

Chapter Two: A Brief Examination on the Loss of the Glory of Christ in the Late Medieval Thought

My study in this chapter will focus on the aspects that fell short of the glory of Christ in late medieval thought from the Protestant view, to provide a brief background to and comparison with the glory of Christ in Luther's thought. In the Middle Ages, the rise of Monasticism to deepen the spiritual life, the establishment of the papacy to strengthen the organization, and the missionary movement to develop the universal missions, had promoted progresses in culture, economy and knowledge, which laid the foundation for the development of modern Western civilization. However, spiritually, there were also increasing problems that had accumulated and caused much corruption of this external, strong Christendom. According to more reliable modern studies on the late medieval period, there was evidence that showed growth in religious piety, in "schools" of theology (the early great European universities), and the flourishing of church building programmes. It was this increased interest in piety which brought about the criticism of the institutional church and set the stage for the rise of anti-clericalism and doctrinal pluralism.²⁵ As for Luther, the heart of the problem of the darkness in the late medieval church was not just institutional or moral but it was rooted in their doctrines, especially the doctrine that stood center stage in the proper understanding of the grace of God in the Gospel of His Son, Jesus Christ.²⁶ "Others," said Luther, "have attacked the life. I attack the doctrine."²⁷ The corruption of churches was fundamentally attributed to the internal deficiencies in

²⁵ McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 1999, 26-32

²⁶ McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 1994, 27

²⁷ Bainton, *The Reformation of the sixteenth century*, 1952, 24. "'Others,' said he, 'have attacked the life. I attack the doctrine.' Not the abuses of medieval Catholicism, but Catholicism itself as an abuse of the Gospel was the object of his onslaught."

theology,²⁸ which led to the external increase in secularization. This is still true today for many churches downplaying doctrine. As Stephen Tong stated, “a true revival must first begin with the doctrinal revival,”²⁹ the Reformation most fundamentally was a theological movement, caused by doctrinal concerns.³⁰ From the doctrinal point of view, although the late medieval theologians in general agreed with the traditional Christology, there seemed no obvious change in the medieval Christology at first glance. However, the shift in the sources and methods of late medieval thought that departed from Scripture and Christ-centeredness (the heart of Scripture), did bring substantial changes in Christology and soteriology. The unbiblical teachings that denied the exclusivity of Christ’s identity and the sufficiency of His work, therefore, infringed the glory of Christ.

2.1 Sources and Methods

2.1.1 Sources

The Doctrine of Revelation: In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a *dual-source theory of doctrine* was developed in addition to a *single-source theory of doctrine*, which elevated the authority of church and tradition over Scripture, thus downplaying the authority of Christ and His Word, and His glory in His people. One single-source theory of doctrine was based on Scripture, the Word of God as the only source of revelation; whereas “tradition” refers to a “traditional way of interpreting Scripture,”³¹ which is under the authority of Scripture, not regarded as a source of revelation. The dual-source theory

²⁸ Trueman, “The Renaissance,” In *Revolutions in Worldview: Understanding the Flow of Western Thought*, 2007, 184

²⁹ Tong, Stephen, *Exegeses of Gospel of John* (18), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fwJyIKOuE-c> (accessed on Aug. 27, 2020), A true revival is based on the doctrinal revival, and should include the following five perspectives: doctrinal, rational, ethical, ministry and evangelical revival.

³⁰ Barrett, “The Crux of Genuine Reform,” In *Reformation Theology*, 2017, 44-45

³¹ McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 1999, 147

of doctrine was based upon two quite separate and distinct sources, Scripture and unwritten tradition as a second source of revelation going back to the apostles themselves passing to the church and the popes to supplement the deficiency of certain silent points in Scripture. The unwritten tradition is also regarded as sacred, for it “takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the apostles, and hands it on to their successors of apostles in its full purity,” to Rome, “Therefore both the sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence.”³² In the late medieval period, an increasing number of theologians such as William of Occam, Heinrich Totting von Oyta, and John Gerson, accepted this view of dual-source theory of doctrine. The church of Rome functioned not only to preserve the truth of the Bible and conduct the interpreting and teaching office, but also to determine the canon and have the authority to judge various kinds of revelations besides Scripture after the apostles as its tradition. Rome had prohibited the translation of Scripture into common languages, and either persecuted or killed those who tried to do so, to prevent people from being confused and misled by their own interpretation if they were allowed to read it in their own language. For many years Scripture was kept only in Latin, which only the priests and the few educated people could understand. Most people were not able to gain access to the Bible, nor were they able to read the Greek Septuagint Translation or the Latin Vulgate Translation. The Vulgate, affirmed in the council of Trent in 1546 as the official Catholic Bible including apocrypha, was the primary Bible of the western Church for over 1,000 years prior to the Reformation.³³ People just followed the teachings of the popes and the bishops, and depended on church and its tradition. Rome alone reserved all the authority to

³² *Dei verbum*, 9, in *Compendium*, 4212

³³ England, “Bible Formation and Canon,” In *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 2003, 202

explain the Bible. Although Rome acknowledged Scripture as the inspired Word of God within which many spiritual truths were contained, a large body of traditions and practices were added and made superior to the Bible, for Rome and its tradition gave the official and final interpretation of the Bible.³⁴ “The Bible was a source of authority, but it was interpreted by the church’s hierarchy (the popes and the bishops) and supplemented by additional canons and decrees that formed an extrabiblical ‘tradition.’ The church had been corrupted by the use and abuse of this system....”³⁵ Therefore, the status of the church of Rome and its own tradition were elevated over the Scripture.³⁶ Though the theories of indulgence, purgatory, treasury of merits, transubstantiation and immaculate conception of Mary are unbiblical, they became the doctrines of the Roman Catholic church even to this day.

