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## Wyclif's Trinitarian and Christological Theology

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# Wyclif's Trinitarian and Christological Theology

Stephen E. Lahey

## 1. Locating Wyclif the Theologian in his Oxford Environment

Anyone familiar with amateur photography can imagine standing in a darkroom, watching the slow resolution of a picture as it sits in its chemical bath. First the main outlines of the image emerge from a blank background, and only gradually do the details follow. Frequently the content of the picture is only recognizable when all the details are clear, when what appear as large, oddly shaped objects resolve into distinct, recognizable ones. Such is the case with understanding of Wyclif's earlier, theological works. Without a familiarity with the details of fourteenth-century Oxford theology, its main players and positions, and their complex understandings of the relation of logic to theology, the writings of one particular theologian are likely to be confusing at best, recognizable only by broad outlines that may or may not have anything to do with the actual positions he takes. While some treatises of his *Summa de ente*, such as *De universalibus* or *De compositione hominis* might arguably be generally comprehensible apart from the mid-fourteenth century dialogue, others, notably *De Trinitate*, are not.<sup>1</sup>

A study of Wyclif's theology must consider a wide range of subjects, including issues of philosophical theology like his discussion of the necessity of created action and the freedom of human willing, his conception of how Being as such relates to the divine being

1 It is a stretch to claim that *De universalibus* is comprehensible apart from the atmosphere in which it was written, but it at least articulates an ontological position recognizable to those familiar with medieval arguments about universals. Professor Breck's summary of the argument of his otherwise excellent edition of *De Trinitate*, is almost impenetrable from a theological standpoint, largely because scholarship had not yet caught up to the treatise's content when he published it. See Johannis Wyclif, *Tractatus De Trinitate*, ed. Allen duPont Breck (Colorado, 1962), pp. xxi-l.

and created being, and the nature of divine knowledge and willing. It would have to address Wyclif's complex understanding of how divine law relates to justice in creation with regards to the law of Moses, and more widely how the law of Christ applies in human *dominium* relations. Wyclif's ecclesiology and its ties to his understanding of the pastoral offices and the sacraments would need to be incorporated into the study, as orthopraxy figures very importantly in Wyclif's theological vision. Finally, Wyclif's conception of the ontology of Scripture and how its truths must be understood and realized in the world would figure significantly in a study of his theology. If such a study is more imaginable now than it was a century ago, when the Wyclif Society edited most of his Latin works, this is because scholars have been studying many of the topics listed with the care they require. This chapter will, I hope, contribute to that project by introducing two subjects essential to any Christian theology, namely, the nature of the Trinity and of the Incarnation.

Three treatises of the *Summa de ente* deserve our attention: *De Trinitate*, *De compositione hominis*, and *De Incarnacione*, all composed between 1370 and 1372. Scholars have noted these treatises' likely function as *Sentences* commentaries, required of all candidates for the degree of a Doctorate in Theology. Such commentaries were generally also the place for taking up one's lance against rival philosophical and theological positions. So it will be important to see how Wyclif's positions on how the three divine persons relate in one nature, and how two natures relate in the person of the Incarnate Word function as likely responses to the *Sentences* commentaries of earlier Oxford luminaries such as Adam Wodeham and Robert Holcot. Wyclif envisioned his theology as a return to the orthodoxy of earlier figures such as Anselm, Augustine, and Robert Grosseteste, as is clear to anyone who has read him. These theologians endorsed a philosophical position more consonant with realism than with the conceptualism prized by many thinkers in early fourteenth-century Oxford. Wyclif expressly intended to show how ontological realism explicates the complex realities of the divine being and its assumption of a human nature in these treatises, and so our interest is in understanding both how realism functions in his philosophical theology of divine persons, and how his thought relates to that of his likely opponents.

In both the metaphysics of the Trinity and of the Incarnation, a universal functions as a nature. In the Trinity, the divine nature is the

universal, for which there are three particulars, namely the three persons, each of whom is divine through their instantiation of Divinity. In the Incarnation, the creature Jesus Christ is the result of hypostatic union of the Word, God the Son, with the nature Humanity, a universal by community, in the physical body of the man Jesus. In Christ, the part that normally is played by the created soul in a human being is played by Humanity, although this does not mean that Christ lacked a soul of any kind. In both the Trinity and the Incarnation, it will turn out that Wyclif's conception that the aggregate being arising out of the union of two distinct beings is itself something bearing ontological weight plays a part.

## **2. *De Trinitate*: The Divine Nature as Universal, the Divine Person as Particular**

### **2.1. *Situating De Trinitate***

While much scholarship remains to be done, we can now identify at least some of the arguments to which *De Trinitate* contributes. This allows us to do more than describe it as what a realist theologian would say about the logical problems inherent to the doctrine of the Trinity. A key problem will be to identify theologians, or if not, positions connected to theologians against whom Wyclif argues; simply to refer to his opponents as "the *Moderni*" is by no means adequate, for everyone engaged in theology during the period fit that bill. It was not until the Council of Constance that the term was used especially to refer to the Ockhamist position.<sup>2</sup> Wyclif himself only occasionally names his opponents throughout his works, and not at all in *De Trinitate*; he uses the term "*Moderni*" very generally in this treatise, and includes among the *antiqui* everyone from Augustine to Scotus. At present, there are no published editions of *Sentences* commentaries of Wyclif's contemporaries, theologians such as Nicholas Aston, Richard Brinkley, Johannes Klenkok, and Uthred of Boldon, and relatively few of his predecessors in the decades before the

2 Neil Ward Gilbert, "Ockham, Wyclif, and the 'Via Moderna'" in *Antiqui et Moderni: Traditionsbewußtsein im späten Mittelalter*, Miscellanea Mediaevalia Band 9 (Berlin, 1974) pp. 85-125.

Black Death.<sup>3</sup> Until more editions are available, our understanding of Wyclif's arguments will remain limited to broad outlines of positions. We may be able to guess at details, for instance, why Wyclif emphasizes ontology and speaks less about epistemic justification, but for the present, our picture of Wyclif's theology continues to emerge.

Thomson dates this treatise to 1370; Robson categorizes the treatise as the fourth tractate of the second book of the *Summa de ente*, following *De intellectione Dei*, *De scientia Dei*, et *De volucione Dei*. The tractates consequent are *De Ydeis*, *De potencia Dei productiva ad extra*. In his "Wyclif and the Augustinian Tradition" Gordon Leff views the treatise as valuable as a touchstone for Wyclif's "original theological position," as it was prior to the more combative treatises of the *Summa Theologie*.<sup>4</sup> He describes the main theme of the treatise to be that reason is a positive aid to faith, the function of which is to provide evidence of the divine Trinity through the signs available in creation. By providing fallen man the wherewithal to recover sufficient understanding of the world to appreciate revealed truth, reason complements faith. Likewise, Leff notes Wyclif's argument that some element of faith is evident in every act of knowing. In every act of knowledge that does not entail direct experience of the thing known, a degree of faith is necessary in the evidence presented to the individual knower for the evidence to be believed. This Leff characterizes as Wyclif seeking "to show where faith and reason converge, while reserving for faith what is distinctive to it. By making it accessible to natural experience in its different modes he has allowed reason a far fuller role in theology than the majority of medieval thinkers have."<sup>5</sup> Leff notes that Wyclif exceeds thirteenth century notions of natural theology by arguing that human reason can demonstrate God's triune nature

3 See William Courtenay, *Schools and Scholar in Fourteenth Century England* (Princeton, 1987) for an introduction to the bibliographic information available. J. A. Robson's *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools* (Cambridge, 1961) remains the best introduction to the milieu in which Wyclif wrote. I have made use of Robert Holcot, O.P. In *Quatuor Libros Sententiarum Quaestiones* (Frankfurt, 1967; a reprint of the 1518 edition), Adam Wodeham, *Lectura Secunda in Librum Primum Sententiarum*, ed. Rega Wood and Gedeon Gal, (St. Bonaventure, 1990), and Michael Dunning's as yet unpublished edition of Richard FitzRalph's *Utrum mens humana sit ymago Trinitatis increate*, (*Sent. Liber 1, Questio 5*).

4 Gordon Leff, "Wyclif and the Augustinian Tradition," *Medievalia et Humanistica*, ed. Paul M. Clogon (Cleveland, 1970), pp. 29-39.

5 Leff, "Wyclif and the Augustinian Tradition," p. 36.

sufficiently to convince any rational criteria, given an understanding of the authoritative witness of revealed truth. But to contrast Wyclif with Aquinas and Scotus on the one hand, and Ockham on the other, as Leff appears to be doing, is to look past the tremendous amount of theology done in Oxford from the 1320s to the 1360s. Leff's description makes Wyclif appear to be a weird proto-rationalist, or perhaps an idealist of some sort, neither of which is accurate.

A good approach for understanding what a theologian thinks regarding reason's limits in matters of faith, and for seeing how he envisions a formal theology ought to proceed would be to investigate his Commentary on the *Sententiae in IV Libris Distinctae* of Peter Lombard.<sup>6</sup> This is true, at any rate, for an identifiable period in Oxford. Before the 1280s, only those of Richard Fishacre, Robert Kilwardby, and Richard Rufus of Cornwall survive.<sup>7</sup> The period between Ockham's lectures on the *Sentences* in 1317–1319 and Bradwardine's *De causa Dei* in 1344 has been described as a Golden Age of theology in Oxford, and *Sentences Commentaries* abound from figures of this period, notably those of Adam Wodeham (d.1358) among the Franciscans, and Robert Holcot (d. 1349) among the Dominicans.<sup>8</sup> The last decade of this period is particularly rich, for Wyclif's immediate intellectual forbears, including Richard Brinkeley O.F.M., Richard FitzRalph, and Thomas Bradwardine, leave record of some activity with the *Sententiae*.<sup>9</sup> But after 1344, things appear to have changed. Com-

6 See Marcia Colish, *Peter Lombard* (Leiden, 1994). See also Philipp W. Rosemann, *Peter Lombard* (Oxford, 2004).

7 See Rega Wood, "Early Oxford Theology," in *Medieval Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard: Current Research*, ed. G. R. Evans (Leiden, 2002), pp. 289–343.

8 See Chris Schabel, "Oxford Franciscans after Ockham," in *Medieval Commentaries on the Sentences*, pp. 359–77. For Wodeham, see Courtenay, *Adam Wodeham* (Leiden, 1978); for Holcot, the best treatment remains Fritz Hoffman, *Die theologische Methode des Oxforder Dominikanerlehrers Robert Holcot* (Münster, 1972). For bibliography for both, see *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jorge Gracia and Timothy Noone (Malden, Mass., 2003), pp. 84–5, 610.

9 See Raymond Edwards, "Themes and Personalities in *Sentence Commentaries* at Oxford in the 1330s," in *Medieval Commentaries on the Sentences*, pp. 379–93. Edwards emphasizes the centrality of biblical exegesis and preaching in the choices and approaches of commentators in this period, which should be borne in mind for Wyclif's own approach. For a general outline of the topics discussed in FitzRalph's *Sentence* commentary, see Gordon Leff, *Richard FitzRalph Commentator of the Sentences*, (Manchester, 1963). For Thomas Brad-

mentaries no longer encompass as many of Lombard's *distinctiones* as they had previously, tending instead to address several large questions.<sup>10</sup> In addressing one or two questions where previously the commentator might have examined a dozen, the post-1344 commentator took the opportunity to engage in analysis of much greater detail. Further, whereas earlier the tendency had been to refer to one's opponents as "*quidam*," by this period it was much more common for one's opponents to be named, and his works accurately cited.<sup>11</sup>

The realist position was most dramatically made by Bradwardine in his *De causa Dei*, but it was generally the tenor of Oxford metaphysics in the 1360s, an articulation of the responses to Ockham made by Walter Burley (d. 1344) and Walter Chatton (d. 1343). Wyclif's position in *De Trinitate* appears to be a response to the kinds of positions held by Adam Wodeham and Robert Holcot, who both denied the inclusion of theology among the sciences. The vigor of Adam Wodeham's rejection of Walter Chatton's position in his *Sentences* commentary [I.d.1 q.2] might lead one to imagine that Wyclif's position is a direct response to Wodeham's, on Chatton's behalf.<sup>12</sup> Given the lack of edited *Sentences* commentaries of the period following Wodeham and Holcot at Oxford, it is impossible at this point to prove or disprove such an hypothesis; the best we can do in this discussion is to hold Holcot and Wodeham as proponents of the kind of position against which Wyclif argued.

While scholarship has made some headway in the past two decades in understanding the Commentary tradition of this period, there remains no serious attempt to include Wyclif in this tradition. Wyclif certainly would have lectured on the *Sententiae* in the course

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wardine, see Jean-François Genest, "Les Premiers Écrits Théologiques de Bradwardine: Textes Inédits et Découvertes Récentes," in *Medieval Commentaries on the Sentences*, pp. 395-421, and "Le de Futuris Contingentibus de Thomas Bradwardine," in *Recherches augustiniennes* 14 (1979), 249-336. For what remains of Richard Brinkley's *Sentence Commentary*, see Zénon Kaluza, "L'oeuvre théologique de Richard Brinkley, OFM," *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 56 (1986), 169-273.

10 Paul J. J. M. Bakker and Chris Schabel, "Sentences Commentaries of the Later Fourteenth Century," *Medieval Commentaries on the Sentences*, pp. 426-64.

11 Damasus Trapp, "Augustinian Theology of the Fourteenth Century" *Augustiniana* 6 (1956), 146-274; William Courtenay, *Schools and Scholars*, esp. pp. 327-55.

12 For Wodeham's special animus against Chatton, see Adam de Wodeham's *Lectura Secunda in Librum Primum Sententiarum*, vol. 1, ed. Rega Wood and Gedeon Gal (St. Bonaventure, NY, 1990), pp. 12-16.



of his studies, and demonstrates familiarity with Lombard throughout his works.<sup>13</sup> Aside from Robson's suggestion that Book 2 of the *Summa de ente* contains the body of Wyclif's "lost" Commentary, the only reference to Wyclif's having published anything on the *Sententiae* can be found in Harris's 1886 introduction to *De benedicta Incarnacione*, wherein he endorses an unknown cataloger's account of the contents of Oriel 15, in which that treatise is included.<sup>14</sup> I believe that Robson's suggestion is correct; many of the criteria for post-1344 Commentaries are met in *De Trinitate*. The treatise is rich with references to specific works of authorities such as Augustine, Anselm, and Grosseteste, as well as to more recent luminaries such as Aquinas and Scotus. References more recent than the late thirteenth century are almost non-existent, though; FitzRalph and Bradwardine are the only figures mentioned by name. It is difficult to imagine Wyclif formulating the arguments of the *Summa de ente's* treatises without specific opponents in mind, but his references to them are restricted to "doctors of signs" or "a certain doctor."

The body of the treatise appears to wander from topic to topic, but the argument can best be understood as extended commentary on Distinction 5 of Book I, "Whether the divine essence generates the Son or was generated by the Father." The most fully developed section of the treatise is Chapter 16, in which Wyclif engages in recognizably scholastic formal reasoning addressing this question, referring twice to Lombard's treatment of it. His argument rests on points made in the previous fifteen chapters, ranging from the relation of reasoning to faith in the doctrine of the Trinity through consideration of the formal distinction of Scotus, and the right relation of language to object and idea in such a discussion. While Leff and others have emphasized Wyclif's reliance on Augustine's *De Trinitate* for the doctrinal content, Scotus's *Sentences* Commentary figures importantly in key points of the argument.

Wyclif's approach focuses more on ontology and the signification that underlies theological truth, suggestive of a desire to order theology and philosophy like that of twelfth-century theologians such as Anselm or the Victorines. In contrast, Richard FitzRalph shows much

13 H. B. Workman, *John Wyclif: A Study of the English Medieval Church*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1926), 1:96-7.

14 See Robson, pp. 134-5, also W. Thomson, p. 15. Thomson notes further that Wyclif structured the *Trialogus* according to Lombard's *Sententiae*.



less interest in this, at least as regards formal trinitarian theology.<sup>15</sup> *De Trinitate*'s twentieth century editor, Allen DuPont Breck, describes it as "not a pioneering work in the sense that it strikes at the heart of any doctrine or practice with something basically new to say."<sup>16</sup> He is right, for Wyclif's description of the Trinity does not diverge from a fairly standard Scotistic depiction of three persons formally distinct from one another, identical with the Divine Essence. But it would be premature to suppose that this makes the treatise valuable only as a set-piece within Wyclif's *Sentences* Commentary; *De Trinitate* may well be a part of Wyclif's attempt to put Bradwardine's *De causa Dei* on firmer metaphysical and theological ground, and his explanation of the relation of faith and reason is an important part of that enterprise. Bradwardine's efforts were very much directed against thinkers such as Holcot, his associate in the de Bury circle, and Adam Wodeham.<sup>17</sup> In his 1993 study of Holcot, Leonard Kennedy comments that Bradwardine's anti-Pelagian arguments lacked noticeable effect; if *De Trinitate* is in fact directed against these thinkers' positions, as I believe it is, the effect was noticeable indeed.<sup>18</sup>

## 2.2. *Faith and Reason as the Starting Point*

*De Trinitate* is divisible into four sections. In the first, Wyclif considers the relation of faith and reason, and explores an analogy useful in understanding the distinction of persons within the Trinity. In the second, he considers the relations between the divine persons, and the way language limits our understanding of those relations. Next, he examines the syllogism Wodeham considers to be valid about the Father and the Son being of the same essence, and uses arguments about universals, reference, and the formal distinction to extricate the faithful from Wodeham's mistake. Finally, Wyclif presents a disquisition on generation within the divine being that can only be the fruit of

15 I am grateful to Michael Dunning for the use of his unpublished edition of FitzRalph's Sentence commentary, the use of which has greatly assisted me by filling out the brief picture of his commentary on Book 1 given in Leff, *Richard FitzRalph*.

16 Breck, 1962, p. viii.

17 See Heiko Oberman, *Archbishop Thomas Bradwardine: A Fourteenth Century Augustinian* (Utrecht, 1957), pp. 43-8.

18 Leonard Kennedy, *The Philosophy of Robert Holcot, Fourteenth Century Skeptic* (Lewiston, 1993), p. 140.

his commentary on Bk. I, Distinction 5. The last chapter considers the spiration of the Holy Spirit from Father and Son, summarizing the arguments levied against "the Greeks" who reject the *filioque* clause in the Nicene Creed.

The treatise's beginning provides a strong indicator that *De Trinitate* represents the beginning of Wyclif's Sentence Commentary. Rather than beginning as Augustine did in his *De Trinitate*, with a brief discussion as to the utility of theological speculation and its place within the life of the faithful, the first four chapters of Wyclif's treatise stoutly defend the position that an act of faith is involved in every act of reasoning, making faith absolutely central to any form of reasoning. Readers unfamiliar with the Sentence Commentary tradition that had developed in Oxford in the early fourteenth-century might be forgiven for wondering why Wyclif expends such energy arguing for a rational analysis of matters of the faith. In 1317 William Ockham had begun his own lectures on the *Sentences*, in which he argued that natural reason is ultimately unable to encompass the mysteries of the faith with the security and extent that his predecessors Aquinas and Scotus had imagined possible. While he stopped short of holding that faith and reason were two separate spheres between which fruitful dialogue is possible, not all who were to follow were as cautious.<sup>19</sup> During the two decades that were to follow, Oxford theologians vigorously examined the possibility that theology really isn't even a science at all. Most notable of these were Adam Wodeham and Robert Holcot, and William Crathorn.

Adam Wodeham, Ockham's student and friend, attacked the arguments of his fellow Franciscan Walter Chatton with notable vigor. Chatton had argued, as Wyclif would, that a return to the safety of theological tradition and scriptural foundation would best serve the needs of the day.<sup>20</sup> Wodeham argued against the possibility of us-

19 See Alfred Freddoso, "Ockham on Faith and Reason," *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham*, ed. Paul Vincent Spade (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 326-49. See William Ockham, *Summae Logicae Pars Prima Tertiae Partis*, c. 1: "Et sic articuli fidei nec sunt principia demonstrationis nec conclusiones, nec sunt probabiles, quia omnibus vel pluribus vel maxime sapientibus apparent falsi, et hoc accipiendo sapientes pro sapientibus mundi et praecise innitentibus rationi naturali, quia illo modo accipitur 'sapiens' in descriptione probabilis."

