Maximalising providence

Maximalising Providence: Samuel Rutherford's Augustinian Transformation of Scotist Scholasticism

Abstract

In recent years evidence has emerged of the considerable influence of Scotist metaphysics on the Reformed scholasticism of the seventeenth century. One of the figures often named in connection with this Scotist revival is Samuel Rutherford (1600-61), who was one of the most important Scottish theologians of the seventeenth century. Focussing on Rutherford's maximalist doctrine of providence this article demonstrates his profound debt to key Scotist philosophical devices. In structuring these concepts, however, it is demonstrated that Rutherford is influenced not so much by Scotus directly but rather much more by the modified Scotism of Thomas Bradwardine, the fourteenth-century Augustinian theologian. In particular, Bradwardine is revealed as the key influence on Rutherford's modal theory and his sophisticated account of divine concourse. The paper concludes by arguing that Bradwardine's influence on Rutherford suggests the need to take a broader view of the late medieval influence on Reformed scholasticism than is currently the case.

Introduction

In recent years there has been a marked revival of interest among scholars of Reformed scholasticism in the contingency metaphysics of Duns Scotus, the early fourteenth-century Franciscan theologian. Writing in the wake of the 1277 condemnations, Scotus proposed a radical revision of traditional accounts of freedom and contingency which was intended to set theology free from the perceived necessitarianism of Aristotelian and especially Averroist thought. At the heart of this was his pioneering theory of synchronic contingency. In brief, the essence of this was to maintain that the will's power towards opposites obtained not only in the future, as Aristotle and Aquinas had claimed, but also in the present moment (Scotus 1994; Vos 2006; Knuuttila 1981: 163-258). Extrapolating the same logic to God suggested to Scotus the possibility of analysing the divine understanding and will, and the undivided "instant" of eternity, into a whole series of logical – and emphatically not temporal – instants or moments of nature (Vos 2006: 245-49; Normore 1996: 161-74). Deploying these he was able to make the profound claim that God's actions could be contingent, meaning that contingency was a property of the divine sphere and not only the created order as Aquinas had claimed (Scotus 2004: d. 39-40 q. 2 n. 12-15, II.469-70). For Scotus, following a broader Franciscan understanding, this also meant that God and humans should by no means be seen as competing causes but rather as freely acting concauses of the same action (Scotus 1950-: 2 d. 34-37 q. 5 n. 96-154, VIII.408-35).

For Antonie Vos and the Utrecht school who have followed him, Scotus' revolutionary account of synchronic contingency enabled early modern Reformed theologians to propose a brilliant and far-reaching account of the relationship of divine and human freedom. In particular, it allowed them to argue that the gracious determination of the divine will did not eliminate or override human freedom but rather established it – a view that some might label a kind of compatibilism, although they themselves prefer the less loaded and anachronistic term of

"dependent freedom" (Vos 2001: 99-119; Van Asselt et al. 2010; Bac 2010; and Beck 2022).[1] However, the view of the Utrecht school has proved highly controversial and has been hotly contended by Richard Muller and Paul Helm (Muller 2017; Helm 2020). Both question the view that the Reformed were committed to a Scotistic view of synchronic contingency (Muller 2017: 139-80, 231-32; Helm 2020: 33, 143). Championing a definite "Calvinist Thomism" Muller denies that the Reformed understanding of divine concourse can be considered in any way Scotist, arguing that the Reformed largely followed Aquinas in arguing for an indeterminist understanding of freedom grounded on a diachronic understanding of contingency (Muller 2017: 110-38, 193-97, 231-35, 286-89, 299-310; cf. Muller 2012: 127-50). Notably, Muller's Thomist reading of the Reformed tradition on grace and concurrence has been roundly endorsed in a major recent volume *Beyond Dordt and 'De Auxiliis'* (Ballor, Gaetano and Sytsma: 2019). While pushing for a much more compatibilist reading of the Reformed tradition than Muller, Helm also does all he can to distance it from Scotism, which he clearly views as philosophically incoherent (Helm 2020: 27-54).[2]

One of the names widely cited in connection with this Scotist revival is the Scottish theologian Samuel Rutherford. While best known today for his radical politics and devotional writing, in his own day he was an internationally-renowned Reformed theologian, known especially for his anti-Arminian works. He was also a gifted philosophical theologian with a deep knowledge of medieval and early modern scholasticism, as evident in his *Disputatio Scholastica de Divina Providentia* of 1649, written while he held a chair at St Andrews and intended for training divinity students to defend the Reformed doctrine of providence against the aspersions of Jesuits, Arminians and Socinians (Coffey 1997; Richard 2008; and Vogan 2012). It is no surprise therefore that both Rutherford and the *Disputatio* have been at the centre of controversy, with both sides seeking to use his theology as a litmus test for a wider Reformed Scotism – or lack thereof (Muller 2017: 271-72, 286).

Here two different issues must be carefully distinguished. The first concerns whether Rutherford is more indebted to Scotism or Thomism. Following discussion in John Coffey and Guy Richard, Simon Burton and Robert Sturdy have both argued for a definite Scotistic framework to Rutherford's theology, albeit within the ambit of a widely-acknowledged Reformed eclecticism (Burton 2015: 123-40; 2017: 121-42; and Sturdy 2021).[3] By contrast, Muller has contested this, arguing for a pronounced Thomism (Muller 2017: 271-72, 286). The second issue concerns whether Rutherford is influenced principally by Scotus himself or rather by the modified Scotism of Thomas Bradwardine, the fourteenth-century Augustinian theologian celebrated for his attacks on the "modern Pelagians" (Oberman 1957). The republication of Bradwardine's monumental *De Causa Dei* in 1618 by Archbishop Robert Abbott and William Twisse, later the Prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly, sparked a seventeenth-century renaissance of interest in his marked anti-Pelagian theology (Baschera 2009: 433-46). For Twisse, he was "one of the brightest stars in the scholastic firmament" (Twise 1648: II.49). Rutherford's own view was that "except for our Scotus, John Duns, there is not another among the more ancient writers prior, no one more subtle, none more solid,

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[1] For an account of "dependent freedom" as distinct from compatibilism see Van Asselt et al. 2010: 32-33.

