non operibus ullis, sed favente et reputante Deo per gratiam.*” WA 18:772.

²²² WA 40.I:42-43

²²³ “...nisi per gratuitam imputationem...” WA 40.I:43.

Christ. The demand of the law is active righteousness, the merit *de condigno* that the scholastics sought to negotiate. Luther's soteriology responds to the human being's inability to achieve such merit with Christ's ability on behalf of the sinner. This righteousness proper to Christ by his merit of it is received as alien righteousness, passively through faith. This is for Luther the gospel. He writes:

Here it is to be noted that these three things are joined together: faith, Christ, and acceptance or imputation. Faith takes hold of Christ and has Him present, enclosing Him as the ring encloses the gem. And whoever is found having this faith in the Christ who is grasped in the heart, him God accounts as righteous. This is the means and the merit by which we obtain the forgiveness of sins and righteousness. "Because you believe in Me," God says, "and your faith takes hold of Christ, whom I have freely given to you as your Justifier and Savior, therefore be righteous." Thus God accepts you or accounts you righteous only on account of Christ, in whom you believe.²²⁴

That God "accepts" or "accounts" one as righteous is not insignificant for Luther, since by means of this distinction he maintains that the human being has no intrinsic or inherent righteousness. Sin remains in the reality of "the flesh." The accounting of Christ's righteousness to the justified believer hides this sin. This righteousness remains external to the believer. Although it is possessed by her, it cannot be produced by her. Althaus describes this reality:

This means that passive righteousness is not more and more replaced and limited by active righteousness, the alien righteousness is not more and more replaced by man's own. Man, including the Christian man, remains a sinner his whole life long and cannot possibly live and have worth before God except through this alien righteousness, the imputation of Christ's righteousness.²²⁵

In his *Lectures on Galatians*, Luther describes justification as a relationship in which Christ and the believer are so intertwined that God does not distinguish between the two but considers them "as one person."²²⁶ Where Aquinas had understood Christ as the new

²²⁴ LW 26:132.

²²⁵ Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 229.

²²⁶ LW 26:168.

lawgiver and the Gospel as new law, Luther understands the work of Christ as fulfilling the law on our behalf. Christ merits the righteousness that the fallen human being could not merit. Thus, the gospel is the message of the sinner's pardon without any merit or worthiness, but solely on account of Christ.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen how early the medieval discussions concerning righteousness gave considerable attention to the question of the degree to which the human being could prepare for and cooperate with grace. This is particularly manifest in terms of debates over the human being's ability to fulfill the law and thus do what God requires of human beings. Luther's conceptual shift from his predecessors turned on the question of whether or not a human being can keep the law and love God above all other things by nature alone, that is, by "doing what is in him." Luther concluded that to affirm this possibility undermined the gravity of sin and minimized the importance of grace. In his engagements with Erasmus, this incapacity of the human person to work towards or even desire her own salvation is most strongly expressed in his judgment that the will is entirely bound, and after the fall free will (*coram deo*) exists in name only. Justifying righteousness can only be passively achieved, just as the will can only passively do good. Faith thus becomes the central category for Luther, in that justification comes to the individual in the form of faith, a gift that is freely given, without any merit or worthiness on the part of the believer; it is simply the form in which justification comes to the individual. God freely gives faith, and that same faith is in effect salvation and justification

In demonstrating Luther's shift away from the medieval church's way of conceiving of righteousness, we see what is at stake for Luther in his account of justification. In great part, it is the incapacity of the human will to contribute towards salvation that is crucial here. Luther is responding to accounts of salvation that are in some ways dialectical, in which God provides grace that activates or makes possible human responses, which, in turn, make possible salvation. For Luther, however, there is no such back and forth. Instead, Luther invokes the idea of justification as the imputation of an alien righteousness to speak of what God is doing as something that is not in any way dependent on human agency. This non-dialectical way of understanding the relationship of the human being to her salvation constitute a challenge to the Finnish

School's real-ontic interpretation. However, Luther's interest in the will as it relates to the human being's capacity for righteousness will allow us to take a more nuanced look at how Luther understands a category that is critical to the Orthodox doctrine of *theosis* and allow us to engage closely with Maximus the Confessor. Additionally, it is not insignificant that among the inheritance that Luther received from the Middle Ages and makes his own is the language of the mystics, which not only supports his understanding of the necessary passivity of the human being in salvation, but which we will see shapes his vision of the transformed will and life in Christ.

3. Salvation in Maximus the Confessor: *Theosis*

Maximus the Confessor (c. 580 – 662) is well-recognized in modern scholarship for his lasting contributions to Christology and theological anthropology in refutation of the two great Christological heresies of the seventh century, monoenergism and monothelitism. Maximus can be properly considered the “father of Byzantine theology” for the systematic and comprehensive engagement of the relationship between Christology and anthropology that is pivotal to his theological system.²²⁷ However, Maximus belongs to both the East and West, having spent a significant amount of time in North Africa and Rome, engaging Western theological themes of grace and the role of the will in human anthropology and Christology more than any other Byzantine writer of the patristic period. Although his polemical concerns are occasionally different from those of his contemporaries in the West, Maximus as an interpreter of Chalcedonian Christology does not represent a school of Greek theology ignorant of Western concerns, and thus is a particularly suitable figure to examine for our comparison of Eastern and Western soteriologies. Maximus represents in a significant way a culmination of patristic thought.²²⁸

Emphasizing the comprehensiveness of his thought, Lars Thunberg writes that the theological system he developed “was in fact a spiritual vision of the cosmos, of human life within that cosmos, and therefore of the economy of salvation, the salvific interplay between the human and the divine.”²²⁹ He developed this comprehensive cosmology largely in opposition to Origenist cosmology, which remained popular particularly in some monastic communities.²³⁰ Maximus’s treatment of Christology and anthropology within this larger cosmological framework establish him as an authority not only in these matters considered in isolation, but also in their relationship to the concept of *theosis* in

²²⁷ John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 2011), 147.

²²⁸ “Although Maximus the Confessor is a speculative theologian of genius, he does not see himself, as would some later theologians, as *constructing* a theological system. He sees himself as interpreting a tradition that has come down to him, and interpreting it for the sake of others.” Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 21.

²²⁹ Lars Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 1985), 31.

²³⁰ The cosmology in question finds its genesis in the speculation of Origen of Alexandria and was expounded upon by Evagrius Ponticus (349-399), whose teachings, while influential, were condemned at the Fifth Ecumenical Council.

Byzantine theology.²³¹ His synthesis is considered by Norman Russell, among others, as the height of theological development of the doctrine of *theosis* as human participation in the divine, the implications of which we will consider below.²³² Because Maximus plays a pivotal role in defining the Byzantine tradition, particularly in regards to the explication of *theosis* in relation to Chalcedonian Christology, he proves an appropriate figure to engage in our consideration of the degree to which Orthodox understandings of human participation in Christ are compatible with Luther's theology. To this end, we will explore Maximus's historical context in the Christological controversies before exploring his ontology, and the way in which the latter shapes his understanding of the will in relation both to its operation in fallen humanity and its role in humanity's restoration.

3.1. Maximus's Context

3.1.1. Single-Subject Christology

Maximus's Christology took definitive shape in the crucible of the monothelite controversy of the seventh century, which served as the historical catalyst for much of his polemical work. The monothelite doctrine proposed a single will (*thelema*) in Christ. Although monothelitism eventually came to the forefront of theological debate as a topic in its own right, in its origin it was closely linked to monoenergism, the doctrine of a single mode of action or "energy" (*energeia*) in Christ. While the terminology that would later be associated with both monothelitism and monoenergism is found in writers from earlier in the patristic period,²³³ a fully formulated monoenergist doctrine did not arise until the wake of the Council of Chalcedon.

²³¹ Maximus's engagement of *theosis* is robust for the patristic period. While his treatment cannot be mistaken for the eventually established theory of *theosis* promulgated by Gregory Palamas which dominates the discourse today, this patristic approach to *theosis* represents a major stage in the development of the doctrine, while avoiding the polemical complications of its most mature manifestation.

²³² See Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

²³³ For example, already in the fourth century, Apollinarius of Laodicea (d. c.392) had proposed one *energeia* in Christ, that of the divine Logos. See Millard J. Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology* (New York: Baker Book House, 1966), 58.

It is outside the scope of this survey to rehearse the whole of this patristic Christological controversy as it preceded the work of Maximus, but to understand his work it remains necessary to review something of the development of Christology that culminated in the two-natures formula of the Council of Chalcedon of which Maximus was a staunch defender. The immediate background to Chalcedon was the controversy between Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius of Constantinople. Nestorius (c. 386 - 450) emphasized the humanity of Christ and distinguished it sharply from his deity. While he never denied the latter, Nestorius was concerned that in Cyril's account of the union of divine and human in Christ, Christ's divinity might be construed as so overwhelming his humanity that the latter ends up being effectively absorbed into the former. To avoid this conclusion, Nestorius taught an indwelling of the divine Logos in Jesus according to the "good pleasure" of God, with the result that there is in Christ a single *prosopon* of union resulting in "an external undivided appearance," but, critically, not a single "hypostasis." Though later treated in Chalcedonian circles as synonyms, in the fourth century Nestorius's differentiation of *prosopon* from hypostasis proved central to Christological debate. The term *prosopon*, which Nestorius employed, frequently translated as "person," refers to the "self-manifestation of an individual."²³⁴ His choice of terminology was not meant to be a technical declaration on the nature of the union between Christ's humanity and divinity.²³⁵ Nevertheless, Nestorius's defense of "*prosopon* by union" was criticized by Cyril as failing to stress the incarnation as a union between the Logos and human nature rather than between the Logos and an individual, Jesus of Nazareth. To Cyril "*prosopon* by union" suggested that the human and divine essences in Christ were two different subjects, the divine Logos and the human Jesus, with the former indwelling the latter, such that Nestorius could describe the incarnation as God and man each taking the *prosopon* of one another. While it is the subject of some debate how well his opponents represented his teaching, Nestorius's Christology seems to have been sufficiently ambiguous on the question of whether the single *prosopon* of which he spoke was an expression of two subjects or one to raise questions about his orthodoxy.²³⁶ For if the one

²³⁴ Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in the Christian Tradition: from the Apostolic Age to the Council of Chalcedon (451)* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975), 126.

²³⁵ Many, notably Nestorius's own teacher, Theodore of Mopsuestia, appear to have been largely content with relegating this to the realm of mystery.

²³⁶ For further treatment of Nestorius's Christological orthodoxy or heterodoxy, see Carl E. Braaten, "Modern Interpretations of Nestorius," *Church History* 32, no. 3 (September

prosopon of the union was merely the single outwards appearance of two distinct subjects, then Christ would be two persons, and divided.

It is difficult to determine what Nestorius intended when referring to “person” and “nature.” As Carl Braaten observes, these controversies “were complicated by imprecise terminological definitions.”²³⁷ It is fairly clear, however, that *prosopon* as used by Nestorius was not intended to denote a “person” in the same way the Cappadocians had used *hypostasis* to speak of the three “persons” of the Trinity – that is, as a subsistent mode of being (*tropos hyparxeōs*) of the divine *ousia*. Instead, he uses *prosopon* to refer to the appearance of the Logos in the man Jesus. Because Nestorius refused to confess that this union entailed just one hypostasis, however, his Christology was understood as distinguishing between Jesus and the Logos in such a way as to prevent confession that Jesus was identical with the eternal Son of God; rather, Jesus was “personally” (i.e., with respect to prosopic appearance) united with the Son of God who dwelt in him, but possessed a human hypostasis that was born of the virgin Mary and remained distinct from the divine hypostasis of the Word.

Nestorius’s way of distinguishing between Christ’s human and divine natures led to his assertion that Mary be called the *Christotokos* (Christ-bearer) rather than *Theotokos* (God-bearer). He did not intend this qualification to deny the confession of Christ’s divinity, but rather to answer the difficult question of how Mary could give birth to the divine Logos who existed before her. (This difficulty was answered by Apollinarius by suggesting the Logos in Christ filled the place of the human soul.) Again, Nestorius emphasized the distinction between the natures, asserting that a true union between the human and divine was not possible because Christ suffered and changed, which God he cannot do.

Cyril of Alexandria (376 – 444) arose as Nestorius’s chief opponent in this debate, charging that Nestorius taught in effect two Christs, in the sense of two subjects, on the grounds that Nestorius’s rejection of the claim that none other than God was born of Mary implied that Jesus of Nazareth was numerically distinct from the divine Son. Cyril agreed that Jesus must be fully human, participating in the human experience fully, in order to effect salvation. He writes that Nestorius, by not accepting that the incarnate Logos was born like any other human, “destroys the mystery of the economy of the

1963): 251-267, and Milton V. Anastos, “Nestorius was Orthodox,” in *Studies in Byzantine Intellectual History* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1979), 119-40.

²³⁷ Braaten, “Modern Interpretations of Nestorius,” 256.

flesh.”²³⁸ Although some of his own party counselled him to concede to these arguments, Nestorius was sure of his own position and appealed for the emperor to call a council in hopes that his orthodoxy would be vindicated.²³⁹ Nestorius, of course, believed *Christ* to have been born like any other human, but his “*prosopon* by union” could not, he held, be identified with the divine *Word* in a way as would allow one to say that the Logos was born. Despite these hopes, Nestorius was condemned as a heretic at the Council of Ephesus and Cyril’s position triumphed.

Cyril’s Christology reflected a soteriological concern of his predecessors in the see of Alexandria, among them Athanasius (c. 296 – 373), that only God can save humanity. Thus, for Cyril, the debate with Nestorius had to do with assuring the very possibility of salvation on account of *who* is incarnate in Christ.²⁴⁰ John McGuckin explains that this single-subject approach avoids ambiguity regarding his divine identity:

For Cyril, if the christological union means anything it means that there is only one reality to be affirmed henceforth. This concrete reality (*physis*) is what stands before the Christian observer; it is a single concrete reality enfleshed before us: *Mia Physis Sesarkomene*. What is more, that concrete, fleshed-out reality, is that of the Word of God, none other. In short, by using the phrase Cyril is attributing the person of the Word as the single subject of the incarnation event. He does so in a phrase which is highly succinct (a good rallying phrase for his party), provocatively robust (using concrete *physis* terms as opposed to the semantic word-plays of Nestorius), and radically insistent on the single subjectivity of the divine Word (the direct personal subject of the incarnate acts).²⁴¹

Cyril does not take issue with the confession of Christ’s full humanity but rather with the separatism that results from Nestorius’ way of construing the distinction between the

²³⁸ P.E. Pusey, *Epistolae tres oecumenicae, Libri quinque contra Nestorium, XII capitum explanation, XII capitum defensio ultraque, Scholia de Incarnatione Unigeniti*, vol. 6, Oxford: James Parker (reprinted Brussels 1965), 18, quoted in Norman Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria* (London: Routledge, 2000), 44-5.

²³⁹ John of Antioch and Theodoret were among the Syrian Fathers who while theologically aligned with Nestorius, were sympathetic to “the point of the argument for Christ’s integrity.” See John Anthony McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy*, (Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2010), 22-23.

²⁴⁰ Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, 17-19.

²⁴¹ McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 208.

humanity and the divine nature of the Logos. For Cyril, any discussion of “twoness” in Christ threatens the kind of robust confession of unity that the Incarnation demands, and so can only be discussed theoretically, in reference to the pre-incarnate Logos on the one hand, and a humanity not yet concretized in and as the person of Jesus on the other. Thus, the grammar of discourse around the person of Christ necessitates for him what Beeley calls “clear commitment to the practice of single-subject biblical interpretation.”²⁴² Such interpretation for Cyril provides no basis for a distinction between Mary’s Son and the eternal Son of God. Cyril correspondingly argued in his third letter to Nestorius that the Bible demands a single-subject Christology. In the letter he understands Nestorius to have read the scriptures through a dualistic lens, thus misrepresenting the incarnation:

We do not divide out the saying of our Savior in the Gospels as if to two *hypostases* or *prosopa*. The one and only Christ is not twofold even though he is understood as compounded out of two different elements in an indivisible unity, just as a man is understood as consisting of soul and body and yet is not twofold but rather is one from out of both.²⁴³

Cyril’s single-subject Christology, while recognizing Christ’s humanity as the medium or ‘instrument’ through which God gives Godself to humanity, allows God to be the agent of salvation entirely. It is the one eternal Son of God, the Logos, who became incarnate.²⁴⁴

3.1.2. The Confession of Two Natures

Shortly after Cyril’s death, Eutyches, a popular Byzantine monk and self-declared adherent of Cyril, began teaching a version of Cyril’s Christology in which Christ was described as “a fusion of human and divine elements” resulting in a single nature, such that in the incarnation Christ’s human nature was “dissolved like a drop of honey in the sea” of his divinity. Eutyches’s own formulation, “two natures before, one after the incarnation,” thus expressed a monophysite (literally, “single nature”) Christology. This

²⁴² Christopher A. Beeley, *The Unity of Christ: Continuity and Conflict in Patristic Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 264.

²⁴³ 3Ep. Nest. 8 quoted in McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 208.

²⁴⁴ McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 195.

suggested that in the incarnation Christ's human nature was deified and absorbed into the divine nature, making his humanity distinct from that of all other human beings. This uncompromising form of single-subject Christology was, he claimed, needed to combat resurgent Nestorianism. Pope Leo I considered his teaching to be unsophisticated and any error the result of his simplicity rather than any malice. Be that as it may, the controversy resulting from Eutyches's teaching led to the calling in 451 of the Council of Chalcedon, which condemned Eutyches and formulated its own statement on the human and divine natures of Christ. The council defined that Christ was to be

acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably (*en duo physisin, asynkhutos, atreptos, adiairetos, akhoristos*); the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person (*prosopon*) and one Subsistence (*hypostasis*), not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.²⁴⁵

In order to solidify the council's anti-Nestorian credentials, the Chalcedonian definitions explicitly stated that Christ is "one person" (*prosopon*) and "one hypostasis." In spite of these efforts to honor Cyril's views, the decisions of the council resulted in the alienation of churches in Syria and Egypt that preferred Cyril's own preferred formula ("one incarnate nature of God the Word") for discussing the unity of Christ. Without defending Eutyches's denial of Christ's consubstantiality with other human beings, this "miaphysite" position adhered to Cyril's language of one (*mia*) nature (*physis*) and rejected the dyophysite (two-nature) formula of Chalcedon. Its adherents viewed the council's talk of Christ subsisting in (rather than out of) two natures as a betrayal of Cyril's insistence on one-subject Christology, notwithstanding its ostensibly Cyrilline insistence that "both natures concur in one person and in one hypostasis," and that they "are not divided or cut into two [persons], but are together one and only and only-begotten Logos of God."²⁴⁶

Chalcedon represented a critical attempt to find Christological language that would be truly catholic: something palatable to the whole church. The council clearly

²⁴⁵ Thomas H. Bindley, *The Oecumenical Documents of the Faith*, (London: Methuen, 1950), 91-92.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

made a distinction between nature (*physis*) and the personal subject of nature (*hypostasis*).²⁴⁷ Yet how these terms were to be precisely understood in a Christological context was not explicit at the time of their deployment in the Chalcedonian definition. This distinction had belonged to neither of the prevalent schools of Christology. As already noted, Cyril, for example, had spoken both of “one incarnate nature” (*mia physis...sesarkōmenē*) and of “one hypostasis” (*mia hypostasis*) thus using nature and hypostasis interchangeably. In doing so, Cyril had sought to emphasize the singularity of the eternal Logos made flesh in and as Christ. However, in a letter to Succensus Cyril could also speak of “nature” as distinct from hypostasis as well, using two adverbs that would recur in the Chalcedonian definition: “We see that the two natures have met without merger (*asygchytōs*) and without alteration (*atreptōs*) in unbreakable mutual union.”²⁴⁸ Since, as McGuckin notes, compatibility with Cyril’s Christology in particular was a litmus test for orthodoxy among the council fathers, it is unlikely that the fathers of the council sought to change Cyril’s Christology.²⁴⁹ Their aim seems rather to have been to clarify the use of language in light of the provocation occasioned by Eutyches to avoid any Apollinarian interpretation, according to which Christ’s human nature was incomplete.²⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the council’s rejection of Cyril’s language of one hypostasis “out of (*ek*) two natures” in favor of “in (*en*) two natures” came to be viewed by miaphysites as unfaithful to Cyril’s confession of “one incarnate nature of God the Logos.”²⁵¹

For miaphysites, Chalcedon had failed to defend the unity of subject in Christ to the point of “Nestorianizing.” They pointed to the *Tome* of Pope Leo I, a document adopted by the council, as fatally ambiguous owing to its lacking a clear statement as to the meaning of one of its key technical terms, the Latin “*persona*.” Did it correspond to

²⁴⁷ Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, 147.

²⁴⁸ Lionel R. Wickham, ed., *Cyril of Alexandria: Select Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 74-75.

²⁴⁹ See McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 233-243.

²⁵⁰ Although as alluded to above, the churches in Syria and Egypt considered Chalcedon as not being a faithful exposition of Cyril’s Christology.

²⁵¹ Cyril’s second letter to Nestorius, which was approved by the council, asserted the hypostatic union (*kath’ hypostasin*) of the human and divine natures in Christ to affirm that there is one Christ “out of both” (*ex amphoin*) natures. See John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974), 35.

hypostasis (or *physis*) as employed by Cyril, or to *prosopon* as employed by Nestorius?²⁵² The defense of the council made in its aftermath by some of its dyophysite apologists intensified the “fundamentalist” interpretation of these Cyrillians, since the dyophysites seemed unable to acknowledge the unity of Christ in that they continued to interpret the language of “one hypostasis” employed by Chalcedon as equivalent to Nestorius’s language of “one *prosopon*.” In attempts to avoid conflation of the natures, they struggled to speak about the Word suffering in the flesh, instead preferring to speak of the flesh of Christ, or his human nature suffering.²⁵³ It was however a distinctly Cyrillian interpretation of Chalcedon, one which insisted on one subject in the incarnate Logos by insisting that the Logos himself suffered on the cross (albeit in his human nature only), that prevailed and was confirmed by the Council of Constantinople (553), at least partly in a (largely unsuccessful) attempt to accommodate the council’s miaphysite critics.

3.1.3. Energies and Wills

The Council of Chalcedon left a complicated political situation in its wake. As already noted, the definitions of the council had alienated considerable numbers of churches in Armenia, Syria, Egypt and other eastern parts of the empire who refused to accept the Chalcedonian doctrine of “two natures” and were subsequently condemned by the imperial church as heretics. In response to the situation, efforts were taken to reconcile the estranged factions, and it is in this context of attempted reconciliation that the monoenergist and monothelite proposals opposed by Maximus emerged.²⁵⁴ The protagonists of the monoenergist and monothelite theological crisis were the Byzantine emperor, Heraclius (reigned 610-642), and the patriarch of Constantinople, Sergius (in office 610-638). Faced with civil war within the empire, the Visigoth conquest of Spain in

²⁵² Georges Florovsky, *The Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century* (Belmont, MA: Notable & Academic Books, 1987), 293-295.

²⁵³ Patrick T. R. Gray, *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 80-89.

²⁵⁴ Descriptions of seventh century monothelitism and monoenergism are somewhat necessarily simplifications. These did not take consistent shape over the course of the controversies as they manifested differently in imperial proposals, patriarchal correspondence, and debates. The main themes and purposes remain the same, however. See Francois-Marie L  thel, *Th  ologie de l'agonie du Christ - La libert   humaine du Fils de Dieu et son importance sot  riologique mises en lumiere par Saint Maxime Confesseur* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1979), 26-28.

the west, and a series of Persian conquests in the east, Heraclius sought to solidify the Empire by reconciling those churches in the east that viewed the two-nature Christology of Chalcedon with suspicion.²⁵⁵ In 633, Heraclius arranged a compromise to ensure the loyalty of churches in Egypt whose leader, Cyrus, the patriarch of Alexandria, was prepared to agree there are two natures in Christ, so long as it was understood that there was just one (*monē*) mode of activity (*energeia*). Affirming the oneness of Christ in this way served, in his view, to guard against the appearance of a Nestorian Christ since a single mode of activity was thought to imply a sufficient unity of the natures and avoid any suggestion of two distinct subjects in Jesus. Pope Honorius agreed with this “monoenergist” compromise, considering the problem not a theological question but a grammatical one. Nevertheless, the presentation of monoenergism as an imperial compromise was rejected by strict Chalcedonians in the empire when, upon his succession as the new Patriarch of Jerusalem, Sophronius argued in his *Synodical Letter* that if Christ has two natures (as Chalcedon taught), then it would follow that he has two activities, since activities corresponded to nature.²⁵⁶ After Sophronius’s argument began to gain traction, Sergius and Heraclius responded by issuing a slightly modified formulation, the *Ecthesis*, in 638. Since a compromise defining Christ as having one energy had failed, this revision attempted a compromise that was dyophysite and monothelite, that is, confessing (with Chalcedon) that in Christ there are two natures but only one will (*monon thelēma*). Additionally, the *Ecthesis* forbade further discussion of the number of *energeiai* in Christ.²⁵⁷

The doctrine of a single will in Christ, monothelitism, was thus presented as second attempt at reconciliation with miaphysite churches in the empire, this time by shifting the emphasis to the unity of Christ’s will (although Christ was still defined, in line with Chalcedon, as having two natures). It was hoped that this compromise would be found acceptable by the miaphysites who had thought Chalcedon too conceptually similar to Nestorianism. The monothelites accepted the Chalcedonian definition of the hypostatic

²⁵⁵ Non-Chalcedonian Christians in Armenia and Syria who had been suppressed under Chalcedonian Byzantines had welcomed the Persian invasion as the “passing of the Chalcedonian night.” John Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions: The Church 450-680 A.D.* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1989), 341.

²⁵⁶ Pauline Allen, *Sophronius of Jerusalem and Seventh-Century Heresy: The Synodical letter and Other Documents* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 29.

²⁵⁷ Cyril Horovun, *Will, Action, and Freedom: Christological Controversies in the Seventh Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 82.

union, but added that Christ had only a single will, which was divine, and no distinct human will. Monothelitism opposed the idea of two wills in Christ on the grounds that distinct wills would necessarily work in opposition to one another. This was perceived as imposing the kind of two-subject Christology that both Chalcedonians and miaphysites rejected.²⁵⁸ It therefore seemed possible to take for granted that if there was only one Christ, there should likewise be only one will at work in him. The monothelites considered the will to be a property of the person (or hypostasis), necessitating that if there is just one personal subject in Christ (as both sides agreed), there could only be one will as well. In the monothelite imagination, to ascribe two wills to Christ would suggest a schizophrenic division. Yet however logical this compromise seemed, it did little to reconcile the opposing Christological factions. Moreover, much of the territory in which miaphysite Christians lived was soon conquered by the emerging power of Islam, and the imperial politics of reconciliation became futile as those lands were lost by the empire. Despite this, the state-sponsored monothelitism remained the official position of the church in Constantinople through the mid-seventh century.

Maximus was in North Africa when this controversy came to a head. Both Sergius and his successor as patriarch, Pyrrhus, promoted the monothelite compromise. After the death of Heraclius, Pyrrhus was deposed and exiled to Africa. While there, in 645 he engaged in a debate with Maximus on the question of monothelitism (*the Disputation with Pyrrhus*). Maximus took up the dyothelite (“two will”) position. In Christ exist both a human and a divine will, corresponding to Christ’s human and divine natures. Neither side of the debate denied that in Jesus is found a divine will. As such, Maximus, in arguing for two wills in Christ, focuses on the nature of Christ’s human will and its relationship to the divine will. In the debate, Maximus establishes his orthodoxy by affirming the undivided unity of Christ in accordance with the definition of Chalcedon.²⁵⁹ The unity of Christ is likewise confirmed in Maximus’s response to his opponent’s objection that two wills suggest two who are willing (*thelontas*), that is, two distinct subjects. To answer this latter charge according to which will is correlated with hypostasis, Maximus invokes the doctrine that in the Trinity there is only a single will in the Godhead (corresponding to the one divine nature) even though there are three divine

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 143.

²⁵⁹ See Christopher Beeley, “Response to Brian Daley and Paul Gavriluk on The Unity of Christ,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 68 no. 3 (August 2015): 356-357.

hypostases.²⁶⁰ Thus, he argues, it is not unreasonable that Christ can have multiple wills and remain a single subject as there is no necessary correspondence between the number of wills and number of persons. What follows in the debate is an exposition of Maximus's understanding of the relationship between willing and nature. Cyril Hovorun explains the dyothelite position as understood by Maximus in the *Disputation with Pyrrhus*: "Nobody is taught to will, but by nature knows how to will. In this sense, willing is a feature of nature, because men employ the properties of nature without being taught."²⁶¹ Because of this insight, Maximus considered the will to be a property of nature. In describing the dynamic of the fallen and redeemed human will's relationship to nature and nature's God, one can understand the dyothelite desire for Christ to assume a will that is a property of his humanity, rather than of his divine person. Since the will, like the rest of humanity, would be subject to the maxim of Gregory Nazianzen ("what is not assumed is not redeemed") the dyothelite argument insisted that a human will is required for Christ to accomplish salvation.

Despite the practical failure of the imperial mandate for monothelitism, Louth refers to it as "one of the most celebrated 'ecumenical' ventures of the early Byzantine period."²⁶² In response to Maximus and others whose opposition made official promotion of monothelitism unsustainable, Emperor Constans II issued the *Typos* in 648, banning discussion of the number of wills in Christ. Pope Martin I convened the Lateran synod the following year, at which both monothelitism and the *Typos* were condemned. Maximus, having arrived in Rome in 646, is generally thought to have served as the mind behind the synod's acts. But while in the west monothelitism was widely opposed, political interests in the eastern empire led to the persecution of those who held to the dyothelite position. As a result, Pope Martin and Maximus were both arrested and tried in Constantinople in 653 for their resistance to imperial policy and sent into exile. Maximus was brought out of exile to stand trial a second time in 661 for his defense of dyothelitism, resulting in the amputation of his right hand and tongue so that he could not perpetuate the doctrine any further. Only after Maximus's death in 662 did the political situation change such that when the Third Council of Constantinople was convened (680-681), monothelitism was definitively condemned as diminishing the humanity of Christ.

²⁶⁰ *Disputatio* (PG 91.289D-292A).

²⁶¹ Hovorun, *Will, Action and Freedom*, 156.

²⁶² Andrew Louth, *St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 153.

Jaroslav Pelikan observes that unlike the previous (Nestorian and Monophysite) Christological controversies, “the new ideas and formulas that provoked controversy [monoenergism and monothelitism] were propagated chiefly within the ranks of the orthodox and within the boundaries of the empire.”²⁶³ It is certainly true that those involved saw themselves as attempting faithful interpretations of Chalcedon and not as introducing new doctrines. Maximus’s dyothelite position eventually prevailed over the imperial monothelitism, becoming the orthodox teaching of both the Eastern and Western churches. In addition to re-affirming Chalcedon’s commitment to dyophysitism, this doctrine of two wills would be critical to Maximus’s larger Christological program. In order to better understand how Maximus’s teaching on Christ’s wills fits into his general understanding of human willing, we will first briefly investigate the cosmology that Maximus developed and the metaphysics that underlay his understanding of being and knowing.

3.2. Maximus’ Ontology: The Basis for his Teaching on the Will

3.2.1. The Origenist Paradigm

Maximus’s cosmology is in many ways an account of grace, which he understands in terms of the gracious emanation of divine energy (*energeia*) from God. This gracious activity occurs for Maximus as God’s transcendent gifts descend into creation as energies in which one can participate.²⁶⁴ Maximus develops his cosmology and specifically his account of creation in response to that of Origen of Alexandria. Origen imagined creation as initially a collective of rational and spiritual beings, which he names *logikoi* (“minds”). According to Origen, these *logikoi* were created outside of time and in close proximity to God so that they might contemplate God eternally. Origen considered this contemplation as a type of primordial rest in God, and his account of the fall begins not with disobedience in the garden, but with these spiritual creatures growing restless and falling away from God through a misuse of their freedom. This movement of creatures away from God, he speculates, was a result of satiation with divine contemplation. Origen

²⁶³ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 62.

²⁶⁴ Amb. 22 (PG 91:1257AB).

reasons using etymology that this primordial fall from God constitutes a movement away from the “divine warmth” so that that as a result of their restlessness and subsequent straying the *logikoi* grew “cold” (*psychesthai*) and became souls (*psyche*).²⁶⁵ As a result of this “cooling,” creatures come to inhabit bodies of various degrees of physicality. This constitutes a second creation, one out of the “dust of the ground” for souls that had previously been created “in the image and likeness of God.”²⁶⁶ Origen further holds that the subtlety of the body in which a soul is found depends on the perfection of the soul to which it is attached. Celestial beings are thought to have ethereal, invisible bodies of various degrees, while less perfect creatures inhabit solid bodies. This physical, embodied creation, in turn, provides the opportunity for the purification of souls, and thus in this cosmology the fall into corporeality is a movement of divine creativity.

Origen’s vision of creation thus embraces a common Platonic motif: contemplation of the good and pure is a type of stasis or changelessness. Because the *logikoi* were initially created with the intention of being ever-near to God in a state of rest and contemplation, Origen can only imagine creaturely movement as taking the form of motion away from this initial state of rest. Motion is thus the occasion for the “first fall.” It results from the misuse of the creature’s freedom and results in deviation from God that leads to the fall away from creation’s primordial perfection. It is in compassionate response to this fall that God provides the physical creation as an opportunity for creatures to make their way back to God through the trials of material existence. The material world, in short, would house souls until they could return to their original state of *stasis* and contemplation of God. Origen thus imagined a cosmic history that proceeds from an initial state of rest (*stasis*), to movement (*kinēsis*) that resulted in a fall away from God, and then lastly to the creation (*genesis*) of the material order as a kind of salvage operation. This progression from rest to movement is manifest in the radical mutability of material creation. In this way the creation of the material, sensible world is understood to be God’s imposition of order onto a creation that has descended into chaos.