20 See Courtenay, *Schools and Scholars*, pp. 265-6; also Gracia pp. 674-5. The influence of Chatton on Wyclif deserves much fuller consideration than is possible here, where Wyclif's more immediate opponents are of interest. See *Reportatio in I Sent.* Dist. 1-9 and Dist. 10-48, ed. See Girard Etzkorn and Joseph Wey (Toronto, 2002).

ing the fruits of natural reasoning to broaden our understanding of the divine, rejecting as many of Chatton's attempts at natural theology as was necessary to emphasize this impossibility. While a conclusion reliably attained using one form of science may seem applicable in another field, it would be foolhardy to assume that this holds across all the rational endeavors we suppose are sciences. We may presume that two diverse lines of argument lead to the same conclusion, as in the famous five ways Aquinas uses to demonstrate God's existence, but "diverse sciences do not prove formally the same conclusion through the same medium, unless by mendacity."<sup>21</sup> Scientific reasoning's ability, for example, to construct arguments demonstrating the existence of an infinite being may entice one to suppose that it can demonstrate God's existence, but the God it constructs is ultimately nothing in comparison to the God of theology. There is no possibility of reason establishing the falsity of the apparently valid syllogism "This thing is the Father; this same thing is the Son; therefore the Father is the same as the Son," for by Aristotle's rules, the conclusion follows neatly from the premises. "And thus unless through our faith it were known that one thing is three things, we would believe firmly the aforesaid sophism to have been well argued."<sup>22</sup>

Robert Holcot's position was that what is evident as scientific knowledge is born from demonstrative arguments; no faith is involved in the process. His argument is that theology could only be considered a science if it conformed to one of the three senses in which the term *scientia* is understood. In the broadest sense, it is firm adhesion to the truth, and in this sense theology is a science. But the question of the basis for that adhesion then arises. If the assent is based in evident knowledge of some truth grounded in empirical data, or in necessary first principles, then one cannot include theology among the sciences, for no viator can claim empirical knowledge nor intuitive comprehension of supernatural truths as necessary first principles.<sup>23</sup>

21 Adam de Wodeham, *Lectura Secunda in librum Primum Sententiae* 1.3.12, p. 1:247: "Et ideo ad variationem mediorum secundum speciem variatur actus sciendi secundum speciem, et diversae scientiae non probant formaliter eandem conclusionem per idem medium, nisi mendicando."

22 Ibid., 2.1.13, p. 2:25: "Et ideo nisi per fidem nobis innotuisset quod una res est tres res, credidissemus firmiter sophismata praedicta bona fuisse argumenta."

23 See Holcot's denial of the possibility of establishing God's existence through unaided reason in J. T. Muckle, C.S.B., "Utrum Theologia Sit Scientia A Quodlibetal Question of Robert Holcot, O.P.," *Mediaeval Studies* 20 (1958), 127-53,

But the matter is more complex than this; Holcot is not suggesting that formal reasoning has no place in theological investigations. While he is clear that the Catholic ought accept as true on authority of Scripture or the Church propositions that might otherwise be rejected, one can—and in some cases must—use logic to investigate theological statements and arguments. With heretics, it is best to stick to analysis of the forms of arguments they use, and leave the divergence in content to ecclesiastic authority. Theologians must be well versed in logic, though, as sophistic arguments frequently arise that require careful parsing. In some cases, he continues, good reasoning can break down when addressing particularly difficult subjects, as with the nature of the Trinity. The syllogism “this thing is the Father,” “this same thing is the Son,” therefore “the Father is the Son” is perfectly acceptable by Aristotle’s reasoning, yet the consequence cannot be accepted, even if the premises are. Understanding the limits of human logic, he suggests, is one of the first requirements of theological investigation.<sup>24</sup>

Another Dominican, William Crathorn (fl. 1330–1331) has recently gained some scholarly attention for his unique epistemological positions. In his Commentary on Book I of the *Sentences*, he argues that our knowledge of perceptible objects arises from our perception of sensible species, which have all the characteristics of the objects they represent. That is, the sensible species of a cat that I see has, just as the cat does, a tail, white fur, a pink nose, and so on. Holcot thought Crathorn’s position was ridiculous, but given its similarity to that argued by philosophers three hundred years hence, it has recently garnered scholarly interest.<sup>25</sup> Crathorn’s influence on Wyclif is likely to have been noteworthy, despite the two decades separating them, given the many subjects on which they directly disagreed. Crathorn’s *In Primum Librum Sententiarum* follows Lombard’s first book only

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at p. 144: “non habemus ab aliquo philosopho demonstrative probatum quod aliquis angelus est, neque de deo, neque de aliquo incorporeo.”

24 *Quodlibet* 87, “*Utrum haec est concedenda: Deus est Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus*,” in Hester Gelber, *Exploring the Boundaries of Reason: Three Questions on the Nature of God by Robert Holcot OP* (Toronto, 1983), pp. 34–36.

25 See “On the possibility of infallible knowledge,” *In Sent.* Q. 1, R. Pasnau, transl., in R. Pasnau, ed., *Cambridge Translations of Medieval Philosophical Texts*, vol. 3, *Mind and Knowledge* (Cambridge 2002), pp. 245–301. See also Gracia and Noone, pp. 692–3.

nominally, ranging across a host of issues that would, later occupy Wyclif's attention. In addition to extended discussions of mereology, indivisibles, and continuous motion, he lists five kinds of Universals, including things universal by causality, by perfections, and by similitude, but explains that logically speaking, the only real Universals are signs or representations of things.<sup>26</sup> He is in agreement with Wodeham, Holcot, and Ockham that human reason cannot establish the existence of God as we understand the divine through revelation. "I say then that it cannot be known by us in this life properly said that there are not many gods, although according to the truth of things there are not many gods, but only one God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."<sup>27</sup>

One might conclude that by the 1330s, theology had become a pallid version of what it had been twenty years before. The approaches of Wodeham and Holcot predominated at Oxford in the years before Black Death, and Courtenay notes that "theology as a science, its practical or speculative nature, and its subject" had generally ceased to be a matter of discussion.<sup>28</sup> Had a general air of skepticism settled over the university? While John Mirecourt and Nicholas of Autrecourt were to be condemned in Paris in 1347, their condemnations were based less on a fear of the possibility of a theology-killing skepticism in their views and more on personal and political differences with the theology faculty there.<sup>29</sup> Skepticism was not the problem; change in interests and methodology, more than anything else, seems to have led pre-1349 Oxford to follow Wodeham's and Holcot's approach regarding theology. Even thinkers one might expect to have opposed the separation of theology from the sciences seem to have occupied themselves with other concerns; Bradwardine's monumental *De causa Dei* is predicated on the idea that philosophy and

26 Q. 11, pp. 153-154; and at p. 182: "Iam ostendum est quod universale non sit res extra animam, sicut aliqui imaginatur," in Fritz Hoffmann, *Crathorn Quæstionen zum Ersten Sentenzenbuch, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters* NF 29 (Münster, 1988).

27 Ibid., Q.4, pp. 305-6: "Dico igitur non potest sciri a nobis in vita ista scientia proprie dicta quod non sint plures dii, licet secundum rei veritatem non sint plures dii, sed unus deus tantum, qui est Pater, Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus."

28 Courtenay, *Schools and Scholars*, p. 255.

29 J. M. M. H. Thijssen, *Censure and Heresy at the University of Paris 1200-1400* (Philadelphia, 1998), pp. 73-89.

logic can defend theological truth, but he does not go out of his way to establish this.<sup>30</sup>

Wyclif does not appear to have been the first to resurrect the issue, though; in the early 1350s, the Franciscan Richard Brinkley addressed the question "Whether the Christian sect depends on faith or reason as its foundation" in his *Sentences Commentary*. Had Brinkley's *Sentences Commentaries* survived, we would be in a position to compare the force of his arguments against those of Wodeham, but all that remains appears to be an *abbrevatio* prepared by Etienne Gaudet, a Parisian scholar in the 1360s.<sup>31</sup> Here, Brinkley is reported as arguing against philosophers who believe "that man should believe nothing, unless what ostensive reason is naturally able to conclude for itself to be the truth. And because they do not know how to prove evidently that there is another life, they establish for themselves this present one on its own."<sup>32</sup> Brinkley argues that man can, by evident reason, infer that human life is itself ordered to another life than the present. Do other sects (*i.e.* religions) have differing conceptions of how reason ought guide the faithful? Brinkley argues that every sect believes its foundational principles to be the truth, and uses these principles to construct rational arguments in favor of their sect. Unfortunately, what we lack are his conceptions of the interrelation of faith and reason that support these assertions. Gaudet reports him as having begun the question by arguing that the human will determines what the intellect will decide upon, and as having then presented arguments against this position. It is very tempting, given Wyclif's own arguments, to fill in the blanks in Brinkley's question, and have him hold that there is an element of faith in every act of reasoning. This would allow us to recognize the compatibility of faith and reason as both

30 *De causa Dei praefatio*, pp. 5-6: "Indagare siquidem causas naturales entium et propinquas, difficultatem non modicam continet et laborem; quanto magis totam universitatem harum causarum, volatu mentis corruptela corporis aggravate transcendere, et usque ad impenetrabile penetrale causarum supernaturalium, altissimarum, inaccessibilum et invisibilum penetrare, ipsasque velut nycticoracis oculo caligante perspicaciter intueri ..." See also Oberman, *Thomas Bradwardine*, pp. 22-7.

31 See Kaluza, "L'oeuvre théologique de Richard Brinkley, OFM."

32 Kaluza, *ibid.*, p. 227: "Circa quod est opinio philosophorum quod homo nihil debet credere, nisi quod ostensiva ratione naturaliter poterit sibi concludi esse verum. Et quia aliam vitam concludere evidenter nesciunt, praesentem pro fine sibi stauunt."



matters fit for scientific exploration, as Wyclif was to argue. But in the *abbrevatio* of the question that follows, Gaudet describes Brinkley as “touching upon the impossibility of reason and faith,” which suggests that he followed his Franciscan predecessors in seeing the two as separate. So while Wyclif was likely influenced by Brinkley’s logic, he probably wasn’t influenced by his understanding of the relation of reason to faith.<sup>33</sup>

A more notable connection can be made between Wyclif and Nicholas Aston, who was a fellow at Queen’s College from 1350, and Chancellor of the University from 1359 to 1361.<sup>34</sup> Aston was, like Wyclif, extremely sensitive to the centrality of logical analysis of language in theological argument. Like Wyclif, he demonstrated no interest in epistemology, preferring instead to apply philosophical logic to ontological problems without reference to the questions of knowability and certainty that occupied theologians in the 1320s and 1330s. More importantly, Aston followed Burley in arguing for the reality of Universals, and again like Wyclif, articulated an approach directly challenging those who would hold that truth lies in propositions, not in things. “Aston does indeed have a very strict definition of truth, for he has identified the truth of any proposition, syllogism, or argument with God.”<sup>35</sup> For our discussion, Aston is most notable for having formulated a proof for God’s existence in response to what he saw as a logically confused argument Bradwardine had made in *De causa Dei* I.1.<sup>36</sup> Bradwardine’s argument, itself a variant of Aquinas’s third argument in *Summa theologiae* Ia Q.2 a.3, from the possible to the necessary, fails, Aston argues, because it fumbles on possibility. Despite its supporters, the argument cannot be recognized as valid. The *fal-*

33 “Et tangitur de impossibilitate scientiae et fidei ... deinde respondetur ad quasdam rationes seu argumenta quae videntur probare oppositum quaestionis ex impossibilitate fidei et scientifici assensus.” from *Utrum regulae sectae Christi et eius propria principia per se sufficient ad aliquam conclusionem mere theologicam scientifice cognoscendam*, Ibid. p. 229.

34 See Courtenay, *Schools and Scholars*, pp. 333-46; Zénon Kaluza, “L’Oeuvre Théologique de Nicolas Agton,” *Archives D’Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire au Moyen Age*, 48 (1978), 45-82. Joel L. Bendee, *Nicholas Aston: A Study in Oxford Thought after the Black Death* (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1979) contains the fullest discussion of Aston’s life and thought, as well as an edition of eight questions from Aston’s *Sentences* Commentary.

35 Bender, p. 183; art. 4, 1. 519-22, in Bender, p. 422: “Ideo dico quod consequentiae bonae et formali, sillogismo bono, vel argumento bono, vel propositioni cuius contradictorium contradictionem includit, nihil in re correspondet nisi Deus ...”

36 Bradwardine, *De causa Dei* I.1, p. 2B, also I.11, p. 198D.



*sigraphicus* [literally, mistake-writer] who jeers at such arguments would rightly assert that Bradwardine's argument allows for a contingency to God's existence that is not commensurate with revealed truth. Rather than pursue Aston's argument, it is sufficient to note that Aston's extended discussion gives evidence of a shift in interest in Oxford in the 1350s, back to subject matter in formal theology consonant with late thirteenth-century thought. This was likely strongly influenced by Bradwardine; following the Black Death, arguments for God's existence were once again on the docket at Oxford. If Aston's *falsigraphicus* is related to those Wyclif would later call "doctors of signs," then it is clear that Wyclif's theological positions were very much in step with those of his fellows at Oxford.

We can know confusedly that God's existence is demonstrable, Wyclif begins, and that the triune nature is recognizable as a result of this demonstration, but can we know God as the blessed experience in the divine vision?<sup>37</sup> When human reason establishes God's existence, it also establishes the triune nature of the divine essence, even if the demonstrator is unaware of this feat. Authorities such as Anselm, Augustine, the Victorines, and Grosseteste all argue that the Trinity is evident through recognition of trinities in creatures, which serve as natural signs by which human reason may deduce syllogistically the divine Trinity.<sup>38</sup> This is effectively described in *Liber de causis*, proposition 6, which says that sensible effects brought about by secondary causes make us stammering to name God in His causes.<sup>39</sup> One can

37 *De Trinitate*, 1, p. 1. See *De Actibus Anime, pars secunda* 3, pp. 107/35–108/21: "[Q]uod deum esse est primum notum a quocunque cognoscente, non tamen est explicite cognoscibile, nisi a re rationali ..."

38 Peter Lombard, *Sententiae* 1.3.1. In FitzRalph's commentary on the *Sentences* 1.5: "Whether the human mind is an image of the uncreated Trinity," he argues that the mind's inability to understand the uncreated Trinity militates against this, but concedes that on Augustine's authority in *De Trinitate*, 14 c.15 it can be argued that the mind's ability to worship and participate in uncreated Wisdom. "That mind is image of God for which it is receptive and can be a participant." The remainder of FitzRalph's commentary addresses real distinction between memory, understanding and will, between the acts of these powers, particularly between acts of cognition and of memory, and between acts of cognition and willing. Wyclif does not appear to have made use of this in his argument in *De Trinitate*.

39 "The first cause transcends description. Languages fail in describing it only because of the description of its being. For the first cause is above every cause and is described only through the second causes which are illumined by the light of the first cause." Prop. 6, *Liber de Causis*, in *St. Thomas Aquinas Com-*

summarize the argument much as one argues from motion to prime mover. We recognize that the soul in creatures is composed of a triune nature, in which memory, reason, and will define the singular essence. This phenomenon, like motion, demands a like, three-fold intelligence that is itself necessary and immutable. Therefore, God has a three-fold nature.<sup>40</sup>

Augustine's example should be our guide, Wyclif explains. His arguments show how reason allows us to recognize the divine truths woven into creation, but in each case the faith must serve as foundational. "This is generally said, that no one can assent to this deduction [of the three-fold divine nature from perceived created trinities] without faith, and so it is not merely natural, and is not demonstrated in the natural light."<sup>41</sup> But if faith is the foundation, is it not then the case that demonstration through natural reasoning is impossible? All reasoning demands some sort of non-rational assent, Wyclif argues, either before or outside of the reasoning process, to conditions that serve as evidence for the reasoning to take place. Learning to read, or to speak, requires a degree of faith in the teacher. The absence of the light of faith infused in the mind allows one to give assent to many ideas, but in each case, the mind craves evidence of some kind. Testimony of authority counts as such even in matters otherwise neutral, so assent can be given in these matters from the authority of scripture or teaching that will be, in light of divine reality, rationally clear to all. Truth is manifested in three kinds of light: divine nature or supernatural disposition, the light of reason or some other created power,

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*mentary of the Book of Causes*, trans. Vincent Guagliardo O.P., Charles R. Hess, O.P., Richard Taylor (Washington, 1996, p. 45). Compare to Wyclif's affirmation of impossibility of human language referring to God in *De Incarnacione* 7, p. 115/15-21. On this topic, see the discussion of analogy and God-talk below.

40 *De Trinitate* 1, pp. 1-3. Contrast with Adam Wodeham, *Sententiae* 1, D.2, Q.1.14, p. 29/69-75: "Although in the truth of things, 'God exists' bears along with it 'the Trinity exists', nevertheless the soundness of this consequence is not evident ... this term 'God' and likewise this term 'prime mover' in these propositions supposit for the Trinity, but this is not evident. And thus it does not follow that the Trinity's being might be proven evidently from creatures ..." Also, contrast with William Crathorn, *Q.7 Utrum omnis creatura rationalis sit imago trinitatis*, where he argues that while in the powers of the soul there is an image of God, it is mistaken to conclude from this that the created being gives evidence of the Trinity of divine being. See Hoffmann, *Crathorn*, pp. 331-51.

41 *De Trinitate* 1, p. 3: "Hic dicitur communiter, quod nemo potest sine fide prima assentire isti deduccioni, et ideo non est mere naturalis, et sic non demonstratur in lumine naturali."

and the light of faith in universal truths that are not evident to natural light.<sup>42</sup> All can converge in the human mind to allow one to give assent to a truth of faith.

Later in his life, Wyclif makes much the same argument at the beginning of his instruction on the Trinity in *Triologus*, where he has his foil *Pseustis* argue a simplified version of the Ockhamist position. His champion *Phronesis* responds, "It is impossible for the faithful or the heretic to know something, unless they know it fundamentally through faith; because just as nobody knows letters—that one is A, the next B, and so of other—unless they believe, so nobody by their senses knows anything sensible, unless first truth speaks and teaches that, that a thing is sensible in one way or in another."<sup>43</sup> We do not degrade natural deduction simply because we give our assent to faith to augment that reasoning process. Further, faith is not judged to be better relative to the wealth of evidence available; the faith of a rich man with a Bible is not superior to that of a poor man without one. Not all acts of faith result in immediate understanding. Sometimes we believe something, yet never understand it, while in others, we come to an understanding immediately on giving assent to it, and in still others, what is believed is only understood after thought. This shows that not all faiths are of a kind.

But are they always present in any act of knowledge? And if so, and if faith is a virtuous qualitative *habitus*, which all theologians recognize to be a theological virtue, can we know anything without the assistance of grace, which is necessary for any theological virtue?<sup>44</sup> Wyclif is not forthcoming in his position on the place of illumination in knowledge here; we must deduce his allegiance to Augustine, Grosseteste, and Bonaventure. Their position was that every act of understanding entails the divine illumination of the mind, an active involvement of the light of Truth in each case of our apprehension of the truth. Aquinas and Scotus limited the need for this illumination

42 *De Trinitate* 1, p. 5. Wyclif argues that just as sunlight is to moonlight, so is supernatural light to the light of natural reason. See *De Trinitate*, p. 6.

43 *Triologus* 1.6, ed. Gotthard Lechler (Oxford, 1869), p. 55: "Impossibile est fidelem vel haereticum quidquam cognoscere, nisi per fidem fundamentaliter illud cognoscat; quia sicut nemo cognoscit literas, quod una est A, reliqua B, et sic de ceteris, nisi credat: sic nemo sensu cognoscit quodcunque sensibile, nisi prima veritas illud dicat et doceat, quod illud sensibile sit illud vel huiusmodi."