[2] Throughout this work Helm takes issue with Muller on the issue of compatibilism. For Muller's strong caution over compatibilist readings of the Reformed tradition see 2017: 323-4.

[3] Coffey remarks on Rutherford's "Scotist vision of God" and his Scotist account of the atonement (1997: 74, 117, 129) while Richard comments on the influence of Scotus on Rutherford's voluntaristic account of God and man (2008: 26, 79, 95-7, 112, 137, 187).

among the Jesuits none to match him" (Rutherford 1649: 154-55).[4] The influence of Bradwardine on Rutherford has been demonstrated by Aza Goudriaan, Burton and Sturdy, but debate continues over its relative importance vis-à-vis Scotism (Goudriaan 2015: 141-56; Burton 2015: 134-37; and Sturdy 2021: 205-10, 247-49).

In this article I will focus especially on Rutherford's doctrine of providence through the lens of his discussions of divine knowledge and will, his distinctive modal theory and his sophisticated account of divine concourse. Building on previous scholarship, this article will seek to show that it was Bradwardine's mediation and transformation of Scotism that enabled Rutherford to construct a "maximalist" account of providence and modal ontology. Rutherford clearly found in Bradwardine, the "hammer of the Pelagians", a major ally in his own battle with what he viewed as the resurgent Pelagianism of the Jesuits and Arminians. In this, he can be linked not only to an important Scotist tradition, long flourishing in his native Scotland, but also, even more so, to the renewed Augustinianism of the Late Middle Ages, which, as Michael Sylwanowicz and others have argued, frequently took up Scotistic ideas in defence of its own controversial account of divine grace (Broadie 1995; Gellera 2015: 179-201).[5] Yet in responding to and adopting Bradwardine's own modification and criticism of Scotus, Rutherford reveals paradoxically both the deep influence of Scotism and the inadequacies of an undifferentiated, monolithic Scotism in accounting for the Reformed doctrine of providence and grace – a point well made by Muller and Helm. With Vos and the Utrecht school, Scotism and synchronic contingency still remain central to this account, but only as reconfigured in light of a wider Augustinianism with deep roots in the Late Middle Ages.

1. Divine Knowledge and Will

The stated purpose of Rutherford's *Disputatio Scholastica* is to vindicate the biblical and Reformed doctrine of divine providence against the objections of the Jesuits, Arminians and Socinians. Drawing on the patristic and scholastic tradition, he understood providence as the act of God, involving the cooperation of divine intellect, will and power and irresistibly directing and governing all things for his glory. Within the scope of providence he included all beings, both potential and actual, but excluded God himself and everything that is impossible (Rutherford 1648: 1-3). In this way, his account of providence may be described as both all-encompassing and maximally actual. In articulating this thoroughgoing actualism we will see that Rutherford undoubtedly draws extensively on the modal and metaphysical thought of Scotus as Sturdy has claimed, albeit mediated through Bradwardine and transformed systematically in light of his anti-Pelagian priorities (Sturdy 2021: 262-308).

Constantly in the background of Rutherford's discussion of providence is his conception of a particular ordering and inner relationship of divine action, encapsulated in the notion of natural priority and posteriority. Importantly, he expressed this notion of natural priority and posteriority according to Scotus' device of logical instants of nature, which he referred to as "instants of reason" or "signs of reason" (Rutherford 1651: 109-15). His most extensive discussion of such instants can be found in his defence of the English Reformed scholastic William Twisse against the attacks of the Jesuit Franciscus Annatus. Rather like Helm, Annatus had accused Twisse of introducing a temporal transit – from a state of possibility to that of futurition – into God's timeless being (Rutherford 1648: 164-67; cf. Annatus 1662: disp. 1 c. 2

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[4] All translations are my own.
[5] For Scotist connections with late medieval Augustinianism see Sylwanowicz 1996: 210-20 and Burton 2013: 37-52. Burton points to Vermigli's and Rimini's view of partial causation as Augustinian in inspiration but this also closely reflects Scotus. See further Frank 1992: 142-64.

sect. xviii, pp 20-1).[6] Rutherford, however, denied this accusation, pointing out that although eternity excludes any succession of instants or any instants of duration, we may still designate within it prior and posterior "instants of reason". In these Scotist terms Twisse's thesis can be expressed by saying that the divine will is the sole cause of transition from a state of possibility or conditional futurity in a prior instant of reason to a state of futurition in a posterior instant of reason (Rutherford 1648: 165).

Rutherford also took up this important notion of natural priority and posteriority in order to express the intrinsic ordering of divine understanding and will. Throughout the *Disputatio* his continual refrain is that God knows all future contingents solely in the decree of his divine will. This was a doctrine affirmed by the Salamancan doctors, and with them he traced it back to Augustine, Hilary, Richard, Scotus and Hervaeus among the older doctors (Rutherford 1648: 162-63; Collegium Salamanticense 1870: to. 1 tract. 3 disp. 8 dub. 1 sig. 1-15, Vol. 1, pp 524-9). It is also, he suggested, a major component in the view of Thomas Aquinas. For while Aquinas is usually associated either with the Boethian doctrine that God knows all things through their coincidence with him in eternity, a position which Scotus for one strongly rejected (Scotus 2004: d. 38 q. 2 n. 20-9, II.452-55), or with an intellectualist account of God knowing all things as the exemplification of his own essence, Rutherford adduced evidence from the *Summa Contra Gentiles* that he also ascribed a significant volitional component to divine knowledge. Thus he points out that in arguing for God's knowledge of all things through his essence Aquinas was careful never to separate the divine intellect from the divine will. Indeed this inseparable link between knowledge and will was a clear consequence of Aquinas' doctrine of divine simplicity. Therefore while he maintains God to be the cause of things through his knowledge, this is always a knowledge with which will is conjunct. In knowing his essence God therefore also knows all the determinations of his own will (Rutherford 1648: 162-63; cf. Aquinas 1924: 1 c. 68, pp 146-8).[7]

While Aquinas' account of divine understanding was clearly influential on Rutherford's account of divine intellection, he himself took this in a much more voluntarist direction, reflecting his especial debt to Scotus and Bradwardine. With them he therefore posed a fundamental metaphysical distinction between the intellect as a necessary principle and the will as a free power. Indeed while recognising an important role for the intellect in the direction of the will, he regarded the will as the seat of freedom in both God and man, reflecting a new understanding of freedom and contingency quite foreign to that of Aquinas (Rutherford 1648: 154; 1651: 1-18; cf. Scotus 1997: 139-42 and Bradwardine 1618: 1 c. 18, p 221).[8] This prioritising of the will is also clear in what Rutherford affirms about the relative independence of the divine will from the determinations of the divine intellect, an argument he took directly from Bradwardine (Rutherford 1648: 54; cf. Bradwardine 1618: 1 c. 21, p. 230).[9] Moreover, such positions closely reflect Scotus' revised understanding of the divine simplicity in which intellect and will are regarded as formally distinct powers of the divine essence (Scotus 2004: d. 8 p. 2 q. 4 n. 104-5, I.362-63; cf. Cross 2007: 107-11).