3.2.2. The Maximian Response

²⁶⁵ Origen, *On First Principles* 2.8.3 in ANF 4:287-8.

²⁶⁶ Genesis 2:7; Genesis 1:26.

In *Ambigua* 7, Maximus distances himself from the Origenist belief in a primitive monad and original, spiritual fall before the creation of the material universe. Instead, Maximus supports an understanding of material creation that cannot be viewed as a descent of pre-existent spiritual realities into corporeality. Denying a creation and a fall outside of time such as Origen had conceived, Maximus contends that there cannot be movement before something is created: “We consider all the things that come into being from God, whether intelligible or sensible, their coming into being (*genesis*) is conceived of before their motion (*kinesis*), for motion cannot precede coming into being.”²⁶⁷ In this account of creation, the material world is not contingent on a primordial fall that can be only construed as a relative good and part of God’s rectifying of the cosmos, but rather is itself a good, intentional, creation of God.²⁶⁸ Also against the Origenist system, Maximus denied both that the soul pre-exists the body and that the body pre-exists the soul, arguing instead that both body and soul form a composite nature of one human hypostasis.²⁶⁹ As such, human beings are created in a relationship between body and soul that continues even in the eschaton.²⁷⁰ Maximus imagines an initial creation that is not in a primordial state of rest. Instead, he presents a cosmology in which creation is inherently incomplete and imperfect, so that creatures might have the occasion and ability to freely move towards completion and perfection in God. In contrast to Origen, motion for Maximus does not signal a derivation from God and a fall away from perfection. Rather motion is proper to the creature, serving as the means by which the creature comes to God and imperfection approaches perfection. Maximus quotes Gregory of Nazianzus on the human creature’s natural motion towards God: “‘We shall, in time to come, *know even as we are known*,’ which, he says, ‘will take place when this Godlike, divine thing, I mean our intellect and reason, mingles with its kin, when the image ascends to the archetype it now longs after.’”²⁷¹ His account of the economy of salvation is in fact the reverse of Origen’s: from creation to movement to rest rather than from rest to movement to creation.²⁷² Maximus even suggests that in the eschaton movement remains proper to the creature in

²⁶⁷ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1072A).

²⁶⁸ Origen likewise thought that the world was created out of God’s goodness, but in response to the falling away of the *logikoi*, not as an “original” creation.

²⁶⁹ Amb. 42 (1325D-1336B); (1336C-1345C).

²⁷⁰ Ibid. (1321D-1324B).

²⁷¹ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1077B).

²⁷² Polycarp Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua of St. Maximus the Confessor and his Refutation of Origenism* (Rome: 1955), 92.

some sense: “No created being has yet ceased from the natural power that moves it to its proper end, neither has it found rest from the activity that impels it towards its proper end...for it belongs to God alone to be the end, and the completion, and the impassible.”²⁷³ Motion is natural to created beings since it is through motion that creatures move towards God. This notion stands opposed to Origen’s conception, in which motion is a sign of declension from primordial rest.

Because motion is something that is proper to the creature and its relationship with God, it is for Maximus integral to the creature’s inmost character, or *logos*. It is Maximus’s understanding of the motion of creatures that leads us to his doctrine of *logoi*, which is also developed in *Ambigua* 7. In that text Maximus speaks of the “procession” of the Logos into all created beings, each of which has its own distinctive *logos* that is a partial reflection of the one Logos. The dynamic nature of creation is essential to a metaphysics of participation in which the *logoi* may proceed and return to the one Logos that is God. These *logoi* are thus “principles” that exist in God. The exact nature of the *logoi* as Maximus understands them is the subject of some debate. In commenting on Maximus, Vladimir Lossky defines the *logoi* as “first causes, which are in fact God’s ideas-volitions, contained in His energies.”²⁷⁴ Louth disagrees, preferring to call them “in fact the will of God and predestinations” that are “not to be considered ontological realities.”²⁷⁵ In either case, however, they may be considered something through which God brought the creation into being. As such, they are nonetheless of the one Logos, forming a plurality in which they are distinct from one another but at the same time one with the Logos.²⁷⁶ Maximus explains the unity of these principles in doxological language, speaking of the many *logoi* as one being with the Logos, yet remaining unconfused in that all things are offered up to God through Christ:

For He Himself subsisted, along with the rational principles of the things which would come into existence, before the ages, supporting by His good will the

²⁷³ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1073B).

²⁷⁴ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology*, 76.

²⁷⁵ Andrew Louth, “St. Maximus’ Doctrine of the *logoi* of Creation,” *Studia Patristica*, vol. 48 (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2010), 82.

²⁷⁶ Wood suggests it counterproductive to think of Maximus’s *logoi* as “divine ideas,” or “Neoplatonic particular forms,” instead emphasizing precisely this point. The Logos self-distributes as *logoi*, and creation comes to be. See Jordan Daniel Wood, “Creation Is Incarnation: The Metaphysical Peculiarity of the *Logoi* in Maximus Confessor,” *Modern Theology* 34/1 (January 2018): 82-102.

invisible and visible creation, for He created, and creates, all things at the proper time by the agency of a rational principle and wisdom proper to the whole and to each thing individually.²⁷⁷

The relationship of the Logos and the *logoi* is for Maximus a carefully developed Christocentric doctrine. Rather than being identified conceptually with Platonic ideas, Maximus treats *logoi* as a tool of Christology, since the *logoi* reflect the presence of the Logos in the whole creation.

While all beings have natural movement, all creatures do not move in the same way; rather, each moves in accordance with the particular character of its *logos*. In other words, distinctive forms of movement are defined by a creature's *logos* and thus unique to each species. Moreover, because motion is the way in which creatures come to participate appropriately, the *logoi* are the instrument of the creatures' participation in God. According to Maximus, each creature has its genesis from the Logos according to the *logos* of its "being"; in addition, each creature has its distinctive form of movement, according to the principle of its "well-being"; in the eschaton the creature finds rest in the "ever-being."²⁷⁸ Alain Riou calls this dynamic triad "a metaphysical theory of movement."²⁷⁹ This metaphysical theory of movement is a "manifestation of a general law" that "the Logos of God (who is God) wills always and in all things to accomplish the mystery of His embodiment."²⁸⁰ Maximus resists with this metaphysical framework any Origenist hierarchical ladder of ascent towards divinity. Rather, the creation, though ontologically separate from God, is intended to reach integrality in itself so that in this integrated state it can be the place in which the Creator's purposes are fulfilled, that is, "praise and service to the Unlimited One."²⁸¹ Maximus envisions this integration as being attained in the personal incarnation of the Logos, in which the Christological vision mapped onto the creation is fulfilled.

The unravelling of the Origenist hierarchy (the denial of any "ladder of ascent" from species to species in a rise towards greater perfection and God) has a dual

²⁷⁷ Joseph Farrell, *Free Choice in St. Maximus the Confessor* (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1989), 136-137.

²⁷⁸ Alain Riou, *Le Monde et L'Eglise selon Maxime le Confesseur* (Paris: Beauschesne, 1973), 47.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

²⁸⁰ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1084C-D).

²⁸¹ von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 172.

implication. The ontological chasm between the Creator and the creation constitutes an “infinite distance and difference (*meson*) between the uncreated and the created.”²⁸² This “middle” space is the infinite ontological distance between the two, “mediated” by the *logoi*. Von Balthasar, in discussing the incarnation, invokes Maximus’s use of the word “chasm” (*chasma*) to describe the distance between the Creator and the creature.²⁸³ Use of this language by Maximus evokes images of the term’s use by Gregory of Nyssa and John Chrysostom to refer to the abyss set between the rich man and Lazarus, which “no one can cross over.”²⁸⁴ Additionally, the cosmology presented by Maximus is positively disposed to creatures or aspects of the creation that would be low on the ladder of Neoplatonic hierarchy. No creature is lower than another in its being (that is, all creatures are ontologically separate and equally distant from God, even though by grace, vocation establishes a unique or privileged role for human beings) but are equally situated in relation to God and equally dependent on the gracious emanation of the Logos.

3.2.3. Human Being as Mediator

A thread throughout Maximus’s work is the concept of the human being’s position as a mediator (*egasterion*) between God and the rest of creation.²⁸⁵ Maximus conceives of the human being as a mediator by his nature. In combination of his physical, spiritual, and psychological constitution, a human is a “microcosm”²⁸⁶ He writes in his *Mystagogy* concerning the analogous relationship between cosmos and human beings:

The entire cosmos consisting of the visible and invisible things is man. And man consisting of body and soul is cosmos. For the intelligible things participate to the substance of the soul as the soul has the same reason as the intelligible ones. And the sensible things bear the image of the body as the body is the image of the

²⁸² Amb. 7 (PG 91:1077A).

²⁸³ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory: Volume III: Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 221–22.

²⁸⁴ Luke 16:26.

²⁸⁵ Lars Thunberg gives the most extensive analysis of this theme in Idem, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1995).

²⁸⁶ Ep. 6 (PG 91:429D).

sensible things. The intelligible things are the soul of the sensible ones and the sensible things are the body of the intelligible ones.²⁸⁷

The mutual participation in the anthropological dynamism between soul and body allow the human being to mediate between the visible and the invisible, the spiritual and the material. Maximus imagines that the spiritual and material aspects of human beings are not intended to function such that one is necessarily utilitarian to the other, but together and inseparably constitute the sum of humanity's created nature. To this end, he emphasizes the natural unity between the soul and the body: "For there exists a law which binds them together. In these ones there is a *logos* of a unifying power which does not allow to loosen their identity on the basis of their unity according to hypostasis."²⁸⁸ Maximus believes that the soul in fact has a call to fulfill the function of mediating. He speaks of the saints' awareness of this intended middle position, that they redirected the movement of the soul so as to reacquaint it with God when "contrary to nature" it drifted towards the flesh.²⁸⁹ This unnatural drifting is described as the effect of the fall in which the natural human faculties of reason have turned away from God and shifted towards the sensible world. Thus, the unique relationship which the human being has to the sensible world, which had been intended in creation to be used according to God's intention for humanity to fulfill a mediating role, devolved into a "slavery to sensibility."

The natural role of humanity as a mediator for the whole of creation has the effect of making the human fall from grace a fall of all creation. The incapacity of fallen humanity to fulfill its role linking the spiritual and the material likewise alienates the non-rational creation from its spiritual source. Louth demonstrates that consequently when humans choose the nothingness of sin over love of God, the relationships in the cosmos are broken.²⁹⁰ This is the case in the fall, but also in every choice that humans subsequently make. These subsequent choices constitute unnatural movements for Maximus:

But moving naturally, as he was created to do, around the unmoved, as his own

²⁸⁷ Myst. 7 (PG 91:684C-685A).

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Amb. 10 (PG 91:1112C).

²⁹⁰ Andrew Louth, "Man and Cosmos in St. Maximus the Confessor," in *Towards and Ecology of Transfiguration*, ed. John Chryssavagis and Bruce V. Foltz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 68.

beginning (by which I mean God), was not what man did. Instead, contrary to nature, he willingly and foolishly moved around things below him, which God had commanded him to have dominion over. In this way he misused his natural, God-given capacity to united what is divided, and, to the contrary, divided what was united...²⁹¹

In this passage, Maximus emphasizes the impact of the fall, which is against our nature (*para phusin*) but nevertheless undertaken freely (*ekōn*) by humanity.

3.3. Maximus on the Will

3.3.1. Tropos and Logos

As already noted, for Maximus all creatures have a natural form of motion corresponding to their distinctive *logos*. Within this scheme, human beings, as rational creatures, are distinctive in that in their case motion is determined by the operation of the will. Yet if the will is characteristic of the *logos* of humanity, its particular deployment in any particular act is a function of the mode (or *tropos*) by which it is deployed by an individual human being. This distinction between the “principle” (*logos*) that defines the nature of a creature and “mode” (*tropos*) by which this nature takes individual form is a further feature of Maximian ontology.²⁹² This distinction allows Maximus to affirm not only a real ontological distinction between the Logos and the created *logoi*, but also a distinction between the *logos* of a particular created nature and the individual modes (*tropoi*) of existence that distinguish individuals of a given created species from one another.²⁹³ As John Zizioulas helpfully explains, *logos* means what the thing is, while *tropos* refers to how any instantiation of a *logos* in a particular entity operates: “Tropos

²⁹¹ Amb. 41 (PG 91:1308C).

²⁹² The most exhaustive analysis of the distinction between *logos* and *tropos* maybe be in Felix Heinzer, *Gottes Sohn als Mensch: Die Struktur des Menschseins Christi bei Maximus Confessor* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1980), 29-145.

²⁹³ In Maximus’s usage, we might consider the term *logos* as functioning equivalent to “*ousia*,” and *tropos* as equivalent to “*hypostasis*.” In this framework, Christ himself is two *logoi* in one *tropos*.

adjusts being to an intention or purpose or manner of communion...without change of what (*logoi*) each thing is.”²⁹⁴

As applied to the human will, the distinction between *logos* and *tropos* grounds a distinction – crucial to Maximus’s discussion of Christ’s human willing during the monothelite controversy – between the “natural” and “gnomic” will.²⁹⁵ Recognizing this distinction will allow us to later identify the corrective of the will that Maximus’s Christology provides. The natural will is for Maximus the *logos* that is essential to the creature. This has an “unalterable consistency” as “the immutability of *logoi* is founded in God.”²⁹⁶ However the natural will only exists in humanity as concretely realized in each individual – that is, in the *tropos* of the will. Thus, Maximus considers that while all of humanity shares a common natural will, each individual in her own hypostasis has a mode of willing specific to her as an individual. Each individual chooses according to its own *gnōme*, or inclination, and this choosing is an expression of its particular *tropos*. Gnostic will is then not a distinct faculty that exists alongside the natural will, but rather it is a *tropos* according to which the natural will operates in this life. Ideally, each person would freely choose in its *tropos* that which is in line with the *logos* of the natural will and thus with God’s own will and intent. However, Maximus perceives that in fallen humanity this *gnōme* refers to “a disposition or habitus of will, such as man as individual and as fallen creature may establish for himself.”²⁹⁷ Because *gnōme* is in this way variable (in that it is a function of individual inclination), it renders the will fallible. The human being is in this life confronted with conflicting desires. These cause her to deliberate, and to form an opinion (*gnōme*) so that she may choose between several conflicting or variable options. This process of deliberation is not intrinsic to the act of willing itself (God, according to Maximus, does not deliberate in willing), but only is characteristic of human willing in this life. Maximus describes the apparent complexity of deliberation beyond what is essential to willing:

Therefore willing is not choosing, for willing is a simple desire, rational and living; but choice is a confluence of desire, deliberation, and judgement. For

²⁹⁴ John D. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2007), 23.

²⁹⁵ This is considered by Léthel, “one of the keys of Maximus’ Christology.” See Idem, “Théologie de l’agonie du Christ,” 18.

²⁹⁶ “...son *logos* *proper* qui lui assure une consistance inaltérable; l’immutabilité des *logoi* est fondée en Dieu.” Ibid., 69.

²⁹⁷ Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 226.

when we desire, we first deliberate; and when we have deliberated, we make a judgement; and after we have judged, we choose what has been received by our judgement as better rather than worse. So willing depends solely on what is natural, but choice on those capacities that belong to us and operate through us.²⁹⁸

Maximus understands sin to be a result of these choices when our gnostic will diverges from the divine will. When one makes poor choices and errors in deliberation, it is an indication that in making the choices which it has, the will has deviated from its *logos*. For Maximus this deviation from the *logos* is a turning from God and therefore a turning of created nature against itself. Such a fallibility of the will does not necessitate, however, that the human being is incapable of choosing wisely and in accordance with God's will. To say otherwise would suggest that the fall was inevitable and thereby compromise the goodness of the original creation, in which human beings were endowed with a discerning will as the form of their God-given means of moving toward perfection. Because Maximus understands the creation as something good (including the will as it was created), he supposes that the will as it operates in this life is not incapable of rightly deliberating and discerning God's will through a combination of grace and ascetic discipline. Although the will can be trained and disciplined to align with God's will and progress in holiness, the degree to which the will has been compromised by the fall (which Maximus conjectures occurred almost immediately after the creation) is by no means trivial.

The fall results from a poor choice. It is the result of a primordial turning of the will from God. Maximus considers that human passions since the fall are focused on sensory experience. That is to say, the inclinations of the human being are subject to the appeal of pleasure and the desire to avoid pain. As such, human being will tend to determine good and evil in terms of pleasure and pain, establishing associations over which to deliberate. Maximus considers that pleasure and pain were not created simultaneously with the flesh, but rather the fall created the conditions that led to human beings to conceive of pleasure as we know it. Maximus calls this a "meaningless pleasure,

²⁹⁸ Opusc. 1 (PG 91:13A) translated in Ian A. McFarland, "The Theology of the Will," in *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, ed. Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 523.

which invaded human nature.”²⁹⁹ In the pursuit of this pleasure, the human being’s power of choice is corrupted. Rather than pursue the spiritual, higher things, in accordance with their nature, the human intellect becomes rooted in the desires of the body and manically longs after sensible things. Maximus proposes that as a corrective God implanted pain, so that together with death (that follows it) human beings may be chastened for the meaningless pleasure they have pursued.³⁰⁰ Thus Maximus expands upon the Pauline trope of death as the result of sin to propose that suffering follows unnatural pleasure as a type of natural debt. Again and again, human beings choose according to their senses, chasing after “ill-gotten pleasure” and avoiding the pain that is imposed against their will.³⁰¹

3.3.2. Deliberation as Impaired Volition

For Maximus, then, the will is essential to humanity. It is a natural property of human beings. However, while willing is intrinsic to human existence, choosing is not. It is rather a function of the exercise of the will under the conditions of space and time, when perception of God is not immediate. This situation results in the need for deliberation and choice, which leads to error when humanity makes choices that conflict with God’s will. This failure in choosing is related to the *tropos* of willing, not to its *logos*, which is tied to nature. The implications of the will’s misuse and the fall that results from it are significant. While gnostic willing is necessarily how the will operates in this life, after the fall the acts of deliberation and discernment do not so much reflect humanity’s freedom as they illustrate both the limitation of human capacity and humanity’s postlapsarian alienation from nature. The will’s freedom should lie in its ability to follow natural desire (i.e., to correspond in its willing to its *logos*) without resistance and thus exist in harmony with its *logos* and with God. However, the process of deliberation demonstrates that the will does not automatically recognize and desire the good. In a paradoxical way, then, Maximus presents the human need to choose as evidence that the will is not in fact free. The need to discern demonstrates that the human being lacks something. She lacks the immediate and absolute knowledge of the good in

²⁹⁹ Maximus the Confessor, *Various Texts on Theology* 4:35 in Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware, *The Philokalia*, 244.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 4:34 in Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware, *The Philokalia*, 244.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 4:38 in Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware, *The Philokalia*, 244.

this life, and with it, freedom as Maximus envisions it. In this way, freedom, as popularly perceived, is for Maximus an illusion.³⁰² To will properly, that is, in accordance with its nature, Maximus imagines in the *Various Texts on Theology* an unlikely scenario in which humanity would need to freely choose the chastisement that it did not desire but which was imposed upon it because of its freely chosen pleasure.³⁰³ The reversal of humanity's situation of a fatally damaged will requires a will that is fully connected to its nature, unstained by the fallen *tropos* of gnostic willing.

3.4. Maximus's Christological Solution to the Problem of the Fallen Will

3.4.1. The Humanity of Christ

Maximus's insistence that Christ must have two wills, preserving the integrity of his two natures, concluded the theological debate around monothelitism. However, for Maximus the reality of Christ having both a divine and a human will does more than confirm the completeness of the natures he possesses. Maximus takes critical interest in Christ's human will because it helps clarify the role that Christ fulfills as mediator of creation and exemplar of humanity's unique role as a creature within that creation. At the time of the monothelite controversy the intended meaning of "will" and "willing" (*thelema*, *thelesis*) was ambiguous, potentially meaning the faculty of the will, the act of willing itself, or an intended purpose or objective. Because these terms were not well-defined, it is difficult to ascertain precisely what the monothelites intended in using them, although it is likely that all three meanings were employed.³⁰⁴ The monothelite insistence on one *thelema* sought to assert the unity of Christ in a way that would appeal to the Cyrillian inclinations of the miaphysite churches in the empire. Maximus's interest in distinguishing the wills that are active in Christ, by contrast, serves (among other things) to demonstrate the role of his humanity in his saving work. He frequently appeals to Jesus's prayer in Gethsemane (especially the version in Luke 22:24) as evidence of a

³⁰² Disputatio (PG 91:293B).

³⁰³ Maximus the Confessor, *Various Texts on Theology* 4:38 in Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware, *The Philokalia*, 244.

³⁰⁴ Demetrios Bathrellos, *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 74-76.

distinctly human will (what Jesus calls “my will”) that is in tension with a divine will (which, because it is by definition identical with the Father’s, Jesus calls “your will”). This distinction of wills in Jesus’s prayer suggests to Maximus that human beings have a natural will, which he views as “the most proper and primary property of every rational nature.”³⁰⁵ Insofar as Jesus is human, he, too, possesses this natural will, which must be distinct from that of the Father.³⁰⁶ By ascribing the will to the nature as opposed to the person or hypostasis, Maximus establishes that without a distinct will proper to his human nature, Christ would not be truly human.

For Maximus, the historical event of the incarnation not only affects the “what” of the relationship between God and the creation, but “how” this relationship exists. An example of this distinction can be found in Maximus’s discussion of the unity of Christ in his *Ambigua*: “He made human nature his very own—literally, really, and truly—uniting it to Himself according to hypostasis without change, alteration, diminishment, or division, and maintaining it unaltered in accordance with its essential principle and definition.”³⁰⁷ In this example, Maximus shows that the nature, the “what” of humanity, could be taken by Christ upon himself without change, such that it subsists in him “by its own essential principle.” This is the *logos* of humanity, which Christ assumes in taking flesh and which is therefore united to him hypostatically. From this perspective, what is changed about humanity by virtue of the incarnation is not what it is (i.e., its *logos*), but how it functions (its *tropos*). In the *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, Maximus describes the *tropos* of humanity being redirected when he discusses the removal of passions from the human nature by Christ. Maximus makes this point in explaining how Christ “put off the principalities and powers” on the cross when “he remained impervious to his sufferings and, what is more, manifested the fear of death, thereby driving from our nature the passion associated with pain.”³⁰⁸ Here it is not something of human nature (viz., its *logos*) that Christ is putting off. That is retained without change; rather it is “a bond,” the mode (*tropos*) of its activity – in the latter case, “the passion associated with pain.” Pain itself as a biological function is not eliminated, but rather its customary association with passion.

³⁰⁵ Opusc. 3 (PG 91:56A).

³⁰⁶ As discussed further below, however, Maximus will deny that Christ has a gnostic will like other human beings.

³⁰⁷ Amb. 42 (PG 91:1320C).

³⁰⁸ Ad Thal. 21 in Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings from St. Maximus the Confessor* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), 112.

The mind of Christ is not determined by these passions that normally arise with pain, but rather dominates them. In this way, Christ is changing the “how” of our existence, to borrow Zizioulas’s language.³⁰⁹

Within this metaphysical framework, the incarnation sees the Logos take upon himself the *logos* of human nature. Because the hypostasis of Jesus’s human nature remains that of being the divine Logos (the Second Person of the Trinity), his mode of existence (*tropos hyparxeōs*) is divine.³¹⁰ In terms of Chalcedonian language, the Word, having hypostatically inhabited flesh without in any way abandoning his divinity, exists in two natures “without confusion,” such that the property of each nature is preserved in this relationship between them. The assumption of human nature does not confuse the being of the Second Person of the Trinity; that is what it means to specify that the “way” (*tropos*) in which he is human is as the divine Logos (just as Maximus would say Christ does human things divinely). It is entirely sufficient for the Logos to assume the *logos* of humanity to be truly human.

Importantly, the affirmation of Christ’s assuming the *logos* of humanity does not imply the assumption of a fallen human nature, since fallenness is rightly described in terms of *tropos* (i.e., how the nature functions) rather than *logos* (what it is). Christ is fully human without sharing in a fallen *tropos*.³¹¹ The divine Logos can certainly be said to have assumed a human nature that is mutable, but not “fallen” in the sense of having its willing inherently corrupted (since the corruption of willing pertains to the hypostasis, which, in Christ’s case, is divine and therefore incapable of being corrupted).³¹² Thus, according to Maximus Jesus can be entirely creaturely without being sinful:

In being formed as a human being, he condescended to....the creaturely origin of Adam prior to his fall.... he assumed the natural liability to

³⁰⁹ Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 24-5.

³¹⁰ It is worthwhile to remember at this point that Hypostatic Union does not exist until the Incarnation. This demonstrates in a Christological example that while all *logoi* subsist eternally in the Logos, they do not “exist” until they assume their *tropoi*. For this reason, Maximus’s theory is different from the Origenist pre-existence of souls. These *logoi* do not “exist” without having taken on their *tropos* within history.

³¹¹ See Ian A. McFarland, “‘Willing Is Not Choosing’: Some Anthropological Implications of Dyothelite Christology,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9 no. 1 (2007): 11.

³¹² We might note that such a human nature would by Maximus’s accounting be mutable even without the fall, as mutability (as motion) is inherent in createdness.

passions but not sinfulness. He became the New Adam by assuming a sinless creaturely origin and yet submitting to a passible birth.... he effectively rectified the deficiency of the one with the extreme of the other.³¹³

These distinctions in Maximus are critical in securing Christ's full humanity while at the same time acknowledging the differences in the "way" in which Christ is human. Christ shares in the fundamental and essential nature of humanity, which is in no sense overwhelmed by his divinity, although its mode (*tropos*) of being is entirely informed and defined by Jesus' identity as the Son of God. Thus, while Christ is impervious to the shortcomings of a human nature because of his divine hypostasis, he is not less human for it but in fact more human in that the way in which he lives out his humanity is in perfect conformity with God's will for the human *logos* to be in fellowship with the divine. Union with the divine "rectifies the deficiency" in humanity.

3.4.2. Gnostic Will

While Maximus was convinced that a dyothelite Christology was necessary to affirm two natures in Christ, the nature of Christ's human will itself was a matter all its own. Maximus's thought on this topic evolved over the course of his career. Within Maximus's broader reflections on the will and willing, *gnōme* in particular proves a relatively fluid term, generally referring to "a dispositional desire (*endiatheton orexin*) for things up to us."³¹⁴ In his early works, Maximus equates the will simply with *gnōme*. In contemplating distinctions in how the will functions, Maximus identifies that desire (*boulesis*) and choice (*prohairesis*) are aspects of willing. The former refers to a desire of the imagination and may be for things that are within one's control or not, that is to say, an appetitive will; while the latter is desire that results from not only deliberation on but also judgment for the object desired.³¹⁵ In his *Commentary on the Lord's Prayer*, which predates his involvement in the monothelite controversy, he had used *gnōme* to describe the operation of Christ's will in the agony of the Passion, showing no deviation from his

³¹³ Amb. 42 (PG 91:1317A) in Blowers and Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 81.

³¹⁴ Opusc. 1 (PG 91:17C). For more detailed discussion of the use of *gnōme* in Maximus, see Polycarp Sherwood, *St. Maximus the Confessor: The Ascetic Life, The Four Centuries on Charity* (New York: Newman Press, 1955), 58-63.

³¹⁵ Opusc. 1 (PG 91:12A-B, 16B-C). *Prohairesis* thus appears as something that rises from *gnōme* and continues to be treated as a "gnomic" activity in his later writings.

resolve to suffer the cross, by which he conquered the fear of death. In his interchangeable use *gnōme* and *prohairesis* Maximus had intended to show Christ as a unique case in which desire and deliberation were conformed perfectly to God's will and operate perfectly.

Other terms in Maximus's later writings were given greater focus by their association with the biblical term *thelema*. Thus, Maximus began to speak specifically of the gnostic will (*gnōmikon thelema*), which was distinguished by Maximus from the natural will (*logikon thelema*) as "the self-chosen impulse and movement of reasoning toward one thing or another."³¹⁶ In summary, whereas in his earlier writings Maximus used *gnōme* to describe the will as such, later Maximus distinguished between *gnōme* and the natural will. The significance of this distinction is as follows: willing was to be understood as a natural human act shaped in every concrete instance by an individual's *gnōme*.

This transition in Maximus's usage can be traced to the 640s, when in his *Opuscula* and the *Disputation with Pyrrhus* he denies that Christ can be ascribed a gnostic will.³¹⁷ In the *Disputatio*, for example, it is evident that "gnomic" has come to suggest a type of deliberation between possibilities that Maximus considers inappropriate referring to Christ:

Those who say that there is a *gnōme* in Christ...are maintaining that he is a mere man, deliberating in a manner like us, having ignorance, doubt, and opposition...Because of this, then, the gnostic will is fitly ascribed to us, being a mode (*tropos*) of use and not a principle (*logos*) of nature...But the humanity of Christ does not simply subsist in a manner similar to us, but divinely, for he who appeared in the flesh for our sakes was God. It is thus not possible to say that Christ had a gnostic will.³¹⁸

As the gnostic will is that which deliberates between good and evil, it belongs to the *tropos* of earthly humanity, prior to glorification, and cannot be possessed by Christ who,

³¹⁶ Opusc. 14 (PG 91:153A-B) quoted in Polycarp Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua of St. Maximus the Confessor and His Refutation of Origenism* (Rome: Herder, 1955), 201.

³¹⁷ Demetrios Bathrellos gives a full account of reasons for Maximus's decision in Idem, *The Byzantine Christ*, 148-62.

³¹⁸ *Disputatio* (PG 91:308C-309A). Cf. Bathrellos, *The Byzantine Christ*, 157.

as the Logos, does not need to deliberate regarding the good. As *gnōme* is a mode of willing particular to an individual human hypostasis, and as Christ has no independent human hypostasis but only that one that is identical with the Logos, his human actions, as they are only willed naturally, are incapable of deviating from the good.³¹⁹ This is the difference between the human will as is operative in Christ and as is operative in the rest of humanity. In Christ there are two natural wills, corresponding to his two natures; but because they are united under one divine hypostasis, neither will operates gnomically, as neither nature lacks either knowledge of the good or inclination towards it.

By making it clear that Christ's will is not merely united to God gnomically (i.e., that Christ knowing the Father's will deliberates and resultantly determines to obey it), Maximus is avoiding any appearance of a Nestorian Christ.³²⁰ Thunberg suggests there is not as drastic a change in Maximus's thought as would appear, and that the perfected gnostic will of Christ that Maximus presupposes in his earlier writings is comparable to Christ's deified natural will as he describes it in his later, anti-monothelite writings. Regardless, Maximus's later explicit rejection of a gnostic will in Christ is based on two presuppositions: firstly, in assuming the *logos* of human nature (which in the Old Adam is corrupted by disobedience), the Logos manifests the *tropos* of being the New Adam (who is obedient); secondly, as the Word made flesh, Jesus does not deliberate between good and evil as humans do to exercise their free choice.

Maximus's denial of a gnostic will in Christ implies that he understands there to be a fundamental difference between the *tropos* of the human will as it exists in Christ and as it exists in every other human being: "In the Incarnate One there are two wills, because there are two natures (and two activities). But there is no gnostic will in Christ...for there is no deprivation of knowledge of the good."³²¹ Maximus affirms that Christ possessed a natural human will, in keeping with his being fully human, since natural will is proper to the *logos* of humanity. However, he posits that the uniqueness of his personal hypostasis as the incarnate Logos made it impossible for him to succumb to any inclination toward sin that exists in the rest of humanity because of the deliberative *gnōme*. This is to say that in Christ exists human will according to the *logos*, but not the *tropos* of "deprivation of knowledge of the good." Gauthier explains that Maximus thus

³¹⁹ Ibid. (PG 91:308D).

³²⁰ If the union of wills were merely a matter of choice, the substantive unity of the wills and the unity of Christ might be threatened.

³²¹ Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 61.

establishes “two complementary truths, that...Christ possessed a human will, and that...He did not possess a peccable will.”³²² In Christ, as in every other human, there is a natural will. However, as the *tropos* of Christ’s humanity is defined by its hypostatic union with the divine Logos, Jesus’s human will is simultaneously superior to every other human will in that it is not subject to the same risk of sinning as every other human will.