The theory of papal primacy, was gradually developed by a succession of eloquent popes, notably Gregory VII (pope from 1073), Innocent III (1198), and Boniface VIII (1294); for centuries the popes claimed supremacy over, and the right to depose, temporal rulers.³⁷ Over time in the Middle Ages, the office of the pope moved to a higher view not just as the vicar/representative of St. Peter (Jesus appointed Peter as the rock of His church and given the keys of the Kingdom of heaven according to Rome’s interpretation of Matt. 16:18-19. Each pope is part of the apostolic succession, an unbroken line back to Peter and has supreme authority), but even as the vicar of Jesus, representing Christ, the glorious King of heaven on earth. The authority of the pope was described as the Sun, the greater light in the daytime in the sky of the church to administer the souls; while the authority of

³⁴ Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, 1962, 457

³⁵ Bray, “Late-Medieval Theology,” In *Reformation Theology*, 2017, 67-68

³⁶ Lam, *Christian Theology in Development (3) The Reformation Church*, 2009, 12-16

³⁷ Cross & Livingstone, *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2005, 1223

the king was like the moon, the smaller light at night to administer the bodies, which should submit to the pope. The combination of the spiritual power and the political power of papacy in late medieval society had led to the corruptions of Rome such as luxury, ambition, and avarice. There was a large number of clergy who were uneducated on the matters of doctrine, especially on the doctrine of salvation. The primary role of the clergy remained sacramental and liturgical.³⁸ The sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, instead of preaching of God's Word became the focal point of the church service. The pulpit suffered an expository drought.³⁹ The church of Rome became "a vast legal, judicial, financial, administrative and diplomatic machine," while its spirituality was hitting a new low.⁴⁰

The impact of the Renaissance Humanism: It was against this dual-source theory of doctrine and the authority of Rome over Scripture that Luther and other reformers strongly criticized. Since the ancient lie of Satan speculated on the words of God in the garden of Eden, the authority of Scripture has faced constant challenges until today, such as the challenge from modern theology when liberals approached Scripture with critical-historical tools and replaced the divinity of Christ with His ethical teaching. One of the important elements which catalyzed the birth of the Reformation was the development of Renaissance Humanism with the slogan *Ad fontes* — back to the original sources. Humanism in the Renaissance, having a very different meaning from what we understand about humanism in the twenty-first century, was a literary and cultural program concerning how to derive and express ideas appealing to classical antiquity as a model of eloquence.⁴¹

³⁸ Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536-1609*, 2015, 2

³⁹ Barrett, "The Crux of Genuine Reform," In *Reformation Theology*, 2017, 48-50

⁴⁰ Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*, 2011, 29-31

⁴¹ McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 1999, 39-45

The slogan *Ad fontes* applied to the church meant a direct return to the Scripture and the patristic writings in Latin and Greek. It helped late Renaissance readers to experience what the first Christians experienced when they encountered the risen Christ. The publications of the New Testament in Greek and the patristic works by the humanists were significantly helpful for the reformers in rediscovering the real teachings of Christ and in replacing the false authority of the Roman church and its tradition with the true authority of the Scripture in the Reformation. Several translations of the Latin Vulgate, which had been important supports for the doctrines and practices of Rome, were found to be incorrect (for example, Matt. 3:2 and Mark 1:15 for the sacrament of penance). The humanists represented by Desiderius Erasmus also criticized the scholasticism which led to barren intellectualism and spiritual poverty, but their reforming thought was at a moral level, a so called “undogmatic Christianity, an eviscerated Christianity precisely because it was a Christianity without Christ at the deepest level”⁴²

2.1.2 Methods

The Methodology of late medieval theology had moved further away from Scripture and Christ-centeredness with the development of *scholastic theology*, yielding more to rational human thoughts. As a result, the glory of Christ became very dim in many church practices. In earlier centuries, monastic writers self-titled “masters of the sacred page,” focused their studies on expounding the text of Scripture by greater use of grammar and rhetoric than of dialectic or logic.⁴³ Arising in the monastic schools, scholasticism gradually developed with the founding of the great European universities in the twelfth

⁴² Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, 2012, 19. Historical and theological introduction of the translators, J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston

⁴³ Leithard, “Medieval Theology and the Roots of Modernity,” In *Revolutions in Worldview*, 2007, 148

century, and reached its peak in the time of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), whose masterwork *Summa Theologica* defined Roman Catholic theology. It was an innovative movement to organize theology in a systematic way and to resolve apparent contradictions in the tradition.⁴⁴ Theology was established as a science through the scholarly practice of scholasticism, which summarized theological issues in a series of “questions” as part of a larger systematic pattern. Masters applied dialectic or logic to resolve “questions” to pursue propositional truth and to summarize and organize Christian truth in systematic ways. To achieve this, they studied the philosophical thoughts of ancient philosophers from Plato to Boethius and integrated them into their theology.⁴⁵ Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica* was the pinnacle of these works. Following the natural theology of Aquinas, the medieval church held the view that human nature was not entirely fallen, especially concerning the use of reason and humanity’s ability to know God and to achieve righteousness. It was believed that God could be known through reason and philosophical speculation, even without Scripture (Rom. 1:19-20). Aquinas synthesized Aristotelian philosophy with the principles of Christianity in his theology.⁴⁶ He introduced new categories of Christological thought by incorporating Aristotelian philosophy into Platonic structures established by Patristic doctrine.⁴⁷ The method of combining theology and philosophy had great appeal to the theologians in the late medieval period.⁴⁸ The competitive environment for masters to make a living in the universities encouraged such innovation in theology to win more students and reputation, which tempted the theologians to depart from Scripture (which occurs even

⁴⁴ Leithard, “Medieval Theology and the Roots of Modernity,” In *Revolutions in Worldview*, 2007, 149-152

⁴⁵ Luther, *Luther’s works, vol. 31: Career of the Reformer I*, 1999, 5

⁴⁶ Wikipedia, *Thomas Aquinas*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Aquinas (accessed Jan. 18, 2020)

⁴⁷ Anthony, *Medieval Theology*, 2016, 33-36

⁴⁸ Nichols, *Martin Luther: A guided Tour of His Life and Thought*, 2002, 72-73

to today). The theories of theology became increasingly abstract and “academic,” departing further away from Scripture. The dependence of scholastic theology on human rational thought had led men away from the divine Christ, and resulted in the rational autonomy and self-sufficiency in theology in the late Middle Ages.⁴⁹