44 *De Trinitate* 1, p. 14 for faith as theological virtue. On the need of Grace for any virtuous act, see *De dominio divino* 3.4-5.

to the sphere of revelation, arguing that the unassisted human reason is capable of accurately perceiving the truth about things in this world without the need of divine assistance. Faith factors into this question when truths understood by pagans such as Aristotle must be explained; Aristotle lacked the Christian faith, yet reasoned out the truth of things in the world. This led Aquinas to conclude that one could not have faith and knowledge about the same thing. Faith requires assent without evidence, while knowledge entails having that evidence.<sup>45</sup> Henry of Ghent [d. 1293] is the last widely studied philosopher to have argued the need for divine illumination before Nicholas of Cusa in the fifteenth century. By the shape of Wyclif's arguments here, it is difficult to avoid concluding that he followed Henry, Bonaventure, and Grosseteste in arguing the need for divine illumination. "For it is impossible for a creature to know anything unless it knows it through grounding from the authority of God teaching and moving to assent."<sup>46</sup>

All that we understand, then, requires some faithful assent of the human mind, some acquiescence to evidence that might be doubted. In the case of understanding objects we perceive, our intuition of sense data entails faith of a kind, which kindles growth of knowledge as our experiences increase. Gradually the knowledge we acquire becomes fodder for the aggregation of sense experiences into judgments we make about the world, which judgments would be impossible without the fundamental faith we have in the individual experiences. If this is a real quality, and not just a fiction we invent to explain our knowing, then it must be like the other aspects of our knowledge of things, it must be in itself something predicable of the human mind, an act as such that may be identifiable in every act of knowing.<sup>47</sup>

45 *Summa theologiae* 2:2.1.4. See Joseph Owens, "Faith, Ideas, Illumination, and Experience," *Cambridge History of Late Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Anthony Kenny, Norman Kretzmann and Jan Pinborg (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 440-59.

46 *De Trinitate* 2, p. 19. "Nam impossibile est creaturam quicquam cognoscere nisi cognoscat illud per locum ab auctoritate dei docentis et moventis ad assensum."

47 For Wyclif's consideration of the ontological status of mental acts, see *De Actibus Anime pars prima*, pp. 1-57, although he has little to say there about the relation of faith to the reasoning process. See *Dialogus* 12 for a brief discussion of the difference between opinion and faith.

Faith has a natural place in all our acts of understanding, great and small, and if we can claim to have an accurate explanation for even the least act of understanding the simplest thing, we should also admit to the possibility that great truths of faith, such as the Trinity, may be explored and understood by human reason.<sup>48</sup> We reason best from basic truths (Aristotle's first principles) taken in faith, which is fundamental to all knowing. The truth that all truths are reducible to one fundamental truth shows that God moves the mind to assent to the truth before the mind itself gives its assent, which is the mark of faith preceding reasoned knowing. Ultimately, all arguments rest on arguments from authority – but divine authority, not human. Human reasoning is only capable, only able to be trusted, if it, in turn, trusts God. The Muslims who prohibit reason from exploring the faith are fools, for they close themselves off from the merits available to them.<sup>49</sup>



If the articles of faith were demonstrable scientifically, philosophers would already have done so, without the need for revelation. But the articles of faith are difficult, subtle, hidden from natural light. The merit that comes from faith consists in voluntarily and humbly submitting the sensibility to the authority of the Catholic Church and the articles of faith, against which rebellion is a sin. So to view faith and reason as incompatible is premature. Faith is at once an act of believing, a habit, an assent to a truth; since what is known is believed as well, faith and knowing are not really incompatible. One can have both in the same case.<sup>50</sup> Turning to *Moderni* predecessors, the disagreement between Wyclif and Holcot is limited, and in fact the two

48 Compare to Bradwardine, *De causa Dei* 1.1, corr. 32, where he argues against philosophers who believe themselves capable of demonstrating all truths without need of revelation. Bradwardine argues at length of the presence of faith in every act of knowing, continuing on to illustrate Christian history as defined by the concord of faith and reason, pp. 28ff.

49 *De Trinitate* 4, pp. 33-34.

50 Here Wyclif's argument with Holcot, if it is with him, becomes more complex. Both agree of the need for the believer to submit himself to the authority of the Church, but the reasons differ. Holcot argued as much because he believed that no natural logic could establish the compossibility of truths evident to empirical experience and the truths of the faith. This is not to say that he believed there to be a need for two separate kinds of logic, but that unassisted reason can only reach so far in its analysis. See Kennedy, pp. 19-21.

agree on more than they disagree: both recognize that truths of the faith must be believed on authority of Scripture and the Church, both argue for use of formal reasoning in theological matters, and both appear to suspect that bad reasoning lies at the base of heresy more often than not. The point of divergence is on reasoning within theology; Holcot believes it best for responding to problems within theology, and less useful for *adducendum*, or dialectical exploration, while Wyclif argues in these chapters for its centrality in just that activity.<sup>51</sup> He explicitly says as much in *De dominio divino* 1.6.

And so the same thing is subject of theology by reason of its dignity and also the subject of metaphysics. But the reasons differ in three ways. For the theologian rightly considers created beings according to the exemplary reasons they have in the Word, and indirectly according to their existence in their proper genera. Thus theology is not perfected before the theologian arrives in paradise. Secondly, the theologian adheres by faith and authority of Scripture to any of the conclusions of his science; indeed, he should explicitly understand this insofar as he is a theologian. Third, the theologian humbly proceeds to the proper highest subject, and understands it as such, but confusedly; barely understanding as distinct knowledge that which he will distinctly know in paradise. And therefore the order of theology will not be reversed in paradise, but will devour every other science, and laying aside perverse ways of proceeding; metaphysics does the contrary. And it is clear that in the Word is sufficient connection to truth, and if the creature knows nothing save the Lord Jesus Christ and that which according to His essence or being is intelligible in the Son, then they [i.e. knower and known] are connected.<sup>52</sup>

51 Wyclif has much more to say about faith in other works, but in these it is considered as the virtue requisite for understanding, without argument as to how it is related to the act of understanding. See, for instance, *De triplici vinculo amoris* 5, in *Polemical Works in Latin*, 2 vols. ed. Rudolf Buddensieg (London, 1883), 1: 176-9. Cf. *Trialogus* 3.2, pp. 133-4: "These three theological virtues, faith, hope and love, differ in this, that faith bespeaks supernatural and habitual understanding of the believing, between considering and knowing, and faith has praiseworthy characteristics. But understand that faith is sometimes accepted for the act of believing, sometimes for the habit [of faith] and sometimes for the truth in which is believed. Thus the faithful say that first is the faith *as [qua]* we believe, second is the faith *through which [per quam]* we believe, and third is the faith *which [quam]* we believe. And some faith (as the schoolmen say) is unformed, when 'the demons believe and tremble' [James 2.19], while other times faith is formed of charity. It seems to me, though, that the faithful, according to the integrity of [their] faith, necessarily have charity, while demons and anyone lacking it [charity] are accordingly infidels."

52 *De dominio divino* 1.7 ed. R. L. Poole (London, 1890), p. 43/3-21: "Et sic idem est subiectum adequacionis theologie quod et subiectum dignitatis, et idem subiectum theologie et methaphisice. Sed rationes diversificantur in tribus. Nam



### 2.3. *Analogy and God Talk*

Later in the treatise, Wyclif makes a related case for the more specific issue of reason delineating the distinction of persons within the divine essence, leading to his argument for the necessity of care with how language is used in theology. The best way to begin study of doctrinal truth is to look to the different ways terms signify as they are used in theology. To do this, one must first give credal assent to the doctrine one seeks to analyze. The Modalist heresy arose, Wyclif argues, when one presumed to understand the Trinity by analyzing the terms to be used before assenting in belief. "And among all the heresies concerning the divine Trinity, I believe that today things are more perilous because the community of the *Moderni* deny universal truths."<sup>53</sup>

Running throughout Wyclif's argument are references to the utility of analogical predication, the philosophical reference theory most commonly associated with Aquinas. Thomas had argued that the best way of understanding how our language might refer to the transcendent Godhead is through understanding that an ontological difference separates God from creation analogous to the difference between substance and accident.<sup>54</sup> Since Thomas's own under-

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theologus recte considerat de creatis secundum rationes exemplares quas habet in Verbo, et indirecte secundum existenciam in genere proprio. Ideo non perficietur theologia antequam devntum sit ad patriam. Secundo theologus adheret fide et auctoritate Scripture cuicumque conclusioni sue sciencie; ymo, hoc debet explicite, in quantum theologus, cognoscere. Tercio theologus humiliter procedit a proprio subiecto maxime, primo, et per se cognito, sed confuse; minime autem cognito quoad distinctam noticiam quosque ipsum fuerit distincte cognitum in patria. Et ideo ordo theologicus non erit reversus in patria, sed devorabit omnes alias sciencias, et deponet preposterum ordinem procedendi; econtra autem de methaphisica. Et patet uod in verbo est sufficiens conexio veritatum, etsi creatura nichil sciat nisi dominum Iesum Christum et ea que secundum essenciam vel esse intelligibile in Filio connectuntur."

<sup>53</sup> *De Trinitate* 9, p. 100: "[E]t inter omnes hereses concernentes trinitatem, credo quod hec esset hodie periculosior quia communitas modernorum negancium veritates et universalialia nec non eciam verificancium dicta auctorum solum de signis attribuunt ..."

<sup>54</sup> The literature on this subject is vast, running from historical studies of the development of the idea in Thomas's own thought, to the theory's comprehensibility and utility in light of contemporary philosophy of language. For Thomas's earlier thought, see *In Sent.* I, d. 19, q. 5, a. 2, c and ad. l; *In Sent.* 3, d. 2, q. 1, a. 1, ad. 3; for later development, see *De Veritate* q. 2, a. 11; *Summa theologiae* 1.1, Q. 13, a. 5. For a representative treatment of the theory in light of contemporary interests, see David Burrell, *Analogy and Philosophical Language* (New Haven, 1973).



standing of how this analogical predication functions developed as his own thought evolved, it is not surprising that a host of different approaches cropped up in scholastic theology, well before Cardinal Cajetan's notoriously inaccurate interpretation in the 1490s.<sup>55</sup> Wyclif is clear that univocal and equivocal predication about God, particularly about the divine persons' identity through their relations to one another, is wholly impossible.<sup>56</sup> This is important to bear in mind, not only throughout *De Trinitate*, but in all his theological works. Scotus famously argued for the univocity of being allowing for univocal predication of God and creation. We will see that *De Incarnatione Verbi* is in large part a development of Scotus's christology, and it is difficult to avoid comparisons to Scotus when reading *De ente primo in communi*, the second treatise of Book I of the *Summa de ente*.<sup>57</sup> Wyclif's arguments in this treatise to delineate the right use of analogy in talking about God, while not terribly clear, should at least define the extent to which Wyclif should be identified with Scotism.

Rather than lay out a scheme by which the theologian can best use language for God-predication, organized along recognizable metaphysical lines such as proportionality, Wyclif more commonly describes how our contact with God through language brings us closer to comprehension of the divine. "We cannot cognize God here purely and as a consequence since we cannot impose terms unless proportionate to our knowledge, it is clear that we cannot adapt terms to God for pure signification."<sup>58</sup> Our temporal approach to God is bounded

55 See E. J. Ashworth, "Analogy and Equivocation in Thirteenth-Century Logic: Aquinas in Context," *Mediaeval Studies* 54 (1992), 94–135. Following Aquinas, the next important thinker to explore the topic was Henry of Ghent; see Jos De-corte, "Henry of Ghent on Analogy: Critical Reflections of Jean Paulus' Interpretation," in *Henry of Ghent*, ed. W. Vanhamel (Louvain, 1996), pp. 71–105. For early fourteenth-century theories, see E. J. Ashworth, "Equivocation and Analogy in Fourteenth-Century Logic: Ockham, Burley, and Buridan," in *Historia Philosophi Medii Aevi: Studien der Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters* 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1991), 1:23–43. In her "Analogical Concepts: The Fourteenth-Century Background to Cajetan" [*Dialogue XXXI* (1992), pp. 399–413], Ashworth concentrates on Peter Aureol (d. 1322), Hervaeus Natalis (d. 1323), and John of Jandun (d. 1328), Parisian thinkers influential to Johannes Capreolus (d. 1444), Dominic of Flanders (d. 1479), and Paulus Soncinas (d. 1494), Cajetan's predecessors. A study of analogy and religious language in Oxford from Ockham through the 1370s would help to explain Wyclif's approach, which is not an original one, but differs from Burley's as described by Ashworth.

56 *De Trinitate*, p. 99.

57 See *Johannis Wyclif Summa de ente Libri Primi Tractatus Primus et Secundus*, ed. S. Harrison Thomson (Oxford, 1930), esp. pp. 62–70.

58 *De Trinitate*, p. 115.

by our inability to breach God's transcendence, but through the fruits of the Spirit we can rejoice in God's love and so enjoy God. We do not enjoy God, but we do enjoy His attributes. The most simple terms connote in signifying God, His being, but they do not signify Him primarily; those most likely to do so would be privative terms composed from the divine transcendence.<sup>59</sup>

Man's passionate nature is analogous to God's, and human passions are attributed to Him in figurative language. "Otherwise it is right for us to understand a term when its primary signification matches God analogously, and elsewhere when its primary signification cannot match God but through analogous properties found in such signs, as regality is in the lion as invincible lord of the beasts. This anthonomastic analogy matches God. Thus God is called a lion in Scripture, and it is clear when the language is figurative and when not."<sup>60</sup> Reason, goodness, knowing, and so on are causes in God for their realization in creation, so that they are only truly predicable insofar as they relate to God; all created perfections are proportionate to divine perfection by analogy. Anselm's recognition of created being predicates in the divine being leads him to conclude that to find our created good we ought love the simple good of God, which is the good of all.

This singular goodness of God is infinitely prior in nature to anything universal, and so truth as much as goodness is communicated universally to the creatures of God. Who would say that the source participates in the water of the river or the lake, which could not be water without there already having existed water in the source?<sup>61</sup>

Since prayer is the elevation of the mind to God, it is clear that it assists considerably, as it helps us to recognize that God's glory, holiness, and any other attribute we praise is inseparable from God. This makes expressions of glory and wonder at the greatness of God a kind of prayer, for it unites the mind to God's very being. "[A]nd there can be nothing so fulfilled or replenishing, nor to which the human spirit is so susceptible, than God."<sup>62</sup>

59 In scholastic terminology, "connotation" means that a term like "blindness" causes one to think of sight, and thus indirectly signifies it. "Blindness" is also a privative term, in that it refers to something absent or lacking in the subject.

60 *De Trinitate*, pp. 124-25.

61 *De Trinitate*, p. 127. His reference to Anselm is to *Proslogion* 25. Wyclif refers the reader to his fuller treatment of this in *De universalibus*, 4-5.

62 *De Trinitate*, p. 117.

For analysis of the limitations of language in describing the Trinity, we can do no better than to examine how predicating relations within the divine being is possible. But before we can see how the *Moderni* err in supposing the validity of the syllogism "God is Father, God is Son, therefore Father is Son," we must first be clear about ontology. Wyclif's realism allows him to hold that the syllogism in question is a parallogism of the sort: Animal is Lion; Animal is Horse, therefore Lion is Horse. As the Universal is one common to many singulars, we do not reason from one relation of Universal to singular and another such relation to conclude about the necessity of the relation of the singulars. Theologians unable to distinguish the logical subtlety or engage in precise reasoning will not be able to defend the faith in such arguments. Even worse is the theologian who says that such reasoning should hold in every matter *other* than those of faith. Those who deny natural theology give Muslim theologians free reign to claim their faith to be on a par with our own! "When the Saracen would claim Mohammed as excellent a prophet as our Christ, then unless a defense against their evidence beyond what the Saracens have in their law, we could in no way prevail against the adversaries of our own law."<sup>63</sup>

#### 2.4. *Trinity as Universal*

Realism in Universals makes explaining one being with three persons much easier. Assuming that the differing natures demand a real difference in an "indivisible being" is the root of Avicenna's mistake that the Trinity entails a divine multiplicity. God is not one person, but one substance, which can be many in one if a Universal is real, for it is as many places as there are particulars. The particulars themselves are not multiple because they are particularized. "An example of this is in created nature, for according to the way of speaking in Scripture, the nature of the Universal is multiple and numerous according to the multitude of its singulars. The human species is founded in three persons, Adam, Eve, and Cain, and it is in three because each of them is a

63 *De Trinitate*, p. 133. "Cum Saraceni dicerent Mahometum tam excellentem prophetam sicut fuit Christus noster, ideo nisi assit defensorium contra evidencias ultra hoc quod habent Saraceni in lege sua, in nullo prevalebimus contra adversarium legis nostre."

human being, yet none of those three people are threefold themselves because they are in this species [divided up three ways]. And the species is in each of them as a species. A species is in a certain thing as it is in a supposit, but the certain thing is itself in the species as existing in its common cause."<sup>64</sup>

The divine being is not a universal because universals have many singular instantiates, and the divine nature is unified. Later, in chapter 13, he will argue that the divine nature is a universal of which there are three instantiations, G(f), G(s), and G(hs). He is not contradicting himself; here he means to say that the divine being is not a universal in the sense that the persons are instantiations—as created beings are instantiations of their universals—because with created being, the individual instantiations are distinct from one another and the universal in itself, but with the divine persons, there is no separating distinction between one another, or between a person and the divine nature. The distinction appears to be formal, as Scotus and Ockham had earlier said.

Alessandro Conti has shown elsewhere in this volume that Wyclif's conception of the formal distinction changed, and we should pause to see just which type of formal distinction he has in mind. In *Purgans errores circa universalia in communi* he describes the difference between divine persons as really distinct, relegating much less to the formal distinction. In *De universalibus*, the persons are distinct, but the distinction is more complex. Here, the persons are "really but not essentially" distinct as three things, each of the same spirit, but the persons are each formally distinct from the nature." This appears to be the arrangement he presents in *De Trinitate* 13, although he does not refer to his "real-but-not-essentially" distinction.<sup>65</sup> Ivan Mueller argues for a much later date for *De universalibus* (1373) than Thomson gives (1368-

64 *De Trinitate*, pp. 79-80 "Exemplum huius est in natura creata, nam secundum modum loquendi scripture, natura universalis multipliciter numero secundum multitudinem suorum singularium ut species humana fundata in tribus personis, sicut Adam, Eva, et Cayn, est in tribus quia quilibet horum trium hominum, et tamen nullus illorum est triplex quamvis sit in illa specie, et illa species sicut species est in illo. Species quidem est in illo tamquam in suo supposito sed ipsum est in specie tamquam in suo communi causante."

65 See Conti, above. Also *Purgans errores* ... in *De Ente*, ed. M. H. Dziewicki, p. 38.25, and *De universalibus*, ed. Ivan Mueller (Oxford, 1985), pp. 91/135-92/156.

66 See *De Trinitate* 3, pp. 140-142.

69).<sup>67</sup> Perhaps if *De Trinitate* (Mueller suggests 1368, Thomson 1370) was written after *Purgans errores circa universalia* (Mueller and Thomson agree that this predates 1368) but before *De universalibus*, then *De Trinitate* would be a good place to look for evidence of the complication of Wyclif's view of distinctions.

Properties do not constitute the person, substance does. Properties serve only as a medium for us by which one person is recognizably distinguishable from another. In the divine being, persons are distinct not according to their properties, but by relation, and speaking of relations within the divine being is difficult. Augustine argues that predicating of relation in God is a middle way between predication according to substance and predication according to accident.<sup>68</sup> Augustine's intent, Wyclif suggests, was to make a formal distinction in eternal being between the subject and that which is not its accident. In God, there is a person, and then that person is G(f), G(s), or G(hs), "because to be a person is to be an hypostasis or substance, and this is said to be in itself and not in regards to some other thing, but to be Father or to be word is relative and is said as regards another, as is clear throughout *De Trinitate* Bk. VII."<sup>69</sup> Each divine person is based in common divine material, and to speak as if the Son is prior to the Father through truth but not causation is just sloppiness and ontologically misleading.

We do not posit a bare divine person devoid of personal nature simply because we recognize the hypostatic nature of the person as a possible basis for accidents. The divine nature causes the persons just as Universals cause singulars, but according to the logic of the Church it does not come into being, so a different sense of causing is involved. We cannot deny that the Son is produced from the substance of the Father, but "produced" [*produceretur*] must be understood properly. "Produces" and "proceeds" [*fit*] must be meant differently, and Wyclif suggests two ways of understanding these verbs.

