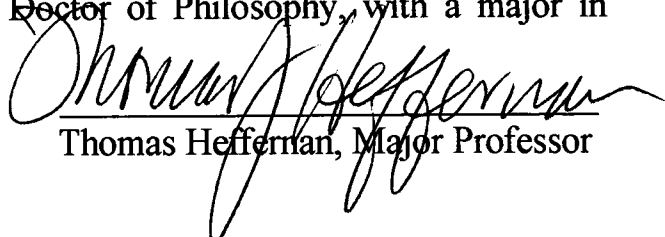
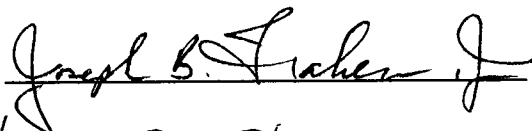


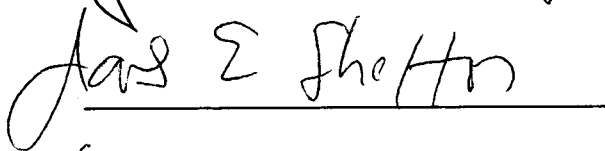
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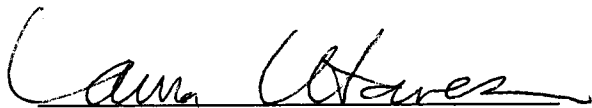
I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Jena Theresa Trammell entitled "The Theology of Grace, Justification, and Baptism in Pearl." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.


Thomas Heffernan, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

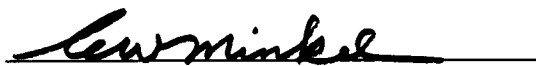

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Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of the Graduate School

The Theology of
Grace, Justification, and Baptism in Pearl

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Jena Theresa Trammell

August 1998

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband

Andrew Nicholson Trammell

whose commitment to my education has made it all possible.

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There are many people at the University of Tennessee to whom I am grateful for helping to make my time there so beneficial. I have benefited immensely through courses taken and assistance received from the faculty and staff in the Department of English. I am especially appreciative of my dissertation committee, Thomas Heffernan, Joseph Trahern, Laura Howes, Paul Barrette, and James Shelton, for their suggestions and encouragement during the many months of dissertation research and writing.

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Abstract

Critics of Pearl are in general agreement regarding the orthodoxy of the Pearl maiden's doctrinal speeches. In consequence, critics generally interpret the character of the dreamer as one who is theologically ignorant or as one who has rebelled against the word of God. Nevertheless, it is my view that many important textual details lend support to another interpretation of Pearl: that Pearl is a poem intended to clarify issues of current theological controversy pertaining to grace, justification, and baptism. These were issues at the center of theological disputations between Thomas Bradwardine and William of Ockham and his followers in the mid-fourteenth century. This study examines the contemporary relevance of Pearl's theological discourse as it aids in explaining the speaker's portrayal, his confusion, questions, and objections, as well as the maiden's divine exposition.

Chapter One is an introduction to Pearl as a literary work and a fuller description of the following chapters. Chapter Two is an overview of scholarship and criticism on Pearl. Chapter Three examines the history of the theology of grace and justification, emphasizing contemporary disagreements originating in the radical nominalistic doctrines of William of Ockham and his followers. Thomas Bradwardine was the leading defender of the orthodox position and is best known

for his treatise De causa Dei contra Pelagium (1344), written to combat the heretical notions of grace propagated by the Ockhamists. Bradwardine's position was later taken up by Richard Fitzralph and John Wyclif.

Chapter Four provides a history of the sacrament of baptism as it relates to the contemporary theological disputes and the poet's concerns in Pearl. Chapter Five presents a new reading of Pearl and discusses how the poet has carefully chosen and is aware of the complex theological traditions of grace, justification, and baptism. The Pearl maiden's speeches accord with the orthodox Augustinian tradition defended by Bradwardine. Chapter Six briefly summarizes the study and offers suggestions for further study.

Finally, Pearl may be interpreted as the poet's effort to discredit the heresies of nominalistic theology. The dreamer, confused due to awareness of the current disputations, is counseled and corrected by the Pearl maiden.

Preface

Acknowledged as one of the finest works of medieval literature, Pearl continues to engage a large modern readership. I was dissatisfied, however, with the great number of subjective and contradictory critical interpretations of the poem's speaker, for I felt they overlooked some significant textual details. I wanted to approach the poem from a fourteenth-century point of view and try to determine how the average medieval reader might have perceived its contents. The best place to start seemed to be with Pearl's doctrinal debate, since most current readings focus upon the speaker/dreamer for his theological ignorance or his unwillingness to accept the revealed word of God. A few studies on Pearl have cited St. Augustine in discussing the poem's theological exposition and demonstrating its orthodoxy. Yet, I wanted to know in addition the opinions of fourteenth-century theologians on the issues of grace, justification, and the sacraments and to ascertain whether the poem's discourse reflected any actual contemporary disputations. I also wanted to know if the speaker's apparent confusion or misunderstandings reflected a broader awareness and interest in such matters among the classes of educated lay readers. Therefore, the following chapters examine the degree to which Pearl reflects fourteenth-century theological debate over grace, justification, and the sacrament of baptism.

Chapter One provides an introduction to Pearl as a literary work. After a brief discussion of the poem's form, structure, and major thematic concerns, I have described some of the primary interpretive problems which have necessitated additional study. I have then outlined in fuller detail the content and direction of subsequent chapters.

Chapter Two contains a review of Pearl criticism and scholarship to the present date. Historically, scholarly attention focused on whether the poem is fundamentally elegiac or allegorical. Since 1955, the most controversial issue in Pearl criticism has centered upon the portrayal of the speaker. The great number of diverse and often conflicting interpretations of this character suggest the need for a new approach to assessing the poem's themes.

Chapter Three sets forth a history of the Christian theology of grace and justification, the issues at the heart of the debate in Pearl. I have defined these concepts and traced their development from the New Testament and the orthodox tradition originating with St. Paul and St. Augustine. I have then examined the preservation of this tradition throughout the Middle Ages and the attacks on tradition by radical nominalistic theologians at Oxford in the age of the Pearl-poet.

Chapter Four presents a history of the sacrament of baptism. The controversy among English theologians in the fourteenth century over grace and justification extended to the efficacy of sacramental grace. The role of baptism in salvation is one of the central theological concerns of Pearl.

Chapter Five explores how well our understanding of the contemporary theological controversies informs our reading of Pearl. When the poem is read in light of doctrinal history, the maiden's speeches to the dreamer can be shown to fully affirm the orthodox interpretations of grace, justification, and the sacraments. Read also in light of current scholastic disputations, an interpretation of the speaker as knowledgeable, but confused or mistaken, over issues of salvation is well supported by numerous textual elements.

Chapter Six summarizes the study, identifies its major theses, and offers suggestions for further research.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Pearl is one of the major works of English literature of the fourteenth century. An anonymous poem in alliterative verse, Pearl is preserved in a single manuscript known as MS Cotton Nero A.x. in the British library. The manuscript contains four poems written in the Northwest Midlands dialect that are ascribed to a single, unknown poet. Two of the poems, Cleanness and Patience, are biblical homilies. Cleanness comprises a series of negative exempla from the Old and New Testaments which illustrate its theme of personal purity. Patience recounts in homiletic form the story of Jonah from the Old Testament. The final poem in the Cotton Manuscript, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, is an Arthurian romance with a Christian theme which illustrates how character and destiny shape human lives. Pearl focuses primarily upon a visionary debate which explores the nature of Christian salvation. Though the Cotton Manuscript is generally given a date of 1400, the dating of the composition of the poems is uncertain and is usually estimated as between the years 1340-1375 (Finch 3).

Scholars agree that on the basis of poetic and narrative skill, only the works of Chaucer are superior to those of the Pearl-poet in the Middle English period. In

both form and theme, Pearl and Sir Gawain are sophisticated and masterful poetic works, rich in artistic subtleties and complexities. However, the form of Pearl is most elaborate. As James Wimsatt has written:

Pearl is probably the most artful long poem in English, the poet's mastery of complex form being comparable to Dante's control of the demanding *terza rima* rather than like the skill of French contemporaries whose technical tours de force have limited aesthetic worth. The Pearl Poet's virtuosity in versifying substantially enhances the semantic richness and sensuous vitality of this work.
(122-23)

In Pearl, the poem's 1,212 lines are shaped into 101 stanzas of long-lined alliterative verse, combined with stanza linking by echo and refrain. Each group of five stanzas (six stanzas in Section XV) is distinguished through the repetition of key words and phrases which connect each closing stanzaic line to the opening line of the succeeding stanza. The same technique of concatenation then links the twenty stanza groups together. The last word of Pearl's first line, "paye," becomes the link-word of the final stanza group and closes the circle. In addition, the poet maintains a difficult stanzaic rhyme scheme: ababababbcbc.

As with Sir Gawain, the complexity of the poet's thematic concerns in Pearl does not yield to the easy moralizing of the homilies. Despite a diverse critical history, most contemporary critics agree in viewing Pearl as a poetic dream vision in

which the speaker falls asleep, imagines himself in Paradise, and greets the resurrected daughter whose death in infancy he has been mourning. The oneiric reunion of father and child (now a maiden) is structured upon a series of questions posed by the dreamer and the responses and instructions of the maiden. An examination of Pearl reveals three central issues in question in the poem: the debate clarifies the issue of how the Christian adult may gain entrance to the heavenly realm, the equality of heavenly rewards once there, and the issue of whether a young child can even obtain salvation. Structurally, scholars have often observed a tripartite division within Pearl (Vantuomo xxxv). The first four stanza groups present the grieving speaker revisiting the garden in which his pearl lies, the transition into vision, and the dreamer's description of the visionary landscape and the Pearl maiden. The next twelve stanza groups relate the dialogue and theological arguments of the dreamer and maiden. The four remaining stanza groups depict the visionary New Jerusalem and conclude with the speaker's reflections upon waking.

Since the first edition of Pearl by the Early English Text Society in 1864, the most controversial issue in its criticism has focused upon whether the poem is fundamentally elegiac or allegorical. The earliest editors and interpreters of Pearl, such as Richard Morris and Sir Israel Gollancz, viewed the work as an elegy on the death of the poet's daughter. In 1904, the theological contents of Pearl were first examined by Carleton Brown. Brown interpreted the poem's conception of the equality of heavenly rewards as heretical, and he asserted the poet's beliefs to

anticipate those of sixteenth-century Protestantism. Also in 1904, William Henry Schofield proposed the first interpretation of Pearl as an allegory exalting the purity and virginity of the maiden. Brown's and Schofield's opinions were rejected by most other scholars, although a new emphasis began to be placed on the allegorical aspects of the poem. The view of Pearl as an allegory quickly became popular and resulted in a number of new interpretations. More recent critics tend to acknowledge both elegiac and allegorical qualities in Pearl. In addition, the poem may usefully be read as a dream vision, a debate, and a Christian consolation.

Since the 1950's, the most controversial issue to emerge in Pearl criticism has focused upon the poet's portrayal of the speaker. In 1933, Rene Wellek declared the orthodoxy of the Pearl maiden's divine exposition. As a result, most subsequent critics have classified the speaker's character as either theologically ignorant or as one who rebels against the laws of God. Though many of these critics have noted the spiritual progress of the speaker in the course of the poem, other critics insist that he fails to progress. And, though some critics view the speaker with sympathy, he is most often viewed with disdain. The majority of critical studies therefore view the poem's theology as consolatory or as merely didactic in nature. Nevertheless, it is my view that many important textual details lend support to another interpretation of Pearl: that Pearl is a poem which seems intended to clarify issues of contemporary theological controversy pertaining to grace, justification, and baptism. The speaker of Pearl appears knowledgeable, but confused or mistaken in these

matters. The nature of grace and justification were widely debated topics among medieval scholastic theologians, and the history of baptism likewise includes controversy. The purpose of this study will be to examine the contemporary relevance of the poem's theological discourse as it aids in explaining the speaker's portrayal, his confusion, questions, and objections, as well as the maiden's exposition in Pearl.

This study will begin with an overview of Pearl criticism and scholarship to the present date. I will then look at the history of the Christian theology of grace and justification: the orthodox tradition originating in St. Paul and St. Augustine, the preservation of such tradition through the Middle Ages, and the attacks on the orthodox tradition in the fourteenth century by radical nominalistic theologians at Oxford. William of Ockham instituted these attacks in the 1320's, and traditional theologians like Thomas Bradwardine did not fully extinguish his heretical "Pelagian" notions of grace and justification until the 1370's. Free will, for Ockham and his followers, preceded the supernatural habit of grace or might even gain merit for an individual without grace. In Pearl, the speaker's statements regarding good works and the maiden's counsel that grace will take precedence over works in salvation both reflect an awareness of these current theological disputes.

The development of Ockham's nominalistic theology led fourteenth-century theologians to an emphasis upon those issues involving man's relationship to God: grace, free will, merit, future contingency, and the sacraments. One of the most

striking perplexities in Pearl is that the speaker is uncertain of the destiny of his baptized infant, despite the long and stable practice and theological tradition of infant baptism. The history of baptism contains some controversy over the age of the participant, with many believing that the sacrament was best postponed until the age of maturity. The absolute necessity of baptism as the initial movement toward salvation does not seem to have been questioned. It is therefore significant to learn that the Ockhamists denied the validity of the sacraments as the instruments of divine grace. Once more, such an issue appears to find its reflection in Pearl.

This study will conclude with a reading of Pearl based upon the discussion of grace, justification, and baptism in the preceding chapters. Here I will show how the poet has carefully chosen and is aware of these complex theological traditions. Pearl seems plainly an effort to resolve contemporary theological misunderstandings or disagreements originating in the fourteenth-century English disputes between Thomas Bradwardine and William of Ockham and his followers. As Bradwardine defended the Augustinian tradition against the "modern Pelagians," so the Pearl maiden's arguments will be shown to correspond to the views of both Bradwardine and Augustine. Throughout the poem, the speaker's remarks reveal him to be neither rebellious nor ignorant, as some critics have claimed, but as a devout and reasonably educated man holding a Pelagian view of God's rewards based upon good works that the maiden will soon correct with her traditional doctrine of grace. Finally, Pearl may be regarded, along with the works of Chaucer and Langland, as

evidence of the growth in lay literacy and of the emergence of a rising class of educated readers of English whose interests extended to the vernacular versions of scholastic disputations.

Chapter 2

Review of Research and Suggestions Toward a New Interpretation

In an examination of research and critical responses to Pearl, it is notable that the subject of the poem's theological debate has received far from adequate attention. Writings on Pearl to date are valuable for their treatment of such topics as verse form, imagery, symbolism, and a variety of cultural and literary influences. Like Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl is a masterful poetic work, rich in artistic subtleties and complexities. However, no formal study of the poem has succeeded in providing a unified interpretation of the poem's thematic structure that is acceptable to most critics when the theological debate and its possibilities for the characterization of the speaker are considered. As John V. Fleming has observed in his essay on the structure of Pearl:

. . . there is not very much about the internal meaning of the poem which commands universal agreement. It has been called both an elegy and a consolatio; its theology exposed as arcane and even heretical, or expounded as catechistic and eventually rather boring. Who or what

the pearl is, who the narrator is—such matters of presumably fundamental importance for any coherent exposition of the allegory are still matters very much under active discussion. (83)

Quite commonly, critics arrive at the meaning of Pearl through selective analysis of some of the poem's features at the expense of the theological debate, which I feel to be the heart of the poem. The common opinion, both explicit and implied, is that the ideas expressed by the Pearl maiden conform to orthodox Christian principles. The figure of the dreamer is typically regarded as ignorant or as one who willfully rebels against God's laws. Certainly most comments concerning the poem's theology reflect just such a view. This chapter comprises a survey of critical responses to Pearl, along with suggestions for inquiry pertaining to the content and sources of the poem's theological debate and the poet's characterization of the speaker. It is hoped that the study which follows this chapter may lead to a more unified interpretation of Pearl and to a more complete understanding of the poet's theological vision.

"Pearl has the reputation of being an exceptionally difficult poem," writes A. C. Spearing in his book-length study of the Gawain-poet (96). While the companion pieces in the Cotton Manuscript, Patience and Cleanness, function as biblical homilies, Pearl is more closely aligned with Sir Gawain, whose meaning eludes simple moralizing. Since no study of Pearl provides a detailed examination of the historical context of the theological discussion in order to explain the significance of

the dreamer's questions and the maiden's instructions, it is useful to know which matters of the poem's content have concerned scholars in the years since Pearl's publication. This section will begin by surveying the assessments so far made of the poem's theology and will then review the other major considerations in Pearl research.

Traditionally, criticism of Pearl has centered upon the attempt to classify the poem into one of a number of literary categories based upon genre or theme. Richard Morris published the first edition of Pearl for the Early English Text Society in 1864. Other early editors and interpreters of the poem, such as Bernhard ten Brink and Sir Israel Gollancz, agreed with Morris in viewing the work as an elegy on the death of the poet's daughter. "The author," states Morris in his preface, "evidently gives expression to his own sorrow for the loss of his infant child, a girl of two years old . . ." (3). For forty years, critical attention dwelled upon identifying the unknown poet, establishing a hypothetical biography for him, and in ascertaining the historical existence of the girl. The poem's debate was considered at this time to be "a mere digression," reports Rene Wellek in his 1933 survey of Pearl scholarship.

In 1904, the theological contents of Pearl were first examined by Carleton Brown. Brown's impressive article, "The Author of The Pearl, Considered in the Light of his Theological Opinions," was concerned to prove that the Pearl-poet was an ecclesiastic due to his extensive knowledge of the Bible and to his acquaintance

with the theological controversies of his age. Brown's scholarship so convincingly supports his assertion of the contemporary relevance of the issues of grace and justification, it is surprising that his brief treatment has not generated further scholarship on these topics. Brown begins by citing the interest of fourteenth-century theologians in the subjects of predestination, free will, grace, and merit. The preceding centuries, he states, had witnessed a growing inclination toward Pelagian opinions: "Emphasis was laid more and more upon man's free will and consequently upon the positive merit obtainable by right conduct, while the doctrine of Augustine, that salvation was entirely a matter of predestination and divine grace, was pushed into the background" (129). In the middle of the fourteenth century, says Brown, the English theologian Thomas Bradwardine was the first to react against this heretical movement. Bradwardine's theological treatise, De causa Dei contra Pelagium, defends his most fundamental doctrine, that salvation is bestowed wholly through God's grace and cannot be earned through any merit. For these reasons, Brown concludes that "this doctrine of grace must have been a warmly debated question in fourteenth-century theology, and not merely a doctrinal commonplace" (130).

Brown then provides a very short discussion of how closely the doctrine expounded in Pearl is in general agreement with the views of Bradwardine on grace and merit. At this point, however, the emphasis in Brown's essay shifts entirely over to a preoccupation with a search for evidence in the poem of the poet's pre-

Reformation ideology. "As we have already seen," states Brown, "Bradwardine laid new stress upon the doctrine of grace; yet he never ventured to carry it to the extent of affirming the equality of the heavenly rewards" (133-34). The claim in Pearl that the baptized infant will receive the same reward as an adult is opposed to both Bradwardine and to established church doctrine. The Church had affirmed the existence of a heavenly hierarchy since the fifth century, Brown states, when the views of the heretic Jovinian were denounced by Jerome. The works of patristic authorities like Augustine and Gregory, as well as those of eminent scholastic theologians like Aquinas and Duns Scotus, also endorse this view. "On the other hand," says Brown, "I have been unable to find a single orthodox theologian or poet, from the time of Jerome until the appearance of The Pearl, who asserts the equality of the heavenly rewards" (137). Like Jovinian, the Pearl-poet provides an exegesis of the Vineyard Parable that supports his opposition to belief in the varying gradations of heavenly blessedness. For this reason, Brown determines the Pearl-poet's approach toward Christianity to be "evangelical rather than ecclesiastical," and he subsequently searches the poem for additional proof of the poet's unorthodoxy: the lack of reference to Holy Church and the saints, the lack of regard for theological tradition, and his direct appeal to the authority of Scripture. Brown concludes his article by declaring the Pearl-poet as one very likely to have been connected to the Wycliffite movement in its earlier stages. The theological debate in

Pearl is considered to be "a most interesting and remarkable anticipation of sixteenth- century Protestantism" (145).

Brown's ideas concerning the equality of heavenly rewards in Pearl have served as the focus for nearly all subsequent studies which have called in question the orthodoxy of the poem's theology. Wellek states that Brown's conclusions were not acceptable to most other scholars of the time, but that he had succeeded in leading many of them to a new emphasis on the poem's theological debate (14). For example, Charles Osgood, in the introduction to his 1906 edition of Pearl, accepts Brown's views on the poem's theology. However, he points out that the Jovinian heresy is the only exception in a body of works by the Pearl-poet that are otherwise, so far as it has been established, thoroughly orthodox. Osgood then argues that such an instance of heresy could have occurred as a reaction to the overwhelming experience of grief suffered by the poet upon the loss of his child. This view, in turn, supports Osgood's contention that Pearl should be read as an elegy.

Jefferson B. Fletcher seems to have settled the issue regarding orthodoxy and the equality of heavenly rewards in Pearl to the satisfaction of most scholars since Brown. Fletcher's 1921 article entitled "The Allegory of the Pearl" offers strong arguments to counter Brown's interpretation. Fletcher flatly rejects Brown's reading of Pearl and the heavenly democracy he insists upon: "The presumption is against a devout fourteenth-century Catholic acting the heretic; and if he were to do so, he would certainly try to bolster up his position as strongly as possible" (17).

Instead, says Fletcher, the poem clearly indicates an orthodox view of distinctions of rank among the saved in the following lines from the dreamer's vision of the New Jerusalem: "Ryȝt byfore Godeȝ chayere / And þe fowre besteȝ þat hym obes / And þe aldermen so sadde of chere" (884-86). These details, Fletcher notes, are taken directly from Revelation 4:10 and 14:3. Theologians in the Middle Ages commonly agreed that the heavenly elders represented the twelve sons of Jacob, or the patriarchs, and the twelve apostles of Christ. Thus, Fletcher establishes that there is indeed a hierarchy of rewards in Pearl, although it is not a point of special emphasis and the condition of heavenly joy and blessing is common to all.

Several years after Fletcher's article, Walter Kirkland Greene attempted to divert scholarship to another area of theological interest in Pearl. In "The Pearl—A New Interpretation," Greene classifies the poem as a homily, along with Patience and Cleanness, and he argues that the theological debate in Pearl, which many yet regard as a digression, gives straightforward expression to the poem's purpose of "illustrating the doctrine of Divine Grace" and of advising readers how they might win that grace (815). Although the largest part of Greene's article is spent in refuting arguments for elegiac and allegorical readings of Pearl, he adds his own observations on various facets of the poem's theological discourse which he rightly believes should not be ignored in discussions of the work. First, Greene points out that three hundred lines at the center of Pearl are devoted to expounding the doctrine of divine grace. Also, through refrain in the eleventh stanza group, the

Pearl maiden repeatedly reminds the speaker that "þe grace of God is gret innoghe." The Parable of the Vineyard is given an exegesis by the maiden which affirms her ideas of grace. And, finally, says Greene, the vision itself of the deceased child raised to the status of queen in heaven reinforces the centrality of the theme of divine grace in Pearl (818). Greene states that the debate is the poet's device for imparting religious knowledge, and he views the role of the dreamer as existing solely to elicit the instruction of the maiden. Greene then expresses his agreement with Brown that the author of Pearl was likely an ecclesiastic, and he sums up his article in stating simply that the poet was "particularly interested in the doctrine of divine grace" (827).

Rene Wellek's influential study of 1933, "The Pearl: An Interpretation of the Middle English Poem," is notable for its detailed summary of research on the poem and is still often referred to by critics of the work. Wellek begins the article with his observation that "the history of the Pearl research shows that . . . opinions vary with almost every writer on the question" (10). After surveying with dissatisfaction the state of research on Pearl, Wellek undertakes to analyze what he judges as the three most vital interpretive questions among scholars: the dilemma between elegy and allegory, the symbolism of the pearl, and the theological meaning of the maiden's instructions to the dreamer. On the poem's theology, Wellek reviews the arguments of Brown and states his disagreement with most of Brown's conclusions. The function of the vision in Pearl, asserts Wellek, is not only to declare the

possibility of the baptized child's salvation, a child too young to have served God, but also the possibility that the child is included among the host which follows the Lamb. The debate should not be dismissed as an irrelevant digression, he says, for it "reinforces the vision by arguments" (24).

In support of this view of Pearl, Wellek examines the overall orthodoxy of the poem's theology in reference to the opinions of several Church authorities, the most important of whom was Saint Augustine. Augustine was explicit in numerous works as to the grace of baptized children. Doubt may arise, Wellek suggests, due to his distinction between two types of grace: "gratia prima," or free grace, and "gratia secunda," or grace proportional to merit. Augustine formed the doctrine which established that all children participate in original sin, inherited through Adam, and that the sacrament of baptism imparts an awareness of God's free grace and a belief in His Son. "Exactly the same view is also held by Saint Chrysostomus and other fathers of the church," states Wellek, "but apparently in the course of the Middle Ages the salvation of baptized children does not seem to have been received quite without question, though the prevalent view held to the kindly theory of the fathers" (26). Significantly, Wellek raises the issue of whether Pearl may reflect contemporary disagreements or misunderstandings regarding baptism. Nevertheless, his sole concern is to attest the poet's orthodoxy. He states that Pope Clement V voiced his agreement with Augustine's doctrine of the salvation of children at the council at Vienne in 1311 and that Saint Bernard of Clairvaux also gave support to

this view. Such evidence is sufficient, Wellek believes, "to show that our poet was completely in the line of orthodox teaching and that he lived at a time when doubt seemed still to be possible about this question." For this reason alone, Pearl is decidedly "un-Protestant," Wellek argues, especially when compared to the views of radical Protestant sects like the Anabaptists who denied the efficacy of infant baptism. As for the question of the equality of heavenly rewards in the poem, he agrees with Fletcher that the distinction of rank is plainly made, although not emphasized, by the poet. Thus, Wellek finds the theology of Pearl to be completely in line with orthodox Christian teaching, and he proposes that the dreamer's doubts are the poet's own which he discards in consequence of the renewed hope that his vision brings him.

In the years since Wellek's article, the discussions of Pearl which concentrate upon its theology have given further support to the view of the poem as completely orthodox. The charges of Jovinian heresy have essentially been laid to rest, while no other aspects of the poem's theology have attracted such attention as a matter for critical and scholarly debate. In 1940, James Sledd published a note addressing the meaning of "rewarde" in line 604 of Pearl. The poem states that in God's kingdom each person receives the same payment "wheper lyttel oþer much be hys rewarde." Sledd argues for "regard" as a likely meaning for "rewarde"; and he backs up Fletcher's interpretation of a hierarchy among the saved, stating: "The poet possibly held that all the blessed are rewarded alike, since they are all in the presence of God,

but that they are not rewarded equally, since they differ in their spiritual capacity to realize His presence" (381). In subsequent notes, Mary Vincent Hillman and Marie Hamilton both agree with Sledd, pointing out parallels to this idea in the works of Dante and Walter Hilton and citing other textual details of the poem. D. W. Robertson's 1950 study, "The 'Heresy' of The Pearl," then appears to have finally settled the matter of the poet's orthodoxy for most scholars to the present day. Robertson offers yet additional evidence to support the view of Fletcher by drawing upon the Parable of the Vineyard in Pearl. The poet's interpretation of the parable is comparable to Saint Augustine's interpretation in his Sermon LXXXVII¹, says Robertson. Those who enter the vineyard late are baptized infants who have had no time to serve. Augustine emphasizes that such children will receive equal reward, that is, salvation, with all the other laborers in the vineyard. Robertson also points out that Augustine believed that among the saved in heaven some would indeed shine more distinctly than others. "The poet's general interpretation of the parable is thus not an "inversion" of Saint Augustine's," Robertson states. "Nor are his remarks concerning heavenly reward contrary to Saint Augustine's" (294).

Laurence Eldredge, in his survey of Pearl research for the years 1933-1973, notes that only one scholar since Robertson has given attention to the issues raised by Brown. Takero Oiji argues that the Jovinian heresy could possibly be discerned in the poem due to the poet's lack of emphasis on the distinctions of heavenly reward. However, Oiji's opinions did not serve to recreate controversy on this

point, and Eldredge finds that “no one has considered the problem of the poem’s orthodoxy again since Oiji” (179). Eldredge himself gives a conventional view of the theological content of Pearl as advancing a sacramental vision of grace: “The poet makes this clear in his earlier discussion of grace: the water of baptism and the blood of the Eucharist are responsible for man’s being saved, not any claims on his part whether of righteousness or innocence” (181). Such a view is, of course, entirely consistent with the medieval orthodox view of the sacraments.

From 1973 to the present, no critical controversies have emerged which challenge the basic view on the nature and interpretation of Pearl’s theological debate. The Pearl maiden is universally considered as doctrinally correct in her instruction to the dreamer. The perceived didacticism of this section of the poem has even diminished Pearl as a work of art for some readers. In The Art of the Gawain-Poet (1978), W. A. Davenport states that the Pearl maiden is a figure who “partakes of divine reason and law, in representing the Christian faith and doctrine which the narrator cannot bring to bear on his grief, though he knows he ought to” (37). In Davenport’s view, the debate with its closed, conventional doctrine is an unfortunate contrast to the poem’s imaginative introduction, with its development of the dreamer in depicting the human experience of grief, along with an element of spiritual adventure. Davenport advises others to read Pearl as a fusion of two disparate works: “If one rejects the double standards as too complex, then one has

to accept that the poem is inconsistent and the work of a poet too ingenious and too complicated in outlook to reconcile the different impulses of his mind" (54).

A short survey of critical commentary since 1978 will affirm the general agreement that exists on the orthodoxy of the Pearl maiden's doctrine. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron write in the introduction to their 1979 edition of the complete works of the Pearl-poet that the "Maiden expounds the essentials of Christian doctrine and is encouraging the Dreamer to change the values by which he lives . . ." (32). A. D. Horgan finds several crucial passages of the Pearl maiden's exposition to be firmly based upon the epistles of Paul in the New Testament. Horgan summarizes Paul's views on grace and justification, supports the argument with references and quotations from Romans, and judges that Paul's ideas are "closely similar to the argument deployed by the Pearl-poet, as he continues the maiden's speech . . ." (178). Several scholars, such as Denise Baker, have suggested that the dreamer errs in confusing earthly with heavenly standards of justice. The purpose of the debate in Pearl, she states, is the same purpose for which scholastic theologians employed the use of dialectic: " . . . to affirm the integrity and unity of the Church's teachings by demonstrating that the contradictions are only apparent" (263). Baker states that the Pearl maiden succeeds in rectifying the dreamer's misunderstandings by "reversing the Dreamer's categories" and teaching him that the true way to attain grace is through the sacraments. More recently, Lawrence M. Clopper has expressed the view that the

Pearl maiden brings the dreamer to an awareness of righteousness by "opening the scriptures to show their concordance (a typological strategy), as a consequence of which he can make the transitus to a reading of John's Apocalypse" (231). And Sandra Pierson Prior states that "the general intellectual climate of the poem is not especially arcane or complicated" and that the dreamer is "an ordinary Christian who has a problem and who has gotten a few things wrong" (29).