This combination of divine hypostasis and human nature is that which within the incarnation effects salvation by Maximus’ estimation. Thunberg identifies this union in the incarnation as “the supreme act of divine grace, which manifests and carries into effect the salvific relationship between God and man.”³²³ According to Thunberg, the incarnation is to be understood as a “cooperative act, an act of reciprocity.”³²⁴ Maximus cannot conceive of a scenario in which salvation is “forced” upon humanity. Likewise, he does not conceive of salvation as an act in which the natures of Christ are divided, so that it is in his human nature only that Christ reconciles humanity to God. Rather it is the union and cooperation of God and humanity in Christ that allows for a truly free and effective act of salvation. For Maximus it is critical that this act of salvation be rooted a free act of the human will to reverse the free human act that led to the fall. Indeed, it is not merely poetic but essential that as the human will caused the fall, the human will should contribute to the restoration of humanity. Salvation in Christ is a free choice of both human and divine wills. To this end the freedom of Christ’s human will is necessary. Francois-Marie Léthel summarizes this point:

For the “fiat” of Jesus in Gethsemane expresses the ultimate decision of his human will before the imminent Passion. To save us, “Christ had to suffer his Passion.” This mysterious necessity proceeded from the philanthropy of God, from that same benevolent will (*eudokia*) that the three persons have towards us. But for Christ to save us, it was also necessary that his Passion be preceded by the acceptance of his human will.³²⁵

³²² R. Gauthier, “Saint Maxime le Confesseur et la Psychologie de L’acte Humain,” in *Recherches de theologie ancienne et medievale*, vol. 21, 1954, 52 quoted in Joseph Farrell, *Free Choice in St. Maximus the Confessor* (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 1989), 107.

³²³ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, 65-66.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Léthel, “Théologie de l’agonie du Christ,” 18.

Christ in his humanity must freely choose to act according to the Father's will, freely choosing to empty himself. In Christ is united the power of God to effect salvation and the consent and cooperation of the human will which once rebelled. Notwithstanding the logical necessity for human cooperation so that salvation is not coercive or fictive, Maximus maintains the gratuity of salvation. Only by the God's election to become incarnate and unite God's divine being to humanity does either the potential or the will exist for salvation to be initiated as both a fully divine and fully human act in the divinized person of Christ.

3.4.3. Nature and Grace

In *Ambigua* 7, Maximus takes on the challenge of addressing how the Christian may become a god by grace without the loss of the *logos* of his nature: "He places himself wholly in God alone, wholly imprinting and forming God alone in himself, so that by grace he is God and is called God."³²⁶ Maximus's conception of salvation here is participatory. He derives this model of participation from Pseudo-Dionysius, who imagines the universe in grades of reality according to a cosmic hierarchy, emanating from and returning to God who is the absolute Cause. In this system the imagined heavenly hierarchy exists in grades of perfection that emanate through the grades of the hierarchy downward, but such that the efflux comes to each creature directly from God, its origin. However, Maximus moves away from the language of emanation (and related Neoplatonic cosmology) and adopts Aristotelian language of rest, potentiality (*dunamis*), and act.³²⁷ In Aristotle, nature is a principle of action or rest. As such, whether a thing moves or rests points to its agency.³²⁸ Likewise, Aristotle contrasts between these internal principles of action and rest, and potentiality. This language of motion and the logic of causal explanations proves useful in identifying the nature of things and their relationship to one another. Maximus speaks of participation in terms of efficient causality, imitation, and supernatural grace. In *Ambigua* 42, for example, he describes participation in God according to one's *logos*:

³²⁶ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1084C) in Blowers and Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 60.

³²⁷ See S.E. Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 204-227.

³²⁸ Aristotle, *Physics* 2.1, 192b20-23.

Of all the things that do exist...the *logoi*, firmly fixed, pre-exist in God, in accordance with which all things have become and abide, ever drawing near through natural motion to their purposed *logoi*. These things are rather constrained to being and receive, according to the kind and degree of their elective movement and motion, either well-being because of virtue and direct progress in regards to the *logos* by which they are, or well-being because of the vice and motion out of harmony with the *logos* by which they exist....according to the having or the lack, in their natural participative faculty of him who exists by nature completely and unparticipated and who proffers himself entirely simply and graciously by reason of his limitless goodness to all.³²⁹

By nature, one participates in God by virtue of their existence, as being itself proceeds from God into the creation. Maximus clarifies the efficient-causal nature of this participation by stating elsewhere that “all things, in that they came to be from God, participate proportionally in God, whether by intellect, by reason, by sense-perception, by vital motion, or by some habitual fitness.”³³⁰ Alongside this first mode of participation, which is defined by nature, *Ambigua* 7 outlines a second mode of participation in God: by imitation. Participation by imitation is related to participation by causation, but nevertheless still merits recognition as something distinct. Imitation refers to the free exercise of virtue;³³¹ and because God the Logos is the substance of virtue, practicing virtues is participation in God.³³² If imitation of virtue suggests participation in morality, then it is an ontological participation in that the virtuous enactment of *logoi* emanate from God in whom these *logoi* pre-exist. Maximus does not explicitly discuss participation in terms of grace, but grace undergirds the modes of participation in God’s life. For it is no more possible for the creature to initiate her own participation than it is for her to establish her own existence. Sharing of divine attributes is not only contingent but is incomplete until the resurrection. Maximus understands the participation that takes place in this life to be a real but limited sharing in the eschatological benefit of full participation in the divine life.³³³ These things are gracious in that they are entirely contingent on the

³²⁹ Amb. 42 (PG 91:1329A-B) in Blowers and Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 60.

³³⁰ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1080B) in Blowers and Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 55.

³³¹ Disputatio 88-95 (PG 91:309B-11A).

³³² Amb. 7 (PG 91:1081D).

³³³ Ad. Thal. 22.

creature's necessary participation in the Logos for both its being and its eschatological fulfillment.

3.4.4. Restoration of Human Nature

Maximus understands the restoration of human nature in Christ to be a restoration of all creation. Christ exemplifies the proper human form and, more broadly, proper creaturely motion, structured by the creature's *logos* and formed according to a virtuous *tropos*. As such Christ himself is the solution to the problem of a fallen humanity. In the person of Christ, the creature is made what it could not will or cause itself to be. Humanity in Christ is then able to serve again as mediator between the spiritual and the physical. Maximus envisions this work of restoration as a "lifting up to God" of the very creation in which our extremities operate and naturally relate:

For humanity clearly has the power of naturally uniting at the mean point of each division since it is related to the extremities of each division in its own parts. Through that capacity it can come to be the way of fulfilment of what is divided and be openly instituted in itself as the great mystery of the divine purpose. It proceeds harmoniously to each of the extremities in the things that are, from what is close at hand to what is remote, from what is worse to what is better, lifting up to God and fully accomplishing union. For this reason the human person was introduced last among beings, as a kind of natural bond mediating between the universal poles through their proper parts, and leading into unity in itself those things that are naturally set apart from one another by a great interval.³³⁴

The potential for encompassing this mediation is grounded in the "rational" (*logikos*) nature given to humanity. The rationality of humans, their ability to will, as well as the human capacity for love that involves both, can be understood as belonging to humanity by virtue of its vocation as mediator. The choices of humanity are ones in which the entirety of the universe is caught up because it is through their natural priesthood that the material cosmos relates to the divine creator in an intentional way. As such the potential to unite the cosmos with God lies in humanity's choices and fulfillment of its priestly role

³³⁴ Amb. 41 (PG 91:1305BC) in Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 155.

in the “cosmic liturgy.”

The reversal of the destructive impact of human willing on the creation requires a renewal of human nature in Christ. This Christological reversal is emphasized in Maximus’s account of the hypostatic union: “Indeed being in himself the universal union (*henōseōs*) of all, he has started without division (*diaireseōs*) and become the perfect human being, having from us, on our account, and in accordance without nature, everything that we are and lacking nothing, apart from sin.”³³⁵ Maximus speaks of this union that Christ effects in himself as the “universal union of all” in which Christ can unite all things because he is himself at unity in his own being. Maximus’s account of humanity as mediator thus gives meaning to why the Logos needed to become incarnate to accomplish salvation. Christ in his humanity restores this mediation that was lost, subsequently offering this restored office and vocation to human beings through a renewed human nature:

[Christ has] in accordance with nature, united the fragments of the universal nature of all, manifesting the universal *logoi* that have come forth for the particulars, by which the union of the divided naturally comes about, and thus he fulfills the great purpose of God the Father, to recapitulate everything both in heaven and earth in himself (Eph. 1:10), in whom everything has been created (Col. 1:16).³³⁶

This recapitulation in Christ is a restoration of the natural power that had been lost to humanity by its abuse of its freedom. By its concrete participation in Christ, human nature is restored for its original purpose, and human beings can again freely partake in the purpose for which they were created. In the person of Christ, human nature’s potential to mediate the creation is restored as the rational desires of the created mediator are redeemed and redirected towards God.

³³⁵ Amb. 41 (PG 91:1308D-1309A) in Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 159.

³³⁶ Ibid.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen how Maximus's ontology and Christology guide his investigation into the nature of relationship with God in general and the nature of the will in particular. These reflections establish key commitments in any further consideration of *theosis*. Firstly, it establishes that for Maximus the relationship between the human and the divine can only be properly considered in light of Christology and the historical event of the incarnation. Throughout all his writings, Maximus upholds the Chalcedonian convictions that in Christ there are to be acknowledged "two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person." This relationship between the human and the divine as revealed in the person of Christ has several dimensions. It is, first, something already intimated in the fabric of creation itself, in the reality of creation's grounding in the gracious self-expression of the Logos. Further, it is concretely manifest in the mystery of the incarnation, where the Logos does not self-distribute encrypted as many *logoi* (as in creation) but is revealed in a perfect union between the fullness of divinity and the fullness of humanity. Finally, it is the *telos* of creation.

The second commitment is that in his consideration of Christ's willing, Maximus identifies what are for him key characteristics of the human will. Those are that there exists a natural will, common to humanity, which is assumed by the Logos in the incarnation; and that in prelapsarian and fallen humanity the natural will operates gnomically, or deliberatively, but does not operate as such in Christ. This gnostic will in human beings is inclined according to passions and describes the *habitus* of the will such as the fallen creature would establish for himself. Thus, the will in fallen humanity appears incapable of aligning with God's will on its own, but Christ, as the very Word of God, knows God's will immediately and acts in accordance with it, with the result that the passions of his body are subjugated to his mind. Because of this, Maximus views Christ as the healing of the fallen will.

Thirdly, that in Christ we see the microcosm of creation and the unique vocation of the human being as a rational creature. This vocation of mediator is one for which humanity was created and is one in which human beings can once again partake by virtue of their participation in Christ who has reconciled the Creator and the creation in his own body through the hypostatic union and the concomitant deification of the human will in

his being. These Christological commitments and anthropological proposals will contextualize and guide our discussions of *theosis* as it may interplay with Luther's theology going forward.

4. Reading Luther Through Maximus's Chalcedonian Christological Lens

Thus far we have reviewed both Luther and Maximus in their understanding of salvation and what is at stake for both theologically. Luther's understanding of salvation is primarily as justification: a forensic declaration of forgiveness made by God about the human being in consideration of the work of Christ, particularly his redemptive suffering and death. Maximus's understanding of salvation is presented primarily as *theosis*: the divinization of the human made possible by the personal ontology of Christ, particularly through the mystery of the incarnation. What these two accounts of salvation share is a deeply Christological emphasis and grounding. While the person and the work of Christ are inseparable from one another for both Luther and Maximus, Luther arguably focuses on salvation as being grounded in the work of Christ on the cross while Maximus focuses more on the person of Christ as the incarnate Logos. In spite of this difference, both these Christocentric accounts of salvation share implications for the role of human agency, with particular focus on the will, in salvation.

In this chapter we will explore this commonality and begin to consider the category of the will as a possible point of convergence between Maximus and Luther. This point of convergence overcomes conventional opposition between the former as promoting an ontological account of salvation (*theosis*) and the latter as defending a relational one (justification). In both Luther and Maximus, the will reveals common concerns and a common understanding of what life in Christ means. Maximus arrives at the will through his Christology, as he addresses the question of Jesus' freedom. Luther, in contrast, takes an interest in the will from a starting point in anthropology, as he addresses the problem of fallen humanity's unfreedom. This chapter will begin with a comparison of Luther and Maximus's accounts of the will and historical criticism of both. The chapter will then explore both theologians' accounts of Christ's freedom as it stands in relation to the will. Finally, it will explore subsequent freedom in Christ for human beings in relation to the will.

4.1 Comparing Maximus and Luther on Human Freedom

4.1.1. Criticism of Maximus's Account of the Will

Luther and Maximus both present accounts of salvation that have been vulnerable historically to criticism over what role, if any, humans play in their salvation. Maximus's opponents saw the human will as a liability in the economy of salvation. As we have seen, the monothelites denied the presence of a human will in Christ. The prevailing theory among them as to what nature of "willing" took place in Christ was that Christ's willing was only ever divine willing (and not also a fully human willing that was different but not opposed to his divine willing). This was considered appropriate by the monothelites, for if Christ's human nature was guided by the divine command there could be no conflict between the two natures, in accordance with the Chalcedonian formula.³³⁷ Moreover, if there was no possibility of Christ's will deviating from God's, one could be sure of Christ's impeccability. Dyothelites like Maximus conceded that they had to respond to the problem of a human will in Christ suggesting sinfulness. They agreed that had Christ possessed a human will that was corrupted by sin, it would necessarily be in conflict with the divine will. Their differing posture from the monothelites lies in the two groups' respective assumptions about the will before and after the fall. Some monothelites argued that prior to the fall, human beings actually possessed the divine will, a position in line with the defining claim of the monothelites that Christ only possessed one will. Macarius I, the patriarch of Antioch, claimed Adam could be considered "co-willer" with God (*sunetheletēs tō theō*).³³⁸ This idea was formally rejected (and Macarius deposed) by the Third Council of Constantinople, on the grounds that sharing the divine will would imply that Adam shared in the divine essence – implying that either Adam in fact did not sin, or his sin was a result of the divine will.³³⁹ For Adam to have sinned, he had to have possessed his own will. Reasoning along similar lines, Maximus also had been clear that a distinctively human will must be natural to the human being, and if natural to the human

³³⁷ *Neūma*, "command" or "expression of will" is used in the *Ecthesis*. See ACO 2, I.160, 25-29.

³³⁸ ACO 2, II.244, 15.

³³⁹ In Cyril's language, "As [Christ] is homoousios, then he is co-willer with his Father, for one essence certainly has one will." ACO 2, II 246, 1-2.

being, then also affected by the fall and in need of being assumed by Christ in order to be redeemed.

Anastasius of Sinai, abbot of Saint Catherine's Monastery (died c. 700) presents another monothelite challenge against Maximus's dyothelitism. This monothelite argument supposes that if there were two wills (or, for that matter, energies) in Christ, then the hypostatic union of a human will with a divine would deify it and change it in such a way that it could not be considered unique or separate from the divine will anymore. This would effectively eliminate the distinctive human element from the union so that it would be nonsensical to speak of a human will as though it were independent of the divine will. In other words, according to Anastasius, "the theosis of the will decreases its number" (*hē theōsis tou thelēmatos tou arithmou esti meiōsis*).³⁴⁰ This amounts to an absorption of the human will so that it is completely subsumed into the divine will – a confusion that is incompatible with Chalcedon. That the human nature of Christ might be moved completely by the divine will is an assumption also made by Pyrrhus in his disputation with Maximus.³⁴¹ Pyrrhus challenges Maximus (who cannot disagree) that the "flesh is moved by the decision of the Word who is united with it."³⁴² Maximus however sees in this way of putting the matter the basis for positing a distinction of wills in Christ. This is demonstrated in his example of Moses and David as individuals in scripture who, while not hypostatically united to the Logos, were nonetheless "susceptible to the influence of the divine energies" and thus "moved by [God's] command." That is to say, these figures prove for Maximus that being moved by the divine will does not mean that a human being does not possess a human will. Hovorun explains this in terms of the communication of idioms:

Once the will is acknowledged to be one of the natural properties, then by virtue of the *communicatio idiomatum* it would also be possible to speak about *communicatio voluntatum*. As with the natural properties, *communicatio voluntatum* does not imply that the wills undergo any change or confusion:

'Thus if you say that there is a common will by the mode of exchange (*tō tēs*

³⁴⁰ Anastasius of Sinai, *Anastasii Sinaitae: Sermones duo in constitutionem hominis secundum imaginem Dei; necnon opuscula adversus Monotheletas* (CCSG 12) VI 3, ed. Karl-Heinz Uthemann, (Brepols: Leuven University Press, 1985), 20-21.

³⁴¹ Disputatio (PG 91:297A).

³⁴² Disputatio (PG 91:297B).

antidoseōs tropō), then you are really saying that there is not one will but two wills.³⁴³

Maximus argues that “since the God of all has himself become man without change, it follows that the same person not only willed properly (*katallēlos*) as God in his divinity, but also willed appropriately as man in his humanity.”³⁴⁴

At bottom, the monothelites rejected two wills in Christ because they held that two wills would suggest two persons (two “willers”), and thus compromise the Chalcedonian confession of Christ as one person. Maximus’s attribution of the will to nature allows it to be understood as a property of his humanity, rather than a function of person or hypostasis. Since the will, on this account, belongs to humanity’s *logos*, only its *tropos* – that is, the deployment of the will in particular acts of willing – would be determined by the person. For Maximus, Christ therefore willed “doubly” (*duikōs*), both as God and as man.³⁴⁵ The necessity of this double willing is wholly soteriological, with the human will in Christ understood in line with Gregory’s principle that what is not assumed is not healed. Christ’s double willing serves to heal the human will as it wills in conformity with the divine. In Christ, the human will, through its assumption by the hypostasis of the Word and corresponding union with divinity, is able to do that which it cannot do on its own, namely, will in accordance with God’s will.

4.1.2. Criticism of Luther’s Account of the Will

Turning to Luther, we find that his tendency towards monergism over synergism regarding the place of the human will in salvation is typical of the Augustinian tradition that he inherited. For this reason, it might not seem at first glance to promise much convergence with Maximus’s thought. Nevertheless, Luther’s position can be seen to stand in positive relation to concerns addressed not only by Augustine, but also by Maximus. In this context, it is worthwhile to briefly comment on similarities in treatments of the will by Augustine and Maximus. Augustine and Maximus are the first figures in the West and the East, respectively, to give sustained theological attention to the will. These expansions on Christian doctrine of the will inevitably involve questions of its capacity.

³⁴³ Hovorun, *Will, Action and Freedom*, 161.

³⁴⁴ Disputatio (PG 91:297B).

³⁴⁵ Disputatio (PG 91:289B).

The question of capacity versus incapacity, according to Zizioulas, “never ceased to represent two options of a dilemma in theological discussion.”³⁴⁶ Zizioulas explains how from the beginning both East and West were anxious to stress the difference between divine nature and human nature, as reflected in the theological importance of Chalcedon to both East and West. “There was, nevertheless,” Zizioulas contends, “always a tendency in the West to view the two natures from the angle of their particular qualities, and to go to the mystery of salvation with a somewhat overdeveloped interest in what happens to man as man.”³⁴⁷ This preoccupation, he argues, led to the question at stake in the Pelagian controversy, which also shaped Luther’s later concerns: What does a human being contribute to salvation? Something or nothing?

In his anti-Pelagian writings, Augustine’s primary purpose was to demonstrate that human beings are incapable of effecting their own salvation. However, McFarland observes that the more fundamental disagreement between Augustine and the Pelagians was not over the capacity of the will (i.e., how much it might accomplish in relation to God’s law), but the nature of the will itself.³⁴⁸ The Pelagian interest in asserting the will’s capacity and self-sufficiency presented it as the seat of human autonomy (i.e., its independence of external causes). This understanding of the will falls well in line with Greek philosophy and *prima facie* with early Christian usages, in that an autonomous person could be thought of as being morally independent and thus as having moral responsibility. However, Augustine thought such a claim to be incoherent. For the will to be radically free from external influence and independent in its deliberation in the way that Pelagius seemed to suggest presents the human being as a creature that could not possibly be in relationship with others or indeed with God who is the source of its being. This is because a will that was truly autonomous, and thus able to will apart from external influences and motivations, would be irreconcilably impersonal. It follows that, from an Augustinian perspective, the Pelagians “save the freedom of the will at the cost of being able to say that the will is in any sense personal.”³⁴⁹ Rather than conceiving the human being as a moral agent in the Pelagian sense, cut off from the rest of the created order (indeed, from its very own human nature), Augustine came to understand human beings

³⁴⁶ J. D. Zizioulas, “Human Capacity and Human Incapacity: A Theological Exploration of Personhood” in *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 28, no. 5 (1975): 405.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ McFarland, “Naturally and by Grace,” 430.

³⁴⁹ Alistair I. McFayden, *Bound to Sin: Abuse, Holocaust and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 170.

as existing firmly grounded in the context of the creation, even of its fallen, sinful reality. He understands the will as not being detached from nature but enmeshed in it.

McFarland proposes this as a point of contact between Maximus and Augustine.³⁵⁰ Both Augustine and Maximus understand sin within the framework of a will that, once itself distorted, invariably goes on to distort the whole nature of which it is a part. Maximus defends the necessity of the human will in Christ during the monothelite controversy as not simply a weakness that is overcome and rendered unnecessary by the divine will; rather, Maximus insists that Christ wills as a human, because of Christ's identity as "the man we consider as Savior."³⁵¹ As such, Christ, as the incarnate Word, is not a human in the same way as we are (here he refers to a problem identified by Gregory, that if Christ had a will like that of any other human it would invariably have resisted God's), but as one who, as divine, wills well so as to heal the human will.

The role both assigned the human will opened Maximus and Augustine alike to accusations that they implicitly denied that Christ's will was free. Pyrrhus supposed that the human will of Christ was appropriated by the Logos. Both he and Maximus agreed that there was a "relative appropriation" (*kata...oikeiōsin...scheticken*), as in the way we might be said to share in the actions of others "through our love."³⁵² However, Pyrrhus thought that it was only in this way – that is, in a purely figurative sense and not as a constitutive attribute of human nature assumed by the Word in the incarnation – that the human will was appropriated. For Maximus this was not acceptable. An assumption of human nature without the concomitant assumption of the will intrinsic to that nature would mean that the nature assumed was not fully (and thus not truly) human. Further, if a human will did not have the potential for agreement or disagreement with the divine will (e.g., as illustrated in the plea for the passing of the cup in Gethsemane), to what extent could the will be considered free?

However, with Augustine, Maximus's purpose in demonstrating such freedom is not to argue for an autonomous will that would enable any human to choose freely, without attention to the effects of sin or grace. Freedom is not defined by this kind of capacity for independent deliberation as that would make human freedom something that competes with grace (in the sense that the will would be understood as less free the more it depended on grace). The will remains a feature of human nature and thus shaped by the

³⁵⁰ McFarland, "Naturally and by Grace," 431.

³⁵¹ Opusc. 6 (PG 91:65A-68D) in Blowers and Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 174.

³⁵² Disputatio (PG 91:304AB).

state in which that nature exists, whether perfected by grace in Christ, or sinful in fallen humanity. Such a construal of the will opened up Augustine, too, to the charge of positing a will that is not free in any meaningful way, since it seemed to suggest that the will has no role to play in determining its own posture towards God.

A similar criticism is clearly leveled by Erasmus against Luther. Against the latter's claim that the total incapacity of the will in regard to salvation must be understood to fully appreciate the helplessness of the human condition, Erasmus responds by accusing Luther of overstating the case:

Nor was it necessary in avoiding the Scylla of arrogance, you should be wrecked on the Charybdis of despair or indolence. Nor in mending a dislocated limb need you twist another, but rather put it back into place... ..there is an abundance in human life of weakness, vices, crimes, so that if any man wishes to look at himself he can easily put down his conceit.³⁵³

Erasmus was not alone in this criticism of Luther. He represents the prevailing thought on the matter in the sixteenth-century church, favoring a synergistic approach to understanding salvation. Luther, of course, did not consider that he had taken the issue too far – though he concedes that Erasmus has rightly understood that for him the impotence of the will is the “hinge of everything.”³⁵⁴ When Luther identifies justification by grace through faith as “the first and chief article,”³⁵⁵ he affirms human incapacity – and thus the absence of a free will – in regard to matters of salvation. If human beings possessed the capacity to contribute to their own salvation through their willing, he reasoned, God's grace and intervention would not be necessary.

That Luther's opinion of the will follow the same lines as Augustine's is apparent in his appropriation of the title *De Servo Arbitrio* for his response to Erasmus.³⁵⁶ This phrase, while a clear refutation of Erasmus' *De Libero Arbitrio*, is not coincidentally

³⁵³ Erasmus, *On the Freedom of the Will*, in *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation*, ed. Gordon E. Rupp, *The Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), 96.

³⁵⁴ “Cardinem rerum” in WA 18:786.30. It is noteworthy that Luther at one point in his life (in a letter to Wolfgang Capito in 1537) considered “The Bondage of the Will” and the Catechism to his only books worth reprinting. See LW 50:173.

³⁵⁵ Martin Luther, *Smalcald Articles* 2.1 in Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 301.

³⁵⁶ One might think that Luther would have identified his treatise as being on the clarity of scripture regarding the matter, as that is a considerable portion of his work.

taken from Augustine's own anti-Pelagian treatise *Contra Julianum*. Lohse observes that "by using this title, Luther intended to make clear that he understood himself as a defender of the Augustinian doctrine of sin and grace against Pelagians old and new."³⁵⁷

So sure is Luther of his faithfulness to the Augustinian tradition in this matter that he confidently says in the treatise that Augustine is "entirely with me."³⁵⁸

Because of Luther's account of the incapacity of the will and his correspondingly monergistic account of salvation, some have concluded that his Christology is likewise monergistic. Yves Congar, for example, suggested that Luther's Christology presents Christ's humanity as merely a "location" for God to effect salvation. This would stand in opposition to both Chalcedonian Christology and to the Congar's own Thomistic tradition. In this Thomistic understanding, salvation is initiated by and dependent upon God, but is effected in and through Christ's humanity. Congar believes that the sufferings of Christ, which are manifest in his flesh and thus his humanity, are minimized by Luther's insistence on the incapacity of the flesh to contribute to salvation. He writes:

Luther tends to see this humanity not as the cause of our salvation, but instead as a place and situation (*lieu et situation*) where "God" alone operates salvation.³⁵⁹

Congar questions what exactly Luther considers the "contribution of the man Jesus in the work of salvation."³⁶⁰ If the value of the union of human and divine natures in Christ is, for example, entirely in its utility in the work of salvation, then the person and mission of Christ appear lopsided. Congar does not intend to open Luther up to accusations of Nestorianism, but rather to highlight what is perhaps an over-emphasis on the operation of God in Christ, at the expense of any mystery that as mediator Christ stands on the side of humanity as much as he as savior stands on the side of God. This critique imagines that for Luther the human nature in Christ is as ineffective as that of every human being.

³⁵⁷ Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 163.

³⁵⁸ LW 33:72.

³⁵⁹ Yves Congar, "Regards et réflexions sur la christologie de Luther," in *Chalkedon heute: Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. 3 (Wurzburg: Echter, 1954), 457-86. Cf. Vidar L. Haans, "Christological Themes in Luther's Theology," *Studia Theologica* 61 (2007): 26-27.

³⁶⁰ Yves Congar, *Martin Luther, Sa Foi, Sa Réforme: Études de Théologie Historique* (Paris: Cerf, 1983), 130.

According to Congar, Luther's Christology is a Christology of "God's sole efficacy" (*Christologie de l'Alleenwirksamkeit Gottes*). This reading of Luther addresses a real concern regarding his preoccupation with human incapacity in salvation: If human beings do not contribute towards their salvation in any respect, then how can Christ be said to accomplish salvation as one who is truly human as well as truly divine? The implication here is that if Luther considered that God in Christ saves in such a way as to exclude any effective contribution from his humanity, then he is dividing Christ in an anti-Chalcedonian fashion. Congar highlights Luther's embrace of metaphor and the *communicatio idiomatum* to dissolve the distinction between the exchange of attributes between God and humanity in Christ on the one hand, and between God and human beings in justification on the other.³⁶¹ By equating the two, he supposes, Luther implies that what is said of Christ in salvation is properly said of his divine nature only, and of his human nature only by metaphor. Marc Lienhard similarly argues that Luther's prioritization of the unity of the human and divine natures in Christ (similar to that of the Alexandrian fathers) opens him up to similar accusations of implicit monophysitism – and thus of monothelitism.³⁶²

Despite such criticism, Luther demonstrates that his commitment to a single-subject Christology does not minimize the role of Christ's human nature such as might tend towards monophysitism. In *On the Divinity and the Humanity of Christ*, Luther discusses the *communicatio idiomatum* in detail.³⁶³ Unlike Congar's critique supposes, Luther does not simply ground the communication of idioms in the person of Christ but utilizes it only in speaking of his specific hypostatic being. In theses 25 to 33, Luther polemicizes against the Eutychian doctrine that he sees implicit in the writing of Caspar von Schwenckfeld (1490-1561). In doing so he acquits himself of any monophysite tendencies. In thesis 25, Schwenckfeld is said to "foolishly scoff" at the doctrine that "Christ according to his humanity is called a creature."³⁶⁴ Luther responds (in theses 32) that the confession that the Word was made flesh without the affirmation that "there is a creature in Christ" amounts to a denial that

³⁶¹ Congar writes of Luther's Christology that "what is said of Christ is said tropologically of the faithful." See Vidar L. Haans, "Christological Themes in Luther's Theology," *Studia Theologica* 61 (2007): 27.

³⁶² Marc Lienhard, *Martin Luthers Christologisches Zeugnis: Entwicklung und Grundzüge seiner Christologie*, trans. Robert Wolff (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 133-134; 259-260.

³⁶³ LW 73:239ff.

³⁶⁴ LW 73:256.

the Word was made flesh. In short, Luther's commitment to the duality of natures in Christ is reflected in his recognition that any prevarication regarding Christ's humanity undermines confession of the incarnation. Indeed, in his disputation against Schwenkfeld, Luther emphasizes that it is according to his humanity that things can be said of Christ that simply cannot be abstracted or reasoned philosophically about God:

Argument: No creature creates. Christ is a creature.

Response: [This is true], understanding "creature" in a philosophical way. But "creature" is said of Christ theologically. Christ is the Creator.

Another: Paul says in Galatians: "God sent His Son, born of a woman" [Gal. 4:4]. Therefore God is a creature.

Response: The argument is true according to the humanity.³⁶⁵

That God can be considered "according to the flesh" is not a weakness for Luther, but rather an added strength. Christ's humanity is for Luther is not something that is subsumed by his divinity or simply "along for the ride" in the exchange between human and divine attributes. The humanity of Christ plays a meaningful part in the reality of Christ's being rather than simply being a locus for the incarnation. Embracing the paradoxical implications of the incarnation, Luther goes on to respond to the charge that while there is nothing accidental in God, to assume humanity is an accident:

In philosophy this is true; but in theology you have [different] rules. When we portray the union so that the divinity in Christ is as it were a substance, but His humanity as it were an accidental quality, like whiteness or blackness, this is not said properly or appropriately, but we speak thus so that it can be understood in some degree. But this unity of the two natures in one person is the greatest possible, so that they are equally predicated, and communicate their properties to each other, as if he were solely God or solely man.³⁶⁶

While divine attributes might be presumed to naturally or necessarily overwhelm human ones, humanity is assumed by the Word in Christ in such a way that it is not diminished

³⁶⁵LW 73:280.

³⁶⁶ LW 73:271.

or rendered inconsequential. For Luther, the reality of Christ's full humanity enables the theologian to say things about God that the philosopher cannot. Specifically, Christ's humanity is not dissolvable into his divinity, but must be preserved even when Christological doctrine gives birth to paradox. Luther's insistence that the union of divinity and humanity is not one of accidents serves his claim that it is in fact "the greatest possible." Human nature is not the mere "clothing" of divinity.³⁶⁷ To the same end, Luther condemns the claim that the divine nature in Christ carries the human nature as error, as this would imply that Christ is a composite. Graham White observes that in this regard, Luther is following the scholastics in rejecting Lombard's *habitus* explanation of Christ's humanity. Such a superficial relationship as is suggested by "wearing" humanity, or humanity being sustained by the divinity, appears a Nestorian interpretation, even if he acknowledges this is not intentional and simply an "inept" way of speaking.³⁶⁸

Throughout his writing, Luther's use of technical dogmatic terms varies, but he consistently situates himself within the doctrinal limits and expectations of Chalcedon.³⁶⁹ In his treatise *On the Lord's Supper*, for example, Luther denies that he confuses the two natures. He rather affirms that in Jesus Christ God is man and man is God in the same person.³⁷⁰ Far from straying from Chalcedon, Luther intensifies the language of exchange between the natures as far as scriptural statement about Christ will allow, embracing the paradoxical statements of Christology, while maintaining that the incarnation "is a truth of faith, not a truth of reason, and it is incomprehensible even for the angels."³⁷¹ Ian Siggins suggests that Luther never fell to either the monophysite or Nestorian extreme, in great part due to his commitment to biblical language over received theological terminology.³⁷² Similarly, Johannes Zachhuber recognizes that when Luther is more flexible in utilizing Chalcedonian language (particularly when distinguishing between nature and person) it is likely because he recognizes the council's doctrines as ultimately deriving from scripture and so prioritizes the biblical witness.³⁷³ While he demonstrates proper use of the *communicatio idiomatum*, Luther prefers to state simply that God is man

³⁶⁷ LW 73:257.

³⁶⁸ White, *Luther as Nominalist*, 290-1.

³⁶⁹ See Johannes Zachhuber, *Luther's Christological Legacy: Christocentrism and the Chalcedonian Tradition* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press: 2017), 100-1.

³⁷⁰ LW 37:213.

³⁷¹ WA 39 II:98, 13ff.

³⁷² Ian K. Siggins, *Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 238.

³⁷³ Zachhuber, *Luther's Christological Legacy*, 102-3.

and man is God in Christ. By doing so, he not only demonstrates the necessary unity of Christ but disproves Congar's claim that the human nature is for him in some way reduced. Like Maximus, Luther regards the composition of Christ's person as an essential part of the story of salvation and not as something that can be considered in the abstract.