Drawing on Bradwardine, Rutherford argued that no cause beyond God's own will can ground the certitude of his infallible knowledge. For if things known were the causes of divine knowledge, then, since causes are naturally prior to what they cause, these things would be naturally prior to God's knowledge of them, contradicting God's role as the first principle and

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[6] For Helm's similar argument against instants of nature see 2020: 48-9.
[7] Significantly, Muller 2017: 231-32 notes something similar of Twisse.
[8] For an account of the difference between Aquinas and Scotus' views see Bonansea 1965: 83-121.
[9] This discussion occurs in the context of whether God is able to create a better world than he does.

final goal of all things (Rutherford 1648: 151-52; cf. Bradwardine 1618: 1 c. 15, pp. 214-18). From a similar argument it followed not only that the futurition of things cannot be viewed as a cause of divine foreknowledge, but that God cannot be said to know future events through their futurition. Indeed, Rutherford insisted that futurition had no meaning in abstraction from God. Following the Scotist tradition he held that as the divine will is the cause of futurition it must also be viewed as the source of God's knowledge about the future. Moreover, taking up Bradwardine's discussion of this he argued that God cannot know the future through either his essence or intellect remote from his will. For in themselves (*de se*) both the divine essence and intellect present opposite states of future contingent propositions to the mind of God indifferently (i.e. as equally possible to be or not to be). Indeed since Bradwardine, following Scotus, viewed the intellect as a necessary principle in God it follows on this hypothesis that whatever is future will be necessarily future and necessarily foreknown by God, thus removing all contingency. Nor is it possible to escape this conclusion by resort to the infinity and immensity of divine knowledge, because this does nothing to remove the indifference of the divine intellect to contingent alternatives. Rather what is required for determinate knowledge of future contingents is a prior determining or limiting factor, and this can be provided only by the decision of the divine will. Put simply, God knows all future events in the determination of his own will (Rutherford 1648: 153-54; cf. Bradwardine 1618: 1 c. 18, p 221).

Significantly, this understanding of the divine will as the cause of determinate knowledge of the future also offered Rutherford a robust defence against the Jesuit doctrine of middle knowledge. First developed by Molina and further refined by Vasquez and Suarez this argued for a hypothetical knowledge of what free agents would do when placed in any conceivable circumstance, referred to as middle knowledge because it intervened between God's knowledge of all possibility and his knowledge of actuality (Bac 2010). Molina drew on the Scotistic device of instants of nature to distinguish three different stages of God's knowledge: his knowledge of pure possibility, his knowledge of conditional possibility, and his knowledge of actual future events (Dekker 2000: 121-23). Importantly, middle knowledge also became a central plank of Arminian doctrine and could be used to reconfigure divine grace as an actualisation of circumstances in which the will moved freely towards the good (Muller 1991: 155-56).

Rutherford's response to this hinged on modal logic. In particular, as he insightfully realised the case for middle knowledge hinged on the question of whether God could be said to infallibly know conditional future contingents – that is, propositions of the form "if x then y" – before every decree of his will. Rephrased, this amounted to the question of whether such conditional propositions could be said to have determinate truth antecedently to the divine will. It was this claim that the proponents of middle knowledge affirmed and which he and other Reformed theologians denied (Rutherford 1648: 14). Drawing on the arsenal of the scholastic modal logic, Rutherford argued that conditional propositions (such as "if Tyre sees signs they will repent") could no more be true without the divine decree than disparate propositions (such as "if the Pope reads the Turk shall laugh"). This is because without the divine will there can be no possible cause connecting their extremes together, meaning they can have no determinate truth and thus not be an object of middle knowledge (Rutherford 1648: 15-17; cf. Collegium Salamanticense 1870: to. 1 tract. 3 disp. 9 dub. 4 sig. 41, Vol. 1, p 587 and de Soto 1642: II c. 12, pp 102-115).

For Rutherford the idea that such conditional propositions could be determinately true before every divine decree of giving efficacious grace was 'a most false and Pelagian doctrine'. He

was adamant that before the divine decree such propositions are indeterminate and therefore neither true nor false (Rutherford 1648: 20-22). In this, as Sturdy has pointed out, he draws deeply on the Scotistic theory of the neutral proposition, according to which the divine will freely assigns truth-value to modal propositions which are then subsequently known to the divine intellect (Sturdy 2021: 124-25). Turning the Jesuit and Arminian argument entirely on its head, he then argued that it was middle knowledge, and not the Reformed doctrine, which was deterministic. For if futures and non-futures are from themselves and not the divine decree then it would seem impossible that any future can be non-future, or vice-versa, binding all things under necessity (Rutherford 1648: 24-25). Even more seriously, if things have their futurition independently of the divine will then they cannot be meaningfully said to have their existence from God – something he argues according to the principle of that "great man" Thomas Bradwardine that 'every future is from eternity and never begins to be future'. For if this were not so things would have their futurition in time and God would begin to know and will them in time – a blasphemous claim (Rutherford 1648: 25-26). In other words, the implication of entirely independent futuritions is entirely independent existences. God becomes shut out from any meaningful engagement from a reality whose existence is simply an unfolding of its own intrinsic self-determination.