2.2 Christ in His Person

The doctrine of Mary and the Saints as the intercessors between God and men denied the exclusive priesthood of Christ and robbed Christ of His glory as our High Priest and only Mediator. The medieval church followed the Chalcedonian Christological definition of “the union of two complete natures, human and divine, without confusion of substance, but by unity of person.” However, along with scholastic theology, it turned from realism to nominalism in the late medieval era; the divinity of Christ was so over-stressed as to make Him an implacable Judge, and thus increasingly remote and terrifying to many medieval people. As a result, people increasingly turned to Mary and the saints as their mediators to pray to.⁵⁰ A most familiar figure of Christ in the late Middle Ages was Christ as Judge sitting upon the rainbow with a lily extending from His right ear, signifying the redeemed, and a sword protruding from His left ear, symbolizing the doom of the damned.⁵¹ Luther once testified that he was utterly terror-stricken at the sight of Christ the Judge in his youth. The over-emphasis on the divinity of Christ as the severe Judge, neglecting His humanity as our Mediator and High Priest, made people fear Him instead of love Him as the merciful Savior. When people experienced weakness, they needed

⁴⁹ Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, 2012, 45-46. Historical and theological introduction of the translators, J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston

⁵⁰ Placher, *History of Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 1983, 128-129

⁵¹ Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, 2002, 29-30

someone more approachable as a vivid symbol of working of grace, which catalyzed the cult of the saints and relics.⁵² The cult of the saints originated in Christians who were martyrs and seen as heroes of the faith who seemed to have a special sort of power who now lived with Christ and could be asked to intercede on people's behalf. In 993, an official process of proclaiming a saint by the pope was created through the evaluation of the piety of his/her life and the miracles produced by prayers to him/her since his/her death. The cult of the saints also partly served to wean people away from the worship of pagan gods as the steps to ascend to the highest place. Just like the pagans had different gods to guard different cities, it was believed that different saints guarded people in different fields. When facing a life-threatening thunderstorm in 1505, in fear of death and hell, Luther called for St. Anne (Mary's mother and miners' protector) to save him, with the promise of a monastic vow. A year later, giving up law school, he did become a monk at the Augustinian Abbey in Erfurt, and eventually accomplished what a lawyer would have never dreamed of.

Among all saints, Mary held an even more special place in Christian piety as decreed "the God-bearer" (*Theotokos*) at the Council of Ephesus in 431 to address the fact that her son was both true God and true man. Being the mother of the incarnate God, it was thought that Mary could gently come between men and Christ to soften the wrath of the offended Judge. Specific theological claims of Mary were gradually developed such as the doctrine promulgated in 649 of her remaining a virgin all her life. The doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary supported by Duns Scotus, who placed Mariology on a more developed foundation, was promulgated officially in the nineteenth and twentieth

⁵² Placher, *History of Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 1983, 129-130

centuries. Mary was also regarded to be “*coredemptrix*” as a figure of redemption in a manner similar to Christ.⁵³ Hence, she became the mediator of the mediators. These teachings of the saints and Mary produced the popular veneration of icons in the church and the society. The object of the Christian faith turned away from Christ, the only Mediator between God and men (1Tim. 2:5), to these many “visible” mediators which seemed to be controlled by men. The Roman Catholic practices of intercessions by Mary and the saints denied the exclusive priesthood of Christ and robbed Christ of His glory.

The Roman Catholic Doctrine of Eucharist: The body of Christ as a Sacrifice which was offered to God in the Eucharist humiliated the glory of Christ. The Catholic view of the Lord’s Super, known as transubstantiation, holds that the elements of bread and wine transformed into the very body and blood of Christ upon the priest’s pronouncement (Luther called it a magic⁵⁴). Long before the seven sacraments became official Roman Catholic doctrine in the Council of Florence in 1438, even though the Eucharist was agreed by everyone as a sacrament instituted by Christ, people could not agree on what actually happened during it. Augustine had already warned people not to take the words of Christ at the Last Supper too literally. Those appealing to the same point of Augustine considered the bread and wine becoming the body of Christ and blood “not materially but spiritually.”⁵⁵ However, the more literal approach eventually won out in the end. The Eastern church first affirmed the real presence of the body of Christ and blood in the bread and wine in the Council at Nicaea in 787 (using an alternative term as “trans-elementation”), but the Western church did not declare this until the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215: “His

⁵³ McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought*, 1998, 121

⁵⁴ Luther, *Luther’s works*, vol. 36: *Word and Sacrament II*, 1999, 297; Luther, *Luther’s works*, vol. 38: *Word and Sacrament IV*, 1999, 201–202

⁵⁵ Placher, *History of Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 1983, 128-129

body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms of bread and wine, the bread and wine having been transubstantiated, by God's power, into His body and blood.”⁵⁶ The term “transubstantiation” was earliest known to describe the change in the Eucharist in the eleventh century and was elaborated in line with Aristotelian metaphysics in the thirteenth century, which was found as classic formulation in the teaching of Thomas Aquinas. According to Aristotle’s theory, in the ordinary course of things, substances remained the same while their properties changed. The process of “transubstantiation” occurred in the reverse way, the properties of bread and wine remained the same, but the substances miraculously changed to the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.⁵⁷ At the moment that the priest repeated the words of the ordinance, “This is My body...,” the bread and wine changed into the body and blood of Christ, and this transubstantiation could strengthen communion with Christ. The sacrament of the Mass had been central and remains central in Roman Catholic worship, but the liturgy was performed in Latin during the Middle Ages, and few people understood.⁵⁸ Because Christ was bodily under the form of bread and wine, the congregation worshipped these elements as worshipping Christ. But they could rarely eat the bread (once a year) and never drink the cup, in order to avoid mistakenly handling of these holy elements. Attending the sacraments as “the mean of grace” was part of good works, through which people would gain a little bit more of salvation every time when they observed the sacraments. The sins of the living and the dead had not been pardoned through the sufferings of Christ, unless Christ was offered daily for them by the priests in the Mass. The Mass as a sacrifice

⁵⁶ Wikipedia, *Transubstantiation*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transubstantiation> (accessed on Aug. 27, 2020)

⁵⁷ Placher, *History of Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 1983, 129

⁵⁸ Trueman, *Luther on the Christian Life: Cross and Freedom*, 2015, 100

presenting Christ's death was seen as propitiatory; those ministering at the altar acted in the capacity of priests.⁵⁹ This ritual brought the clergy special class and authority in people's salvation, which became one of the reasons for Rome's corruptions. The Mass is a denial of the one sacrifice (Heb. 10:12) and sufferings of Christ and is an accursed idolatry,⁶⁰ since "the body of Christ" had been offered to God again and again as many sacrifices, which had humiliated the glory of Christ.