4.1.3. Shared Soteriological Purpose

Luther and Maximus have a shared commitment not simply to the language of the Chalcedonian definition, but to its soteriological purpose. The definition produced at Chalcedon declares in agreement with the Nicene Creed that the incarnation that effects this unique relationship between divinity and humanity is “for us and for our salvation.”³⁷⁴ Following this teaching, the “why” of the incarnation for both Luther and Maximus is inextricably soteriological, so that for both of them Christology is always connected to soteriology. Maximus reveals this explicitly in his *Liber Asceticus*, where he relates the question of a young monk who asks why the Word became flesh. The elder in his story responds by saying “the goal of the Lord's incarnation was for our salvation.”³⁷⁵ Luther maintains with Maximus the soteriological purpose of the incarnation. Far from devaluing Christ's human nature, he insists that the full humanity of Christ is indispensable for coherent (albeit still paradoxical) speech about the incarnate God. This comparison of the place of humanity, both Christologically and anthropologically, for Maximus and Luther reflects their shared commitment to the principles of Chalcedon.

4.2 Christology and the Psychology of Jesus in Luther and Maximus

³⁷⁴ The Chalcedonian definition is preceded in the acts of the Council with a declaration on the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed: “this wise and saving creed would be sufficient for the full acknowledgment and confirmation of the true religion...it fully explains the Incarnation of the Lord to those who receive it faithfully.” The council defines: “...our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the humanity; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, *for us and for our salvation*, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the humanity; one and the same Christ...” Thomas H. Bindley, *The Oecumenical Documents of the Faith*, (London: Methuen, 1950), 91-92.

³⁷⁵ “*Ho skopos tēs tou Kuriou enanthropēseōs, e emetera en sōteria.*” Maximus, *Liber Asceticus* (PG 90:912A).

In this section, we will continue to see the way in which Luther's Chalcedonian commitments affirm for him Christ's unfallen freedom and thus, with Maximus, Christ's orientation to God's will. Maximus develops his doctrine of the will within the context of his Christology. This context allows him to fully explore the realities and implications of a divinized will, not as a hypothetical, but in respect to the scriptural accounts of Jesus and the doctrinal commitments that follow from them. The drama of Christ's human will relating to the divine plays out in his life of obedience, which is also a central aspect of Christ's salvific work for Luther. While Luther does not explore the psychology of Jesus as such in any Christological treatise, Christ's freely obedient willing remains a fixture of his reflection on Christ's work. Both Maximus and Luther negotiate the relationship between freedom and obedience as it is manifest in willing. But whereas Maximus's more focused assessments of human willing and obedience are developed in an explicitly Christological context, Luther's correlating engagement of what true freedom looks like is primarily anthropological. As a result, while Maximus's assessment of freedom is demonstrated in a study of *how Christ lives*, Luther's understanding of what freedom looks like develops in his assessment of *how one lives in Christ*.

4.2.1 Christ's Obedience in Maximus

Maximus's understanding of freedom is closely tied to his understanding of creaturely motion, which we have previously explored. He understands rational creatures as by nature possessing a passivity (*pathos*) in relationship to the Creator's activity (*energeia*).³⁷⁶ Yet this creaturely passivity does not for Maximus suggest inactivity. Rather, it is indicative of a potential that is proper to the creature, following the Aristotelian concept of what William Charlton calls "passive power," where passivity means that something has the positive capacity to be affected.³⁷⁷ To be passive is then not to be inert, but rather to have a potential that is fulfilled by an active contributor (in the case of creatures, the divine Logos). In line with his anti-Origenist ontology described in Chapter 3 above, Maximus suggests that creatures in fact long to be moved. He imagines all creatures in this way as images that are fixated on their archetype or the

³⁷⁶ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1073B-C).

³⁷⁷ See Helen Lang, *The Order of Nature in Aristotle's Physics: Place and the Elements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 47-9.

impression of a stamp that only desires to fit the mold that shaped it.³⁷⁸ However, rational creatures are distinguished from other creaturely types by the fact that their possession of wills gives them the ability to fight passivity and resist being moved. Instead of living into the fullness of their relationship with God (and in doing so living into the fullness of their own nature), humans willfully resist God and nature in their unwillingness to be moved in accord with God's creative intentions for them. By conforming their *gnomē* to the natural will, human beings learn authentic freedom by actively conforming themselves to what is natural for them. At the same time, the eschatological relinquishing of self-serving deliberation of the will – what Maximus calls gnostic surrender (*ekhorēsis gnomickē*) – is the fulfillment of God's activity in us. By this gnostic surrender, potentiality in the creature is fully actualized in a glorified life lived in the Creator, in whom its purposes are fulfilled.

As we have seen, in his mature thought Maximus denied that there is a gnostic will in Christ, as in him there is no privation of knowledge of the good that would require deliberation as to the proper course of action. Thus, gnostic surrender is not something that occurs in Christ because insofar as Christ's will is already divinized, the state that will be realized in other humans by this act of surrender is already present in him from birth. Thus, in Christ Maximus finds the model of the creature finding its freedom in conforming to the will of God. Christ is obedient in his submission to the Father's will. Paul Blowers calls this obedience an “active passivity.”³⁷⁹ The Son's unity with the Father is accented by a “sacred drama” in which the incarnate Christ learns submission to the Father's will. In detailing the dynamic between the human and divine wills in Christ's person, Maximus does not intend to demonstrate a balance between human and divine activity in Christ. Instead, his purpose is to show that in Christ a human will is perfectly deified, and all his voluntary faculties correspondingly aligned with God's purposes. Maximus explains this as a proleptic manifestation of God's intent to deify the whole cosmos:

In this way there shall be no intentional divergence between universals and particulars. Rather, one and the same principle shall be observed throughout the universe, admitting of no differentiation by the individual modes according

³⁷⁸ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1076B-C); Amb. 10 (PG 91:1180A).

³⁷⁹ Paul Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 225-253.

to which created beings are predicated, and displaying the grace of God effective to deify the universe. It is on the basis of this grace of that the divine Logos, when he became man, said, *My Father is working even now, and I am working* [John 5:17].³⁸⁰

Maximus imagines Christ's "working," as it is called in John's Gospel, as a beautiful passivity complementing the Father's activity and inaugurating the formation of the whole universe towards the well-being God desire for the cosmos.

This submission to the will of the Father is not manifest according to Maximus simply in Christ's death, but in the whole of his life. Nevertheless, while Maximus identifies restoration of humanity and inauguration of the eschaton in all aspects of Christ's life, we will focus on a few instances in which the Christ's sufferings are shown to liberate the will and demonstrate free obedience. Especially in his temptation and suffering in Gethsemane, Christ proves himself to be not a vacillating human limited by a gnostic will. Likewise, when Jesus resists the temptations of the devil in the wilderness, he demonstrates that he is "like us in every way but without sin."³⁸¹ Being not susceptible to temptation in the same way as are humans who will gnostically, Christ shows how his receptivity to the Father's will (which he knows perfectly) is a manifestation of freedom. He is not limited by what Balthasar calls the "double bind of being forced by one's created condition to make a choice, in order to realize one's being, and yet of having to choose something whose implications one does not fully understand."³⁸² With this observation, Balthasar shows how the freedom of choice characteristic of gnostic willing is not just an imperfect freedom, but may be a cruel, self-inflicted conundrum.

The passion of Christ – including the dramatic prelude of Christ's agony in the Gethsemane – effects a radical reorienting of the human will towards God for those who participate in the *tropos* of Christ's new humanity. François-Marie Léthel observes how Maximus begins to move beyond Gregory Nazianzen and more fully develop his analysis of the agony in the garden beginning in his *Opusculum* 20.³⁸³ In the wake of the monothelite controversy, Maximus highlights Jesus's human will as the field on which

³⁸⁰ Ad Thal. 2 in Blowers and Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 100.

³⁸¹ Ad Thal. 21 in Blowers and Wilkins, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 113. Cf. Hebrews 4:15.

³⁸² von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 265.

³⁸³ Léthel, *Théologie de l'agonie du Christ*, 60-4.

salvation plays out.³⁸⁴ This drama is manifest as Christ in his human will “learned obedience through what he suffered” (cf. Hebrews 5:8). Christ experiences obedience through suffering in a real way. Maximus understands Christ’s emotions in the garden as manifestations of a human will that has genuine fear and aversion to death, but which produces these real emotions as a result of not self-interest but of natural and godly fear:

For the natural functions of volition did not operate in the Lord in exactly the same way as they do in us. Rather, he did in truth hunger and thirst, not in the very same mode as we hunger and thirst, but in a way that transcends us since he did so voluntarily. So he truly hungered, not like us but for us.³⁸⁵

Christ’s fear – like his hunger, thirst, and other natural properties of his human nature – is not something suffered in the manner that the rest of humanity experiences it. Rather than being avoided or regretfully undergone, Christ’s sufferings are undertaken resolutely and selflessly. In this way of suffering, human nature itself undergoes in Christ a new experience of these passions. Blowers describes this as Christ “push[ing] out the frontiers of our human nature, including its passible faculties, inaugurating new ‘uses’ for emotions like the fear of pain or death.”³⁸⁶ Christ’s passion in this reading becomes an account of the human nature learning how to do all these human things (fear, suffer, die, etc.) in a divine way. These emotions, even the fear of death we see in Gethsemane, manifest the drama of the natural will, rightly oriented and all its human faculties, being brought into service of God. This dramatic reorientation of the will frees the human will to operate virtuously. In this way Jesus’s freely-willed suffering opens up the possibility for true freedom of the will, in which the human will is no longer captive to sinful and selfish passions.

4.2.2. Christ’s Obedience in Luther

For Luther, Christ’s obedience to the will of the Father, particularly that which manifest in his suffering and death, is a radical expression of his full humanity. The extreme of Luther’s insistence on Christ’s full humanity is found in his accounts of

³⁸⁴ Opusc. 20 (PG 91:233B-237C).

³⁸⁵ Disputatio (PG 91:297C-300A) in Blowers, *The Transfiguration of the World*, 238.

³⁸⁶ Blowers, *The Transfiguration of the World*, 239.

Christ's suffering. Augustine, among others, had minimized the emotional turmoil that is attributed in scripture to Christ during his passion. While it was necessary that Christ truly suffered, Augustine tempered his treatment of Christ's suffering so as to not imply a divine passibility: "[He] exercised these emotions when he judged they should be exercised...when it pleased him."³⁸⁷ The scholastics followed suit in their accounts of Christ's suffering, likewise emphasizing its conditionality as something that could be put off when it pleased Christ, or as something not proper to Christ but appropriated from humanity as a whole. Luther's dependence on Scripture for knowing Christ meant, however, that he could not qualify the experiences of one whose "soul [was] exceedingly sorrowful, even to the point of death."³⁸⁸ That Christ was also fully human meant that his suffering had to have been not simply physical, but also psychological and emotional.³⁸⁹ This is an important point of convergence with Maximus. Luther comments on Psalm 21 that "the blow of God with which for sins he is struck, is not only the penalty of death but also the fear and the horror of a troubled conscience that feels eternal wrath and also has it."³⁹⁰ Whereas Aquinas (following John of Damascus) had supposed Christ's cry of dereliction on the cross represented not his own emotions but was spoken on behalf of humanity, Luther is convinced these words are entirely Christ's own as well.³⁹¹

In his lectures on the Psalms from 1519-1521, Luther says that Christ himself is in a mystery "forsaken by God."³⁹² In his lecture on Psalm 22, Luther critiques Augustine's unwillingness to apply the whole of the Psalm to Christ. It is as if for Luther the more scandalous a Christological statement is in upholding the full humanity of Christ, the more important it is that it be preserved. There is no doubt that for Luther Jesus is fully God. Luther recognizes that "reason wants be clever here and not tolerate that God should die or have any human characteristics, even though it is used to believing like Nestorius, that Christ is God..."³⁹³ In embracing the most difficult passages of scripture that reveal Christ's full humanity, Luther – far from displaying any monophysite tendencies himself – resists the implicit monophysitism he perceived in the scholastics. The surety of

³⁸⁷ Augustine, *The City of God* 14.9 in NPNF 2:269.

³⁸⁸ Matthew 26:38; Mark 14:34.

³⁸⁹ Here one might find in Luther implied sympathies to Gregory's maxim "what is not assumed is not healed."

³⁹⁰ WA 5:603, 14.

³⁹¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* III.47.3.

³⁹² WA 5:237, 38.

³⁹³ LW 41:105.

salvation and ultimate sign of God's favorable disposition towards humanity is entirely dependent on the humanity of Christ, because in the incarnate Christ God shows his love for us by dying for sinners (cf. Romans 5:8). He writes, "To me there is no more effective consolation to the whole human race than that Christ is entirely human."³⁹⁴

This strong defense that Luther mounts that Christ is fully man and, as such, truly suffered, speaks to the nature of that suffering. It is crucial for Luther that Christ's suffering is freely undertaken to set the sinner free. The "psychology" behind Christ's work of redemption lay for Luther in the "*pro me*," the revelation that Christ's work as well as the mystery of his person as being "for us and our salvation."³⁹⁵

Christ has two natures. What has that to do with me? If he bears the magnificent and consoling name of Christ, it is on account of the ministry and the task which he took upon himself; it is that which gives him his name. That he should by nature be both man and God, that is for him. But that he should have dedicated his ministry and poured out his love to become my savior and my redeemer, it is in that I find my consolation and well-being. To believe in Christ does not mean that Christ is a person who is man and God, a fact that helps nobody; it means that this person is Christ, that is to say, that for us he came forth from God into the world...³⁹⁶

Luther's claim that "to believe in Christ does not mean that Christ is a person who is man and God, a fact which helps nobody" is not a dismissal of the significance of Chalcedon. Rather, it is a judgment that historical knowledge alone does not constitute faith (cf. James 2:19). Rather, knowing Christ and knowing that Christ is "for me" is necessary for salvation. Luther's emphasis on the ministry of Christ as it relates to his person (that is, in his work of redemption) ties in directly with the question of Christ's freedom as we might understand it in conversation with Maximus. Christ's whole work of salvation is undertaken not for his own sake, but for the sake of others. This selfless life and selfless suffering overcome the bonds of sin and death as the effort of one who is "altogether pure

³⁹⁴ WA 9:441, 21f.

³⁹⁵ See Klaas Zanol, "A Human God: Some Remarks on Luther's Christology," *Concordia Journal* 30 (2004): 42.

³⁹⁶ WA 16:217, 33ff quoted in Dennis Ngien, "Ultimate Reality and Meaning in Luther's Theology of the Cross," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 42 (2004): 391.

and innocent.”³⁹⁷ Referencing Philippians 2:7 Luther writes (as though in Christ’s voice), “For in my own person of humanity and divinity I am blessed, and I am in need of nothing whatsoever. But I shall empty myself; I shall... suffer death, in order to set you free from death.”³⁹⁸ But in doing this, Christ has shown himself to be free in that he is not bound to will sinfully. Rather he is in his divinity and his humanity one active agent of salvation who wills the salvation of humanity and proceeds to accomplish it. For Luther only Christ as the Word of God incarnate can do this “not by compulsion but out of His own free will.”³⁹⁹ There is for Luther no coercion of the divine will on the human will in Christ; rather, Christ who is blessed in his “own person of divinity and humanity” demonstrates his freedom not in maintaining a reserve of autonomy, but in perfectly conforming to the Father’s will by which he is able to will the good.⁴⁰⁰

4.2.3. Suffering and Obedience

While we can see Maximus and Luther share an interest in Christ’s obedience as a manifestation of his freedom, Luther does not develop a focused reflection on what it means for Christ to be free. This would perhaps seem to him an unnecessary exercise, as Christ’s freedom is necessarily connected to his identity as the Son of God. Rather, having stressed the degree to which fallen human beings – particularly in regard to their willing – are in captivity, Luther sets out to examine how these fallen humans become free *in Christ*. Still, despite their different *foci* in their analyses of willing, it is possible to see a parallel between Maximus’s assessment of Christ’s freedom and suffering and Luther’s understanding of what freedom looks like as it develops in his assessment of how the believer lives and suffers in Christ.

It is not insignificant that Luther nowhere speaks of release from suffering in this life for the Christian. Rather, he sees the nature of suffering, like freedom, as being transformed by Christ. This lies at the heart of Luther’s theology of the cross. In the 1518 Heidelberg Disputation, Luther sustains his belief in the incapacity of the fallen will to freely do good. In the theses concerning the will (13-18) we find resonances with

³⁹⁷ LW 26:288.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ The significance of this free will of Christ having the ability to do good will unfold in our subsequent look at Luther’s Heidelberg Theses.

Maximus's understanding of activity and passivity. Luther posits that "free will, after the fall, has power to do good only in a passive capacity, but it can always do evil in an active capacity."⁴⁰¹ Luther's interest here is, again, somewhat different than that of Maximus, for while both believe the fallen will to be impaired in its relationship to things above, Maximus is less pessimistic about the will's ability to learn. Nevertheless, both share an understanding in which the true potential of the will lies in its passivity before divine grace. Luther's distinction between the active and passive capacity responds to the concern expressed, however obliquely, at Heidelberg that the will be more than nothing.⁴⁰² The positive potential of the will is not its own, but that does not mean the will is useless. Luther's position is rather that although the human will can change, it is not free to change itself. This is the same position Luther later took against Erasmus:

But if the power of free choice were said to mean that by which a man is capable of being taken hold of by the Spirit and imbued with the grace of God, as a being created for eternal life or death, no objection could be taken. For this power or aptitude, or as the Sophists say, this disposing quality or passive aptitude, we also admit; and who does not know that it is not found in trees or animals? For heaven, as the saying is, was not made for geese.⁴⁰³

Here Luther expresses the unique position humans inhabit in creation: they are defined by their potential to be "imbued with the grace of God" and thereby to be able to love God and receive the eternal life for which they were created. However, the question remains: what is required for the grace of God to activate this potential that is passively present in the human being? For Luther, if human effort cannot be the answer (because his focus on passivity means that there is nothing in one's power to do), then the answer is humility.⁴⁰⁴ Humility emerges not through human activity, but through a form of divine activity – the proclamation of the law – which (in Luther's words) "is alien to God's nature [but] results in a deed belonging to his very nature: he makes a person a sinner [God's 'alien' work] so that he may make him righteous [God's 'proper' work]."⁴⁰⁵ Because the fallen will is free

⁴⁰¹ LW 31:40.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ LW 33:67.

⁴⁰⁴ LW 31:40.

⁴⁰⁵ LW 31:50-51.

only to do evil, it can in no way humble itself. Rather it must be humbled by God.⁴⁰⁶ This requires for Luther a receptivity that was all but lost by the human being after the fall. The human being can neither choose humility nor can it choose the mechanism by which it is humbled. For Luther, a will that tries to choose in matters relating to God or righteousness will always choose wrongly.

Luther thus rejects the idea that the suffering a Christian endures can be one of her own choosing. In a sermon of 1530 given in Coburg, Luther compares the cross the Christian bears to the cross of Christ not in that it is *chosen* by the Christian, but that it is embraced. It is “the kind of suffering which we have not chosen ourselves, as the fanatics choose their own suffering.... the kind of suffering which, if it were possible, we would gladly be rid of, suffering visited upon us by the devil or the world.”⁴⁰⁷ It is of interest that Luther’s conviction that the human will left to its own devices chooses wrongly finds its way into his discussion of how humans accept suffering. Luther suggests that his opponents here (the “enthusiasts”) who choose their own suffering do not experience suffering in a beneficial way. The shape of the cross which the Christian bears cannot be chosen (indeed, it is something we would “gladly be rid of”) but is something that can only be received. The passive obedience of receiving a cross not of one’s own choosing connects the believer to Christ in that “in this way [God] wants to make us conformed to the image of his dear Son, Christ, so that we may become like him here in suffering and there in that life to come in honor and glory.”⁴⁰⁸

In this sermon Luther contrasts Christian suffering and the suffering of non-Christians. We might consider this contrast as suffering “in Christ” and suffering “without Christ.” The one who suffers in Christ gains benefit from suffering because her sufferings are shaped by Christ’s own. “Christian suffering is nobler and precious above all other human suffering because, since Christ himself suffered, he also hallowed the suffering of all his Christians.”⁴⁰⁹ Those who are without Christ, however, “run into

⁴⁰⁶These are earlier works of Luther, but the commitment to humility as something which has to happen to us remains throughout his thought. In marginalia on the preceding citation from as late as 1545, Luther writes “This is indeed the true humility which is in utter despair of itself and hastens back to Christ in complete trust... This faith is the humility which turns its back on its own reason and its own strength.” See Martin Luther, *Early Theological Works*, ed. James Atkinson, Library of Christian Classics, n. 16 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 289.

⁴⁰⁷ LW 51:198.

⁴⁰⁸ LW 51:206.

⁴⁰⁹ LW 51:207.

affliction and suffering, [and] have nothing to comfort them, for they do not have the mighty promises and the confidence in God which Christians have. Therefore they cannot comfort themselves with the assurance that God will help them to bear affliction and suffering to good.”⁴¹⁰ Luther’s view of Christian suffering has resonances with the training of the will that one finds in Maximus. Because Christ has suffered, the Christian has a model for suffering well. What makes this way of suffering particularly Christian, or “in Christ,” is that the Christian has comfort in suffering that the non-Christian does not. Thus, the Christian is able to receive the cross and to bear it not because they have preferred it, but because suffering has been transformed by the example of Christ that suffering may be brought to good. This is not simply the opportunity to imitate Christ in the midst of suffering, however. The Christian is able to persevere and imitate Christ because Christ first suffered, thus “hallowing the suffering of all his Christians.”

This hallowing of suffering corresponds to the renewal of suffering we see in Maximus where he writes of Christ: “His sufferings (*pathē*) are wondrous, for they have been renewed by the natural divine power of the one who suffered.”⁴¹¹ Such renewal is possible because he suffered in a divine way (*theikōs*). For Maximus this is foremost because he was more than a mere man, but more specifically because he suffered voluntarily. As a result of this transformation of suffering (or, more properly, the transformation of the way in which humans experience suffering), Christians can subsequently imitate Christ in their own sufferings, as their wills come to be trained so that God may through suffering “make us conformed to the image of his dear Son.” Luther thus desires that “we may understand and learn [suffering] aright.”⁴¹² Such conforming to the image of Christ exemplifies the sort of freedom the believer has in Christ. Luther’s vision of how a Christian imitates Christ in his sufferings depends on Christ having first freed the human will and on a subsequent learning to embrace those crosses which we “would rather be rid of” through the new knowledge one has of suffering on account of Christ.

For Maximus, as we have seen, Christ’s freedom is manifest in his unbroken receptivity to the Father’s will. Through his obedience Christ liberates freedom itself, restoring the will’s potential and teaching those who are in Christ how to will rightly. For both Luther and Maximus, being freed in order to exemplify Christ’s freedom in one’s

⁴¹⁰ LW 51:201.

⁴¹¹ Amb. 5 (PG 91:1056B).

⁴¹² LW 51:208.

own life is a characteristic of the believer. In this section we have seen how both Luther and Maximus affirm that Christ, as fully human and fully divine, is free and thus freely wills in concord with the divine will. Going forward we will see how the work of Christ transforms human behavior and translates to human freedom in willing.

4.3 Human Freedom in Christ for Luther and Maximus

4.3.1. Freedom in Christ for Luther

Luther's understanding of freedom as it pertains to human beings is inseparable from his soteriology. The postlapsarian human being is for Luther utterly sinful—a condition which arose from misuse of the human freedom it has now lost.⁴¹³ As we have seen, for Luther the human faculty of the will has through the fall become in matters *coram Deo* thoroughly *unfree*. It is a *servum arbitrium*. For Luther this is universally true after the fall. In the *Heidelberg Disputation* he states that “Free will, after the fall, exists in name only, and as long as it does what it is able to do it commits a mortal sin.”⁴¹⁴ As already noted, Luther specifies his understanding of this claim in subsequent theses: “Free will, after the fall, has power to do good only in a passive capacity, but can always do evil in an active capacity.”⁴¹⁵ In short, he understands the will after the fall to be so tainted that even when not coerced to do evil, it is only in its power to do evil. Here he channels Augustine, who writes that “free will indeed, avails for nothing except to sin, if he knows not the way of truth.”⁴¹⁶ It follows that after the fall the will can do good only when acted upon by an outside force, that is, by Christ. The freedom that has been lost to sin can only be restored through Christ. This freedom is something new, which he writes Christ has gained for him and given to him.⁴¹⁷ The dependence on Christ for this restoration of human freedom leads Oswald Bayer to refer to it as “Christ-freedom.”⁴¹⁸ The bondage of the will is for Luther an anthropological universal – the very human condition in need of

⁴¹³ Luther's views of freedom being lost as a result of its misuse share some potential criticisms with those of Augustine for whom the prelapsarian world can be construed as somewhat Pelagian.

⁴¹⁴ LW 31:40.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Augustine, *The Spirit and the Letter* 3.5 in NPNF 5:84.

⁴¹⁷ LW 31:354.

⁴¹⁸ Oswald Bayer, “Necessary Transformation? The Reformation and Modernity in Controversy Over Freedom,” *Pro Ecclesia* 22, no. 3 (2013): 290-306.

redemption. However, true freedom for the human being is directly the result of Christ and Christ's relationship to the sinner. As such it is concretely the freedom of a *Christian*.

That the work of Christ is one of making one free stands at the center of Luther's explanation of the second article of the Creed in his *Large Catechism*: "Those tyrants and jailers have now been routed, and their place has been taken by Jesus Christ, the Lord of life, righteousness, and every good and blessing. He has snatched us poor lost creatures from the jaws of hell, won us, made us free and restored us to the Father's favor and grace."⁴¹⁹ Apart from Christ, the human being cannot be free and is instead captive to his own proclivity towards sin. To preach Christ means to "feed the soul, make it righteous, set it free, and save it, provided it believes the preaching.... as the soul needs only the Word of God for its life and righteousness."⁴²⁰ Luther argues that faith in Christ frees because it establishes a new relationship in Christ. Liberation from the "tyrants and jailers" of sinful bondage does not deliver one to a state of autonomy, but rather the "place [of these tyrants and jailers] has been taken by Jesus Christ." Freedom is determined by the lordship of Christ and the benefits Christ confers. This is illustrated in Luther's analogy in *De Servo Arbitrio* of the will being ridden by either God or Satan, which even in the former case does not at first sound like "freedom."

One's freedom in Christ is also described by Luther in relation to God's law. Luther understands the law as that which accuses the human being by demonstrating his transgression of God's will and inability to justify himself. The law then leads the human being to despair and is thus salutary only inasmuch as it is the means by which God generates humility: providing that knowledge of the depths of human sin which leads the sinner to trust in God.⁴²¹ The new freedom that Christ offers is a freedom from the law, in that Christ fulfills the law on the behalf of humanity. This represents a shift from the Thomistic understanding of Christ as a new law-giver, as we have seen. Luther instead emphasizes Christ as the "end" of the law. This abrogation of the law (*abrogatio legis*) does not contradict or negate it, but rather signifies that the condemnation that the sinner

⁴¹⁹ Martin Luther, *Large Catechism*, in Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 434.

⁴²⁰ LW 31:346.

⁴²¹ It is not our intention here to go into detail about the uses of the law. Following Melancthon, Lutherans have largely accepted that the Law continues to play a role in the life of the Christian. Others, after von Amsdorf and Agricola argue that the Law's function is fulfilled when the Gospel has been preached. For a summary of this debate, see Timothy J. Wengert, *Law and Gospel: Philip Melancthon's Debate with John Agricola of Eisleben over Poenitentia* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997).

has merited under the law is no longer considered on account of Christ (cf. Rom. 8:1). The forgiveness of sins is the liberation of the sinner.⁴²² Luther thus understands Christian freedom not as a state of autonomy but rather of absolute dependence on Christ, because he has taken to himself the condemnation that properly belongs to sinners in order to liberate them from it. Galatians 3:13 becomes central to Luther's understanding of this exchange: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written: Cursed be everyone who hangs on a tree." In his commentary on this verse in his 1535 Galatians lectures, he observes:

[Paul] does not say that Christ became a curse on His own account, but that He became a curse "for us." Thus the whole emphasis is on the phrase "for us." For Christ is innocent so far as His own Person is concerned; therefore He should not have been hanged from the tree... But Christ took all our sins upon Himself, and for them He died on the cross. Therefore it was appropriate for Him to become a thief and, as Isaiah says, 'to be numbered among the thieves.'⁴²³

Here Luther firmly locates his soteriology in his Christology. Christ became a curse "for us," that is, for the sake of human salvation. Luther does not attempt a philosophical explanation of Christ's "becoming" a curse, but rather embraces and extends Paul's already scandalous language. He instead scorns the "sophists" who would "deprive us when they segregate Christ from sins and from sinners." What is at stake for Luther is the purpose of Christ's action and the fact that it happens in his person. Luther sees Christ as embracing everything that we are so that in that place can take place a "happy exchange and struggle."⁴²⁴ Christ by taking to himself that which makes us captive, returns his own freedom for faith in him.

4.3.2. Freedom to Love in Luther

⁴²² As Melanchthon explains, "Our freedom consists in this, that every right of accusing and condemning us has been taken away from the Law." Philip Melanchthon, *Loci communes theologici* (1521), in *Melanchthon and Bucer*, ed. Wilhelm Pauck (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 125.

⁴²³ LW 26:277-8.

⁴²⁴ WA 7:25, 34.

However, Christ is not only the abrogation of the law, but also its fulfillment. If the law is fulfilled by Christ, failure to keep it is no longer an impediment to salvation for believers. However, the law continues to play a role for Luther in his understanding of how Christian freedom manifests itself. Freedom from the condemnation of the law in Christ suggests for Luther a newfound freedom to fulfill the law “in free love.”⁴²⁵ This freedom for a new purpose is grounded in Luther’s conviction that Christian freedom is, once again, freedom in Christ and not deliverance to individual autonomy or neutrality. This concept is explored in *The Freedom of a Christian*, in which Luther clearly distinguishes this freedom in Christ from other understandings of freedom. He presents the freedom *to be* something more in Christ in a paradoxical set of theses: “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none; A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant, subject to all.”⁴²⁶ This distinction reveals a dual reality of the believer, who is both spiritual (the “inner man”) and carnal (the “outer man”). The freedom found in Christ is not in the first instance a carnal (“outer”) freedom, but spiritual (“inward”): the freedom from condemnation by the law. For Luther “it is only possible for...faith to rule the inner person.” Luther expounds on his first thesis on Christian liberty (viz., that the Christian is a free lord, subject to none) as follows: “Let this suffice concerning the inner man, his liberty, and the source of his liberty, the righteousness of faith. He needs neither laws nor good works but, on the contrary, is injured by them if he believes that he is justified by them.”⁴²⁷

However, the whole human being is not “inner.” The outer person finds its expression of freedom in Christ in the *imitatio Christi*, having first been freed by Christ. Christ is first a gift (*donum*) who effects the liberation of the believer, and then secondly an example for the shape of the believer’s life in Christ.⁴²⁸ Manifest externally, this freedom in Christ appears as love for the neighbor:

⁴²⁵ WA 7:30, 22. The American Edition renders this: “in love that is not constrained.” LW 31:359.

⁴²⁶ Luther bases this paradox on several Pauline passages, among them 1 Corinthians 9:19, Romans 13:8, Galatians 4:4, and Philipians 2:6-7.

⁴²⁷ LW 31:358.

⁴²⁸ This is an underlying theme of Luther’s treatise that demonstrates his rejection of certain aspects of scholastic Christology. Christ is to be recognized as given to humanity, a gift “that is your own.” He is not a “new Moses.” Cf. LW 35:119-20.

A Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbor. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, in the neighbor through love. By faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into his neighbor. Yet he always remains in God and in his love...⁴²⁹

Thus, Luther addresses freedom as a reality that is experienced both internally and externally. The internal freedom is the primary and most profound freedom. It is grounded in the person of Christ and communicated to human beings by the work of Christ. This Christian freedom is the “spiritual and true freedom and makes our hearts free from all sins, laws, and commandments.”⁴³⁰ Comparing the difference in excellence to that between heaven and earth, he speaks to not only the greater grandeur of internal freedom but also to its priority. External freedom is the result of this internal freedom. It is faith in Christ *externalized* as love for neighbor. Luther understands these works of love not as that which makes a Christian, but as fruit which one bears because she is a Christian. As such, both realities of freedom, freedom *from* the law and freedom *for* works of love arise from the believer being in Christ. This dual reality of this Christian life not only reflects the nature of freedom for Luther, but the nature of Christ. For this reason, Wilhelm Mauer considers *The Freedom of a Christian* the “most perfect expression” of Luther’s reformation Christology.⁴³¹ The external freedom that results from internal freedom resonates with Maximus’s conception of gnostic surrender, in that it reflects the fulfillment of God’s activity in us. This gradual surrender of an autonomous will by the creature in reflection of what naturally exists in Christ, and its compatibility with Luther’s vision of the Christian life will be more fully explored in the next chapter.