Some Jesuits cleverly attempted to extricate themselves from this dilemma by invoking the Scotistic device of possible worlds, arguing that God from infinite possible worlds available to him is able to choose precisely those in which circumstances propel the human will to the good. To give the biblical example referenced above, God could thus foreknow a world in which the Tyrians repent on witnessing miraculous signs. However ingenious, Rutherford rejected this line of argument, holding that it still bound God to necessity since all the circumstances of the possible worlds are set in place before the divine decree (Rutherford 1648: 26-30). Nevertheless, Rutherford by no means rejected possible worlds, but rather, true to Scotus' own account, he sought to place them squarely under God's own free dominion as willed realities (Vos et al. 1994:29-38; Bac 2010: 307-26). Citing Bradwardine in support, he argued that since God is "greatly actual and most perfect" it is absolutely necessary, and not a matter of freedom, that his will should be determined about all states of affairs, whether true or feigned, possible or impossible, past, present or future. He held that to have a will suspended from eternity about anything would be contradictory to the infinite act of the divine essence and contrary to the character of the Watchman of Israel who never sleeps (Rutherford 1648: 145; cf. Bradwardine 1618: 1 c. 22, pp 234-5). Here we see Bradwardine as Rutherford's principal scholastic source for a maximally actual doctrine of providence which is universal in scope.

2. Modality

Rutherford's attempt to give a totally unconstrained account of divine freedom and sovereignty is reflected in his comprehensive reform of modal ontology. Indeed, his revised modal system was clearly an important buttress of his account of divine providence. The essence of Rutherford's modal metaphysics is found in his claim that all possibility, impossibility, futurity and actuality derives originally from God. As we might expect Rutherford drew heavily on Scotus and Bradwardine in establishing this claim (Knuuttila 1996: 127-44; 1981: 163-258; Frost 2013: 368-80; and Genest 1992: 33-86). While Sturdy tends to read Rutherford as espousing a purely Scotistic modal theory, this section will follow Goudriaan and Burton in arguing that he draws on Bradwardine in order to safeguard God's absolute divine sovereignty and freedom (Goudriaan 2015: 149-51; Burton 2017: 132-39). Significantly, it is in relation to

Bradwardine's innovative modal theory that we come to understand both his profound debt to Scotus and his major departure from him.

Rutherford's entire discussion of modality hinges on the modal status of the Aristotelian principle of non-contradiction, expressed succinctly by him as "it is impossible for the same to be and not to be". While Scotus and other scholastics tended to treat this as having its own independent *per se* authority as the fundamental principle of all reasoning, Rutherford followed Bradwardine in holding that its truth is grounded in the necessary being of God. Specifically, he held that the principle of non-contradiction has its truth primarily and originally from God himself who is the fount of all truth and secondarily and by participation in created beings. It is because it is simply and absolutely impossible for God not to be the same as himself that it is also impossible for beings by participation to violate this principle of contradiction. In God, he says, through the divine simplicity and unity "shines the most united and sweet coidentification" and he therefore must be accounted the supreme exemplar cause of all identity, concord, union and truth in creatures (Rutherford 1648: 538; Bradwardine 1618: 1 c. 11, p 198; cf. Frost 2013: 369-80).

The law of non-contradiction is seconded in Rutherford's modal system by another Aristotelian principle of paramount importance also emphasised by Bradwardine: the priority of act over potency (Bradwardine 1618: 1 c. 11-14, pp 198-214). Since with the scholastics he believed God to be infinite in act it therefore follows that he must also be prior to every conceivable potency. Against the Jesuits then there can be no realm of possibility independent of God which acts as a constraint on his omnipotence or freedom. For to say this would be to make possible essences the origin and cause of divine omnipotence, as ridiculous a notion as if the rivulets should aspire to be the font itself (Rutherford 1648: 538-39).

Probing deeper into Rutherford's account of possibility and impossibility it is clear that he follows a definite Scotist trajectory in explaining these in terms of the compossibility or incompossibility of individual constituent terms (Knuuttila 1996). In creating a particular species God also constitutes in that same act what is diverse repugnant to that species. For example, in creating the actual or possible essences of goats and deer, God in the same act creates their incompossibilities, ruling out their combination into a 'hircocervus' as impossible (Rutherford 1648: 540). Generalising, Rutherford held that what is impossible must be said to be logically posterior to what is possible and may be defined in terms of the incompossibility of possible elements (1648: 540-44).

Significantly, Rutherford aligns his own views on this question with those of Henry of Ghent, Scotus and Bradwardine. This is because all of these theologians argue that it is not true to say *simpliciter* of something impossible that God is not able to do this because it is not able to happen. Rather it must be said that this is not able to happen because God is not able to do this (1648: 543).[10] This he contrasts with the Jesuit opinion that things are impossible *in se* and intrinsically, illustrated by Fonseca's claim that what is impossible is to be attributed not to God but to the nature of their repugnant terms (Rutherford 1648: 539), or Ripalda's argument that while created beings have their existence from God they have from themselves their intrinsic non-repugnance of existing (1648: 545). Rutherford's riposte to such a position is to cite the argument of Bradwardine that what is incompossible cannot be without God (1648: 542; cf. Bradwardine 1618: 1 c. 13, p 204). Elsewhere, taking his lead from the Bradwardinian principle that all possibilities are originally from God, he infers that every incompossibility, as

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[10] Bradwardine 1618: 1 c. 13, pp 206-7 cites precisely the same references from Scotus and Henry.

originating from two or more possibles, must also be from God as its origin (1648: 543-44; Bradwardine 1618: 1 c. 14, p 209).[11]

While much of this resonates with Scotus, one important difference remains. For Scotus argued that something could be impossible even if *per impossibile* there were no God; something that Rutherford strenuously denied. Scotus' reasoning was that while the possibility of terms originates from the divine intellect, they have their repugnancy from the principle of non-contradiction independently of God (Scotus 1950-: 1 d. 43 n. 5-7, VI.353-4; cf. Knuuttila 1996: 140-41). By contrast, Rutherford's Bradwardinian view that even the principle of non-contradiction was dependent on God meant that impossibility must also be grounded in God himself. To remove the first being is to pluck up this principle of non-contradiction and to invite a chaos of contradictions which renders all talk of possibility and impossibility meaningless (Rutherford 1648: 549). Going beyond Scotus, Rutherford therefore held God not to be constrained by any "transcendental presuppositions" of possibility or impossibility outside himself, but rather to constitute these in his own necessary being.[12]