Conclusions: Therefore, the Roman doctrine of the saints and Mary and the Eucharist turned people's *faith away from Christ* to the sacrament and the saints, from true repentance to etiquette and formalism, which dispossessed the glory of Christ as the only Savior Lord and King in His church and His Kingdom. The relationship between man and God was mediated through Mary and the saints and church, which blurred the glory of Christ as the Only High Priest and Mediator. All these doctrines of Rome did not help people to build a personal relationship with God and love God, but made it a difficult and almost impossible path for people to come to God, preventing people from knowing the true glory of Christ and living for His glory alone.

2.3 Christ in His Work

The Medieval Doctrines of Salvation and the treasury of merits: Salvation in Roman Catholic faith depended not only on the grace of God through Jesus Christ, but also in part on the merit of one's own good works (synergism: cooperation of God and man), and so not wholly on the merit of Christ's work of redemption, which undercut the glory of Christ in His sufficient work for salvation revealed by the Gospel. As a result, the

⁵⁹ Macleod, "The Work of Christ," In *Reformation Theology*, 2017, 379

⁶⁰ Heidelberg Catechism, Question 80

assurance of salvation fell into uncertainty because of the fallibility and fallenness of human nature. In the medieval era, salvation was not seen as an individual event, a personal encounter with Christ or a personal union with Christ, but primarily as an event of the church community sanctified by the Holy Spirit. There was no remission of sins and no salvation possible outside the institution of church. Salvation must be received in the church, for the pope held the keys of the Kingdom of heaven (Matt. 16:18-19) to admit the souls. Thus, the church possessed the authority to grant the remission of sins on the basis of *the treasury of merits* which consisted of the superabundant merits of Christ, Mary, and the saints.⁶¹ The church claimed that besides Christ, Mary and the saints also had done so much good that they had done even more than they needed for themselves; hence, those supererogatory works (special merit of supererogation) were retained by the church and could be administered to others.⁶² Two papal bulls relevant to this: *Unigenitus* (1343) and *Salvator Noster* (1476), established the doctrine of the treasury of merits and its connection to financial gifts to church.⁶³ The treasury of merits became the theological basis for various kinds of meritorious works, such as fasts, prayers, charities, indulgences, sacraments, etc. The Roman doctrine of justification was ecclesiological-centered instead of Christ-centered. The historical work of Christ was necessary, but only introductory to the realization work of the Holy Spirit and the meritorious work of the individual Christian.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Lienhard, *Luther: Witness to Jesus Christ*, 1982, 93

⁶² Lillback, "An Introduction to Luther, Calvin, and Their Protestant Reformation," In *Unio CUM Christo* (Vol.3 No.1), 2017, 91-93

⁶³ Trueman, *Luther on the Christian Life: Cross and Freedom*, 2015, 37

⁶⁴ Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 2000, 120-121

According to Rome, *justification (iustificare)* was a process of gradual transformation of a sinner by divine grace *and* cooperation with grace — progressive sanctification. Faith was the beginning of justification for it was essential in the process of sanctification/justification, which began at baptism. The infusion of divine grace through baptism is the first justification and the second justification is by good works cooperating with grace; that is the doctrine of double justification.⁶⁵ Rome declared in the Council of Trent, “faith is the beginning of salvation (*initium salutis*). It is the foundation (*fundamentum*) and root (*radix*) of salvation without which it is impossible to please God....” (cap. 8). Faith was necessary, but not sufficient for salvation. Cooperation with grace by free will and good works was equally necessary. Rome turned sanctification into a justification. The Roman church affirmed at Trent and continues to affirm today that the basis by which God will declare a person just or unjust is found in one's “inherent righteousness.”⁶⁶ To Rome, Paul dealt with the first justification only, in which he excluded all works, but James dealt with the second justification, which is by good works. This was the misinterpretation of James’ purpose to address justification by works; in fact, James was distinguishing true/living faith from false/dead faith by works as its fruit and evidence (James 2:26-27).⁶⁷ In the Roman system, the medieval scholastics generated different concepts of faith. They distinguished between *fides informis*, unformed faith (simple right beliefs, credence, orthodoxy) and *fides caritate formata*, more admirable faith formed by

⁶⁵ Jones, *One Justification or Two Justifications*, 2015, <https://www.reformation21.org/blogs/one-or-two-justifications.php> (accessed on May 29, 2022)

⁶⁶ Sproul, *Is the Reformation Over?*, 2009, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/reformation-over/> (accessed on Dec. 27, 2021)

⁶⁷ For James stresses works important for faith, Luther once questioned if the Epistle of James belonged in the canon of Scripture, but he never tried to remove it from the Bible. In fact, James does not suggest that works lead to salvation. He actually echoes Christ’s own teachings about a good tree and good fruit and the true servant of God in Matt. 7:16-23.

love (right beliefs working through the supernaturally added grace of love); between *fides implicita*, implicit faith (having no knowledge of the doctrine of the Gospel and Scripture, merely trusting the priest and following the church tradition) and *fides explicita*, explicit faith (having explicit knowledge of the details of doctrine).⁶⁸ These various kinds of faith were held to be meritorious for salvation. Even though these kinds of faith submitted to the church, obedient to its traditions and practices, they lacked a biblical base and departed from Christ and His Word. According to Rome, even a person who has true faith, can still not be justified, because he can commit a mortal sin and lose justifying grace. He then must be justified a second time through the sacrament of penance, named as “a second plank” of justification for those who have made shipwreck of their souls.⁶⁹ Thus, in the Roman view of the Gospel, justification was accomplished through the sacraments instead of faith in Christ alone.