Of course, the internal freedom that works on the conscience does not result in a transformation of volition divorced from a transformation of the affections. That is to say that the freedom Luther describes is not purely intellectual. The issue is somewhat obfuscated by Luther’s preoccupation with the assurance of salvation that comes with faith in Christ as opposed to the uncertainty of salvation otherwise. Bound with the will are what Maximus calls the passions. Simeon Zahl convincingly argues that the affections

⁴²⁹ LW 31:371.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Wilhelm Mauer, *Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen: Zwei Untersuchungen zu Luthers Reformationsschriften 1520/1521* (1949), 25, quoted in Eberhard Jungel, *The Freedom of the Christian: Luther’s Significance for Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 20.

and desires of the individual, particularly their captivity and transformation, have been largely unacknowledged in Luther but are a significant theme during this period in which we see Luther developing his understanding of human nature and human freedom.⁴³² It is worthwhile that as we look to Maximus, for whom the passions are a prominent category which undergo purgation and redirection, that we consider that implicit in Luther's preoccupation with freedom from the law is a freedom of the individual's desires. As much as the human will is necessarily bound, what (or to whom) it is bound will dictate the direction of one's appetites or desires. Thus, one who is free from the law is freed from a desire to use the law for their own gain or aggrandizement. Being freed to love, their desire may be directing outward and above.

4.3.3. Freedom from Passions in Maximus

What can be said of freedom for Luther can be similarly said of freedom for Maximus. This is not to say that Luther and Maximus understand freedom in strictly the same way. Nevertheless, Maximus shares with Luther the conviction that genuine freedom does not represent the autonomy of the human being but is rather a new Christologically fulfilled reality in which the self is rightly oriented in respect to God and the creation. Like Luther, Maximus considers human freedom in terms of the will. While the will is a faculty for choice prior to glory, choosing is not understood as central to the will by Maximus. Rather, the will is primarily understood in terms of one's personal orientation, which may be directed towards higher things or lower things.⁴³³ The fall represents for Maximus a corruption of the will as a result of the human being abusing its freedom: "Our forefather Adam misused his freedom and turned instead to what was inferior, redirecting his desire from what was permissible to what had been forbidden."⁴³⁴ This turning of the will of which Maximus speaks is a matter of change in orientation

⁴³² See Simeon Zahl, "The Bondage of the Affections: Willing, Feelings, and Desiring in Luther's Theology, 1513-1525," in *The Spirit, the Affections, and the Christian Tradition*, eds. Dale M. Coulter and Amos Yong (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), 181-205.

⁴³³ Amb. 42 (PG 91:1348C).

⁴³⁴ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1092D).

from higher goods to lower goods. Because the will has been disordered from its natural created purpose (the *logos* of the human nature), it is unable to fulfill God's law.⁴³⁵

Maximus thus understands the inability to fulfill the law differently than Luther does. Maximus does not consider the will as necessarily incapable of fulfilling the law after the fall. Its state is severely inhibited and is only able to choose the good in as much as it is approximating Christ. For Luther this is a matter of necessity. Even so, Luther carefully distinguishes his thought on this in *De Servo Arbitrio*. He explains that this necessity does not amount to coercion, as though the will without God would be at liberty to choose for itself. One is not compelled by God to act virtuously against one's will, nor is one compelled by Satan to do evil against one's will. Actions of the will are "spontaneously and freely undergone" (*sponte et libenti voluntate facit*).⁴³⁶ The will spontaneously does good when ridden by God and cannot help but sin when ridden by the devil. Luther affirms the latter in his *Lectures on Genesis* where he says that "when our nature is without the Holy Spirit, it is impelled by the same evil spirit by which Cain was impelled" (*ab eodem malo Spiritu agitator, quo agitates est impius Cain*).⁴³⁷

Nevertheless, Maximus does recognize a tendency to transgress God's law that becomes intrinsic to humanity after the fall. Adam is not coerced to sin, but once he has been seduced to do so humanity's nature (and with it the way it wills) is altered:

In the beginning, sin seduced Adam and persuaded him to transgress God's commandment, whereby sin gave rise to pleasure, and, by means of this pleasure, nailed itself in Adam to the depths of our nature, thus condemning our whole nature to death, and via humanity, pressing the nature of (all) created being towards mortal extinction.⁴³⁸

This commandment of God refers to not only the particular transgression that led to the fall. Rather, it encompasses the whole of the law.⁴³⁹ Maximus writes that a result of the

⁴³⁵ And yet, for Maximus sin is not primarily a legal phenomenon the way it is for Luther. It is something that ontologically affects human beings, although without corrupting the essential nature of humanity.

⁴³⁶ WA 18:634, 25.

⁴³⁷ LW 1:273; WA 42:201.37-202.7.

⁴³⁸ Ad Thal. 61 in Blowers and Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 137.

⁴³⁹ Besides this use of "commandment," which is more in line with what Luther has in mind, Maximus speaks of "law" (*nomos*) elsewhere, though often in relationship to nature as the ruling principles behind action.

fall was the death of “that element within us by means of which we destroyed our power to love with our whole mind, which we owed to [God] alone.”⁴⁴⁰ By losing the capacity to love God properly, Maximus imagines that our painful human experience of loving incompletely will foster a desire to love God again. This expectation that God be loved “with all of our mind” alludes to Christ’s reference to the greatest commandment and the summary of the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 22:37; cf. Deut. 6:5). Although Maximus does not here say so, we may infer that capacity to love the neighbor (the second “great commandment” and a key to Luther’s understanding of freedom in Christ) is likewise destroyed. This is evidenced by the universality of Maximus’s description of sin after the fall. In the wake of the fall, human beings cease to be the mediator of creation’s relationship to God and become instead an instrument “pressing the nature of (all) created beings towards mortal extinction.” Adam and his descendants are described as “groping willfully with both hands through the confusion of matter.”⁴⁴¹ Thus fallen humanity is characterized by the fatal impairment of human natural capacities, culminating in death.

For Maximus, one who has not been saved is “not freed, in his fear of death, from slavery to pleasure.”⁴⁴² Maximus does not discuss the human situation in the legal categories that Luther (following the Western tradition more broadly) does. While Luther tends to speak of subservience to Satan, Maximus focuses his conception of the slavery from which one needs to be freed on the subservience of the whole human person to their sensual nature. Fallen human beings are not free in that their reasoning is determined by pleasure and pain. Rather than being free in God, as is natural, the human being is unnaturally under the power of carnal experience. Adam’s misuse of his will has through disobedience rendered human willing subject to these passions. Christ, being free from these passions “alone is truly free and sinless.”⁴⁴³ While Adam “created willful sin through his disobedience,” Christ’s obedience distinguishes him as “inconvertible” by pain and pleasure.⁴⁴⁴

Because Christ in his perfect humanity does not share this liability to pain and pleasure, Maximus says that he has “brought an end to both extremes.”⁴⁴⁵ Like Luther, Maximus explores how Christ embraced sin in order to nullify its effect:

⁴⁴⁰ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1093A).

⁴⁴¹ Amb. 10:28 (PG 91:1156C).

⁴⁴² Ad Thal. 21 in Blowers and Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 112.

⁴⁴³ Amb. 42 (PG 91:1348C).

⁴⁴⁴ Ad Thal. 42 in Blowers and Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 121.

⁴⁴⁵ Ad Thal. 61 in Blowers and Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 136.

Therefore, the Lord did not *know* “my sin” (*hē emē hamartia*) that is, the mutability of my free choice. Neither did he assume nor become my sin. Rather he *became* the “sin that I caused” (*hē di’eme hamartia*); In other words, he assumed the corruption of human nature that was a consequence of the mutability of my free choice. For our sake he came a human being naturally liable to passions, and used the “sin” that I caused to destroy the “sin” that I commit.⁴⁴⁶

This passage from the *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* is central to Maximus’s understanding of the exchange that takes place between Christ and believers as a result of Christ’s actions. Maximus sees Christ as willing humanly in accordance with God’s will, and in doing so liberating humanity from the corruption, sin, and passions that have defined it after the fall.⁴⁴⁷ Maximus expresses here similar Christological insights to Luther in his Galatians lectures. Specifically, Maximus exposit Christ as “submitting voluntarily to the condemnation owed me in my nature, even though he himself was blameless...in order to condemn both my deliberate ‘sin’ and the ‘sin’ that befell my nature.”⁴⁴⁸ Christ in his humanity has given God occasion to judge it and for humanity to recover what was lost when in Adam humanity undermined its freedom. The result of this action of Christ is “a new mystery.”⁴⁴⁹ Having driven sin, passion, and corruption from humanity, Christ has set human nature back on course, and thus renewed the possibility of fellowship with God. This is what freedom looks like for Maximus.⁴⁵⁰ As is the case for Luther as well, the life of a Christian is one of love, which “gives faith the reality of what it believes.” Maximus writes to John the Cubicularius that love makes

self-determination submit to reason, not bending reason under it, and
persuading the inclination (*gnōme*) to follow nature and not in any way be at

⁴⁴⁶ Ad Thal. 42 in Blowers and Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 120.

⁴⁴⁷ In *Ad Thalassium*, Maximus still uses the language of free choice (*proairesis*) in regard to Christ’s willing. It is during the Monothelite controversy that he later expressly denied that there is deliberation in Christ.

⁴⁴⁸ Ad Thal. 42 in Blowers and Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 121.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ Cf. Maximus in Opusc. 1 (PG 91:17D): “Freedom is not choosing...freedom is the innate authority to perform what is up to us or the unobstructed authority of using what is up to us or the unenslaved desire of what is up to us.”

variance with the logos of nature. In this way we are all, as it were one nature, so that we are able to have one inclination and one will (*mia gnōme kai thelēma*) with God and with one another, not having and discord with God or one another, whenever by the law of grace, through which our inclination the law of nature is renewed, we choose what is ultimate.⁴⁵¹

Life in Christ is thus characterized by a transformation in desires and inclinations. Freedom in Christ is a freedom to grow into humanity's natural desire for God and love for the creation. In this conviction we can observe parallels to Luther's understanding of the freedom for love that comes with faith. Just as Luther frames his account of freedom as freedom from the law and subsequently freedom to love one's neighbor, similarly Maximus understands freedom as a restoration of nature and subsequently freedom to be in relationship through love. *Theosis* itself is distinguished by this alignment of the human being's desires with God's own, such that "we are able to have one inclination and one will with God and with one another." The Christian life is then characterized by an increase in this perfect relation with God and with neighbor.⁴⁵² Maximus explicitly links *theosis* with the alignment of the will over and against the "law of the flesh," which he identifies allegorically with the mountain of Matthew 17:20:

Faith is a relational power or a relationship which brings about the immediate perfect and supernatural union of the believer with the God in whom he believes.... who is dispassionate or, rather, who has already *become god* through union with God by faith: this it is quite natural that if such a person says to a mountain, 'Go to another place,' it will go. The mountain here indicates the will and the law of the flesh, which is ponderous and hard to shift, and in fact, so far as our natural powers are concerned, is totally immovable and unshakable.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵¹ Ep. 2 (PG 91:396C-D). This letter long antedates the monothelite controversy.

⁴⁵² Maximus expounds on this as the final victory of love in Ep. 2 (PG 91:392D-408B).

⁴⁵³ Maximus the Confessor, *Various Texts on Theology* 2:8-9 in Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware, *The Philokalia*, 189-190.

This life in Christ is defined then by the transformative relationship of faith, which graciously enables the spirit to move “the will and the law of the flesh” rather than being subject to it.

4.4 Conclusion

On examining Luther and Maximus’s respective accounts of human freedom we find that their treatments both share common assertions about humanity and common Christological commitments. Both identify sin as an act of will. As a result of the fall, the will is drastically inhibited: disconnected from God and displaying an incapacity to innately will the good. Thus, fallen humanity is not free. Luther describes the resulting state as a radical bondage of the will to sin. For Maximus, who does not hold to an Augustinian understanding of the bondage of the will, humanity’s freedom is fatally impaired rather than (as for Luther) completely destroyed by the will’s mis-inclination. Maximus’s vision of postlapsarian humanity is expressed through an understanding of the will as a constitutive part of humanity’s nature or *logos*, which we have seen in our previous chapter. While Luther does not focus in the same way as Maximus on the disordered nature of human passions, he is if anything even more insistent about humanity’s incapacity after the fall to live in line with God’s will. For Luther this is explicitly demonstrated in the human inability to fulfill the law and escape its condemnation apart from Christ. For both theologians, then, sin constitutes a type of captivity. For Luther this slavery to sin (and to the pleasure that drives it) is demonstrated in the law. For Maximus it is slavery to pleasure (which is sinful insofar as it is not oriented to God). Both situations are the result of unnatural separation from God. It is this separation from God that is remedied in the person of Christ, who frees for both Luther and Maximus. This liberation creates a new relationship between the believer and God, one which for both thinkers is a life that now exists in Christ and is free because it is in Christ.

In summary, it is possible to see that Luther and Maximus share similar concerns in discussing the will theologically against those who would suggest that the human will after the fall is free in its relationship to God. Against his monothelite opponents, Maximus argues for the importance of the human will as a redeemable natural faculty, one which being proper to each person can exist in Christ and not be found in conflict with the divine will. Consequently, Maximus addresses the problem of human willing

through the “lens” of Christ, in whom a human and a divine will are shown to be different yet not opposed. For Maximus, a created will that is moved by God may – and must, lest the integrity of created nature be lost – remain distinct from the divine will, though guided by it. Luther begins from a position of denying any agency to the fallen human will in matters of salvation. However, the two are not in disagreement regarding the posture of a human will in relationship to the divine will. Luther in arguing that the will is bound after the fall, shares a common conviction with Maximus that the will is only free in direct proportion to its openness to and reception of the divine will. One is free not because one is able to choose, but rather one is free because of God’s activity in them.

As such, for both thinkers only Christ is truly free – unalienated from nature according to Maximus and perfectly obedient according to Luther. Indeed, given the two thinkers’ shared commitment to the idea of Christ’s perfect freedom, it is difficult to imagine that Luther would object to the Maximian idea that Christ (unlike all his post-Adamic brothers and sisters) was unalienated from the proper form of human nature, just as surely as Maximus certainly did not deny that Christ was perfectly obedient. As a result of this radical freedom existing in Christ alone, the believer’s freedom can only consist in their participation in Christ, which occurs for Luther by faith, and for Maximus by gracious ability to live and will properly, by faith and according to nature.

Integral to both is a Christological commitment that serves a soteriological purpose, namely, that proper understanding of the *person* of Christ as divine and human is essential to appreciating the *work* of Christ in salvation and has implications for the life of the believer in Christ. These common commitments allow us to further consider Luther’s doctrine of justification through a Chalcedonian, Christological lens. In particular, we see that this Christological framing of the doctrine allows for insight into how what can be said of the personal union of humanity and divinity in Christ informs our language in speaking about the nature of union between God and human beings who are in Christ. In the next chapter, with these commonalities in mind, we will focus more closely on Maximus’s idea of gnostic surrender, its relation to Luther’s understanding of Christian freedom, and on the exchange that both theologians confess as taking place between Christ and the believer. This will allow us to bring Maximus into conversation with the Finnish School for a clearer picture of what justification and *theosis* in particular can be said to share.

5. Theosis, Justification, and the Transformation of Willing

In the last chapter we explored in detail several ways in which both Maximus and Luther may be understood to have common theological commitments that guide and support their respective accounts of salvation – commitments which converge in their reflections on the will. Both Maximus and Luther frame their accounts of salvation in terms of the character of human willing, albeit arriving at the issue of the will from two different approaches. Maximus’s account is derived from his Christology, specifically the question of Jesus’s freedom. Luther, conversely, develops his account of the will through his anthropology, specifically in considering fallen humanity’s lack of freedom. The upshot, however, is that for both theologians the will appears as crucial to understanding of what life in Christ means and helps to overcome conventional opposition between *theosis* and justification, according to which the former is an ontological account of salvation and the latter a forensic one.

Having established the critical nature of the will as it frames consideration of freedom and salvation for both thinkers, in this chapter we will consider both *theosis* and justification specifically as referring to a transformation of human willing. To this end, we will first compare Maximus’s account of gnostic surrender with Luther’s understanding of desiring rightly. In this way we will be able to identify a shared expectation of how the will, renewed by grace, should function. Second, we will look at the way in which both thinkers are able to characterize the dynamics of salvation as a “beautiful/happy exchange.” In doing so, we will continue to see how the transformation of the will is for both thinkers descriptive of a new way of being “in Christ.” Lastly, we will continue to look at how this exchange of properties is Christologically grounded and introduce Luther’s doctrine of human beings as *simul iustus et peccator* as a remaining point of disagreement and a test of the limits of commonality with a Maximian understanding of *theosis*.

5.1 The Transformation of Willing in Salvation

5.1.1 Maximus’s “Gnostic Surrender”

As we have seen in chapter 3, Maximus makes a distinction between the natural will (which he understands as something that Christ possesses as part of his human

nature), and the gnostic will (which he holds that Christ is unique among human beings in not possessing). The gnostic will (or, more accurately, gnostic willing) does not exist in Christ because in him there is no privation of knowledge of the good and thus no need for the deliberation between options that defines the gnostic will in other human beings. Because Christ has perfect access to the divine will by virtue of his divine hypostasis, his human willing does not vacillate between alternatives. In every other human being, however, there exists a disposition to deliberate. It is this deliberation that humans generally experience as “free choice” (see *Opusculum* 1, where Maximus identifies *gnome* as the “innate desire for things that are within our power, from which choice rises”).⁴⁵⁴ This gnostic disposition is “innate” (*endiathetos*), proper to the humanity’s creaturely being before the eschaton. While it is of itself morally neutral, its potential for variation constitutes the creature’s fallibility.⁴⁵⁵ Despite this weakness, Maximus does not consider the gnostic will to be simply a liability. According to Paul Blowers, “Even if it does not qualify as a natural faculty in the strict sense, it becomes a ‘resource’ of the passible creature in its postlapsarian life.”⁴⁵⁶ When Maximus speaks of the moral training that the creature must undergo in order to attain a divinized will, it is the gnostic will which he imagines “learning” how to desire rightly.

Nevertheless, in fallen humanity Maximus understands the *gnōmē* as the source of discord both within the individual’s own self, between individuals, and between the individual and God. In *The Four Hundred Texts on Love*, the particular dispositions (*gnōmai*) of the individual are said to have “split up” the single human nature so that the individual is unable to love more fully.⁴⁵⁷ In practice, the gnostic will tends towards self-interest, since when fallen humans choose, they tend to choose according to their own appetites and opinions, both over against other human beings and in opposition God’s command. Maximus identifies this with the inordinate love of the self (*philautia*) that is associated with the fall from grace. In the *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, this love of self and the compulsion to distinguish ourselves from one another through the exercise of

⁴⁵⁴ “*Orexis endiathetos tōn eph hēmīn ex hēs hē proairesis.*” *Opusc.* 1 (PG 91:17C).

⁴⁵⁵ *Amb.* 8 (PG 91:1104A).

⁴⁵⁶ Blowers, *The Transfiguration of the World*, 123.

⁴⁵⁷ Maximus the Confessor, *The Four Hundred Texts on Love* 1:71 in Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware, *The Philokalia*, 60.

choice is interpreted as the division of the single human nature.⁴⁵⁸ Thus it is not human nature that motivates individualism and alienates humans from one another and from God, but rather the love of self and the choices that *gnōmē* manifests in its fallible choosing. While the relationship between the fragmentation of human nature and *gnōmē* is more complex than can be explored here, it is apparent that for Maximus human beings having variable and divided dispositions means that they only channel a part of human nature and not its wholeness.⁴⁵⁹ This is in line with what we have seen regarding Maximus's conception of human willing and human nature, according to which *gnōmē* is related to an individual's mode of being (*tropos*). Since the will is an inherent part of human nature, the question is not whether a human being needs to overcome their nature in order to love (and will) selflessly, but whether a human being can exercise her will to achieve the end of fellowship with God for which we were created.

The process by which the will achieves such an undivided love for God is discussed by Maximus in *Ambigua* 7, where Maximus speaks explicitly of a gnostic surrender (*ekchōrēsis gnōmikē*).⁴⁶⁰ While the training of the will to follow “right reason” (*orthos logos*) is part of how the human being comes to learn true freedom in this life, gnostic surrender is presented as something more than learning to recognize and choose the good.⁴⁶¹ Maximus associates it instead with an eschatological state where life in the presence of God simply leaves the deliberative will nothing more to do. The result is that our individual dispositions may be conformed to “a natural disposition, one fixed and unchangeable” (*thesin tēn kata phusin pagian te kai ametatheon*).⁴⁶² This does not mean an abandonment of willing as such (since will is part of human nature, human beings could not cease to will without thereby ceasing to be human), but rather the achievement of a state where gnostic deliberation and choice no longer have a place, and the (natural) will is immediately ordered toward God. Such a will is completely transparent to God's own will, in line with Christ words in Gethsemane “not as I will, but as you will” (cf.

⁴⁵⁸ “Our one nature is divided into a thousand pieces, and we, who all share the same nature, mindlessly tear each other into shreds, like wild beasts.” Ad Thal. *Proemium* (PG 90:256B) quoted in Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 197.

⁴⁵⁹ Ep. 2 (PG 91:392D-408B). It also follows then that besides there being no deprivation of knowledge of the good in Christ on account of his access to the divine will, there necessarily would not be *gnome* in him because in the incarnation he assumed the fullness of human nature, not only a part of it.

⁴⁶⁰ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1076B-C).

⁴⁶¹ Ibid. (PG 91:1084A-B).

⁴⁶² Ibid.

Matthew 26:39).⁴⁶³ The “fixed and unchangeable” disposition describes a state in which human beings are irrevocably open to God’s will. While fallen humans currently have the ability to choose something other than God and to resist nature, Maximus envisions that in glory humans have “neither the inclination nor the ability to be carried elsewhere.”⁴⁶⁴

As the name suggests, “gnomic surrender” is not merely a surrender of the will, but precisely a *willing* surrender. Maximus contends that the will shall “surrender voluntarily” to God.⁴⁶⁵ By this he means that the act of surrender will itself be a manifestation (and, indeed, the fulfillment) of human freedom:

And this will take place because that which is within our power, I mean our free will—through which death made its entry among us, and confirmed at our expense the power of corruption—will have surrendered voluntarily and wholly to God, and perfectly subjected itself to his rule, by eliminating any wish that might contravene his will. And this is precisely why the Savior, exemplifying within himself our condition, says to the Father: Yet not as I will, but as thou wilt.⁴⁶⁶

Maximus sees the voluntary surrender and subjugation of the will to God as a fitting parallel to the voluntary disobedience that corrupted humanity. Additionally, he also identifies Christ’s own surrender to the Father’s will as a prefiguration of those who will also surrender their will to the Father in imitation of him. Although Christ’s surrender is not “gnomic,” Maximus sees Christ as “exemplifying...our condition” and the salutary effect of submitting to God’s will.

This text from the *Ambigua* provides insight into Maximus’s understanding of how human agency is transformed as the result of Christ’s healing of the human will. Death “made its entry among us” as a result of our activity – itself rooted in the exercise of the will. Christ, in parallel, “exemplified” our condition by assuming and thereby healing human nature. In Christ’s assuming of our humanity we find a universal (because Christ assumes the whole human nature, not a human hypostasis) response to the universal condition that affects humanity. Yet in this life there still remain in human

⁴⁶³ Opusc. 7 (PG 91:69B-89B).

⁴⁶⁴ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1076C).

⁴⁶⁵ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1076B).

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

beings “wishes that might contravene [God’s] will” which are either exercised or excised by something “within our power.”⁴⁶⁷ What a human being finally becomes appears to be the result of whether he chooses to act on these wishes and move away from God. As Maximus writes in Letter 9, “Towards any of these [God, naturally, or the flesh, inordinately] is the human is moved, according to his innate desires” (*pros tina toutōn kinēthē kata gnōmēn endiathetōs ho anthropos*).⁴⁶⁸ This early text demonstrates a continuity of thought in Maximus that continues through to his mature conception of gnostic surrender in *Ambigua* 7. In speaking of the previously mentioned “fixed and unchangeable natural disposition,” Maximus asserts that he is “not implying the destruction of our power of self-determination (*autoexousios*).”⁴⁶⁹ On the contrary, it is precisely humanity’s agency as exercised in and through the will that makes gnostic surrender possible. The natural power of the will to move and be moved is inherent to human beings as creatures. Thus, the sacrifice of one’s self-generated dispositions, judgments, and the like in favor of those that have their origins in God does not constitute the nullification of human agency but the fulfillment of its created potential and purpose.

Surrendering the will to God is the means of overcoming ego-driven deliberations by which humans try to establish their existence independently of God. In doing so, the fracturing of our shared nature can be healed by the God who, in taking flesh, is human nature’s archetype and redeemer. By surrendering one’s gnostic disposition, the glorified human being is able to live in imitation of Christ whose will is deified even in advance of glory. Thus, the self-determination involved in gnostic surrender entails for Maximus the eschatological cessation of gnostic activity. McFarland describes the eschatological state for Maximus as one in which nature has displaced *gnōmē* in the individual and resultantly gnostic division within humanity is overcome. Although *gnome* contributes to the individual development of the fallen human being, it is something that necessarily disappears as the fulness of nature is restored.⁴⁷⁰ While Maximus has been explicit in maintaining the self-determination of the human being in movement towards God and the eventual eschatological surrender of the gnostic will, the culmination of redemption is the grace that heals the will so as to overcome any opposition to nature. Thus, Maximus

⁴⁶⁷ Here it is worth revisiting that for Maximus the will itself is a natural power, which is a type of motion as we have seen in Chapter 3. Cf. Opusc. 16 (PG 91:185D).

⁴⁶⁸ Letter 9 (PG 91:448A). In Letter 2 (PG 91:396D), Maximus similarly says that nature will be renewed by desire (*gnōmikōs*).

⁴⁶⁹ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1076B).

⁴⁷⁰ McFarland, “Naturally and by Grace,” 413.

writes that Christ “will join to the will of the one who supplies the grace the *gnōmē* of those who request it, by rendering the two identical in a unity of relation.”⁴⁷¹ Overcoming the opposition to nature is the abrogation not of the self, but rather of every impediment to the self’s communion with Christ. In this giving of grace, the “fixed and unchangeable natural disposition” is restored so that the human being may “be as changeless in *gnome* as...in nature.”⁴⁷²

In these excerpts we see two things of note. First, while self-determined willing is part of the surrender of the will that a glorified human being must undergo as a condition of life in God’s presence, isolated self-determination is not the purpose of gnostic surrender. Rather, because *gnōmē* is a function of how human beings will in space and time, it necessarily bows out as human beings ascend to a heavenly state outside of space and time in the eschaton. Second, the unity with God that is achieved in the eschaton by the surrendering of the will and the resulting overcoming of gnostic divisions is both firmly dependent on God and nevertheless (or, rather, for that very reason) natural. It is dependent on God because grace is necessary for the will to be united to the will of God who supplies that grace; and it is natural because it constitutes the end for which human beings were created and for which purpose they have a natural capacity (that is, the natural will which is the movement of the human’s being and which preserves that grace that God gives).

5.1.2 Luther’s New Motivation for Good Works

Having looked at Maximus’s vision of a redeemed will, we will now turn to Luther on the issue. We have seen that for Luther the will is a critical category to identifying fallen humanity’s infirmity. However, while Luther readily identifies the will as the problem, he lacks the type of systematic vision of the redeemed will that Maximus produces since he does not consider the will as active in the individual’s justification or its own restoration. Luther’s treatises on the will and his consideration of ethical motivations of the Christian do, however, reveal for us what a transformed human will looks like for him. In the previous chapter we saw that for Luther the internal freedom that is the result of justification is manifest in external works of love for one’s neighbor.

⁴⁷¹ *Commentary on the Our Father* (PG 90:900A) quoted in McFarland, “Naturally and by Grace,” 413.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*

With this in mind, an investigation into Luther's vision of the redeemed will asks the question, "How does one will spontaneous acts of love towards one's neighbor?" Luther's interest in the Christian's motivation for good works give us insights into what the transformed will looks like for him.

Luther's discussions of good works that a believer performs invariably return to the topic of that person's salvation. In this context, he shows his hesitancy to ascribe moral virtue to any good works that are done apart from Christ.⁴⁷³ In his sermon of 1521 *On the Three Kinds of Good Life for the Instruction of Consciences*, Luther addresses the question of why a Christian does good.⁴⁷⁴ He answers that the failure of attempts to justify oneself by good works lies in the unrighteousness that motivates those works. While one is moved to genuine goodness by love, acts that are unrighteous are the product of self-interested or self-serving motivations:

We do not really want to be righteous; we only pretend because we are afraid of being punished or disgraced, or because we seek our own ends and pleasure in these works. And no one is righteous solely and alone for God's sake, the way it ought to be. The natural man wants to and has to seek something whereby he may be righteous. He is not able and has no desire to be righteous for righteousness' sake. He does not allow himself to be content with righteousness, as he ought to do, but it is determined by means of it either to earn something or escape something.... We ought not be good to earn something or avoid something, for that is to behave no better than a hireling, a bondsman...and not as willing children and heirs who are righteous only for righteousness' sake, that is, for God's own sake alone, for God himself is righteousness, truth, goodness, wisdom, holiness. He who seeks nothing other than holiness is the one who seeks God himself, and he will find him. He who seeks reward, however, and avoids pain, never finds him at all and makes reward his God. Whatever it is that makes a man do something, that motive is his god.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷³ Relevant to our overall purposes, Simo Peura makes this point when he says that Luther "typically refuses to distinguish between the question of salvation and the question of ethics." See Simo Peura, "What God Gives Man Receives: Luther on Salvation," in *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 78.

⁴⁷⁴ LW 44:231-42.

⁴⁷⁵ LW 44:241.

Luther does two things in this text. First, he presents an assessment of fallen humanity that precludes any claim to virtue as achieving righteousness before God. In doing so he upholds his claim made in the *Heidelberg Disputation* about the total incapacity of the human will. Second, Luther equates God with righteousness itself. This is an important claim for several reasons. Luther is establishing that righteousness is not an object or quality to be possessed so much as a relationship to be entered into. Therefore, righteousness is not a kind of “thing” acquired from God who possesses, or something outside God that God may observe the human being pursue and obtain. Likewise, righteousness cannot be attained apart from God, since to desire righteousness is identical with desiring God. Thus, for Luther, to desire righteousness, holiness, or other divine attributes for the sake of reward or otherwise for one’s own sake is not only fruitless but is also idolatrous. Even the joy of heaven or the blessing of God, when it is desired for oneself, reveals that the goal is really self-interested. Following the principle that whatever serves as a motive for human action is good for the actor, the logic of Luther’s position forces the conclusion that one who does things for love of self is his own god.

Rather than the result of any form of self-interested love, Luther sees genuine good works and holiness as the consequence of a self-emptying that disregards one’s own gain and profit. This does not mean that achieving righteousness necessitates that the individual is working against her own self-interest. Neither does it negate the objective value of certain acts of civil righteousness that one may accomplish. It is rather to say that righteousness before God is achieved apart from preoccupation with one’s own self.⁴⁷⁶ Luther’s *Freedom of a Christian* explains that this is possible because the believing Christian already possesses the fullness of love and joy by faith and thus lacks nothing else that it should desire.⁴⁷⁷ The Christian, herself being an image of Christ, is like him “content with this form of God which [s]he has obtained.”⁴⁷⁸ As works come naturally for the human person, the works of a Christian are undertaken with the contentment of faith, so that knowing she lacks nothing she can direct her works outwards. Such a person is able to serve free from self-interest because she by faith is like Christ, already knowing God, and enjoys God in such a way that she is entirely content. Luther describes this as a

⁴⁷⁶ Jennifer Herdt explains Luther’s requirement of the law as being that “we put our trust in God rather than in ourselves.” See Idem, *Putting on Virtue*, 176.

⁴⁷⁷ LW 31:367.

⁴⁷⁸ LW 31:366.

“confidence towards God.”⁴⁷⁹ This confidence excludes any lack that might drive an individual to act in her own self-interest. Indeed, it is the very compulsion to act in this way from which Luther holds the Christian is freed. As a result, the Christian “knows all things, can do all things, ventures everything that needs to be done.... gladly and willingly.... because it is a pleasure for him to please God in doing these things.”⁴⁸⁰ Reward simply cannot motivate righteousness in Luther’s mind. What drives righteous behavior is that Christ lives in the believer (cf. Galatians 2:20).⁴⁸¹ The willing service of a Christian to her fellow manifests not as the (so to speak, “gnomic”) desire of an individual. It is not something that is deliberated upon, lest the self saturate the will and steer it towards its own sinful purposes; it is rather an act of pure (as it were, “natural”) will.

In short, for Luther faith not only justifies but also is the source of righteous living. Thus, Paul Althaus is correct in asserting that justification by grace through faith “presupposes” the ethical life.⁴⁸² In his *Treatise on Good Works*, Luther clarifies what makes a work good. First, Luther would have us understand that God has plainly instructed human beings regarding good works: that which is God-pleasing and holy has been commanded in scripture, and that which is sinful has been condemned. “Therefore, whoever wants to know what good works are as well as doing them needs to know nothing more than God’s commandments.”⁴⁸³ However, if a commandment is kept out of fear or for personal gain, it remains a sin *coram deo*, even though it may outwardly accomplish good. As Jennifer Herdt explains, “The kind of purity of intention central to Christian virtue is not something we can create in ourselves.”⁴⁸⁴ Thus, unless these commandments are kept in faith, they are not kept rightly. To put it differently, for Luther only a Christian can fulfill the commandments righteously, because only a Christian can be said to fulfill them in faith. In his study of early Luther on the conscience, Michael Baylor describes the way in which faith shifts the center of moral concern away from the self and locates it in God:

⁴⁷⁹ LW 44:6

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ LW 31:353.

⁴⁸² Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 3.

⁴⁸³ LW 44:16.

⁴⁸⁴ Herdt, *Putting on Virtue*, 182.