Where Rutherford departs from Scotus on issues of modality it is notable how closely he follows Bradwardine. Significantly, Bradwardine offered his own argument against Scotus' position in his *De Causa Dei*. Here it is clear that while he is in complete agreement with Scotus that impossibility can be reduced to the incompossibility of constituent terms, he denied both that the impossible is *per se* and formally repugnant to existence and that the formal reason for possibility resides firstly in the divine intellect (Bradwardine 1618: 1 c. 13, pp 207-8). Arguing against Scotus, Bradwardine subtly distinguished between two senses of the term impossible: an affirmative and a negative one. In the negative sense, in which impossible is taken for 'not possible to be', he conceded Scotus' position. However, in the affirmative sense he flatly denied Scotus' argument, arguing that if God did not exist then nothing positive or affirmative could exist, and so nothing could be positively impossible (Bradwardine 1618: 1 c. 13, p 207).

Significantly, we find Rutherford making a similar concession to Scotus as Bradwardine. Thus in the course of his own argument against the Scotist position Rutherford confronts the argument that without God the proposition "nothing is" would be intrinsically true and that all things could therefore be said to be negatively impossible. Interestingly, like Bradwardine, Rutherford first concedes the point that non-being taken purely negatively would exist if God did not exist. However, he immediately qualifies this by saying that in this case the very term "exist" is taken abusively, for it cannot be said that non-being is prior or posterior to God because properly it is 'simply nothing'. He goes on to buttress his argument, along Aristotelian lines, with the claim that truth pertains only to determinate being and non-being and is therefore dependent entirely on God. Moreover, by implication, it would seem that a statement about pure non-being could not be taken as truth (Rutherford 1648: 547-48). In this way, Rutherford clearly joins Bradwardine in rejecting Scotus' *per impossibile* thesis.

In denying Scotus' position that the divine intellect is the principiative cause of possibility Bradwardine gives a much more important role to divine power in constituting possibility than Scotus would allow. Succinctly put, he argued that the divine omnipotence is the cause of divine intellection and naturally prior to it. Thus using Scotus' own conception of natural priority and posteriority, and assuming his own equation of being and power, Bradwardine turns his argument entirely on its head (Bradwardine 1618: 1 c. 13, pp 207-8). Rutherford too

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[11] Bradwardine 1618: 1 c. 13, p 207 also interprets Scotus as having held the view that all possibility comes from God. This was indeed a common interpretation of Scotus, but it is disputed by Knuuttila (1996). For a valuable discussion of this issue see Hoffman 2009: 359-80.

[12] The phrase "transcendental presuppositions" is taken from Knuuttila 1996: 143.

is clear that "omnipotence in first act" antecedes the "formal cause of the possible" (1648: 545-46). Like Bradwardine, he equates omnipotence with the essence of God, arguing that it is because God is omnipotent that all possibles are possible (1648: 532). Indeed, Rutherford renders this relation entirely explicit, arguing that possibles are not something real but are simply something that can be described in relation to divine omnipotence (an extrinsic denomination) (1648: 557-59). It is true that elsewhere Rutherford will affirm the Scotist point that impossibility is related to the contradiction of practical ideas in the divine intellect, yet in giving omnipotence a prior claim in establishing possibility he clearly shows the influence of Bradwardine over and against the Subtle Doctor (Rutherford 1648: 543, 559-61).

Overall, it would not be an exaggeration to say that Rutherford derives his Scotistic account of modality almost entirely from Bradwardine. Central to both is the claim that God's being is so necessary that for it not to be includes a contradiction. From this they both inferred, as we have seen, that the principle of non-contradiction is itself founded in the being of God. For this reason both are also adamant that all truth, necessity, possibility and impossibility must be entirely dependent on God. Moreover, as we shall now turn to, both employ their modal claims in establishing a sophisticated account of the compatibility between divine and human freedom, sourcing all necessity and contingency in the being and prevolition of God.

3. Freedom and Determination

Rutherford's view of the relation of divine and human freedom is highly complex and has been the topic of considerable debate. Matching the contours of the early modern discussion it has generally been expounded in relation to four different and competing systems of divine concourse: Jesuit simultaneous concourse, Thomist physical premotion, Scotist co-causality and Bradwardinian predetermination. While everyone is agreed on Rutherford's emphatic rejection of the Jesuit theory, debate continues to rage over whether he followed the Thomist account, as Muller claims, a version of Scotist co-causality, as Sturdy has recently powerfully argued, or a Bradwardinian account of predetermination as Burton has suggested (Muller 2017: 271-72; Burton 2017: 132-39; and Sturdy 2021: 262-74). Although Muller and Sturdy have sought to distance Rutherford from Bradwardinian compatibilism, Sturdy has nevertheless indicated an important proximity between Scotus and Bradwardine on divine co-efficiency (Sturdy 2012: 208-9). Building on this, this section nevertheless offers a subtly different reading, reconnecting Bradwardine's modified Scotism not only to co-causality but also to premotion and predetermination itself.

According to Rutherford, the problem with the Jesuits is that they reduce the whole mystery of divine providence into the freedom of the human will (1648: 181). Axiomatic to the Jesuits was a view of indifferent or libertarian freedom according to which the will always remains free to will the opposite with all the prerequisites for action, including the action of divine grace, assumed. In this view both God and humans must be seen as partial concauses of the free act of the will, with God's decision to concur with the human will occurring simultaneously, in both time and nature, with the will's own action (Dekker 2000: 119-21). The view of co-causality underpinning this was undoubtedly indebted to Scotus and the Franciscan tradition. It is for this reason that many of the Reformed rejected partial causation as compromised due to its association with Jesuits and Arminians. Even so it is misleading and distinctly unhelpful for Helm to refer to this as a doctrine of "Franciscan freedom" (Helm 2020: 21-22).[13] For Scotus himself affirmed the gracious determination of the human will alongside his account of

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[13] This is a term he derives from Eleonore Stump.

co-causality, and the same was true, as we will see, of some of his most important followers (Garrigou-Lagrange 1939: 113-14; Langston 1983: 96-128). Indeed, Rutherford himself drew deeply on Scotist reasoning in order to undermine the Jesuit case.