67 See *De universalibus*, introduction, pp. xix-xxxviii.

68 See Augustine, *De Trinitate* 5.1.3-8.

69 *De Trinitate*, p. 81. "Secundo patet, ut mihi videtur, quod prius est esse personam quam esse patrem vel filium vel spiritum sanctum, quia esse personam est esse hypostasim vel substantiam, et dici ad se et non ad aliud; sed esse patrem aut esse verbum est relativum et dicitur ad aliud, ut patet VII De Trinitate, diffuse." The reference is to order of knowing, not order of being; Wyclif, following Augustine and the Western tradition, recognizes that by the order of being, nature precedes person.

Here Wyclif appears to be reasoning about the divine persons' operations using linguistic structure. If predication in being corresponds to predication in words, then it stands to reason that, Latin being the language expressing these truths, there must be ontological declensions.<sup>70</sup> He suggests four ways of ablative predication within God. In the first, [x does *in by/through* y] G(f) knows *by* G(s) and loves *by* G(hs), while G(s) lives, knows, and wills *by* G(f), and G(hs) lives, knows, and wills *through* G(f) and G(s). In the second, the ablative predication is of formal cause [x is Q *through* Q-ness as regards x], and in every such formal predication here Wyclif means for us to think of Q as Divine Nature and x as a person. In the third mode of ablative predication within God, a person acts *through* the nature of the action: the Father "speaks" the Son through "wording" or self-expression. This differs from the first in that the relation is between the agent and the nature of the act, rather than between two agents, which the first describes. In the fourth way of ablative predication, x is Q because to be Q is an accident associated *with* x's substance. Confusion arises regarding the relation of persons within the divine nature for those unfamiliar with the difference between "is" in these predicative senses, and "is" in identity statements.

More simply, Anselm expresses the triune nature of God in making an analogy to a river, which has three distinct elements: a source, a flow, and the delta. Augustine and Anselm give examples that are useful means of understand the ordering of persons. In our understanding of the relation of the uncreated Trinity to every created nature—whether Universal or singular—there is a base similarity, in that each being is One, True, and Good. For example, the cross is an emblematic symbol of love: the crosspiece demonstrates the width of divine love, the vertical piece the final perseverance from earth to heaven, and the headpiece the celestial hope because Christ is head of the Church.<sup>71</sup> Simply because such created trinities are difficult to recognize in nature, it is not right for philosophers to reject such attempts. If the human mind has the right expression of what is known in the mental word, and the love arising from knowing the truth is right, then is recreated in our minds the uncreated Trinity.

70 This seems to be the substance of *De Trinitate*, pp. 84-86.

71 *De Trinitate* 8, pp. 91-92.

### 2.5. *The Father is to the Son as Speaker is to Word*

In the treatise's fifth chapter, Wyclif suggests that understanding the distinction of the persons in the Trinity is best begun by recognizing that the Word expressed by God signifies perfectly the truth of the divine essence. This is the analogy John 1:1 illustrates to show the distinction of God the Father, [G(f)] the speaker, and God the Son [G(s)] the Word. (i.e. Father : Son : : Speaker : Word). Logical discourse communicates truth apart from particular things, for when demonstrating a syllogism one speaks of donkeys and men, but does not mean for the hearer to think that the subject of the statements are animals. So speech is carried not in words, but in what it signifies. Truth is predicated more in the being of things, not words. Accidents "speak" their subject as species do their genus. In man, white is said from whiteness, and whiteness is said from the white man; likewise, if Paul is said to be man essentially from humanity, then humanity "speaks" Paul to be a man. Grosseteste expresses this, "all the world is a statement speaking the art, word and intention intrinsic to God from which it flows."<sup>72</sup> The inherence relation of accident to subject automatically entails self-expression of the particular in which the relation is founded. The argument can best be described:

- a. A sentence expresses a truth when it is true, which truth is a statement identical to its ontological subject matter.
- b. A statement "Fx" is True if Fx is a part of creation.
- c. All creation is a collection of predications related as the form "Fx" suggests.
- d. That collection itself is a predication expressive of the Word.
- e. Each statement, whether the set (creation), a subset (a branch, or twig of the Porphyrian tree) or an individual (Peter) is analogous "in a certain way" to a correlate truth in the divine mind.
- f. The set of all correlate truths in the divine mind, possible, actual, necessary, past, present and future, are the Word, which has a causal agency on all created statements.
- g. The identity of the Word with God is undeniable Therefore: G(f) : G(s) : : Speaker : word

<sup>72</sup> Grosseteste, *Hexameron* 1.1, first version 2-3, p. 48, in Robert Grosseteste, *On the Six Days of Creation*, trans. C. F. J. Martin (Oxford, 1999), p. 48.



If all creation speaks itself, each substance must contain an essential word, and God ordains the limitation of the degree of being that each substance has to its self-expression in just this way. Each substance expresses itself in measure, form, and weight, which expression is analogous to the uncreated Trinity governing it.<sup>73</sup> Objections to this would hold that insensible bodies cannot have appetites or cannot express themselves as do created minds. But earth does have an appetite to move in a straight line, light refracts according to set laws, and these basic physical laws indicate a superior force guiding these bodies, using them to express a regulation greater than the individual bodies. All physical laws, including the laws of motion and physics, have as their basis divine laws enacted and expressing fundamental truths, which illustrates the need for theology to lie at the heart of the physical sciences, as well as of metaphysics. Thus, following a lengthy discussion of how laws of mechanics articulate created being's self expression, Wyclif comes to two conclusions. First, every essential nature desires itself and expresses itself according to its own good. Second, every created nature expresses itself in its accidents and in its Universal as species and genus, and in its essence intrinsically in the form that gives it definition. Each case of self-expression entails use of a word, and this tie of a created being to its word itself "speaks" the primordial tie of Divine being to Word. From this primordial tie simultaneously arises the resolution consequent to an expression of truth, a delight, that completes the uncreated Trinity. This, Grosseteste argues in *Hexameron* 14, is best at explicating the nature of the Trinity for our minds. Philosophers recognize that the same essence is at once possible intellect, agent intellect, and will, which relation of distinction within one thing is analogous, as Augustine holds, and as grammarians and logicians have long recognized.<sup>74</sup> Other scientists, including rhetoricians, arithmeticians, geometricians, astronomers, and so on, all recognize echoes of the Trinity in the created order.

The *Moderni*, by whom Wyclif most likely means Wodeham, Holcot, and their followers, disregard this truth by denying the truth of universals in things, departing from "the ancients" and causing them to misunderstand distinctions within the divine being. The Johannine

<sup>73</sup> Grosseteste, *Hexameron* 8.4.4-6, pp. 226-27.

<sup>74</sup> *De Trinitate* 6, p. 61.

phrase "the word was with God" must be understood as positing a distinction between God the speaker and God the word, and John's silence regarding the Holy Spirit here should not be taken as indicative of ignorance of Its identity with G(f) and G(s), see I John 5:8.<sup>75</sup> The Holy Spirit is, in fact, the means by which we understand God, as the Gospels affirm repeatedly. To imagine that we see other gods than the Triune God is indeed the grievous sin against the Holy Spirit described in Mark 3:29. Wyclif describes the uncreated Trinity as manifested first in the being of G(s), the second person.

I believe that John, naming the Son of God 'word', was intending the entire sentence philosophically said about the utterance of the reality, and was intending deep subtlety and through the threefold generation of the word, [was showing] the word [itself] to be threefold: first, the mind concealed and consubstantial with God in the speaking which can be known through the first phrase, 'in the beginning was the word.' The second word is accidental within the speaking as elicited knowledge which can be known through the second phrase, 'the word was with God.' The third is the word spoken from outside, as by the voice or through a work, and this can be known through the third phrase, in which 'the word was made flesh.' These three manners of words are grouped together in Him, and there is no speciousness with this truth, which is the highest spirit expressing itself to be truth, of past or future, either by negation or logical possibility or any other hypotheticalal truth.<sup>76</sup>

75 This is the famous trinitarian passage proven by Erasmus to be a later addition to the letter. The text of 1 John 5:7–8 in the Latin Vulgate read "There are three on earth that bear witness, the Spirit, the water and the blood, and these three are one. *There are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are One.*" The latter, italicized sentence Erasmus expunged as not original to the Greek. Breck refers to this passage as 1 John 7 without further reference.

76 *De Trinitate*, p. 74: "Hoc tamen credo quod beatus Johannes nominans filium dei 'verbum' intendebat totam sententiam philosophiam predicatam de dicencia rei et longe subtiliorem intendebat et per triplicem generationem verbi, triplex esse verbum: primum mentis magis abditum quod est consubstantialiale ipsi dicenti quod notari potest per primam proposicionem, in principio erat verbum. Secundum verbum est accidentale intus dictum ut noticia elicita quod notari potest per secundam proposicionem verbum erat apud deum. Tercium est verbum adextra dictum ut vox vel opus et hoc notari potest per terciam proposicionem in hoc enim quod verbum caro factum est. Congregantur enim in eo omnes iste tres maneries verborum, nec est color apud istam veritatem, que est summum spiritum dicere se esse veritatem, de preterito vel de futuro aut negacionem vel posse logicum vel aliam veritatem hypoteticam."

## 2.6. Referring to a (Formally Distinct) Divine Person

At this point, we must concentrate our attention on how the divine persons are related to one another, and how these relations are described. If God the Father [G(f)] generates God the Son [G(s)], meaning that God generates God, God would have to be distinct from God insofar as Son and Father differ. Otherwise, insofar as G(f) is not the same as G(s), then God is not God. Three results follow. First, God differs from God. Second, God is distinct from God but not different because that would entail real distinction in material essence. Third, God is neither different nor distinct from God.

Regarding the first, holding "God is different from God" would be to say that God is not the same as [God (f), God (s), God (hs)], and the Trinity is other than God. Or if God (f) is not the same as God (s), then God the Trinity differs from God (a Person). If God is not the same as God, then the difference either lies in number within God, or somehow outside of God, with a distinct God. The former, that there is a difference in number within God, cannot be held, but the latter leads to a difference between God as God and God (a Person). The problem rests in how we use the term "God." If the analogy were to a man, in that "Fred" refers to Fred the material body and also to Fred's soul, then God differing from God could work because in man body differs from soul in the same man. But "God" cannot refer to God as such and God (a Person) in this way, because there is one and only one God; nothing can demonstrate real difference within Him, otherwise my God [God (Father)] might have something (generation) that your God [God (Son)] lacks. So, Wyclif argues, this first suggestion cannot be the way to describe the relation of God to the Trinity of persons in God.

Denying the second (God is distinct from God but not different) entails looking at how to use the personal distinction. John Damascene holds that the three persons differ in number, not nature, while Augustine holds God (the Son) differs from God (the Father) by causality. Who can understand what supports theological truth when the authorities obviously use reference schemes that vary according to their needs? "If a friend is said to be 'another me,' how much more is the Son who is the same essence by number with the Father said to be another self!"<sup>77</sup> What of the case of where A thinks of God (Father), B

<sup>77</sup> *De Trinitate*, p. 137: "Si enim amicus figurative dicitur 'alter ego', quanto magis filius qui est eadem essentia numero cum patre dicitur alter ipse!" A rare Ciceronian reference in Wyclif.

thinks of God (Son), and C of God (Holy Spirit)? Are what each understands different in themselves? Augustine argues that when one person of the Trinity is named, the other two are contained in the essence of the subject of the predication, even if the "personal" supposition suggests otherwise.<sup>78</sup> Scriptural examples abound, Wyclif continues, in which the need to recognize that [God (f), God (s), God (hs)] is meant when predicating of God (a Person). The term "person" is not proportionate to "incommunicable thing." We must not risk confusing predication of person with predication of essence, Wyclif says, and the means of avoiding the confusion lies in recognizing the need for the formal distinction.

The Divine essence is not caused, communicable, and neither begotten nor begetting. A Divine person is caused, not communicable, and either begotten or begetting. There must be some means of distinguishing between essence and person, and Wyclif follows Scotus and Ockham in invoking the formal distinction to distinguish between them—not that the person is not the essence (or the essence the person) but that the person is not formally convertible with the essence. G(f) is distinct from divine essence in that G(f) is not communicable, while the divine essence is communicable.<sup>79</sup> "I know that the universal is prior by nature to its singular such that any singular whatsoever is bound by it. But it is not thus of the divine nature with regard to its supposit (i.e. [G(f), G(s), G(hs)]); but of personal causation there is disagreement, as some concede that the Father precedes the Son in principle but does not cause Him. I think the Father properly causes the Son and both together cause the Holy Spirit, and all three are the first cause of all things."<sup>80</sup>

Augustine agrees, holding that God is the cause of all, including His wisdom; both are the cause of all else sempiternally. Chrysostom holds that G(f) is prior to G(s) not by nature but by cause, and this is

<sup>78</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 1, p. 2.

<sup>79</sup> Wyclif's use of the formal distinction is by no means uncommon; Adam Wodeham's position is far more fully developed, perhaps because of his more austere ontology. See Hester Goodenough Gelber, *Logic and Trinity: A Clash of Values in Scholastic Thought, 1300-1335* (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1974), pp. 234-64.

<sup>80</sup> *De Trinitate*, p. 143. Compare to *De ente primo in communi* 4, pp. 92-94. Thomson summarizes Wyclif's argument here as denying a formal distinction between persons, (see p. xxxii), but I think this is inaccurate.

confirmed by Grosseteste, who argues in *De libero arbitrio* that there is no procession in the Godhead, and no causation save that of creation. Grosseteste reports Hilarion as saying that the Father is greater than the Son not through the Son being Incarnated but through Filiation, but to hold that the Son is thus less than the Father is wrong. Grosseteste strives to find agreement between Augustine, Chrysostom, and Hilarion; we ought to emulate him! "Would that the *Moderni* writing now would attend to the words and sense of this good man, whose intention was to agree with the ancient teachers by collecting their catholic senses and expositing them in pious and favorable sense—and not by arguing against dead men in equivocation to equal them in their writing and so be exalted. Very many are guilty of this today."<sup>81</sup>

### 2.7. Generation Within God: Wyclif's Commentary on I Sent. D.5

The fullest theological analysis of the treatise lies in Wyclif's exploration of the question "how can God generate in one person and be generated in another person without compromise in the absolute unity of the divine essence?". This takes its root in Lombard's fifth distinction of the first book of the *Sententiae*, but the discussion is as much about how language functions in explicating the subtle ontological relations within the divine essence as it is about the relations themselves.<sup>82</sup> Further complicating matters, Wyclif occasionally looks ahead to addressing the metaphysics of Incarnation in this discussion, and refers back again to this discussion in *De Incarnacione*, prompting us to pay close attention to his explanation of how theological language depicts divine reality.<sup>83</sup> Careful analysis of Wyclif's argument on the subject would involve exploring the Trinitarian position of Adam Wodeham; Hester Gelber's study of Wodeham and Holcot's

81 *De Trinitate*, p. 145: "Utinam moderni scribentes attenderent ad verba et sensus huius boni hominis, cuius intencio fuit concordare antiquos doctores colligendo sensus eorum catholicos et exponendo eos ad sensum pium ac favoabilem. Non enim arguendo contra homines mortuos ad sensus equivocos ut scripture eorum subpeditentur et scripture sic arguencium exaltentur. Sic enim faciun hodie culpabiliter nimis multi."

82 In Lombard the question is *Hic quaeritur an Pater genuit divinam essentiam vel ipsa Filium, an essentia genuit essentiam vel ipsa nec genuit nec genita est*. Peter Lombard, *Sententiae* 1, dist. 5, c. 1, (Grottaferrata, 1971), p. 80.

83 See *De Incarnacione* 9, pp. 150–1.

thought lays the foundation for what would be a very welcome comparison between the two great lights of early fourteenth-century Oxford and Wyclif.<sup>84</sup>

One problem that has arisen historically in understanding how the persons are distinct from one another yet identical in the divine essence has been counting the number of entities involved. Are there three, or four, or more? That is, by "God" do we mean the set [G(f), G(s), G(hs)] or the set {divine essence + [G(f), G(s), G(hs)]} ? "There are three divine persons, as there are three things, anyone of which is God. A person is singular when it cannot be communicated to many suppositis. The essence is not four things but any of these three ... The Trinity is not a single of these but all three of these at once."<sup>85</sup> This Wyclif has discussed in *Purgans errores circa universalialia in commune*.

In predication according to essence the singular and its universal are distinct across the board, since the singular is one, as the universal another individual. It does not follow, 'these are distinct things, so to these we assign number' because through most general and most singular demonstrating of its supposit, any things distinct are these, yet they are not held numerable, since one of them remains. Thus they are distinct formally, but not formally distinct things. Nor are they formally 'these two' [indicating this universal and this singular] but they are *this*, and so the differences are to this sense, that these differ, but not through numerical difference are they formally thus; because only by difference formally or according to reason are they 'these'.<sup>86</sup>

84 Hester Gelber, 1974, esp. pp. 235-317.

85 *De Trinitate*, p. 149: "Sicut ergo tantum sunt tres persona divine, sic tantum sunt tres res quarum quelibet est deus. Persona enim est singularium possibile cum non potest communicari multis suppositis. Essencia igitur non est quarta res sed quelibet harum trium ... Trinitas vero est non singula harum trium sed omnes tres simul."

86 *Purgans mores circa universalialia in communis*, *De ente I Tractatus IV*, 5, p. 47/7-22: "Conceditur eiam in predicatione secundum essenciam quod singulare et suum universale sunt quotlibet distincta, cum singulare sit unum, ut universale quotlibet alia individua. Non ergo sequitur: ista sunt res distincte, vel res distincta sunt ista, ergo ista ponunt in numerum, quia demonstrato generalissimo et singularissimo eius supposito, quotlibet res distinct sunt ista, et tamen non ponunt in numerum, cum unum eorum sit reliquum. Et ita ista sunt distincta formaliter, sed non formaliter res distincte. Nec ista sunt formaliter 'ista duo' (demonstrando singulare et suum universale) set sunt 'istud': et sic differencia sunt ista ad istum sensum, quod ista differunt, et tamen nulla numeraliter differencia sunt formaliter ista: quia solum differencia formaliter vel secuncum rationem sunt ista."

If you take Peter and God, you have two; since God is three in one, you also have four. If you count natures, you have two in Peter (body and spirit) and one (Deity), thus three. It follows, then, that 3 and 4 make 2! Obviously, number breaks down as an effective tool of quantification in understanding the divine nature.

A century and a half earlier, Joachim of Fiore wrote a (now lost) treatise criticizing Peter Lombard's innovative analysis of how terms refer to the persons within the Trinity. The Calabrian claimed that Lombard's description of a Trinity that neither begets nor is begotten entailed a fourth entity in addition to the three divine persons. Lombard had emphasized the impossibility of attributing particular actions of the divine persons to the divine essence, and caused Joachim consternation by having used the term "essence" to mean something other than "person" or "hypostasis." Joachim himself was rebuked by the Fourth Lateran Council for conceiving of the divine unity as a collective, or group of individual persons, guilty of an inability to appreciate Lombard's nuance in reference.<sup>87</sup> He erred, Wyclif explains, by confusing the reference of terms predicated of the divine essence, and terms predicated of persons.

Unlike any other essence-bearing thing, the Divine essence generates Itself; Lombard holds that there is a sense in which essence begets essence as Father begets Son, and another sense in which essence is begotten by essence, as Son is begotten by Father. Some problems arise from this. First, if there is a sense in which G(f) begets the divine essence, and the divine essence includes the being of G(f), then the subset is causally prior to the set. Second, if G(f) understands the begetting, then if G(s) is divine understanding, it must follow that understanding precedes understanding. Third, if there is a sense in which the divine essence neither begets nor is begotten, then in that sense there are four beings referred to by God: The begetting Father, the begotten Son, the spirated Holy Spirit, and the un-begotten non-begetter, a "Quaternity." The Church, Wyclif declares, was right to condemn this line of reasoning about the Lombard.

<sup>87</sup> Joachim's *De Unitate seu Essentia Trinitatis* has not been found, and given Wyclif's apparently loose formulation of Joachim's errors, it appears not to have been available to him at Oxford. Joachim's problem lies in his reading of *Sententiae* I, D. 25, c. 2. See Giles Emery, *Trinity in Aquinas* (Ypsilanti, 2003), pp. 12–13.