In contrast to the agreement of critics on the orthodoxy of the maiden's theological instructions in Pearl, critics disagree enormously in their interpretation of the dreamer and in their level of regard for him. Some sympathize with or pity the dreamer greatly for the loss of his child and for the tormented grief he endures, although at times he has been censured for indulging himself in such grief. He is also weak, it has been stated, for being unable to overcome his sorrow through the discourse with the maiden. It is sometimes expressed that he is appallingly ignorant in his knowledge of theological matters or that his comments in the poem reveal his foolishness. Some critics even vilify him, characterizing him as rebellious to God's laws, and as angry, carping, lacking in true faith, and jealous of the Pearl maiden for her status in heaven.

Prior to the 1950s, scholarship on Pearl finds readers largely sympathetic to the figure of the dreamer. As the poem was so often read as an elegy at this time, such commentary would expectedly view the dreamer with compassion as he mourns the death of a beloved child. Critics who insisted upon an allegorical, rather

than an elegiac, interpretation of the poem, tended to focus their discussion upon the symbolism of the pearl and the figure of the maiden. However, it must be pointed out that the character of the dreamer in Pearl was never treated as the subject of any detailed examination at all until Charles Moorman's seminal essay of 1955, entitled "The Role of the Narrator in 'Pearl.'" Moorman's keen perceptions regarding the dreamer and his function in Pearl led to a new awareness and critical emphasis on the dreamer's character and his development over the course of the poem.

Before Moorman published his essay, the most controversial issue in Pearl criticism had focused on whether the poem was fundamentally elegiac or allegorical. In the first half of the twentieth century, a number of new allegorical readings of Pearl began to compete with the nineteenth-century critical tradition that had claimed the work as an elegy. In 1904, the same year Carleton Brown wrote his article on Pearl's theology, William Henry Schofield proposed the first interpretation of the poem as an allegory exalting the purity and virginity of the maiden. In "The Nature and Fabric of The Pearl," Schofield maintains that "The Pearl is not in the least elegiac or autobiographical, as hitherto regularly regarded by scholars and critics, and that the conclusions as to the author's life and domestic sorrows . . . are wholly without foundation" (154). Schofield discusses the symbolism of the pearl in relation to medieval lapidaries which stressed the pearl's whiteness and purity. He then discusses how two thirteenth-century vernacular works, the Love-Rune of Thomas de Hales, and Hali Meidenhad, an alliterative homily, seem to have

provided a model for the Pearl-poet's conception of the heavenly maiden. For these reasons, Schofield asserts that "no one can, I think, feel much doubt what the poet intended the Pearl to signify. He imagined her . . . as a representative of the brides of the Lamb in paradise, a symbol of 'Clean Maidenhood'" (174). Schofield believed that the debate in Pearl was a device to introduce the allegory. His conclusions were quickly dismissed by other critics, so quickly, in fact, that he soon composed another essay to bolster support for his previous findings. However unsuccessful he may have been, Schofield's ideas initiated a new critical and scholarly interest in the allegorical aspects of the poem. The view of Pearl as an allegory soon became popular and resulted in a number of new interpretations. Even many who still held firmly to the elegiac interpretation of the poem, such as Charles Osgood, yet conceded the existence of "certain allegorical elements" (14).

The most notable allegorical readings of Pearl can be summed up briefly. Writing in 1918, Robert Max Garrett stated that the pearl represents the main sacrament of the Catholic mass, the Eucharist. Garrett cites the poet's explicit reference to the Eucharist in the closing stanza of Pearl, and he explains how the poem teaches that only in this manner may one be united with the true pearl, the mystical body of Christ. A few years later, Jefferson Fletcher exposed the mistaken dilemma of critics who assumed that Pearl must be strictly categorized as either elegy or allegory. He points out that the allegorical interpretations of the poem can be granted without denying the more literal interpretation of the pearl as a child. In

his study, Fletcher also gives a perceptive statement on the symbolism of the pearl, a statement with which most later critics agree: "A medieval symbol of this kind is like a crystal of many facets. Though each facet may reflect but one object, the symbol as a whole may at the same time reflect many objects" (21). Fletcher proposes that the pearl represents both innocence and the Virgin Mary, yet he acknowledges that these ideas alone do not go far in exhausting the pearl's symbolic possibilities. Rene Wellek stated his assent to Fletcher's arguments in his survey of research. Exploring the matter of symbolism further, Wellek judges that there is no simple identification for the pearl, and he advances a number of possibilities: the pearl as representing the earthly child, the visionary girl in heaven, the Lamb, the blessing of God, and the pearl of the parable.

Despite such observations on the multifarious nature of the poem's symbolism, scholarship on Pearl yet produced a number of distinct new allegorical readings. Sister Mary Madeleva devoted a book to her allegorical interpretation, entitled Pearl: A Study in Spiritual Dryness. Finding no proof in the poem that the poet had a daughter, Madeleva denies entirely the girl's existence and argues for a view of Pearl as spiritual autobiography, a study in "interior desolation." Such works, states Madeleva, examine the spiritual experiences and consolation of the individual and were commonly composed in this age. She discusses numerous examples of writings in this tradition, such as those of Henry Suso, John Tauler, Thomas a Kempis, Richard Rolle, and Juliana of Norwich; and she notes the pattern

of development they share: desolation, vision, consideration of God's grace, Christ's passion, and complete surrender to the divine will (38-58). The maiden in Pearl is thus said to be the personification of the narrator's own soul, and the poem ends in a moment of purification of his formerly impetuous spirit. Mary Vincent Hillman offered another allegorical reading of the poem as an exemplum of the deadly sin of covetousness (10). She finds the grief of the dreamer to be wicked on three accounts: it is opposed to reason, to Christian doctrine, and because it is purposely indulged. For these faults, the dreamer is awakened from his vision, rather than allowed to remain in heaven, and the reader is instructed to renounce the love of temporal things.

D. W. Robertson set forth one of the most prominent allegorical interpretations of Pearl in "The Pearl as a Symbol." Robertson determined a four-level allegory for Pearl based upon the multiple levels of meaning found in traditional scriptural exegesis: the literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical. The pearl is literally a precious stone. Allegorically, as the maiden, the pearl signifies baptized children who will attain salvation through perfect innocence. Morally or tropologically, the pearl symbolizes those who regain innocence through penance. Anagogically, the pearl represents heavenly life in the presence of God. Robertson believes that the Pearl-poet desired for his audience to be instructed as to how they might win redemption. He states:

The allegorical value presents a clear picture of the type of innocence; the tropological value shows how such innocence may be attained; and the anagogical value explains the reward for innocence. To these meanings the literal value serves as a unifying focal point in which the other values are implied to one who reads the book of God's Work on the level of the sentence. (26)

In another well known study, Wendell Stacey Johnson suggested that Pearl may be read as an allegory of the sacraments of baptism and penance. Johnson focuses on the contrast in the poem between the nature of earth and heaven, and he discusses the poem's abundant imagery. A great divergence is clearly seen when the imagery of the earth and garden, with its emphasis upon dust, vegetation, and mutability, is compared to the imagery of paradise and the New Jerusalem, with its emphasis upon light, brilliance, and eternity as symbolized by the precious stones. Johnson says that a third type of imagery emerges to unite the two worlds: water imagery. In the form of a stream and a river in heaven, the image of water reinforces the traditional symbols of water and blood explicitly mentioned by the maiden in her speech. Johnson states, "In the water and blood, liturgical symbols . . . drawn from the Bible, the poet imagines the connection between heaven and earth. The link is the saving blood of Christ symbolized in the saving water of baptism and the blood of the Eucharist" (48).

Finally Marie Padgett Hamilton advanced a reading of Pearl as an allegory representing a "Catholic Paradise Lost and Regained" which also centered, like Johnson's, upon the sacraments of baptism and penance. Drawing support from St. Augustine and St. Thomas, Hamilton argues that the dreamer represents the individual with the pearl of eternal life in infancy through baptism. Now past the age of innocence, the dreamer may redeem his right to the jewel only through an active faith in God and in obedience to His will, chiefly by the renunciation of earthly desires. Hamilton points out that the maiden in the poem instructs the dreamer that he must purchase his pearl "maskelles." Thus, if the dreamer is not in a state of grace, he must restore his lost innocence through penance. The reference to the Eucharist in the poem's closing denotes the prime ritual through which a state of grace may be regained. "The final stanza of Pearl," states Hamilton, "announces the triumphant culmination to which the poem has tended from its opening line" (57). The dreamer, having learned like St. Paul and Dante that true peace may be gotten through complete submission to God's will, newly commits himself to God and re-enters into a state of grace and friendship with Him.

Through the mid-1950s, research into the thematic structure of Pearl continued to center upon elegiac and allegorical approaches, with interpretations almost as numerous as the commentators themselves. "No wonder the privilege of private interpretation was granted, not long ago, by a Continental scholar, to all readers of Pearl," stated John Conley in 1955, referring to Fernand Mossé's remark

in his Handbook of Middle English that all readers should be at liberty to give Pearl the interpretation of their choice (52). While new allegorical readings of the poem continued to appear, two highly regarded scholars yet supported the view of Pearl as an elegy. E. V. Gordon, in his 1953 edition of Pearl, observed that the growing number of allegorical studies had served to deepen the reader's appreciation for the poem's uniqueness and complexity by bringing out the allegorical and symbolic elements within. However, Gordon states that to be properly considered an allegory, the complete narrative and all important details must work together consistently to this end. Though noting the existence in the poem of some minor allegories, Gordon argues that "there are a number of precise details in Pearl that cannot be subordinated to any general allegorical interpretation . . ." (xii). Gordon cites many textual details which substantiate his view of the poem as an elegy, and he declares that "the whole theological argument that follows assumes the infancy of the child when she left this world" (xiii). As for Pearl's doctrinal theme, Gordon states that no particular understanding of theology is needed: the maiden is an authoritative figure who dispels the doubts and misunderstandings of the father. For more on Pearl's theology, readers are referred in footnotes to the studies of Wellek and Brown.

Dorothy Everett also granted to Pearl an elegiac reading, comparing the poem to Lycidas in her essay and exploring affinities in the two works. She states that both share an emphasis on personal loss, spiritual and moral reflection

pertaining to that loss, and later develop into awareness and acceptance of God's will. Both poems are crafted with a high level of conscious artistry, and both rely upon highly emotive language. Everett allows that there are many differences between the poems, while she insists they remain "essentially of the same order" (85). Everett then gives an overview of Pearl, commenting on stanza form, courtly language, rhetorical devices, and the poet's use of many diverse sources. Citing the lack of critical agreement on the poem's meaning, Everett devotes a few paragraphs to the theological debate in Pearl. She refers briefly to Wellek's research, to his comments that child baptism might have been controversial in the poet's age and that Bradwardine's treatise on grace may indicate a fundamental interest in the matter, as suggested by Carleton Brown. Even so, because the maiden's doctrine of grace is in accord with Church teaching, Everett concludes that Wellek was correct to maintain Pearl's theology as completely orthodox: "The intellectual and spiritual struggle presented in the poem is not waged against orthodox beliefs; rather, it is a struggle to accept the teaching of the Church by one who wishes to do so, but is beset by doubts" (95).

The shifting of Pearl studies away from the elegy-allegory debate began in 1955 when an important new article on the poem closely examined the function of both the dreamer and the theological discussion. In "The Role of the Narrator in Pearl," Charles Moorman argues persuasively that the best approach to interpreting the poem is to disregard questions of allegory and symbolism and to focus, not on

the maiden, but on the dreamer instead: "For whatever else the poem may be . . . it is, first of all, a fiction presented from a clearly defined and wholly consistent point of view" (104). Moorman perceptively notes that Pearl begins and ends with the narrator standing alone; that it is he who controls the poem's discourse by introducing subjects and asking questions; and that both the maiden's doctrine and the vision of the New Jerusalem are presented for his profit. It is through the theological debate, Moorman believes, that the narrator begins to resolve the mysteries of death and to accept the loss of his child. Therefore, all theological elements in the poem—the parable, the discussion of grace, the innocents in heaven—are central to the poem's purpose, rather than digressive in character. "The theme and the poetic method of Pearl," states Moorman, "are thus the theme and poetic method of most elegies, the acceptance, through suffering and revelation, of death as a part of the universal plan" (121). Despite Moorman's participation in the elegy-allegory question, his study marks a turning point in Pearl scholarship toward new attention to the poet's characterization of the dreamer, the most controversial issue to the present date in Pearl studies.

In 1955 another important essay was published which, like Moorman's, laid new stress upon the portrayal of the dreamer. In "Pearl and a Lost Tradition," John Conley also argued for a central focus on the narrator. In this study, Conley discusses the poem in relation to the tradition of consolation. William Henry Schofield first noted the parallels between Pearl and The Consolation of Philosophy

of Boethius, a popular medieval philosophical meditation; and he determined The Consolation to have had a certain influence on Pearl ("Nature" 175-79). Conley follows up on Schofield's brief remarks, expanding the analysis, and declaring Pearl to be an example of a Christian consolatio. Conley finds Pearl analogous to The Consolation on the bases of theme, situation, and roles of the characters. The narrator, he states, is revealed to be a man of folly: "Like Boethius of The Consolation, as well as like Saint Augustine of The Confessions and Troilus of Troilus and Criseyde, the narrator has mistaken false for true happiness" (63). Through grace, the narrator learns to renounce earthly love, a false and mutable source of bliss, for the true and immutable love of God. Conley thus states the theme of Pearl to be consistent with the Christian tradition regarding the nature of happiness.

In response to the insights of Moorman and Conley, many new studies of Pearl began to place emphasis upon the dreamer's characterization and his spiritual progress or lack of progress as the poem unfolds. Such studies necessarily include, if they do not emphasize, an interpretation of the theological debate. Questions of elegy and allegory were eventually minimized, so that by 1970 the majority of scholars and critics would seem to agree with A. C. Spearing's opinions in his critical study of the Gawain-poet. Spearing finds more merit to reside in the allegorical studies of Pearl, for he views elegiac readings as doing little to increase appreciation for the poem as a literary work. However, the large number of

disparate allegorical readings is itself problematic: “. . . indeed, the very profusion of proposed allegorical interpretations may be helpful in reminding us how rich in meaning the pearl is, so long as we are willing to see the richness as suggestive rather than rigidly systematic” (135). In this study, Spearing also affirms the symbolism of the pearl as disclosing itself gradually. “The pearl image is not static but dynamic,” he remarks (137). Most subsequent studies tend to acknowledge both elegiac and allegorical qualities in Pearl, while focusing discussion upon the dreamer’s plight or the meaning of the poem’s theology or symbolism. Many excellent studies also suggest sources and their possible influence on Pearl’s meaning. Certainly, the collective body of critical writings and scholarship to the present date on Pearl is a testament to the poem’s greatness as a literary work, although a unified reading has not been widely agreed upon. Despite the apparent unanimity regarding the maiden’s doctrinal speech as orthodox, the characterization of the dreamer has replaced the elegy-allegory issue as the central source of dispute among readers.

No matter the approach, most commentators since 1955 give some attention to the poem’s theological debate and the function and development of the dreamer. Therefore, to illustrate the controversy which has emerged, a number of scholarly and critical treatments shall be summarized here in approximately chronological order, emphasizing the diverse views of the dreamer’s portrayal. Robert Ackerman compared some of the symbolic concepts in Pearl to other medieval doctrinal

treatises in "The Pearl-Maiden and the Penny," commenting on the dreamer's "peevisish surprise" when learning that a child could be included in the heavenly company of those who follow the Lamb (156). In 1967, Patricia M. Kean published her critical analysis of the poem's themes in The Pearl: An Interpretation, a work quite often referred to in other studies. Focusing on the poem's dramatic development and the personal experience of the narrator, Kean explores his reasoning and shifting states of mind. The poem begins, she says, with the portrayal of the grief of the narrator, who quickly progresses to a mood of rebellious excitement in his debate of theological issues with the maiden. The dreamer wishes to cheat death: he concludes too eagerly that the maiden is yet living and that he can join her. When the dialogue ends, the narrator remains unconvinced of what he has heard, although finally he must acknowledge the truth. He is returned to the garden, the site of his original refusal to heed the voice of reason. At this point, there are indications that the narrator has not moved beyond the stage of his earlier grief and disappointment, even though he has expressed his resignation to God's will. States Kean, ". . . Pearl is not a poem which builds up to a triumphal climax, but one which ends with the failure—the partial failure at least—of the main character to achieve what he sets out to do" (229). The theme of Pearl relates closely to that of Sir Gawain, for both works end with the disappointment and disillusionment of the protagonists who are left "sadder but wiser" men for their mistakes. The poet, Kean says, "writes, above all, of the facts and difficulties of the Christian life as they

present themselves to imperfect individuals . . . ” (242). The dreamer’s failure signifies a basic moral problem in Christian belief of the human will in conflict with reason, and Pearl suggests to readers the need to accept without question the divine scheme of the universe and to give over the full possession of one’s soul to God.

Rejecting this view of the dreamer as one who fails to progress, Louis Blenkner searches for the unifying concept in Pearl, asserting that “the psychic change wrought in the dreamer is of central importance . . . ” (221). Pearl, says Blenkner, is comparable to Dante’s Comedy in that both are intricately structured accounts of spiritual journeys which conclude in mystical ecstasy. He points out, “The three stages of that adventure correspond to the Augustinian division of the rational soul into three faculties—memory, understanding, and will—which furnish the basis for the theologian’s traditional threefold division of the soul’s ascent to God . . . ” (228). At this time, Charles Moorman published a book-length critical study which expanded his previous discussion of Pearl’s narrator. Here, Moorman assesses the maiden’s theological arguments as solely a dramatic device through which the dreamer resolves the paradox that he struggles with and learns to accept the fact of death: “Thus the terms of the central episode of the debate—grace and merit—are of no great consequence in themselves, but have meaning within the dramatic framework of the poem only as they relate to the attitudes which they serve to reveal . . . ” (56-57). Reading Pearl as a Christian consolation, Ian Bishop subscribes to Moorman’s emphasis on the dreamer’s development, as he too

observes a central movement in the poem from the "mourner's rebellious grief to a state of hopeful resignation" (24).

A. C. Spearing has offered one of the more sensitive critical interpretations of the figure of the dreamer in Pearl. Like Patience and Purity, says Spearing, Pearl examines the relationship between the human and the divine orders, although the poet reverses the fundamental scheme in Pearl. Instead of God descending to intervene on earth, the dreamer ascends to the divine kingdom. In sympathetic support for the dreamer, Spearing states that "being merely human, not, like the Maiden, transmuted into an aspect of that purity, he cannot be anything but inadequate to the role he is called on to play" (105). However, in acknowledging the complexity of the dreamer's portrayal, Spearing also detects the flaw of pride: "Part of his inadequacy is not to recognize his inadequacy" (105). This fact accounts for the dreamer's readiness to argue against the maiden's theological statements. "In consequence," Spearing explains, "the Dreamer, like Jonah, becomes a comic figure, struggling in vain to dominate a world which is not his and which he does not understand" (106). The humanity of the dreamer, for Spearing, finally adds to, rather than detracts from, the appeal of Pearl as a literary creation.

Robert F. Sutton states that the theme of Pearl is the Christian doctrine of grace, as clearly emphasized by the poem's structure, debate, and the characterization of the dreamer. Sutton describes the dreamer as one who "vacillates in his reactions, who is naive and unable to analyze his experiences . . ."

(89). However, Sutton praises him at the poem's closing for his progression from religious skepticism to faith. Charles Muscatine views the dreamer as a representative of fallen human nature, and he agrees that the dreamer awakens to new knowledge of religious truth in the course of Pearl's narrative:

This awakening, the imperfection of the dreamer's understanding and of his self-control, are essential to the meaning of the poem, which comprehends something of the pathetic inadequacy of ordinary mortal thought and feeling to grasp the full nature of God's love, God's grace, God's kingdom. (55)

Ann Douglas Wood offered a radically divergent interpretation of the dreamer's character in her 1973 examination of the Vineyard Parable in Pearl. Wood asserts that the dreamer's complaints to the maiden in Pearl are meant to identify him with the angry early-comers to the vineyard in Christ's parable in Matthew. Wood briefly mentions a number of the many glosses on the parable, beginning with Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory through to the later medieval period. Such tradition, she states, along with an anonymous Middle English sermon, support her view of the parable as a conventional exemplum of envy. In addition, she says that the early-comers were sometimes viewed as partially virtuous for their industry and that the parable also carries an implied warning against sloth. These ironic associations are brought to bear upon the dreamer in Pearl and reveal him to be both envious and spiritually slothful. Wood is critical of modern readers who

“over-sympathize” with the dreamer, and she catalogs his other, myriad flaws that include obsession with his loss, preoccupation with his own pain, self-indulgent grief and pity, greed, self-righteousness, argumentativeness, and incomprehension. Furthermore, his abuse of God’s grace brings him close to blasphemy. In the final section of Pearl, the dreamer refuses to accept the maiden’s lesson and foolishly attempts to cross the stream and take what is not his. It is only with the loss of his vision, states Wood, that the dreamer gains true understanding and can rejoin the church as an active and unresenting laborer.

W. A. Davenport discerns two separate voices or personalities embodied in the speaker in Pearl. The first is the narrator who speaks movingly of his sorrow and who is intelligent and honest in both opening and closing sections of the poem. The second is the dreamer who, like “an old, half-witted sheep, is insensitive and stupid, and sinks to bewildering depths of bathos in his questions to the Maiden” (24). Davenport dislikes the unpoetic vision episode and its conventional doctrine in Pearl, preferring instead the lyrical exploration of grief and its resolution which frames the vision. He states that the dreamer’s ignorance presents a contrast to the maiden’s knowledge and that the theological dialogue in the poem is important only insofar as it illustrates the dreamer’s capacity for receiving instruction. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron agree that the dreamer in Pearl is ignorant, as well as rebellious, opinionated, headstrong, and self-pitying. Nevertheless, this portrayal helps readers to identify and sympathize with him, especially since his lack of

understanding derives from grief and the inherent difficulty of the theological concepts involved. Andrew and Waldron contend the dreamer is only “nominally a Christian” when the poem opens but later enters into a new state of faithfulness and submission to the will of God (35-36).

S. L. Clark and Julian Wasserman have argued that the dreamer’s failure to understand the maiden’s theology is due to his excessively earthbound and literal-minded intelligence. Such literalism even destroys his vision, since he rushes into the river. However, the maiden’s exposition aids the dreamer in his progression toward “understanding Heavenly reality rather than earthly appearance” (9). Theodore Bogdanos discusses the poet’s preoccupation with religious paradox in his book-length critique of Pearl’s symbolism. He agrees that the mentality of the dreamer is too earthbound and that the maiden’s speech assists the dreamer to new faith and consolation. Yet Bogdanos believes the dreamer’s struggle for understanding is elevated by the appearance of Christ in his vision: “Limited spiritual perception is not unique to him but is presented by the poet as part of the human condition—what Christ in his compassion understood and responded to by entering that condition” (85).

William Vantuomo states that the rebelliousness and pride of the dreamer in Pearl link the poem thematically to Patience with its character of Jonas. Like Jonas, the dreamer is chastened and humbled through his encounter with the divine. In Vantuomo’s view, the theme of “humility’s battle to subdue pride” dominates the

four poems of the Cotton Manuscript (xxxi). Mary Flowers Braswell expresses a similar opinion, though she interprets Pearl as a penitential text. The dreamer's proud nature, she says, must be reformed through a "catechetical process at the hands of the maiden" (50). Lynn Staley Johnson reads both elegiac and consolatory themes in Pearl, and she suggests the character of the dreamer to be modeled on that of Mary Magdalene in her encounter with the resurrected Christ on Easter morning. Based on the four Gospel accounts, Mary Magdalene receives counsel from Christ and is directed back into the world. Like this tale, states Johnson, the theme of Pearl also warns readers of the dangers of excessive emotionalism and despair: "As the poem implies, emotion on its own is vulnerable to self-involvement, ultimately to despair; and the believer must learn to live by faith, not by touch" (175).

Rosalind Field writes in her study of the visionary New Jerusalem in Pearl that the dreamer is self-centered and obsessed with his personal loss. He not only refuses to accept death but is outraged by it, and he learns nothing in his "persistent interrogation" of the maiden. His failure to respond to the vision is further emphasized when he is distracted by the sight of the maiden even as he is shown a vision of Christ. The dreamer's waking reflection, however, reveals a change in his longing to be "a humble member of Christ's household" (16). Michael Olmert expresses his view of Pearl's purpose as centering upon "the instruction of a neophyte" (397). The dreamer's bafflement is due to a willful rejection of the faith he accepts intellectually. To negate his rebellion, the dreamer learns that he must

accept Christian teaching in the trusting manner of a child, a point stressed by the maiden's exposition of grace and innocence.

In the 1990s, critical interpretations of the Pearl dreamer have not much altered from the basic views emphasizing his pride, ignorance, and rebellion. Sarah Stanbury argues that the dreamer continues to dwell upon the bitterness of his grief in the poem's last stanzas and that the poem fails to convince readers that a change has been affected. "Even at the end," she states, "the narrator still seems to believe that he could have stayed in the visionary realm; he still is unwilling to accept that the condition of living in the world is a condition of exile" (32). Therefore, in her view, Pearl does not succeed in its consolatory efforts. Frances Fast says that the dreamer is "admittedly a bit of a fool" (371). His deficiencies are exposed as he repeatedly falters and makes mistakes. However, examples of his persistent self-mockery and abasement reflect his growing humility in the course of the poem, especially as he begins to grasp doctrinal truth. Though the maiden's exasperated attempts meet with limited success, the dreamer does express comfort at poem's end in a new awareness of his inclusion in Christ's family. Fast believes the poet may be playfully suggesting the reassuring notion that even such fools as the dreamer are incorporated into God's realm.

More recently, Gregory Roper has shown that the structure of the dreamer's spiritual progress in Pearl corresponds to the structure of the sacrament of penance set forth in medieval penitential handbooks. The dreamer must confront and redeem

his corrupted nature through the only means possible, the Christian sacrament that is “centrally concerned with recognizing and reforming one’s divided, damaged, sinful self” (164). Once reformed, the dreamer receives both consolation and new knowledge of how he, like the maiden, may transcend death. And finally, Sandra Pierson Prior rejects readings of Pearl which claim that the dreamer attains a new level of enlightenment. The debate ends, she says, with little indication that the dreamer has advanced to the maiden’s point of view. As for the poem’s theology, Prior advises readers that “a bit of ignorance can be an asset, since it places the reader in much the same position as the Dreamer, who seems to be quite poorly schooled in the theology of salvation” (29). Later, she adds, “The basic truths concerning the Crucifixion and its saving grace are probably the most central ones of Christianity. The Jeweller should know them without being told . . .” (42). Apart from being uninformed, Prior characterizes the dreamer as stupid, selfish, and willful. Perceptive readers learn through the negative example he sets of the sinful desires and improper perspectives that ensnare him in grief and confusion even as the poem ends. Prior sums up: “For the Pearl poet, human beings are a pretty sorry lot: weak and foolish creatures, who, even when they know, when they have been told, and they have read, and they have seen the truth of Christianity, do not give up their mortal longings and misunderstandings” (44).

In reviewing the historically diverse body of scholarship and criticism on Pearl, a reader is likely to ask whether another literary work has ever resulted in a

set of more varied interpretations. At times, critical opinions contradict each other to such an extent that one has the feeling the critics are not even speaking of the same work. Setting aside the elegy-allegory debate, an overview of studies on Pearl since 1955 affirms that critics universally agree upon the orthodoxy of the maiden's doctrinal speech, whereas they do not agree at all upon the poet's characterization of the dreamer. While most regard him as sinful, there is little consensus as to the level of his sinfulness or whether or not he progresses spiritually in the course of the poem. Critics who interpret a growing awareness or new faith in the dreamer cannot then seem to agree on the exact nature of the change nor the point in the poem in which this change takes place. In contrast to the majority of these studies are the arguments of a few critics who find the dreamer fairly blameless and even praiseworthy.

It is most notable that the desire for a unified interpretation has resulted in so great a number of disparate readings, even as Pearl's themes are expressed fairly consistently among critics. Almost every study finds the central theme of Pearl to be the human will in conflict with God and the necessity of complete submission to God's laws. Of those critics who condemn the dreamer, many view him as a type of negative exemplum, while others believe the dreamer's new faith and consolation to emphasize the rewards of his submission. Of those critics who regard the dreamer with sympathy, he is commonly viewed as an Everyman whose imperfections and mistakes signify the human condition and the struggles inherent in true Christian

faith. Because critical controversy centers upon the figure of the dreamer in Pearl, clues to a unified reading that might reconcile some of the conflicting opinions would seem likely to reside in the dreamer's portrayal. And, since the poem exists for the purpose of relating the dreamer's visionary encounter with the maiden, it also seems likely that further study of the poem's theological debate is warranted and may produce a more comprehensive view of the poem.

In 1904, Carleton Brown called attention to the theological concept of grace as a possible issue of controversy in the mid-fourteenth century. Several later critics have insisted upon the exposition of divine grace in Pearl as the poem's leading concern. The substantial discourse in Pearl devoted to the question of justification by grace or by works certainly seems to indicate a contemporary interest in the topic. In 1933, Rene Wellek conjectured that Pearl reflects arguments or misunderstandings that might have arisen over the sacrament of baptism in the period. While studies of Pearl to the present have elucidated the meaning of many other aspects of the poem's composition, none have moved beyond this stage in analyzing the historical significance of the poem's theology. I believe such a study will greatly illuminate the poet's intentions in his creation of this work, especially where it may shed light on the contemporary relevance of the dreamer's questions. The dreamer in Pearl is so often characterized as rebelling against God or as remarkably uninformed. Such a view of the dreamer seems mistaken, however, on two accounts. First, and most importantly, the dreamer, like the maiden, makes

frequent allusions to the Bible and cites Scripture to support his beliefs concerning justification and God's grace. Indeed, he seems portrayed as both learned and fully Christian, though a Christian who strongly adheres to the Pelagian view that salvation is gained only through good works and that heavenly rewards are granted in proportion to these works. At the same time, the dreamer's persistent questioning of the maiden also appears to be a literary device upon which to structure the exposition of the poet's own views upon these subjects. These considerations lead in turn to the question of the author's need to resolve these issues and whether they are in fact based upon actual theological arguments of the fourteenth century. Rather than presenting an established view of Christian doctrine, Pearl seems to be an attempt to resolve contemporary theological complexities surrounding the issues of grace, justification, and baptism.