It is faith which confers on the conscience the ability correctly to judge, as God judges, persons before actions and actions in the light of persons. Or, perhaps more accurately, faith is the power of the conscience to accept God's judgements about the person rather than those which the conscience arrives at naturally, or by inference from actions.⁴⁸⁵

Baylor is arguing that for Luther faith allows the conscience to shed its preoccupation with the self and accept the judgment that God makes. The concern is no longer any result which the individual will himself draw about his own actions, because the actions are delivered from the taint of self-interested motivation.

Luther locates the source of all Christian righteousness in Jesus's command to believe in him (cf. John 6:28-29): "When we hear or preach this word, we hasten over it and deem it a very little thing and easy to do, whereas we ought here to pause a long time and to ponder it well. For in this work all good works must be done and receive from it the inflow of their goodness, like a loan"⁴⁸⁶ Luther calls this faith in Christ "the first and highest" of all good works. Yet here he does not simply suggest that faith in Christ inaugurates in the Christian a newfound ability to do good works. Rather every good work is located in and receives its merit from this act of faith "like a loan." Previously we saw that Luther understood the Christian as being freed from the law *for* good works. Here we see that this freedom for good works does not signify a shift in the believer's natural capacity to do meritorious works, but a new availability for fulfilling the law in love by virtue of her being in Christ. Indeed, in Luther's mind it may be the same outward actions that are undertaken, but the inward disposition, according to which they are done in faith, is that which transforms the works and makes them good. Thus, faith becomes for Luther the "criterion of *every* good work."⁴⁸⁷

Finally, the way in which these good works are manifest further helps us reconstruct Luther's sense of how good works are willed. As we have seen, the nature of true righteousness precludes the possibility of the self as the "object" of good works; instead, they must be directed towards God and towards one's neighbor. Both the *Treatise*

⁴⁸⁵ M. G. Baylor, *Action and Person. Conscience in Late Scholasticism and the Young Luther* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 228.

⁴⁸⁶ LW 44:2.

⁴⁸⁷ Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 285.

on *Good Works* and the sermon *On the Three Kinds of Good Life* criticize preoccupation with the performance of religious works (those directed towards God) when such a preoccupation is a calculated attempt to garner spiritual advantage or favor for the one performing them. Luther otherwise takes for granted, however, that right worship of God is inherent in the fulfillment of the commandments in faith. Therefore, rather than focus on the ritual manifestation of good works, Luther instructs on the opportunity to serve one's neighbor, having a conscience that before God is clean.

Luther contrasts works that are done for one's own benefit with the commandments of God that "drive us to our neighbor's need, that by the means of these commandments we may be of benefit only to others and their salvation."⁴⁸⁸ Concern for one's neighbor becomes a recurring theme in the treatise. Faith creates a reality in which preoccupation with the self is not only illogical but also unimaginable: "For if faith does not doubt the favor of God, and a man has no doubt that he has a gracious God, it will be quite easy for him to be gracious and favorable to his neighbor..."⁴⁸⁹ Similarly, he frames the freedom to serve one's neighbor in terms of selflessness while discussing the seventh commandment: "Faith teaches this work of itself. If the heart expects and puts its trust in divine favor, how can a man be greedy and anxious? Such a man is absolutely certain that he is acceptable to God; therefore he does not cling to money; he uses his money cheerfully for the benefit of his neighbor."⁴⁹⁰ Faith, for Luther, frees the heart from being concerned with oneself and one's individual needs. As a result, the desire and will of the Christian naturally becomes for the neighbor.⁴⁹¹

As love for one's neighbor and desire for her well-being is not grounded in the worthiness of the recipient, the Christian does not undertake to judge her neighbor. Instead, as described by Baylor, in faith there is a new "power of the conscience to accept God's judgments about the person rather than those which the conscience arrives at naturally."⁴⁹² Just as faith removes the impediment of the will's subjective judgment from the self (freeing one from the compulsion to direct works to one's interests), so also faith removes the will's judgments of the neighbor (freeing one from the compulsion to withhold works that benefit the neighbor). Faith affecting the desire of the will to

⁴⁸⁸ LW 44:71

⁴⁸⁹ LW 44:108.

⁴⁹⁰ LW 44:102.

⁴⁹¹ The Christian *desires* to do that for which she is *freed*.

⁴⁹² Baylor, *Action and Person*, 228.

differentiate and decide in one's own interest thus removes any competitive drive that restricts the individual from willing according to God's command.

Luther describes this new, non-competitive way of living in Pauline language of "faith active in love" (cf. Galatians 5:6). "Here faith is truly active through love, that is, it finds expression in works of the freest service, cheerfully and lovingly done, with which a man willingly serves another without hope of reward; and for himself he is satisfied with the fullness and wealth of his faith."⁴⁹³ Althaus explains the shift in the object of our good works succinctly, saying that "teleologically, our deeds are done not for God but for our neighbor and for him alone. Whatever we do, we are to concern ourselves only with our neighbor's needs and not worry about our own salvation."⁴⁹⁴ As a result, the goal of a Christian's life becomes entirely one of service to her neighbor.⁴⁹⁵ In this way of living, the Christian imitates Christ's own selfless life, lived not for himself but for others. Such devotion to one's neighbor identifies a Christian, one who lives in faith. Luther writes as much in *The Freedom of a Christian*, describing a life compelled to share in Christ's mission:

Just as our neighbor is in need and lacks that in which we abound, so we were in need before God and lacked his mercy. Hence, as our heavenly Father has in Christ freely come to our aid, we also ought freely to help our neighbor through our body and its works, and each one should become as it were a Christ to the other that we may be Christs to one another and Christ may be the same in all, that is, that we may be truly Christians.⁴⁹⁶

Luther's *imitatio Christi* appears as more than simply an ethical mirroring of Christ's life. To be a Christian means not only being a "Christ" to one's neighbor but that in doing so Christ will be "the same in all." With this clause, Luther precludes any "respect of persons" among Christians in regard to the performance of good works. One cannot help

⁴⁹³ LW 31:365.

⁴⁹⁴ Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, 5.

⁴⁹⁵ While his understanding of vocation is outside the scope of this project, it is necessary to note that Luther's writing on vocation engages in detail how faith manifests as love for one's neighbor in the Christian life. Significantly, Luther identifies all Christian vocation as being cruciform and an imitation of Christ, breaking down the medieval distinctions between religious and secular vocations in the process. Cf. Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, trans., Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957).

⁴⁹⁶ LW 31:367-68.

his neighbor according to his own preferences, but only in the manner that Christ has. “He does not distinguish between friends and enemies or anticipate their thankfulness or unthankfulness, but he most freely and most willingly spends himself and all that he has, whether he wastes all on the thankless or whether he gains a reward.”⁴⁹⁷

In summary, for Luther preoccupation with the performance or the result of works goes against the rule of faith, which is defined by selfless orientation towards one’s neighbor. Faith thus creates a reorientation of the moral center away from the concerns of the self and, in and through Christ, centers it in God. Christians “willingly” and “cheerfully” do good works because they are not judging actions according to their own interests. Rather the Christian wills to do good in an un-calculating way: spontaneously and out of love. Thus, the Christian is indeed both a perfectly free lord and a perfectly dutiful servant, but also a *selfless* servant, one who in faith is moved by that which moves Christ and not by the individual, peccable motivations.

5.1.3 Shared Vision of a Renewed Will

In Luther’s treatment of good works, we find a vision of a Christian whose motivations are transfigured by the new life of faith. Faith is depicted as providing a cleansing of the conscience and assurance of one’s acceptance by God so that the believer, no longer driven by concern for self-advancement and self-preservation, can desire God and that which God wills. Luther does not distinguish between modes of volition the way that Maximus does. While Luther only fleetingly refers to the kind of “willing” that propels this altruism in the texts on good works, his understanding of human motivation and volition remains consistent with his claims about the will established in the *Heidelberg Disputation*, namely, that the free will after the fall can only do good in a passive capacity, while in an active capacity it will always sin. He does, however, describe the effect of faith on a Christian’s motivations in a way not dissimilar to the way Maximus describes gnostic surrender. For both, the multiplicity of finite ends characteristic of fallen willing is eradicated from volition so that the human being’s love is manifest outwardly toward a single, unified end. In this shared vision of the redeemed will, we see a surrender of self-interest and an advent of blessed spontaneity that, in its similarity to that which Maximus ascribes to the natural will in a state of grace, can be

⁴⁹⁷ LW 31:367.

viewed as a proleptic experience of eschatological reality that is experienced as growth and progress.

First, we see that both Maximus's and Luther's accounts anticipate a will that has surrendered self-interest. Maximus speaks of this in terms of the believer "separating himself from any thoughts or properties to which he is privately inclined."⁴⁹⁸ The broadening and diversifying of desire beyond love of the self and of lower things is part of Maximus's understanding of the human being's growth and movement to its eschatological goal and his related vocation as microcosm. In *Ambigua* 7 Maximus speaks of the creature's movement and the developments around its desire as it moves towards its *telos*.⁴⁹⁹ As human nature has been fragmented in the fall (as seen in the creature's disordered desire towards lower things), so desire plays a role in the return to divine affections. God is said to introduce to the human being that cooperates with grace an "impassable desire" (*apathēs ephesis*). This seemingly oxymoronic concept is possible because the natural will retains its capacity for such desire but now driven by grace rather than the passions. As it returns to God, the will is seen as loving less according to the individual's narrow, material desires and more broadly as it comes to focus instead on the God in whom the will desires its repose. This broadening is not for its own sake, but a result of the new openness of desire for God, as Maximus claims in his commentary on the Lord's Prayer: "The whole mind should strain toward God, stretched out like a sinew by the irascible faculty and aflame with passion for the highest reaches of desire."⁵⁰⁰

Maximus's understanding of the human creature's vocation as microcosm is situated within this movement towards God. As noted in chapter 3 above, human nature mediates the relationship between God and the creation, since the human being's unique bond of body and soul serves as a stage for the reconciliation all bodily creatures. As such Maximus sees the destiny of each individual as tied to that of his neighbor:

Because it is the very image of its Creator – [the human being] should, on the one hand, by means of its desire and the whole power of its total love, cling closely to

⁴⁹⁸ Ep. 2 (PG 91:400AB).

⁴⁹⁹ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1080C).

⁵⁰⁰ Maximus, *Orationis Dominicae Exposito* quoted in Paul M. Blowers, "The Dialectics and Therapeutics of Desire in Maximus the Confessor," *Vigiliae Christianae* 65, no. 4 (2011): 433.

God through knowledge, and, growing in likeness to God, be divinized; and, on the other hand, through its mindful care for what is lower, in accordance with the commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself, it should make prudent use of the body, with a view to ordering it to the mind through the virtues.... that the Creator of all might be proven to be One, and through humanity might come to reside in all beings in a manner appropriate to each, so that the many, though separated from each other in nature, might be drawn together into a unity as they converge around the one human nature.⁵⁰¹

In this section, Maximus relates the union of body and soul (a relationship which requires ordered love of the soul's "neighbor," the body) to loving other human persons who share with us this same image of God and common nature. In Christ, in whom all human beings converge around one redeemed human nature, the desires of the believer may be healed. The discipline through which the *gnōmē* is healed is inseparable from the reality of communion with other. Maximus describes the Church, specifically, as bringing the faithful to a "single identity of the will" (*kata mian gnōmes tautotēta*).⁵⁰²

Similarly, for Luther sanctified desire broadens out from the self to the world. Given the volume of Luther's reference to love for one's neighbor, this point need not be rehearsed at length. It is of note, however, that Luther does explicitly differentiate between seeking one's own good and seeking the common good. In his lectures on Romans, he comments on Paul's distinction of the "prudence of the flesh" as that which rejects the common good in favor of one's own advantage: "It enjoys only itself and uses everyone else, even God."⁵⁰³ This is contrasted with the "prudence of the spirit," which "chooses the common good and seeks to avoid what can harm the common life. It rejects self-interest and chooses what is disadvantageous to the self. For it directs the love that 'seeks not its own' (1 Cor. 13:5) but that which belongs to God and all his creatures."⁵⁰⁴ In contrast to the scholastic confidence that humans in their sin can recognize and desire the common good, Luther holds that the prudence of the flesh is always interested in its own good rather than the common good. Where the interests of the two overlap, it is

⁵⁰¹ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1092B-C).

⁵⁰² Myst. 24 (PG 91:705A-B).

⁵⁰³ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, trans. Wilhelm Pauck (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 225.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 226.

inevitably because of self-preoccupied motives.⁵⁰⁵ Only the prudence of the spirit operates apart from self-preserving or self-aggrandizing impetuses.

The practical implications of this distinction inform Luther's commentaries on such themes as submitting to temporal authorities. While Luther maintains that the Christian is free *coram Deo*, the Christian's dutiful servitude means restraint and control out of concern for the needs and desire of others, particularly in the secular realm, where most divisions manifest themselves. While not developed in terms of the unity of human nature (as in Maximus's more explicitly Christological account), Luther grounds the need for attention to the needs of the neighbor as acknowledgment of "that which belongs to God and all his creatures." Others exist and have their worth not because of their perceived utility, but because God delights in them.

Second, both accounts present this selfless way of willing characteristic of the redeemed as fundamentally *natural*. For Maximus, this is critical to the Christology that undergirds his whole system. Following the soteriological principle laid down by Gregory of Nazianzus, Maximus has defended the claim that the human will is something that must be assumed by the Word in order to be redeemed. Thus, Christ possesses a (natural) will, because a will is proper to human nature. The same does not go for the gnostic will, that particular mode of willing that human beings in time and space exercise individually (i.e., at the level of *tropos*) and that opens the space for willing that is contrary to nature. While human beings are capable of gnomically willing against nature, the one who wills entirely naturally (as we see in Christ) "moves only towards things that are good" and thus does not have a gnostic will.⁵⁰⁶ In his *Disputation with Pyrrhus*, Maximus defines willing as a property of nature precisely to argue that it is not something that exists at the level of hypostasis (and thus to be identified with Jesus' divine person). There is, correspondingly, no ontological division between will and nature, as the former is "a power of life out of its nature."⁵⁰⁷ Thus Maximus's Christologically grounded account of the natural will leads us to understand that when human beings surrender *gnome* what is left is not a will that asserts its autonomy unnaturally, but rather a creaturely motion of willing that is entirely in accord with its nature.

⁵⁰⁵ Dieter, *Der Junge Luther und Aristoteles*, 48. Dieter discusses these lectures at greater length in Idem, *Junge Luther und Aristoteles*, 269-75.

⁵⁰⁶ Farrell, *Free Choice in St. Maximus the Confessor*, 189.

⁵⁰⁷ Opusc. 3 (PG 91:49B).

In Luther's account, the spontaneity of willing that which is good is contrasted with the culpable motivations that, apart from faith, drive human beings to do good works (viz., seeking reward, either from God or from others, or avoiding punishment).⁵⁰⁸ We may briefly mention here the question of natural law without straying too far from our discussion of the will, inasmuch as for Luther this law, manifest both in creation and through revelation, "is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"⁵⁰⁹ Luther contends that even the love of self that fallen humans experience is an "inward reminder" of this commandment.⁵¹⁰ Thus the revealed law expands and explains what one knows naturally or intuitively.⁵¹¹ Those who suppress this natural knowledge of God's law are described as people who "purposely stop their ears or pinch their eyes shut to close out sound and sight."⁵¹² This describes a willfully diminished capacity to acknowledge that which God has not only explicitly commanded, but also endowed the creature with an innate (though now corrupted) desire for. Thus, one can say that for Luther disobeying God's law is unnatural.

Yet in his alternative to sinful desire to fulfill the demands of the law, Luther speaks of a willing that seemingly lacks any motivation, except that it is done gladly – because it is a "pleasure...to please God."⁵¹³ This spontaneity suggests a type of ease indicative of a nature freed from the bondage incurred by the fall. In the *Treatise on Good Works*, Luther gives his clearest explanation of this. Having proposed that in faith the distinction between various types of works falls away (because, as we have seen, it is not the work itself, but the quality of its being done in faith that gives it merit), Luther uses the biblical examples of Saul, Hannah, and Paul to show that faith produces an effortless approach to works: "It further follows that a Christian who lives in this faith has no need of a teacher of good works, but whatever he find to do he does, and all is well done."⁵¹⁴ Luther supports this with an example of a loving human relationship. "When a man and a woman love and are pleased with each other, and thoroughly believe in their love, who

⁵⁰⁸ LW 44:242.

⁵⁰⁹ LW 27:349. Natural Law as its own category in Luther is more debated than what we have presented in its relationship to volition. See Robert C. Baker and Roland Cap Ehlke, *Natural Law: A Lutheran Reappraisal* (St Louis: Concordia, 2011).

⁵¹⁰ LW 27:351; "*Hoc autem exemplum intus sentitur.*" WA 2:577, 31.

⁵¹¹ LW 40:98. Luther goes so far as to claim that "the natural laws were never so orderly and well written as by Moses."

⁵¹² LW 19:54.

⁵¹³ LW 44:231-42; LW 44:6

⁵¹⁴ LW 44:5.

teaches them how they are to behave, what they are to do, leave undone, say, not say, think? Confidence alone teaches them all this, and more.”⁵¹⁵ Luther proposes that the Christian likewise is propelled purely out of their confidence in God. One neither needs to be taught how to act, nor to convince oneself of the benefit of one’s actions. Faith makes good works once again natural to the human being.

Yet both Maximus’s and Luther’s accounts share another, sobering similarity. Both describe the life in Christ in ideal terms, that is, the Christian’s volition as it should be (or, in Maximus’s explicitly eschatological perspective, as it will be in glory). Such expectation often runs counter to worldly experience. Although this idea remains unattained, this way of being is proleptically experienced inasmuch as the believer participates in it now. For Maximus, to train the will is by grace a possibility for the faithful person, even if the final surrender must wait until the state of glory. For Luther, however, such potential for training remains outside the Christian’s ability. In his *Lectures on Galatians*, he writes something Maximus could not: “We are sinners even after we have received the Holy Spirit. Externally there is not much difference between the Christian and another socially upright human being.”⁵¹⁶ Even though she is in Christ, the Christian remains a sinner, such that by nature she cannot initiate good works of her own volition. She remains herself powerless to act contrary to her sinful nature. A Christian for Luther may grow and increase in good works that flow out of love, but these works will not necessarily look any different externally from those of the non-Christian, since it is the underlying faith and the transformed motivations that propel such external works that differentiate the Christian. Luther writes, “For although we have become a new creature, nevertheless the remnants of sin always remain in us.”⁵¹⁷

This remnant of sin demonstrates the complexity of the new state of the Christian for Luther. It is certainly not the case that Luther eschews all talk of improvement in Christian life. He can say, for example, that “a Christian is not yet perfect, but he is a Christian who has, that is, who begins to have, the righteousness of God.”⁵¹⁸ Likewise, in a sermon on 1 Peter, he contends that purification, though completed in glory, begins in this life: “It is characteristic of a Christian life to improve constantly and to become purer. When we come to faith through the preaching of the Gospel, we become pious and begin

⁵¹⁵ LW 44:6.

⁵¹⁶ LW 26:376.

⁵¹⁷ LW 30:228.

⁵¹⁸ LW 17:224.

to be pure. But as long as we are still in the flesh, we can never become completely pure.”⁵¹⁹ We see that while Luther remains pessimistic about human capacity for improvement, he is not opposed to speaking of progress in faith, albeit cautiously. He is able to speak “moving and progressing towards [perfection] every day...when the spirit is master over the flesh, holding it in check, subduing and restraining it, in order to not give it room to act contrary to this teaching.”⁵²⁰ Progress is possible for Luther because the conscience made clean by faith allows the believer to consider her neighbor differently and desire rightly. Such living responds to and upholds the rule of the spirit over the flesh, so that the point Luther has previously argued may be proven true: namely, that a Christian can “willingly serve another without hope of reward; and for himself he is satisfied with the fullness and wealth of his faith.”⁵²¹ Because the key here is faith, there is “not much difference externally” between the Christian and a morally upright unbeliever. Yet still the language of progress is clear: “This life, therefore, is not godliness, but the process of becoming godly, not health, but getting well, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not now what we shall be, but we are on the way. The process is not yet finished, but it is actively going on.”⁵²²

As Luther primarily presents the new, selfless disposition of the will through faith as the logical conclusion of one’s new life in Christ, he discusses the necessary progression and growth with less theoretical precision than Maximus. Where he does attempt to provide more systematic division between stages of personal growth, these are given in a pastoral context to help the Christian reflect on what kind of conscience propels her works. In *On the Three Kinds of Good Life*, for example, he presents such a struggle as one in which the Christian grows from a false good life “concerned only outward works” to that of a well-developed conscience, to that kind of life characterized by self-denial and the Holy Spirit. The most important distinction for our purposes is that between the second and third kind of good life. In the former, one understands “humility, meekness, gentleness, [etc.]” but “set[s] about them in the wrong way.”⁵²³ Luther says that “God does not just want such works by themselves. He wants them performed gladly

⁵¹⁹ LW 30:17. These sermons on 1 Peter are somewhat early in Luther’s career (1522), but nevertheless follow the *Heidelberg Disputation* and Luther’s established views on the will and human capacity for good works.

⁵²⁰ LW 21:129.

⁵²¹ LW 31:365.

⁵²² LW 32:24.

⁵²³ LW 44:240.

and willingly. And when there is no joy in doing them and the right will and motive are absent, then they are dead in God's eyes."⁵²⁴ In the latter, the Holy Spirit "makes a pure, free, cheerful, glad, and loving heart, a heart which is simply gratuitously righteous."⁵²⁵ The transition from the second kind of good life to the third is beyond human potential. The fallen human cannot will himself to be selfless. It is instead the result of the Spirit's arrival and operation to make the heart so. Thus, the difference between the Pharisaic works of the first kind of good life and the flawed piety of the second kind is not external but in the inner quality of the works. The third kind of good life stands apart because its works are undertaken "seeking no reward, fearing no punishment."⁵²⁶ Luther's belief that we must daily die and rise anew does not mean that we must always begin at the same place.⁵²⁷ Rather the progress made is always one of a return to the third kind of good life in spite of whatever achievements one may have attained in the second kind.

Thus, though Luther's account of spiritual progress is different from that which we see in Maximus, it remains arguably compatible with it. Maximus envisions final gnostic surrender in the eschaton. Until then, human beings are to strive for *homognomia*, a gradual increase in the unity of the will with one another. In this vision of the training of *gnōmē*, we find something similar to Luther's expectations of struggle and progress for the one who is in Christ. While Maximus concludes that the deified natural will in Christ precludes him gnostically willing, in all other human beings *gnōmē* persists in the way in which human beings experience their interactions in space and time and seek to negotiate a virtuous life for other human beings.⁵²⁸ While gnostic willing means fallen human volition is fallible, before the eschaton it must be the tool for training the will.

In *Ambigua* 7 and 8, Maximus develops a vision in which the material world provides the occasion for creatures—specifically human beings whose God-given form of movement is manifest in willing—to heal their willing by mastering their passions and desires. Here we remember that for Maximus, motion is not inherently evil but part of a good created order in which creatures' motion culminates in a state of final rest in which

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

⁵²⁵ LW 44:241.

⁵²⁶ LW 44:242.

⁵²⁷ "Qui incipient et non proficiunt, ponunt manum ad aratrum et respiciunt." WA 56:485, 28

⁵²⁸ Opusc. 16 (PG 91:193B-C).

they cease to move on their own and begin to be entirely moved by God.⁵²⁹ It is in this discussion that he shows that *pathos* can be beneficial. Through the struggle of life (what Gregory of Nazianzus describes as “divine playfulness”), the creature comes to appreciate life’s transience and strives not to pursue the fulfillment of selfish passions but spiritual virtues.⁵³⁰ Like Luther, Maximus envisions the human being as moved by love, either of self or of higher things: “The blameworthy passion of love engrosses the mind in material realities. The praiseworthy passion of love, conversely, binds it even to divine realities.”⁵³¹ These “material realities,” which Maximus calls blameworthy, are analogous to the concerns of the flesh that Luther says the Christian ceases to be concerned with when she is satisfied with the fullness of faith.⁵³² The Christian, convinced of God’s favor, no longer concerns herself with appeasing God and, content with having God, is no longer compelled to indulge sinful desires of the flesh. Throughout the Christian’s life one improves by progression from self-love to love of God and love of neighbor.

In the context of these texts, Maximus proposes disciplines for rehabilitating the passions, namely ascetic discipline and the imitation of virtue. These constitute a mortification of the flesh that does not destroy the passions but reorients them so that irrational love of lower things might give way to properly ordered love.⁵³³ Luther’s descriptions of progression in these matters does not entertain concrete strategies for progress in the same way that Maximus does. For Luther such attempts would fall under the category of pious works—those of a heart that understands the good of humility but goes about it the wrong way.⁵³⁴ However this does not mean such attempts for Luther are worthless. Rather (and in line with his understanding of the relationship between law and gospel), they have the utility of driving one to despair of one’s own works, allowing the believer to rely again on the gospel. These exercises, when compared to Luther’s understanding of progress might represent an increase in *desire* for holiness, but not in the actual *achievement* of holiness. This is a progress within the second kind of good life, in

⁵²⁹ For this reason, Maximus speaks of the eschatological destiny of human beings as a state of “ever-moving repose.”

⁵³⁰ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1093A-B).

⁵³¹ Car. 3.71.

⁵³² LW 31:367.

⁵³³ A detailed assessment of the proper cultivation of love in Maximus can be found in Paul Blowers, “Gentiles of the Soul: Maximus the Confessor on the Substructure and Transformation of the Human Passions,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* no. 4 (1996): 57-85.

⁵³⁴ LW 44:240.

which the will is trained through positive and negative reinforcement (i.e., the desire of praise and fear of punishment). In this restricted sense, Luther does reference the value of the Christian's work as an ascetic discipline when in *The Freedom of a Christian* he writes,

Each one should do the works of his profession and station, not that by them he may strive after righteousness, but that through them he may keep his body under control, be an example to others who also need to keep their bodies under control, and finally that by such works he may submit his will to that of others in the freedom of love.⁵³⁵

Here also, such effort does not make the will selfless or righteous, however much the language of "submitting his will by such works" seems to resonate with Maximus. Nevertheless, so long as it is understood to not be a means towards salvation, Luther can imagine vocation as a context in which the will is kept humble and the body under control. Apart from such submission in free love, the Christian is idle and susceptible to a return to self-love.

In this section we have seen how both Maximus and Luther understand salvation as involving specifically a transformation of the will. Maximus's representation of ecstasy and abandonment of the passions does not have the neighbor-specific focus that Luther's does. Nor should this be a surprise, for because each is writing in a different theological context, their immediate concerns are correspondingly different. Luther's neighbor-centered love appears in the sermons we have explored as a response to the claim that good works might merit salvation. But if that claim is (as Luther holds) false, then the point of good works must not be one's own benefit *coram Deo*, but the manifestation of one's faithful participation in Christ's own love for humanity. Maximus does not deny the value of helping one's neighbor: as we have seen, both Luther and Maximus see the transformed will as moving out of love for one's neighbor, increasingly transcending self-interested willing and desiring instead what God wills. Thus, the will increasingly desires what God desires and loves as God loves as it abandons those self-differentiating and self-assertive habits that alienate the human from God and the neighbor. By grace human willing increasingly reflects God's will, no longer maintaining the self as the source of its

⁵³⁵ LW 31:369.

own blessing but giving up the self to God, leaving one's will oriented outwards and upwards.

Maximus and Luther disagree on the agency which human beings exercise in submitting their will to God. Maximus supposes that nature is "moved" (*agetai*) by a self-determining capacity.⁵³⁶ Nature doesn't compel us, but it provides the capacity to meet our eschatological goal. By contrast, though Luther does not view progress toward our eschatological goal as unnatural, he emphasizes the passivity in which a fallen will does good. With respect to the possibility of progression in grace the two agree, although their way of talking about how human agency is implicated in this progression differs. The will wills rightly when it no longer is concerned with the self, but instead depends on God in faith. Faith, the hidden perfecter of the works, allows the Christian to live not in and for the self but in Christ and in her neighbor.

5.2. The Communication of Properties and Nature of Exchange

In both Luther and Maximus, we see that the transformation that takes place in the believer can be understood as a surrendering of the self – particularly the self-preoccupation of the will. This surrender of the will to God makes the Christian available to participate in God's own will and thus transforms the Christian's efforts, overcoming the willful self-assertiveness that defines the fallen human's relationship to their neighbor and to God. Luther frames what we understand as the rehabilitation of the will in terms of faith. Faith creates a clean conscience before God, freeing the Christian to willingly and gladly serve. In comparison, Maximus does not describe the healing of the will as a response to faith; instead, he stresses the incarnation as its cause on account of the natural will being assumed and divinized in Christ. It is as a result of the incarnation that the believer may cooperate with grace to surrender her particular desires so that they become increasingly changeless as they are rehabilitated to God's own will.

The changes that occur as the will is transformed lead us to ask how these particular traits of the redeemed will (selflessness, virtuous desire, etc.) are communicated to the human being. This is an important question, because for Luther the will has in itself no capacity in itself be truly virtuous, and even for Maximus the surrender the will to God and imputation of virtuous desire is the result of cooperation with grace, not solely the

⁵³⁶ Disputatio (PG 91:304C).

will's natural capacity. In explaining this communication, both Luther and Maximus speak of an exchange that occurs between God and the believer. Importantly, this language of exchange is a central fixture of the Finnish School's interpretations of Luther as espousing a doctrine similar to *theosis*. In light of what we have seen thus far we will compare the two characterizations of an exchange between God and the believer, with an eye to how this illuminates the situation of the will in justification and *theosis*.

5.2.1 Luther's Joyful Exchange

The joyful exchange (*commercium admirabile*, *fröhlich wechsel*) is not an uncommon theme in Luther's writings.⁵³⁷ David Steinmetz identifies the concept as originating in Luther from Augustine's sermons via his mentor in the Augustinian friars, Johan von Staupitz. Augustine had written that "what is properly God's (namely, life) becomes man's; and what is proper to human nature (namely death) becomes God's."⁵³⁸ Burnell Eckardt and others have situated Luther's interest in the exchange in the medieval emphasis on Christ's death as vicarious satisfaction.⁵³⁹ Whether this is the origin of its importance or not, Luther (following Staupitz) broadens the exchange into a nuptial metaphor. This transition is significant because it does not frame the exchange between Christ and believer in terms of strict transaction, as models of vicarious satisfaction or substitutionary atonement would imply. The nuptial metaphor emphasizes more the ongoing relationship and even tension between the two parties. As such it is not a saccharine or romanticized understanding of the relationship between Christ and the believer. Volker Leppin argues for the influence of medieval mysticism on not only Luther's use of nuptial metaphor but his entire theology of the cross.⁵⁴⁰ It is in this intimacy of relationship that the true difference between partners becomes apparent. However, it is not merely a contrast of the mystic and her divine spouse, but of the Christian with Christ, and even of

⁵³⁷ A *commercium admirabile* is described between Christ and creatures (WA 5:253, 10-11), and in exchanging human sin for Christ's righteousness (WA 5:608, 5-22), as well as a *feliciter commutans* (WA 40, I:443, 23); and the phrase *fröhlich wechsel* is found in WA 7:25, 34.

⁵³⁸ David C. Steinmetz, *Luther and Staupitz: An Essay in the Intellectual Origins of the Protestant Reformation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1980), 29.

⁵³⁹ Burnell Eckardt, *Anselm and Luther on the Atonement: Was It "Necessary"?* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992).

⁵⁴⁰ Volker Leppin, *Die fremde Reformation. Luthers mystische Wurzeln* (München: C. H. Beck, 2016), 60-63.

the “old Adam” and of Christ within her. While the relationship between the two partners is transformative, the bride does not become the groom, and vice-versa.

In a letter to Georg Spenlein (April 8, 1516) Luther writes, “Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness, just as I am your sin. You have taken upon yourself what is mine and given to me what is yours. You have taken upon yourself what you were not and have given to me what I was not.”⁵⁴¹ This often-quoted prayer that Luther commends to Spenlein describes a certain transaction, but only subsequent to the assertion “you are my righteousness, just as I am your sin,” so that any transactional exchange is predicated on a continuing context of relational dependence. In short, the Christian is not simply the beneficiary of grace transferred from Christ to her; such a commodification of grace is foreign to the reformer. Rather, what defines the exchange between Christ and the believer (indeed, what makes it “happy”) is not simply that the believer benefits disproportionately, but that the exchange is a definite sign of the new relationship between the two. It is for this reason that the nuptial approach to this metaphor becomes so strongly developed in Luther’s thought.

In *The Freedom of a Christian*, Luther distinguishes between three “benefits” of faith.⁵⁴² The first is identified as the “union” of the soul with the promise of God, which Luther illustrates by employing the classical patristic image of iron glowing like fire because of the union of fire with it.⁵⁴³ The qualities of the God’s word (that is, what is promised by faith) are transferred to the soul by virtue of proximity like fire and iron.⁵⁴⁴ The second is the “office” of faith which Luther calls “the very highest worship of God.”⁵⁴⁵ Luther says that “we ascribe to him truthfulness, righteousness, and whatever else should be ascribed to one who is trusted.” Were the exchange to be understood in purely transactional terms, here we would see a clear imbalance. God provides faith, which enables right worship, and then rewards the effect of his gift: “Faith works truth and righteousness by giving God what belongs to him. Therefore God in turn glorifies our righteousness.”⁵⁴⁶ The third benefit is that of the soul’s union with Christ, beyond that kind of union the soul was aid to have with the promise of God. Faith “unites the soul

⁵⁴¹ LW 48:12-13.