Any determination of the Church, and especially in matters of faith, is as much to be believed as is the gospel. Something should not be believed to be the saying of Christ or scripturally revealed from the meaning of the Holy Spirit unless brought to bear from information or faith by the Church. So it is right naturally and more to trust the Church as authority, and placed in that state by biblical canon, to be a bold delegate in whatever way by authority of Scripture, as would a sentence spoken by the Savior in any of the gospels boldly pronounce that this sentence would be true because they are the words of Christ.<sup>88</sup>

Wyclif's problem lies not with Joachim, though; his argument is with those who allow linguistic subtlety to derail theological accuracy, although as elsewhere, he names no names in this chapter. The philosophical problem rests in the relation between the divine essence and the generating occurring within the essence. The absolute nature of the divine essence precludes generating or being generated, so the presence of this generating holding between Father and Son cannot be essential to God. Yet to hold that the essence is something beyond the generating and the being generated of the persons seems to lead to positing a Quaternity, a fourth divine being beyond the generating, the generated, and the spirated persons.

At this point it is easy to get lost in the dense thicket of arguments and distinctions around which Wyclif frames his analysis of the problem. Rather than recount each dispute apparent in the chapter, it will be more useful to frame the discussion in terms of a logical phenomenon Desmond P. Henry has recently described.<sup>89</sup> Henry suggests that a useful means of understanding how Wyclif departs from standard medieval thought is through analysis of his mereology, or his understanding of how aggregate or collective terms stand for aggregate

88 *De Trinitate*, pp. 159–60: “[C]uilibet determinacioni ecclesie et specialiter ein materia fidei est tante credendum sicut evangelio. Patet ex hoc quod non crederetur aliquid esse dictum Christi vel scripture sacre ex sententia spiritus sancti revelatum nisi ex informacione et fide adhibita ecclesie, ergo prius naturaliter et plus oportet credere ecclesie quam auctoritati et de canone Biblie tamquam loco ab auctoritate ut allegata protervo quacumque auctoritate ut sententia Salvatoris in quocumque evangelio protervius diceret quod illa sententia esset vera si esset dictum Christi.” This early estimation of the Church's role in regulating dogma at Lateran IV differs markedly from Wyclif's later opinion. See *De Apostasia* 5, p. 69.19–26, wherein he suggests that Joachim had detected defects in the Church and was condemned for largely personal reasons.

89 D. P. Henry, “Wyclif's Deviant Mereology,” *Die Philosophie im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert*, ed. Olaf Pluta (Amsterdam, 1988), pp. 1–17.

beings. It is normal for us to say something like "The Union is preserved!" without presuming there to be something above and apart from the collection of things we call the Union. Wyclif's approach, on the other hand, was to reason that there is an aggregate with identifiable ontological reality that arises from any set of two substantial beings. What follows from this is that for any set of three people (Peter, Paul, and Linus), there are four aggregate beings: the three ordered pairs derived from the set, and the universal Humanity defining each particularized humanity of each member. There cannot be more than this, he argues, for each aggregate being can only arise from substantially real beings.<sup>90</sup> Wyclif devotes considerable effort to refuting the predictable Third Man arguments arising from his position throughout *De universalibus*, and uses the reality of aggregate beings in his descriptions of how "a certain man" in the parable of the Good Samaritan serves as an aggregate for all saved people, among other things. Still, Henry remains puzzled as to why Wyclif would have made such an ontological claim, suggesting that the grounds for such a baroque ontology have yet to be identified. His point is well taken; earlier in *De universalibus* Wyclif objects to Burley's contention that universals are things apart from their particulars, which would put Wyclif in the majority who believed universals to be real, but not really distinct from their particulars.<sup>91</sup> Why, then, would he attribute reality to aggregate beings derivable from any set of two particular objects?

It is possible that evidence for an answer to this question lies in *De universalibus* 11, where he presents a streamlined description of the argument of *De Trinitate* 16. Here he says that Joachim's ignorance of the way Universals function led him to conclude that the set [G(f), G(s), G(hs)] is not a true unity, but a collective unity of resemblance, in the way in which many men are a single population.<sup>92</sup> Had he recognized that the Trinity, "that common thing" is what each divine person is, that Itself It neither begets nor is begotten, but contains persons that beget and are begotten and spirated, just as a Universal like

90 See *De universalibus* 9. For a brief, accessible discussion, see *Trialogus* 2.1.

91 Ibid., 4, p. 28/50. For Burley's view, which appears closer to Wyclif's than Wyclif might admit, see Elizabeth Karger, "Walter Burley's Realism," *Vivarium* 37 (1999), 24-40.

92 Ibid., 11, p. 119/611-17.

Humanity neither is seated nor is not seated, but contains individuals who are one or the other but not both, his objections would have vanished.<sup>93</sup> There is a sense, Wyclif continues, in which one can say that God begets, or God is begotten, if one refers with the term "God" to G(f) or G(s) through personal supposition. "But you must not believe that because of the acceptance of these terms, the divine nature begets or does not beget the Son."<sup>94</sup> The more appropriate way of understanding the term "God" is as referring to that which neither begets nor is begotten; he refers the reader to Avicenna's "*equinitas non est aliquid nisi equinitas tantum*" to encourage our understanding that such universal terms as "Man," "Animal," and "God" refer first and foremost to the universals prior to their instantiations.<sup>95</sup>

As noted earlier, Wyclif is painstaking in his articulation of the idea that the divine essence is a universal of which the divine persons are instantiations. In *De universalibus* he emphasizes that no other universal thinks or acts upon others, and while with all other universals, the particular is ontologically consequent upon the universal, with God, "the nature is not prior to nor more perfect than the person."<sup>96</sup> Further, in the related discussion in *De Trinitate* 16, he says "there is a difference between nature of the universal and the divine nature, because the divine nature moves every created action, but the nature of the universal only causes every action of its suppositions."<sup>97</sup> Aware that this same issue would figure in his treatise on the Incarnation, he notes that terms that refer within God to G(s) do not import universals from creation into the divine essence. "If it is conceded that man is God in this way, it must then be conceded that humanity would be deity and that humanity is eternal but deity temporal according to which the Son is less than the Father, and just as the divine essence is common to three persons and consequently a Trinity, thus a man would be common to the three persons and there would be a confusion of persons, since [the essence] would not have

93 This is the substance of Wyclif's argument; the example is my own.

94 Ibid., p. 120/648.

95 Ibid., p. 120/655-61; reference is to Avicenna, *Philosophia prima* tract. 5, cap. 1, cited in Mueller's edition of *De universalibus* p. 265.

96 *De universalibus* p. 121/719.

97 *De Trinitate*, 16, p. 163: "Et in hoc est differentia inter naturam universalem et naturam divinam, quia natura divina agit omnem actionem creature, natura autem universalis causat omnem actionem sui suppositi." See also above, n. 58.

been held as common, and he would be a singular in the essence of these persons."<sup>98</sup> Wyclif mentions this issue only in passing, but understanding the relation of the universal "Man" to God the Son in the Incarnation lies at the very heart of his treatise *De Verbi Incarnatione*, to which we now turn.

### 3. An Overview of Wyclif's Christology

#### 3.1. Historical Context

Our understanding of fourteenth-century Oxford theologians' arguments about the ontology and logic of the Incarnation is considerably less than it might be. Prior to Wyclif, Ockham appears the last to have made a contribution to what had been a mainstay of thirteenth-century theology. In his pared-down ontology, he rejects the existence of a common nature like humanity apart from individual people. But this easily leads to understanding him to have held that in Christ was an individual human person in addition to the divine nature, making up either a two-person person (that is, the human person Jesus, and with the added Word, the person of the Christ), or a Christ in which a human person and the divine person of the Word are not united by anything into a third composite. Ockham was aware that he could be interpreted as having advocating Nestorianism, and argued vigorously against this interpretation, but the tendency amongst opponents of Ockham's christology seems to have been to press the Nestorian interpretation as the only comprehensible reading of his approach.<sup>99</sup> As we will see, Wyclif's approach is to argue both for the existence of a

98 *De Trinitate* 16, pp. 163–64: "Ymmo si conceditur quod homo est deus ita concedendum est quod humanitas esset deitas et quod humanitas est eterna sed deitas temporalis secundum quam filius est minor patre, et sicut essentia divina est communis tribus personis et per consequens trinitas, sic homo esset communis illis tribus personis et esset confusio personarum cum non haberetur ut commune et esset singula illarum personarum essentia."

99 For the historical evidence of Ockham's struggles against the label of Nestorianism, see Heiko Oberman, *Harvest of Medieval Theology* (Cambridge Mass, 1963), pp. 249–61. For philosophical analysis of Ockham's christology, see Marilyn McCord Adams, "Relations, Inherence and Subsistence: or, Was Ockham a Nestorian in Christology?" *Nous* 16 (1982), 62–75. Her assessment is that Ockham's christology bows to the needs of orthodoxy, a rare instance of his privileging theology over ontological consistency.

human nature apart from individual people, and for the existence of an aggregate man, a composite of body and soul distinct from both.

Regarding others of Wyclif's predecessors, Nicholas Aston, no fan of Ockham's ontology, appears to have read the *Sentences* after 1350, and he addresses several Christological issues. His treatment of "Whether uncreated Truth could sustain hypostatic union with created truth?" might well contribute significantly to understanding Christological controversy in Oxford during the years just prior to Wyclif's.<sup>100</sup> Another question, "Whether one person incarnated from another not incarnate could be a truth defended by a Catholic?," appears only in Gaudet's summary.<sup>101</sup> Uthred of Boldon, the Benedictine whose opinions aroused an uproar as Wyclif began the *Summa de ente*, appears not to figure in this issue, as none of the censured opinions address the question of the Incarnation directly.<sup>102</sup> In all likelihood, the richest source for Ockhamist arguments against which Wyclif would argue in *De Incarnacione* would be the works of Robert Holcot (d. 1349) and Adam Wodeham (d. 1358). Unfortunately, neither of these theologians' christological works have been edited.

Holcot was famous as the eminent Dominican theologian in Oxford, and his works were studied well into the sixteenth century. Holcot's theological position is not easy to delineate with terms familiar to the twenty-first century reader. Leonard Kennedy emphasizes his tendency to philosophical skepticism, suggesting that his position inspired with those of Nicholas of Autrecourt and John of Mirecourt.<sup>103</sup> Others argue that equating Holcot's unwillingness to recognize hu-

100 Robson's description of Aston's approach suggests less attention to ontological questions than Wyclif shows, see Robson, pp. 106-108. For a more recent assessment of Aston's place at Oxford, see Courtenay, *School and Scholars*, pp. 334-5, n. 17. Most significantly, see Kaluza, "L'oeuvre Théologique de Nicolas Aston," where he describes Oriel 15 as containing 12 questions of Aston, of which the first is the question listed above. He appends the description of Etienne Gaudet, an early sixteenth-century scholar of English scholasticism, of Aston's works, in which the topics covered in this question are listed, see p. 75. See also Courtenay, *Schools and Scholars*, p. 353, Trapp, "Augustinian Theology of the Fourteenth Century," pp. 230-231.

101 See Bender, p. 21.

102 D. Knowles, "The Censured Opinions of Uthred of Boldon," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 37 (1951), 303-42.

103 Leonard A. Kennedy's *The Philosophy of Robert Holcot, Fourteenth-century Skeptic* (Lewiston, 1993) emphasizes Holcot's influence on the positions of Autrecourt and Mirecourt, condemned in 1346 and 1347. "Since Holcot was one of the lead-

man logic's applicability to theological truths is less indicative of skepticism than it is of his evolving understanding of the right approach to ordering reason in the life of faith.<sup>104</sup> Kennedy describes Holcot's christology very briefly, noting that he devoted only a half-page to the Incarnation in his 248 page *Sentences* commentary, and appends a *Quodlibet* (58) "Whether God can make an impeccable rational nature" to his study.<sup>105</sup> Here Holcot says, "Although the rational creature could be placed in such a disposition such that he could not sin for the time in which he has it, yet this is not to say that he could not sin when the disposition is removed. And so, simply speaking, he is peccable. And so commonly it is said that a creature is made impeccable through grace, not nature."<sup>106</sup> Kennedy describes Holcot as having argued that, had Christ set aside that assumed nature, which was for Him possible, that it could have sinned. Indeed, there is no contradiction in holding that God could have united with a sinful and damned nature, in which case God could be both blessed and damned at once.<sup>107</sup>

I think it likely that Kennedy's description of Holcot's christology is unnecessarily abbreviated, as at least seven earlier *Quodlibets* address Incarnational theology directly.<sup>108</sup> These include (2) Whether the Son of God assumed the human nature in unity of the supposit?, (4) Whether the history of the conception of Christ is true in totality?, (7) Whether Christ suitably redeemed the genus of humanity?, (8) Whether divinity is a part of Christ?, (9) Whether the incarnate Christ

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ing Oxonians to be read on the Continent in the 1340s, and since the doctrines of Nicholas and John were akin to his, it is most likely that his influence on them was great, even if it was reinforced by that of many other writers." (p. 139.)

104 Heiko Oberman, "*Facientibus Quod in Se est Deus non Denegat Gratiam*: Robert Holcot O.P. and the Beginnings of Luther's Theology," *Harvard Theological Review* 55 (1962), 317-42, reprinted in his *The Dawn of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids, 1992), pp. 84-103. See also Gelber, *Exploring the Boundaries of Reason*; and Simo Knuuttila, "Trinitarian Sophisms in Robert Holcot's Theology," in *Sophisms in Medieval Logic and Grammar*, ed. Stephen Read (Dordrecht, 1993), pp. 348-56.

105 Kennedy, pp. 107-109, and Appendix 4, pp. 164-67.

106 Kennedy, p. 166: "Licet ergo creatura rationalis posset poni in tali dispositione qua stante non posset peccare pro tempore pro quo eam habet, non tamen fit per hoc talis natura quin poterit peccare, illa dispositione ablata. Et ideo, simpliciter loquendo, ipsa est peccabilis. Et ideo communiter dicitur quod creatura potest fieri impeccabilis per gratiam, non per naturam."

107 Kennedy, p. 107. These he has culled from said *Quodlibet*, *Sent* 3, q. 1 a.5, and *Sent*. III, q. 2, a. 6.

108 Richard Gillespie, "Robert Holcot's *Quodlibeta*," *Traditio* 27 (1971), 480-90.



would have been given had man not sinned? (10) Whether the human will in Christ had conformity with the divine willing?, and (12) Whether Christ established his resurrection through suitable demonstration?<sup>109</sup> Exploring Holcot's arguments in these questions will likely provide a much fuller view of his suitability as a likely opponent of Wyclif in *De Incarnacione*.

Wodeham had a reputation as the equal of Scotus and Ockham, and as an ardent defender of the latter. There are two sources available of Wodeham's thought regarding christology, both arranged in accord with the scheme of the *Sententiae*. The earlier, the Norwich lectures of 1329 and 1332 are briefer, but available in a recently published edition.<sup>110</sup> The later, more theologically complete are the *Oxford Lectures* of 1332, which have yet to be published; William Courtenay provides as an appendix to his study of Wodeham a list of questions from a *reportatio* of the *Oxford Lectures* and from a subredaction of the first book of the *Ordinalio*, showing considerable attention to christology.<sup>111</sup> Until further work on Wyclif's predecessors yields fruit, then, we will have to settle for a summary of Wyclif's christology with little historical context.

Recently, Richard Cross has suggested a useful means of sorting out models for the hypostatic union of God and man in Christ. Some approaches, notably Peter Abelard and Thomas Aquinas, involve recognizing divinity and humanity as being arranged as parts that make up the whole Christ. Peter Lombard described three approaches in *Sententiae* 3.6. In the first, the Word clothed Himself with human nature as a man wears a cloak; this is the *habitus* theory, suggested by Augustine. In the second, a man composed of body and soul was assumed by the Word so that he became identical with the Word; this is the *assumptus homo* theory, endorsed by Hugh of St. Victor and Anselm. In the third, Christ begins to be composed of divinity and (body and soul) in a subsistence relation; this appears to have been Lom-

109 Gillespie, p. 487: 2. *Utrum Filius Dei assumpsit naturam humanam in unitatem suppositi?* 4. *Utrum historia conceptionis Christi sit in tota vera?* 7. *Utrum Christus convenienter redemit genus humanum?* 8. *Utrum divinitas sit pars Christi?* 9. *Utrum Christus incarnatus fuisset dato quod homo non peccasset?* 10. *Utrum voluntas humana in Christo fuit divinae voluntati conformis?* 12. *Utrum Christus probavit resurrectionem suam convenientibus argumentis?*

110 Adam Wodeham, *Lectura Secunda*.

111 See William Courtenay, *Adam Wodeham*, pp. 183-209. See also Rega Wood, "Adam Wodeham," in *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, pp. 77-85.



bard's approximation of the position of Gilbert of Poitiers.<sup>112</sup> Aquinas understood both the *habitus* and the *assumptus homo* position as having been condemned by Pope Alexander III in 1170 and 1177, and supposed any theory in which Christ's Humanity is described as accident to have been heretical. Others, including Bonaventure, Giles of Rome, Henry of Ghent, and Scotus, use a "substance-accident" model, in which Christ's Humanity is related to the Word as an accident or property is related to its substance. Ockham's ontology, in which a nature like "Humanity" is a concept naturally referring to a concrete individual or individuals, denies any sort of further reality to what his predecessors called universals.<sup>113</sup> Given Wyclif's endorsement of a richer realist ontology than most pre-Ockham theologians would have dared embrace, it will likely be best to see him as reacting primarily against Ockham's ontology, using the Scotist "substance-accident" model for his more full-bodied ontological articulation of Humanity being assumed by the Word.

### 3.2. *What makes a Man? De compositione hominis as Prologue*

R. W. Southern describes Robert Grosseteste's *De cessatione legalium* as being a much more profound expression of medieval humanism than Anselm's *Cur Deus homo*, despite its much more abstract argument. This is because Grosseteste envisioned the Incarnation differently than Anselm; it is not rooted in man's having sinned beyond any other form of redemption, but instead is the "final act in the unfolding drama of creation: it made Man and Nature complete, and it bound the whole created universe together in union with God."<sup>114</sup> Grosseteste is notable for having argued that the Incarnation would have occurred even had man not sinned, on the reasoning that the Incarnation benefits all creation, and to make its occurrence a response to sin gives

112 Richard Cross, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation: Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 1–26. See Lauge Olaf Nielsen, *Theology and Philosophy in the Twelfth Century* (Leiden, 1982), pp. 193ff. for detailed discussion of the period's christology. For Lombard's christology, see Colish, pp. 398–470; also Rosemann, pp. 118–43.

113 Ockham's approach is best described, I believe, in terms of what today is called trope nominalism. See my "William Ockham and Trope Nominalism," *Franciscan Studies* 55 (1998), 105–20.

114 R. W. Southern, *Medieval Humanism* (New York, 1970), p. 49. Reference is to Robert Grosseteste, *De cessatione legalium*, c. 1235.

it a comparatively diminished place in the order of creation.<sup>115</sup> If we were to assume that Wyclif's title, *De Incarnacione*, is meant to evoke a primarily Anselmian Christology, we would be very mistaken. Anselm's account in *De Incarnacione Verbi* contains very little about what human nature entails, and how it can be assumed by the Word, while Wyclif's account focuses almost exclusively on this subject. Again, Anselm argues extensively for substitutionary atonement in *Cur Deus homo*, emphasizing man's great unpayable debt to God, while Wyclif says comparatively little on the subject.<sup>116</sup> Wyclif's understanding of the Incarnation is more similar to Grosseteste's, who was known as much for his careful scientific understanding of the created world as for his theological acumen.<sup>117</sup> Hence, Wyclif's conception of the ontological make-up of the human person deserves our attention before we can understand how he envisioned the Word becoming a man.

Wyclif likely wrote *De compositione hominis* in 1372, the same year as *De Incarnacione*.<sup>118</sup> He gives three reasons for approaching the subject matter: moral theory relies on a clear understanding of the relation of soul to body, knowledge of this relation of soul to body is the key to understanding the more subtle elements of the faith, and the relation provides insight into what just human *dominium* entails. Of these, only the second reason figures in the treatise, and straightaway Wyclif proceeds to the kind of mereological concern that D. P. Henry mentioned. Scripture shows us, Wyclif argues, that the human soul is a created spirit itself indivisible, able to be unified to a body, which

115 See James McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 127-30.

116 *De Incarnacione* 6, ed. E. Harris (London, 1886), p. 90 contains his assertion, following Anselm, that because a member of the genus man sinned, a member of the genus would have to redeem that sin. But this is an aside in his explanation as to how Christ is really man.