Although a detailed examination of the historical sources of Pearl's theological discourse has not yet been offered, two studies provide additional points for consideration. A. C. Spearing remarks that standard Scriptural exegesis would seem unlikely to aid in the interpretation of Pearl since the poet offers his own individual interpretation of the biblical materials he presents. The Parable of the Vineyard, for example, "is given a full and explicit exegesis by the poet" (102). In 1993, David Aers published an essay arguing that an extreme and pervasive individualism characterizes the dreamer throughout Pearl. Aers faults the dreamer for the "fantasy of total possession" which underlies his negation of earthly

mutability and loss (63). The maiden's orthodox teaching requires a transformation that he resists to the poem's last stanza, when he finally transfers his desires to God. Aers concludes his discussion with a brief comparison of Pearl to Piers Plowman. He remarks on the "Pelagianism" of the Pearl dreamer's insistence upon God's obligation to repay good works. Piers Plowman also explores this issue, but Langland's emphasis is on Christian community rather than individual experience: "A sharper contrast to Piers Plowman . . . is hard to imagine, for there the Church, its sacraments, and its contemporary practices are pervasive and passionate topics for reflection" (73). Aers believes the Pearl poet's preoccupation with individualism, along with its "silent marginalization of the Church," seem to imply a covert challenge to conventional Catholicism. Interestingly, Aers raises many of the exact issues pertaining to Pearl's theology, including the presence of Pelagian ideas, as did Carleton Brown nearly ninety years before.

For numerous reasons, the historical significance of the theology of Pearl is very much in question. To what extent the maiden's speech affirms Church teaching or the dreamer's questions represent authentic opposition to orthodoxy or the poet may be working out his own theology has not been established. It therefore appears that the study of Pearl would benefit from research that will place the poem in an accurate context in relation to medieval developments on the theology of grace, justification, and baptism.

Chapter 3

The Theology of Grace and Justification:

New Testament to the Fourteenth Century

Since the publication of Pearl, critics have occasionally noted the preoccupation of the poet with the idea of divine grace. It was Carleton Brown, in 1904, who first pointed out that the subjects of grace and merit had gained the interest of many fourteenth-century theologians. Brown briefly noted the presence of such ideas in the works of English theologian Thomas Bradwardine before turning the focus of his essay to other matters. In 1925, Walter Kirkland Greene declared that the main purpose of Pearl was to "illustrate the doctrine of Divine Grace" (815). In support of his thesis, Greene set forth several observations on the poem's theology which he rightly believed ought to demand consideration in study of the work. He first notes that of Pearl's 1,212 lines, 300 lines at the center of the work, or one-fourth of the whole, are devoted to expounding the doctrine of divine grace. Next, through refrain in the eleventh stanza group, the maiden reminds the speaker repeatedly that "the grace of God is gret innoghe." Greene also states that the Vineyard Parable is given an exegesis which affirms the maiden's conceptions of grace and justification and that the complete vision of the child in heaven itself

reinforces the central theme of divine grace in Pearl. Though some later critics have echoed Greene's views, no study of Pearl has detailed the contemporary relevance of the poem's theology of grace and justification, which will be the subject of the present chapter. It will be my point later in this study to argue that the poet's central purpose in composing Pearl was to clarify the theological concepts of grace and justification, concepts of contemporary controversy among theologians in mid-fourteenth-century England.

Pearl indeed centers upon the theme of divine grace. The encounter of the dreamer and maiden in Pearl, her exposition of divine knowledge, and the vision of the New Jerusalem are made possible only through the fact of her prior salvation through God's grace. Confusion regarding the nature of salvation and its related issues of grace and justification has compounded the dreamer's grief and led to the despairing tone in which the poem opens. Pearl begins with the speaker expressing a sorrow that torments and oppresses him over the loss of his pearl, ostensibly his infant daughter. Various images in the opening stanzas emphasize his view of her as imprisoned within an earthly grave: "To þenke hir color so clad in clot. / O moul, þou marre3 a myry iuele, / My priuy perle wythouten spotte" (22-24). In the visionary episode, when the dreamer first recognizes the pearl maiden in Paradise, he is astounded to find her in "so strange a place" (175), and he later tells her, "I wyste neuer quere my perle wat3 gon" (376). The vision is then dedicated to the maiden's elucidation of the doctrines of divine grace and justification. She explains the nature

of salvation and its relationship to the sacraments, while handling the dreamer's objections to his eventual satisfaction. When the debate closes, the dreamer is granted a sight of the New Jerusalem, the place where those in God's grace will dwell eternally in His glorious presence. Pearl concludes as the dreamer asserts the truth of his vision and states that his grief has found partial remedy in his new knowledge of her salvation:

If hit be ueray and soth sermoun

Pat þou so styke3 in garlande gay,

So wel is me in þys doel-doungoun,

Pat þou art to þat Prynse3 paye. (1185-88)

The dreamer goes on to express the universal struggle to maintain the human will in accord with God's will, and he blesses the pearl maiden, commending her to Christ.

Traditionally, criticism of Pearl has judged the maiden's discourse on divine grace to be orthodox, in line with Church teaching and the doctrine of Saint Augustine. Such a view of the poem's theology has led critics to two general interpretations of the orthodoxy of the poem's speaker. He is most often characterized as defiant to the will of God or as simply ignorant of God's plan for human salvation through grace. The instructions of the maiden either tame his willfulness or improve his knowledge and lead him to the true path to God. Such views of the dreamer, however, do not account for the fact that he makes frequent references and allusions to Scripture throughout the poem and also seems to have

some knowledge of Aristotle and classical literature. Indeed, he often appears quite intelligent and learned. In the closing of Pearl, the dreamer admits to his inability to perceive all of God's mysteries, and he voices his intent to obey the will of God as revealed by the maiden and to seek a state of grace for himself through faith and contrition. Despite his opposition to the maiden in the debate, it would seem that he is a Christian man who seeks to do God's bidding on earth and to dwell with Him upon death, but that he has believed salvation to be merited and heavenly rewards distributed only according to good works, rather than the grace of God. If such an interpretation of the dreamer is accurate, then it is reasonable to ask if Pearl reflects contemporary theological arguments or misunderstandings pertaining to grace and justification. This chapter will set forth a brief history of the doctrines of grace and justification and will thereafter focus upon the prominence of these issues as subjects of controversy among fourteenth-century theologians in England.

In Christian theology, grace is the unearned favor of God, given freely by Him to individuals who are thereby redeemed from sin and granted salvation. In the New Testament, grace is made possible through the figure of Christ, whose death atoned for the sins of mankind and revealed the unlimited love and forgiveness of God for all humanity. The word "grace" is translated from the Greek *charis*, the early meaning of which denoted a personal quality or a talent that brings joy to others. Grace gained a special Christian usage in response to the Incarnation, signifying "the being and action of God revealed and actualised in Jesus Christ, for He is in His

person and work the self-giving of God to men" (Torrance 21). After the New Testament era, theologians came to regard grace as both the action of God and the gift of salvation.

The word "grace" appears in the New Testament approximately 150 times, chiefly in the epistles of St. Paul. Although Christ does not use the word Himself, His person and life as portrayed in the Gospels served as the model for the development of the concept of Christian grace. As Thomas Torrance states:

It matters little that the word *charis* in its significant sense is wanting [in the Gospels], for there it is not in the abstract that we encounter grace, but in concrete manifestation: in the glad spontaneous fashion in which our Lord received sinners as in the instances of Matthew and Zacchaeus, of the sinful woman in Simon's house and the woman brought Him to be stoned, freely forgiving them, and in the eager compassion in which he healed the sick and suffering, as in His constant demand for mercy and forgiveness among men because of the love of God. (22-23)

In contrast to directives in the Old Testament for man's adherence to the law, the example of Christ in the Gospels diminished the idea of human merit in salvation. Jesus speaks repeatedly of God's love as freely given and independent of any initiative on the part of man. "You received without paying, give without pay," Jesus charges his twelve disciples (Matt. 10:8). In the Parable of the Vineyard,

Jesus sets forth another striking example of the reversal of expectations which exists between man's kingdom and the Kingdom of God: "So the last will be first, and the first last" (Matt. 20:16). The radical transformation of the basis of salvation in the Gospels announced the futility of seeking God's grace on the basis of personal merit.

St. Paul interpreted the significance of Christ's death and resurrection in terms of justification. The term "justificatio" is translated from the Greek *dikaiosis*, which specified a form of being in a state of holiness. Justification in Christian theology means literally "to make just" and refers to the process in which the relationship between God and the individual is restored, having been damaged by human sin. Justification confers a state of grace upon the individual, freeing one from bondage to sin and bestowing the promise of salvation upon death. "In [Paul's] Epistle to the Romans in particular he has given us the classic statement of his belief concerning the grace of God," says Oscar Hardman (12). Paul believes justification to consist wholly in one's devout faith in Christ Jesus and in an utter reliance upon God's mercy: "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God" (Rom. 5:1-2). Paul speaks of grace primarily as God's giving of Himself to men through Jesus. Apart from faith, no other approach to man's justification is possible, since God through Christ has performed a deed that so

vastly exceeds the capabilities of any individual to repay. Yet, states Torrance, "at the same time Paul thinks of grace as actualised among men in the person of Jesus Christ. In Him it has really broken through and now operates among men" (30). Thus, when God justifies man and bestows His free gift of grace upon the sinner, grace is manifested in faith and in life as acts of love and forgiveness.

The subsequent history of the doctrines of grace and justification is characterized by misunderstandings, conflicting interpretations, and intense arguments over the New Testament conceptions. Despite Paul's insistence upon the primacy of grace in man's relationship with God, the idea of justification quickly came to assume a meaning very distinct from the Pauline understanding. K. Stendahl observes: "It has always been a puzzling fact that Paul meant so relatively little for the thinking of the church during the first 350 years of its history. To be sure, he is honored and quoted, but—in the theological perspective of the west—it seems that Paul's great insight into justification by faith was forgotten" (83). Early Christian writers of the apostolic and patristic periods display a fairly consistent theology of justification by merit, rather than faith. This strand can be traced from one of the earliest Christian documents, the Didache, a manual of Christian teaching spuriously ascribed to the twelve Apostles and dated 90-100 A. D. In the theology of later writers, such as Clement of Alexandria, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, and the Shepherd of Hermas in the second century, Tertullian in the third century, and Ambrosiaster in the fourth, there exists a persistent failure to fully

adhere to the Pauline doctrine of justification by grace. These writings are characterized by a description of justification which typically becomes contingent upon the individual's success in emulating the example of Christ in performing works of forgiveness and charity (Torrance 133-41).

A number of explanations has been offered to account for the lack of success of these early Christian writers in comprehending the Pauline formulation of grace and justification, in which grace is the absolutely fundamental element. Thomas Torrance notes that passages in Hebrews and the Epistle of James may suggest the correlation of grace with the Holy Spirit, and he believes this may have originated a meaning that Paul did not intend. Torrance remarks, "It is strange that [grace] which is used almost exclusively in the New Testament in intimate connection with Christ should afterward become detached from His Person, and either used as an independent principle or in connection with the Spirit" (34). James 4:6 states that "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Hebrews 10:29 asks, "How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace?" Along with this, Torrance adds that the emphasis upon righteousness and law in the Old Testament and the tendency toward self-justification in Greek pagan philosophy continued to exert an enormous influence upon the early Christian Church. He proposes that as the new Christian

religion “represented a corrosion of the faith both from the side of Judaism and from the side of Hellenism . . . the basic significance of grace was not grasped” (137).

G. W. H. Lampe points out that some of the issues facing the early Christian writers were different from those of St. Paul and that “much of their attention had to be focused on the problems of moral conduct as these arose in the Christian communities . . .” (24). Such problems led to a necessary preoccupation with the ethical concerns of the Christian. Lampe acknowledges the failure of the apostolic and patristic fathers to appreciate Paul’s doctrines of grace and justification, though he praises such achievements as their establishment of the essential tenets of Trinitarian theology. He concludes that “the defects of their theology . . . were probably inevitable, given the nature of the task which they undertook, and are not the fault of the Apologists themselves in setting about that task in their particular fashion” (38). Finally, Alister McGrath attributes misunderstandings of the doctrines of grace and justification to semantic distinctions between Greek and the earliest Latin versions of the New Testament. For example, in Greek, *mereri* is regarded as a descriptive quality and refers to the level of estimation in which an individual is held by others. The Latin word “meritum” is a verb that denotes the individual’s efforts to become righteous. States McGrath:

. . . it is necessary to observe that the early theologians of the western church were dependent upon Latin versions of the bible, and approached their texts and their subject with a set of presuppositions

which owed more to the Latin language and culture than to Christianity itself. The initial transference of a Hebrew concept to a Greek, and subsequently to a Latin, context point to a fundamental alteration in the concepts of 'justification' and 'righteousness' as the gospel spread from its Palestinian source to the western world. Viewed theologically, this transition resulted in a shift of emphasis from *iustitia coram Deo* to *iustitia in hominibus*. (15)

An additional characteristic of the writings of the early fathers is their emphasis upon the freedom of the human will. Of central threat to the Christian Church in the patristic age were the pagan fatalisms, especially Gnosticism in the second century and Manichaeism in the third century. These religious systems held the view that human life is predetermined and therefore man cannot be held accountable for his sins. To combat such heresies, the general affirmation of man's free will is found throughout the body of patristic literature, in both Greek and Latin traditions. "The pre-Augustinian theological tradition is practically of one voice in asserting the freedom of the human will," states McGrath (20). As for God's grace, the early fathers acknowledged it as the fundamental source of man's virtue and the means of his redemption; their faith was distinguished above all by an insistence upon the prevenient grace of God through Christ. However, they did not view grace as incompatible with free will, but as preceding free will. Human effort was required to cooperate with God's grace to complete the justification of the

individual. Thus, for the patristic writers "grace is divine assistance, enabling, strengthening and inspiring men in good works. It does not simply take over when human effort fails; still less does it render effort superfluous, but at every point it co-operates with the rightly motivated human will," says Lampe ("Theology" 156-57). As regards the issue of human sin, a result of the theological acceptance of man's free will was the basic view that sin resides in the misuse of free will.

In the western tradition, the movement toward a theology of justification by merit is attributed in large part to Tertullian (c.160-c.225), who introduced the terms "free will," "merit," and "satisfaction" into Latin theology. Although Tertullian emphasized the supremacy of divine grace in his writings, he believed human nature to be freely capable of moral choice in fulfilling God's demands for righteousness as exemplified by Christ (Hardman 13). Tertullian also wrote that in penance the individual may satisfy his debt to God and through good works even obligate God to reward him (McGrath 23). This concept of God's indebtedness to humanity grew commonplace and went unchallenged until the age of Augustine, when the issues of free will, divine grace, and justification became the subjects of great controversy.

Through the writings of St. Augustine the Western Christian Church was to establish its approved positions on grace, justification, and human free will. Augustine (354-430) came to the Christian faith in 386, after having successively embraced Manichaeism and then Neoplatonism. Upon his conversion, Augustine

devoted the remainder of his life to his duties as priest, bishop, and administrator of the Church and to the composition of Christian works as both theologian and apologist. The corpus of his writings includes about 100 works of theology, approximately 800 sermons, and over 200 letters. The letters alone attest to Augustine's influence during his lifetime: his counsel was solicited by emperors, popes, and saints (O'Meara 16). He contributed substantially to the formulation of doctrines on the Trinity, the sacraments, and to an understanding of Christian history and the spiritual authority of the Church. Augustine's place among theologians of the Christian Church is similar to that of St. Paul among the apostles: he is the greatest of the Church fathers and the most preeminent of western theologians. As Jaroslav Pelikan has said, "In a manner and to a degree unique for any Christian thinker outside the New Testament, Augustine has determined the form and the content of church doctrine for most of Western Christian history" (293).

The thought of Augustine influenced almost every area of early doctrinal speculation, and his mature reflections on the subjects of divine grace and justification prevailed amid great controversy to become the orthodox articulation of the Latin Church. It was in the early years of the fifth century that Augustine was first compelled to argue against the radical doctrines of the British monk Pelagius, who proclaimed that God's grace was the reward of man's initiative in performing good works. Other early theologians had expressed belief in the free will of man as

cooperating with the grace bestowed by God. Augustine himself had subscribed to such an idea in his early years as a Christian (Creswell 45). Pelagius, however, insisted that grace was the effect, rather than the cause, of man's faithful endeavors. Though Pelagius was condemned by Pope Zosimus in a General Council at Carthage in 418, the issues he raised engaged Augustine until the bishop's death in 430. Along with numerous sermons and letters, Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings comprise fifteen treatises. The earliest, On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, is dated 412, and his last, Against the Second Reply of Julian, was composed the year he died (Lehmann 231-31). In consequence of the Pelagian controversy, Augustine developed and refined the Christian theological concepts of grace and justification while setting forth the definitive statements on man's free will, original sin, and the sacraments. Augustine's doctrine of Christian grace is considered to be the classic restatement of St. Paul's formulation in the New Testament. For his contributions to theology, the Western Church named Augustine not only "Doctor of the Church," but the "Doctor of Grace" as well (Pelikan 294).

Pelagianism may be described as a heresy which rejected the notion of original sin in mankind and embraced the idea of human perfectibility and self-justification. At the beginning of the fifth century, the Church's doctrine of grace had yet to be precisely stated and was rather vague. Western theologians considered grace as a type of divine assistance necessary for mankind's salvation, but the nature of this assistance had not been clarified (Rees 27). Pelagius (c.350-

c.418) was a devout Christian writer whose mission was one of moral reform. Little else is known of him apart from his writings and from the anti-Pelagian works of Augustine. Pelagius is believed to have composed 22 works, including a Commentary on the Epistles of Paul, promoting his belief in human moral autonomy. Of the extant works attributed to him, seven are complete and twelve have survived as fragments (Rees 133-34). His great opponent Augustine cited and discussed the arguments of Pelagius at length in his own writings. From the sum of these, it is clear only that Pelagius was likely of British ancestry, that he lived some years in Rome before its fall in 410 and traveled in Africa and Palestine, that he was educated and fluent in both Latin and Greek, and that he knew the Bible well. Pelagianism attracted many followers, the closest of whom were Coelestius, a Roman lawyer, and Julian, bishop of Eclanum, who became the leading theologian of the movement upon Pelagius' death (Lehmann 203-7).

Arthur McGiffert says of Pelagius: "He was a devout Christian and was generally recognized as a sound and competent teacher. To start a controversy or stir up strife within the church was the last thing he desired" (126). Yet, Pelagius was above all a moralist who had grown increasingly outraged at the disgraceful conduct of the Christian community during his residence at Rome. "The political and moral corruption of the state, the scandalous behavior of Christian clergy, and the half-Christian, half-pagan practices of many ordinary Christians are well documented in Christian writers of the period," states William Collinge (4).

Pelagius was concerned when he read what he believed to be the denial of human free will in Augustine's prayer in the Confessions 10:40: "Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt" (Kelly 357). Pelagius believed the doctrine of man's inherent sinfulness, or original sin, as developed by Tertullian, Ambrose, and Augustine, led Christians to a state of moral complacency and had diminished human aspirations to virtue. He felt strongly that if God's goodness was to be affirmed, then mankind must be viewed as possessing both reason and moral conscience. Man, Pelagius claimed, has an innate capacity for both good and evil, although he is not bound to either. If this is not true, then human acts are devoid of significance, and evil itself must be attributed to God, which is untenable. In his theology, Pelagius insists upon a version of creation that he claims "must include human free will and the possibility for every man of genuine moral struggle and progress" (Lampe, "Theology" 158).

At the heart of Pelagius' doctrines, then, lies his declaration of the completely free human will, an endowment from God intended for man's operation independent of divine aid. Pelagius wholly rejects the doctrine of original sin, declaring that sin cannot be transmitted from individual to individual. Like Adam, each human determines his own destiny and, through the use or misuse of free will, earns his justification or condemnation when he is judged by God. Pelagius frequently uses the term "grace," but defines it variously as God's act in creating a self-determined humanity, as the rational faculty man possesses and by which he is capable of

avoiding sin, as the aids to virtue found in the Scriptures and the teachings of the Church, and as the saving example of Christ (Evans, Pelagius 111). In his view, man's knowledge of God's will as revealed in the Bible is fundamental to his salvation because it informs and directs the human will toward a life of good works. Robert Evans states:

This knowledge is given to him in Scripture: in law, in teaching, and example. Pelagius requires a doctrine of grace which will allow human nature, which has never been crippled or even weakened, to stand out clearly revealed; by thus emerging in its own clarity it will be able to resume its effective working. (Pelagius, 112)

To summarize Pelagian theology, its principal beliefs are those of human moral perfectibility and the possibility of living without sin. Man's justification is contingent upon his efforts to understand and conform to the will of God disclosed in the Bible. Although Pelagius speaks consistently of the necessity of grace in salvation, he always emphasizes his crucial distinction that "the grace of God has no enabling function" (Lehmann 217). God's grace is a reward which depends wholly upon man's own initiative to know and obey Him.

Augustine's doctrines of grace, justification, and human free will were evolving prior to the beginning of the Pelagian controversy and had undergone significant development around 395, the year of his advancement to the see of

Hippo. In two works addressed to Simplicianus in 396 or 397, Augustine reexamined his former opinion of the Christian life as the struggle for perfection in which grace aids the cooperating human will and grace may even be called forth by the believer's expression of faith (Creswell 46). Augustine had been engaged in serious meditation of Paul's expression of grace in the Epistle to the Romans 9-11. The works To Simplicianus contain the first statement of Augustine's belief in the grace of God as a freely bestowed gift, entirely unearned and undeserved by man. This new outlook, however, was complicated by Paul's statement in Romans 9:10-13 of God's right to choose His elect:

And not only so, but also when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of his call, she was told, "The elder will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

As a result, Augustine began to develop his doctrine of predestination, in which both the saved and unsaved were determined by God before the time of creation and whose good or evil wills are made manifest through their works. Freedom of the human will was now no longer possible for Augustine (Creswell 82). In Confessions 10:4, written c.396-400, Augustine acknowledges the prevenient grace of God as the source of his own meritorious works: "The good I do is done by you

in me and by your grace" (209). Thus, God has given His grace to justify a predestined elect who are then enabled to act in accordance with God's laws.

The Pelagian controversy arose in the early years of the fifth century; and through the course of the controversy, Augustine was driven to reappraise and redefine his conceptions of grace and justification once more. At a most basic level, the Pelagian controversy is often described as the struggle between Augustine and Pelagius to establish the proper relationship of man's volition to God's purposes. But more precisely, as Paul Lehmann states, "The real argument had to do with the nature and power of the will in view of the fact that Christ had died to deliver man from sin and so to prepare him to enter into that eternal kingdom . . ." (210). Pelagius asserted that the redemptive work of Christ lay in His example and instruction to mankind regarding the appropriate use of free will to merit the individual's salvation. Indignant and alarmed at the number of Christians converting to Pelagianism, Augustine began working to refute his claims and to account for the role of Christ in his own scheme of salvation.

Faith in Jesus Christ as the means of man's redemption lies at the center of Augustine's doctrine of grace and justification:

The foundation of Augustine's teaching and the source of its dogmatic character is a confession that Jesus Christ, by historical redemptive action, is the sole source of salvation for humanity.

Christ established his salvation in an historical way, and he communicates it through belief in the account of his action and participation by his sacraments. (Burns 96)

Pelagius believed all men were free to imitate either the example of Adam or the example of Christ. In contrast, Augustine declared that while man's spiritual rebirth had been effected in Christ, all men continue in sin. In several treatises, Augustine developed his understanding of Adam's corruption as the source of sinfulness in humanity, transmitted "through generation rather than imitation" (Burns 96). Augustine's doctrine of original sin states the universal fallen nature of mankind. Adam had been formed with the ability to refrain from sin and not to die, but he and his heirs forfeited this grace when he disobeyed God. Adam's body, the instrument of his sin, became the conveyor of that sin. In Adam, not only do all men sin, but all bear the guilt of his sin and are condemned for it (Pelikan 298-300). The relationship of original sin to grace was discussed in Augustine's treatise entitled On Nature and Grace against Pelagius:

For if we are now a new creature in Christ, we were still children of wrath by nature, like everyone else. But God, who is rich in mercy, on account of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead through our sins, raised us up to life through Christ, by whose grace we are saved. But this grace of Christ, without which neither infants nor grown persons can be saved, is not bestowed as a reward

for merits, but is given freely, which is why it is called grace”

(qtd. in McGrath, Christian 219)

Because of original sin, it is solely the free gift of divine grace made known through Christ, and never human merit, which justifies the sinner.

Another of Augustine’s tasks in battling Pelagius was to reformulate his idea of man’s freedom in such a way that free will was not to be denied. This he did by working out an ingenious and complex understanding of the human will. Augustine distinguished human free will from true human liberty, the latter of which he defines as the freedom to serve Christ given only through grace. Augustine contrasts this liberty with the incapacity of the human will to fulfill Christ’s commandments. For Augustine, the human will is indeed free to choose the good, yet it possesses no innate power to accomplish its choice, no power to achieve “the conformity of living to knowing,” as James Wetzel expresses it (8). Despite the free decisions of man’s will, all humans are enslaved to sin due to original sin. Augustine emphasized this in one of his earliest anti-Pelagian writings, On the Spirit and the Letter 3.5:

A person’s free choice will only serve to lead them to sin, if the way of truth is hidden from them. And when it is plain to them what they should do and to what they should aspire, even then unless they feel delight and love in doing so, they will not perform their duty, nor undertake it, nor attain to the good life. But in order that we may feel

this affection, "the love of God is shed abroad in our heart" not "through the free choice which springs from ourselves" but "through the Holy Spirit which has been given us" (Romans 5:5). (qtd. in McGrath, Christian 221)

Therefore, Augustine agreed with Pelagius that the human will is free; but it is free only to choose, since it does not possess the power to attain its choice. It is when the human will is acted upon by grace that man is enabled to both choose and achieve the true freedom of following Christ.

Augustine does speak of man's participation in justification. In Against Julian, Augustine states that man indeed has the power to participate in the divine being. It is a process beginning when the irresistible grace of God operates within the individual, freeing the will to desire and perform the good. According to Augustine, the goodness of any work is dependent upon both the work itself and the individual's motive in performing the work. Faith, the only correct motive, can exist solely through the previous gift of God's grace. Participation in justification is therefore the Holy Spirit working through the cooperating will of the believer to accomplish righteous acts. Like St. Paul, Augustine believes the Holy Spirit works through the justified to actualize God's love among mankind. However, it is important to remember that no matter the good deeds brought about, such participation of the human will is itself a reward of grace and not a means of obtaining grace. Furthermore, it is only God, and never ungodly man, who is able to

judge the goodness of any act, for outside the heavenly city of God not even the justified can refrain from sinning. Augustine believes, as Alister McGrath states, "The bridge between the moral and the meritorious, between the human and the divine estimation of an act, lies in the justification of the ungodly" (33).

T. A. Burkill has given a concise summary of Augustine's theology of grace and justification as follows:

Augustine argued that the corruption of human nature must mean that, to practice the good life, men need the spiritual reinforcement of divine grace. The natural human will is *de facto* ineffective; and in the course of the Pelagian controversy Augustine so stressed the necessity of the infusion of a divine dynamic for the conduct of the Christian life that he arrived at the notion of the irresistibility of grace: God saves whom He will (On Corruption and Grace, 14). Some He predestines to salvation, others to damnation (An Enchiridion Addressed to Laurentius, 100). The elect have been endowed with the gift of perseverance (On the Gift of Perseverance, 8), and their number is permanently fixed (On Corruption and Grace, 13). (122)

To the present day, the notion of predestination has been regarded as the most controversial aspect of Augustine's theological outlook. Even recently, James

Wetzel has commented that “many unresolved tensions in [Augustine’s] reflections remained with him as he broke ranks from antique philosophy and Pelagian theology to square virtue with his conception of grace. We expect too much if we want a tidy resolution to so radical a break” (207). As Augustine worked out his theology of salvation during the period he defended Christianity against Pelagianism, he began to lay more and more emphasis upon his belief in predestination, especially after an ecclesiastical condemnation of Pelagius in 417. Predestination was a subject Augustine had evaded for approximately twenty years, since his first expression of God’s grace as prevenient in the letters to Simplicianus (Burns 94). In his renewed decree of predestination, Augustine sees all humans as divided into two groups: the saved, representing God’s mercy, and the damned, representing God’s justice. Now, Augustine stressed the divine mystery of God’s plan, for He alone possesses knowledge of who is saved and who is condemned.

Etienne Gilson succinctly expresses Augustine’s point of view on the mystery of predestination in this manner:

Why some are to be saved and not others, is the secret of God; in meditating upon this mystery, let us remember at least this, that ever since the fall of Adam, no single man has any right to be saved; salvation is a work of love, not of justice, and the mystery is much less why all men are not saved, than why some of them are. (80)

Pelagius devoted his life to asserting the existence of a knowable God Whose scheme of salvation adheres to man's rational sense of justice. Ultimately, Augustine was to declare an unknowable God: "Most of all he insisted that God's justice and mercy are unfathomable mysteries which cannot be forced into the narrow human categories of fairness, deserved punishment and earned reward" (Burns 95). In Augustine's theology, God's enigmatic and prevenient grace is man's justification.

Pelagianism was declared heretical at a synod in Carthage in 418, and the following doctrines of Pelagius were condemned: that Adam's mortality was not a result of sin; that Adam's sin did not affect his descendants; that infants are not guilty of sin; and that grace is not a gift (Kelly 370). After Pelagius' death c.418, Julian, the bishop of Eclanum, launched an aggressive attack upon Augustine's theology as a type of Manichaeism. In order to mitigate the spread of Julian's influence, Emperor Honorius called for the Western Church to censure Pelagianism once more. In 431, at the Third Ecumenical Council in Ephesus, Pelagianism was again formally condemned. In consequence, Augustine's doctrine of salvation grew increasingly in acceptance, though it was not wholly acceptable to everyone. One such theologian was Jerome, who rejected Pelagianism but yet would not accept Augustine's ideas of irresistible grace or of predestination (Burkill 127-28).

In the middle years of the fifth century, a movement known as Semi-Pelagianism began to gain in prominence. The Semi-Pelagians, or Massilians as they

were also known, consisted mostly of those who, like Jerome, admired Augustinian theology but rejected its determinist outlook and its diminishment of human moral endeavor. Debate was initiated by residents at the monastery at Hadrumetum in North Africa who believed "Augustine's teaching on the sovereignty of grace called into question the very logic of the monk's life" (Weaver 4). From Hadrumetum, the movement spread to southern Gaul and grew in support. Semi-Pelagians accepted the doctrine of original sin and the necessity of divine grace, but they believed human effort was required to respond to grace. They accepted God's foreknowledge of future events, but they believed this did not predetermine an individual's life. Semi-Pelagianism continued to gain adherents through the early sixth century, attracting such notable figures as John Cassian, Vincent of Lerins, and Faustus of Riez. The movement came to an end, however, at the Second Council of Orange in 529, which embraced most of the Augustinian theses. J. N. D. Kelly states, "[Semi-Pelagianism] suffered, inevitably, but unjustly, from a suspected bias to Pelagianism, but what chiefly sealed its fate was the powerful and increasing influence of Augustine in the West" (371).