The Doctrine of Sacraments: During the Middle Ages, seven sacraments (baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick, marriage and holy orders) had been set up in the church for the forgiveness of sins, sanctification and salvation. According to the developed Roman system, the sacrament of baptism functioned as the elimination of original sin from Adam and the sins that the person committed on his own. However, the blood of Jesus functioned only for the purging of sins committed before baptism. After baptism, there were mortal sins distinguished from venial sins, which resulted in the loss of the grace of salvation. Because the tendency to sin remained in the believer, he might be often overcome by sins, but he was able to recover through the services of the other

⁶⁸ Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical*, 2005, 725

⁶⁹ Sproul, *The Gospel at Stake: Revisiting the Roman Catholic – Protestant Debate*, 2013, <https://credomag.com/2013/01/the-gospel-at-stake-revisiting-the-roman-catholic-protestant-debate-r-c-sproul/> (accessed on May 29, 2022)

sacraments to have the grace of God. This justifying grace was understood as infused grace, a supernatural substance infused by God into the human soul in order to facilitate redemption.⁷⁰ Receiving the infused grace was the prerequisite for salvation. For Thomas Aquinas, the infusion of grace made a real change in the recipient who was released from the constraints of his sinful nature and granted the ability to subordinate his mind and will to God. Lombard explained how justification was given through Christ in two ways: first, Christ's death justified man, while love was aroused through it in his heart and made him righteous; Second, through the same love, sin was extinguished by which the devil held him captive, and so he was no longer condemned. God's grace in justification directed man through the grace of the Holy Spirit to good works.⁷¹ A person's salvation depended not only on the work of Christ but also on one's own good works performed before and after justification as meritoriously contributing to and also increasing one's justification.⁷²

The Doctrine of Merits: Medieval scholastics distinguished between two kinds of merit: congruous merit of "fitness" (*de congruo*) and condign merit of "worthiness" (*de condigno*). The former was due to man's well-intentioned efforts when he "did what he could" (*facere quod in se est*) to seek the good, thus it was "fitting" that God should reward him with grace. The latter arose from one's good works done with the aid of the grace thus received (*gratia gratum faciens*), which were meritorious, then he was rewarded with more grace and finally with salvation and glory. But how much man should do without the stimulus of "special" or "operative" grace (*gratia peculiaris, praeveniens, operans*), was much debated. Aquinas held that man could make no effort whatsoever toward the good

⁷⁰ McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 1999, 103

⁷¹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion & 2*, 2011, 745

⁷² Hughes, "Assurance of Salvation," In *Encyclopedia of the Reformed faith*, 1992, 12–13

apart from grace, and therefore could acquire no merit; and that any such effort inspired by grace carried both kinds of merit — “congruous” inasmuch as it was a work of man’s free choice, “condign” inasmuch as it was a work of God’s grace. In the late Medieval Ages, the prevailing trend was more optimistic as to what man could do by his own natural power to earn congruous merit; as for condign merit the help of grace was essential.⁷³ This fell into a sort of semi-Pelagianism that in fact, has never disappeared from history, for it just makes so much sense to our human nature and rationality.

The Doctrines of Penance, Indulgence and Purgatory: The sacrament of penance was performed as a key spiritual discipline (meritorious works) for the forgiveness of sins and for salvation. Rome interpreted the word *Poenitentia* in the translation of Matt. 3:2 in the Vulgate, to mean either the remorse of the sinner or the penance imposed on the sinner by the church. The penitential system of the early and medieval church fused both meanings in the term “do penance” which consisted of both a contrite heart on the part of the sinner and his fulfilling of satisfactions.⁷⁴ Formally defined by the Council of Florence in 1439, the penance consists of four steps: contrition (heartfelt repentance), confession (auricular confession to a priest of every sin), satisfaction (acts of reparation), and absolution (forgiveness pronounced by the priest).⁷⁵ A penitent sinner first could show sorrow for his sins (*contritio cordis*), confess them orally (*confessio oris*), render the penitential acts (*satisfactio operis*) determined by the congregation according to the penitential canons or rules, and then receive pardon (*absolutio*).⁷⁶ The penance was originally applied only to those sinners being excommunicated by the congregation in

⁷³ Luther, *Luther’s works*, vol. 33: *Career of the Reformer III.*, 1999, 266

⁷⁴ Luther, *Luther’s works*, vol. 48: *Letters I*, 1999, 67

⁷⁵ Atherstone, *The Reformation Faith & Flames*, 2011, 24

⁷⁶ Luther, *Luther’s works*, vol. 31: *Career of the Reformer I*, 1999, 19

private, then had gradually become public and a part of the sacrament. This change tempted the popes to use it to increase their power and wealth. The plenary indulgences were first granted to Crusaders in the eleventh century and to those who did not want to participate, substituting money, and later to every penitent pilgrim in the jubilee years, eventually to all persons who paid the papacy for them by the end of the fourteenth century.⁷⁷ In the sixteenth century, the Council of Trent, in response to the Reformation, confirmed the use of penance and made it a condition of receiving communion and pronounced “anathema” (a curse to eternal damnation) on those who denied its necessity for salvation.⁷⁸ The penitential function that the church offered included indulgences, pilgrimages, intercessions of the saints and alms, so to make “satisfaction” for their wrongdoing. Indulgences had grown over time into a lucrative trade and extended to cover not only the living but also the dead. Rome taught, based on the apocrypha (2 Maccabees 12:42-45) and its tradition (from ancient Fathers, Augustine and Aquinas),⁷⁹ that before the dead of the elect who had unfinished penances could enter heaven, he must go through an intermediate state, called purgatory, to undergo the process of purification or temporal punishment. His sins could be purged by such post-mortem suffering to achieve the necessary holiness (satisfaction) to enter heaven. This Roman doctrine of purgatory elaborated in the scholastic works in the twelfth century and defined for the first time at the Second Council of Lyon in 1274, declared that for some souls to be purified after death, they could benefit from pious duties that the living faithful would do for them, namely, the sacrifices of

⁷⁷ Luther, *Luther's works*, vol. 31: *Career of the Reformer I*, 1999, 20

⁷⁸ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (2 vols), 1990, 712

⁷⁹ Cross & Livingstone, *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church* (3rd ed. rev.), 2005, 1358. “St Augustine’s occasional remarks on a purifying fire after death (*De Civ. Dei*, 21. 26; *Enchiridion*, 68 f., etc.) and on the value of the Church’s prayers for those who die in the communion of the Church (*De Civ. Dei*, 21. 24 etc.), combined with his implication that the ultimate fate of individual souls is decided at the moment of death (*Enchiridion*, 110), provides much fuel for later theology.”

