The University of Erfurt, founded in 1392, is one of the oldest German universities and the place where the great German reformer, Martin Luther, earned his master's in arts. Established at the request of the free citizenry of a prosperous town, conveniently located at the very heart of Germany, not divided into nations like other European universities and yet exhibiting the typical four-faculty structure (arts, medicine, law, and theology), the University of Erfurt was an ideal fosterground of solid theological learning and the cradle of a distinctively German Christian identity. Instituted at the beginning of a major ecclesiastical crisis—the so-called Great Papal Schism—the University of Erfurt soon gained a reputation for outstanding expertise in theological training, evidenced by the fact that the university had its own faculty representation at the councils of Constance and Basel. Erfurt gave rise to a number of theologians of considerable renown, such as the Franciscan John of Erfurt, who was also a canon law specialist and well-versed philosophy commentator, the Augustinian Angelus Dobelinus, the university’s earliest theology professor, Matthew Döring, a provincial minister of the Franciscan order and a trustworthy exponent of Duns Scotus’s teaching, and John Rucherat of Wesel, an early critic of the practice of selling indulgences, an emphatic defender of the authority of Holy Writ in theology, and the first highly decorated university

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1 I wish to thank Pekka Kärkkäinen for advice on the literature regarding the Erfurt Sentences commentaries, and Martin Kitanov for providing me with competent translations of some of the secondary literature in German.

the theologian to be tried for heresy in Germany. By the time Luther began his theological studies at the monastery of the Augustinian hermits in Erfurt (1505), theology at Erfurt had a long-established tradition, and commenting on the Peter Lombard's Sentences had become a cornerstone of this tradition also. Luther himself contributed to the Sentences commentary tradition. Thus, by looking at some of the surviving Sentences commentaries of Erfurt theologians prior to the time of Luther's early theological training, we can learn more about the tradition within which Luther was nurtured, and sharpen our understanding of Luther's intellectual milieu. Moreover, we can learn a great deal about the evolution of the genre and methodology of commenting on Lombard's Sentences. Lastly, by focusing upon a single conversation topic—namely, the Augustinian theme of enjoyment and use which provided the foundation for Lombard's systematic organization of the contents of sacred doctrine in the four books of the Sentences—we can see whether late medieval commentators viewed themselves as synthesizers and conservers of doctrine, or rather as innovative contributors to the systematic development of doctrine.

2 The Place of the Concept of Beatific Enjoyment in the Tradition of Sentences Commentaries

The first distinction of Book 1 of Peter Lombard's Sentences is the locus classicus for the treatment of the theological concept of enjoyment (fruitio) derived from Augustine's De doctrina christiana, Book 1. The choice of the enjoyment of God as the opening topic of Lombard's Sentences was very convenient insofar as it provided thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Sentences commentators with an opportunity to explore a variety of issues pertaining to faculty psychology prior to discussing the doctrine of the Trinity. More precisely, the concept of enjoyment gave scholastic theologians an occasion to examine the nature of volition, on the one hand, and the relationship between volition and cognition, on the other. A significant amount of theological and philosophical work was produced at the turn of the thirteenth century as a result of the immense interest in the concept of enjoyment. The most hotly debated questions concerned

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3 See Ullmann, Reformers before the Reformation, 225–9.
5 For a concise account of Luther's intellectual context, see Kärkkäinen, “Martin Luther,” 475–6.