The Second Council of Orange, under the leadership of Caesarius of Arles, rejected Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism outright and approved Augustine's theology of grace and justification with some modifications. The adjustments to Augustine's doctrines were intended to preserve a degree of human autonomy in response to divine grace and to eliminate the predestination to evil. The Council

endorsed the Augustinian doctrine of original sin intact, along with the doctrine of the prevenience of grace. While all claims to the independence of human merit were denounced, the Council agreed that an individual could resist the grace of God. And, while the Council was silent regarding Augustine's belief in the predestination of God's elect, they condemned his view that God would predestine any human being to eternal damnation. As prevenient grace had become associated with baptism, the following view of the process of man's salvation emerged from the Second Council of Orange: the free will of each individual is rehabilitated through baptism, and the mature adult may accept or reject the call of grace; God bestows additional grace on the faithful, which strengthens the effort to live a Christian life; therefore, the baptized adult is ultimately accountable for his salvation, though faith itself and good works are attributed to God (McGiffert 140-41).

The work of the Second Council of Orange marks an important moment in the history of Western Christianity. Arthur McGiffert writes:

The Council was attended by only a few bishops and would have had little significance had not Caesarius succeeded in securing the confirmation of Pope Boniface for its decision, thus giving them an official standing in the west which they have never lost. They were treated by Gregory the Great, at the end of the century, as genuinely Augustinian and his influence had much to do with the permanent

credit they enjoyed. Ever since Augustinianism has been orthodox in the western Catholic church . . . (141)

On the Augustinian tradition established at Orange for the subsequent course of the Middle Ages, McGrath states, "The theology of the medieval period may be regarded as thoroughly Augustinian, a series of footnotes to Augustine, in that theological speculation was essentially regarded as an attempt to defend, expand, and where necessary modify, the Augustinian legacy" (17). In the mid-fourteenth century, as my study will later discuss, the theological content of the maiden's discourse in Pearl conforms closely to the Augustinian tradition and to the doctrines of grace and justification decreed by the Council of Orange.

No serious challenges to this synthesis of Augustine's theology of grace and justification were raised from the time of Gregory the Great, elected Pope in 590, until the later medieval period in the age of the Pearl-poet. In the ninth century, the priest Gottschalk of Soissons did make an attempt to restore Augustine's doctrine of double predestination, which asserted that all men are predestined either to salvation or damnation. The controversy arising from Gottschalk's views lasted about fifteen years. Pelikan states that one of the most serious concerns raised by Gottschalk's theology was that of the authority of the Church fathers and, most importantly, of Augustine. Condemned for misinterpreting Augustine, Gottschalk defended his views by quoting from Augustine. Others asked if the condemnation of Gottschalk amounted to a condemnation of Augustine. Gottschalk's opponent

Hincmar of Reims, noting the often contradictory nature of patristic writings, called for the determination of the authority of those works and of their writers. Such tasks would require both "historical scholarship and interpretative skill." These twin activities would later form the basis of scholastic methodology in the twelfth century, when the emphasis placed upon patristic authority was to become a central issue of theological concern (Pelikan 94-95). Gottschalk himself was condemned and imprisoned in 848. A Council at Quierzy in 853 reaffirmed the Augustinian synthesis of man's salvation established at Orange in 529, though with no resolution to the problem of predestination (Burkill 167; Knowles 243-44).

From the time of the Council of Quierzy in the ninth century to the theological renaissance of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, the period saw an overall acceptance of the orthodox position, despite the occasional questions or confusion expressed by some religious thinkers. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, theological activity centered almost exclusively in the monasteries. Pupils engaged in a thorough study of the Scriptures and the commentaries of Church fathers, and controversial debate of doctrinal issues lessened. This monastic period in theology was followed by a period of revived interest in matters of theological complexity, an interest which accompanied a wider rebirth of general intellectual activity. The theological renaissance is associated with the cathedral schools of the Frankish empire, such as those at Paris, Laon, Chartres, and Rheims. By the end of the eleventh century, many of the masters of the schools began to compose biblical

commentaries, or Sentences, on different points of Church teaching. The title of Sentences soon came to denote the compilation of the theological opinions of a teaching master. Of the early masters, St. Anselm is considered the most distinguished (Knowles 257-59).

The theological renaissance brought with it a rise in the interest in philosophical speculation. Augustine's theology was well known for its Neoplatonist outlook, and Boethius' widely read Consolation of Philosophy argued that man could come to knowledge of God through philosophical methods. Aristotle's works became increasingly available in the West through the course of the twelfth century. Philosophy was not viewed as an alternative system which threatened religious faith at this time, but many thinkers desired to assess the usefulness of philosophical wisdom in a theological context (G. R. Evans 3-6). The interest in such ideas contributed to the development of scholastic theology, the general theological procedure of late medieval Christendom. Scholastic theologians were concerned to develop a rational justification for the Christian faith, to reconcile contradictory viewpoints in patristic literature, and to organize Christian theology into a systematic body. Collections of Sentences were scrutinized and subjected to rigorous new techniques of interpretation. As for the doctrines of grace and justification, Augustinian theology was supported and reaffirmed. McGrath states:

The high regard in which Augustine was held during the theological renaissance of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries ensured that the

framework of the medieval discussion of justification was essentially Augustinian. The theology of the period may be regarded as a systematic attempt to restate and reformulate Augustine's theology to meet the needs of the new era then developing. (38)

St. Anselm (c.1033-1109) has been designated the father of scholasticism. Etienne Gilson describes Anselm as "the first to pursue the ideal of a theology whose dialectical rigor turned it into a kind of science" (139). Anselm declared the operating principle of his theology to be "faith seeking understanding." Anselm began from a position of faith, and he proposed that through the philosophical technique of dialectic, or logic, his theology would lead to a greater understanding of faith. Anselm was profoundly influenced by Augustine's theology; it was, for him, the absolutely authoritative source for the Church. David Knowles states that "[Anselm] made it his boast that he departed not at all from the teaching of Augustine, and the claim is justified in so far as he made no great advances from Augustine's position . . ." (248). In his innovative theological writings, Anselm delivered logical proofs for the existence of God, for the orthodox view of the Trinity, and for the necessity of the Incarnation to effect man's salvation. In the latter work, Why God became Man, Anselm diverged from the endeavors of Augustine by striving to explain why man is saved, rather than how he is saved. Anselm also provided arguments adapted from Boethius in two short treatises he wrote on free will and predestination in support of the Augustinian point of view (G.

R. Evans 82-83). Anselm's approach to theology established a scholastic prototype adapted by subsequent medieval theologians in their efforts to elucidate and reinforce the understanding of orthodox Church teachings (Luscombe 179).

One of the most influential figures in twelfth-century theology, Peter Abelard (1079-1142) was foremost a philosopher who came to the work of theology in the middle of his career as a thinker and teacher. While Anselm believed that human reason could deepen the understanding of the Christian faith, Abelard wished to determine the validity of Christian doctrine itself by subjecting it to a penetrating rational analysis. Himself a devout Christian, he felt that no one should believe blindly or should be compelled to believe (Burkill 176). His attitude was therefore "to explain the faith as far as possible in rational terms, and to perfect its expression so as to remove what is illogical or unacceptable" (Knowles 250). Though Abelard's theology was popular and he attracted many disciples, he was looked upon with suspicion and hostility by other, more conservative theologians who believed his true intentions lay in undermining the Christian faith (Gilson 163). The contempt for Abelard held by William of Saint Thierry and Bernard of Clairvaux precipitated Abelard's condemnation at the Synod of Sens in 1140, a condemnation ratified by Pope Innocent II. Among other charges, William and Bernard accused Abelard of Pelagianism for his alterations of the Augustinian doctrines of salvation.

In Abelard's soteriology, he insists that man's salvation is not possible without prevenient grace. However, Abelard recast the Augustinian conception of

original sin, preferring to regard it merely as mankind's penalty for Adam's disobedience, rather than the corruption of man's will made evident in concupiscence (Knowles 250-51). Various sins, in Abelard's view, incur different levels of guilt based upon the intentions or ignorance of the sinner. In addition, he also argued that enabling, or cooperating, graces are not added to the initial grace that brings men to faith. In William's view, such statements were tantamount to suggesting that there is a place in the process of justification for independent human merit (Luscombe 129-30). Whether justified, William's charges of Pelagianism against Abelard were supported by Bernard; and among a host of other criticisms, their attacks on the weaknesses in Abelard's theology led to his official censure and the abandonment of many of his teachings (Luscombe 142).

Peter Lombard (c.1100-60) was an Italian theologian who studied under Bernard of Clairvaux in Paris. In the 1140's, Lombard undertook the task of expanding Anselm's glosses on the Psalms and the Epistles of Paul. "Religiously preserving the Anselmian text as a nucleus," Lombard sought to elaborate and clarify its theology by incorporating all relevant scriptural and patristic sources (Smalley 64). His intent was to consolidate and harmonize the sum of Church teachings, and his efforts produced a compendium entitled the Four Books of Sentences. The Sentences of Lombard is essentially an Augustinian synthesis; McGrath points out "that its thousand citations from Augustine comprise four-fifths of the work" (38). In the second of the four books, Lombard deals with original sin,

grace, and free will. He affirms the Augustinian doctrine that no man can do good unless his will is first liberated and subsequently assisted by the divine graces. D. E. Luscombe states, "With Abelard perhaps in mind, [Lombard] asks whether operating and cooperating graces are not one and the same grace which both operates and cooperates. Such a view, he says, would not be unreasonable, but the plural is used to indicate their different effects" (276). Lombard's success in compiling and reconciling contradictory viewpoints earned for him the title of Master of the Sentences. The Lateran Council of 1215 declared the official orthodoxy of Lombard's Sentences, and it became the standard textbook of Western theology for several centuries (Burkill 182).

The greatest scholastic theologian of the thirteenth century was Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-74). In the 1260's and 1270's, Aquinas constructed his grand compendium, the Summa Theologica, regarded as the most outstanding achievement of systematic theology in the age of scholasticism. Attracted to the natural and metaphysical philosophies of Aristotle, Aquinas wished to harmonize such philosophical knowledge with the truths of theology. While his procedure was innovative, in theology Aquinas maintained an essentially Augustinian outlook. Aquinas divided the Summa Theologica into three parts, the second of which concerns mankind, the human will, good and evil, grace, and the natural and theological virtues. In his doctrines of grace and justification, Aquinas closely followed the Augustinian tradition originally decreed by the Second Council of

Orange in 529 and stated by Peter Lombard in his Sentences, which endorsed all but Augustine's ideas of irresistible grace and predestination to evil. Aquinas then contributed his own significant development of the conceptions of grace, justification, original sin, and merit. In affirming Augustinian doctrine, Aquinas states that sinful humanity is powerless to merit the grace of God. When grace is given, man may then freely choose or reject the gift. The acceptance of grace must itself be attributed to God, but the rejection of God's offer lies in the individual's own inadequacy. Like Augustine, Aquinas attests the mystery of divine election and salvation through predestination. God's foreknowledge, however, does not compromise man's freedom: God's infinite power enables Him to know in advance the individuals who will accept His gift of grace through their own free choice and who will refuse. God foresees, but He does not command the human will (Knowles 274-75).

In addition to upholding Augustinian tradition, Aquinas also desired to explain more precisely the nature of the human will and to give a more detailed view of the process of grace and justification (McGrath 100). Aquinas was the first theologian to distinguish the original justice of prelapsarian man from mankind's subsequent deficiency and utter dependence upon divine justice through grace. He derived his idea of the capacity for human nature to regain its integrity and union with God "from the [Augustinian] axiom that grace did not abolish nature, but completed it" (Pelikan 285). William Van Roo summarizes Aquinas' view of

original justice from the short work On Evil: "Original justice was the perfect rectitude of human nature, the complete subjection of the body and the lower powers of the soul to reason, and of the reason to God" (198). Original sin led to the disordering of the various elements of man's nature and to separation from God. The gift of grace led to the proper reordering of man's nature, making the body and will much more subservient to reason, though not perfectly so (Wawrykow 227).

In the Summa Theologica, Aquinas also elaborated a new understanding of the divisions of grace, based upon the Augustinian distinction between operative and cooperative graces, though Aquinas added that man's own cooperative efforts could merit the increase of grace. Aquinas discusses both graces in terms of their actual and habitual functions. In the process of justification, the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love are infused by God's grace and are strengthened to the extent that man struggles against sin. Sin negates justification, and a new infusion of grace is necessary to justify man. Joseph Wawrykow explains: "To express this notion more theologically, the middle ground of the life of grace is a growth in grace and the theological virtues, by which these theological habits become more firmly rooted in their possessor and the possessor becomes more apt for the vision of God" (224). Aquinas' theology of salvation is complex, and his views altered in the course of his life. In his early work, he expressed a belief that man could prepare himself to receive the grace of God. However, in the Summa Theologica, though he sometimes appears to assign man a decisive level of responsibility in justification,

Aquinas is explicit that it is exclusively God's grace to which salvation must be attributed (McGrath 108).

Despite the continuity of the orthodox Augustinian tradition of grace and justification for nearly nine centuries in the course of the Middle Ages, these doctrines were to be strongly challenged in a controversy centered at Oxford University in the mid-fourteenth century. We shall later see how this controversy appears to have affected the Pearl-poet. At the close of the thirteenth century, Aristotelian philosophy with its empirical emphasis was still an important current in Christian theology and philosophy. But in England its influence had long been checked by the official censure of the archbishops. Aquinas' theological methods had never gained a large body of devoted followers there, though his works were much read. The doctrinal positions of the Oxford masters were fairly consistent in their expression of a conventional Augustinian outlook (Little 70). In the early years of the fourteenth century at Oxford, there was seen a revived theological interest in the works of Anselm and in his view that man must first believe in order to understand, along with the promotion of an extreme doctrine of realism. Meyrick Carré states that at this time "the Augustinian view of the divine illumination of the intellect was maintained by a succession of masters and in terms that allowed little to the human mind in the work of discovering essences" (140).

The medieval philosophy of realism provided the philosophical counterpart to the Augustinian theory of the foundation of man's divine knowledge. Through the

works of Augustine, the philosophy of Plato and his followers, the Neoplatonists, had been transmitted through the Middle Ages. Like Plato, Augustine believed that the changing and temporal things of this world cannot explain unchanging and eternal truth. Beyond this world lies the changeless reality of the Creator. Man must turn away from his earthly, mutable concerns to focus on the Ideas, Plato's concept of forms comprising those things eternal and divine. Of these forms, great value is laid upon the principles of order and harmony derived from them. From the eternal Ideas, the objects of man's sense perception compose their being, and knowledge is true as far as it discerns these realities. Absolute knowledge requires illumination, an imparting from God through participation in the Ideas (McInerny 108). The later medieval philosophy of realism similarly held that God had fashioned the particular objects known by human sensory perception out of the eternal Ideas which exist in His mind. Man's search for knowledge requires passing beyond material phenomena to arrive at the immaterial originals, or universals, which constitute the timeless truth behind man's changing world of experience.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century at Oxford, a young religious and philosophical thinker, John Duns Scotus, began to attract attention for the "disturbing ingenuity" of his ideas (Mallet 203). The work of Duns Scotus was to have a profound influence on later Oxford theologian and philosopher, William of Ockham, whose doctrines of grace and justification ignited a Pelagian controversy in mid-fourteenth-century England. Prior to this age, traditional theologians had long

subordinated philosophy to theology, and Aquinas had attempted their reconciliation. The work of Duns Scotus initiated the formal separation of the two disciplines and brought an almost overwhelming new level of complexity to religious and philosophical thought. As a Franciscan, Duns Scotus was trained in the Augustinian tradition of Bonaventura. He attacked the rival Aristotelian theological tradition, especially the teachings of Aquinas. However, Duns Scotus was not an uncritical supporter of Bonaventura and Franciscan theology. He revised the theology of his order, sometimes in light of Aristotelian philosophy, and he rejected Bonaventura's belief in divine illumination, for instance. Essentially a critic, Duns Scotus, or the Subtle Doctor, as he was known, formulated extraordinarily complex and detailed arguments as he worked to correct the errors of other theologians. His principal theological works include a commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard, known as the Oxonian Work, the Parisian Reports, and a short treatise on natural theology entitled On the First Principle (McGiffert 295-97).

Duns Scotus harbored no religious skepticism, but he would not accept either the Thomist synthesis of revealed and natural knowledge or the Augustinian notion of divine illumination (Copleston 216). He believed, like Aquinas, in Aristotle's theory that natural knowledge is formed by the human mind working on sense experience. But he took issue with Aquinas in greatly restricting the scope of philosophical inquiry in matters of theology. Duns Scotus believed the human mind to be much more limited in its capacity to confirm supernatural knowledge than

previous thinkers. He carried his arguments against Aquinas' use of Aristotelianism further than any of the contemporary advocates of Augustinian illumination at Oxford. According to Duns Scotus:

Since it was impossible to reach a cause through its effects, human reason could hardly establish a relationship between the created world and its creator. God was infinitely free; His ways were incalculable. One had to postulate a complete distinction between theological and scientific knowledge and limit the action of human reason to the latter. Yet Duns did his best not to step outside the accepted framework of metaphysics. He still believed that by reason one could arrive at general propositions about existence and made a last great effort to adapt the realist tradition to the new sense of God. (Reeves 71)

Duns Scotus resisted any easy connection between natural knowledge and knowledge of the divine, and he preferred to speak in terms of probabilities rather than proofs in metaphysics. Aquinas had indeed reserved certain Christian mysteries, such as the Trinity and the Incarnation, as problems relying solely upon faith. But for Duns Scotus, there were numerous other important dogmas whose explanations could be located only in the will of God. For example, Duns Scotus could not find acceptable proofs for God's omnipotence or for the soul's immortality. He later developed a variety of arguments to strengthen his basic

contention that “God is the subject matter of theology, but not of metaphysics” (Copleston 217).

In theology, apart from the separation of religious and philosophical speculation, Duns Scotus challenged other important doctrines in his discussion of the will of God. Like many theologians and philosophers before him, Duns Scotus was intrigued by the nature of the human and divine wills. Aquinas had stressed the primacy of reason and knowledge over the will. The will follows what reason presents to it as the highest good, and God’s will can therefore be explained through the use of reason. In contrast, Duns Scotus stressed the primacy of the will. Reason may show the will what is possible, but the will is free to choose any path of action. The freedom of the will means that it does not simply follow the commands of reason. As a logical outcome of this analysis, Duns Scotus maintained the absolute freedom of God; and he distinguished the two forms of God’s power in terms adopted by subsequent fourteenth-century thinkers:

His ordained power (*potentia ordinata*) as His law for this world and
His absolute power (*potentia absoluta*) as His omnipotence pure and
simple, regarded solely in itself and expressed in the creed of an
omnipotent God limited by nothing save logical self-destruction,
which would impair His power. (Leff, Dissolution 14)

Duns Scotus insisted that the world order is as it is not because it follows reason, but because God freely chose it. Similarly, something is not willed by God because it is good, but it is good because He willed it. The Subtle Doctor's emphasis upon divine will rather than intellect was a rejection of Aquinas' Aristotelian thesis that God created the world through pure thought. Duns Scotus viewed love as the source of all of God's actions and as the ultimate command for mankind. The most striking conclusion he drew from his thinking on the divine will was the necessity for a renewed emphasis upon faith, a faith measured not by man's wisdom but by his love (Copleston 226).

Critics have historically disagreed in their interpretations of the theological and philosophical work of Duns Scotus (Mallet 205). He did not leave a complete system of thought, and he attracted many followers who elaborated his conceptions. As a philosopher, Duns Scotus is usually considered to be a moderate realist who believed that the human mind apprehends universals by way of particular objects rather than through divine illumination. As a theologian, Duns Scotus originated the formal break between philosophy and theology when he argued that "the theologian can adduce many considerations to show that the great beliefs of the faith are very probably true, but he cannot offer demonstrative proofs in their favour" (Carré, Phases 153). Duns Scotus cast doubt on the ability of human reason to confirm theological truth, believing Scripture to be the ultimate source for religious knowledge. The following generation at Oxford was to see William of Ockham

deny unconditionally the capacity of human reason to attain any degree of certainty in theological speculation.

William of Ockham (c.1285-1349) is often regarded as the most important intellectual figure at Oxford in the fourteenth century (Courtenay, Role 103). Primarily a logician, Ockham constructed a radically novel philosophical doctrine based upon Aristotelian principles and an intricate new logic. As founder of the new nominalism, Ockham posed a compelling threat to the traditional foundational concepts in both philosophy and theology. In philosophy, Ockham drew chiefly upon the works of Duns Scotus, adapting much to his own use and then frequently extending the ideas of this master (Wood 51). In theology, while professing belief in the infallibility of Scripture, his commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard contained numerous statements which many opposed as threatening to orthodox teachings. Ockham's influence on medieval intellectual life was vast. As Carré has observed: "Nominalism . . . was already attracting philosophers at Oxford when the Commentary was composed. From Oxford it rapidly spread to Paris and to other centres of learning and for two centuries it continued to divide the schools of Europe into hostile groups" (Phases 157). According to James Weisheipl, it is largely due to the thought of Ockham and his followers that the University of Oxford experienced its era of greatest renown. Weisheipl states:

In the first half of the fourteenth century the schools of Oxford attained a reputation throughout the academic world that they never

quite equaled before or after. It was a period in which Richard of Bury, bishop of Durham, could boast that 'admirable Minerva . . . has passed by Paris, and has happily come to Britain'. In the early fourteenth century the Oxford schools of logic, physics, and even of theology attracted the attention of the whole academic world with their 'English subtleties' and 'calculations'. (607)

At Oxford, the mid-century reaction against Ockham's theology was to reach its most distinctive point in the great theological treatise of Thomas Bradwardine completed in 1344, De causa Dei contra Pelagium. As Ockham's most outraged and forceful opponent, Bradwardine's charges of Pelagianism against him led to a resurgence of traditional Augustinian thought on the issues of grace and justification which was to prevail and carry on through much of the century in the work of later Oxford theologians Richard Fitzralph and John Wyclif. "Without doubt," as Weisheipl states, "the two most influential and outstanding thinkers of the early fourteenth century were William of Ockham and Thomas Bradwardine; their influence on future generations at Oxford and elsewhere was extraordinary" (643).

Ockham joined the Franciscan order and began his studies in theology at Oxford in 1310. Following the typical program of study, he completed his chief theological work, the commentary on Lombard's Sentences, between 1315 and 1319. This commentary is generally regarded as the earliest of his extant writings, a collection also consisting of his Quodlibetal Questions, a number of treatises on

logic and physics, as well as numerous political works. Scholars seem to agree that the political works date from the time of Ockham's excommunication in 1328 to his death in 1349. Otherwise, the dates and order of composition of Ockham's writings are unsettled matters (Moody 22-23). Ockham's academic career was halted in 1324, just before he was to receive his license to teach theology, when he was called to the papal court in Avignon to answer to charges of unorthodoxy. He was later referred to by his admirers as the Venerable Inceptor, a term denoting his academic attainment just short of the doctorate (Klocker 1).

Like the works of Duns Scotus, Ockham's works are fundamentally of an analytical and critical nature. His nominalist theories of knowledge found expression in his earliest work, the Sentences commentary, and were developed in most of his non-political treatises. Ockham was revolutionary in attacking one of the most traditional presuppositions of philosophical and theological belief: "The pervading note of Ockham's philosophical discussions is the rejection of all facets of realism. Universals have no existence in reality. They are convenient mental fictions, signs standing for many particulars at once," states Carré (Realists 107). With his explicit denial of realism, Ockham swiftly dismissed the ancient belief in the objective reality of universals that was so basic to philosophical and religious thought. Universals were merely signs or names, hence the term "nominalism." The name "man," for example, is only a general designation applied to all humans; such a name has no essential and independent existence apart from particular human beings.

Instead, only concrete and individual things have true existence in the natural world. The immediate awareness of individual things and actions through sensory perception and intellection is what Ockham regarded as intuitive knowledge. Intuitive knowledge, he believed, is the sole basis for the knowledge of individual things and is therefore the sole source for the natural knowledge of reality. As Harry Klocker states:

Ockham consistently maintained a world of uniquely existing singulars, each of which was only itself and pointed only to itself. Knowledge of these singular beings was grounded in a sensible and intellectual intuition of their existential presence to the knower. All other knowledge became abstract knowledge which divorced itself from existence. Such abstract knowledge resulted in a relationship of concepts, a logic, a pattern of interpretations, which might be adequate as a possible explanation of the world but which could give no guarantee of its existential validity. Such validity was always reserved for the initial intuition. (7-8)

Over the following decades at Oxford, Ockham attracted a group of eager disciples, of whom the best known are Robert Holcot, Adam Wodeham, and Thomas Buckingham. Ockhamist thought was applied to a variety of academic disciplines; William J. Courtenay cites the most frequently mentioned as “a nominalistic metaphysics, an epistemology of intuitive cognition, a terminist logic, a

nominalistic physics, and a semi-Pelagian soteriology" (Reception 89). Ockham's nominalism indeed raised serious questions for the realm of theology. His rejection of realism led him to abandon traditional Augustinian theology. And, since universals were simply names or signs attached to images in the human mind, there was no metaphysical relationship between such signs and the objects they were applied to. "Metaphysical philosophy therefore is not a process of real knowledge and understanding, but a shifting about in our mind of mental symbols, as it were a shifting of ciphers or tickets," explains David Knowles (284). Thus the rational character of the Christian religion could not be proved, and Ockham fully rejected the category of natural theology common to Aquinas and Duns Scotus. As a professed believer, Ockham embraced the only conclusions possible for him, that "the Christian system is to be accepted in its entirety on the basis of divine revelation, but the claim that it is rational is to be abandoned once and for all" (McGiffert 308). The principles of Duns Scotus had precipitated the growing disuse of philosophical inquiry to sustain theological truth, but Ockham's epistemology forced a permanent division between the two disciplines.

In theology, nominalism did away with such metaphysical matters as proving God's existence, the problem of universals, and the relationship of form to matter. Instead, as Ockham introduced his new theories of knowledge at Oxford, both he and his disciples began to focus chiefly upon the relationship of God to the created order, of the divine will to the human will, and upon the issues of grace, free will,

and future contingents. The sacraments were also typically discussed in their relationship to grace and free will. Of these developments in theology, Gordon Leff states:

What is so striking about these questions is that they were virtually reduced to those concerning the relation of free to divine will, in which grace and predestination, for the first time since the Pelagian controversy of the fourth century, became the central problems. It is evidence of the breakdown in the old harmony between the divine and the created that, instead of ascertaining God through His traces in this world, His existence had to be reconciled with man's. (Bradwardine 10)

In development of his nominalistic theology, Ockham appropriated and expanded Duns Scotus' doctrine of the primacy of the divine and human wills. From this exercise evolved Ockham's speculations on the nature of God's freedom and omnipotence, speculations which were to lead directly to the charges of Pelagianism against him.

Ockham reasoned that because the truths of Christianity cannot be proven, Christian belief must rely upon faith alone. It followed that since man can know nothing of God by his natural faculties, and yet must believe in His omnipotence by faith, then man can in no way define, predict, or limit God's actions or powers.

Ockham embraced Duns Scotus' doctrine of God's absolute and ordained powers and then carried the concepts to their furthest limits when he determined them to be "the basis of ultimate truth in philosophy and in theology" (Weisheipl 613). God's ordained power signified the laws He freely established and disclosed through revelation. In contrast, God's absolute power signified His unlimited potential to perform any action regardless of revelation, except that which in itself implies a contradiction. Even by his absolute power, God cannot act in a manner that is self-contradictory. The most radical new element in Ockham's theology was his extreme emphasis upon God's unpredictability due to His absolute freedom. Ockham's discussion of the divine will and of the infinite freedom and power of God culminated in often bewildering levels of complexity in his theological writings. Leff has remarked, for example, that while Ockham disallowed Augustinian metaphysics, his position on God's freedom to do as He wills without antecedent provision for mankind was intensely Augustinian. Says Leff, "The novelty here lay only in the sustained way in which [Ockham] developed the paradoxes which could flow from divine omnipotence" (Paris 297). It was precisely this elaboration of the paradoxes existing in the distinction between God's ordained order and His absolute power that eventually involved Ockham in the charges of unorthodoxy.

Ockham's attacks on many of the traditional positions of theology are plainly shown in the divergent truths he maintained between God's ordained and absolute powers. In such a context, revelation itself appeared to be no more than revealed

probability as opposed to any ascertainable order. Although vowing belief in the word of God as disclosed in Scripture, Ockham's theology, as Carré says, "is dominated by a central religious conviction, that of the absolute freedom of God's will in all the measures of the world" (Phases 165). Regarding grace and justification, Ockham wrote in his commentary on the Sentences that the supernatural habit of grace was necessary for man's justification by God's ordained power. On the other hand, Ockham claimed that such a habit of grace was not necessary for justification by God's absolute power. Here, Ockham insisted that God rewards merit, though no action of man can be of itself meritorious. The decision to bestow merit lies purely in God's absolute freedom to accept or reject the freely willed and performed actions of man. Of God's absolute power and human merit, Ockham wrote in his commentary: "Nothing is meritorious unless it is voluntary, that is, freely elicited and freely carried out, for nothing is meritorious unless it is in us and in our power. But nothing is in our power of acting or not acting unless this comes from the will, as the principal mover, and not from a habit" (Leff, Heresy 301). In asserting human free will in justification by God's absolute power, Ockham made it possible for man to achieve justification without the supernaturally infused habit of grace, since God cannot be limited in His freedom to reward any act. "By this means," states Leff, "the Ockhamists enabled free will to become the main agent in a meritorious act and relegated grace to a secondary cause, which God, in acting directly, could by-pass" (Heresy 301).

Augustine's major works were widely available in the later medieval period, and through them every medieval theologian was familiar with the heresy of Pelagianism. Weisheipl states that "no medieval theologian, not even Ockham, would admit to being a Pelagian" (646). It is impossible to ascertain the true extent of Ockham's personal belief in orthodox theology, and scholars have sometimes speculated on his motivations. In his book-length study of the theology of Bradwardine and Ockham, entitled Bradwardine and the Pelagians, Leff has written:

Ockham and his followers . . . refused to move beyond that which could be verified: God, as outside these terms of reference, was essentially a shadowy figure whose relation to His creatures was unknowable. He was virtually excluded from their system, and, as the Masters at Avignon themselves would recognize, Ockham could equally have dispensed with God in expressing his views on grace. One cannot but feel that God would have no real place at all with Ockham and his followers were it not for the need to safeguard themselves. (12)

For Ockham, the division of God's powers may have appeared to provide a means for safe retreat from the inevitable charges of unorthodoxy against him.