117 Wyclif cites Grosseteste not at all in *De compositione hominis*, ed. Rudolf Beer (London, 1904), but frequently in *De Materia et Forma* and elsewhere. A study of Wyclif's theological anthropology in light of Grosseteste's thought would be useful.

118 Note that neither of these treatises are included in the traditional contents of the *Summa de ente*. Robson describes the arrangement of the *Summa*'s treatises as being first to explicate the metaphysical basis for Wyclif's theology and second to treat the range of questions commonly discussed at Oxford. He describes *DCH* as a "conflation of Wyclif's opinions on universals and the Trinity and Incarnation, which he had expressed more fully elsewhere." (Robson, p. 139) I think it better to consider *DCH* and *DI* as complementary works, and would argue that envisioning Wyclif as emulating Grosseteste's theological anthropology would help considerably in reversing Beer's and Robson's low opinion of *DCH*'s relative worth.

union results in the integrated human being. Both Augustine and Anselm say that just as the divine essence is a trinity of three singular natures, so in the Incarnation, the same person is three distinct natures – divine nature, human soul, and a body. And by this, it is clear that a man is soul, flesh, and the union of the two. Such a trinity must be unavoidable, the aggregate of (body + soul), which Wyclif calls the integrated nature, having ontological status commensurate to the two considered in themselves.<sup>119</sup>

The created spirit, or soul, animating our corporeal body is what allows us foothold on the horizon of eternity; according to its lower nature, directed to the body, what is real is what is sensible, while according to its higher nature, directed to eternal truths, the reality of intelligible forms shines through.<sup>120</sup> Soul differs from uncreated spirit in three ways. First, the uncreated spirit is the prime creating essence, while the other is accidental to that creator. Second, uncreated spirit is the Word, having being from itself, while created spirit has being from another. Finally, uncreated spirit is beyond all single natural laws, while the created spirit is subject to these laws. The Incarnation did not involve the uncreated spirit assuming a created spirit. “[T]he divine word is said significantly actively to assume a body for itself, not a human spirit, but a human body, which God in the eternal plan had provided that it be joined hypostatically to His creature ...”<sup>121</sup>

He reports *Moderni* critics of his position as responding with the argument, “This man is this incorporeal nature, this man is this corporeal nature, therefore the incorporeal nature is the corporeal nature.” Confusing identities in numeration across ontological boundaries, Wyclif retorts, is the cause of constant misunderstanding for these philosophers, commenting that he has dealt with the philosophical grounding for the proper understanding of identity in *De universalibus*.<sup>122</sup>

119 Wyclif refers the reader to *De Civitate Dei* 13.24.2.

120 *DCH* 1, p. 8.9-18. The phrase “in orizonte eternitatis” is from *Liber de causis* 2, n. 22; for earlier use of the phrase in describing the soul’s place, see Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Book of Causes*, trans. V. A. Guagliardo, C. R. Hess, and Richard Taylor (Washington, D.C., 1996), p. 17.

121 *DCH* 1, p. 9/6-10: “[E]t hinc verbum divinum dicitur significanter active assumere sibi corpus, spiritus autem humanus non sic, sed corpori, quod deus eterno consilio disponit a suo creatore ypostatice copulari ...”

122 *DCH* 1, p. 10/19. Reference is to *Tractatus De universalibus* 1; see Paul Spade’s “Introduction,” especially his discussion of Wyclif’s theory of identity and distinction, and his theory of predication in John Wyclif, *On Universals*, Anthony Kenny, trans. (Oxford, 1985), pp. xx-xli.

For just as the nature of the universal is any of its supposits or singulars, which are united in that common being, thus the same singular thing is certainly distinct in itself, which is united with all in the same supposit of species; as any man is a spiritual nature who has a soul; he is the same corporeal nature or essence, who has a human body, and these two are incommunicably distinct. And he is a third nature from body and soul integrated, which is distinguished from both and so, if he wish the first truth, any human person, since he, as man, is completely six and divisible and thus the most perfect prime under the Sun. For by reason of soul he is three, namely memory, reason and will; and by reason of body, which is another qualitative composite part, it appears just as the soul to be three supposits, namely matter, form and their connection. Seven then, as there were seven days in the production of the world, God resting in singular and miraculous new man our Jesus Christ, who with these six would be essentially creator, will be seven ...<sup>123</sup>

So given that Jesus is seven, every human being is six; three natures (two incomplete and one integrated), and numerically six because the soul has three parts, namely memory, reason, and will. Considered further, man is tenfold, just as the total universe is made up of ten categories: three natures [formal/spiritual, corporeal, and the combination], six things of two incommunicable natures [three of formal/spiritual, i.e. capable of understanding spiritual things, able to be beatified, and able to inform the body, and three of material, namely minimally cognitive, removed from beatification, and able to be formed] and the integration of all these nine which is the common singular person. The

123 *DCH* 1, p. 11/2-23: "Nam sicut natura universalis est quodlibet surorum suppositorum vel singularium, que in illo communi quodammodo uniuntur, sic eadem res singularis est valde disparia, que omnia uniuntur in eodem supposito speciei, ut quilibet homo est natura spiritualis, cui accidit esse animam; est iterum natura vel essentia corporea, cui accidit esse corpus humanum, et hec duo incommunicabiliter sunt distincta. Et est tercio natura ex corpore et anima integrata, que distingwatur ab utraque et sic, si prima veritas velit, quilibet persona hominis, cum sit homo integer sex et divisim et sic primus perfectus numerus sublunaris. Nam ratione anime est tria, scilicet memoria, ratio et voluntas; et ratione corporis, quod est altera pars compositi qualitativa, videtur etiam sicut anima supposita esse tria, scilicet materia, forma et earum connexio. Septimo autem, tamquam septimo die productionis materialium mundi, deus quiescens in singulariter ac mirabiliter novo homine domino nostro Jesu Christo, qui cum ad ista sex sit creatrix essentia, erit septem et per consequens omnes vices creature beatificabiles in se tam efficaciter beatificans quam etiam objective." Compare Christ as seven to the Incarnation as seventh day in Grosseteste quoted in note 1:19.

nature composed of these two incommunicable natures is distinct from both considered in themselves. It is a quantity arising from the actualizing power of form on the potential quantity of matter, which should be distinguished as different in kind from both, just as substance is something distinct from the form and matter composing it.

Scripture tells us of the different natures contained within a man; sometimes, the term "man" refers principally to a soul (Col. 3:10), sometimes, to a body (2 Cor. 4:16), and sometimes to the integrated combination of the two, which philosophers understand to refer to rational animal as composite of body and soul. In a fourth way, Scriptures refer to Christ as man, alternating between the previous senses while still referring to the same God-man.

[F]or the person or for the substance, which is any of these three natures or things, or indeed all beings contracted [together], which is each of them, and in this way the faith speaks from Scripture that this Man, who created heaven and earth, was born of a virgin, conversed with men, suffered, died, and was buried, descended to hell, and ascended etc. Not according to the assumed nature did He create the kingdom, nor according to Deity did He suffer, nor according to His soul was He dead and buried, nor according to His body or other integrated nature did He descend to hell, but since the same person was all these, according to one of these He did one, and according to another He did the rest, just as it was best suitable.<sup>124</sup>

In a similar fashion Paul refers to his own mystical experience in 2 Cor. 12:3 as something that happened, but Paul is not sure whether it was to himself as ensouled body, or as an extra-corporeal being; yet,

124 *DCH* 1, p. 18/3-22: "[Q]uarto modo accipitur homo pro persona vel pro substantia, que est quelibet istarum trium naturarum vel rerum vel etiam omne ens contraccius, quod est aliqua earundem; et isto modo loquitur fides ex testimonio scripture, quod ille homo, qui creavit celum et terram, fuit natus de virgine, conversatus cum hominibus, passus, mortuus et sepultus, descendit ad inferos et ascendit etc. Non autem secundum naturam assumptam creavit seculum nec secundum deitatem paciebatur, nec secundum animam fuit mortuus et sepultus, nec secundum corpus aut aliam naturam integram descendit ad inferos, sed cum eadem persona fuit hec omnia, secundum aliquid fecit unum, et secundum aliud fecit reliquum sicut optime congruebat; et sic loquitur 2 ad Cor. 9 de se ipso: Scio, inquit, hominem huiusmodi sive in corpore, sive extra corpus nescio, deus scit, quoniam raptus est in paradysum. Ecce quod scivit se esse raptum et nescivit se in illo raptu esse se corpus vel animam; ideo sequitur, quod scivit se esse commune ad corpus et ad animam." The reference is in fact to 2 Cor. 12:3. See also *Trialogus* 2.7.

Wyclif argues, the term “*hominem*” refers accurately to Paul, in whatever state he experienced paradise.

If body and soul are distinct from one another, what provides the formal basis for accidents for the body that lacks a soul? Wyclif argues for the existence of a corporeal form present in the body prior to ensoulment, but this causes the problem of there being two possible ontological beings contained in one person. One being, a body with a corporeal form considered as such, is distinct from the ensouled integrated man, yet the two are not truly distinguishable, Wyclif argues, because these coextensive bodies communicate equally in the same material essence. This rules out the possibility of an infinite regress of distinguishable essences.

The soul’s relation to the body is that of an exemplary form essentially extrinsic to the body that conserves through its virtues the “complexional form” of the body just as luminosity continually conserves light.<sup>125</sup> The soul requires the pre-existence of the body since its chief act is to animate a body, but not necessarily a temporal priority. In one way, the body causes the soul as material cause, but in other ways, the soul causes the body as final and efficient causality. What of formal causality? The body considered in itself has corporeal formality apart from the formal causality of the soul, which presumably imparts humanity to the body.<sup>126</sup>

It appears more likely that ‘this man’ communicates more than ‘this body and this animal’ for it communicates ‘this spirit’, which remains human spirit existing as such, even when it no longer remains a body or an animal. It is not the case that these two [spirit and body] are the same animal or the same body in number, for the prior corporeal nature is a body and yet is not thereby an animal. Since man is all three [body, soul, integrated body + soul], he exists, after his body is dead, by virtue of the prior corporeal nature, and he is a composite, prior to being an animal, according to his corporeal nature and the soul.<sup>127</sup>

125 *DCH* 3, p. 46/9: “conservans lumine suarum virtutum formam complexionalem corporis.”

126 This is consonant with *De universalibus* 3, p. 71/20-35.

127 *DCH* 3, p. 48/10-22: “Ulterius tamen pro materia videtur michi probabiliter posse dici, quod iste homo plus communicatur quam hoc corpus vel hoc animal; nam iste homo communicatur isti spiritui, cum manet homo spiritu per se existente, quando non manet animal sive corpus; et sic negatur, quod ista duo sunt idem animal vel corpus idem in numero; nam prior natura corporea est corpus et non animal ... homo autem, cum communiter sit ista tria, est post corpus mortuum secundum naturam priorem corpoream, et prius animal secundum naturam ex corpore et anima complete compositam.”



The obvious criticism is to hold that Wyclif might as well be saying that if this soul is this body because of the being of this person, one can as easily say that a man is an ass, or that deity is humanity because Christ is a human person. He refers the reader to *De universalibus* wherein he demonstrates that if this argument were allowed to proceed, anything could be anything, which cannot be so.<sup>128</sup> Yet the parallogism "God is divine," "Christ is creature," therefore "God is creature" is not as easily addressed.

Deity is essentially, but not formally, a man. I say essentially because the essence of our Lord Christ which He has eternally before assuming man, is deity, and this Person is man formally, because Humanity. And this appears to be denying that this deity is animal, body, and substance or creature, although it might be this [Incarnate Word], which is any of these, because through the same He would be substance and uncreated essence, and consequently a creature, which would not follow from this, that He is a man, unless He were formally a man, as Christ. So although Christ is a man, and this man would be animal and a creature, still Deity is not a man because of this being—animate Word or another creature—but because of this fact—that He is God before being any creature.<sup>129</sup>

This brief discussion on the relation of body and soul in man is meant only to show that Wyclif envisioned a coherent picture of human being in which to portray his understanding of the Incarnation; the reader is advised to look elsewhere for fuller consideration of his philosophical anthropology.<sup>130</sup>

128 *De universalibus* 1, p. 9/220: "Et si sophisticè instetur ex dictis sequi 'patrem esse Filium', 'Hominem esse asinum' et sic 'Quidlibet esse quidlibet'—nam in qualibet tali propositione eadem essentia significatur per subiectum et praedicatum, et hoc sufficit ad praedicationem secundum essentiam, igitur et cetera ..."

129 *DCH* 3, pp. 48/30-49/5: "[D]eitas est essentialiter, sed non formaliter homo; essentialiter dico, quia essentia domini nostri Jesu Christi, quam eternaliter habet ante assumptum hominem, est deitas, et illa persona est homo formaliter, quia humanitas. Et sic videtur michi negandum, quod deitas sit animal, corpus et substantia vel creatura, quamvis sit illud, quod est quodlibet istorum, quia per idem essent substantia et essentia increata, et per consequens creatura, quod non sequeretur ex hoc, quod est homo, nisi foret homo formaliter, sicut Christus. Ideo, quamvis Christus sit homo, et ille homo sit animal et per consequens creatura, tamen deitas non est homo secundum illud, quod est verbum animal vel aliqua creatura, sed secundum illud, quod est deus ante quamlibet creaturam."

130 See Emily Michael "John Wyclif on Body and Mind," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64 (2003), 343-60.



One final element from *De compositione hominis* will add to our understanding of its place in Wyclif's christology. While discussing the relation of corporeal essence to the human form, it occurs to Wyclif to address the question of whether Christ's incarnation preceded creation, a question common in many *Sentences* Commentaries.<sup>131</sup> Lombard had said, "If you look to the person [of the Word], say confidently that this man has always been; if to the nature of man, concede him to have come into being."<sup>132</sup> The priority of the created human essence, or humanity as such, to all individual humans allows us to recognize individual humans as instantiations of a universal. Humanity is a universal by community; by virtue of the corporeal presence of the created human essence in Adam, all men are contained in Adam.

Does this mean that there is a sense in which I pre-exist my present existence? In the sense that each being exists in *rationes seminales* contained within first principles being actualized in the earlier creation, yes, but the level of pre-existence is extremely weak. It is more accurate to say that each man exists as intelligible to God, which does not posit any pre-existing man, only God's knowing eternally. This addresses the following paralogism: The Word exists before creation; The Word is human nature, therefore human nature pre-exists creation. We can recognize that the man Christ Jesus was before the world, which He created, but He was not purely a man before the world.

There are three differences between how the human nature becomes instantiated in a particular man and how the Word became man. The nature humanity is united to its particular, and does not unite itself; it is passive in this sense, and does not come together somehow ahead of time with the soul that will occupy the body, but is active in the sense that it acts upon the individual substance realizing the nature of the species therein. The Word, on the other hand, temporally precedes Humanity, because the Word is that which creates, then assumes Humanity. It acts upon Humanity, and remains the Word while also becoming the integrated whole (Word + Human-

131 This question is the subject of *Sentences* 3, D. 12, c. 1, and it appears that what follows here is Wyclif's discussion of Lombard's position.

132 *Ibid.*, p. 81: "Si igitur ad personam respicias, confidenter dic hominem illum semper fuisse; si vero ad naturam hominis, concede eum coepisse."

ity) and each of its parts (the number of which varies, depending on how you count the elements and the composites that arise from them, as described above.) Thus, the Word takes up a full man [*plenum hominem suscepit*], as the body through soul and the integrated nature through both body and soul. "One can then philosophically concede that this man was before all creation, because this person, because of His integral excellence, assumed an integrated human nature, so that He had Himself."<sup>133</sup>

### 3.3. *Christ the Creature and the Triduum*

A good general rule to follow in reading Wyclif is to pay close attention to the opening section of any of his treatises; in most cases, he provides some sort of *vade mecum* to guide the reader through the generally complicated courses of his reasoning. In the case of *De Incarnacione*, he begins by suggesting that many of the difficulties that arise in the christologically oriented study of Scripture can be avoided by remembering that "there are three incommunicable natures in Christ: deity, body, and soul. This is clear in this way. Christ is God and perfect man, as supported by the faith: God is wholly deity, and the perfect man is wholly as much body as soul."<sup>134</sup> We have just described his understanding of what being a man involves: any individual member of the species is body, soul, and the aggregate (body + soul). Christ differs through the addition of Deity to these three components, which addition Wyclif will argue in no way effects the truly human nature of Christ. Wyclif will argue that the Word assumed not *a* human nature, but Humanity as such. Perhaps the right approach is to imagine that Deity, the universal divine nature shared by the persons of the Trinity, needs something more than *a* human nature to offset its magnitude in the Christ: the balance is achieved by the Word's assuming Humanity as such. The questions that result from this are interesting. First, if the Word assumes Humanity, does this mean that

133 DCH 2, pp. 29/30–30/1: "Digne ergo et philosophice est concedendum, quod homo ille fuit ante omnem creaturam, quia illa persona, que propter sui excellentiam tam integre assumpsit naturam humanam integram, sic se habuit."

134 DI 1, p. 3/6–11: "... Christus sit tres nature incommuicantes: scilicet, deitas, corpus, et anima. Patet sic. Christus est Deus et homo perfectus, ut ex fide supponitur: omnis Deus est deitas: omnis homo perfectus est tam corpus quam anima: ergo conclusio."

Christ is involved in every relation with each particular of that universal? Is Christ somehow attached to each of us?

Wyclif addresses two issues in the first several chapters of *De Incarnacione*. Was Christ a creature? What happened to Christ's humanity during the triduum, the period between Good Friday afternoon and Easter morning, when tradition holds that Christ harrowed hell? The first question, that of the created being of Christ, may seem redundant, given his brief discussion of Christ's pre-existing creation in *De compositione hominis* 2. Thomas Aquinas addressed this in two places. In *Summa contra Gentiles* 4.48, he argues that Christ must not be called a creature, because "in Christ there is no other hypostasis or person save that of God's word, and that is uncreated."<sup>135</sup> So while it is certainly true that the Incarnation came into being, such that the human nature assumed by the Word was created, to call Christ a creature without qualifications is incorrect. On the other hand, in *Summa theologiae* 3a Q.3 a.3, he explains that we may speak of the Incarnation "as a matter of it coming about in time that a human nature, involving the existence of a human being, came to be assumed by a divine person."<sup>136</sup> The problem lies in whether by "Christ" we refer to the hypostatic union of Deity and Humanity, or to G(s) as that which assumes Humanity. If the first, then Christ is a creature, but if the second, then He is not. Given Wyclif's continued emphasis that Christ is a creature, it is reasonable to ask whether an Ockhamist christology could be construed as denying this.

We cannot pause to explore Ockham's christology in any depth, but a brief discussion of how Ockham diverges from Aquinas will help explain Wyclif's approach.<sup>137</sup> In *Summa logica* 2, Ockham argues that reference to a common nature like humanity in a proposition "Socrates is a man" is really reference to Socrates himself, and nothing more. In this kind of statement, Aquinas and Scotus would hold that the predication "is a man" of Socrates refers to a common nature, humanity, that can be distinguished from the being of Socrates.

135 *Summa contra Gentiles* 4.48, trans. Charles J. O'Neil (South Bend, 1957), p. 207.

136 Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford, 1992), p. 304, see *St* 3a, Q. 3 a. 3.

137 See Alfred Freddoso, "Logic, Ontology and Ockham's Christology," *The New Scholasticism*, 58 (1983), 293-330, for philosophical assessment of ongoing attempts to accuse proponents of Ockhamist nominalism of being unable to present a coherent Christology.