Rutherford emphatically rejected the Jesuit notions of the will's indifferent freedom and God's simultaneous concourse (1648: 40-44; 1651: 439). Indeed, he held that simultaneous concourse entirely subverted the divine concourse with human will, making human freedom the limiting factor and determinant of divine freedom. Drawing on Scotist principles, Rutherford argues that God is not able to foreknow determinately a free act in the instant of reason prior to the created will's determination of itself. This is because, as Ludovicus a Dola argues, with such concourse *simul natura* supposed God is not able to foreknow a free act determinately to exist when the coprinciple of this act (i.e. the human will) is still able to will or not to will. Yet, neither is the latter possible, for in this case the divine concourse essentially includes the act of the free will. Therefore God saying "I know that Peter will believe if I direct his will and offer my concourse in second act" is reducible to the tautology of God saying "I know that Peter will believe if he believes", which tells us precisely nothing (Rutherford 1648: 23-24; cf. Dola 1634: pars. 2 c.. 3 s. 3, pp. 122-4).

In rejecting the Jesuit theories of middle knowledge and simultaneous concourse Rutherford upheld the alternative view that all things are determined by divine fiat. Echoing Calvin he claimed that God predetermines even the number of drops in the sea or grains of sand on the beach (Rutherford 1648: 39; cf. Calvin 1960: 1.16.5). According to the Jesuits and Arminians this doctrine of the absolute and irrevocable divine decree was tantamount to "the most fatal fate of the Stoics". Unlike Calvin, Rutherford did not entirely shrink from this conclusion. Instead, citing the testimony of Augustine and Bradwardine, he held it to be admissible to speak of fate, provided that in doing so we do not reduce all things to natural modes of causation, hold them to be necessitated by a natural chain of causes or invoke any astrological agents. This Christian and divine fate he defines with Bradwardine as "the will of God, the efficacious cause of all things" (Rutherford 1648: 99-111; cf. Bradwardine 1618: 1 c. 28, pp 264-7. He holds it to be perfectly consistent with human freedom. By contrast, he argues, as we have already seen, that it is the Jesuit doctrine that events are fixed as determinately future in an instant of nature prior to the divine decree which ushers in a "most fatal necessity" (Rutherford 1648: 108).

Rutherford's own account of divine concourse is expressed according to what he called the "physical predetermination" of the will. This held that all natural and supernatural acts of the human will must have God as first mover (Rutherford 1651: 364). In this understanding God therefore predetermined the human will by a real, physical impulse (1651: 370). Rutherford therefore rejected decisively the Jesuitical argument of a Dola that God is able to determine the will by illustration and attraction (1648: 44). He would also have clearly rejected the account of moral premotion espoused by a number of early modern Scotists, whereby God acting as final cause is able to infallibly but freely determine the will to the good (Baxter 1681: I.7-9). For Rutherford, however, God must be understood as moving the will by "physical efficiency" in a manner that is "indeclinably determinative" and not only as a final cause infallibly drawing the will to its action (1651: 367-68).

It is no surprise therefore that Muller has connected Rutherford to the Thomist and Dominican account of physical premotion (2017: 319). Drawing on Aquinas' view of God as the "unmoved mover" behind every created motion, this model of divine concourse was developed by Domingo Báñez and the Dominicans of the sixteenth century in their conflict with the Jesuits

– although scholars continue to debate how much this reflected Aquinas' own intentions (Matava 2016: 37-101; Shanley 1998: 99-122). For Báñez, physical premotion is a "kind of divine aid ... by which God *applies* the human will to act". It is a vital motion according to which "a creature premoved by God moves itself and produces an act that is properly its own" (Matava 2016: 38). It is called physical premotion as it occurs through an influx of efficient and not final causality and moves the will from "a state of non-operation to actual operation" (Matava 2016: 42-44). Muller is therefore absolutely right to point out the undoubted affinities between Rutherford's doctrine of divine concourse and the Dominican account of premotion. Indeed, while Rutherford much preferred the term "predetermination" we do find him on at least one occasion speaking of physical premotion and, indeed, the notion is implicit in much of his discussion (Sturdy 2021: 262-63). There can also be no doubt that Rutherford was familiar with Báñez's views for he cites them with great approval in his *Exercitationes* (1651: 169).

Yet there are two important reasons to qualify Rutherford's relation to the Dominican account of physical premotion. The first is, as Sturdy suggests, that Rutherford explicitly frames his account of physical predetermination in a Scotist context (2021: 270).[14] In particular, Rutherford is clear that God's predetermining action must be seen as "prior in nature" to the will's own action and he draws on Scotus' logical instants to explain this (1648: 408-9; 1651: 109-13). Now it may well be true, as Muller claims, that instants of nature had by the sixteenth and seventeenth century become the common property of the schools, but this does not negate the connection with Scotus or the Scotist tradition, especially since Rutherford clearly affirms the synchronic action of the will, as we will see below (Muller 2020: 147). The second reason, also identified by Sturdy, is that Rutherford explicitly denies the key Thomist understanding that the will is determined by the final judgement of the practical intellect – something that even his friend Voetius had conceded despite his Scotistic account of freedom (Rutherford 1651: 364-66; cf. Sturdy 2021: 277-78).[15] While recognising the force of this argument, Rutherford held with Scotus that the will was able to turn itself away even when presented by the intellect with its "formal and ultimate object" (Rutherford 1651: 364-66; cf. Scotus 1997: 127-52).[16] Indeed, skilfully turning the Thomist argument on its head, Rutherford argued that if necessarily in itself the ultimate judgement of the intellect could determine the will then this would reduce grace to "mere suasion" (1648: 366).

In seeking to understand Rutherford's doctrine of divine concourse we must understand that he grounded it explicitly on Bradwardine's Augustinian view that the will's free dominion over its own acts does not exclude it falling under the dominion of a higher power (Rutherford 1648: 42; cf. Bradwardine 1618: 2 c. 28, p. 569).[17] Now in justifying this understanding in the *De Causa Dei* Bradwardine significantly drew on Augustine, Aquinas and Scotus. From Augustine he held that God moves without time or place every creature whether spiritual or corporeal, natural or voluntary. Interestingly he equated this with Aquinas' Aristotelian view that all things are instrumentally moved by God. However, somewhat surprisingly, especially for Scotus' modern critics, he was also insistent that this was the view of the Subtle Doctor himself.