Ockham explicitly defended his theology against charges of Pelagianism in both his Sentences commentary and in his Quodlibetal Questions. In the first book

of his Sentences commentary, for example, Ockham consistently maintained that he avoided the errors of Pelagius because he did not obligate God to reward man's good works. God is so infinitely free, Ockham claimed, that He cannot be constrained by anything in the created order. In the same manner, Ockham also held that God cannot be obligated to punish the sinner. The value of any act lies in God's estimation alone, and reward and punishment rest upon the divine will to freely impose. Regarding Ockham's position on grace as it pertains to merit in the created world, Alister McGrath states:

Although Ockham insists that an act can only be meritorious if it is performed in a state of grace, it appears that he regards this as merely a *conditio sine qua non*, secondary in importance to the divine acceptation. For Ockham, an act can only be meritorious *de potentia ordinata* if it is performed in a state of grace—but the meritorious value of that act is determined solely through the divine will. (115)

In contrast, Ockham's theology of grace as it relates to God's absolute power gives implicit approval to a notion of human moral capacity and salvation independent of grace, even as he argues in his own defense against unorthodoxy. In his Quodlibetal Questions, Ockham wrote:

Perhaps you will object that [my thesis regarding merit and salvation] contains the error of Pelagius. I reply that it does not. For Pelagius

held that grace is not in fact required 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]. (493)

Ockham sought to secure himself against Pelagianism by redefining the concept of merit as residing solely in the divine acceptance of a freely willed human act and not as emerging from that act as a force which could in any way limit or compromise the freedom of God to respond in the manner He chooses. As Weisheipl states, "By rejecting the [Pelagian] concept of merit Ockham thought he was avoiding the heresy of Pelagius" (648). Ockham stated that God, in His ordained power, never acted in a manner contrary to the laws He freely established. However, by God's absolute power, Ockham declared that it was possible for man to gain salvation without the infusion of divine grace, if God freely chose to accept an act as worthy of merit. The division of God's powers always allowed Ockham to maintain that he was speaking merely of possibilities, rather than certainties. This particular possibility, however, had clear affinities with Pelagianism; for while acknowledging the gratuitousness of grace, it also implied that man may initiate the process of justification.

An additional facet of Ockham's nominalistic theology was his belief in the radical contingency of all things in the created order. Ockham and his followers believed that God, in His absolute power and perfect omniscience, must know the

future eternally. This led to difficulties, however, in their attempts to reconcile this view with their insistence upon man's free will. Does God's foreknowledge predetermine the choices of the human will? "While the problem was one of logic with theological ramifications," observes Weisheipl, "its origin lay in human psychology, as Aquinas and others had pointed out. It consisted in trying to imagine God's knowledge and will in the manner of human knowledge and will . . . " (623). Aquinas, following the Boethian tradition, maintained the necessity of all things in the created order through God's providence, as well as maintaining God's perfect knowledge of all future events. According to Aquinas, God existed outside created time in a state of eternal presence. Future events in the created order, like past events, were ever-present to God.

Determined to maintain human free will, Ockham and his disciples reasoned that God must allow His knowledge of future events in the created order to be contingent, although His allowance here was "subject to change as free will was free to change its course of action" (Leff, Bradwardine 137). As Leff discusses, such an argument could cast doubt on the truth of God's revealed word and render it contingent as well: "Anything God or Christ said about the future could turn out differently and so they could mislead" (137). While the Ockhamists seemed to support such radical solutions to the problem of contingency, Ockham himself was evasive as to stating his view as a matter of belief. "As we shall see," states Weisheipl, "Ockham always refused to give an explanation, insisting that 'it is

impossible to explain clearly the manner in which God knows future contingents” (623). This issue, along with the issues of grace and justification, comprise the central targets of Bradwardine’s attack upon the theology of Ockham and his followers.

The dangers of Ockhamist thought for traditional Christian theology can hardly be overstated. Augustine’s condemnation of the Pelagian position on grace and justification, ratified by the Second Council of Orange in 529, had served continuously through the centuries to warn theologians against any doctrines which might imply that man possesses the power to earn his own salvation. Throughout the years, an occasional issue was raised which suggested that the Augustinian notions of grace and salvation served to undermine the significance of Christian ethics. Until the time of the fourteenth century, such issues were inconsequential for the orthodox tradition. In the twelfth century, Peter Abelard was judged Pelagian and condemned at the Council of Sens for his opinion that man may perform a good work through free will. In the thirteenth century, Aquinas wrote in his early commentary on Lombard’s Sentences that God gives preparatory grace to those who try their best. However, in Aquinas’ later Summa Theologica, he was explicit that every human effort is the result, and never the cause, of grace. It was Ockham’s development of the doctrine of God’s absolute power, taken from its peripheral place in the theology of Duns Scotus, and given its position of preeminence in nominalistic theology which constituted a threat not as easily

resolved in the fourteenth century. As Meyrick Carré states, “The lectures of the young *inceptor* proved to be dangerously unorthodox; he propounded a doctrine of empiricism, and did not shrink from objecting to the grounds upon which the tenets of theology were traditionally supported” (Realists 102). Heiko Oberman states, “The thought that God might not be bound to revealed laws meant a sweeping transformation for the Middle Ages” (Archbishop 8-9). And May McKisack states simply, “For theology, Ockham’s teaching was deadly” (509).

In 1324, Ockham was summoned to Avignon by Pope John XXII at the urging of John Lutterel, the former chancellor of Oxford. Leveling charges of heresy, Lutterel requested that approximately fifty-six propositions in Ockham’s commentary on the Sentences be examined by a papal commission. While at Avignon, Ockham allied himself with a group of Franciscans engaged in a bitter controversy with the papacy over evangelical poverty. For this activity, he was imprisoned. In 1326, the commission of theologians declared fifty-one of Ockham’s articles to be heretical. Ockham, however, refused any retractions. In 1328, he escaped from Avignon and sought protection at the court of the Emperor Louis of Bavaria, where he remained until his death in 1349. Upon his association with Louis, a vehement critic of the pope, Ockham was excommunicated from the Church. For the remainder of his life, Ockham engaged in polemics against the papacy, aiming chiefly at its enormous power and wealth (Carré, Realists 102-3).

Of Ockham's articles censured at Avignon, the commission labeled the first four as Pelagian. All four invoked God's absolute power as permitting man to initiate his own justification. The first three articles asserted God's power to accept as meritorious any action performed freely by man and without the necessity of prevenient grace. The fourth article stated God's power to remit human sin without grace (Leff, Heresy 296). The papal commission felt strongly that Ockham's intent was to destroy the traditional belief in God's grace; and in condemning Ockham's Pelagianism, they also rejected his notion of God's absolute power. As Leff explains:

[The commission] refused to allow hypothesis to circumvent revelation. What has been ordained by God is the only criterion; to destroy the laws which apply to this world by laws which apply to none is equivalent to rejecting all standards. Thus the *magistri* saw Ockham's method as essentially an attack upon the foundations of the established tenets, even though it was carried out in the name of God's omnipotence. (Bradwardine 191)

Scholars agree that Ockham's radical theological innovations and his subsequent censure at Avignon make it likely that he was the primary target of his contemporary Bradwardine's attacks upon the "modern Pelagians." Following convention, Bradwardine did not name his opponents in his writings, but, as Leff points out, "Ockham was openly associated with heretical tendencies in a way that could not

have escaped attention, least of all by Bradwardine, the arch-enemy of Pelagianism” (Bradwardine 192).

At Oxford in the 1320’s and 1330’s, Ockham’s thought was of the greatest influence in both generating controversy and in attracting adherents. Walter Burley, John of Reading, and Walter Chatton are among the most noted of the English critics of Ockhamist logic and theology during this period (Courtenay, Adam 59-70). Their criticism, nevertheless, did little to halt the enthusiasm of Ockham’s followers, like Robert Holcot, Adam Wodeham, and Thomas Buckingham, whose theological writings quickly became important works. In these writings, Ockham’s thought was often extended into so many far-reaching and outrageous conclusions that Bradwardine’s indignity and contempt for the “modern Pelagians” may well be understood. According to Oberman, Holcot, in the manner of Ockham, also employed the doctrine of God’s absolute power to subvert God’s ordained power. For example, Holcot wrote in his own commentary on the Sentences: “On account of the contingency of the future, as it exists for God too, that which has been revealed is also continually subjected to that contingency and what the Scripture says can be untrue” (Oberman, Archbishop 45). Adam Wodeham occasionally made claims considered as shocking even for the Pelagians. “In a remarkable passage,” says Leff, “[Wodeham] states that the *raison d’être* for God’s *potentia absoluta* is that it enables God to do otherwise than by His ordained power” (Bradwardine 242). Along with those of Buckingham, the Ockhamist views expressed in the

works of Holcot and Wodeham consistently represent most of Bradwardine's main targets.

Jaroslav Pelikan cites Thomas Bradwardine (c.1290-1349) and his contemporary, the Italian Gregory of Rimini, as the two most influential proponents of Augustinianism in the first half of the fourteenth century (Vol.4 18). Bradwardine entered Merton College at Oxford and became Master of Theology in 1323. He remained at Oxford until 1335, pursuing further studies and attaining a high reputation as both mathematician and theologian. While at Oxford, Bradwardine originated a mathematical approach to the physics of motion that was accepted by all the Mertonians over the new nominalistic physics inaugurated by Ockham (Weisheipl 633-37). In 1335, Bradwardine left Oxford for London, where he became chaplain to Richard de Bury, bishop of Durham. Bury was an intellectual, an advisor and intimate of Edward III, and a friend of the Italian humanist Petrarch. Listed among those in his household in 1334 and 1335 were Robert Holcot, Walter Burley, Richard Fitzralph, and Richard Kilvington, the future Dean of St. Paul's. For several years, Bradwardine enjoyed the society of the well educated men among Bury's circle in London, who for pastime would read and debate controversial topics of theology (Courtenay, Schools 134). In 1337 and 1338, Bradwardine held the office of chancellor at St. Paul's, and it is believed that some of his theological lectures on grace and justification date from this period (Oberman, Archbishop 17). In 1339, Bradwardine was appointed confessor to the

king, in whose service he remained until his election as the archbishop of Canterbury shortly before his death from the plague in 1349. The corpus of Bradwardine's works includes treatises on mathematics, physics, and theology. Bradwardine's greatest theological treatise, De causa Dei contra Pelagium et de virtute causarum ad suos Mertonenses, Libri tres (1344), is a collection of lectures, delivered primarily at Oxford at the request of the Merton fellows. Its central goal was to combat the heretical conceptions of grace and justification promoted among the pestilent "modern Pelagians." It was this treatise which earned for Bradwardine the title of "Doctor Profundus" (Stephen 1097).

Bradwardine was an exact contemporary of Ockham, whose disturbing new doctrine of nominalism struck the final blow for the harmonious union of philosophy and theology achieved in the previous century. In its place, Ockham and his followers quickly worked to formulate the paradoxes which cast doubt over the certainty of divine revelation itself. The pervasive influence of the Ockhamists in matters of theology is readily apparent in the rapid changes seen in the Sentences commentaries at Oxford, the chief introduction to theology. The original Sentences of Peter Lombard contained over 600 chapters which examined every fundamental issue of theology. In contrast, as Ockham's epistemology spread, the size of the typical commentary on the Sentences was dramatically reduced: ". . . as the new limitations of Ockham's theory of knowledge were imposed, the Commentary shrank in size and hardly bore any relation to the classical Commentaries of, say, St.

Thomas, St. Bonaventura or even Duns Scotus" (Leff, Bradwardine 9). By Bradwardine's time, the central questions in the Sentences commentaries had become those regarding the relationship of the divine will to the human will, grace, justification, and future contingents. Though the Ockhamists were hardly without critics, it was Bradwardine whose powerful intellect and impassioned belief in Scripture and the theological tradition of grace enabled him to successfully battle the heretics whom he refers to throughout De causa Dei as the "modern Pelagians." David Knowles attests that as Ockham's logic was threatening to "mutilate the Christian faith," the single mighty voice that was raised against him in his lifetime was "that of his fellow Oxonian Thomas Bradwardine" (284-85). Bradwardine approached the crucial issues of his treatise in the same manner as his opponents: with logical arguments advanced by a complex series of propositions and proofs (Kennedy 194-95).

In the preface to De causa Dei, Bradwardine describes the source of his theological work as originating in his abhorrence of the growing religious skepticism of his day, a skepticism which emphasized man's free will and power in the created world and neglected the role of God and His grace. Prior to his inception as a student of theology, Bradwardine experienced a conversion which, as McGrath has pointed out, appears to "exemplify the Augustinian *cognitio* through *illuminatio*" (141). Bradwardine's conversion centered upon a new awareness of God's grace which he took up at once as the primary theological cause of his career.

Bradwardine writes in Book I of De causa Dei of how he was tempted early in his life by the doctrines of the Pelagians and of his subsequent illumination from God:

From time to time I heard theologians treating of the questions of grace and free will, and the party of Pelagius seemed to me to have the best of the argument Everyday I heard them teach that we are the masters of our own free acts, and that it stands in our power to do either good or evil, to be either virtuous or vicious, and such like. And when I heard now and then in church a passage read from the apostle, as that word in Romans, ix.16, "Therefore it is not in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but in God that sheweth mercy", I had no liking for such teaching, for towards grace I was still graceless But afterwards, and before I had become a student of theology, the truth before mentioned struck upon me like a beam of grace. It seemed to me as if I beheld in the distance, under a transparent image of truth, the grace of God as it is prevenient both in time and nature to all good works—that is to say, the gracious will of God, which precedently wills that he who merits salvation shall be saved, and precedently works this merit in him,—God, in truth, being in all movements the primary Mover. Wherefore also I give thanks to Him who freely gave me this grace. (qtd. in Workman 120-21)

In De causa Dei, Bradwardine presents himself as a crusader whose mission is to uphold the theological concepts of grace and justification in the tradition of St. Paul and St. Augustine, his two principal theological sources. Bradwardine viewed Augustine as the truest heir to the apostle Paul and as the most magnificent advocate of divine grace. In De causa Dei, Bradwardine relies firmly upon the authority of tradition to bolster his cause in defeating the modern heirs of Pelagius. He states that, while at times it seems "almost the whole world is running after [Pelagius] and inclining to his errors," God's Church has always stood staunchly behind Augustine (Pelikan, Vol.4 18). As for the offending nominalistic theology, modern scholarship agrees with Oberman that "Bradwardine rightly indicated its Pelagian tendencies" (Archbishop 2).

De causa Dei is a vast document of nearly 1,000 folio pages. It was widely read in the fourteenth century and later published in 1618 when Lord Henry Savile, a warden at Oxford, bound the work together in one volume, along with Bradwardine's biography. De causa Dei is the subject of two book-length treatments by modern scholars Leff and Oberman, who discuss in detail both Bradwardine's theology and the historical context in which it was written. Bradwardine was not a systematic theologian: his concern was solely to assert the preeminence of divine grace in justification and to defeat all claims to human merit. Leff and Oberman both remark upon the unified construction of Bradwardine's

argument and the coherence maintained throughout the nearly 1,000 pages of his treatise. States Leff:

. . . as a closely reasoned, powerfully argued treatise on a particular topic and with a set purpose, De causa Dei may be claimed as unique during this period. The central argument is never lost, and allowing for what in our eyes is the inherent medieval *penchant* to excessive repetition, it is without any real digression. (Bradwardine 17)

As typical of the scholastic theologian, Bradwardine's knowledge is comprehensive and his use of sources broad. However, he relies most centrally and consistently throughout De causa Dei upon Scripture, with emphasis on St. Paul, upon the works of St. Augustine, with emphasis on the anti-Pelagian writings, and upon the works of St. Anselm. The two most often cited expressions in De causa Dei are the passage given above from Romans 9:16 and John 5:15: "For apart from me you can do nothing" (Leff, Bradwardine 110-15; Oberman Archbishop 22-27).

James Weisheipl has characterized De causa Dei as "the most devastating assault on Pelagianism ever written" (The Mertonians 652). As such, it is composed of three books: Book I sets forth arguments for the existence of God and His attributes; Book II establishes the nature of man's will; and Book III reconciles the divine will with the created order. In Book I, Bradwardine draws largely upon Aristotle, Aquinas, and Duns Scotus in formulating proofs for God's existence and

in establishing God as the Supreme Being and Prime Mover of everything in the created sphere. God's knowledge is perfect and it is active, says Bradwardine. God knows everything that was or is to come; and everything that comes into being is a result of His will acting freely through His love (Leff, Bradwardine 46). Also in Book I, Bradwardine offers a catalog of heresies that begins with the earliest heretic, Cain, whom he designates the precursor of the Pelagians. "From this vantage point," says Oberman, "Bradwardine sets out to show the connections and transitions in the history of heresy. Since he feels that his own time makes an unbelievably large contribution to this history, he dedicates his every waking hour to doctrinal reform . . ." (Forerunners 25).

In Book II of De causa Dei, Bradwardine discusses creation, man's will, and the role of human sin in God's created order. "So far," states Leff, "Bradwardine has been preparing ground. He has made God the source of all creation and His will its law" (Bradwardine 50). In Book II, Bradwardine then moves to establish his principle of divine participation which constitutes the foundation of his theological system. In his doctrine of divine participation, Bradwardine asserts that God participates actively in every aspect of each created thing by His moving and directing according to His providence. Without God's eternal involvement in the world, there is absolutely no action nor being. From this point, Bradwardine develops his Augustinian conception of the bondage of the human will. As Leff says: ". . . Bradwardine allies God's active will to St. Augustine's concept of

man as worthless and powerless to do good of his own resources" (Bradwardine 58). Left to his own resources, man's will may freely choose to do what is good, yet in reality possesses power only to accomplish what is sinful. The aid of divine grace is indispensable for any man to perform what is good. Like Augustine, such a view allows Bradwardine to maintain God's omnipotence, as well as a measure of freedom in the created will. Although Bradwardine's theology has sometimes been judged as deterministic, in his doctrine of human sin he is explicit that God is not responsible for evil though He directs everything in creation. God is the supreme good and can only bring about that which is positive: God is the Author of all that is good. God does not cause sin, though He allows it to exist. Sin arises from a negative cause and therefore can only be attributable to man. Even so, Bradwardine finds a role for evil in God's providential plan. Following Augustine, he states that God allows, never wills, sin as punishment for the wicked and for the trial and strengthening of His elect. Oberman states:

Bradwardine knows himself to be in the same position as the Bishop of Hippo. The latter was already accused by the Pelagians of making God responsible for sin in his doctrine of predestination. This, however, is rightly stated by Augustine to be impossible, for God being "causa essendi" can consequently never be "causa deficiendi". Bradwardine finally with clear assurances safeguards God's share in

sin against a wrong interpretation in agreement with Augustine.
(Archbishop 133).

Bradwardine's essential doctrines of grace and justification are located in Book III of De causa Dei. Both concepts derive from the foundational belief in all of Bradwardine's theology that God acts eternally and never contingently based upon the conduct of His creatures. Of grace, Bradwardine establishes its thoroughly gratuitous nature, its prevenience, its absolute necessity in the performance of any good work, and its role in any human propensity to the good. "Such a doctrine," as Leff remarks, "resurrects all the inexorability of St. Augustine; it also anticipated Luther and Calvin in its denial of merit to any consideration" (Bradwardine 66). Of justification, Bradwardine is insistent that man has absolutely no part to play, for never can a human deed become the cause of God's actions. Grace is a gift of which credit is due solely to the Creator. Any attempt to act through the power of man's own will can only result in evil.

In Book III, Bradwardine's strength in polemic is displayed as he sets about to destroy the nominalistic doctrine of justification through merit by God's absolute power. Bradwardine argues against the Pelagians by stating their notion of merit negates belief in the eternal truth of God's omnipotence and in the eternal goodness and perfection of His providence. Ultimately it places restrictions, he says, upon God's infinite nature and makes His absolute power in actuality conditional. As a result of the Pelagian view, the immutable will of God decreed in Scripture is falsely

rendered contingent and ever subject to change (Leff, Bradwardine 77). As for the problem of predestination, Bradwardine was willing to extend his belief in the absolute sovereignty of God to its utmost limits and commit to Augustine's severe doctrine of double predestination and to deny the possibility for any degree of future contingency. This he affirms along with the Augustinian doctrine of the mystery of divine election: no one can have assurance of election or damnation in this lifetime. Thus, the Augustinian view that all things are predestined was revived by Bradwardine, and several scholars have even maintained that his powerful arguments in De causa Dei helped lead to the popularity of the doctrine among the later Reformers. In one essay on future contingents, for example, Calvin Normore has stated, "Bradwardine's work is seminal in a conceptual revolution that was taking place in the fourteenth century" (376).

Bradwardine's influence has been traced to a reliable degree for the remainder of the fourteenth century and for the period leading up to the Reformation. Bradwardine had both supporters and detractors in his lifetime and his century; yet the factual evidence regarding his influence indicates the general success of his mission and his insistence upon the traditional theological concepts of grace and justification. William of Ockham and his followers had ruled out entirely the use of metaphysics to support theology, as it was impossible, they believed, to have knowledge of God through rational means. The Ockhamist use of the notion of God's absolute power then ultimately rendered man's knowledge of the Divine

Being indefinable and unpredictable: “God, in fact, lost all the traditional attributes of creator; He became the source of uncertainty instead of eternal light” (Leff, Bradwardine 257). Bradwardine’s response amid the crisis was to assert the eternal truth of God’s revealed word in Scripture and to fiercely uphold the theological tradition of grace based upon the writings of St. Paul and St. Augustine and sustained and handed down the centuries by God’s holy Church:

In his fight against Pelagianism Bradwardine knew himself to be in line with Christ, Paul, Augustine, Gregory, and other Doctores; the Holy Church of God builds on so many Synods and Councils, so many popes and saints and so many and such strong intellectual arguments which all show that Pelagianism is a heresy. (Oberman, Archbishop 26)

While he lived, Bradwardine’s position had the implicit support of the papacy, which was opposed to all forms of nominalism. Bradwardine had desired for the pope to make an official pronouncement against the Ockhamists, though no such specific action was taken (Pantin 134). However, in a letter to the masters of Oxford dated 1346, the pope attacked the Ockhamist doctrines for their “unreal and useless opinions’ . . . together with their disregard of the bible and the *sancti* . . . in favour of ‘philosophical questions and other disputatious matters and suspect views’” (Leff, Heresy 297).

Of Bradwardine's influence in his lifetime, it is certain the Doctor Profundus was highly respected and esteemed by his fellow intellectuals and theologians as well as by the Church. His honorary title aside, Bradwardine continued in the king's service until his election in 1349 to the highest ecclesiastical office in the land, the archbishopric of Canterbury. As personal confessor to King Edward III, Bradwardine accompanied him on numerous military expeditions in the 1340's. Gotthard Lechler has reported that Bradwardine's religious and moral influence upon the king and his army was so vast that several historians have attributed the English victories as owing more to Bradwardine than to the prowess of Edward and his troops (67). Bradwardine is the leading theologian associated with the rise of Augustinian thought at Oxford in the early fourteenth century, a movement that became prominent in the second half of the century. He became one of the most widely read and quoted English writers of the century and the only one to be named in the works of Chaucer (Courtenay, Adam 117). Due to Bradwardine, the word "Pelagian" came into common usage in his age (Leff, Heresy 302). Bradwardine's De causa Dei, however, was often viewed by his contemporaries as too extreme in its answer to the problem of nominalistic theology; and there were few even among his advocates who wished to endorse his predestinarian theology in full. Courtenay states:

Bradwardine's thesis quickly became a *cause célèbre* at Oxford and, later, at Paris. Few theologians did not take up the challenge and

attempt to protect the freedom of man from what looked to them like a thoroughgoing, predestinarian, even predetermined view of the divine plan. It made Bradwardine a household name among the educated, inside and outside the university, and put forward a particular interpretation of Augustine that had its own long and interesting history. (Schools 322)

Even among modern scholars there is disagreement as to the level of determinism in Bradwardine's theology. The Dictionnaire de théologie catholique cites Bradwardine for "sa doctrine du déterminisme" and "son augustinisme excessif" (771-72). Leff also reads De causa Dei as a defense of determinism, though Oberman and Weisheipl agree that Bradwardine's Augustinian interpretation of the freedom of the human will, his insistence upon mankind's responsibility for sin, and his emphasis upon God's divine plan for His creation distinguish his theology from the type of impersonal pagan fatalism condemned in Paris in 1277. Weisheipl states:

As long as God's prior free choice and man's subsequent free will were both admitted, there was mystery; only when one or the other was denied was there heresy. This 'mystery' of the faith transcended human comprehension as much as did the trinity, incarnation, real presence in the eucharist and salvation itself. (The Mertonians 651)

As for Bradwardine's contemporary nominalist opponents, Courtenay points out that Robert Holcot, the only Ockhamist among the intellectuals gathered at Richard de Bury's London household, was one of just two members of that circle who did not attain significant advancement. Courtenay suggests that Holcot's career was adversely affected by the attacks upon his theology in De causa Dei (Schools 136). Also, much can be discerned from the fact that another well known nominalist, Thomas Buckingham, experienced a dramatic conversion as evidenced in his theological writings. Buckingham's early commentary on the Sentences shows his support of Ockhamist views of God's absolute power. Later when Buckingham completed his 88 Questions in 1350, he explicitly stated at the beginning of the work that he now writes against the errors of the Pelagians. Leff remarks:

That Buckingham experienced a change of heart seems likely even though on the question of future contingents he still supports free will, and that he had suffered severe censure at some stage seems apparent from his more than usual hesitance in voicing his own views. Could the effect of Bradwardine's disputation with him . . . and the denunciation of his views in De causa Dei have had their effect on him? We can only finally reply with fuller information, but it seems at least probable. (Bradwardine 261)

Of Buckingham, John Robson asserts that "his change of heart is one of the most valuable pieces of evidence we have for assessing the reaction of Oxford to the De

causa Dei" (65). Plainly, Buckingham's change in opinion seems to suggest that, after a lengthy period of upheaval due to nominalism, the study of theology at Oxford was returning to a more conservative outlook.

The devastating plague of 1348-49 ended the lives of many of the scholars concerned with the theological issues brought to the forefront by Ockham, leader of the "via moderna," and Bradwardine, defender of the "via antiqua." Ockham and Bradwardine themselves succumbed to the black death in 1349, along with countless other English scholars. Far fewer treatises by Oxford scholars exist that can be traced to the 1350's and 1360's as compared to the previous several decades (Robson 31). It is impossible to know precisely how the dispute would have fared had the major participants survived the plague and carried on. However, Bradwardine's treatise did mark the most significant turn against the "Pelagians," though Pelagianism did not completely disappear and nominalism remained a prominent trend in philosophy at Oxford until the 1370's (Oberman, Archbishop 188). Robson has noted the large extent to which Bradwardine is cited in surviving Sentences commentaries in the generation after his death: "It has long been appreciated that the De causa Dei struck a powerful and effective blow for traditional Augustinianism," states Robson, "and its influence is marked by the numerous citations in the Commentaries read at Oxford and Paris in the following twenty years" (40).

In the 1350's and 1360's, traditional Augustinian views of salvation were upheld and defended by Oxford's most distinguished theologians. The work of Richard Fitzralph and John Wyclif indicates that the issues which engaged Bradwardine and his opponents continued to occupy the interests of subsequent thinkers in the age of the Pearl-poet. "Fitzralph is one of the most important English theological writers of the fourteenth century," states W. A. Pantin (152). In the 1340's and 1350's, Fitzralph (d.1360), also an Oxonian and the bishop of Armagh, was well known for his theology promoting a moderate realism and Augustinianism. His great theological work De questionibus Armenorum was commissioned by the pope to explain the Catholic faith to the Armenians, who were negotiating for reunion with Rome. Three of the work's nineteen books were devoted to the issues of human free will and God's foreknowledge. Sharing Bradwardine's contempt for the irresponsible speculations of the nominalistic theologians, Fitzralph affirmed much that Bradwardine expressed in De causa Dei; and Fitzralph enjoyed boasting later in his life that he had helped to "destroy the English sophisms of Occam" (Pantin 132). However, alarmed by the ethical danger inherent in what he interpreted as Bradwardine's view that God is responsible for all human actions, Fitzralph labored to moderate his doctrines of the divine will, predestination, and future contingents: "In reality, [Fitzralph] says, God's will is not equally causal in all circumstances, and we must distinguish His first and supreme act of Creation from the lapses of perfection which are the immediate consequences of men's volitions"

(Robson 83). Out of such efforts, Fitzralph developed his unique doctrine that God knows past events as past and future events as future. Of Fitzralph's influence, Robson states that "to Oxonians at the end of the century he and Bradwardine stood out as the two great conservative philosophers of the previous generation" (85). Fitzralph's De questionibus Armenorum shares with Bradwardine's De causa Dei the distinction of being the two most frequently cited works by Oxford scholars in the period 1350 to 1400 (Robson 96).

Bradwardine and Fitzralph are regarded as the two leading precursors of John Wyclif (d.1384), who is by all estimates the most important philosopher and theologian at Oxford in the second half of the fourteenth century. Of Bradwardine and Fitzralph, Courtenay states, "These two figures form the most important intellectual heritage for Wyclif. We find in Wyclif a strong doctrine of grace and justification, of predestination *ante praevisa merita*, of the invisible, inward, or essential church, and the idea of the lordship of grace" (Schools 324). When Wyclif arrived at Oxford in the 1360's, the main topics of theological controversy had not changed from the time of Bradwardine, and nominalism was yet the predominant trend in philosophy (Robson 196; Oberman, Harvest 426). By the 1370's, Wyclif was the most renowned of contemporary Oxford scholars and was well known for his philosophical realism. In theology, Wyclif's most frequently cited authority was St. Augustine, and his debts to both Bradwardine and Fitzralph are plainly evident.

Wyclif adapted Bradwardine's version of the relationship between the divine and created wills. Leff states:

[Wyclif] himself frequently mentions Bradwardine by name and he largely takes over the latter's view on grace and predestination. Although his argument, unlike Bradwardine's, is founded upon the metaphysics of being, and its modes, it is directed to a similar theological end; and in this sense it can be regarded as heir to the problems which exercised Bradwardine. This is particularly apparent in Wyclif's polemic against Cunningham over future contingents, where he had to combat the same doubts over revelation as those cast by Holcot, Buckingham and Woodham What is so striking in Wyclif's case is that in the 1360's the same questions of grace and future contingents were exercising him as had exercised Bradwardine in the 1330's. (Bradwardine 261-62)

Wyclif accepted the Augustinian theology of grace and justification promoted by Bradwardine, though he, like Fitzralph, modified some of Bradwardine's doctrines. For example, while Bradwardine attributed predestination to the absolute sovereignty of God, Wyclif interpreted predestination as one of the eternal truths made known to God through the Ideas (McGrath 142). Also, though Wyclif believed in the eternity of divine actions, he resolved the matters of necessity and contingency in a manner very different from Bradwardine (Robson 198-99).