⁵⁴² More appropriately rendered “graces of faith” (*gratiae fidei*), as “benefit” in English favors a purely transactional interpretation.

⁵⁴³ LW 31:349.

⁵⁴⁴ LW 31:349.

⁵⁴⁵ LW 31:350.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom” (*quod animam copulat cum Christo, sicut sponsam cum sponso*).⁵⁴⁷ Here Luther explains how precisely relationship between the parties is the basis of exchange, providing also the foundation for the first two benefits he enumerated. The embrace of nuptial union as a metaphor concisely explains Luther’s understanding of the relationship. The two parties in a marriage become “one flesh” by their union – not only the nominal union of promise but the actualized union of their marital relations (hence *animam copulat*).

The nuptial metaphor points to the establishment of goods now shared in common that were once proper to separate parties. In their physical union a bride and bridegroom share themselves with one another in a way that transcends mere transaction. Thus, Luther establishes his model of exchange as one of intimacy and selflessness, according to the example of marriage.⁵⁴⁸ “Everything they have they hold in common, the good as well as the evil.”⁵⁴⁹ In this understanding there is not *trade* of goods or services between the parties, but a *sharing* of all things among them. This sharing transforms the sharer so that the economy of the exchange is inseparable from the being of those involved. For Luther it would be a “fragile love” in which a husband did not give over control of everything that was his to his bride. Commenting on 1 John, Luther affirms this understanding of sharing between spouses as the substance of the happy exchange. “We share his good things; he shares our wretchedness. I believe in Christ. Therefore my sin is in Christ.”⁵⁵⁰ It is in this way that everything that Christ has can be claimed by the Christian.

5.2.2 Maximus’s Beautiful Exchange

Maximus can also speak of an exchange similar to that which Luther describes. Whereas for Luther discussion of the joyful exchange as a mystical reality (like a marriage) develops out of a discussion of faith, Maximus entertains it within the context of the ontology of the incarnation. This is not to say, however, that it is an entirely

⁵⁴⁷ LW 31:351; WA 7:54, 31.

⁵⁴⁸ The marriage of Christ and the soul is a “true marriage” (*verumque inter eos matrimonium*) which is approximated by the “feeble type” of human marriage. WA 7:54, 33f.

⁵⁴⁹ LW 31:351.

⁵⁵⁰ LW 30:225.

separate matter from faith. In *Ambigua* 7, Maximus frames the incarnation as intended for humanity's deification:

God by his condescension is and is called man for the sake of man, and also so that the power of this reciprocal disposition might be shown forth herein, a power that divinizes man through his love for God (*dia to philotheon*), and humanizes God through his love for man (*dia to philanthrōpon*). And by this beautiful exchange (*kata tēn kalēn antistrophēn*) it renders God man by reason of the divinization (*theōsin*) of man, and man God by reason of the Incarnation (*anthrōpēsin*) of God. For the Logos of God (who is God) wills always and in all things to accomplish the mystery of His embodiment.⁵⁵¹

This account of a “beautiful exchange” expresses the absolute reciprocity that Maximus envisions. The incarnation is the catalyst of this exchange: God “is and is called man for the sake of man, and also so that the power of this reciprocal disposition might be shown forth...” Yet while this exchange is initiated by God, Maximus’s vocabulary stresses the mutuality of the subsequent relationship. In parallel, Maximus speaks of *philotheos* and *philanthropos*, setting up these two as like, relational postures. Further, the last sentence, in which Maximus speaks of the will of the Logos to accomplish the mystery of his embodiment “always and in all things,” makes clear that what the personal incarnation that inaugurates this new philanthropic disposition allows is a mystical incarnation in the individual believer.⁵⁵² This is demonstrated in a second set of lexical choices in this text, where Maximus sets up *anthrōpēsin* parallel to *theōsin*, rather than using other vocabulary such as the *sarkōthenta* or *enanthrōpēsanta* of the creed.

The mutuality of exchange is further demonstrated as the Logos’s incarnation and the human being’s *theosis* are conceptualized spatially. In *Ambigua* 10 Maximus again writes concerning the divinization of humanity as a result of the humanization of God:

For [the Fathers] say that God and man are paradigms of each other, so that as much as man, enabled by love, has divinized himself for God, to that same extent God is humanized for man by his love for mankind; and as much as man has

⁵⁵¹ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1084C-D) in Blowers and Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 60.

⁵⁵² Jean-Claude Larchet, *La divinisation de l’homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur* (Paris: Cerf, 1996), 378.

manifested God who is invisible by nature through the virtues, to that same extent man is rapt by God in mind to the unknowable.⁵⁵³

Larchet, Thunberg, and others have commented on the formula that we see Maximus here employ: as much as (*tosouton*) God is humanized, to such an extent (*hoson*) the human being is divinized.⁵⁵⁴ Here again we see that Maximus is referring to the effect of relationship with God on the human being. The believer manifests God “through the virtues,” that is, the ascetic life in which desires are redirected to their logos. As a result of this love of God, which manifests as *philanthrōpia*, “the nature of the body is necessarily ennobled (*eugenizetai*).”⁵⁵⁵

This union of reciprocity is described by Maximus as *perichoresis*, a term he also employs (following the Cappadocians) to describe the interpenetration of the human and divine natures in Christ.⁵⁵⁶ As a spatial metaphor, this interpenetration is intended to portray the Chalcedonian idea of a perfect unity in which the natures nevertheless remain distinct and unconfused. Because of its effectiveness in maintaining distinction while indicating an inseparable unity, Maximus applies this term to the union of human and divine not only within Christ’s hypostasis, but also in those who are being divinized. “In a manner befitting his goodness [God] wholly interpenetrates (*perichōrēsantos*) all who are worthy.”⁵⁵⁷ While a minority of scholarship interprets *perichōrēsis* in this context with God as the dominant partner, most view this as indicative of a complete mutuality being described, given the concept’s basis in the incarnation.⁵⁵⁸ It is in reference to the

⁵⁵³ Amb. 10 (PG 1113BC). Polycarp Sherwood reads *to agnōston* instead of *to gnōston* in Idem, *The Earlier Ambigua of Saint Maximus*, 144.

⁵⁵⁴ Larchet, *La divinisation de l’homme*, 376-382; Thunburg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 31-32.

⁵⁵⁵ Amb. 10 (PG 91:1113C).

⁵⁵⁶ The concept of *perichoresis* is central to Maximus’ commentary on Gregory and Pseudo-Dionysius in *Ambigua* 1-5 and the term explicitly used in *Ambigua* 4 and 5. Cf. PG 91:1097AB.

⁵⁵⁷ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1076C).

⁵⁵⁸ Likewise, its later use by John of Damascus to describe the interpersonal relationships of the Trinity affirms a balance in operation. Cf. Idem, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 3.5 in NPNF 9:4950. George L. Prestige is in the minority of scholars who emphasize an imbalance in the reciprocity of *perichōrēsis*. Cf. Idem, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: PSCK, 1952). Harry Wolfson represents the majority of scholarship (including Thunburg, cited below) when he writes “The physical analogy is the same as that of the Stoic ‘mixture.’ The *perichoresis* or penetration is always used as a mutual act, but the two sides of the mutual act are conceived as being neither simultaneous in occurrence nor the

incarnation that Maximus writes, “The human nature, united without confusion to the divine nature, is completely penetrated (*perichōrēsis*) by it, with absolutely no part of it remaining separate from the divinity to which it was united, having been assumed according to the hypostasis.”⁵⁵⁹ Thunberg represents the majority of scholarship on this, concluding that it is “a union without confusion in its consequences of full reciprocity...[H]uman *perichōrēsis* is in Maximus’ opinion real and not illusory.”⁵⁶⁰

To explain this union without confusion, Maximus employs the familiar analogy of iron in a fire to explain how Christ’s divinity and humanity could be united without confusion and without the humanity being destroyed:

He has become everything for us and has done everything for us out of his own free will, without distorting his essence, or its perfect natural properties, even though he divinized them, like the iron made red-hot, having rendered our essence wholly theurgic, having penetrated (*perichōrēsas*) it in an utmost manner by virtue of the union, having become one with our essence without confusion, according to the same and sole hypostasis.⁵⁶¹

The iron, of course, does not cease to be iron, although its proximity to the fire transforms it so that it shares the properties of fire—giving light, heat, even producing fire itself in turn. This transformation of Christ’s humanity becomes a corresponding model for how humans are being divinized. Maximus considers this “the most perfect work of love...to contrive through the mutual exchange of what is related that the names and properties of those that have been united through love should be fitting to each other.”⁵⁶² The unity of love is manifest in the sharing of properties, not only by virtue of Christ’s person, but on account of Christ’s relationship to the believer.

same in meaning.” Idem, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 428.

⁵⁵⁹ Amb. 5 (PG 91:1053B).

⁵⁶⁰ Thunburg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 28.

⁵⁶¹ Opusc. 4 (PG 91:60B) quoted in Elena Vishnevskaya, “Divinization as Perichoretic Embrace,” in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, eds. Michael J. Chistensen and Jeffrey A. Wittung (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), 140. Maximus again utilizes this same analogy in Opusc. 16 (PG 91:189C-192A).

⁵⁶² Ep. 2 (PG 91:401B).

So the human being is made God, and God is called and appears as human, because of the one and undeviating wish (in accordance with the will) and movement of both, as we find in the case of Abraham and the other saints...God takes form in each, through his great love for humankind, out of the virtue that is present in each through the ascetic struggle.⁵⁶³

Such a sharing is the result of both loving and willing by both partners, although for human beings before the eschaton it necessitates also the struggle of asceticism.

5.2.3 The Will in the Exchange

Neither of these accounts of the exchange that takes place between God and human beings explicitly addresses the question of willing. Maximus does allude to the will by referencing the virtues through which the believer “manifests God,” as well as the “wish (in accordance with the will) and movement” of both God and the believer that precedes that struggle for virtue by the believer. It also exists throughout implicitly in the context of one desiring the ascent of *theosis*, which we have seen is tied to the discussion of the exchange. For Luther the connection of the language of exchange to the will is even less clear. The exchange relies heavily on the relationship of faith, and though (as we have seen) faith is intricately tied to the transformation of the will, Luther does not speak of the will in direct relation with the metaphor of exchange.

The presence of will in the dynamic of exchange is for both theologians indirect and implicit, found in their common observation that this exchange, while “happy” and “beautiful,” involves struggle, so that while we do not see explicit reference to the will, we can recognize the dynamics of willing. For Maximus this is clear enough. He understands *theosis*, gnostic surrender, and the beautiful exchange that encompasses both as requiring the free will of the human being utilizing the natural capacity that God has given them to desire grace: “As much as man has manifested God who is invisible by nature through the virtues, to that same extent man is rapt by God in mind to the unknowable.”⁵⁶⁴ These virtues are the result of struggle, of training the will, so that it does not resist the perichoretic flow but returns to its natural motion directed toward God.

⁵⁶³ Ep. 2 (PG 91:401BC).

⁵⁶⁴ Amb. 10 (PG 1113BC).

The *noesis* that occurs in proportion to one's manifesting of God is, of course, itself related to volition. Maximus relates progress in knowing God to the correction of desire, as the will no longer is directed inordinately towards lower things and can pursue the divine.

Luther's account of the joyful exchange is likewise not devoid of struggle. Luther considers the "most pleasing vision" as encompassing both "a happy exchange *and struggle*."⁵⁶⁵ Luther continues the nuptial metaphor by, like Maximus, addressing the impact of this exceptional union on the sinful human being experiencing it. For this reason, he doesn't rely solely on the blissful side of the marriage metaphor, but on the struggle which once solely belonged to the sinner but which Christ now also shares "by the wedding-ring of faith." Because the struggle with sin is now part of the common property between the sinner and Christ, Luther can call this a "blessed struggle" (*salutare bellum*) and "mighty duel" (*stupendum duellum*).⁵⁶⁶ In her relationship to God, the Christian counts this struggle as completed because it is given up to Christ. *Coram Deo*, the union means the Christian is already free. In her outer person, however, she carries this struggle into her vocation and life of faith:

Here the works begin; here a man cannot enjoy leisure; here he must indeed take care to discipline his body by fastings, watchings, labors, and other reasonable discipline and to subject it to the Spirit so that it will obey and conform to the inner man and faith and not revolt against faith and hinder the inner man, as it is the nature of the body to do if it is not held in check.⁵⁶⁷

In keeping with Luther's theme in this *The Freedom of a Christian*, the ascetic life described no longer belongs to monks, but to every Christian in their various vocations. The aggression of said *bellum* proves to be against one's own (former) self through self-discipline. In Maximus' language, the cultivation of virtue belongs to all who would seek to "be found worthy." And here we can identify a link between the way both thinkers conceive struggle in the context of a happy or beautiful exchange. While Maximus does not distinguish between the inner and outer person as does Luther, he, too, acknowledges a struggle that before glory the human being necessarily experiences as part of being

⁵⁶⁵ "Frölich wechßel und streytt." WA 7:25, 34.

⁵⁶⁶ LW 31:351; WA 7:55, 8; LW 31:352; WA 7:55, 16.

⁵⁶⁷ LW 31:358-9.

joined to Christ and sharing in divine properties. Without such a struggle, one risks the flesh “revolting against faith and hindering the inner man,” just as much as submitting the will to the pursuit of carnal desires will inhibit one’s own participation in God’s life.

In this way it is possible to conclude that Luther and Maximus in their respective uses of the metaphor of exchange share some common perspectives on this new way of being, especially as it relates to willing. This shared perspective is grounded, respectively, in the Christological foundation of Maximus’s understanding of the exchange and in Luther’s understanding of the exchange as a benefit of faith. Both accounts have a Christological foundation. Though less explicitly than Maximus, Luther develops his understanding of the exchange in terms of the unity of the person of Christ. This unity, using the same logic as Maximus, is applied metaphorically to the union of Christ and the soul: sharing all things, yet without confusion. This is demonstrated in the central Christological declaration of *The Freedom of a Christian*:

Christ is God and man in one person. He has neither sinned nor died and is not condemned and he cannot sin, die, or be condemned; his righteousness, life, and salvation are unconquerable, eternal, omnipotent. By the wedding ring of faith he shares in the sins, death, and pains of hell which are his bride’s. As a matter of fact, he makes them his own and acts as if they were his own and as if he himself had sinned he suffered, died, and descended into hell that he might overcome them all.⁵⁶⁸

Luther understands the struggle as primarily that of Christ. It is this struggle that makes the inner person free, and only subsequently does the outer person struggle in faith. In his *Theses Concerning Faith and Law*, Luther writes, “True faith has as its end use of Christ’s passion, life, and salvation.”⁵⁶⁹ Christian righteousness is for Luther passive, and the creation of the faith that unites one to Christ requires allowing him to work in us.⁵⁷⁰ This is the essence of a Christian not living in himself but in God and his neighbor.

⁵⁶⁸ LW 31:351-2.

⁵⁶⁹ LW 34:110.

⁵⁷⁰ “*Ibi enim nihil operamur aut reddimus Deo, sed tantum recipimus et patimur alium operantem in nobis, scilicet Deum. Ideo libet illan fidei seu Christianam iustitiam appellare passivam.*” LW 26:4f.; WA 40/I:41.

Likewise, Maximus, having grounded his understanding of the exchange of properties between human beings and God in the exchange of human and divine in Christ, envisions a relationship in which human beings are available to receive the God inasmuch as they make themselves available to him. What made Christ's will unique for Maximus was the unreserved availability and openness to the divine will that Christ possessed by virtue of his hypostatic identity as the Second Person of the Trinity. Free from gnostic hindrance, Christ's human nature was able to exercise the fullness of its natural potential in harmony with the divine will. "His will in no way contradicts God, since it has been completely deified."⁵⁷¹ By grace, as a result of God's incarnation in Christ, the human being may be divinized to such an extent as God in her may be humanized. What is required of the human being is that by grace she conform to the end of her God-given nature.

In their respective accounts of the happy/beautiful exchange, we thus find conceptual similarities between Maximus and Luther, as well as a connection between their understandings of salvation as a transformation of the will and their Christologically grounded accounts of human and divine union. This allows us to conclude that the rehabilitation of the will as a consequence of faith and a manifestation of union with Christ establishes some similarities between Luther's more forensic and Maximus's more ontological account of salvation. For both, salvation is a proximity to God that results from grace, which causes the transformation of the believer, a transformation that involves the will both to initiate and to sustain. Differences nevertheless remain. For Luther the will can only sin in an active capacity, that is, can only sin until the works it wills begin to be done in faith. Maximus maintains the capacity of the will to do good even after the fall, despite its impairment, and allows for it to desire God. The transformation of the will as a result of faith remains nevertheless a key point of contact between Maximus's and Luther's accounts of salvation.

5.3 The Extent of the Communication of Attributes

5.3.1 The Conservation of Nature

⁵⁷¹ Opusc. 6 (PG 91:65B).

Having explored the relationship between the transformation of the will through faith and the union of God and the believer through faith, it is important to turn our focus to what the communication of attributes discussed in the context of exchange means for the nature of the Christian. Both Maximus and Luther have described a relationship in which the properties of one party are appropriated by the other. By virtue of this relationship, they are transformed even as their natures remain intact. In the metaphor of iron in the fire that is common between them, Luther and Maximus both exploit the image of iron acquiring the properties of fire, without itself *becoming* fire. It is the proximity of the two that creates this real change by virtue of their relationship to one another. The transformation of the human being by virtue of her uniting to God, and the transformation of those attributes, particularly willing, that belong to the human being, have helped us identify points of reference between justification and *theosis*. In this section we will explore the meaning and the result of the communication of attributes we have seen above, and how in this exchange natures are preserved.

For Maximus the human being's vocation as mediator of the creation is central to every aspect of how one considers the relationship between the human and the divine. The exchange of properties between the human and divine in any human life is predicated in the descent of the Logos and his penetration into human nature, and the reciprocal ascent of the human nature into the divine that is characteristic of the hypostatic union. This historical incarnation of the Logos primes the human being's creaturely work of mediation by bridging the first and greatest division, that between the creature and the Creator. Torstein Tollefsen writes, "It is by becoming man that God accomplishes what man was originally destined to do...In Christ the human individual is restored to itself."⁵⁷² It is because of this first obstacle overcome, that the divisions among creatures can be overcome by Christ and in his wake, the rest of humanity.

In this context, Maximus establishes how we are to understand the transformation that occurs by this union, glossing on Gregory Nazianzen's dictum that "the natures were innovated (*kainotomountai*)...and God becomes man."⁵⁷³ This leads one to question in what way the transformation occurs, or more precisely, to what degree the nature is different. Maximus maintains the integrity of both the divine and creaturely natures in the hypostatic union. The union between human and divine does not create something that is

⁵⁷² Torstein Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 183.

⁵⁷³ Amb. 41 (PG 91:1308CD).

“new” in that it is different in its essence. The essential character – the *logos* – of Christ’s humanity remains unchanged. Were it otherwise, then he would not have a true human nature. Rather, the exchange of properties in Christ occurs at the level of *tropos*. In keeping with Chalcedon, the humanity of Christ remains unconfused, even as it is transformed with respect to its mode of existence by its union with the divine nature. Thus, the way in which Christ is human is as God. In Christ the creature gains a new mode (*tropos*) of being. In this respect, the creature Christ can be said to be a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). Here we recall Maximus’s account of the *logoi* and *tropoi* in creation in *Ambigua* 7. As the *logoi* have both their origin and their consummation in God the *Logos*, they are both unconfused with and (in a way) indivisible from him:

The one Logos [is] many logoi, indivisibly distinguished amid the differences of created things, owing to their specific individuality, which remains unconfused.... the many logoi are one Logos, seeing that all things are related to Him without being confused with Him, who is the essential and personally distinct Logos of God the Father.⁵⁷⁴

The qualification that the Word is “without confusion” reflects this doctrine’s conformity to Maximus’s Chalcedonian commitments, but it further establishes the distinction-in-unity that those who are transformed by *theosis* share with Christ, who is their archetype: “For it is clear that He who became man without sin will divinize human nature without changing it into the divine nature, and will raise it up for His own sake to the same degree as He lowered himself for humanity’s sake.”⁵⁷⁵ Divinization is for Maximus a transformation of human nature without that nature changing into something else.

We might keep in mind the image of the iron in the fire as an example of the mechanics of the exchange as we understand it here. Iron can be hot or cold, rough or smooth. These accidents define the *way* that it is, but regardless of the how it appears, it is still iron. In the fire this does not change. The iron glows red hot, changing color, changing temperature, becoming soft and malleable. However, despite all these significant changes—changes that allow the iron to become useful to the craftsman’s

⁵⁷⁴ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1077C-1080A).

⁵⁷⁵ Maximus the Confessor, *Various Texts on Theology* 1:62 in Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware, *The Philokalia*, 178.

intent—it does not cease to be iron. It acquires the properties of fire but retains the *logos* of iron. Its chemical composition down to the atomic structure of the element remains the same. And as long as it remains in such proximity to the fire it will retain its new properties. Likewise, the human being maintains the integrity of her nature even when divinized. She is made *new* because she appears and manifests completely differently “owing to the grace and the splendor of the blessed glory of God, which is wholly appropriate to him, and beyond which nothing more splendid or sublime can be imagined.”⁵⁷⁶

What does it mean, however, for one to be the iron that is in the forge? Maximus writes that Christ has “just as the soul unifies the body.... joined us to Himself and knit us together in the Spirit.”⁵⁷⁷ The mystery in Maximus is the very tension that the believer is assimilated to God while retaining his individuality, so that Christ and the saint in glory are both human, but they are not the same human being. Tollefsen argues that the hypostasis of the believer (and thus of the divinized human) must be understood in the tension between the *logos* of nature and the *tropos* of existence.⁵⁷⁸ Maximus writes:

It is by being some thing [human], not as being some one, that each of us principally operates as man; but by being some one, e.g. Peter or Paul, he gives form to the mode of action...according to his gnomic will. Hence in the *tropos* the changeability of persons is known in in their activity, in the *logos*, in the inalterability of natural operation.⁵⁷⁹

To be divinized means for human nature to be preserved in its *logos* as distinct from God even as its *tropos* is transformed by proximity to the divine nature and will. Human individuality lies in the tension between the *what* one is and *how* one is who he is. We cannot be changed into something completely other—our nature remains that of a human and not that of God. But for Maximus we are susceptible to such deification by grace that transforms our nature’s mode of being.

5.3.2 *Simul Iustus et Peccator*: A Point of Divergence

⁵⁷⁶ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1088BC).

⁵⁷⁷ Amb. 7 (PG 91:1097B).

⁵⁷⁸ Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology*, 131.

⁵⁷⁹ Opusc. 10 (PG 91:137A) in Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology*, 132.

As we assess what justification and *theosis* say about the human being, it is necessary to address Luther's claim that the believer is *simul iustus et peccator*, which stands as a distinction in which the differences between his and Maximus's accounts of salvation become patent. Luther's anthropology, as we have seen, is shaped by a dialectical understanding of God's twofold reign. Righteousness is outside our self, even though it does impress on the will. This impression on the will means that the self is open to incremental transformation. Maximus likewise understands that human persons undergo incremental transformation in response to grace as they conform to their nature. This transformation is primarily the result of the impression of grace on the will. However, for Maximus such a transformation is not distinct from salvation. Rather than a natural and spontaneous response to being saved, Maximus imagines the struggle and training of the will as part of the process of salvation healing the believer and the believer's will, culminating in glory in *theosis*. The distinction between these two understandings of the Christian's situation under grace but before the eschaton become pronounced in their expectation of Christian transformation.

In *Against Latomus* Luther's anthropological dialectic takes shape as he describes the two foundations that God has provided for believers "so that the sin which is in them should not lead to their condemnation."⁵⁸⁰ The first foundation describes the position of the individual *coram Deo*; on this foundation the individual is either entirely righteous in Christ or entirely sinful. The second foundation describes the individual *coram hominibus*, and their struggle against sin with the help of the Holy Spirit. As Luther explains the apparent disconnect as a delayed manifestation of one's relationship *coram Deo* in one's life *coram hominibus*:

Everything is forgiven through grace, but as yet not everything is healed through the gift. The gift has been infused, the leaven has been added to the mixture. It works so as to purge away the sin for which a person has already been forgiven...while this is happening, it is called sin, and is truly such in its nature but now it is sin without wrath, without the law, dead sin, harmless sin, as long as one perseveres in grace and his gift.⁵⁸¹

⁵⁸⁰ LW 32:239.

⁵⁸¹ LW 32:229.

From the outer perspective, the believer must struggle and persevere in the Spirit to overcome the “dead sin.” From the inner perspective, God’s saving work is done. Soteriologically speaking, this standing *coram Deo* supersedes any consideration of development of the temporal, outer person.

In the *Disputation Concerning Justification*, Luther describes the one who is justified as receiving God’s forgiveness but remaining *simul iustus et peccator*.⁵⁸² Insofar as the justified person is reconciled to God, they are righteous. They are, however, as argued in *Against Latomus*, without condemnation not because they do not sin (or because good works cannot be sinful), but by virtue of the covenant made with those who are in Christ.⁵⁸³ The sin that remains throughout their life against which they much struggle shows the believer to nevertheless be a sinner. Luther uses the analogy of a doctor curing a sick man’s illness to explain this duality:

Justification is similar to the case of a sick man who believes the doctor who promises him a sure recovery and in the meantime obeys the doctor’s order in the hope of the promised recovery and abstains from those things which have been forbidden him, so that he may in no way hinder the promised return to health or increase his sickness until the doctor can fulfill his promise to him. Now is this sick man well? The fact is that he is both sick and well. He is sick in fact but he is well because of the sure promise of the doctor, whom he trusts and who has reckoned him as already cured, because he is sure that he will cure him.⁵⁸⁴

Candace Kohli argues that here, in his *Antinomian Theses and Disputations* (1537-1540), Luther allows for moral improvement in response to the imputation of Christ’s healing medicine. Taking the medieval image of *Christus medicus*, he extends Christ’s agency beyond the initial work of justification (the diagnostic of the law and the administration of the medicine of the Gospel) to an ongoing healing activity of Christ that leads to the “active resistance” of the sick man as the presence of Christ enables him to resist the sin

⁵⁸² LW 25:260; Cf. LW 34:167.

⁵⁸³ LW 32:239.

⁵⁸⁴ LW 25:63.

that remains and by fulfilling the law “in the Spirit” through good behaviors.⁵⁸⁵ As such the health of the sick man depends on the continued care of the physician; health under his care is the goal, not independence following one-time treatment.

Luther’s dependence on promise and continuous aid as constitutive of the righteousness (wellness) that the believer possesses leads to the question whether the *simul* implies one is totally just and totally a sinner or partially just and partially a sinner. The *totus-totus* understanding of the *simul* means that the believer’s status is determined not by their nature, but by their relationship with Christ. Against the antinomians, Luther maintains that in substance, that is according to his own properties, the Christian is *totus peccator*; but in regard to his relationship to Christ, he is *totus iustus*.⁵⁸⁶ A *partim-partim* understanding of the *simul* finds resonances in *The Freedom of a Christian*. Part of the believer’s life is in Christ, while part is in the flesh. Luther describes this *partim-partim* way of being by visualizing the believer between heaven and earth:

The person who believes in Christ is righteous and holy through a divine imputation....but while we are lifted up into the bosom of the Father and are clad with finest raiment, and our feet reach out below the garment, Satan bites them whenever he can. Then the child struggles and cries out and realizes that he is still flesh and blood and that the Devil is still there, and plagues constantly, until the whole man grows holy and is lifted up out of this wicked, evil world.⁵⁸⁷

This new reality of this imputation creates a situation reminiscent of the *tosouton-hoson* formula employed by Maximus. In as much as one is a Christian, she is righteous; insofar as she looks at herself, she is a sinner and is in constant battle.⁵⁸⁸ Indeed, Luther considers that “if Christians are considered in terms of quality, they are full of sin.”⁵⁸⁹ Because this paradox addresses different aspects of the Christian’s life, such a claim is not a

⁵⁸⁵ Candace L. Kohli, *Help for the Good. Martin Luther’s Understanding of Human Agency (1530-1545)*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, 2017, 4.4.2.

⁵⁸⁶ LW 73:206; WA 39/1:563-4.

⁵⁸⁷ LW 25:258. In WA 39/1:508: “*quantum...eatenus*.”

⁵⁸⁸ LW 73:176.

⁵⁸⁹ LW 73:235.

contradiction. Luther is adamant to this effect.⁵⁹⁰ Rather, in the Christian “two contraries in one subject” exist: both God’s righteousness and the Old Adam with his corrupt nature.

If we are to consider our state primarily in terms of our relationship to Christ, then the *totus-totus* interpretation of the *simul* most accurately represents the concerns we have seen in Luther. “The Word...is saintliness itself. But this saintliness is imputed to those who have the Word. And a person is simply accounted saintly, not because of us or because of our works but because of the Word. Thus the whole person becomes righteous.”⁵⁹¹ Without understanding that the believer is entirely justified, one falls into despair and uncertainty of her own salvation. Conversely, without understanding that the believer is entirely a sinner, questions concerning one’s own agency and capacity for good works arise. For if one is only partially a sinner, then it is only natural to ask to what degree, and the believer’s dependence on the relationship of faith is correspondingly weakened, with the result that salvation is reduced to a process of dubiously measurable self-improvement.

However, for Maximus the question of progress does not threaten the integrity of salvation in the same way. Maximus does not have a *totus-totus* anthropology. Were we to place him inside Luther’s framework, he might be found to sympathize to a degree with a *partum-partum* understanding of the *simul*. This is because Maximus’s anthropology does not operate within the same dialectical framework as Luther’s. For Maximus, by pursuing life according to one’s logos, one participates increasingly in God’s life.⁵⁹² Given that the created world exists with a natural capacity for cohesion and progression, in order to progress the human being must move according to the rationality of nature and willingly cooperate with the creator.⁵⁹³ Part of Maximus’s system is the incarnational reality that everything – salvation in particular—is played out in the microcosm of humanity. The ontological steps of a Maximian ladder of ascent correlate to internal, spiritual progress. Personal, social, and even cosmic realities are shaped by the creature’s own journey towards God, so that the “inner person” has much more to do with the “outer person” than Luther himself might imagine. At the same time, for Maximus the grace that transforms one’s will and shapes one’s desires is not determined by the ascetic

⁵⁹⁰ Dieter, *Der junge Luther und Aristoteles*, 306-7.

⁵⁹¹ LW 5:213-214.

⁵⁹² Amb. 7 (PG 91:1080B).

⁵⁹³ Cf. Ian A. McFarland, “Fleshing out Christ: Maximus the Confessor’s Christology in Anthropological Perspective,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (2005): 417-36; Paul M. Blowers, “Gentiles of the Soul,” 57-85.

struggle of the “outer person” any more than it is for Luther when he argues that the flesh must be disciplined so that the flesh does not “revolt against faith and the inner man.” Maximus simply does not categorize such distinctions.

Oswald Bayer, commenting on the work of Theodor Dieter, observes the problem in using Luther’s analogies to pinpoint a coherent ontology.⁵⁹⁴ Luther’s fondness for analogies rooted in the union of the dissimilar (*extremorum compositio*) is deeply connected to his Christology, particularly in response to his deepened appreciation of the *communicatio idiomatum* in writing on the Lord’s Supper. “Luther discovers the positive spiritual importance of all worldly reality after his new conception of word and sacrament has made him aware of how worldly reality mediates spiritual reality, not only negatively but positively.”⁵⁹⁵ Human and divine, flesh and spirit are united without fear of dissolution or even the possibility of such by virtue of the promise. This promise is overtly represented in the promise of the doctor that the sick man must trust, or the promise of faith that the sinner must believe. Bayer writes concerning this promise:

[It] is the medium in which the *vere homo* and the *vere Deus* are inseparably united. This means that the *est* that mediates the *vere homo* and the *vere Deus*—God’s life and Jesus’ death—cannot be understood predicatively or apophatically. It does not declare the meaning of an already fixed subject but is the movement in which the reality of both is established at the same time. It does not mean a significative copula but an effective one, in fact a synthetic one. If the natures need the *promisso* as a copula, then the copula in turn is determined solely by the natures—hence Luther’s identification of *verbum* and Christ himself as *Verbum*.⁵⁹⁶

Bayer identifies a pattern in which Luther’s more relational ontology as deployed in discussing Christological and Trinitarian relations does not translate easily to the communication of God’s reality to the believer, where the emphasis is on the promise uniting extremes in spite of radical incompatibility between the two parties.

⁵⁹⁴ Oswald Bayer, *Freedom in Response: Lutheran Ethics: Sources and Controversies*, trans. Jeffrey Cayzer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 90-118.

⁵⁹⁵ Bayer, *Freedom in Response*, 98.

⁵⁹⁶ Oswald Bayer, “Philosophical Modes of Thought of Luther’s Theology as an Object of Inquiry,” in *The Devil’s Whore* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2011), 19.

