Introduction

I had a difficult but powerful insight as my study of Christianity deepened as I realised that, when reading the Bible, I was finding, even imposing, the theology that I had been taught onto the text. This was not deliberate; the church culture bubble that I grew up in had a very strong influence that was difficult to put to one side in order to allow passages to speak to me and challenge me in fresh ways. The Bible had become, for me, a static text that I would go to with questions in order to find answers, generally ones that gave me comfort. It was no longer the living, breathing word of God. Now, when I read the Bible, I am surprised if it does not subvert ideas that I have of God, humankind and salvation history and convict me to change how I think and how I live my life. It is alive for me once more.

These volumes on sin, grace and free will have taken me on a similar journey through the history of Christian thought. As an undergraduate, one tends to read about the key Christian thinkers of the past, with perhaps excerpts of their writings to illustrate how they approached different concepts. When working at a postgraduate level, one must look far more closely at the sources themselves, although even then secondary sources can play a strong role in research.

The joy of preparing these books has been to seek to throw off the secondary sources, to read the key historical figures' own works, often in their own language (I'm afraid my Greek was not up to working with the early Fathers in the original), and to seek to present these thoughts to the reader. I have tried to keep my voice to a minimum, although it is inevitably present in the choice, organisation and presentation of the material. Throughout, my intention has been to encourage you, the reader, when interested by a thought in these volumes, to go back to the source and decide for yourself what the writer meant.

The results of my research have often been surprising to me. I had not worked heavily on the Reformation period before this book, being more a specialist in the medieval period, and expected a largely popish focus to these writings. That was certainly present, but it was not the sole object of the reformers' writings, which took on Scholastics and fanatics and even each other, often using language that was greatly Catholic in its thought and expression as they sought to reform the faith, rather than restart the faith. It has been pleasing with each thinker presented in the first two volumes to see how greatly each honours Scripture as the prime source of the faith, and how they work with this and the tradition of thought they receive in order to help the Church to understand the faith that it holds. I don't agree with any of them in all they write, but I am struck that these are writers pursuing God as I do within their context and understanding, and, rather than sitting in judgement when I disagree, I am forced to reflect that my own theological matrix probably has many gaps and holes of which I am not aware.

This volume follows the overall method of the previous one in seeking only to present passages that explicitly work with our key themes of sin, grace and free will, although at times there were sections that seemed to scream out for inclusion without any direct references – particularly in areas that discussed the sacraments or the nature of faith. I have stuck to looking at theological works, rather than commentaries on certain portions of Scripture or sermons on specific passages. Occasionally, particularly during the Reformation, there were writers who wrote theological sermons with no set text, rather a set theme, and some of these are included. The volume has been arranged thematically rather than chronologically or by work – except for the short chapter on the Council of Trent that is dealt with by session – in order to bring together different threads of thought on the same issue and show the complexities present in any one thinker's approach to sin, grace or free will.

One change that has been made from Volume One is an attempt to make the language a little more accessible, and so I have sought to modernise the language with my own translations and paraphrases. With good referencing, it is hoped that the task of identifying the precise original passage will not be too hard and this book should be a little more readable. In this regard, I must give great thanks to several current scholars who have allowed me to quote extensively from their translations of the primary sources. Jasper Hopkins has done a wonderful work in translating Anselm of Canterbury into very readable English. He has even made these translations available online for any to access and he very kindly gave me permission to quote from these editions for this work. Professor

Giulio Silano has recently published the first complete translation of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, a vital work in medieval theology that had a precedence in the study of theology for centuries – far more important in that context than the work of Thomas Aquinas – and I was delighted to receive his permission and that of the Pontifical Institute to use that translation in this volume. Finally, in terms of thanks, Professor Tony Lane and Graham Davies have given me permission to use their work on John Calvin's *On the Bondage and Liberation of the Will* here, the only translation that I know of that work. For the rest, I have sought to work with the original texts, helped of course by available translations, to present readable quotations here for the reader.