In Wyclif's earlier writings, there are explicit indications that orthodox theology was still being challenged by nominalistic views. "Wyclif reacted violently against the nominalism of the Ockhamists," state Marjorie Reeves and Stephen Medcalf (76). There are passages in Wyclif's De sciencia Dei and De volucione Dei in which he directly attacks the Ockhamists' fallacious conceptions of grace and their misuse of the notion of God's absolute power. By condemning his opponents in these works as "modern Pelagians," Robson observes that Wyclif "pays Bradwardine his highest compliment in using the name by which the 'Doctor Profundus' always referred to the radical theologians" (211). One such radical opponent of Wyclif's is thought to be Uthred of Boldon, a Benedictine monk known for his interest in Ockhamist theology and the doctrines of grace and justification. Wyclif had been engaged early in his career in a controversy with Uthred over monasticism. Later, in 1368, Uthred was censured by a group of friars who drew up twenty-eight articles from Uthred's public lectures which they claimed to be erroneous. Pantin states:

Perhaps the most interesting feature is that the articles under dispute are not concerned with the obvious topics that divided the monks and the friars, such as poverty and mendicancy, but with more purely theological topics, especially grace and justification, and so they illustrate those theological preoccupations which can also be seen in

Bradwardine and Buckingham, and in other theologians of this period on the Continent. (168)

It is apparent from Wyclif's writings and Uthred's doctrinal opinions that Pelagian conceptions of grace and justification were still being propagated in the 1360's (Oberman, Archbishop 188). Evidence of the awareness of these issues is afterward indicated in the literary works of Chaucer and Langland. It seems, however, that the major disputes were likely settled by about 1370: "The battle with the Pelagians appears to have been over by the 1360's (though echoes of it can be found in [Wyclif's] Summa de Ente), and the problem of the nature and efficacy of divine grace was no longer an acute issue. In Wyclif's theology it has a secondary, if still important, part" (Robson 207).

It is clear that the visionary debate in Pearl reflects the most prominent theological issues of its age. Pearl and its companion poems in the Cotton Manuscript are believed by most scholars to have been composed during the years 1340-1375, the period associated with the revival of academic Augustinian theology at Oxford. The origins of the revival lie in Bradwardine's anti-Pelagian lectures and his treatise of 1344 entitled De causa Dei contra Pelagium, composed to counteract the new nominalistic theology of the Ockhamists. While establishing the return to Augustinianism, Bradwardine did not, however, inspire a school of disciples; he was not a member of a religious order that would defend and circulate his teachings, and the Hundred Years War soon isolated Oxford as a center of theological study

(McGrath 142-43). It was at Paris that a modern Augustinian school was soon afterward established through the influence of Gregory of Rimini, who quoted De causa Dei in his own work (Leff, Gregory 238). In England, Bradwardine's Augustinian theology of grace and justification was to be adopted by Oxford's most preeminent theologians, though nominalistic theology maintained some support through the succeeding generation. In the next chapter, I will discuss the theology of baptism, another issue of contemporary relevance in Pearl. The final chapter of my dissertation will examine Pearl in light of these current theological controversies. I will discuss the evidence for the widespread knowledge of these issues among the educated laity and will provide a reading of Pearl that emphasizes the speaker's awareness of Ockhamist positions on grace, justification, and baptism.

Chapter 4

The Theology of Baptism:

New Testament to the Fourteenth Century

It is significant that the learned speaker of Pearl is unaware of the full implications of the Christian sacrament of baptism, especially as it pertains to infant salvation. In the years since Pearl's publication in 1865, just one critic has observed that the poem's treatment of divine grace and baptism seems to suggest contemporary misunderstandings or controversies regarding the sacrament. In his 1933 essay entitled "The Pearl: An Interpretation of the Middle English Poem," Rene Wellek argued against the common view of the poem's theological discourse as an irrelevant digression. The function of the speaker's dream vision, Wellek stated, is not only to declare the possibility of the baptized child's salvation, but also the possibility that the child is included among the host which follows the Lamb. The debate thus "reinforces the vision by arguments" (24). In support of this interpretation of Pearl, Wellek examines the overall orthodoxy of the poem's theology in reference to the opinions of several Church authorities, the most important of whom was St. Augustine. Augustine was explicit in numerous works as to the grace of baptized children. Wellek suggests that misunderstandings may

have arisen due to Augustine's distinction between two types of grace: "gratia prima," or free grace, and "gratia secunda," or grace which aids in the perseverance of faith. Augustine formulated the doctrine which established that all children participate in original sin, inherited through Adam, and that the sacrament of baptism imparts an awareness of God's free grace and a belief in His son. States Wellek:

Exactly the same view is also held by Saint Chrysostomus and other fathers of the church, but apparently in the course of the Middle Ages the salvation of baptized children does not seem to have been received quite without question, though the prevalent view held to the kindly theory of the fathers. (26)

Significantly, Wellek raises the question of whether Pearl may reflect contemporary disagreements regarding baptism. However, his sole concern is to attest the poet's theological orthodoxy. He states that Pope Clement V voiced his agreement with Augustine's doctrine of the salvation of children at the council at Vienne in 1311 and that St. Bernard of Clairvaux also gave support to this view. On the basis of this evidence, Wellek declares that the theology of baptism in Pearl is "in perfect accordance with the views of the church, even though at the time of our poet doubt was still possible" (26). As Wellek finds the theology of Pearl to be completely in line with orthodox Christian teaching, he then proposes that the

dreamer's doubts are the poet's own which he discards in consequence of the renewed hope that his vision brings him.

Wellek's study has been influential in the history of criticism on Pearl and appears to have settled the issue of the poem's orthodoxy for most critics to the present time. Today, Wellek's work is still commonly cited in studies of Pearl, and universal agreement exists among critics as to the orthodox nature of the maiden's theological speeches. In consequence of this view, the speaker of the poem is typically regarded as an ignorant man who is unaware of the Christian teachings on salvation or as one who will not submit to the will of God, due to his rebelliousness, foolishness, or grief. These views, however, do not take into consideration all of the details of the poem. Rather than ignorant, the speaker seems reasonably well educated for a medieval man. He possesses some learning of classical philosophy and literature, as well as a fairly comprehensive knowledge of Scripture, made known through his frequent references and allusions to the Bible. As for his refusal to submit to God's will, there exists the puzzling fact that prior to his vision of the maiden in Pearl the grieving speaker seems genuinely confused as to the destiny of his infant daughter. "I wyste neuer quere my perle wat3 gon," he tells the maiden early in his vision (376). His confusion is soon resolved when she explains the nature of her salvation through divine grace and its mediation through the Christian sacrament of baptism.

Sufficient textual evidence supports the common view of the speaker's relationship to the maiden in Pearl as one of father to daughter. It is thus highly unlikely that the speaker, or truly any other person so closely involved with the girl, would have been unaware of her earthly baptism. Indeed, the situation of the speaker's knowledge of her baptism in infancy, along with his uncertainty regarding the status of her soul upon death, together suggest that controversy may have developed in the mid-fourteenth century concerning the sacrament of baptism, and perhaps in relation to infant salvation in particular. The Pearl-maiden devotes a significant portion of her visionary teaching to an explanation of baptism's efficacy for the salvation of innocents in her larger exposition of divine grace and justification. The overall history of the sacrament of baptism, like many other aspects of Christian theology, involves controversy and has experienced disagreement in a few areas, namely: what precisely happens in the sacrament, whether the sacrament is necessary, and whether a small child should be baptized. There was some small sentiment against infant baptism from the early Christian era and throughout the Middle Ages. In addition, the relationship of baptism to grace and justification seems to have been called into question as a result of the Pelagian disputes between Thomas Bradwardine and William of Ockham and his followers in the mid-fourteenth century in England. In this chapter, I will illustrate the history and contemporary significance of the sacrament of baptism which pertain to the issues focused upon by the poet in Pearl.

The term “sacrament” is translated from the Greek *mysterion* (mystery) and refers to the liturgical ceremonies of the Catholic Church that are believed to have originated with Christ and which communicate God’s grace to recipients. Since the time of the New Testament, the two principal sacraments of the Church have been baptism and the Eucharist, or Holy Communion. The tradition of Latin Christianity includes five additional sacraments: confirmation, penance, matrimony, ordination, and unction (Urban 255). However, it is baptism and the Eucharist that are most closely identified with the personal ministry of Jesus. “In the Gospel records,” as Linwood Urban states, “Jesus commanded his followers to teach and baptize all nations, and also to reenact the Supper he ate with his disciples the night before His crucifixion” (255). The word “baptism” derives from the Greek work *baptein*, meaning “to dip,” and signifies the Church’s universal ritual of initiation performed with water. The advent of the sacrament of baptism was proclaimed in the Gospels by John the Baptist, who prepared the way for the coming of Christ:

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins And he preached, saying, “ . . . I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” (Mark 1:4-5, 8)

John baptized Jesus at the beginning of Jesus' own ministry, as attested in all four Gospel accounts. Christ later spoke of the essential nature of the sacrament: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Upon His resurrection, Christ then commissioned his disciples to baptize initiates throughout the world into the Christian faith:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."
(Matt. 28:16-20)

It is clear from the New Testament that Christ issued the command to redemption through baptism into the new faith. Yet, apart from His injunction, Christ is otherwise silent as to the nature, meaning, and administration of the sacrament. Oscar Cullman has written that baptism necessarily comprises two aspects: what happens at the moment of baptism and what is transformed by the sacrament (47). After the Gospels, New Testament writers like Paul emphasize the power of the Holy Spirit given in baptism to remit sin in God's faithful. In Acts 2:38, Peter exhorts in his Pentecostal sermon: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." States Cullman, "The new element rather

concerns the fulfillment of just this forgiveness of sins, and this is the closest connection with the transmission of the Holy Spirit” (11). In 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 and Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30, St. Paul uses the metaphor of “sealing with the Holy Spirit” to remind Christians that through baptism they are participants in the death and resurrection of Christ, rising to a new life in the Holy Spirit with Him (Lampe, Seal 6-7). As a rite of initiation in the New Testament, baptism is consistently associated with the pardoning of sins and with participation in the Holy Spirit. And, Warren Carr has observed, “The New Testament does not debate the doctrine or the form of baptism in any way. It may be assumed that baptism was not a matter of controversy until after the New Testament had been written” (36). Beginning in the earliest centuries of the Christian era, some fundamental disagreements did arise which questioned the nature and purpose of baptism and sought to make alterations in its essential meaning and application.

Until the early twentieth century, most scholars believed that the apostolic church did not practice infant baptism. The baptismal narratives of the New Testament relate accounts only of adult conversions, and the sacrament is administered at the moment that a personal profession of faith is made (Moody 282-85). Furthermore, Christian writings on the sacraments prior to 200, like that of the Didache (c.100), are ambiguous regarding the inclusion of children (Finn 32-36). In the 1920’s, this common view of infant baptism in the earliest centuries was challenged by several scholars, the most notable of whom was Joachim Jeremias.

Although no firm evidence for the baptism of children exists before the close of the second century, Jeremias argued solidly in its favor in the first and second centuries on the basis of much strong, albeit indirect, evidence. First, says Jeremias, in almost every instance of baptism in the book of Acts, it is stated that the recipient was baptized with his or her household. Jeremias notes the repeated use in the Greek New Testament of the word *oikos*, meaning “the whole house.” After assessing the strength and unity of the household in this age, Jeremias concludes that the use of the term *oikos* “makes it quite clear that no single member of the household was excluded from baptism” (20). Next, Jeremias compares the rite of Christian baptism to that of Jewish proselyte baptism. He then argues in favor of the influence of the Jewish tradition of the baptism of parents together with their children upon the later Christian sacrament (24-40). Furthermore, Jeremias points out that in Colossians 2:11-12 Paul names baptism as the rite of initiation to replace circumcision, the rite that is performed on all Jewish male infants. Finally, Jeremias interprets Jesus’ blessing of the children in Matthew 19:13-15, Mark 10:13-16, and Luke 18:15-17 as affirming the view that God’s kingdom will not be withheld from them; and this evidence he regards as an implicit endorsement of infant baptism (48-50).

The earliest direct evidence for the practice of infant baptism dates from about 200. Christian documents of the third century confirm that infant baptism was by this time a well established and widespread practice. Irenaeus wrote in his treatise “Against Heretics” (c.200) that all people are saved through Christ in

baptism, and Irenaeus explicitly refers to infants as well as old men (Schlink 132). In the Apostolic Tradition (c.215), Hippolytus detailed the rites of the Roman Church. Hippolytus states in the baptismal instruction that children too young to speak for themselves are to be baptized along with their adult sponsors, and Hippolytus' directives are supported by numerous witnesses (Wainwright 20). Tertullian composed the first Christian treatise dedicated to baptism. In On Baptism (c.200), Tertullian is clear that infant baptism is the accepted practice in the African church, though he himself has reservations against baptizing children for a variety of reasons (Argyle 201). And, writing about 240, Origen frequently refers to infant baptism in his homilies and commentaries on the New Testament, even claiming that the command to baptize infants is a tradition handed down from the apostles (Argyle 205). Edmund Schlink writes:

Thus infant Baptism from ca.200 has been documented from greatly different areas of the church. It is remarkable how much this practice is regarded as self-evident. Nowhere is there a reference to the counter argument that infant Baptism was an innovation. It is certain that this practice did not arise only about the year 200. Even Tertullian acknowledged this Baptism as valid, although he warned against it.

(133-34)

While infant baptism can be documented as a customary Church sacrament at the beginning of the third century, there is at the same time evidence of a growing

movement to challenge the administration of baptism to children. Andre Hamman states that such concerns may have developed out of a need to protect the Christian faith from the apostasy which now plagued the African Church (7-8). Hammon describes Tertullian's treatise On Baptism as a warning against the baptism of potential heretics: "The whole treatise is a polemic against those who forment schism" (29). Among the reasons given by Tertullian for the postponement of baptism until adulthood is his belief that baptism imposes a serious responsibility upon the baptized to live a life in accordance with Scriptural values and the teachings of the Church. Tertullian argues that post-baptismal sins bring a greater condemnation to the sinner than sins committed prior to baptism. He therefore closely associates baptism with mature penitence and faith (Argyle 200-01). Jeremias states that Tertullian's objections to infant baptism appear to have had little effect over the practice in the early third century, as evidenced in Christian writings of the period (85). However, by the early fourth century, a prevailing tendency to delay Christian baptism until adulthood or even to the point of death is well documented.

The trend of postponing baptism likely emerged out of Tertullian's efforts to persuade Christians that they must conduct lives of righteousness upon receiving the sacrament. Tertullian urged that baptism be performed as soon as possible upon reaching adulthood. Nevertheless, out of the general notion of delaying infant baptism grew the idea of "a postponement based on the desire to enjoy one's life for

the meantime and to get the utmost benefit of the forgiveness granted in baptism," says Jeremias (87). Of the negative consequences of such belief, Hugh Riley points out that the widespread acceptance of delayed baptism was accompanied by a corresponding destruction of Christian ethics:

The growing practice of postponing baptism until the deathbed, because it was viewed as such a burden or even a danger given the task one was involved in in this world . . . was threatening to give this sacrament a purely eschatological orientation and make of it a highly individual rather than an ecclesial concern. (213)

In light of the acceptance of the greater guilt incurred by post-baptismal sin, parents began increasingly to put off the baptism of their children, except when in danger of death: "In particular Christian mothers wished to wait till their children had gone through the storms and stresses of youth before they submitted them to the rigorous moral claims of the Church" (Jeremias 87). The pervasiveness of the practice of postponing baptism in the late third and early fourth centuries is shown in the large number of important Church figures whose own baptism was suspended until reaching the age of adulthood or later. The most famous early example was the Christian emperor Constantine, whose baptism was performed at the hour of his death in 337. Other examples of late baptism include Novatian, also baptized on his deathbed; Basil the Great, baptized at age twenty-seven; St. Ambrose, baptized after his election as bishop around age thirty-five; John Chrysostom, at age twenty or

twenty-five; St. Jerome, at about age twenty; and St. Augustine, baptized in 387 at the age of thirty-two (Argyle 207; Urban 271; Jeremias 88). Despite the trend toward delayed baptism in these years, the practice began losing support in the late fourth century. In the fifth century, Augustine's doctrine of original sin ended the practice of delayed baptism entirely and established infant baptism as the universal custom of the Church (Urban 271).

"In the history of the theology of baptism it is surprising how late and how sparsely theological arguments in favor of infant baptism appear in the documents," states Schlink (137). It was not until Augustine that the theology of the sacrament was fully formulated and defended, giving "to infant baptism a systematic theological basis" (Argyle 214). Augustine was himself baptized as an adult upon profession of his Christian faith by his teacher Ambrose of Milan in an elaborate ceremony on Easter Sunday in 387. Augustine frequently recalled the brilliant moment of his initiation into the new life of faith; the Pauline spiritual rebirth of baptism is emphasized throughout the body of his writings (Smith 72-75). Augustine later developed his complete theology of baptism largely in response to two contemporary controversies: the Donatist controversy and the Pelagian controversy. The Donatists raised the question of the personal worthiness of the ministers of the sacraments. The Pelagians denied the concept of the inherent sinfulness of human beings. In answer to the Pelagians, Augustine's doctrine of

original sin was articulated and the sacrament of infant baptism firmly reestablished (O'Meara 204, 446).

Tertullian is said to have instituted much of the basis for the doctrine of original sin, although he did not advocate the practice of baptizing children. Owing to his belief in the higher level of guilt incurred by post-baptismal sin, he wrote in his treatise On Baptism that the delay of the sacrament until adulthood was to be preferred over early baptism due to the overwhelming degree of sinfulness in children and in youths (Osburn 50). Written in the early years of the third century, Tertullian's theology of baptism carried the traditional associations of the remission of sins and reception of the Holy Spirit. In the early fifth century, Augustine's meditations on the psychology of human sin led to significant alterations in the essential meaning and practice of baptism. During the years of the Pelagian controversy, from 410 until his death in 430, Augustine evolved a view of human sin infinitely more subtle and penetrating than any previous Christian writer.

The monk Pelagius and his followers believed that the low moral character of Roman Christian culture in the early fifth century demanded a strong response from the Church. Pelagius therefore preached a powerful message of personal responsibility and called Christians to conform their behavior to the highest ethical standards. Man's salvation, he claimed, is based upon the individual's success in emulating the love and good works of Christ in the Gospel accounts. Pelagius rejected any notion of hereditary sin in mankind. Man is intrinsically good, he said,

though indeed there are many individual sinners. Human sin is a matter of free will, and one is free to sin or not to sin. Adam was merely an example of one who had fallen through his own volition; his condemnation did not affect his descendants. "Thus, for Pelagius, humanity did not need redemption, only inspiration. Jesus, consequently, came as master and model, not Savior," states Warren Smith (26). With this denial of original sin, the Pelagian concept of grace was necessarily restricted to that of God's teachings in Scripture and His rewarding of the virtuous. Pelagius also challenged the traditional view of the sacraments and their role in salvation. Says Justo Gonzalez:

As to baptism, Pelagius claimed that infants are innocent and therefore do not need it. Furthermore, baptism does not give birth to a free will where there was formerly a will under the bondage of sin. It only breaks the custom of sinning and calls the believer to a new life that he himself is to build through the use of his own freedom. (30-31)

In the doctrines of Pelagius, baptism became essentially irrelevant, as he held that infants are born into the same state of innocence as Adam before the fall, that man can live without sinning, and that unbaptized infants are granted eternal life.

In response to the views of Pelagius, Augustine composed some of his most important theological works, including the treatises On the Spirit and the Letter, On Nature and Grace, and The Grace of Christ and Original Sin. Augustine never shrank from defending his belief in the absolute priority of divine grace in human

salvation. It was prevenient grace alone which enabled man to desire the good, to perform the good, and to find redemption from sin. Human nature had been defiled through the fall of Adam, and mankind was universally enslaved to sins such as pride, lust, and greed. Historically, Augustine's doctrines of grace and human sin have been often characterized as severe and even cruel. However, it must be pointed out that Augustine was absolutely committed to depicting man's condition as accurately as he had both observed and personally experienced it. Smith has written:

In attempting to be fair to Augustine we must see him as one defending a faith laden with deep personal meaning. He had experienced so great an outpouring of grace, and he was such a miserable sinner, that he could not permit someone—even one of great sincerity—to take away that essential truth as to the reality of God, man, and man's salvation. (130-31)

In his Confessions, a spiritual autobiography, and in his later anti-Pelagian works, Augustine reflected deeply upon the nature and origin of human sin, and he labored to construct his theology of sin on the firm basis of Scripture. Confessions (c.397) is devoted chiefly to an introspective analysis of Augustine's spiritual and emotional progress as he struggled early in life to attain knowledge of God. In Book 10:23, he offers an argument against the freedom of the human will due to the warring impulses between man's spirit and his nature, citing Galatians 5:17: "For the

desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would.” Later, in The Grace of Christ and Original Sin (418), Augustine gives expression to his mature understanding of original sin. Original sin entails not only the loss of privilege for man, says Augustine, but it also places the guilt of Adam’s sin upon each individual due to mankind’s moral union with Adam. Such guilt is transmitted by generation, and thus no infant enters into the world free from the taint of original sin. States Augustine:

From the moment, then, when “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, because all men sinned” (Rom. 5:12), the entire mass of our nature was ruined beyond doubt, and fell into the position of its destroyer. And from him no one—no, not one—has been delivered, or ever will be delivered, except by the grace of the redeemer. (Ch. 34)

Augustine’s doctrine of original sin was further strengthened by his ruminations on the pervasiveness and infinite variety of human sin. “Augustine’s understanding of man’s need is one of great psychological and spiritual insight,” states Maurice Wiles (107). According to Pelagius, salvation was a matter of obeying God’s laws and performing good works; damnation was God’s judgment for those who failed to carry out His commands. In contrast, Augustine would never define sin so simply as the failure to perform good works. For him, the

categories of human sin were so extensive as to be without limit. Sin derived from pride, greed, ignorance, hopelessness, and countless other human weaknesses. Apart from Pelagius' denial of mankind's innate sinfulness and subsequent dependence upon grace, Augustine discerned an additional danger in the Pelagian doctrines: that they would lead Christians to do good out of the desire for reward rather than out of love for God. In consequence of Augustine's belief in original sin with its utter debasement of human nature, he found in divine grace the unsurpassed love and mercy of God for mankind: "For [Augustine] the church was called by God to minister to a bleeding and broken humanity, hurt and aching. Grace was the healing balm, provided by a loving, gracious God for sinners," states Smith (129).

Augustine's doctrine of original sin inspired a significant reinterpretation of the sacrament of baptism. Traditionally baptism had been administered for the remission of sins, though it was often carried out for the benefit of apparently sinless infants. Augustine was the first to establish a theological basis for the baptism of infants: the urgent need to remove original sin. Augustine continually disparaged Pelagius in his writings not only for refusing to acknowledge mankind's fallen nature, but also for failing to comprehend that infants must receive baptism chiefly in order to cancel the guilt of sin transmitted from Adam. "This is novel doctrine," observes Osburn; "until now . . . the doctrine of original sin had been an inference from the practice of infant baptism; from henceforward it is given as its main reason. Almost its only reason" (50).

Augustine distinguished between original sin and actual, or post-baptismal, sin. He believed that baptism in infancy, with its removal of original sin and bestowal of the Holy Spirit, strengthened the child for the reception of the later graces he might receive. Gonzalez summarizes this aspect of Augustine's theology of grace and baptism as follows:

. . . the fact that one has received the first grace—which . . . comes with baptism—does not mean that one has already achieved the final crown. It is necessary to remain faithful unto death, and this is possible only through the gift of perseverance, which is also a result of grace and does not depend on human merits. Thus, salvation is from beginning to end a work of grace. (Vol.II 46)

Although salvation could never be assured, it was certain that the individual in a state of original sin could not receive eternal life. Indeed, those who died in a state of original sin at any age, even infancy, could be assured of eternal damnation. In his Epistle 98, Augustine declared firmly, "The bond of guilt which is inherited from Adam cannot be canceled in any other way than by the parents themselves presenting their little ones to receive the grace of Christ" (Osburn 52). It was thereby through Augustine that the critical need to remove original sin became the theological foundation for the sacrament of infant baptism in the Western Church. "Given the debilitating effects of original sin, it seemed only prudent to begin the process of regeneration as early as possible," states Linwood Urban (271).

Despite the trend toward delayed baptism in the fourth century, the practice of infant baptism never entirely ceased and even seemed to be regaining somewhat in popularity at the beginning of the fifth century. It was not many years before Augustine's doctrine of original sin, supported by the Church, made infant baptism imperative: "Under the impetus of Augustinian doctrine, infant baptism spread throughout the church, though of course adult baptism continued for adult converts" (Argyle 217). By the end of the fifth century, all traces of the pre-sacramental instruction required for candidates of baptism, common since the age of Hippolytus and Tertullian, diminished with the predominance of infant baptism (Fisher 7). In 529, the Council of Orange declared the orthodoxy of Augustine's doctrines of original sin and baptism, and they administered the death blow to Pelagianism. The bishops who gathered at Orange stated in agreement with Augustine that Christian perseverance originates not in the free will of man, but in the gift of the Holy Spirit given freely by God. In view of original sin, only those who are baptized may, with the aid of Christ, receive the gift of perseverance and attain salvation upon death (Gonzalez, Vol.II 60-61; Pelikan, Vol.I 327-29).

In his book Baptism and Change in the Early Middle Ages, c.200-1150, Peter Cramer discusses baptism as a sacrament which greatly resisted change in its essential import from the third to the twelfth centuries. The Christian ablution, whether performed on adult or child, deviated little in these years from its central signification of the remission of sin and of a new life in the Holy Spirit through

Christ's death and resurrection. With the approval of Augustine's doctrine of original sin by the Council of Orange, however, the association of baptism with children now too became standard in Latin Christendom: "Indeed, the child, and the small body of the child with its vulnerable nakedness and its suggestions of uncertainties and precariousness, perhaps replaced water as the central symbol of baptism," states Cramer (3). Another result of the prevalent practice of infant baptism was that the rite was soon no longer associated with the Easter season, when it had traditionally been administered. Instead, baptism was performed upon the births of children throughout the year (Stevick 14). The fifth and sixth centuries also witnessed the development of the penitential system as the Church made effort to handle the inevitable post-baptismal sins of the people (Urban 272).

Augustine's theology of original sin and infant baptism remained the orthodox position of the Church throughout the Middle Ages to the time of the Reformation, and was to be adopted by most of the Reformers as well. After Orange, the pronouncement to baptize infants gained further papal authority over the years in the canons of Dionysius Exiguus in the mid-sixth century, and later by Gregory II (d.731), Leo IV (d.855), and by Nicholas I in 866, to name a few (Fisher 3). In England, Bede wrote in his Ecclesiastical History (731) of the Roman missionary Augustine's labors to establish the British Church, beginning in 597, and of the mass baptisms of Anglo-Saxon converts to Christianity. Though the sacrament is depicted by Bede primarily as a tool of conversion, he states that Augustine also

urged the baptism of the newly born (89-91). The emperor Charlemagne similarly employed the rite of baptism as a method to convert conquered heathens to Christianity and to unify the inhabitants of the Frankish empire: "[Baptism] was often the only thing that distinguished the peoples of the newly conquered borders of the Carolingian empire from the pagan tribes," states Susan Keefe (171). By the middle of the ninth century, however, when the West was more fully Christianized, baptism was rarely administered to any but infants.

Through the Middle Ages in Christian England, the tradition of infant baptism was continually enforced not only by mandate of the Church, but by English law as well. In 693, the king of Wessex commanded that every child be baptized within a month of birth. In the eleventh century, the Canons of King Edgar ordered baptism within thirty-seven days of birth. The eleventh-century Laws of the Northumbrian Presbyters prescribed punishment for the parents of any child dying unbaptized within nine days of birth. After the Norman Conquest of England in 1066, the Synod of Winchester in 1074 commanded infants to be baptized in their first year at Easter or at Pentecost, except when in danger of death (Fisher 86-87). C. D. F. Fisher states that "by the twelfth century throughout the British Isles baptism was almost always received in infancy" (87). Any debate of the sacrament was limited to the date within an infant's first year that baptism should be administered, always excepting emergency baptism in case of imminent death.

In 1237, the Council of London ordered the baptism of infants at the time of the first Easter or Pentecostal season following their births. In 1279, Archbishop Peckham countermanded the Council of London's decree, stating that baptism should be performed year-round and immediately upon birth, owing to the extremely high degree of infant mortality. In the fourteenth century, a rubric in the Sarum Manual reaffirmed Archbishop Peckham's decision on the baptism of children; and Fisher states that "this sense that infants must be baptized with all possible haste survived the upheaval of the Reformation in England" (111). Also in the fourteenth century, the Constitutions of Padua of 1339, as well as synods at Avignon in 1337, Beziers in 1342, and Chartres in 1355, all issued a similar order for the baptism of newborn children (Fisher 111-12).

By the time the Pearl-poet composed the poems of the Cotton Manuscript in the mid-fourteenth century, the sacrament of infant baptism was a practice solidly established in England and the Christian West. Furthermore, there could be no question as to the theological basis of such practice: theological tradition had always sustained and defended Augustine's theology of infant baptism. Every distinguished theologian of the medieval period affirmed the doctrine of original sin as the principle on which infants must be baptized. Peter Lombard, following his sources in Augustine and the Augustinian theologian Anselm of Canterbury, treated the subjects of original sin and the sacraments in Book II of his Four Books of Sentences (c.1158). Lombard stated in agreement with his authorities that infants

must be baptized for the remission of original sin (Fisher 128). Lombard's Sentences later became the standard textbook of theology in the Western schools for several centuries.

"The fullest representative exposition of the doctrine of baptism in the Middle Ages is that of St. Thomas Aquinas," states A. W. Argyle (218). The greatest mind in scholastic theology, Aquinas constructed his magnificent compendium of systematic theological knowledge, the Summa Theologica, in the 1260's and 1270's. Attracted to the natural and metaphysical philosophies of Aristotle, Aquinas wished to harmonize such philosophical knowledge with the truths of theology. While his procedure was innovative, in theology he maintained an essentially Augustinian outlook. Aquinas' doctrine of baptism has been characterized as "the Church's way of meeting birth" (Stevick 18). In Book III, Questions 66-69 of the Summa, Aquinas describes baptism as the sacrament which unites the infant to Christ and the Church, remits original sin, and blesses with the Holy Spirit. Like Augustine, Aquinas declares that no remedy can save an unbaptized infant from eternal punishment in light of the guilt of original sin and that therefore baptism must follow upon birth as quickly as possible (Osburn 218-19).