Thus, when Luther sees that sin and the effects of sin remain in the believer, he nevertheless explains that the general direction of travel remains one always moving from sin to righteousness. While still on earth, the Christian is always in need of repentance and forgiveness. And yet Luther says she is simultaneously at the end of this struggle by the promise of God and its trustworthiness. Luther sees no conflict in this paradox. For this reason, he explains the *simul* in terms of both *totus-totus* and *partim-partim* at different times. In the *Lectures on Galatians*, he writes, “And so if we look at the flesh, we are sinners; if we look at the Spirit, we are righteous. We are partly sinners and partly righteous.”⁵⁹⁷ This is not a partiality that suggests a schizophrenic Christian any more than two natures suggest a schizophrenic Christ. Luther only recognizes the need to “walk by the Spirit and not obey the flesh or gratify the desires of the flesh.”⁵⁹⁸ One is a sinner because he is still liable to sin and in danger of falling under its power. For this reason Luther says against the antinomians

[Christ] has purchased redemption from sin and death so that the Holy Spirit might transform us out of the old Adam into new men—we die unto sin and live unto righteousness, beginning and growing here on earth and perfecting it beyond, as St. Paul teaches.

He continues further on, “And yet logic, too, implies that a Christian should either have the Holy Spirit and lead a new life, or know that he has no Christ.”⁵⁹⁹

The difference for Maximus and Luther lies not in possibility of discussing a *partim-partim* existence of humans. The concept itself – that an object may be partially at the beginning of its journey and partially at its end – has its origin in Aristotle. Both Maximus and Luther recognize and speak of the progression and struggle involved in growing into a Christian life. Theodor Dieter believes that for Luther the idea of progress (such as Maximus envisions the Christian life) does not exclude the *simul*, but actually incorporates it.⁶⁰⁰ Dieter successfully points to a juxtaposition of the terms “*simul*” and “*semper*” already early in Luther’s writings that show an adopted Ockhamist understanding of the human being as “*semper in motu*” to explain the Christian’s

⁵⁹⁷ LW 27:69.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁹ LW 41:113-4.

⁶⁰⁰ Dieter, *Der junge Luther und Aristoteles*, 344.

continuous movement from sinfulness to holiness. To the extent that Luther understands the *simul* as explaining how the Christian may progress in holiness (though never progress towards righteousness, which is a gift alone), we can even say he is in agreement with Maximus about the steady march of ever-increasing holiness that a true Christian life demands. The dissonance between them lies in the fact that Luther can in other contexts express the conviction that the one who is justified is *totus iustus*. For Luther, by virtue of the effective promise one is entirely justified in God's eyes and there is nothing more to be accomplished except to live in progression towards an end that is already fulfilled by God. For Maximus this wholeness, only proleptically experienced but not yet possessed in the present, lay at the end of the training and struggle that we have related to the work of a will that has been shaped by God through faith.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen in greater detail the how *theosis* and justification can be understood in terms of a transformation of human willing. In doing so we have identified several points of similarity through a comparison of Maximus's account of gnostic surrender with Luther's understanding of desiring rightly. While these accounts differ in their understanding of the will's capacity to desire grace, they share an expectation of how the renewed will functions, as well as of how it struggles and how this struggle is navigated in the Christian life. Second, we have seen how Maximus and Luther alike can describe salvation (whether conceived in terms of *theosis* or justification) using the language of a "beautiful" or "happy" *exchange*. In this point of comparison, we have seen that the transformation of the will is for both thinkers descriptive of a new way of being "in Christ." The analogies employed by both Maximus and Luther for how one is changed by proximity to God demonstrates a reasonable degree of conceptual common ground.

Having considered the transformation of the will as an indication and manifestation of justification and of *theosis*, and the beautiful exchange, with its image of the unconfused sharing of properties, as the means by which God impresses upon the human will, we have turned to Luther's doctrine of human beings as *simul iustus et peccator* as a point of genuine disagreement with Maximus. In discussing the *simul* in response to the communication of attributes and Maximus's understanding of the conservation of natures, we test the extent of similarity between the two accounts we have

thus far compared. Both Maximus and Luther see a struggle of the human being as a necessary part of the will being transformed. In isolating Luther's understanding of how such progress relates to salvation, we see a marked difference.

For Luther, the struggle is subsequent to justification, a result of the Christian's newfound freedom to willingly and gladly serve conflicting with the flesh, and the Christian's need to keep the flesh from rebelling against faith and the "inner person." Maximus's understanding of a struggle is also a result of a changing will, but with more of an accent of a change that is in process – still striving towards *theosis* in which the gnostic will shall be surrendered. For Maximus, Christ by his life and death has overcome the obstacles which the fallen will could not surpass and teaches those who partake of his grace to imitate him and thus conform their will to God's own. Both thinkers to a certain degree agree on how the will is transformed as it is redeemed, and what struggles are required for human beings who are in Christ but not in glory. However, the frameworks within which they work out their respective anthropologies differ enough that while the will is an important category for both as that which must be transformed and employed in the struggle of faith, they differ in whether the will does these things because *it has been saved*, or because *it is on the way to being saved*. Taking these considerations, we will be able to return to the Finnish School and its claims regarding justification and *theosis*, and in light of what we have learned see how the category of the will in Luther and Maximus might give us insight into how compatible the two accounts of salvation are.

6. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have shown that despite some problematic aspects in the scholarship of the Finnish School of Luther interpretation, Mannermaa's identification of similarities between Orthodox language surrounding deification and Luther's treatment of the incarnation and the communication of attributes allows for significant reflection on common commitments and themes between the two. To that end, I have critically engaged the particulars of both the doctrine of justification by grace through faith as developed by Luther and the doctrine of *theosis* as imagined in the writings of Maximus the Confessor. Subsequently, I have constructively engaged these two figures in their treatments of the will as a central anthropological category and their common Chalcedonian Christological commitments. In doing so I have attempted to provide a critical lens through which justification and *theosis* can be considered not incompatible in their Christological commitments and vision of the healed will, without succumbing to the temptation of neatly identifying the two.

In this concluding chapter, I will summarize the central concerns of what has gone before. I will then summarize how this detailed look at the will as a central anthropological and Christological category in both the doctrine of *theosis* and the doctrine of justification supports the overall project of the Finnish School, and how on that basis one might engage similarities between Lutheran and Eastern Orthodox thought in a more constructive way. Lastly, I will propose ways in which theologians might draw on this research to further ecumenical dialogue and incorporate these considerations into developing a robust Lutheran spirituality.

6.1 Summary of Findings

This thesis began with an exploration of the central claims developed by Tuomo Mannermaa. Mannermaa puts forth an "efficient" view of justification as opposed to an understanding of justification as forensic. He argues that Luther understands justification to be a "real-ontic" union of the believer with Christ and that this aspect of Luther's theology has been neglected in favor of an "ethical-relational" emphasis. The key to this interpretation is Mannermaa's claim that for Luther Christ is "both the *favor* and the *donum*" of God, meaning that Christ who is present in faith "is identical with the

righteousness of faith.”⁶⁰¹ For Mannermaa, to say that Christ is present in the believer by faith is to say that Christ is present fully in both his humanity and his divinity. This personal presence of Christ is equated with *theosis* rather than with an imputed righteousness (the “ethical-relational,” which is typical of later Lutheranism but according to Mannermaa is in conflict with Luther himself).

Mannermaa seeks to find support for his claims in select texts of Luther such as a Christmas sermon of 1514, and, more significantly, Luther’s *Commentary on Galatians* of 1535. In these texts, he identifies an interest which Luther takes up in his doctrines of the incarnation and (more specifically) the *communicatio idiomatum* when discussing the way in which Christ saves. He understands salvation according to Luther in terms of this communication of attributes, prioritizing participation in Christ’s person over the historical saving work of Christ. It is at this point that the Finnish School overreaches in its claims. While the former is not unimportant to Luther, the Finnish School fails to properly situate Luther at times, particularly in terms of his emphasis on the distinction between law and gospel, the *verbum externum*, and Christ’s atoning work on the cross. In doing so, the real distinction between *donum* and *favor* in Luther’s writings is obscured. Nevertheless, Mannermaa and the Finnish School do identify the significant attention given by Luther to themes reminiscent of *theosis*. Because these themes are especially soteriological and Christological ones, it is worthwhile to address the relationship of these themes in Luther to *theosis* in the broader texture of Luther’s theology, such as the place of the will.

To better evaluate the claims of the Finnish School about a correlation between justification and *theosis*, I first gave a description of justification as Luther’s account of salvation. Luther arrives at his doctrine of justification by grace through faith within the context of the medieval West. In this context, questions regarding the human being’s natural ability and the human will arose in response to debate over the degree to which human beings are capable of performing the good works considered necessary for salvation. Within this debate, distinctions were made between works that could be considered “meritorious” and those which could not contribute towards one’s salvation. While some later scholastics (such as those associated with Ockham and the *via moderna*) imagined fallen humanity as existing in a somewhat neutral position from which it could

⁶⁰¹ Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 5.

choose between good and evil, and grace as something that ‘elevated’ a man’s natural efforts, Luther understood the fallen human being as a creature radically enslaved by sin.

This anthropological vision of the human being as entirely dominated by either sin or by grace manifested significantly in Luther’s understanding of the human will as in bondage. Luther maintains that after the fall, free will exists in name only. While an individual has freedom in matters “below” her, in spiritual matters the will has no agency, but is ridden by either God or the devil. However, even in rejecting an Erasmian understanding of the will as *synergos*, Luther does not propose determinism. Though the will is totally mastered from without, it is not coerced. In terms of salvation this means that cooperation with God is not a precondition for salvation, but rather salvation results in one cooperating with God. Luther thus comes to understand righteousness as something alien to the individual, which is first imputed independent of any human desire or contribution through Christ’s work on the cross and appropriated through faith. This dialectical way of understanding salvation conflicts with the Finnish School’s account of a “real-ontic” interpretation of the union of Christ and the believer. The critical importance of the will as a location of spiritual bondage and incapacity in matters of salvation, however, provides us with an important point of reference in exploring to what extent Luther’s account of salvation can be reconciled with that of *theosis*.

Next, I gave a description of *theosis* as Maximus the Confessor’s account of salvation. Rather than arrive at the question of the will out of an anthropological inquiry (as did Luther), Maximus takes an interest in the will as a result of Christological reflection. I first established Maximus’s context in the wake of the Christological controversies that both preceded and followed the drafting of the definition of the Council of Chalcedon confessing the two natures of Christ. For Maximus, that Christ has two natures necessitated that he also have two wills, on the grounds that without a distinct human will, proper to his human nature, he could not be said to be truly human.

The presence of a human will in Christ was for Maximus not an incidental trait. In Maximus’ cosmology willing is a manifestation of creaturely motion. He imagines all creatures as having a natural motion according to their particular *logos*. For humanity, willing is the form of motion characteristic of its *logos*. Maximus’s understanding of the exact nature of willing in Christ developed over time. His mature understanding of willing distinguishes between the “natural” and the “gnomic” wills. While humans will gnomically as a consequence of the lack of a direct vision of God that is characteristic of their existence in space and time, Christ has only a natural human will because in him (as

the divine Son) there is no privation of knowledge of the good. The perfect willing of Christ as human is crucial, then, to Maximus's understanding of salvation. Christ restores human nature by willing naturally, perfectly, and thus is in himself the reconciliation of a fallen humanity. By virtue of the union of his natures, the creature—in the person of Jesus joined to the divine—is made what it could not will itself to be. In Christ, a restored humanity, no longer living in opposition to nature but according to it, is able to fulfill its vocation as mediator between the creation and the Creator. By virtue of the incarnation, human beings are made capable of training the will in the imitation of Christ, who has in his living, dying, and rising healed the natural will common to humanity. While Maximus does not share Luther's pessimism regarding the ability of the postlapsarian human will to actively do good, both Maximus and Luther identify the will as a problem in fallen humanity that cannot be healed through its own efforts but is rehabilitated by virtue of its relationship to Christ.

Having thoroughly rehearsed the development and the conclusions of Luther and Maximus in their accounts of salvation, I turned to a constructive consideration of their treatments of Christology and of the human will vis-à-vis salvation. Chapter four proposed a reading of Luther through Maximus's Chalcedonian Christological lens in order to begin to see to what degree the two accounts can coalesce, focusing on the themes of obedience and freedom. Both Luther and Maximus understand fallen humanity as not being free. For Luther this is demonstrated in the inability of a fallen human being to keep the law and thus live according to God's will. Maximus understands this lack of freedom not in terms of a radical bondage or incapacity, but nevertheless as a fatal impairment of the will as demonstrated in the disordered passions and slavery to pleasure. Both accounts point to an unnatural separation from God, and both accounts understand Christ as freeing the sinner (from the law and from the passions, respectively).

While their opinions of the will's capacity differ, both Luther and Maximus can be seen to argue against the idea that the human will, as it exists in fallen humanity, is truly free, since whether the fallen will is understood as in bondage or as alienated from nature and nature's God, both affirm that a human will can only be free inasmuch as it is receptive to the divine will. As such, they share a common Christological commitment, namely, that Christ alone is perfectly free. For Luther this freedom manifests in Christ's salvific life and work. For Maximus it is intimately linked to Christ manifesting in his person the proper form of human nature. Nevertheless, both Luther and Maximus share the conviction that Christ is able to do what he does precisely because of who he is. This

Christological framing of both Lutheran justification and Maximian *theosis* allows us to see that for both theologians what is said of the relationship of God and the one who is in Christ reflect the relationship of the human and divine natures in Christ, especially as it concerns the freedom and the will.

Chapter five proposed a way to begin to reconcile the differences between justification as a forensic understanding of salvation and theosis as an ontological one by understanding both as referring to a transformation of human willing. Maximus imagines the transformation of human willing as “gnomic surrender.” While Christ, whom the believer is imitating, does not will gnomically, Maximus imagines that the imitation of Christ involves a training of the will to desire those things that God has shown are good and in doing so no longer be directed by the passions. This exercise is a movement towards the eschatological destiny of surrender in which the human being will not cease to will, but shall will naturally, being irrevocably available to God’s will and not prone to deliberation. This voluntary giving-over of one’s will to God in the eschaton fulfills human freedom. Rather than nullify human agency, the willing surrender of gnomic division fulfills its potential and purpose to move and be moved and finally to rest in God.

Luther on the other hand, speaks of a transformation of human willing in terms of a new motivation for good works. Luther proposes that the justified believer’s new relationship with Christ frees her to be able to fulfill the law out of love of neighbor without hope or expectation of reward. Faith provides a clean conscience and assurance of acceptance by God so that what good works follow are not the vain attempts of sinful motivations, but spontaneous acts of love. Like Maximus, then, Luther imagines a future in which the will has surrendered its self-interest. Yet for both, in the interim, the human being still subject to sin struggles and contends with the passions and desires of the flesh. Though the kind of human agency exercised in one’s progression in holiness in this life is a point of disagreement between the two, both agree that the will wills rightly and naturally when it no longer is concerned with the self, but instead is freed to depend on God.

Chapter five further explored how as Luther and Maximus identify a similar change that occurs in the human will that is being healed, namely, the way in which the characteristics of a redeemed will are communicated to the human being. Both Luther and Maximus employ language of exchange (which they characterize as “joyful” and “beautiful,” respectively). It is here that we saw most poignantly Luther’s language of “union.” For Luther the exchange between Christ and the believer is the definite sign of

the new relationship that exists between them. Luther invokes nuptial imagery in which there is less an exchange of external goods than there is a sharing of all things between the partners. Maximus employs the language of exchange not between Christ and the believer, but between the human and divine natures in the incarnation. Nevertheless, there is again an emphasis on the complete sharing of all things between the partners. Inasmuch as God is humanized, to such an extent the humanity is divinized.⁶⁰² The degree to which both occur is of course, for Maximus, completely. Maximus describes this union-without-confusion as *perichoresis* and employs the analogy of iron in a fire to demonstrate how the properties of one can fully penetrate the other without it ceasing to be itself—an analogy employed by Luther as well. In Maximus, this becomes a model for divinization. Just as Christ’s human nature was fully divinized by its union with the divine nature, while not transforming humanity into divinity, likewise the human being does not cease to be human, but rather is human in a new way. Ultimately, we see that Luther and Maximus can both be said to understand salvation as a transformation of willing, and that they both conceptualize the way in which God impresses on the human will Christologically—as an unconfused sharing of properties reflective of the union of the dissimilar in the Christ’s own person.

6.2 Return to the Finnish School

Despite having identified significant shortcomings in ways in which Mannermaa and the Finnish School attempt to cleanly correlate justification with *theosis*, in this thesis I have shown that while the two doctrines are indeed quite distinct from one other in emphasis and conceptual framework, a conversation between Luther and Maximus allows us to identify significant thematic parallels: namely, sympathetic accounts of human freedom and the role of the human will in salvation, and a persistently Christological framework in considering salvation and the life of the believer. These similarities suggest the two doctrines are more compatible than some more critical assessments of the Finnish School would suggest.

6.2.1 Significance of the Finnish School’s Concerns

⁶⁰² Larchet, *La divinisation de l’homme*, 31-2.

The findings of this research support the overall project of the Finnish School to a certain degree. Based on the clear developments in Luther's thought and his convictions regarding the total incapacity of the will to actively do good, it would be infelicitous to say that Luther intends to describe *theosis* by his language of justification and the presence of Christ through faith. However, while we cannot identify justification and *theosis* as describing the same process, Mannermaa is not wrong to identify language in Luther which, while not necessarily conflicting with the traditional interpretation of justification, certainly points beyond a narrowly forensic account of salvation. Setting aside the praiseworthiness of the Finnish School's effort at identifying points of ecumenical consensus between divergent Christian traditions, one can sympathize with Mannermaa's unease about a Lutheran understanding of salvation that is purely forensic. By bringing Luther into dialogue with Maximus we find that much of the language that the Finnish School identifies as pointing to *theosis* is familiar because of Luther's Christological awareness and the locus of Orthodox language of *theosis* being grounded in the theology of the incarnation.

Besides simply finding further points of congruence between the two doctrines, considering Maximus' account of *theosis* allows us to defend the identification of Orthodox concerns or themes in Luther's theology against charges of Osiandrianism, (while not correlating justification itself with *theosis*). Though Wengert and Laato rightly argue that the Formula of Concord rejects Osiander's interpretation of Luther in favor of a forensic understanding of justification, this does not deny the *inhabitio Dei* but simply identifies it as "belonging to sanctification" and not to justification.⁶⁰³

By focusing our attention on the nature of the will and, relatedly, the nature of Christian freedom – two themes central to Luther's mature theology – I have attempted to avoid the selective and eisgetical reading of Luther of which Carl Trueman accuses the Finnish School.⁶⁰⁴ Having identified the importance of the fallen will's incapacity for Luther, it is critical that interpretations of Luther as engaging themes found in Orthodoxy maintain this starting point. Given Luther's clarity that justification is *propter Christum* and not *propter fidem*, if we are to attempt to incorporate Orthodox themes into Luther's understanding of salvation, we must maintain the priority of Christ's reconciling work and the grace (*favor*) it provides over any gift of such grace (*donum*) to the individual.

⁶⁰³ Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration III.54 in Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 571-2.

⁶⁰⁴ Trueman, "Is the Finnish Line a New Beginning," 231-44.

This is in line not only with Luther's prioritization of *favor* over *donum* that Laato identifies, but with the presentation of *theosis* we have encountered in Maximus, in which Christ first conquers the passions in his own body, reconciling human nature to the divine, and subsequently thus enables those who are joined to him to imitate him.⁶⁰⁵ Though the way in which Christ's salvation is applied to the believer is understood differently in Luther and Maximus, both nevertheless agree that salvation is first achieved or worked out in the person of Christ and then subsequently in the life of the believer.

Similarly, where Timo Laato critiques Peura for not working with the text of *Against Latomus* (in which Peura claims Luther developed the concept of real-ontic union), our engagement with the same text regarding the motivation towards good works has shown compatibility between Luther's understanding of selfless motivation of the healed will and the transformation of desires in Maximus' account of *theosis*. This correlation between an account of Christian transformation that results from the liberation of the conscience in justification and an account of the process of growing in holiness that is constitutive of *theosis* is significant without conflation of the two.

Because justification and *theosis* approach the event and experience of salvation in and through Christ through different historical and contextual lenses, it is difficult to correlate the two without overstating the intent and vision each account of salvation presents. To correlate justification (which being a forensic category is spoken of largely as a single 'event') with *theosis* (which being a metaphysical, ontological category is spoken of more broadly) is difficult. In his critique of the Finnish School, Laato concludes, "Union (*unio*) with Christ is not enough to calm the heart. Not the gift (*donum*) but the grace (*favor*) 'really produces true peace of heart.' ... A Christian would 'rather—if it were possible—want to be without the healing brought about by righteousness than without God's grace.'" ⁶⁰⁶

If we briefly consider Laato's claim against what we have seen described of justification and *theosis*, we see that this claim is certainly true for Luther but not at all for Maximus. Luther emphasizes the righteousness of Christ that is *extra nos* comforting from without and making one sure of his salvation. 'True peace of heart' is the result of that assurance which is definitively declared. The healing that is brought about by righteousness is a consequence of the clean conscience before God. Luther precludes any

⁶⁰⁵ Laato, "Justification: The Stumbling Block," 340.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

notion of healing without first having received the assurance that one is free to heal, and thus in the Lutheran mind a Christian would rather have the assurance than the healing, although as Laato implies it is not for Luther possible to have the assurance or God's favor without it producing in the believer the gifts of grace. Based on what we have seen, Maximus would not disagree with this last point that it is not possible to have one without the other; at the same time, however, Maximus would not conceive of the idea which Laato attributes to Luther. Maximus does not consider fallen humanity as the default state from which salvation and restoration must incrementally improve the human being. Rather, Maximus works from an understanding of both righteousness and healing as part of the eschatological future which redeemed humanity is intended for and does not consider them apart from one another. Thus, while at one level, a doctrine of forensic declaration like that of Luther and one of ontological becoming found in Maximus cannot be identified, both are rooted in the same engagement with Christ, which is in each case being considered with different concerns in mind. Luther's assurance of salvation provided by God's declaration to the sinner reflects a desire that salvation be final and sure, whereas Maximus's account of restoration and healing reflects a desire that salvation be complete and all-encompassing. These broad observations do not intend to suggest that for Luther the completeness of salvation is unimportant, or that for Maximus the finality of God's salvation is insignificant. Rather "if it were possible" to separate out the many realities of Christ's saving work, justification and *theosis* each emphasize their own.

6.2.2 Incorporation of Orthodox Themes into Luther's Theology

Thus, while justification and *theosis* are framed within two very different conceptual frameworks, they may be correlated inasmuch as they both attempt to describe a rehabilitation of the fallen will and a realization of human freedom not through the exercise of human autonomy but by relationship to Christ.

A key consideration in how incorporation of Orthodox themes into Lutheran thought does not necessarily compromise Luther's central convictions is the degree to which salvation and justification are categories that have their consummation in the eschaton. Maximus adeptly alludes to how human beings experience salvation within the confines of space and time. He identifies the inauguration of salvation in the incarnation of Christ and the fulfillment of all things in the eschaton, speaking plainly about the

ascetic discipline and effort on the part of the believer in the interim. While Luther similarly understands the need for daily dying, rising, and struggle until the believer enters glory, he speaks of justification as a *fait accompli*. The believer's status before God cannot improve any more through struggle and discipline, as it is dependent not on her work but on Christ's (though her relationship with God and others certainly may grow in love as a result of justification). Thus, it seems that for Luther the goal is accomplished and ever-present, while for Maximus the goal remains ahead. Here I have shown the limited but not insignificant degree to which the contentious question of human cooperation in salvation may begin to be bridged by a critical dialogue between Luther and Maximus. While Luther's preoccupation with the incapacity of the fallen human being to contribute to salvation means that no beneficial cooperation can exist prior to receiving grace, he unequivocally accepts that in Christ, a united humanity and divinity save the fallen humanity. Thus, Luther and Maximus can both agree that in Christ's unique person a meaningful cooperation between the human and divine exists. What remains is the question of how the justified human being cooperates with God, by conforming her will to the divine will. Here again, there is a common vision of such cooperation as a transformed will that conforms to the divine will. What remains distinct between the two schools of thought is whether this occurs after one has been saved (Luther) or in a process of being saved that lasts one's whole life (Maximus).

The will and the movement of the will towards God are of interest to both, but for Luther the eschatological reality is already possessed fully by virtue of promise. It is the sureness of promise that enables real growth. For Maximus there is growth and gradual rehabilitation of the will on the way to complete reconciliation in the eschaton. Given that for Luther growth in holiness can only occur when the conscience is made clean and works are done out of love for God and neighbor and not out of self-interest, what Maximus is describing is for Luther the result of justification—nothing that will influence one's disposition towards God, but the loving response in faith and confidence to a work already begun in them which must be carried on to completion (c.f. Phil. 1:6).

If we consider *theosis* as a transformation of willing, incorporating this theme into Luther's understanding might look like thinking of the life in Christ as a Christification of the will. For Luther, as for Maximus, the will is transformed and trained as a result of something Christ has done. Having been liberated (whether from the condemnation of the law or from bondage to passions and desire), the will is free to imitate Christ. While this imitation is clearly a result of participation in being (via full participation in the *logos* of

nature) for Maximus, Luther does not posit a metaphysical account of how one attains this aptitude. The shared incarnational image of fire and iron communicating properties to one another give the impression that for both it is proximity to God after the example of Christ's own union of human and divine that is the basis and also the standard for what results from a redeemed life. Luther's lack of metaphysical framework for this participation "in Christ" allows an Orthodox (or potentially other) interpretation of this Pauline trope to be fitted for their compatibility with Luther's doctrinal commitments.

Because both Luther and Maximus attempt to advocate for a sound doctrine of the will against various opponents, incorporating a Maximian understanding of willing as not choosing, but as willing passivity to the divine offers a means of defending Luther's understanding of the will against potential charges of determinism. For both theologians there is a certain passivity understood in how the human being wills rightly. To say that in both a deeply pessimistic anthropology and in a hopeful anthropology (though one still thoroughly realistic about the injury inflicted upon the will by sin), the will that has been reconciled to God through Christ's person and Christ's work becomes free inasmuch as it is available to God, provides a point of contact between those who affirm salvation comes from entirely outside of us and those who affirm that salvation cannot be deterministic. This framing breaks away from traditional Western reliance on the dichotomy of a synergistic understanding of salvation and a deterministic one. Autonomy does not become the standard for the exercise of freedom; rather, God is found to be commonly understood according to God's absolute independence and freedom, and the human being is defined according to her absolute dependence on God.⁶⁰⁷ Likewise whatever capacity the will possesses for goodness and holiness, whether active or entirely passive, is enabled by Christ, who ennobles the nature by his union, not changing it in in some unnatural or coercive way.

Beyond the question of to whether and to what degree justification and theosis are referring to the same process, we might also ask whether the justified human or the deified human is, to borrow Peura's phrase, "*mehr als ein Mensch*." For Luther we can conclude that the eschatological, redeemed human is still human. What may be surprising is that according to Maximus's account, the deified human is not more than a [mere] man either. Rather, it is precisely Maximus's point that what defines divinized humanity is that it is fully human, and not something else. Maximus explains this in his account of human

⁶⁰⁷von Loewenich, *Theology of the Cross*, 150ff.

nature being restored and humanity fulfilling its created purpose in the eschaton, but it is further evidenced by the Chalcedonian claims regarding Christ's human nature in the hypostatic union. While Christ is certainly "more than a man," his humanity does not become somehow superhuman by virtue of its divinization. Rather his humanity is exceptional because it is perfect and perfectly in accordance with its nature. Neither in Christ nor in the believer is humanity transformed into divinity. Rather, the human being acquires a new way of being human.

6.3 Going Forward

Both Luther and Maximus arrived at strikingly similar conclusions regarding the will as the source of human rebellion and its role in the rehabilitation of humanity. These similarities are at first surprising, given the different ways in which they came to take interest in the will. Luther's interest arose out of his anthropology and a desire to demonstrate the will's incapacity, and thus the human being's inability to contribute to her own salvation. Maximus is sure that while the will is certainly impaired by sin, it nevertheless plays a critical role in humanity's salvation, given his understanding of willing as the way in which human creatures move and participate in their nature. In spite of these differences, however, they have in common an understanding of the will's role in salvation as having its nexus in Christ, in whom the incapable and the capable, the creature and the Creator, embrace. Their common Christological commitments, namely a Chalcedonian understanding of the union of human and divine natures in Jesus's person as a single subject, undergird their accounts of salvation by identifying the deficit in fallen humanity and the reconciliation of it that occurs in Christ, through his person and through his work.

6.3.1 Ecumenical Implications

Turning scholarly attention back to the core convictions of Christology and soteriology shared by Luther and Maximus has potential for reinvigorating ecumenical dialogue (as intended by the initial work of Mannermaa and the Finnish School) by engaging uniquely Orthodox doctrine. As we have seen in this thesis, much of the problem in equating long-developed doctrines lays in the extensive and divergent history that led to their current iterations. While distinctions between the Western tradition's

emphasis on judicial and legal analogies in soteriology and the Eastern tradition's emphasis on the mystical and ontological realities in soteriology are obvious, within those same tradition we find later distinctions and developments that may obscure profound commonalities.

For this reason, in this thesis, rather than engage a later, Palamite or otherwise more developed, doctrine of theosis which may be more familiar to modern Orthodox ears, by engaging with Maximus the Confessor we have been able to look at *theosis* as described by a theologian much more immediately engaged in the Christological controversies which defined understandings of Jesus's person that a typical reading of Luther takes for granted. This strategy helps strip away considerable baggage and more readily identify what aspects of doctrine are most fundamentally shared.

Because the scholarship of the Finnish school has proved so contentious in Lutheran circles, it is questionable to what degree it can continue to contribute to and foster ecumenical conversation. Having identified provocatively similar language and themes between Luther and Orthodox conversation partners, a new field of work inspired by the Finnish School might involve a return to the patristic and biblical origins of such language and themes rather than attempting a direct rapprochement between highly developed doctrines. The antiquity of figures and texts which would be engaged in such dialogues (such as Maximus here) allows for participation not only narrowly of Lutherans and Orthodox, but also Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and others whose history of doctrinal development share these early touchstones.

6.3.2 Towards a Common Christological Spirituality

One result of this research is its implications for working towards a common Christological spirituality. While this research itself attempts to be a corrective to the Finnish School, it seeks to honor the Finnish School's own efforts to be a corrective to a limited and limiting view of the doctrine of justification. Critical engagement with the analogues in the doctrine of *theosis* allow for emphasis on the dynamic communion that results from justification. Growing familiarity with the language of struggle and union with Christ that is part of the believer's response to justification by grace through faith may encourage the faithful to consider the way in which God imprints on the human will and makes truly good works a result of justifying faith.

Specifically, the conclusions we have drawn might provide new ways of speaking about the life in Christ. To the extent that *theosis* may be interpreted in a Lutheran context as a Christification of the will, the imitation of Christ by the believer may come to be more acutely understood in for both Lutherans and Orthodox as recognizing and navigating the relationship between the human and divine wills in the individual, so that they increase in harmony. While upholding the importance and unique contribution of justification by grace through faith as a dogmatic proposal to the Western church, recognizing that what Lutherans identify as justification is for a theologian such as Maximus not the goal, but only the beginning of a life of grace and openness to God's will, may help motivate the Christian towards the discipline and effort that both Luther and Maximus understand as necessary to the Christian life. An understanding of how the transformation of the will is imagined by Maximus allows for a much stronger connection between the new life of the believer and the life of Christ whom she is called to imitate. To speak of Christ alone as perfectly free for both Maximus and Luther helps to bridge the gap between being freed *from* the law and being freed *for* works of love, showing them as necessarily linked to one another.

A Lutheran consideration of the "joyful exchange" in terms of *theosis* may help produce a robust understanding of what it entails as constitutive of personal transformation beyond a simple forensic acquittal. Both these doctrines point to the same thing: an intimacy between the believer and Christ that reflects that of the union of human and divine in Christ himself. Identifying and reemphasizing such intimacy in the Lutheran tradition might support exhortations to Christian obedience and service that are informed by a more dynamic relationship with Christ who is being imitated, rather than a call to action that may be required as a relatively autonomous and individualistic response. Similarly, the shared metaphor of the "joyful exchange" can, as we have seen, have implications for how one experiences the reality of the *simul*, as well. Language which acknowledges the tension of a relationship in which the partners are transformed by their mutual life without being changed one into the other affirms the dissonant experience of "both-and" life before glory, without reducing the loftier reality to an intellectual assent or practical impossibility.

6.3.3 Future Directions for Study

While this thesis engaged the will as one of the most central and sustained categories in both Luther's and Maximus's theological thought, there remain other ways in which justification and *theosis* can be compared. One such area for future study is a comparison of freedom in terms of nature. In the course of this thesis, we saw that according to Maximus humans will naturally and thus when they will rightly and in harmony with God's own will, they are willing according to nature and their created purpose. Further research might explore the ways in which a Lutheran understanding of being freed in Christ to love God and neighbor can be considered in terms of liberation from an unnatural posture towards both. The concept of human being as *incurvatus se* might be further developed in Maximian terms of disaffecting oneself from God and one's *logos* (alienation from nature), and Christ as one who in his person is turned outwards by embracing the whole of creation as the Logos who assumed human nature.

As the role of human agency in salvation remains one of the most contested debates arising out of the Reformation, reassessment of the extent to which Lutherans can confidently speak of cooperating with God without jeopardizing their dogmatic commitment to justification by grace through faith apart from works of the law will provide greater flexibility for Protestant theologians to engage their ecumenical partners at some of the most profound levels of theology. A renewed interest in creating constructive theologies that work with the core Christological and anthropological commitments belonging by divergent accounts of salvation without scrutinizing the sequence of how salvation is experienced will allow for not only renewed dialogue and insight, but witness to the doxological nature of Christian theology.

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