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[14] Sturdy rightly links this to the Scotist Theodore Smising.

[15] Muller 2017: 246-7 points to the Thomistic character of Voetius' thougtht here. Beck 2022 offers a sophisticated defence of Voetius' wider, eclectic Scotism. Matava 2016: 61-66 demonstrates the intimate relation of intellect to premotion for Báñez.

[16] While Rutherford does not cite Scotus in this section the parallels are clear.

[17] See Augustine 1845: 14.45, Vol. 44 col. 0944. This is cited in Rutherford 1648: 32 and also by Bradwardine 1618: 3 c. 1, p. 639.

Drawing on Scotus' *Ordinatio* he thus argued that every second cause causes inasmuch as it is moved by God as first cause. If the first cause necessarily moves then everything else would also be necessarily moved. Since we observe real contingency in the world this means that God as first cause must contingently move all causes to their ends (Bradwardine 1618: 2 c. 20, pp. 541-2).

What this suggests is that Bradwardine's account of concourse is founded on Scotus' understanding of God as the contingent mover of all things. Indeed, there can be no doubt of this for Bradwardine draws explicitly on Scotus's celebrated *Lectura* 1 d. 39 to argue that both the divine and human will are synchronically contingent in their operation (1618: 3 c. 5, pp. 655-6). In fact, as Michael Sylwanowicz has convincingly argued, Scotus' account of God's contingent and synchronic action was crucial for Bradwardine's own sophisticated compatibilism (1996: 204-10). For, following Scotus in applying synchronic contingency to the common scholastic distinction between first and second act, it allowed him to argue that the will could remain free even in the very moment of its determination as it always retained (in first act) its power towards opposites, and thus to resist the divine determination (Bradwardine 1618: 3 c. 6, p .660; Scotus 1895: q. 16 n. 5, Vol. 26, p. 199; cf. Genest 1992: 66 and Sylwanowicz 1996: 204-10). This meant that the will was only subject to an Anselmic "following necessity" in its determination and not a "preceding necessity". For Bradwardine, such a necessity was only the Aristotelian necessity such that "whatever is, when it is, necessarily is", which he held was entirely compatible with contingency (1618: , 3 c. 2; c. 4-5, pp. 646-9, 651-7; cf. Anselm 2007: 363).

Returning to Rutherford we find him utilising precisely the same line of reasoning to argue with Bradwardine the compatibility of God's necessitating and determining of human action with the will's intrinsic and synchronic freedom towards opposites. In its simplest form Rutherford's argument is that physical predetermination of the will by God does not bind or inhibit the will or compel it to do anything other than what itself wills, but rather by a "connatural leading" moves the will to that which the will acts and determines for itself (1648: 42). Indeed, he insists that the decree of God moves the will to elicit that same act which it would elicit if *per impossibile* there were no divine decree (1648: 588). Precisely how there can be "this most friendly consociation" between the free acts of the creature with the unconquerable will of the Creator is, he maintains, a profound mystery (1648: 113).

Yet although the mode of divine concourse remains beyond our understanding, Rutherford still believes it possible to articulate and defend this position, and it is here that we find him beginning to invoke Scotus' understanding of synchronic contingency. Firstly, therefore Rutherford draws on modal logic to argue that both the divine decree and divine predetermination impose only a hypothetical and not an absolute necessity on free acts of the human will. This type of necessity, he says, is precisely that Aristotelian necessity of the present such that "whatever is, when it is, necessarily is" and is therefore entirely consistent with contingency – precisely the point that Bradwardine himself had made (Rutherford 1648: 157, 258). Secondly, buttressing this, he argued, in a position that he viewed as common to the Reformed, that when God determines the human will it retains, in the divided sense, its power of resisting this divine determination (Rutherford 1648: 44, 118, 124).[18] Even under divine determination the will thus retains its freedom to resist this determination and to will the opposite of what God determines – even though this possibility will never be actualised. (Rutherford 1648: 118).

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[18] For Voetius' identical use of this distinction see Beck 2022: 442-8.

Such modal distinctions were, as Muller and Helm have rightly pointed out, susceptible to both diachronic and synchronic interpretations (Muller 2017: 35-36; Helm 2020: 33; cf. Knuuttila 1981: 163-258 and Scotus 2004: d. 39-40 q. 1-3 art. 4 n. 57-8, II.481). Confirming that Rutherford understood this synchronically we find an important discussion in the *Exercitationes* of the will's universal and particular power. Universal power is essential to freedom and manifest in an indifference to all possible acts. By contrast, particular power is essential to freedom and comes or goes with the actualisation of particular acts (1651: 113-14).[19] In these terms Rutherford's thesis was that the divine decree does not remove the universal power which is essential to the freedom of the human will, but rather determines, from eternity, the will's particular powers of acting, accidental to its freedom. In fact, he was clear that the divine determination removes precisely the same particular power as the will does in its own determination (1651: 113-15). Moreover, since the universal power of the will is never lost, even in the moment of its determination, then in the same moment of time that it acts the will must also retain its power towards the opposite.[20] Elsewhere he makes a similar point drawing, like Bradwardine, on the scholastic distinction between first and second act (Rutherford 1648: 408-9). The freedom of the will is thus seen to be synchronic in structure, as it was for both Scotus and Bradwardine (Scotus 2004: d. 39 q. 1-3 art. 3 n. 39-44, II.476-77; Bradwardine 1618: 3 c. 1, pp. 637-46):