For Aquinas, the distinction is real, and occurs naturally in our understanding, and for Scotus, the distinction is formal between the common nature Humanity and the *haecceity* of Socrates. Ockham dismisses both, arguing that the humanity arising from predicating "is a man" of Socrates is neither something apart from Socrates nor is it a part of Socrates. "If it were, then real humanity would have remained in Christ in the tomb, and humanity would have been really united to the Word in the tomb, and consequently He would have been a man, which is false."<sup>138</sup> Peter Geach argues that this prevents Ockham from distinguishing between two propositions: "The man Christ began to exist" and "Christ as man began to exist." Aquinas establishes the falsity of the first and the truth of the second in his argument in *Summa contra Gentiles* 4.48, but Ockham, Geach charges, cannot. Freddoso argues that, in most cases, the distinction is possible, but admits that here Ockham is constrained by his theory of reference. The term "Christ" in the second sentence must supposit for G(s) for the sentence to refer properly, and be a true statement, but if it does, then Ockham falls into the Arian heresy, implying that G(s) began to exist.<sup>139</sup>

Wyclif appears to suspect this in his attack on *Moderni* theologians who debase the Incarnation through bad metaphysics. "By scholarly decline from the logic of the *antiqua* about universals and right metaphysics of substantial forms, modern doctors are of one mind in denying that man is a soul, or Christ humanity, and so that Christ is a creature, by understanding through the name [*autonomatice*] Christ only according to the excellence that is Christ; and so although they grasp the truth, many yet fall away from the logic of Scriptures."<sup>140</sup> Not only ancient authorities such as Augustine and Jerome, but Scripture itself, make clear that when Christ refers to Himself in speech in the gospels, it is to Himself as man among men that He

138 William Ockham, *Ockham's Theory of Propositions: Part II of the Summa Logicae*, trans., Alfred Freddoso and Henry Schuurman, (South Bend, 1980), pp. 87-88.

139 Freddoso, 1983, p. 302.

140 *DI* p. 12/20-27: "[D]eclinante scola ab antiqua logica De universalibus et a recta metaphisica de formis substancialibus, negarunt doctores moderniores concorditer quod homo est anima, vel Christus humanitas, et consequenter quod Christus est creatura, intelligentes autonomatice Christum solum secundum excellentissimum quod est Christus; et sic licet verum concipiant, multum tamen degenerant a logica scripturarum."

refers, as well as to God the Son. A familiar picture should by now be emerging: in their departure from realist metaphysics and their refusal to recognize the right way of reading Scripture, the foundation of all created truth, the Moderns have lost ability to do theology properly. While he does not explicitly identify his opponents with Arianism, at this point he recounts the Arian heresy, dwelling with ghoulish delight on Arius's ignoble end. He comments that many are now free brazenly to deny the literal sense of Scripture where it suits them, "saying that God was the Word in name only, and that not all things were made through Christ but all things this side of Him, and so He is a god and creature, but neither the God of gods nor a creature in the same univocal sense as we are. Even the heretics [of old] are not so sophisticated, not denying Scripture, as they do today, because [they were] better founded in logic and metaphysics than are our own."<sup>141</sup> Is Wyclif's criticism that of Geach? Is he saying that his opponents' ontology forces them to use the term "Christ" in an Arian manner? He continues by warning that Eutychism (a species of Monophysite heresy) and Nestorianism loom as real threats for the theologian who, committed to this ontology, attempts to avoid Arianism. That is, the ontological reduction of the *Moderni* force them to refer to Christ as only having a divine nature, which was the Monophysite position. If He has two natures, then their ontology presses them to understand Christ as having assumed a pre-existent human being, which he understands to be Nestorian.

Recall that in *De compositione hominis*, Wyclif describes the distinction between corporeal form in the inanimate body and the soul as form for the human being. He was by no means the first to do this; Matthew of Aquasparta (d. 1302) had argued for the plurality of forms in animate substance in response to Aquinas's assertion that the intellectual soul serves as the form for the human being.<sup>142</sup>

141 *DI* p. 21/14-23: "Scio tamen quod protervus postest, ut hodie, negare qualibet partem scripture de virtute sermonis, et dicere quod Deus erat verbum nuncupative, et quod per Christum non sunt omnia facta sed omnia citra ipsum, et sic est Deus ac animatus, sed nec Deus deorum nec animatus nobiscum univoce. Sed non sic sophisticati sunt etiam heretici, non sic negantes scripturam ut hodie, quia melius fundati in logica et methaphisica quam nostrates." See also his earlier [1363?] *De Logica Tractatus Tercius* 9, p. 123/5-28, where he explains that the ancient theologians rightly used Platonism to explain the relation of uncreated Word to created Christ.

142 See Cross, pp. 64ff.

Ockham made a similar distinction in *Quodlibet* 2 Q.11, which Alfred Freddoso translates as "Is the form by which a human being's body is a body distinct from the sentient soul?"<sup>143</sup> Ockham holds that the two are distinct; when an animal dies, the same number of accidents inhere in the corpse as they did in the living body. They can only inhere in a substantial being, which requires both matter and form, so there must be some form remaining in the corpse after the soul leaves. This is the bodily form, or corporeity. Regarding Christ's body during the triduum, "if the corporeity did not differ from the sentient soul in a human being, then Christ's body in the tomb would never have been an essential part of the human nature in Christ, and the living body and the dead body would not have been the same, and the divine nature would not have been united to the body in the tomb [on Easter] except through a new assumption, which is absurd."<sup>144</sup> That is, if there were not a real distinction between Christ's sentient soul and His corporeity, then His corporeity—His human bodily form—would not have been an intrinsic part of the Incarnation, which would be Docetism. Presumably, Ockham means for us to resolve the issue by recognizing that Christ's corporeity held the fort in the tomb during the triduum while His sentient soul descended to hell.

Wyclif's problem with this rests in dividing things so neatly: what about Christ's corporeity entails its retaining human bodily form? The way Wyclif understands the *Moderni* position, Christ's humanity cannot leave Christ's body, nor can it remain. If it descends with Christ's sentient soul, then the corpse is no longer human, no longer that of Christ, for whom the Incarnation did not cease during the triduum. If the humanity does not descend, then G(s) alone descends, which is impossible. It is not that Ockham denies Christ's liberation of hell in His humanity, but that Wyclif thinks that the Ockhamist does not account for the humanity effectively enough. Both the body and the soul need to be human, and Ockham's ontology does not provide for that.

So every modern doctor of whose writing I have memory of having read, say in agreement that during the triduum the body was the body of

143 William Ockham, *Quodlibetal Questions*, trans., Alfred Freddoso and Francis Kelley, (New Haven, 1991), 1:136–39.

144 Ibid., p. 138, interposition mine.

Christ just as the soul was then the soul of Christ; because in remaining outwardly the union of the Word with the assumed nature, it remained the same union. So they say that it is synecdoche [in this case, using the whole to refer to the part] to say that they buried Jesus, that is, the body of Jesus. But I do not see how it would then be the body of Jesus, unless Jesus then were Jesus corporeally, having every part of the body as His own parts, according to the voice of Truth, Matthew 26:12, 'sending this ointment here in my body she has made me for burying.' For certainly I believe that the same Christ and every part of His body was buried.<sup>145</sup>

The point is to take the opportunity of this critical period of the Incarnation to understand that humanity and divinity remained hypostatistically joined. Taking Lombard's discussion in Bk. 3 D. 22 as his starting point, Wyclif explains that Hugh of St. Victor follows Augustine, Scripture, and philosophical reason in arguing that "man" refers to body and soul of man, even when the two are separated in death.<sup>146</sup> His formal christology begins here, in his clarification of what remained in the tomb, with endorsement of a modified *assumptus homo* theory of Hugh and Anselm so that the assumed Humanity, a universal of kind and not an extant man or particularized human nature, is united to the Word as accident to substance. That is, he takes up the *assumptus homo* approach and arranges it by the (post-Aquinas) substance-accident model using a stronger realism than that countenanced by any of the previous substance-accident theorists.

Given Augustine's endorsement of the use of the term *habitus*, it would be startling for Wyclif to have adopted the *assumptus homo* approach without in some way making the *habitus* model consonant with it. This he does by describing four senses by which the term *habitus* refers. First, it is acquisition of wisdom, the truth which while not

145 *DI* 3, p. 39/10-21: "Unde omnes moderniores doctores, quorum scripta memini me legisse, dicunt concorditer quod in triduo corpus illud fuit corpus Christi sicut et anima fuit tunc anima Christi: quia manentibus extremis unionis Verbi ad naturam assumptam, manet eadem unio. Unde dicunt, quod est synecdochica locutio, sepelierunt Iesum, id est, corpus Iesu. Sed ego non video, quomodo foret tunc corpus Iesu, nisi Iesus tunc foret Iesus corporeus, habens omnes partes illius corporis partes suas, iuxta illam Veritatis vocem Mt. 26 'mittens hec unguentum hoc in corpus meum ad sepeliendum me fecit.' Pro certo ego credo quod ipse Christus sicut et quilibet pars corporis sui sepultus est."

146 *Si Christus in morte fuit homo* in *Sententiae* 3, D. 22, c. 1, pp. 135-6: "Quibus respondemus quia licet homo mortuus fuerit, erat tamen in morte Deus homo, nec mortalis quidem nec immortalis, et tamen vere erat homo." For Wyclif's endorsement of Hugh, see *DI* 3 p. 48/17-29.



moving, once taken in moves the soul that it informs. Second, it is acquisition of food for nutrients for the body, changing the body that acquires it. Third, the clothing that takes the shape of the wearer's body, and finally, as accoutrements we wear that do not change their shape, as with a ring on the finger. The first changes but is not changed, the second changes and is changed, the third is changed and does not change, and the fourth neither changes nor is changed.<sup>147</sup> Further, there are two other senses of *habitus*, of which the first has two parts: a quality of the body, as with health, or of the soul, as with the moral or intellectual virtues.<sup>148</sup> The second is the sense of *habitus* referred to as the tenth Aristotelian category, "which is to have, possession, or having, and this *habitus* is caused by the third and fourth kinds of *habitus* understood materially: 'riches' [what is had] denominates human riches, possessions, or having formally."<sup>149</sup>

[H]umanity was assumed by the Word as *habitus* in the third way, since it occurred to a being in act, not changing or making into another person He whom it affected. The saints say that humanity is like clothing uncovering deity, and the religious who put on Christ have *habitus* of the body; knowing this, that humanity happened to God, but not inseparably. Thus says Augustine in his dialogue with Felicianum, that humanity is an accident of the Word, not that it would be a thing inhering as a new kind of accident, since it would be anticipating in created substance; neither that it would be coæval with the Word or like a passion naturally consequent to the subject, but contingently from our time it is ineffably in the Word not changing the nature to which it comes, but in miraculous form, because the Word of God is identified or hypostatically joined: which according to Augustine in the first book of *De Trinitate*, 'such was the union of incarnation, in which God would have made man and man God.'<sup>150</sup>

147 Augustine, *De diversibus quaestionibus* 1.73; CCSL 44A, pp. 209-12, see also Peter Lombard, *Sent.* 3, D. 6, c. 6 1-5.

148 Here Wyclif is referring Thomas's explanation of habits of the body, its sensitive powers, and the soul, and its intellective powers, see *Summa theologiae* 1.2, Q. 50 a. 1-4.

149 Wyclif's reference to *habicio* as the tenth category, instead of to affection, which is given in 1b25, is consistent with his list in *De universalibus* 10, p. 234/625.

150 *DI* 7, p. 119/12-27: "Dicitur ergo quod humanitas assumpta a Verbo est habitus tercii modi, cum accidit enti in actu, non mutans vel faciens ipsam aliam personam quam prefuit. Ideo dicunt sancti quod humanitas est quasi vestis detegens deitatem; et religiosi, qui Christum induunt, habent habitus corporis; hoc notantes, quod accidit Deo humanitas, sed non inseparabiliter. Ideo dicit

Aquinas rejected both the *assumptus homo* and the *habitus* theories as leading to Nestorianism in *Summa theologiae* 3a Q.2 a.6, because he understood both as requiring a pre-existing man with whom the Word would join. Wyclif argues not for a pre-existing man, but for Humanity itself, the universal by community in which all human beings participate, as that which the Word assumed in hypostatic union. The universal Humanity is what allows the body in the tomb to remain human, and it accompanies Christ to hell in continued union with the Word. He makes the argument by referring to a three-fold distinction in kinds of predication formulated by Bonaventure in his *Sentence* commentary: actual, aptitudinal/habitudinal, and mixed.<sup>151</sup> Actual predication is when the subject is being in act, and the form is predicated in it, as when man is said to exist in the statement "man is an animal." Predication by aptitude is when neither subject nor predicated form is in act, but necessarily are ordered to one another based in a higher principle of nature; no red exists on its own in the statement "the flower is red." When the subject is in act, and the predicated form is not actually in it, but according to necessity is ordered as based on a higher principle of nature, this is mixed, or part actual, part habitudinal predication. This, Wyclif explains, is the sense in which Christ was man during the triduum, "because the subject, that is the Word of God, then was in act, and the form of humanity was retained in habitude or aptitude of conjunction of soul to body ... whoever concedes that body and soul were parts of Christ in the triduum, has to concede as a consequence that Christ had human being from them."<sup>152</sup>

Augustinus in Dialogo ad Felicianum quod humanitas est accidens Verbo, non quod sit res inherens ut accidentia novem generum, cum sit precipua creata substantia; nec quod sit coeva Verbo vel sicut passio naturaliter consequens ad subiectum; sed contingenter ex tempore nobis ineffabiliter inest Verbo non mutando naturam, cui advenit, sed formata mirabiliter, quia Verbo Dei ydemptificata vel ypostatice copulata: cum secundum Augustinum primo De Trinitate, 'talís fuit unio incarnationis, que Deum faceret hominem et hominem Deum.'" Reference is to Augustine's description in *De Trinitate*, 13.24.

151 Harris gives reference to *Sent.* 3, Dist. 22.1.

152 *DI* 4, p. 49/17-23: "Et sic concedit quod Christus fuit homo in triduo, quia subiectum, quod est Verbum Dei, tunc fuit in actu, et forma humanitatis servata fuit in aptitudine coniunctionis anime ad corpus. Nec vidi planiorem sententiam alicuius doctoris in illa materia; quia indubie, quicumque concedit quod corpus et anima fuerunt partes Christi in triduo, habet concedere consequenter quod Christus habet correspondentem esse hominis ex eisdem."

It might be objected that Wyclif's assertion that Christ was univocally man among men can be used to establish change in the Word in experience of the passion.<sup>153</sup> The answer lies in Wisdom 7:24, "Wisdom is more mobile than any motion, because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things."<sup>154</sup> This truth, combined with Aristotle's assertion "the motion of the first mover would be the life of the living thing" [Physics 8, 6 259b 15] leads Wyclif to assert, "this Wisdom is the first mover in efficacy and dignity in accordance to the assumed Man, by means of whose very first motion of all the whole world, both before and after, is perfected, since any other creature through the passion of Christ is renewed to its primary perfection, by which it serves God and reconciles men to God."<sup>155</sup> In the only scholarly article devoted to Wyclif's christology, Michael Treschow suggests that this indicates the absolute centrality Wyclif attributes to the passion; "[n]ot only did the incarnate Word redeem us from our sins through his Incarnation and Passion, but the incarnate Word also, with his very motion of Incarnation and Passion, gave life to the whole created universe from its very origin, from the beginning."<sup>156</sup> Wyclif's assertion illustrates his determination to champion earlier orthodoxy over what he sees as contemporary attempts to dodge the centrality of Christ in creation.<sup>157</sup> Most likely the earlier view most important to Wyclif was that of Grosseteste, who argued that the Incarnation would have been necessary, even had Adam not sinned, as the

153 *DI* 6 contains Wyclif's argument for the univocity of Christ's humanity.

152 NRSV translation; "omnibus mobilibus est mobilior sapiencia" is Wyclif's version.

155 *DI* 7 p. 107/19-24: "[S]ic verissime sine ficticia illa Sapiencia est primum mobile efficacia et dignitate secundum assumptum hominem, mediante cuius motu primo omnium totus mundus ante et post perficitur; cum quolibet alia creatura per Christi passionem ad perfeccionem primarium, qua Deo serviret placato et homini instauratur."

156 Michael Treschow, "On Aristotle and the Cross at the Centre of Creation: John Wyclif's *De benedicta Incarnacione* Chapter Seven," *Crux*, 33 (1977), 28-37, quote p. 33. My thanks are due Prof. Treschow, who kindly sent me a copy of this article.

157 See Bonaventure, *Breviloquium* 4.4; Anselm, *Cur Deus homo* 2.16 and 22; Thomas Aquinas, *SCG* 4.22; also Dániel Deme *The Christology of Anselm of Canterbury* (Aldershot, 2003) for discussion of this topic, esp. pp. 209-26 for a contemporary approach suggestive of Wyclif's criticism of the *moderni*. For Wyclif on the timing of the Incarnation in human history, see *De veritate Sacrae Scripturae* 28, ed. Rudolf Buddensieg (London, 1905-7), 3:128-9.

act completing all creation, as already indicated. Compare Wyclif's argument with that of Grosseteste in *Hexameron* 9:

"And on the seventh day God ended his work." ... can be understood allegorically to mean that Christ took on flesh in the sixth age and completed and finished everything. For he brought back all natures as if into the unity of a circle, which before the incarnation had not fully returned into a circle. For God, insofar as he is God, does not have any nature that is common to any creature, or which is said of him and of them in a univocal way. But when God became a human being, the God-man shared in a nature with the rational creature in a univocal way, and the making of the circle was perfect, and the circular return to God was joined up.<sup>158</sup>

### 3.4. *Criticism of the Moderni and Scotus*

The *Moderni* diverge from ancient authority, and hence truth, in three ways. First they reject universals, without which Anselm argues one cannot understand the mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and many other sacraments of faith. "Just as the divine form or nature is common to three suppositis [*i.e.* the persons of the Trinity], so every nature or specific universal form is common in actuality to all of all of its suppositis; and the person of the Word is common to the divine nature and hypostatically united to the other two [divine persons] ..." <sup>159</sup> The further hypostatic union of the Word with the universal Humanity does not result in a further aggregate being, "for the hypostatic union, which is the personal identity, makes it that any of the three uncommunicated natures [Deity, soul, and body] is fully the same common person; although between themselves they are naturally distinguished through all the many testimonies of the saints, as with Gregory, Augustine, and Anselm."<sup>160</sup> The *Moderni* do not understand

<sup>158</sup> Robert Grosseteste, *On the Six Days of Creation*, 9.8, p. 282.

<sup>159</sup> *DI* 9, pp. 144/30-145/3: "Sicut enim natura vel forma divina est communis ad tria supposita, sic omnis natura vel forma specifica universalis in actu est communis ad omnia eius singularia; et persona Verbi communis ad naturam divinam et alias duas contingenter extranee ypostatice copulatas ..."

<sup>160</sup> *DI* 9, p. 143/26-31: "Nam unio ypostatica, que est ydemptitas personalis facit quod quelibet istarum trium incommunicantium naturarum est plene eadem communis persona; licet inter se naturaliter distinguantur per totum ex multis sanctorum testimoniis supradictis, ut Augustini, Gregorii, et Anselmi." Wyclif refers the reader to Anselm's *De Incarnacione Verbi* 6. The "three uncommunicated natures" refer to Deity, soul, and body, which Wyclif introduces on p. 317.

the close tie of personal identity and substantial form, foolishly supposing that corporeity can remain as basis for substantial accidents. Wyclif develops his response elsewhere, in *De compositione hominis*.