Masses, prayers, alms and other duties of piety, to relieve punishments of this kind.⁸⁰ Indulgences were developed and popularized with the idea of purgatory. These beliefs became the central part of late medieval religion and practice which made a good business for Rome for filthy lucre.⁸¹ A popular Dominican preacher and indulgence salesman, Johannes Tetzel, authorized by the pope to raise funds nominally for the construction of St. Peter's Basilica, urged the local German populace to invest in indulgences to release their friends and family from purgatory, proclaiming: "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs!"⁸² This issue ignited the furor of Luther to post the *Ninety-Five Theses* on the church door on Oct. 31, 1517, which inadvertently set on fire the Reformation Movement, for the times, the place and the man all met in Luther.

Monastic and Popular Piety: Monasticism was also believed to be the way *par excellence* to heaven.⁸³ The monk, like young Luther, was among those true devoted "warriors" struggling to climb up the ladder to heaven, by obeying the principles and instructions of the monastery to put on his cowl, gird himself with a rope, assume the vow of celibacy and poverty, practice the sacraments and other good works, etc. In this way he would please God and be saved. This was considered to be the high and mighty wisdom making an effort at the veneration and worship of God.⁸⁴ The late medieval model of spirituality was associated with the imitation of Christ, which aimed to copy Christ's way of life, particularly celibacy and poverty, as the most efficient way to gain merit in God's eyes. There were widespread interests and practices in meditating upon the sufferings of

⁸⁰ Wikipedia, *purgatory*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purgatory> (accessed on Aug. 26, 2021)

⁸¹ Cross & Livingstone, *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church (3rd ed. rev.)*, 2005, 1359

⁸² Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, 2002, 87

⁸³ Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, 2002, 30-33

⁸⁴ Luther, *Luther's works, vol. 1: Lectures on Genesis*, 1999, 161

Christ, which had produced a large number of printed works on this mystical current in fifteenth century religious literature. The common features of these late medieval passion meditations emphasized that the inner man was conformed to the suffering of Christ by *compassio*, while the outer man was conformed to the works of Christ by *imitatio*.⁸⁵ Compared to scholastic theology, this type of spiritual theology advocated reflection and instruction to shape the inner and outer life of believers. It aimed to bridge the gap between medieval piety and academic scholastic theology, seeking to reform Christian life in practice. These meditations also embodied the scholastic teaching on the necessity of Christ's death for salvation. According to Tomlin's survey, he named two broad types of passion meditation. One type, *Subjective Imitational Meditation*, had its primary function the imitation of Christ as example by the arousal of internal *compassio* for the sufferings of Christ and the external *imitatio* of His patience and forbearance, represented by Aelred of Rievaulx, the *devotio moderna*, and Johannes von Staupitz (Luther's spiritual mentor). The other kind, *Objective Sacramental Meditation*, had as its focus on the death of Christ as achieving objective satisfaction for sins. This countered the late medieval insecurity about salvation by directing the penitent to the objective guarantees of the sacramental life of the church through which grace came and merits were gained, represented by Johannes von Paltz and Gabriel Biel (linked to a nominal type of soteriology which applied the *facere quod in se est* in the *via moderna*).⁸⁶ Unlike the first type, the passion of Christ did not directly impact the soul, but worked effectively through the objective use of the sacraments.

⁸⁵ Tomlin, *The Power of the Cross: Theology and the Death of Christ in Paul, Luther and Pascal*, 1999, 134; M. Elze, "Das Verständnis der Passion Jesu im Ausgehenden Mittelalter und bei Luther," *Geist und Geschichte der Reformation: Festgabe H. Rückert*, eds. H. Liebling and K. Scholder (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1966), 127–51

⁸⁶ Tomlin, *The Power of the Cross: Theology and the Death of Christ in Paul, Luther and Pascal*, 1999, 138-139

The believer was to be reassured as to the value of those sacraments by contemplating the soteriological efficacy of the passion, mediated by the sacraments of penance and absolution as well as through indulgences. This popular and monastic piety was the spiritual and theological environment that young Luther lived in the Augustine monastery.

Conclusions: In short, the confusion in the doctrine of justification and salvation in the late medieval church led people to believe that the work and grace of Christ was not sufficient for the forgiveness of sin and salvation. Men had to depend on their merits by following church traditions and its practices, and on the institutional guarantees of the church to gain his reconciliation to God. The object of faith turned away from Christ to the church and its traditions. “What is ultimately lost in Rome’s sacramental theology is the glory of Christ and our assurance that before God we stand justified in Christ and that His work is complete, perfect, and sufficient to save me, now and forevermore.”⁸⁷

2.4 The Theology of Glory

The Definitions of *theologia gloriae* and *theologia crucis*: *Soli Deo Gloria* (Glory to God alone), and yet the theology of glory is not the theology thought to attribute glory to God, but in fact, is “the perennial theology of the fallen race,”⁸⁸ an anthropocentric theology of which the poison never vanishes in human history that we need to recognize. The theology of glory (*theologia gloriae*) is a term used by Luther for the current speculative, scholastic theology that emphasized God’s glorious attributes and works speculated through human reason, and man’s will and merits in salvation, rather than the

⁸⁷ Wellum, *Christ Alone – The Uniqueness of Jesus as Savior*, 2017, 270-271

⁸⁸ Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther’s Heidelberg Disputation, 1518*, 1997, xiii

divine self-revelation and the grace of Gospel in the sufferings and cross of Christ,⁸⁹ the latter being named the theology of the cross (*theologia crucis*). These are two antithetic ways of doing theology. Luther had published the *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* to repudiate scholasticism as a whole in September 1517,⁹⁰ but it was in his commentary on the *Ninety-Five Theses* that he first raised both concepts of *theologia gloriae* and *theologia crucis* in 1518, which he developed more fully and more precisely and programmatically in the *Heidelberg Disputation* later in the same year.⁹¹

The scholasticism that Luther critiqued was the medieval movement which flourished in the period from 1200 to 1500 and emphasized the rational justification of religious belief and the systematic presentation of those beliefs in order to achieve a comprehensive view of theology.⁹² Scholastics attempted to build up “a Cathedral of thought” that could support all aspects of life, which propelled medieval theology to its heyday.