There is consistent uniformity in the practice and theology of infant baptism in the Middle Ages from the time of Augustine in the fifth century to the age of Reformation in the sixteenth century and beyond. Stevick has observed that "the continuity of baptismal teaching and practice at the Reformation is remarkable for a

time of much discontinuity” and that “Luther was thankful that baptism had, over the centuries, remained relatively uncorrupted” (18). In view of the extreme importance placed upon the medieval Christian sacrament of infant baptism and of its relatively unchanged character during the Middle Ages, it is significant that the speaker in Pearl is confused over the destination of his baptized daughter’s soul upon her death in infancy. It is especially significant given that the speaker appears to be a fairly knowledgeable man of whom one would expect to have some understanding of the compelling grounds for the baptism of infants. Yet, even if prior to the girl’s death the speaker had been unaware of the theology of original sin, of baptism’s remission of sin, and of the salvation of baptized infants, certainly such standard consolation would have been offered him by the clergy. In Pearl, the situation of the speaker’s perplexity concerning the baptized girl’s status, especially in light of his profession of faith and high level of Scriptural knowledge, certainly substantiates Rene Wellek’s remark, made in 1933, that “apparently in the course of the Middle Ages the salvation of baptized children does not seem to have been received quite without question . . .” (26). The chief emphasis of Wellek’s essay on Pearl was to demonstrate the orthodoxy of the Pearl-maiden’s doctrinal speeches, speeches which indeed closely adhere to the theological tradition of the Church. In contrast, I wish to suggest an explanation for the speaker’s lack of certainty over his lost infant’s destiny which may exonerate him of the common critical charges of theological ignorance or of rebellion against the word of God.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the years 1320-1350 were a time of major theological controversy in England. William of Ockham's radical development of the doctrine of God's absolute power, as opposed to the ordained power of God revealed in Scripture, threatened to undermine the sources of traditional Christian authority. Ockham's innovative philosophy, known as nominalism, was effectively a severe empiricism, limiting man's knowledge to practical experience alone. In theology, Ockham reasoned that because the truths of Christianity cannot be proven, then belief must rest solely upon faith. It followed that since man can know nothing of God by his natural faculties, and yet must believe in His omnipotence by faith, then man can in no way define, predict, or limit God's actions or powers. Ockham accordingly distinguished God's powers by two categories: God's ordained power signified the laws He freely established and disclosed through revelation; in contrast, God's absolute power signified His unlimited potential to perform any action regardless of revelation. The most alarming new element in Ockham's theology was his extreme emphasis upon God's unpredictability due to His absolute power. At the center of nominalistic theology lay the belief that any of God's revealed laws could be altered or reversed by invoking His absolute power. In consequence, revelation ultimately appeared to be no more than revealed probability as opposed to any ascertainable order.

Gordon Leff states that "Ockham's doctrines met with immediate response, and the period until the Black Death . . . is the most extreme and unorthodox in

the history of medieval thought . . . ” (Medieval 291). In theology, Ockham and his followers, notably Robert Holcot, Thomas Buckingham, and Adam Wodeham, concerned themselves mainly with God’s relationship to humanity and the relevant questions of grace, free will, merit, the sacraments, and future contingency, since these might be interpreted from a practical standpoint. The Ockhamists quickly earned the outrage and hostility of traditional and conservative theologians by maintaining that statements known to be true by God’s ordained power could be false by God’s absolute power, and vice versa. Of grace and salvation, Ockham wrote in the first book of his Sentences commentary that God, by His absolute power, could disregard grace if He chose to award merit to any freely willed action performed by man: “God can, if He wills, dispense with all order in awarding man final glory” (in Leff, Medieval 289). Regarding the sacraments, Ockham scholar Marilyn McCord Adams has summarized Ockham’s discussion from his Sentences commentary (Book IV, Questions 1, 10-11) as follows:

Since, for Ockham, God is utterly free in the redemptive process, God is not bound by sacraments any more than He is bound by anything else. Not only are sacraments not logically necessary or sufficient for the infusion of charity or grace, Ockham denies that they are its efficient causes either. He agrees with his opponents that the sacraments are not natural causes of infused grace. But he contends further that they cannot be instrumental causes. (Adams 1278)

Holcot expressed a similar view in his own Sentences commentary (Book I, Question I, Article 4) that grace might be obtained, even by pagans and without participation in the sacraments, through man's natural capabilities:

Although in fact, a man cannot now avoid sin without grace, it would be possible if God chose to decree otherwise; and we consider that, in accord with such a decree, there might be a person who heard about a single Object, creator and ruler of all, and loved that Object totally; and God could provide a way of salvation for that person, pouring out grace upon him even without baptism or the other sacraments. (qtd. in O'Mara 335)

Nominalistic theology dominated the University of Oxford in the 1330's and 1340's. The result of Ockham's doctrines in the hands of his numerous followers was a challenge to further destroy the Scriptural foundation of theological tradition and to free mankind from the necessity of God's prevenient grace in salvation. Scholars agree that the enthusiasm of Ockham's disciples in these years often led them to conclusions so audacious that Ockham himself may have hesitated to approve them (Oberman, Archbishop 45; Leff, Bradwardine 242). By God's absolute power, the Ockhamists insisted upon the autonomy of the human will and upon man's freedom to perform deeds which could be deemed meritorious by God in His absolute power. The most outstanding opponent of the nominalists, the theologian Thomas Bradwardine, designated them as the "modern Pelagians" in his

treatise De causa Dei contra Pelagium for their belief that man could take the initiative in salvation and for their disregard of Scriptural authority. De causa Dei, completed in 1344, is a polemical work aimed at the outrageous and heretical claims of the Ockhamists concerning man's role in salvation. Bradwardine declares, for one, that his opponents ignore the issue of original sin; and throughout the treatise he testifies to the absolute authority of revealed truth and the theological tradition established by St. Paul and St. Augustine.

Bradwardine did not work alone in his battle against nominalistic theology. Other important theologians, such as Walter Burley, Gregory of Rimini, and Richard Fitzralph, opposed the radical doctrines of the Ockhamists. However, it is Bradwardine's treatise that marked a significant turn against the "Pelagians" and the return to a more traditional Augustinian outlook in theology at Oxford. Such an outlook became prominent in the second half of the fourteenth century, although Pelagian ideas did not completely disappear and nominalism remained the leading trend in philosophy at Oxford for several decades (Oberman, Archbishop 188). As for the question of how well these theological disputes were known outside the university, the evidence is small. However, William J. Courtenay states that Bradwardine's De causa Dei made him "a household name among the educated, inside and outside the university . . ." (Schools 322). And John Robson has written in his study of the intellectual environment of mid-fourteenth-century Oxford:

. . . theologians were not pursuing their own private obsessions, remote from the world of reality; for interest in such matters ranged far beyond the Schools, which only reflected a wider concern. Ockham once protested that laymen and old women used to badger university lecturers with their heretical views on necessity and contingency and the limits of God's power. (33)

Writing in 1961, Robson even briefly cites Pearl as an example of the laity's interest in the issues that dominated the concerns of theologians at Oxford in this era (33). That the central issues continued to engage interest later in the fourteenth century appears evident from Chaucer's naming of Bradwardine in conjunction with Augustine and Boethius in the "Nun's Priest's Tale":

Witnesse on hym that any parfit clerk is,
That in scole is greet altercacioun
In this mateere, and greet disputisoun,
And hath been of an hundred thousand men.
But I ne kan nat bulte it to the bren,
As kan the hooly doctour Augustyn,
Or Boece, or the bisshop Bradwardyn,
Wheither that Goddes worthy forwityng
Streyneth me nedely for to doon a thyng—

“Nedely” clepe I symple necessitee—

Or elles if free choys be graunted me (3236-46)

That Pearl, composed 1340-1375, is a literary work reflecting the most prominent theological issues of its age seems clear, as contemporary controversy focused upon the concepts of grace and salvation, free will and contingency, and the sacraments. For Pearl, Ockham’s denial of the sacraments as necessary to man’s salvation by God’s absolute power seems especially striking; since according to Ockham it was man’s freely performed actions and not sacramental grace by which God awarded salvation in His absolute power. In view of the Church’s long-standing tradition and theology of infant baptism, the speaker’s uncertainty in Pearl over his baptized daughter’s redemption appears to indicate some knowledge of the Ockhamist position on the sacraments. Such uncertainty gives to the speaker his greatest anguish: “Fro þou wat3 wroken fro vch a woþe, / I wyste neuer quere my perle wat3 gon. / Now I hit se, now leþe3 my loþe” (375-77). As such matters troubled and preoccupied the greatest minds of the age, so the more ordinary speaker of Pearl may be excused for his lack of assurance regarding his baptized infant’s salvation. In the next chapter, we shall see further how the Pearl maiden disparages the nominalistic outlook in theology and supports the orthodox and traditional position of the Church on baptism.

Chapter 5

Pearl and Contemporary Theological Controversy

Scholars have little examined the degree to which Pearl reflects the contemporary theological debates over grace, justification, and the sacraments. Although precise dates for the composition of the four poems of the Cotton MS remain elusive, most estimates give the years 1340-1375, the period in which theological controversy at Oxford centered upon these issues in response to the radical new nominalistic theology of William of Ockham and his followers. As we shall see in Pearl, the speaker may be characterized as a Christian who has been misinformed or confused over issues of grace and free will due to the Pelagian conceptions of the Ockhamists. The speaker thus acts as a foil for the Pearl maiden, whose doctrinal lessons conform to the orthodox Augustinian tradition maintained with ultimate success by Oxford's more conservative theologians, such as Thomas Bradwardine. I believe that the Pearl-poet was well acquainted with the subjects of contemporary theological controversy, as was the audience he wrote for. The poem's elaboration of Augustinian conceptions of grace, justification, and baptism reflects the poet's readings in the current theological work of Thomas Bradwardine or perhaps even in the works of St. Augustine, which were widely available.

The Pearl-poet was clearly aware of contemporary philosophical disputes and had an understanding of aristocratic culture. Though he, unlike Chaucer, seldom refers to other authors and books in his poetry, a remarkable variety of sources and influences have been discerned in the poems of the Cotton MS. The Pearl-poet was fluent in Latin and French, and he seems to have known Italian as well. Well acquainted with native English literary traditions, his versification in Pearl displays familiarity with French and Italian techniques. Cleanness, Patience, and Pearl exhibit the poet's extensive knowledge of the Vulgate Bible: "In the case of Pearl particularly, the poet displays a knowledge not only of the Apocalypse of St. John, which is his main source, but of many other parts of the Bible, allusions to which he weaves together with great deftness" (Spearing 13). Apart from the Bible, the Pearl-poet drew upon a large number of other written sources, believed to include: English romances of the alliterative revival; contemporary English devotional writings; medieval Christian consolations; the Cursor Mundi; lapidaries; classical Latin literature and rhetorical theory; medieval French courtly romances, including Jean de Meun's Roman de la Rose and Chrétien de Troyes' Arthurian cycle; the French Mandeville's Travels; Andreas Capellanus' De Arte Honeste Amandi; and in Italian, Dante's Divina Commedia and Boccaccio's "Olympia." The Pearl-poet, like Chaucer, is one of the very few Englishmen prior to the fifteenth century who appears to have read the works of the great fourteenth-century Italian poets (Lasater 73; Watts 34; Spearing 12-18).

Aside from these examples of the Pearl-poet's learning, there is some evidence that the poet may have studied at Oxford or that he may have been in close association with university-educated circles, like Richard de Bury's 1330's-1340's household of London intellectuals. Though almost no biographical data exists for the Pearl-poet, the following evidence would serve to indicate the poet's awareness of the Ockhamist controversies which dominated theological debate at Oxford in this age. In 1978, Laurence Eldredge published a note showing the close similarity between images of roundness in theologian William Woodford's De sacramento altaris and in Pearl, and Eldredge suggests there might have been more contact between university men and laymen in the fourteenth century than previously believed. Two more recent scholars, Denise Baker and Warren Ginsberg, have noted the extent to which the debate in Pearl resembles the dialectic method of scholastic theology and demonstrates the advanced education of the poet (Baker 263-67; Ginsberg 731-44). Ross Arthur has evaluated the verbal complexity of Pearl in light of contemporary logical tracts devoted to word-play and associated with the terminist logic which developed with the rise of nominalism at Oxford. Arthur judges the Pearl-poet as "a master of logic," skilled in the use of verbal techniques that minimize confusion and keenly aware of the manner in which terms and linguistic structures may communicate complex truths. Arthur concludes that the Pearl-poet's familiarity with terminist logic suggests a knowledge of contemporary academic issues at Oxford in the first half of the fourteenth century:

"If we believe that the Pearl-poet kept abreast of current academic thought, we should be reading Ockham, Buridan, Bradwardine, Holcot, Heytesbury—and not just their theological works" (131).

Kevin Marti writes very convincingly of the Pearl-poet's extensive knowledge of orthodox resurrection theology. For practical considerations, the Pearl-poet, like Dante, gives his otherworldly figures resurrected bodies before they could truly possess them, since the day of the general resurrection lies yet in the future. Otherwise, in Pearl the poet closely adheres to the traditional characteristics of resurrected bodies described in the theological writings of Augustine, Aquinas, and others. Marti characterizes the Pearl-poet's use of this orthodox theological material as a "painstaking and impressively learned literary application of teachings about the resurrected body's seven characteristics, and a sustained emphasis on earthly bodies' inability to approach or bear the sight of glorified bodies" (333). Writing in 1992, Marti remarks in closing, "Surely our next step as scholars is to see if the poet draws as deeply from other theological sources as from this one, and to see if any common pattern emerges in the poet's departures from tradition" (334).

Finally, Philip O'Mara has recently argued that Ockhamist theologian Robert Holcot's collection of moralized stories entitled Moralitates (c.1340) is a source for important elements in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. In one of Holcot's tales, for example, he depicts the image of "a barefoot armed man clad entirely in green"

which O'Mara believes is likely to have provided inspiration for the poet's portrayal of Sir Bertilak ("Robert" 329). O'Mara also believes that Sir Bertilak's character should be interpreted as a type of righteous heathen and that this view further strengthens the connection between Holcot and the Pearl-poet. Holcot declared his conviction in both his Sentences Commentary and Wisdom Commentary that "salvation was actually possible for pagans" by God's absolute power (O'Mara, "Robert" 335). For these reasons, O'Mara suggests that the Pearl-poet may have been a university student who studied under Holcot or perhaps came into contact with him at Bury's London household ("Holcot" 104). However, while it is plausible that the Pearl-poet knew Holcot and consulted his Moralitates as a source for thematic and descriptive material, O'Mara's arguments for the poet's Holcotian theological outlook are not convincing. Bertilak is an extremely enigmatic and paradoxical figure, and there is no evidence in Sir Gawain that the poet regards him as one who is likely to be saved. O'Mara assumes far too much when he states, "In sparing Bertilak's soul from the pains of hell, God will act rather as Bertilak himself acted when he spared Gawain's life, and on similar grounds; for Bertilak too has demonstrated courtesy, devotion to duty, and compassion" ("Holcot" 105). In contrast, the poet's theological vision in Pearl will here be shown to be anti-Holcotian and anti-Ockhamist and as completely orthodox and Augustinian in nature.

Along with the evidence for the Pearl-poet's reading and education, there is strong support for the idea of a growing audience of educated laymen and readers of English in the fourteenth century who were deeply interested in the most important topics of contemporary theological debate. In Medieval Readers and Writers, 1350-1400, Janet Coleman discusses the growth in lay literacy of the period and analyzes the predominant themes of non-scholastic literature in England:

It is clear that by the latter half of the fourteenth century, authors in England were contributing to a rapidly expanding corpus that was becoming one of the most substantial of vernacular literatures in Europe. It came into existence largely through the demands of a new public: a court that was widely expanded by an urban merchant patriciate of London. Although Edward III, as early as 1337, had ordered the gentry and the bourgeoisie to teach their children French 'to be better able and qualified for their wars', he is said to have met with little success. English was becoming the dominant status language. (20)

The first half of the fourteenth century witnessed a rise in development of the urban middle classes and the rapid expansion of university education. At the same time there was a notable increase in the number of French and Latin texts made available in English translation (37-41).

In her examination of prevalent thematic interests, Coleman focuses most specifically upon the works of Chaucer and Langland, though with some attention paid to Gower and the poets of the alliterative revival. Coleman's declaration of the important attention outside university circles paid to current theological debate is well supported in her discussion of the relevant texts of Chaucer and Langland; and there is treatment here of the preoccupations of Bradwardine and the Ockhamists: that a large percentage of thinkers were engaged with the issues of human free will, merit, contingency, fate, and providence; that interest in these areas led to a revived interest in Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy and that Chaucer himself was to produce a translation; and that the Ockhamist distinction between God's ordained and absolute powers led to questions regarding the nature of justice and reward in both orders (244). Coleman discusses how the views of conservative and traditional theologians like Thomas Bradwardine and Richard Fitzralph became well known through the sermons they delivered in English to general audiences. In London and Durham, Bradwardine delivered famed vernacular sermons on God's sovereignty and grace upon the occasions of Edward III's victories at Crécy and Neville's Cross. These sermons were later transcribed in Latin as Sermo Epinicius. Likewise, Fitzralph preached over eighty sermons "delivered *in vulgari anglico ad populum*" in the 1340's and 1350's which are preserved in Latin transcription (266).

In her discussion of Bradwardine's Sermo Epinicius, Coleman states:

This sermon, like other writings meant for a non-university milieu which none the less offered to its listeners the issues at the heart of current theological debates, makes plain one of the channels by which the laity gained a familiarity with the vernacular expression of fourteenth-century theology. Here was the problem of human liberty, of chance and fate as these affected one's personal future. Here was also the concern for an appropriate understanding of the meaning of 'just reward' for deeds or intentions that were freely performed. From such expositions, these concerns passed into the repertory of discussion beyond the schools to emerge, as we have seen, at the dinner tables of the laity. (267)

In Coleman's work, the Pearl-poet is mentioned twelve times though given only cursory attention. But certainly her arguments in support of a growing lay readership interested in contemporary theological disputation can help to inform our reading of Pearl as well our reading of Chaucer and Langland.

Finally, before commencing discussion of Pearl, it must be noted that the Pearl-poet's contemporary Chaucer was familiar with the work of Bradwardine and the Ockhamists. Chaucer's meditations on fate and free will in Troilus and Criseyde and "The Nun's Priest's Tale" are believed by some scholars to have derived from Bradwardine's position on free will in De causa Dei contra Pelagium and Sermo Epinicius, both well known and widely circulated (Mallet 214-15; McGrade 86).

Chaucer's works also reflect his awareness of the skeptical philosophy of the Ockhamists known as nominalism and its controversial challenge to the traditional philosophy of realism that divided the scholars at Oxford in the mid-fourteenth century. The presence of ideas related to the nominalist-realist debates has been noted in a number of studies on the Canterbury Tales and the Envoy to Bukton (Williams 16-21; Ruud 199 ff). The Pearl-poet is the medieval English writer whose learning, intelligence, imaginative powers, and literary talent could be said to rival Chaucer's own. It is therefore most probable that the Pearl-poet was also aware of and influenced by the most prominent theological and philosophical issues of his age.

In Pearl, the theological discussion between the speaker and the maiden begins in the fifth section, or twenty-first stanza, of the poem. In the first four sections, the poet establishes the speaker's plight and complicated emotional condition. Critical attention was first paid to the portrayal of the speaker/ dreamer in Pearl in 1955 when Charles Moorman argued persuasively that the best approach to interpreting the poem was to set aside questions of allegory, symbolism, and the maiden, and to focus on the character of the speaker instead: "For whatever else the poem may be . . . it is, first of all, a fiction presented from a clearly defined and wholly consistent point of view" (104). The emphatic use of the first-person pronoun throughout the poem distinguishes a point of view characterized by the reflections and experiences of a well developed persona. Moorman also

perceptively noted that Pearl begins and ends with the narrator standing alone; that it is he who controls the poem's discourse by introducing subjects and asking questions; and that both the maiden's doctrine and the vision of the New Jerusalem are presented for his profit. Reading Pearl as an elegy, Moorman concluded that the speaker comes to an acceptance of his loss through the poem's theological discourse. Later critics have typically judged the speaker to be an ignorant man who is unaware of the Christian teachings on salvation or as one who will not submit to the will of God, due to his rebelliousness, foolishness, or grief. However, as we shall see, such judgments of the speaker's portrayal appear to have overlooked some of the poem's important details.

The speaker of Pearl seems reasonably well educated, rather than ignorant. He possesses some learning of philosophy and literature, as well as a fairly good knowledge of Scripture, made known through his frequent references and allusions to the Bible. As for his refusal to submit to God's will, there are clues which indicate the speaker's genuine confusion as to the destiny of his infant daughter. Indeed, the speaker appears characterized as a Christian man who has been misinformed or confused over issues of salvation due to an awareness of the Pelagian conceptions of current Ockhamist theology. Textual support of this view may be discerned from the poem's beginning. In the opening verses of Pearl, the emphasis upon the speaker's conflicting feelings and shifting states of mind realistically mirrors the experience of human grief. Pearl begins in a lyrical mode

with the speaker's expression of praise for his pearl and then abruptly gives way to a sorrowful expression of loss:

Allas! I leste hyr in on erbere;

Pur3 gresse to grounde hit from me yot.

I dewyne, fordolke of luf-daungere

Of þat pryuy perle wythouten spot. (9-12)

Numerous commentators on Pearl have pointed out that the speaker's use of the term "luf-daungere" derives from the tradition of courtly literature and signifies a love which enthralls and torments the lover who is separated from his beloved. Though a few critics have interpreted the term's use in Pearl to imply that the speaker laments the loss of a cherished woman, most critics regard its meaning as a metaphorical indication of the grieving speaker's separation and longing for his lost infant. In addition, the speaker's familiarity with the lexicon of courtly literature should also serve to indicate to readers the first important clue to the characterization of the poem's central figure: that he is a man of some learning and with some degree of literary interests or exposure to literature.

In the third stanza, the speaker pauses from recounting the tale of his grief to reflect upon the stretch of garden in which his pearl lies:

Þat spot of spyse3 mot nede3 sprede,

Þer such ryche3 to rot is runne;

Blome³ blayke and blwe and rede
 Per schyne³ ful schyr agayn þe sunne.
 Flor and fryte may not be fede
 Per hit doun drof in molde³ dunne;
 For vch gresse mot grow of grayne³ dede;
 No whete were elle³ to wone³ wonne.
 Of goud vche goude is ay begonne;
 So semly a sede mo³t fayly not,
 Þat spryngande spyce³ vp ne sponne
 Of þat precios perle wythouten spotte. (25-36)

The speaker's contemplation of the cycle of death and renewal in nature and the association of beauty and goodness with decay is a certain allusion to Scriptural passages in John and I Corinthians, as noted by various editors of Pearl. John 12:24 reads: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." I Corinthians 15:36-37 states: "What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain." This is the first of several examples in Pearl which suggest that the speaker knows the Scriptures.

A tone of mourning is reestablished in the final stanza of Section I where the speaker discloses the principal dilemma with which he struggles:

A deuely dele in my hert denned,
þa3 resoun sette myseluen sa3t.
I playned my perle þat þer wat3 spenned
Wyth fyrce skylle3 þat faste fa3t;
þa3 kynde of Kryst me comfort kenned,
My wreched wylle in wo ay wra3te. (51-56)

Here, the speaker acknowledges a dismal grief that lodges in his heart despite an understanding of Christ's merciful nature which ought to bring him comfort and relief from suffering. It must be noted that the final two lines of this passage contradict the claims of critics who insist upon the speaker's ignorance of Christian teachings on salvation. If ignorance was the issue, we might expect the speaker to express a desire for enlightenment. Yet, he states plainly that his will struggles against something which challenges his knowledge of Christ's comfort. It is conceivably the pain of overwhelming grief which prevents the speaker's acceptance of his loss and of any Christian consolation. In a note to line 54 in his edition of Pearl, E. V. Gordon states an interpretation of the passage that has found agreement with many subsequent critics: "The nature of Christ gave him grounds for comfort, but his self-will made him suffer in the pain of his sorrow." Still, in the absence of any more explicit information, the passage must also incorporate the possibility that there are other issues which prevent the speaker's tormented will from embracing the solace of Christ.

Before moving into discussion of the theological debate in Pearl, some additional examples will serve to illustrate the speaker's character as one who is reasonably well educated. While he does not appear to be a university scholar, the hints of his learning are likely intended to portray him as a typical member of the expanding gentry and upper middle classes which Coleman describes in her study. Distinguished by a rising literacy and demand for works in English, this was the type of audience for which the Pearl-poet wrote. In the first verse of Section 3, the speaker continues a lengthy description of the marvelous landscape of his dream, the sights of which have a positive effect on his mood. His reflections include a reference to Lady Fortune, the goddess of Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy and a popular medieval literary motif:

As fortune fares þer as ho frayne3,

Wheþer solace ho sende oþer elle3 sore,

Þe wy3 to wham her wylle ho wayne3

Hytte3 to haue ay more and more. (129-32)

In the later dialogue, the speaker seeks the Pearl maiden's pardon for speaking rashly, alluding to the creation narrative of Genesis, "I am bot mol and manere3 mysse" (382). In the following two lines and prior to the maiden's doctrinal instructions on grace, he reaffirms his knowledge of Christian teachings: "Bot Crystes mersy and Mary and Jon, / Þise arn þe grounde of alle my blisse" (383-84).

Of Mary, the speaker tells the maiden: "Now, for synglerty o hyr dousour, / We calle hyr Fenyx of Arraby" (429-30). Gordon's note on these lines states that the phoenix was commonly used in medieval literature as a symbol for Christ and sometimes for Mary. Chaucer likewise employed the epithet when he described the Duchess Blanche as the "soleyn fenix of Arabye" in Boke of the Duchesse (981). Soon afterward, in debate with the maiden over the justness of God's rewards, the speaker cites Psalms 12:11-12:

In Sauter is sayd a verce ouerte
Pat speke3 a poynt determynable:
"Pou quyte3 vchon as hys desserte,
Pou hy3e kyng ay pretermynable." (593-96)

In the third stanza of Section XIII, now convinced by the maiden's arguments, the speaker ceases to oppose her and inquires instead into the nature of her present existence:

Quo formed þe þy fayre fygure?
Pat wro3t þe wede, he wat3 ful wys.
Þy beauté com neuer of nature;
Pymalyon paynted neuer þy vys,
Ne Arystotel nawþer by hys letture
Of carped þe kynde þese properté3. (747-52)

Here, the speaker's reference to Pygmalion, the artist, and Aristotle, the philosopher of natural science, is a conventional literary expression in Old French literature that is employed, for example, in the Roman de la Rose, as noted by Gordon. At the close of the debate, the speaker repeats his allusion to Genesis when he thanks the maiden for her divine instruction: "I am bot mokke and mul among" (905). He then requests permission to be granted a sight of the heavenly dwelling she calls Jerusalem, though her use of the name confuses him. He states:

Pou telle3 me of Jerusalem þe ryche ryalle,

þer Dauid dere wat3 dy3t on trone,

Bot by þyse holte3 hit con not hone,

Bot in Judee hit is, þat noble note. (919-22)

The speaker knows the earthly Jerusalem to be situated in Judea.

The dialogue between speaker and maiden concludes at the beginning of Section XVII, when the maiden directs him to the site where he will be allowed to gaze upon the New Jerusalem. The maiden returns to the radiant city, leaving the speaker alone to detail his observations of the splendors he beholds. Though the maiden has related some information on the heavenly Jerusalem of the "Appocalyppece," the speaker attests in several statements that it is his own reading of the book of Revelation which confirms the truthfulness of his vision. Of the precious gemstones which adorn the tiers of the city, the speaker states: "As John þise stone3 in writ did nemme, / I knew þe name after his tale" (997-98). The

speaker enumerates the gems from the tradition of Aaron's breastplate in the Apocalypse, and concludes, "I knew hit by his deuysment / In þe Apocalyppeȝ, þe apostel John" (1019-20). In the next several stanzas, the speaker repeatedly emphasizes the idea that in his vision he knew the scene he witnessed to correspond to his reading of John's account of the New Jerusalem.

All the examples above contribute to an impression of the speaker's character as a Christian who is fairly well educated and familiar with Scripture and literature. He is thus likely to be representative of the class of lay readers for whom Pearl was composed. In light of the prevalence of nominalistic theology at Oxford in the mid-fourteenth century, it is probable that the speaker has gained an acquaintance with some of the controversial doctrines of the Ockhamists. The complex and radical tendencies of nominalistic theology, along with its appeal to man's reason, were very likely to have generated doubts, confusion, and misunderstandings over the nature of salvation among the laity. Now we shall examine the degree to which the debate and other important details in Pearl reflect these contemporary theological controversies on grace, justification, and the sacrament of baptism.

The visionary debate in Pearl reflects the most prominent theological issues of its age. The encounter of the speaker and the Pearl maiden, her exposition of divine knowledge, and the vision of the New Jerusalem are made possible solely through the fact of her prior salvation through baptismal grace. The speaker's confusion regarding the role of grace in salvation, which seems to reflect a nominalistic

position, has compounded his grief and led to the despairing tone in which the poem opens. The dialogue between speaker and maiden begins in the fifth section of the poem, though the speaker's ideas concerning her salvation are revealed earlier in the work. In the opening stanzas, various images emphasize the speaker's view of his pearl as imprisoned within an earthly grave: "To þenke hir color so clad in clot. / O moul, þou marre3 a myry iuele, / My priuy perle wythouten spotte" (22-24). The speaker's vision then commences with a description of the wondrous landscape of his dream, and he declares:

More of wele wat3 in þat wyse

Þen I cowþe telle þa3 I tom hade,

For vrbely herte my3t not suffyse

To þe tenþe dole of þo gladne3 glade;

Forþy I þo3t þat Paradyse

Wat3 þer ouer gayn þo bonke3 brade. (133-38)

As the speaker believes himself to be in Paradise, a striking complexity soon arises in the poem. The speaker recognizes the maiden he encounters as his lost pearl, and he expresses his astonishment at having found her there: "Bot baysment gef myn hert a brunt. / I se3 hyr in so strange a place, / Such a burre my3t make myn herte blunt" (174-76). It is significant that the Christian speaker has not believed that his infant daughter, though baptized, is in heaven. In light of the stable tradition and

theology of baptism in medieval England, with its assurance of salvation for the innocent, the speaker's confusion seems to indicate an awareness of the nominalistic position on the sacraments. William of Ockham and his followers denied the sacraments as logically necessary or sufficient for the infusion of grace by God's absolute power. They believed instead that God freely bestows merit on whomever He deems righteous, an essentially Pelagian position based upon good works. Such a theological understanding might well have restricted the hopes of many bereaved parents of children too young to have served God. The speaker confirms his uncertainty of the girl's salvation in later dialogue with the maiden, when he states:

My blysse, my bale, 3e han ben bope,

Bot much þe bygger 3et wat3 my mon;

Fro þou wat3 wroken fro vch a woþe,

I wyste neuer quere my perle wat3 gon.

Now I hit se, now leþe3 my loþe. (373-77)

Until this moment, the speaker has had no knowledge of his pearl's eternal status, as he plainly states. But, to see her presently in heaven softens his grief, for the hope he dared not to entertain is realized.