It is notable that it is also this synchronic structure of the will's action which allows Rutherford to answer the objection that the will in determination retains only an empty, hypothetical kind of freedom. As Sturdy has shown, his response rests on arguing for the exact coincidence of the particular powers removed by the divine decree and by the human will, such that God moves the will to elicit that same act which it would elicit if *per impossibile* there were no divine decree (Rutherford 1651: 114-15; Sturdy 2021: 284-92). Yet while Sturdy rightly links this to Scotus, it is notably Bradwardine who Rutherford draws on to justify its central claim (Sturdy 2021: 284-92). Since, according to Bradwardine, there can be no futurition outside of God, the eternal pattern of futuritions corresponding to the will's temporal actions must itself correspond precisely to the synchronic structure of the divine decree. Moreover, even if we assumed *per impossibile* that there was no divine decree, there must still be an eternal pattern of futurition defining the will's actions, since no direct transit between the possible and actual is allowable. The will's own action and the eternal futurition defining its possibility must therefore precisely coincide (Rutherford 1648: 588; 1651: 108). In this sense, as Sturdy rightly points out, "human freedom is effectively a mirror image of the divine freedom" (2021: 290). For Sturdy, the synchronic paralleling of divine and human will is to be seen as a prime example of Scotist co-causality and partial causation (2021: 270-71). In particular, he notes that Rutherford drew prominently on that "erudite Scotist" Theodore Smising to answer Jesuit and Arminian objections that physical predetermination makes God into the author of sin (Sturdy 2021: 270-71; cf. Rutherford 1648: 386). Following Scotus, Smising made an important distinction between physical and moral causation of sin, holding that God cooperated in the physical act of sin as partial concause but in no way participated in the moral character of sin (Smising 1634: 434; Rutherford 1648: 456). While Rutherford does not use this language these are precisely the points he makes in defence of God's physical predetermination of sinful acts (1648: 386-87). Indeed, Rutherford also credits Smising directly with the key insight that

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[19] This closely relates to what Dekker 1998: 113-22 calls the distinction between abstract and situated freedom in Scotus.

[20] Rutherford's claim that in the "sign of reason" anteceding its futurition the will is indifferent to willing and nilling the same thing under disjunction also serves to confirm this (1651: 112).

predetermination does not hurt human liberty any more than general concourse or codetermination does (1648: 387; cf. Smising 1634: 516).

There can be no doubt that Sturdy is right to highlight Scotus' understanding of co-causality as highly significant for Rutherford. In fact, Scotus may well also be the direct source for Rutherford's crucial *per impossibile* argument, for he used a markedly similar claim to point to the exact coincidence of the eternal "now" with the now of the present instant in time (Frank 1992: 158; Langston 1983: 112-13). Yet the straightforward equation of Smising's understanding of partial causation with Rutherford's doctrine of physical premotion is by no means unproblematic. For Smising was insistent that the "determination of the divine will is not prior by nature or reason to determination of created will but simultaneous with it" (Smising 1634: 505, 517). In this it is clear he has the full backing of Scotus who argued this point explicitly against the view that God's causation is naturally prior to the human will in his *Ordinatio* 2 d. 37 (Scotus 1950-: 2 d. 37-40 q. 5 n. 102, 145, VIII.411, 429). Of course, Smising was quick to distinguish this view from the "general, indeterminate concourse" of Molina and Suárez, insisting, with Scotus, that God's decision to concur is solely according to the eternal decision of his will and not any kind of foreknowledge or middle knowledge (1634: 436). Nevertheless, such a claim still seems markedly different from Rutherford's understanding that the determination of the divine will is "prior in nature" to the determination of the human will (1648: 408-9).

In fact, Rutherford's desire to combine premotion with co-causality resonates with Bradwardine's modified Scotism. For, as Sturdy has also recognised, Bradwardine drew on Scotus' account of partial causation explicitly to demonstrate that God is the co-effector of every act of the human will (Bradwardine 1618: 2 c. 20, pp. 541-2; cf. Sturdy 2021: 208-10). However, he also combined partial causation with his Scotistic doctrine of premotion holding that the "uncreated and created will in coeffecting the act of the created will are not coequal nor coeval in natural order" (1618: 2 c. 29, p. 577.ff.; cf. Sturdy 2021: 208). It is this crucial priority of nature that Sturdy seems to gloss over, effectively reducing Bradwardine's understanding of co-efficiency to Smising's and Scotus' *simul natura* concourse (2021: 208-9).

While Bradwardine's reading of Scotus goes somewhat against the grain, it is notable that it can actually be accommodated by Scotus' own metaphysics.[21] For Scotus himself distinguished two kinds of co-causes of this kind: a participative model in which the superior co-cause moves the inferior co-cause to its action (e.g. a hand moving a ball moving a stick) and an autonomous one in which the superior co-cause does not move the inferior co-cause (e.g. a husband and wife in the act of procreation) (Frank 1992: 154-55; cf. Scotus 1950-: 2 d. 34-7 q. 5 n. 117, VIII.417.[22] In effect, while Scotus seems to have held that divine concourse, at least in the moral order, was a form of autonomous co-causality, Bradwardine clearly held it to be an instance of participative co-causality.[23] Scotus' worry here seems to have been that such a priority of nature would lead to determinism, but Bradwardine, as we have seen, could draw on Scotus' own account of synchronic contingency to defuse that concern (Scotus 1950-: 2 d.

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[21] It also conforms closely to a wider late medieval tradition of reading Scotus. See further Schwamm 1934: 296-335.

[22] Scotus calls the relevant kind of co-causality here essentially-ordered which he distinguishes from accidentally-ordered co-causes (e.g. two mules pulling a cart).

[23] Confirming this Bradwardine 1618: 1 c. 13, pp. 202-8 holds that essentially-ordered causes follow an order of natural priority and posteriority. By contrast, Sturdy 2021: 209 denies a participative reading of Bradwardine in favour of an autonomous one. Schwamm 1934: 315 also identifies Bradwardine's reading as authentically Scotist.

34-7 q. 5 n. 101, VIII.410-11; cf. Frost 2021: 78-101).[24] In sum, what Bradwardine offered Rutherford was an ingenious way, inspired by Scotus but also departing from him, of combining the pre-efficiency and co-efficiency of God's action on the human will while asserting the compatibility of both with human freedom. In doing so, he developed a sophisticated Scotistic compatibilism highly attractive to Rutherford in his conflict with the Jesuits and Arminians.[25]

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[24] However, as Schwamm 1934: 86 n. 13 points out there are passages in Scotus which explicitly hold that God's determination of the human will is compatible with its freedom.

[25] To say this is not necessarily to identify Rutherford as a compatibilist, for his *per impossibile* argument seems different from that of Bradwardine, reflecting what Beck 2022: 451, 453 terms "dependent freedom" or "free necessity".

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