The Characteristics of Scholastic Theology: The main characteristics of the theological method of scholasticism is the use of reason in religious discourse to explain faith, and was a synthesis of philosophy and theology. The medieval theologians after the eleventh century paid more and more attention to the contribution of philosophy to theology in order to defend the rationality of Christian faith, rebut the criticism of pagans and other religions, and also to provide systematic ways of presenting doctrine. Along with the rise of European universities and the rediscovery of the works of Aristotle from the

⁸⁹ McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 2014, 319

⁹⁰ Luther, *Luther's works, vol. 31: Career of the Reformer I*, 1999, 6

⁹¹ Buhler, “Theology of the Cross: Its Meaning in Luther and Some Stages of its Reception History,” In *Martin Luther – A Christian between Reforms and Modernity* 2017, 698

⁹² McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought*, 1998, 105

Muslim world in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century, his thought gradually became popular and dominated theology, especially under the influence of Aquinas whose *Summus contra Gentiles* applied the principles of Aristotle to prove Christian faith to Muslims and Jews. By means of Aristotelian logic, the scholastics sought to synthesize things divine and human. They applied the deductive method, such as syllogism, to move a religious truth or assumption to a new conclusion, in order to build a logically defensible and coherent system. A vast synthesis between Christian theology and Greek philosophy was developed in the scope and complexity of the later medieval theologians like Duns Scotus, Occam and Biel.⁹³ It is easy to fall prey to ambition through achieving intellectual respectability or academic accuracy. Such challenges become even more radical in this post-modern period with competing secular philosophies. In the late Middle Ages, a profound interest in metaphysical questions that were not addressed by Scripture was addressed by speculative pursuit instead of biblical interpretation. Thus, reason was lifted up to the level of faith. Scholastic theologians believed that human reason was neutral, not corrupted by sin. A true knowledge of God could be obtained from the study of nature,⁹⁴ that is to know God through God's eternal power and divine nature (Rom. 1:19-20) from the philosophical perspective apart from divine revelation, which Luther opposed and called the theology of glory.

The Impacts of Philosophy on the doctrines of Justification, Free Will, Natural Theology: The significant impact of Aristotle can be found in the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification. The righteousness of God is considered as “distributive justice,” a concept

⁹³ Frame, *An Introduction of Western Philosophy and Theology*, 2015, 123

⁹⁴ Cross & Livingstone, *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church (3rd ed. rev.)*, 2005, 1615

from Aristotle, which means the righteousness that one shall work out and of his own. This turns the foundation of justification to human effort rather than the grace of God, changing “justification by faith” to “justification *by merit*.”⁹⁵ The Aristotelian theology of Aquinas was a progressive theology (the theory of the process of movement from potentiality to actuality) rather than a dichotomous theology, as advocated by Plato. Justification became a developing process, a long journey for man to reach God through penances, confession, merit, pilgrim, papal forgiveness, mass, and various kinds of good works.⁹⁶ Aquinas claimed that justification must be from God’s justifying grace, and not dependant on human works, but how shall people receive this justifying grace? Only depending on God or also on the free will of man? Aquinas held the teleological view of Aristotle and believed that the nature of *free will* itself drives towards good and man has the ability to choose different ways to reach the final good, which was different from the view of Augustine and the reformers on the total corruption of free will after the fall.⁹⁷ Although Aquinas claimed that apart from God’s grace, man could make no effort whatsoever towards the good, God’s help was seen as the Prime Mover (*causa efficiens*) on fallen man’s free will, so that he could exercise his liberty to make decisions by deliberate reason not only in matters in his life, but also in matters of God as well.⁹⁸ Aquinas believed that man was created with a natural human goodness as part of the image of God and a supernatural gift of grace (*donum supereadditum*) as the likeness of God (which was also influenced by the framework of Aristotle's cosmological dualism of form and matter). Only the *donum* was entirely destroyed after the fall, but many natural created capacities, such as reason and virtue,

⁹⁵ McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction (5th Ed.)*, 2017, 39-40

⁹⁶ Yeung, *The Study of Martin Luther’s Theology*, 2009, 137

⁹⁷ Yeung, *The Study of Martin Luther’s Theology*, 2009, 227-231

⁹⁸ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ib-Q109.2

remained intact.⁹⁹ Fallen man still kept a considerable natural capacity to know God and to love God.¹⁰⁰ Not only just man, but also all creatures according to their natures had the inclination to love God.¹⁰¹ Thus, Aquinas developed medieval *natural theology*, to know God by reason, apart from Scripture. He divided natural theology from divine revelation, and nature from grace, regarding philosophy as the discipline in which human reason was sufficient and sacred doctrine as the discipline in which we received the truth by revelation and faith.¹⁰² In fact, natural theology could be the good witness of God in the light of divine revelation.¹⁰³ However, when the philosophical principle behind it was based on rational autonomy and self-sufficiency in theology, as Packer and Johnston commented, “natural theology leads men away from the Divine Christ, and from Scripture, the cradle in which He lies, and from the *theologia crucis*, the Gospel doctrine which sets Christ forth.”¹⁰⁴ When natural reason is independent of Scripture, it becomes Mistress Reason, which Luther ironically called the *Devil’s whore*,¹⁰⁵ for he was fully aware of the spiritual warfare behind the synthesis of theology and philosophy (“Greeks bearing gifts”).¹⁰⁶ This warfare between the lies of Satan and the Word of God has unfortunately continued down through history to our own time.

The Late Medieval Scholasticism of Nominalism: In the fourteenth century, the occurrence of many “unreasonable” crises in Europe (such as the kings of nations fighting

⁹⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia IIae 85.1, 2:966; Williams, *Unio CUM Christo (Vol.3 No.1)*, 2017, 27

¹⁰⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia IIae 94.2, 2:1009

¹⁰¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2:1125 (Ib-Q109.3); Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia 60.5, 1:301. “God, in so far as He is the universal good, from Whom every natural good depends, is loved by everything with a natural love.”