The choice of writers to include in this volume was not easy, however, the framework was agreed with the publishers to work from the beginnings of the Scholastic movement with Anselm of Canterbury to the end of the first phase of the Reformation at the Council of Trent. The decision to end at that point controlled things a little, since it seemed to demand the inclusion of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and Trent itself, which together would produce a sizeable amount of material. Some will have wanted other reforming voices to be included, but the balance of the volume would have been wrong in my opinion.

The balance may still not be right, and as a medievalist I am aware of how many thinkers have been left out in the decision about whom to include. There is a strong domination of early scholastic thinkers from the late eleventh and twelfth centuries. Anselm of Canterbury is a logical inclusion as the father of Scholasticism and the author of the method of 'faith seeking understanding'. Originally, I was going to limit Anselm's contribution to the topic of free will; however, reading through his works again, it seemed important to allow his work on sin, in particular, to feature here as the first major writer on the subject since Augustine. Bernard of Clairvaux could have featured more heavily but, in the end, I decided to focus on his most explicitly relevant work, *On Grace and Free Choice*, partly because of the topic and partly because Bernard is a thinker in the mystical line of medieval thought, while the other choices are more Scholastic in their method. I would have loved to include a full chapter on Peter Abelard, as yet, however, I am unaware of any translations of his great *Theologiae* into English (I know the *Summi Boni* has been translated into German) and to include Abelard would thus break my intention to direct the reader back to the original source – I do not expect you all to learn Latin on the way. Peter Lombard, as stated above, is now available thanks to Professor Silano's work and is a vital voice in medieval theology. Thomas Aquinas had to be included, though

only after a deep breath before plunging into the *Summa Theologiae*. I decided not to go outside this work (although there are a few quotations from the Supplement to the *Summa*, which were collected from Aquinas' other writings), given that it runs to many thousands of pages in itself, and hope that you will not judge me for limiting your access to Aquinas. There were many other writers in the medieval period who could justly be included – I nearly put in a chapter on Duns Scotus and his views on free will – but there was not sufficient space to include any more and I seek the pardon of those with specific interests that are not represented here.

The inspiration for this series was a perceived gap in the presentation of the Church's thought on sin, grace and free will, combined with a desire to allow readers to meet key historical figures directly rather than purely through the thoughts of secondary scholars. Most of the writings looked at in the first volume felt a little chaotic when looking particularly for these themes, but this was because their major motivation was establishing the foundations of the Christian faith in light of diverse thought and under great political pressure. In this second volume, the thinkers under study present works on particular subjects that makes access to and presentation of their thought generally a little easier, although Martin Luther was a struggle on this level as he was writing in reaction to so many different views – he felt much more like an Early Church thinker than a late medieval one in this regard. What continues to come across strongly as this research progresses is that there is a level of commonality across the Church on some aspects – the priority of grace, the effects of original sin, the limitations of the human will; however, the complexities present in the concepts themselves, in how different thought patterns mould writers' approaches and, most importantly, in the various parts of the Bible that speak about these concepts, lead to a wide variety in ways of thinking that stretches our minds well beyond any automatic understanding.

We shall begin with Anselm and, for those continuing from Volume One – I can't think many have been anxiously awaiting this next instalment in Harry Potter-like frenzy – we move out of the Dark Ages with its limited novel thinking into a new renaissance period. Erigena, featured in the Epilogue to Volume One, lived at the time of the Carolingian Renaissance under the Emperor Charlemagne, a brief revival of learning but not one that transformed Western thought. Augustine's writings remained supreme as the theological tool to work with Scripture and faith, and in many ways this continues through the medieval and modern periods. The difference is that there is not an unswerving devotion to his

thought, rather an appreciation of his wisdom while recognising that it is not the final, complete word on our understanding of God, humankind and all that exists. The twelfth-century renaissance (not a catchy title, I know) ushered in the movement known as Scholasticism in which, on the basis of the authority of Scripture and the faith determined by the Church Fathers, people sought to engage the various forms of revelation more deeply with their reason. The Father of this movement was Anselm of Canterbury.