The intelligent speaker's apparent doubts and confusion over the significance of Christian baptism gives strong, though indirect, support for the influence of nominalistic doctrines among the classes of educated lay readers in England. Many of the speaker's remarks and assertions in the course of the poem's debate give

direct evidence of his awareness of Ockhamist theology, as do the maiden's reproaches. Moreover, the Pearl maiden's doctrinal speeches conform to the orthodox Augustinian positions of the Church. She affirms the Church's traditional teaching on baptism, and she settles the issues of grace and justification to the speaker's eventual satisfaction. It seems that in an era of radical and unsettling theological disputation, the Pearl-poet desired to resolve important theological complexities and to discredit the Pelagian conceptions of the Ockhamists by attributing the poem's exposition of traditional doctrines to an authoritative and heavenly figure. In this sense, poetry might accomplish what theology cannot, for the Pearl maiden speaks with the authority of God's elect and gives personal testimony of her own salvation.

The speaker's dialogue with the maiden begins in Section V of Pearl, when he overcomes his initial astonishment at their meeting and addresses her:

Art þou my perle þat I haf playned,

Regretted by myn one on ny3te?

Much longeyng haf I for þe layned,

Syþen into gresse þou me agly3te.

Pensyf, payred, I am forpayned,

And þou in a lyf of lykyng ly3te,

In Paradys erde, of stryf vnstrayned.

What wyrde hat₃ hyder my iuel vayned,

And don me in þys del and gret daunger? (242-50)

Here is still another example of the narrator's lack of certainty regarding his infant's salvation. After requesting that the maiden confirm herself as his lost pearl, the speaker expresses his desire to know how she came to reside in the heavenly realm. For the moment, however, it is the speaker's expression of grief upon which the maiden focuses. Her statements in the following two stanzas are chiefly consolatory:

Bot, jueler gente, if þou schal lose

Þy ioy for a gemme þat þe wat₃ lef,

Me þynk þe put in a mad porpose,

And busye₃ þe aboute a raysoun bref;

For þat þou leste₃ wat₃ bot a rose

Þat flowred and fayled as kynde hyt gef.

Now þur₃ kynde of þe kyste þat hyt con close

To a perle of prys hit is put in pref. (265-72)

With great joy at the unexpected reunion, the dreamer responds that she has eased his sorrow, "A juel to me þen wat₃ þys geste, / And iuele₃ wern hyr gentyl sawe₃" (277-78). His immense happiness and exhilaration at this moment lead him to declare impetuously his intention to dwell with her there and to love the Lord who has brought him this bliss. It is this declaration which brings him the stern

reproof of the Pearl maiden: "Pou ne woste in worlde quat on dot3 mene; / Py worde byfore py wytte con fle" (294). She states he has committed three errors: that he believes her to be in Paradise because he sees her with his eyes; that he believes he may remain and dwell with her there; and that he believes he may freely pass through the river which divides them. Reading Pearl in light of contemporary theological controversies over grace, the stanza which immediately follows is undoubtedly of central import to interpreting the work, for it seems to give an unequivocal expression of the Pearl-poet's attitude toward the skeptical theology of the nominalists. In this speech, the Pearl maiden judges those who place too high a value on human reason and reject or modify the revealed word of God to be guilty of the sin of pride:

I halde þat iueler lyttel to prayse

Þat leue3 wel þat he se3 wyth y3e,

And much to blame and vncortayse

Þat leue3 oure Lorde wolde make a ly3e,

Þat lelly hy3te your lyf to rayse,

Þa3 fortune dyd your flesch to dy3e.

3e setten hys worde3 ful westernays

Þat leue3 nobynk bot 3e hit sy3e.

And þat is a poynt o sorquydry3e,

Pat vche god mon may euel byseme,

To leue no tale be true to tryȝe

Bot þat hys one skyl may dem. (301-12)

Such a passage recalls the radical statements of Ockhamist theologians who went so far as to proclaim that by God's absolute power the Holy Scriptures could be false. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, Ockham's doctrine of God's ordained and absolute powers distinguished God's laws revealed to man in Scripture from the absolute freedom of God to act in any manner He chooses regardless of revelation. Ockham's theological innovations derived from his philosophy of nominalism, an extreme empiricism that denied the concept of universals and maintained that only concrete and individual things have true existence in the natural world. In consequence, Ockham and his followers limited man's knowledge to practical experience alone and proclaimed that the Christian religion must be upheld solely through faith. Despite their profession of faith, however, at the center of nominalistic theology lay the belief that any of God's revealed laws could be altered or reversed by invoking His absolute power (Chapter 2, 51-67; Chapter 3, 28-31).

The alarming doctrines of the nominalists led contemporary theologians at Oxford to an emphasis upon the relationship of God to humanity and the relevant issues of grace and justification that are at the center of debate in Pearl. The Ockhamists drew the outrage and hostility of traditional and conservative theologians by maintaining that statements known to be true by God's ordained

power could be false by God's absolute power, and vice versa. Of grace and salvation, Ockham wrote in the first book of his Sentences commentary that God, in His absolute power, could disregard grace if He chose to award merit to any freely willed action performed by man: "God can, if He wills, dispense with all order in awarding man final glory" (in Leff, Medieval 289). Ockham further denied that the sacraments were logically necessary or sufficient for the infusion of grace (Adams 1278). By God's absolute power, the Ockhamists insisted upon the autonomy of the human will and upon man's freedom to perform deeds which could be deemed meritorious by God in His absolute power. The most outstanding opponent of the nominalists, Thomas Bradwardine, designated them as the "modern Pelagians" in his famed treatise De causa Dei contra Pelagium for their belief that man could take the initiative in salvation and for their disregard of Scriptural authority and the theological traditions established by St. Paul and St. Augustine (Chapter 2, 67-79).

The rebuke of the dreamer cited above in Pearl indicates not only the poet's awareness of Ockhamist theology, but also a knowledge of the foundational tenet of nominalistic philosophy: the denial of all reality excepting the singular and concrete. It was Ockham's belief in this idea which led directly to the development of his unorthodox theological views. Like the dreamer, it is the Ockhamists who "setten hys worde3 ful westernays / þat leue3 nobynk bot 3e hit sy3e" (307-8). At this point, the Pearl maiden begins her correction of the speaker's mistaken notions: "Deme now þyself if þou con dayly / As man to God worde3 schulde heue" (313-

14). Her remarks in the course of the debate support the traditional positions of the Church defended by Bradwardine. The maiden's first lesson for the speaker is to remind him of the reality of original sin and physical death, and she expresses also the Augustinian notion of God's sovereignty so forcefully advocated by Bradwardine:

Pou wylne₃ ouer þys water to weue;

Er moste þou ceuer to oþer counsayle:

Þy corse in clot mot calder keue.

For hit wat₃ forgarte at Paradys greue;

Oure 3orefader hit con mysse₃eme.

Þur₃ drwry deth bo₃ vch man dreue,

Er ouer þys dam hym Dry₃tyn deme. (318-24)

With these words of the maiden, the speaker, who is understandably yet preoccupied with hope of regaining his lost pearl, returns to his mood of grief. His expression of pain elicits additional words of consolation from the maiden, followed by this advice:

Stynt of þy strot and fyne to flyte,

And sech hys blyþe ful swefte and swyþe.

Þy prayer may hys pyté byte,

Þat mercy schal hyr crafte₃ kype.

Hys comforte may þy langour lye
And þy lure₃ of ly₃tly fleme;
For, marre oþer madde, morne and myþe,
Al lys in hym to dy₃t and deme. (353-360)

In view of the divine sovereignty stated in the last line of this quotation, the maiden urges the speaker to approach God through prayer, submission, and the petition for mercy. This approach is continually stressed by the maiden throughout Pearl and is consistent with conventional Church teaching, as opposed to the works-based doctrines of the Ockhamists. In contrast to the theological tradition of grace, the Ockhamists claimed that man's freely initiated good works could be deemed meritorious by God and attain grace by His absolute power. The speaker replies that he did not intend to offend God with his rash speech, and he implores the maiden to look upon him with pity, considering that "Fro þou wat₃ wroken fro vch a woþe, / I wyste neuer quere my perle wat₃ gon" (375-76). With these lines, the maiden now understands that it is not only bereavement but confusion regarding her eternal salvation which has distressed the speaker. The speaker reaffirms his faith in Christ's mercy, and he beseeches the maiden to explain how she has attained her present place in the heavenly realm:

I wolde bysech, wythouten debate,
3e wolde me say in sobre asente

What lyf 3e lede erly and late.

For I am ful fayn þat your astate

Is worþen to worschyp and wele, iwysse. (390-94)

These remarks imply the dreamer's view of salvation as a reward based upon varying degrees of merit. He now knows the maiden to be in heaven, but he does not understand how she has earned her salvation.

The maiden answers that when she died at a tender age she was taken to be a bride of Christ and crowned as a queen in heaven:

þow wost wel when þy perle con schede

I wat3 ful 3ong and tender of age;

Bot my Lorde þe Lombe þur3 hys godhede,

He toke myself to hys maryage,

Corounde me quene in blysse to brede

In lenghe of daye3 þat euer schal wage;

And sesed in alle hys herytage

Hys lef is. I am holy hysse:

Hys prese, hys prys, and hys parage

Is rote and grounde of alle my blysse. (411-20)

The maiden's employment of the term "quene" leads the speaker to confusion, for, as he states, he believed Mary to be the queen of heaven. Mary is indeed heaven's Empress, confirms the maiden, and yet all other heavenly souls are kings and queens who share equally in divine blessing as members of Christ's body :

The court of þe kyndom of God alyue

Hat3 a property in hytself beyng:

Alle þat may þerinne aryue

Of all þe reme is quen oþer kyng,

And neuer oþer 3et schal depyue,

Bot vchon fayn of oþere3 hafyng,

And wolde her coroune3 wern worþe þo fyue,

If possyble were her mendyng. (445-52)

The speaker's response distinctly expresses his belief in salvation as compensation for worldly service, even to the point that the level of reward itself is dependent upon the level of service:

Byself in heuen ouer hy3 þou heue,

To make þe quen þat wat3 so 3onge.

What more honour mo3te he acheue

Þat hade endured in worlde stronge,

And lyved in penaunce hys lyue3 longe

Wyth bodyly bale hym blysse to byye?

What more worschyp mo3t he fonge

Þen corounde be kyng by cortaysé?

That cortaysé is to fre of dede,

3yf hyt be soth þat þou cone3 saye.

Þou lyfed not two 3er in oure pede;

Þou cowþe3 neuer God naþer plese ne pray,

Ne neuer nawþer Pater ne Crede;

And quen mad on þe fyrst day!

I may not traw, so God me spede,

þat God wolde wryþe so wrange away.

Of countes, damysel, par ma fay,

Wer fayr in heuen to halde asstate,

Oþer elleȝ a lady of lasse aray;

Bot a quene! Hit is to dere a date. (473-92)

Some critics have judged the dreamer harshly for these comments, believing him impudent and resentful of the Pearl-maiden's unearned, and thus undeserved, reward. However, when read in light of the contemporary arguments over grace and justification, it seems likely that the dreamer has embraced a works-based conception of justification due his knowledge of nominalistic doctrines: such belief undoubtedly derives from the Ockhamist position on God's absolute freedom to award merit to any freely willed human action which He judges to be good, regardless of the theological tradition of grace. As the maiden reverses the dreamer's thinking and guides him to a new state of enlightenment, it is only natural that he questions her and seeks clarification.

The Pearl maiden at this moment realizes that the speaker has little comprehension of the true significance of Christian grace, and she undertakes to instruct him. The remainder of the poem's debate is devoted to the maiden's exposition of divine grace. She begins by recounting the vineyard parable in Matthew 20:1-16. The poet's use of this parable is exceptionally well suited to Pearl's themes. It illustrates both the primacy of grace in man's relationship to God and the logical contradictions which exist between the worldly and heavenly orders, implying the inadequacy of human reason to comprehend the will and justice of God. As the maiden begins her instruction, she stresses the eternal truth of the ordained laws revealed in God's Holy Scriptures:

'Per is no date of hys godnesse',

Pen sayde to me þat worþy wyȝte,

'For al is trawþe þat he con dresse,

And he may do nobynk bot ryȝt.

As Mathew meleȝ in your messe

In sothfol gospel of God almyȝt,

In sample he can ful grayþely gesse,

And lykne₃ hit to heuen ly₃te. (493-500)

Such details fit into an overall view of Pearl as composed to help defeat the contemporary and heretical notions of Ockhamist theologians.

The maiden retells in full the parable of the vineyard, with its account of the disgruntled laborers who demand more in wages than those who did not work the entire day. At evening, when the vineyard owner pays the agreed upon penny to each laborer, those who toiled longest complain, "Vus þynk vus o₃e to take more. / More haf we serued, vus þynk so" (552-53). The owner replies that he has honored their covenant and that he is a good man who would not cheat anyone. Such is the kingdom of heaven, as Christ states, where "Þe laste schal be þe fyrst þat stryke₃, / And þe fyrst þe laste, be he neuer so swyft" (570-71). The dramatic reversal of expectations between the human and divine orders in the parable of the vineyard both undercuts the Ockhamist notion of justification by merit and asserts the inability of the human intellect to perceive the will of God. In God's kingdom, the workers who have toiled longest are not necessarily entitled to greater reward.

The maiden then presents her own full and detailed exegesis of the vineyard parable:

More haf I of joye and blysse hereinne,

Of ladyschyp gret and lyue3 blom,

Pen alle þe wy3e3 in þe worlde my3t wynne

By þe way of ry3t to aske dome.

Wheþer welnygh now I con bygynne—

In euentyde into þe vyne I come—

Fyrst of my hyre my Lorde con mynne:

I wat3 payed anon of al and sum.

3et oþer þer werne þat toke more tom,

þat swange and swat for long 3ore,

þat 3et of hyre nobynk þay nom,

Paraunter no3t schal to-3ere more. (577-88)

The maiden states that the perfection of joy and bliss she experiences in heaven is excessive in proportion to what might justifiably be claimed by anyone as a reward for worldly service to God. As we seen above in Chapter 2, such an expression is consistent with the views of St. Paul, St. Augustine, and Bradwardine, who stress in their writings that human salvation is a gift too inestimably great for anyone to merit

and further that there is no virtuous human action which can be performed without a preceding infusion of divine grace, so that salvation is always a work of God and not of man (Chapter 2, 7-8, 20-27, 29-31, 70-78).

The speaker's response to the maiden's exegesis of the parable is characteristic of the skeptic: "Me þynk þy tale vnresounable" (590). He too can draw upon Scripture to support his view of heavenly rewards distributed according to human merit:

Godde3 ry3t is redy and euermore rert,

Oþer Holy Wryt is bot a fable.

In Sauter is sayd a verce ouerte

Þat speke3 a poynt determynable:

"Þou quyte3 vchon as hys desserte,

Þou hy3e kyng ay pretermynable."

Now he þat stod þe long day stable,

And þou to payment com hym byfore,

Þenne þe lasse in werke to take more able,

And euer þe lenger þe lasse, þe more. (591-600)

The speaker's quotation from Psalms 12:11-12 denotes an Old Testament conception of divine justice in which the righteous were those who followed the commandments of God as revealed in Scripture; and it would make a useful study to determine if any current nominalistic theologians applied the phrase to support their own notion of justification. Other passages in Scripture were at times employed by the Ockhamists as confirmation of their views. Heiko Oberman has discussed some of the arguments by which Bradwardine refuted the claims of the "modern Pelagians" when citing Scripture to prove that justification is dependent upon merit determined by God in His absolute power. In passage I.43.413-14 of De causa Dei, for example, Bradwardine explicates troublesome verses from the epistle of James. Oberman states:

Here Bradwardine has an opportunity to discuss James 2, a chapter which is readily quoted by the Pelagians. They cite two texts in particular (2:14, 26, AV): "What does it profit, my brethren, though a man says he hath faith and have not works?" And: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also". However, by this it is not meant that when the opportunity or the necessity arises to do good works, man does *remain* righteous by faith without works. Faith without works dies because of lack of love, which is the form of life for the Christian faith. So one is not

justified by works, but works are an accompanying or following form
of faith. (Archbishop 171)

Since the speaker in Pearl will not easily disregard his belief that God grants
reward in proportion to merit, the maiden makes effort once more to elaborate the
profound munificence of God which distinguishes Christian salvation:

‘Of more and lasse in Gode³ ryche’,

þat gentyl sayde, ‘lys no joparde,

For þer is vch mon payed inlyche,

Wheþer lyttel oper much be hys rewarde;

For þe gentyl Cheuentayn is no chyche,

Queþer-so-euer he dele nesch oper harde:

He laue³ hys gyfte³ as water of dyche,

Oper gote³ of golf þat neuer charde.

Hys fraunchyse is large þat euer dard

To Hym þat mat³ in synne rescoghe;

No blysse bet₃ fro hem reparde,

For þe grace of God is gret inoghe. (601-12)

This stanza lies at the exact center of Pearl and marks the beginning of the maiden's longest speech, a speech that comprises twelve stanzas, or 144 lines, and during which the speaker makes no interruption or objection. The maiden's purpose in this speech is to elucidate the theological tradition of grace, a point given emphasis in the refrain of this stanzaic group: "For þe grace of God is gret inoghe."

In the eleven succeeding stanzas, the Pearl maiden's compelling arguments on grace and her numerous Scriptural and theological references show strong support for the orthodox positions established by St. Paul and St. Augustine and defended by Bradwardine. Bradwardine's chief mode of confronting the "modern Pelagians" was his appeal to authority and tradition; and like Bradwardine, the Pearl maiden's exposition of divine grace relies also upon customary and sanctioned Church teachings. The maiden now once more addresses the speaker's insistence upon belief in eternal reward as commensurate with meritorious works: "Þou say₃ þat I þat com to late / Am not worpy so gret fere" (615-16). The maiden's refutation of this view is then consistent with the theology of Paul and Augustine, who maintained that no member of the sinful human race deserves salvation:

Where wyste₃ þou euer any bourne abate,

Euer so holy in hys prayere,

þat he ne forfeȝet by sumkyn gate

þe mede sumtyme of heueneȝ clere?

And ay þe offer, þe alder þay were,

þay laften ryȝt and wroȝten woghe.

Mercy and grace moste hem þen stere,

For þe grace of God is gret innoȝe. (617-24)

Augustine supported Paul's statement in Romans 3:23-24 that "since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" Likewise, the Pearl maiden states that it is God's mercy and grace that redeem sinners and not the actions of man. To this, she adds that baptism confers grace upon the child, and she compares infants to the late-coming vineyard workers:

Bot innoghe of grace hatȝ innocent.

As sone as þay arn borne, by lyne

In þe water of babtem þay dyssente:

Pen arne þay boroȝt into þe vyne. (625-28)

As the Ockhamists were opposed to the necessity of sacramental grace in justification by God's absolute power, the poem very likely reflects this aspect of their theology. As the speaker in Pearl seems to have come under the influence of Ockhamist teachings, he is accordingly perplexed over his infant's destiny, despite her earthly baptism and the theological tradition of the salvation of baptized children. By the authoritative voice of the Pearl maiden, however, baptism will soon be restored in the poem to its essential position in Church doctrine.

Next, the maiden briefly recounts the fall of mankind through Adam's sin and its consequences for humanity:

Inoȝe is knawen þat mankyn grete

Fyrste watȝ wroȝt to blysse parfyt;

Oure forme fader hit con forfete

Þurȝ an apple þat he vpon con byte.

Al wer we dampned for þat mete

To dyȝe in doel out of delyt

And syþen wende to helle hete,

Perinne to won wythoute respyt. (636-46)

The account of man's fall in Genesis provided the theological basis for belief in the inherent sinfulness of human nature, as Augustine and Bradwardine stressed in their writings. This belief constitutes an important contrast with Pelagian doctrine, which espoused the inherent goodness and perfectibility of mankind and interpreted sin as the conscious choice of the human will. Like Augustine and Bradwardine, the Pearl maiden discloses that the exclusive means by which a corrupted humanity may be saved is through the mercy of Christ and baptismal grace:

Bot þeron com a bote astyt.

Ryche blod ran on rode so roghe,

And wyne water þen at þat plyt:

þe grace of God wex gret innoghe. (645-48)

The maiden's extended discussion of these ideas carries over to the following stanza, where her statements include clear and important references to the theology of baptism in Paul and Augustine. Of Christ's mercy and of baptism, the maiden continues:

Innoghe þer wax out of þat welle,

Blod and water of brode wounde.

Þe blod vus boȝt fro bale of helle

And delyuered vus of þe deth secounde;

Þe water is babtem, þe soþe to telle,

Þat folȝed þe glayue so grymly grounde,

Þat wascheȝ away þe gylteȝ felle

Þat Adam wyth inne deth vus drounde. (649-56)

In Augustine's theology of sin, he originated the doctrine that all human beings, as descendants of Adam, share alike in the guilt of Adam's sin. Because this guilt is transmitted in the act of procreation, no human enters the world free from the culpability of original sin. The Augustinian doctrine of original sin became the theological basis for infant baptism from the fifth century onward; for, as Augustine declared, it was only via the sacrament of baptism that the guilt of original sin was washed away so that each child could receive the grace of Christ (Chapter 3, 17-20). In the maiden's speech, she refers explicitly to the Augustinian conception of the "gylteȝ felle" possessed by the descendants of Adam. Additionally, the maiden's reference to man's physical death as the "deth secounde" and her reference to

drowning echo the figurative language of Paul, who interpreted baptism as a death and subsequent rebirth to a new life in Christ: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4). In statements consistent with the writings of Paul, Augustine, and Bradwardine on grace and justification, the Pearl maiden affirms the theological traditions of the Church.

The maiden proceeds in her speech to again advise the dreamer that sinners might draw closer to God through genuine penitence:

Grace innogh þe mon may haue

þat synneȝ þenne new, ȝif hym repente,

Both wyth sorȝ and syt he mot hit craue,

And byde þe payne þerto is bent. (661-64)

The maiden speaks here of salvation in terms of possibilities, like Augustine and Bradwardine who believed that salvation is ultimately a mystery and that there can be no assurance of salvation. All salvation depends upon the mercy and grace of

God, and the maiden acknowledges the passive role of man: "Þe gyltyf may
contryssyoun hente / And be þurȝ mercy to grace þryȝt" (669-70).

The anti-Pelagian basis of Pearl's theology is given further emphasis in the
next several stanzas in which the maiden gives Scriptural examples of those who will
be saved: the adult penitent upon whom God bestows grace and the guiltless
innocent, assured of salvation through baptism. Of the gratuitous nature of grace
and the mystery of God's plan, the maiden states:

Anende ryȝtwys men ȝet sayȝt a gome,

Dauid in Sauter, if euer ȝe syȝ hit:

"Lorde, þy seruaunt draȝ neuer to dome,

For non lyuyande to þe is justyfyet."

Forþy to corte quen þou schal com

Þer alle oure causeȝ schal be tryed,

Alegge þe ryȝt, þou may be innome,

By þys ilke spech I haue asspyed. (697-704)

The maiden's exposition of grace and justification rises to its strongest arguments in her examples of Christ's mercy for mankind. At the heart of Pelagian theology, as Augustine insisted, lay the failure to comprehend the saving work of Christ. In Christ's death, man's salvation has already been effected and grace made available to sinners. Grace is therefore the cause, and never the reward, of good works (Chapter 2, 21-22; Chapter 3, 15-18). As the Pearl maiden attests:

Bot he on rode þat bloody dyed,

Delffully þurȝ hondeȝ þryȝt,

Gyue þe to passe, when þou art tryed,

By innocens and not by ryȝte. (705-08)

In the following stanzas, the maiden retells the story of Jesus' blessing of the children in Matthew 19:13-15, Mark 10:13-16, and Luke 18:15-17. In this final example of her speech, she reinforces the idea of grace as the unearned favor of God:

Iesus con call to hym hys mylde,

And sayde hys ryche no wyȝ myȝt wyne

Bot he com þyder ryȝt as a chylde,

Oþer elleȝ neuermore com þerinne.

Harmleȝ, trwe, and vndefylde,

Wythouten mote oþer mascle of sulpande synne,

Quen such þer cnoken on þe bylde,

Tyt schal hem men þe ȝate vnpynne. (721-28)

The Pearl maiden closes her speech in recounting Christ's parable of the pearl of price in Matthew 13:45-46. The perfection of the matchless pearl of price is compared to the perfection of the eternal blessings enjoyed by those who reside within the heavenly realm. The maiden's final statements remind of mankind's redemption in Christ, and she urges the dreamer to seek the Lamb of God. Pointing to the pearl which adorns her dress, she states:

My Lord þe Lombe, þat schede hys blode,

He pyȝt hit þere in token of pes.

I rede þe forsake þe worlde wode

And porchace þy perle maskelles. (740-44)

When the maiden's 144-line theological discourse on grace concludes, the speaker is accepting of her lesson and the debate comes to a close. Having listened so long

without interruption, he is satisfied with his new knowledge of salvation and turns his attention to other matters, desiring to know more of the maiden's present existence. She presents an account of heavenly life in the Lord's presence in the New Jerusalem that is based upon Revelation, after which the speaker expresses his gratitude for her instruction:

'Neuer þe les let be my þonc',

Quod I, "My perle, þaȝ I appose;

I schulde not tempte þy wyt so wlonc,

To Krysteȝ chambre þat art ichose. (901-04)

Finally, the speaker requests and is granted permission to view the New Jerusalem. The precisely detailed descriptions of the heavenly city in Revelation lend further authority to the maiden's arguments as they reinforce the truthfulness of his vision.

The vision in Pearl ends in a touchingly human manner when the speaker catches sight once more of the Pearl maiden in the New Jerusalem. The pain of his loss renewed, he impulsively attempts to cross the river, abruptly terminating his dream. Though he avows his displeasure at being cast out of "þat fayre regioun," he asserts the veracity of his vision and states his comfort in knowing that his pearl resides with the Lamb:

'O perle', quod I, 'of rych renoun,

So wat3 hit me dere þat þou con deme

In þys veray avysyoun!

If hit be ueray and soth sermoun

þat þou so styke3 in garlande gay,

So wel is me in þys doel-doungoun

þat þou art to þat Prynse3 paye.' (1182-88)

The speaker then remarks upon the folly of those who would struggle against the will of God: "Lorde, mad hit arn þat agayn þe stryuen, / Oþer proferen þe o3t agayn þy paye" (1199-1200).

In the closing stanza, the traditional role of Christ's grace in salvation is emphasized. The speaker recalls his former uncertainty over his pearl's eternal status and expresses once more his new assurance of her salvation granted in the visionary encounter:

To pay þe Prince oþer sete sa3te

Hit is ful eþe to þe god Krystyin;

For I haf founden hym, boþe day and naȝte,

A God, a Lorde, a frende ful fyin.

Ouer þis hyul þis lote I laȝte,

For pyty of my perle enclyin,

And syþen to God I hit bytaȝte

In Krysteȝ dere blessyng and myn,

Þat in þe forme of bred and wyn

Þe preste vus scheweȝ vch a daye.

He gef vus to be his homly hyne

Ande precious perleȝ vnto his pay. (1201-12)

In the course of the poem, the speaker has turned away from his previous misconceptions of Christian salvation which doubtless derived from an acquaintance with nominalistic theology. He now embraces the Pearl maiden's orthodox teaching of justification through grace, the theological position of Paul, Augustine, and Bradwardine.

Like numerous other works in Middle English literature, Pearl reflects the theological interests of its age. Reading the poem in light of the contemporary scholastic disputations on grace and justification helps to interpret the theological content of the poem's debate and the poet's characterization of the speaker. Beginning in the 1320's and through the course of five decades, William of Ockham and his many followers at Oxford insisted upon a view of mankind as freely capable of performing good works which God could judge meritorious by His absolute power. The Ockhamist emphasis upon self-justification led to their denunciation by Bradwardine as "modern Pelagians" who would circumvent revelation by the division of God's powers into two orders: the ordained and the absolute. Bradwardine is the leading theologian associated with the conservative movement to defeat the heretical doctrines of the Ockhamists and to uphold the Pauline and Augustinian traditions of grace and justification. The Pearl-poet, like Bradwardine, supports the traditional positions of orthodoxy. The composition of Pearl is itself proof of the general interest of lay readers in the complex topics of current theological debate. Therefore, it seems the Pearl-poet, following his likely sources in Bradwardine and Augustine, made a unique and poetic contribution to aid in discrediting the Pelagian conceptions of the Ockhamists and to bring an understanding of the traditional theology of salvation to those who read his work.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

The preceding chapters have examined the contemporary significance of the doctrinal content of Pearl. The theological issues of grace, justification, and the sacraments were central in the controversies between Ockhamist and traditional theologians in England in the age of the Pearl-poet. Given the apparent prominence of both nominalistic theology and the conservative reaction against it, it would be surprising if such complex and vital themes were not explored in the literature of the period. Evidence suggests that among the classes of lay readers some familiarity with these disputes is reasonably certain: for example, in Ockham's complaint of the questioning of Oxford theologians by laymen; in the vernacular sermons of Bradwardine and Fitzralph; in the significant public career of Bradwardine, who made the defense of the Augustinian doctrine of grace his main theological cause; in the appearance of related ideas in the works of Chaucer and Langland and in Chaucer's naming of Bradwardine in the "Nun's Priest's Tale."

In view of the contemporary importance of the issues of grace, justification, and baptism, Pearl must be read as the poet's effort to clarify and resolve these current theological disagreements for his readers. It is likely that the poem's

speaker typifies the group of readers for whom Pearl was composed: that is, members of the educated laity, possessing some knowledge of Scripture and literature, and whose acquaintance with nominalistic theology has introduced confusion and misunderstandings. The questions and objections of the dreamer in the course of the debate reflect a view of self-justification that is characteristic of Ockhamist belief. The doctrinal speeches of the Pearl maiden clearly conform to the orthodox Augustinian view maintained with ultimate success by theologians like Bradwardine and suggest the Pearl-poet's familiarity with Bradwardine's works or perhaps with the work of Fitzralph or Wyclif, who adopted Bradwardine's doctrine of grace. With regard to these findings, further investigation of Bradwardine's theology would seem beneficial for scholars of Middle English literature.

In a recent book on Bradwardine, Edith Dolnikowski praises the Profound Doctor's approach to the fundamental problem of divine omniscience and human free will as a "synthesis of Aristotelian, Augustinian, Boethian, and Thomist cosmological principles" that "combined a precise definition of time's relationship to eternity with an Augustinian conception of grace . . ." (205). Of Bradwardine's importance in fourteenth-century thought, Dolnikowski writes:

. . . Bradwardine far surpassed his contemporaries in grasping the implications of traditional metaphysics and in conveying his insights to a large audience. His influence and popularity as a thinker are proven by his remarkable success inside and outside of academic

circles. His brilliant public career enabled him, in turn, to popularize his essentially traditional views of nature and God among both learned and lay communities. (207)

Bradwardine, the staunch defender of orthodoxy, was nevertheless an original thinker who exerted an extraordinary influence in his age and for subsequent generations. His full influence upon English literature, however, remains to be assessed. Bradwardine's most important theological works, De causa Dei contra Pelagium and Sermo Epinicius, exist only in their original manuscript form. For Pearl, the comparison of the poem to these treatises will reveal the true extent of the poet's debt to Bradwardine as the source of the poem's theology.

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