¹⁰² Frame, *An Introduction of Western Philosophy and Theology*, 2015, 144-145

¹⁰³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Abridged in one volume), 2016, 148-149

¹⁰⁴ Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, 2012, 45-46

¹⁰⁵ Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, 2012, 46

¹⁰⁶ Frame, *An Introduction of Western Philosophy and Theology*, 2015, 46

each other, the religious chaos of having more than one pope, and the Black Death, the most serious plague in history bringing more than one third of drop in population), had changed the thought of theologians from intellectualism and realism dominant in the earlier part of scholastic period, to voluntarism and nominalism dominant in the latter part of the scholastic period (1350-1500). The monastic background of Luther in Erfurt and Wittenberg was nominalism, represented by William of Occam (1288–1347) and his disciple Gabriel Biel (1420–1495). In favor of an extreme nominalism, Occam developed a *via moderna* (new way) in contrast to the previous *via antiqua* (old way) of Aquinas.¹⁰⁷ He was famous for his “Occam’s razor”: “choose the simplest solution to a problem, positing no more entities than necessary,”¹⁰⁸ which addressed the principle of simplicity to eliminate the supernatural from view.¹⁰⁹ He believed that universal terms were the concepts of classes of individual things and human reason was limited to the realm of individual things. He did not agree with Aquinas that universals existed beyond the individual things as concepts in God’s mind and as the concrete essences of things belonging to the designated species (realism). For Occamists, God was the great *exlex* (outside the law),¹¹⁰ as being utterly transcendent and sovereign. He possessed unconditioned, absolute power (*potentia absoluta*),¹¹¹ and He could do everything except those things that went against His attributes or against the principle of logical contradiction. God also had the ordained power to do what He had actually chosen to realize by His will if He considered it good.

¹⁰⁷ McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 2014, 218

¹⁰⁸ Frame, *An Introduction of Western Philosophy and Theology*, 2015, 158

¹⁰⁹ Grenz & Nordling, *Pocket dictionary of theological terms*, 1999, 85

¹¹⁰ Berkouwer, *Divine Election*, 1960, 53. Calvin resisted the idea of arbitrariness in the *potentia absoluta* and the concept of the *exlex* which he opposed with the remark that God is a law unto Himself (ICR III, xxiii, 20). He saw this scholastic view seriously violated the true sovereignty and trustworthiness of God.

¹¹¹ Kolb, “Bound, Freed, Freed to Be Bound: The Wittenberg Understanding of Justification,” In *Unio CUM Christo* (Vol.3 No.1), 2017, 48

For example, He could make a world where human beings have four eyes and three legs, but He could not make a world where triangles have four sides (contradictory) whereas He decided to create people with two eyes and two legs in this world. In voluntarism, it was believed that the reason God did this thing by His ordained power, was not because it was reasonable (the belief held by the intellectualists where God would not do unreasonable things), but because it was His will. It was only through revelation that God told us why He did this. Thus, neither human logic nor metaphysical speculation, but God's revelation alone was the right source to know God.

The Pactum View of Occamism: Occamists applied the ordained power of God to the realm of salvation in a way that God chose to give His grace to those who first did as well as they could do (*quod in se est*).¹¹² This was characterized by “*pactum*” (covenant)¹¹³ between God and men that set up the condition of justification as “*facere quod in se est*” (to do what one is capable of doing on one's own). God could keep His covenant and reward you with His justifying grace provided you make your own effort to reject sins and do good deeds. For example, Gabriel Biel prized humility above all,¹¹⁴ speaking of self-accusation, self-denigration and self-humiliation; and he firmly claimed that the human work of “doing what lies within you” was the first step to salvation.¹¹⁵ On one hand, *via moderna* emphasized that human good deeds did not have intrinsic value for salvation, and justification was based on the grace and generosity of God's covenant, thus cleverly avoiding the error of Pelagianism of exaggerating human virtues. On the other hand,

¹¹² Luther, *Luther's works, vol. 33: Career of the Reformer III.*, 1999, 266

¹¹³ McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 2008, 71-72, 101-102

¹¹⁴ Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 352

¹¹⁵ Tomlin, *The Power of the Cross: Theology and the Death of Christ in Paul, Luther and Pascal*, 1999, 161

through the covenant, causal law allowed man's limited good deeds to be exchanged for justification in return. This view of justification based on the "merit-justification" causal law of covenant, very popular in the late medieval period, was a departure from the view of Augustine in his fight against Pelagianism. Furgenson named this God of covenant as a "Semi-Pelagian Jesus" or "Santa Christ" who gave gifts to those who had already done the best they could, as the saying goes: God helps those who help themselves.¹¹⁶ This way of thought also underlies the assertion made by many that God did not heal you or answer your prayers because you did not have enough faith or prayers.

Conclusions and Consequence of the Loss of Assurance of Salvation: Salvation required the infused justifying grace of God and the good works of man. However, there was an unresolved theological issue concerning which limited good deeds were required as they were not clearly specified. As a result, man could not obtain definite assurance of his salvation. Most people were troubled by their own guilt all the time, as was Luther. Occam and Biel believed that man by His own will and nature could seek God, love God and obey God's words to do good deeds and avoid doing evil without aiding grace, but this was opposite to Luther's personal experience.¹¹⁷ Struggling with a huge moral burden and an insurmountable gap between a corrupted man and a Holy God, Luther experienced a great existential anxiety (*Anfechtung*)¹¹⁸ and often despaired over his own sins in his early years in the monastery. For him, his good deeds were just like a polluted garment even

¹¹⁶ Ferguson, *In Christ alone: Living the Gospel Centered Life*, 2007, 16

¹¹⁷ Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, 2012, 20

¹¹⁸ Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 35: Word and Sacrament I*, 1999, 110. "What greater affliction (*Anfechtung*) is there than sin and the evil conscience which is always afraid of God's anger and never has rest."; Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 1952, 42. Bainton defines it as "all the doubts, turmoil, pang, tremor, pains, despair, desolation, and desperation which invade the spirit of man." *Anfechtung* can stem from the devil, or from the "hidden God" to test us.

when he tried very hard to do his best.¹¹⁹ He could not love, but hated God for demanding what man actually could not do. His agonies turned out to be the darkness before the dawn of the Reformation; when the light from Scripture came into his chaos, he experienced breakthrough in his theology. Luther wrote the *Disputation against Scholastic Theology* in 1517, which was to “restore the theology of Christ,”¹²⁰ and raised the theology of the cross in later years, since the glory of Christ on the cross had been covered up by scholastic thought, which displaced the Way, the Truth and the Life of Christ (John 14:6) with the way of human reason, speculations and works in the late medieval era.

¹¹⁹ Frame, *An Introduction of Western Philosophy and Theology*, 2015, 169

¹²⁰ Luther, *Selected Writings of Martin Luther, vol. 1, 1517-1520*, 2007, 31-42