Thomas Bradwardine died on the 26th of August 1349, 38 days after his consecration as archbishop of Canterbury. Early in his career at Merton College, Oxford, he had engaged in the study of mathematical and physical questions, discussing them in a number of works which remain for the most part still unedited. During his studies at Oxford, however, he also came to the fundamental conclusion that the theologians of his days did not grant the grace of God an appropriate place in matters of soteriology. It was precisely the desire to reassert the Augustinian point of view against any kind of Pelagian tendency which according to him dominated the theology of many among his contemporaries, that caused him to write »De causa Dei adversus Pelagium et de virtute causarum«, which he completed between 1335 and 1344.

This essay will not engage in a study of »De causa Dei« as such, but will rather attempt to reconstrcut the motives which led to the publication of the first – and to date also the only – printed edition of this work, published in London in 1618. A mere consideration of the year of publication together with an awareness of the focus of Bradwardine’s work (the defence of Augustinian soteriology) should cause historians of the Reformation to suspect the presence of specific theological interests behind the decision to print it. This suspicion is further increased by the fact that this edition was prepared by order of the »most

2 See Oberman, Bradwardine, 12f.
3 For a discussion of the year of completion of »De causa Dei« cf. Oberman, Bradwardine, 18f.
4 Such a suspicion was already formulated by Nicholas Tyacke, Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c.1590–1640, Oxford 1987, 56.
reverend« archbishop of Canterbury George Abbot, whose Calvinist tendencies are well known.

This article, attempting to substantiate the suspicions mentioned above, argues that the publication of Bradwardine’s »De causa Dei« in 1618 should essentially be understood as a piece of religious propaganda. Through the publication of the anti-Pelagian work of his predecessor Thomas Bradwardine George Abbot wanted to reassert the Reformed doctrine of predestination against its critics in England, submitting at the same time to the foreign Reformed churches – which were to assemble at the Synod of Dort in the same year – a clear evidence of what he considered the official position of his own church. Bradwardine’s voluminous attack against the Pelagians was therefore meant as a witness to the Calvinism of the English Church, as it were, prior to Calvin himself.

1. »BEHARRUNG« and »BEWEGUNG« in ENGLISH THEOLOGY BETWEEN THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURY

Although the majority of English theologians remained loyal to Calvinist positions throughout the reigns of Elizabeth and James I, there were also significant areas of dissent, which testify to the presence of alternative views at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge as well as among the clergy. The cases of Antonio del Corro (Oxford) and William Barrett (Cambridge) shall serve as examples of the university debates. Corro, a former Spanish monk, who came to England in 1568 and taught at Oxford from around 1579 to 1586, was denied the title of


6 In the present essay the term »Calvinist« is used simply to indicate those who supported a doctrine of absolute predestination as it was developed by Reformed theologians such as Peter Martyr Vermigli or Girolamo Zanchi and as it was afterwards endorsed at the Synod of Dort. Since this view of predestination was shared in England by both conformists and non-conformists, the label »Calvinist« does not as such imply any specific attitude in matters of church government.