Just as Christ is of two forms or natures, namely divinity and humanity, so the same person of Peter is corporeity, in which is animality or soul, and with this is the immortal spirit, which some call spirituality. And just as the Word is of a different sort after it became man, than it was when only divinity, so the person of man is something different when it is body, than when it is only spirit, which necessarily it is, if he is. Nor is it against this corporality to be soul, and yet to be indivisible as a mass, since the corporal life is with its way of life, by which the body lives formally. So the Apostle in Col. 2:9 says, that in Christ, "resides every fullness of divinity corporeally" because (in) Christ, who is a body, divinity formally inheres, and fully everything, which inheres in God, since He is God. And that corporality is humanity, by understanding the term "man," since it speaks to the union of two natures. Thus, as is clear in what follows, the humanity is said in an equivocal fashion to employ, where it is shown, that not every other thing makes some quiddity, but another complete supposit, which is essential to individual or person. Nor does it follow, that man would have two humanities, of which both are substantial form, but his humanity happens in animation of the body, with which animation this spirit is identified. And from this it is clear, that humanity is to every point of the man according to all of him, and not a simple element of corporeity, which same is indivisible as a mass.<sup>161</sup>

161 *DCH* 5, p. 85/5-86/2: "[S]icut Christus est duarum formarum seu naturarum utraque, scilicet divinitas et humanitas, sic eadem persona Petri est corporeitas, que est animalitas et anima, et cum hac est spiritus immortalis, quem quidam vocant spiritualitatem. Et sicut verbum est aliud, postquam fuit homo, quam fuit quando solum erat divinitas, sic persona hominis est aliud quando est corpus, quam est quando est solum spiritus, quod necessario est, si est. Nec obest illam corporalitatem esse animam, et tamen esse indivisibilem quoad molem, cum vita corporalis sit cum huiusmodi vita, qua corpus vivit formaliter. Unde Apostolus ad Coll.2 dicit, quod in Cristo 'habitat omnis plenitudo divinitas corporaliter', quia Cristo, qui est corpus, inest formaliter deitas, et plene omne, quod inest deo, ut deus. Et illa corporalitas est humanitas, intelligendo hominem, ut dicit unionem duarum naturarum. Ideo, ut patebit posterius, humanitas dicitur exercere equivoce, ubi ostendetur, quod non omne aliud facit aliquam quiditatem, sed aliud suppositale completum, quod est essenziale individuo vel persone. Nec sequitur, quod homo habeat duas humanitates, quarum utraque sit forma substantialis, sed humanitati sue accedit animacio corporis, cui animacione ille spiritus est ydentificatus. Ex istis patet, cum humanitas sit ad omnem punctum hominis secundum se totam, et non corporeitas simplicis elementi, quod ipsa est indivisibilis quoad molem." See a condemnation of *Moderni* attitudes on pp. 102-3 of this treatise as well.

The essence of a thing is the same personally as the composite subject, as the intellective soul of man, which is its humanity, is the same person with the man to which it gives form. Further, the *Moderni* deny predication according to essence, by which Wyclif means that the sentence "Socrates is a man" entails predication of a distinct nature, Humanity, of the individual Socrates.<sup>162</sup> Finally, in their philosophical error they veer into the absurd, considering possibilities such as the Incarnation of the Word in non-human form. "Nor do I see how He could have assumed the nature of a pig, or a serpent, or some other creature than a man. For if one of these could be monstrous, He certainly could have been a chimera or a goatstag with the head of an ass, the tail of a horse, the mane of a lion. He would in so doing most truly not have been our Jesus ... It is empty and dangerous to assert such things."<sup>163</sup> As we will see, this criticism applies not only to Ockhamists, but they do define Wyclif's philosophical response to Ockhamist thought, although the identity of his opponents remains unclear.<sup>164</sup> Turning from his arguments against *Moderni* theologians, Wyclif believes his own approach is best explained in light of the model Scotus provided.<sup>165</sup>

162 For an explanation of Ockham's ontological parsimony in his predication theory, see Alfred J. Freddoso, "Ockham's Theory of Truth Conditions," in *Ockham's Theory of Propositions: Part II of the Summa Logicae*, pp. 1-77; Gyula Klima, "Ockham's Semantics and Ontology of the Categories," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham*, pp. 118-42.

163 *DI* 4, p. 65/9-16: "Nec video quomodo posset sumpsisse naturam porci, serpentis, vel alterius creature quam hominis, ut patet posterius. Nam si aliquid potuisset esse monstrum, potissime fuisset chimera vel tragelaphus habens caput asinum, caudam equinam, pectus leoninum. Et sic esset veracissime de Iesu nostro ... Vacuum ergo et periculosum est rationes tales asserere." For the intention of Ockham's speculation in this vein, see Oberman, *Harvest*, pp. 255-9.

164 Adam Wodeham seems a good beginning place. William Courtenay provides a useful list of Adam's extant christological thought in his *Adam Wodeham*, pp. 194-5. The incipits he provides from Adam's *Reportatio et Ordinatio Oxoniensis* suggest attention to Christ's knowledge, its relation to divine knowledge, its capacity to know future contingents, and His ability to know the smallest corporeal part of His physical body. This last question, 3, Q. 11, might prove of particular interest for evidence of a position against which Wyclif would have argued.

165 Wyclif indicates that he has used an "abbreviator" of Scotus, "Cowtonus" in his assessment of the Subtle Doctor's Christology. This was Robert Cowton, an English Franciscan educated in Paris before 1315. Cowton was a contemporary of Scotus, but more inclined to the theology of Henry of Ghent. His *Sentences* commentary was later abbreviated by Richard Snettisham and was widely used as a secondary source during Wyclif's period at Oxford. See Wil-



Scotus rejects Aquinas's view in which the human nature shares in the existence of the divine person as a concrete part of a thing shares in the existence of the substantial being of the thing, because it suggests Christ's human nature was a constitutive part of the second person of the Trinity, a part perfected by the nature of the Word.<sup>166</sup> This seemed to Scotus to verge on the monophysite heresy. Rather than consider Christ's humanity as a part of the Word's being, Scotus followed the approach of many, such as William of Auxerre, who viewed the relation as like that holding between accident and substance. He identified two characteristics of accident's relation to substance; a substance has a passive potentiality to take on an accident, and the accident, in turn, depends on that substance.

Consider the possibility of becoming blue. Right now, you are not (presumably) blue. Nor am I. We each have the possibility of being made blue, being coated with blue paint, or stained by some dye; this corresponds to the passive potentiality of the substance. But my possible blue is not your possible blue. The blue I might become is mine, and depends on my being, while the blue you might become is yours, and depends on your being. Should I cease to be, the blue I might become will never be, although yours might still come into being. This illustrates the dependence relation of the accident upon the substance; it's being is not anything that affects the being of the substance. Should I become blue, my substantial being will be the support for the being of the blue, which is particularly mine.

The analogy is between the being of the Word and substance, and the possibility of becoming human and blue. In each case, Scotus, argues, the being of the accident has a dependence relation on the being of the substance that does not correspond to a correlate relation in the substance. "Thus Scotus is quite clear that sufficient for the divine person's being human is the actualization of *the human nature's* potentiality for dependence ... we will have to accept by stipulation that a substance x can have a property F merely in virtue of F's relation to x."<sup>167</sup> Cross's comment underscores his puzzlement about how a thing can acquire an accident without itself being affected; in my example, if my possible blueness is actualized, I become blue. That

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liam Courtenay, *Schools and Scholars*, 187, 189, 364. Also, H. Theissing, *Glaube und Theologie bei Robert Cowton OFM* (Münster, 1969).

166 *St* 3a, Q. 2 a. 6, as described in Cross, *Duns Scotus*, pp. 114-16.

167 Cross, *ibid.*, p. 117, italics his.



Christ's human nature's potentiality for dependence is actualized is all that is required: "It is not necessary for a mutation to have existed in anything said to have been made such, but only in that on account of whose passive change something is said to be made such; and here that was only the human nature."<sup>168</sup> Briefly, the metaphysics of the blueness being made real does not entail accounting for the possibility of the substance becoming blue.

Directing all the attention on the individuality of the accident, and making the human nature of Christ into something having metaphysical properties seems to open one to Nestorianism, the heresy that held there to have been two separate persons in Christ, one human and one divine. To avoid this, Scotus and the many other adherents of the substance-accident approach, had to argue that Christ's human nature does not count as a person. To do this, Cross describes two approaches. First, one might argue the need for some further positive feature that needs to be added to the "accident" of "human nature" to make it a person, and second, one might argue that a person is different from a nature by virtue of something the nature lacks, and not something the person has. Scotus opts for the second approach, since the first suggests that Christ's human nature is something less than everyone else's human natures. The second approach holds that being a person is a negative property of a nature. This seems the counterintuitive approach, but for Scotus it is the only way of treading the middle ground between Nestorianism and the Monophysite heresy, and it ends in arguing that all human nature, from creation onwards, has a negative property, an empty space, the express purpose of which is to allow the Incarnation. When this negative property is realized, instead of that human nature being a person, it inheres in a substance, the Word, *without* being a separate or separable person.

[T]he assumed nature [*i.e.* Humanity] has two *habitudes* to the Word, either by reason of causation as generally every creature depends on the whole Trinity, and this *habitude* presupposes in the creature a natural capacity suggesting imperfection, which must have the divine causal act inseparably with it. The second *habitude* is [that] by which the assumed nature can be the nature of the Word according to obediential power, and this power can not be actualized save by miracle, and bespeaks a certain perfection in the person assuming; to terminate thus

168 Ibid., quotation from *Ord.* 3.7.2, n. 6.

the created dependence according to this reason is hypostatically to assume said creature.<sup>169</sup>

Wyclif follows Scotus in adopting the substance-accident model in which [Substance : Accident : : Divine Nature : Human Nature] is the analogy for explaining the Incarnation of the Word. In this model, Scotus describes the relation of accident to substance as having two aspects, namely a relation of ordering and one of ontological dependence. Every creature has a causal dependence to God, so the causal relation is not a good model for explaining the human nature's relation as accident to the divine nature's substance. Every created nature has that relation. The hypostatic union is a union of order of dependence because the relation holding between the Word and human nature is a property of the human nature — of the "accident" — that lacks a corresponding property in the Word that would make the relation mutual. So the hypostatic union is a non-mutual, one-sided relation that boils down to a created dependence on uncreated Being structured on something other than causation.<sup>170</sup>

The reference Scotus makes to actualizing this power by miracle naturally calls to mind other possibilities that might have been miraculously realized in the Incarnation. We have already noted Wyclif's scorn for contemporaries who stray into speculation about the Word having assumed a non-human form, which would have been possible *de potentia absoluta*, by God's absolute power. The terms *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata* were, by the time of Aquinas, recognized as useful in distinguishing between divine ability considered in the abstract and divine ability as actualized in creation.<sup>171</sup> The use of this distinction acquired political baggage in the 1290s, when conflict between the pope and mendicant friars introduced the distinction into arguments about the extent of papal authority. Scotus continued to use the distinction, despite having acknowledged this troublesome mutation in its applicability.<sup>172</sup> This opened the door to his follow-

169 Here, *DI* 11, p. 185/5-23, Wyclif quotes *Ordinatio* 3.d.1.1; Wadding 7.6.

170 See Cross, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, pp. 121-4 for a careful explanation of Scotus's distinction to which Wyclif alludes here.

171 William Courtenay, *Capacity and Volition: A History of the Distinction of Absolute and Ordained Power* (Bergamo, 1990); for Aquinas, see pp. 88-89.

172 Hester Gelber, *It Could Have Been Otherwise: Contingency and Necessity in Dominican Theology at Oxford 1300-1350*, (Leiden, 2004), p. 313, n. 9; reference is to Scotus's *Ordinatio* 1.44, in *Opera Omnia* ed. Charles Balic (Vatican City, 1963), 6:363/17-364/10.

ers' using the distinction to generate possible divine courses of action within creation outside the purview of *potentia ordinata*.

In 1315, regent masters of theology at Oxford condemned several positions making use of the distinction in generating counterfactuals. While not condemning use of the distinction, this effectively limited the scope of possible scenarios theologians might generate.<sup>173</sup> The distinction figured again in 1324-28, during the Avignon commission's investigation and ultimate condemnation of Ockham. Among those most closely following the Scotist approach were the Dominicans at Oxford. Their approaches varied, but two friars in particular subjected ideas in which the distinction figured to careful propositional analysis of the kind that continued to flourish during Wyclif's time. Hugh Lawton and Robert Holcot used analysis of sentences describing God's knowledge, willing, and action modified by the distinction to tease modal subtleties out of problematic statements. Hugh Lawton tended to avoid innovation in summoning hypothetical instances of God's intervening in the created order, but Holcot boldly ventured into this territory, wielding his propositional analysis to engage in real innovation. "Holcot's integration of the vocabularies and logics of contract, of *obligatio*, and of covenant create a sophisticated new context for understanding the deployment of divine power."<sup>174</sup> We cannot yet say whether Wyclif's indictment of those who would dabble in hypotheticals *de potentia absoluta* are directed at Holcot, or some or all of his followers, as texts identifiable with Dominican authors at Oxford in the generation after Holcot and Black Death have yet to be edited. Elsewhere, he writes

[T]he power of God appears to me to be the highest and greatest and as such self-limited and defined, because other powers are defined through it, though it limits itself through itself ... indeed He limits Himself insofar as being able, with respect to understanding of extrinsic things in which He can and in which He cannot [act]. But want of ability or a limitation in distinguishing between that which He can [do] and that which He cannot [do] appears to be a place of scholastic exercise in truth or the endless, although to Him it would be most manifest how much He can [do].<sup>175</sup>

173 Courtenay, *Capacity and Volition*, pp. 100-120.

174 Gelber surveys the rich theological variety of Dominican use of the distinction; see *It Could Have Been Otherwise*, pp. 309-49. Citation, p. 339. for the full flavor of Holcot's analysis, see Robert Holcot, *Seeing the Future Clearly: Questions on Future Contingents*, ed. Paul Streveler and Katherine Tachau (Toronto, 1995).

175 *De Actibus Anime* 3, in *Miscellanea Philosophica* vol. 1, ed. M. H. Dziewicki (London 1902) pp. 109/34-110/8: "[P]otentia dei videtur mihi esse summe et maxime

### 3.5. *Christ Assumed Everyman*

Up to this point, it would be understandable to ask in frustration just what Wyclif conceived the Incarnation to involve. His arguments about the triduum suggest antipathy for a *Moderni* approach, although whose is by no means clear. He seems to agree with the Scotistic approach, but only in a limited way; nowhere does he give evidence of agreeing with the Scotistic conception of individuation, in which common nature and *haecceity* define the self. Rather than address Scotus head on, he appears to veer off into a prolonged discussion as to whether the Word could have assumed many humanities at once or successively, noting that Aquinas thought that if the Word had assumed many humanities, He would be many men.<sup>176</sup> Wyclif's response is to argue that the Word assumed the common nature Humanity, a universal having ontological priority to any of its created particulars. "If He were to have assumed all humanities, then He would be one man as such, as the most recent writers have asserted truly enough."<sup>177</sup>

Readers of medieval literature will be familiar with the play "Everyman," in which the eponymous character, who represents all human beings, goes from carefree ignorance of his place in creation to an awareness of his need for good deeds and the sacraments through the agency of Death. Death says, "Every man I will beset that liveth beastly / Out of God's laws, and dreadeth not folly. ... Lo, yonder I see Everyman walking; / Full little he thinketh on my coming ..."<sup>178</sup> Wyclif begins his discussion of the metaphysics of the Incarnation in Chapter 13 by making a jump similar to the one Death has just made. He argues that if every man would be Everyman, then he [Ev-

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et per se finita et limitata, quia alie potencie finiuntur per illam, et illa per se finit se, sicut patet per theologos concedentes ternarii suppositum esse finem binarii prioris suppositorum; immo finit se quantum ad posse, respectu intelligencia extrinsecorum in que potest et in que non potest. Ideo sicut est per se, sic finite se per se. Sed inercia vel confinium distinguendi inter illa que potest et illa que non potest videtur pro statu opinandi esse scolasticus locus exercitandi in veritate vel demum infinite, quamvis sibi sit manifestissimum quante potest.

176 *DI* 12, p. 203; Wyclif cites *In Sent.* 3, D. 1, a. 8-9, but ignores *St* 3a, Q. 3, a. 7, wherein Aquinas holds that the Word could assume any number of human natures.

177 *DI* 13, p. 216/8-12: "Si omnes humanitates assumeret, foret unicus homo tantum, ut recentissimi scribentes asserunt satis vere." Wyclif does not disclose the identity of these recent writers, of course.

178 *Everyman*, in *Medieval English Literature*, ed. J. B. Trapp (Oxford, 1973), pp. 390-1.

eryman] would only be one man, and if Christ assumes Humanity, then Christ, too, would be Everyman.<sup>179</sup> It cannot be that Christ is every man, of course, nor that Christ is more than one man through having assumed the universal Humanity, nor can it be that the universal Humanity is itself a man capable of receiving accidents like individual men are. What Wyclif means is that Christ has the same kind of body and soul as all other men have. In assuming the universal, He did not become the being of the universal by which all its particulars have their being. There need be no posited haecceity by which individualization occurs for Wyclif, and there need be no additional individuating element added to the hypostatic union of the Word and Humanity. In assuming Humanity, Christ did not thereby assume every relation holding between the universal and its particulars.<sup>180</sup>

A problem arises in that the universal Humanity is not something apart from the Godhead, when it is understood as a Divine Idea providing ontological ground for the instantiation of the form in every particular man. How can one person of the Trinity assume an identity of a particular when the divine essence provides the foundation for the universal that defines all particulars? Would not the other two persons be changed thereby? Wyclif argues carefully against change in *G(f)* and *G(hs)* by the Word's assumption of Humanity, but he does not address the former question. He gives evidence of awareness of it by arguing that the Word produces the conditions whereby only the Word's Deity is hypostatically united to Humanity; filiation is proper to the Word, and to neither of the other two divine persons, and all the properties of the Word admit of assumption of the flesh, but his arguments for the metaphysical means by which occurs amount to nothing more than assertion. His concluding paragraphs indicate that his intention is to clarify how the term "Christ" has several referential schema, depending on the sense in which the term demands to be understood.

[S]ome things are in the Word purely insofar as God; others insofar as man, and others mixed. Insofar as God, He created the world; insofar as

179 *DI* p. 216/13-16: "Nam hoc posito, omnis homo foret omnis homo; ergo foret solummodo unus homo. Antecedens patet per exponentes, cum homo Christus sit omnis homo; ut patet per conversionem, omnis homo est Christus."

180 *DI* 13, p. 220.

man, He suffered death; and insofar as God and man, He redeemed man. Nor should a reduplicative sign be understood in each way, so that it expresses a formal logical consequence and cause; just as here Christ insofar as He is man is a creature but in another way He is cause, so that although He can be God and not have produced the world, yet deity was the cause why He produced the world and not His humanity ...<sup>181</sup>

The treatise, then, appears largely to be an effort to show that *Moderni* christology is best addressed by a philosophical attention to language with a level of depth defined by the approach of Scotus but a richer ontology. At the very simplest level, the Incarnation appears to be the Word having assumed the universal Humanity in the human body born of the Virgin, the integrated whole person resulting from this being the creature Christ. Functioning as a human soul would be the hypostatic union of Word with Humanity. It is possible that such was his plan in 1372; certainly by 1373, when he had begun *De dominio divino*, the idea still figured in his thought.

... Christ is the subject of theology. For which it was considered that in the Word there is a triple unity: first is the unity of essence with Father and the Gift, from which John 10, 'I and the Father are one'; second is the unity of supposition in which according to the blessed Incarnation both natures, namely corporeal and incorporeal, are the same Word; third is unity in common nature by which the same and every creature are one, since every creature is corporeal and incorporeal, and for these two reasons He is communicated to every creature, first according to Ideal Reasons, by which everything, although they are distinct rationally, are the same essentially to the Word of God, and any creature is the same essentially with its Idea. And others have declared that it does not follow, 'this Idea is God, because essentially, and this same Idea is creature, because accidental to it, therefore this creature is God.' But it well follows that any creature according to its intelligible being is God.<sup>182</sup>

181 *DI* 13, p. 230/19-28: "[A]liqua insint Verbo pure in quantum Deus; aliqua in quantum homo; et aliqua mixtim. In quantum Deus, creavit mundum; in quantum homo, passus est mortem; et in quantum Deus et homo, redemit hominem. Nec debet signum reduplicatum intelligi utrobique, ut dicat consequenciam formal logicam et causalem; sicut hic christus in quantum homo est creatura; sed et quomodolibet dicit causam, ut licet potest esse Deus et non produxisse mundum, tamen deitas fuit causa quare produxit mundum et non sua humanitas."

182 *De dominio divino* 1.6, pp. 42/16-43/2: "[Q]uod Christus sit subiectum theologie. Pro quo considerandum est quod in Verbo est triplex unitas: prima est

Wyclif did not turn completely away from philosophical theology thereafter; his christology continues to factor into his thought throughout the rest of his life. Three examples illustrate this: Christ as ideal Lord in his treatises on human *dominium*, Christ's identity with Scripture in *De veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, and Christ as the paradigmatic teacher of the Christian life in *Opus Evangelicum* and *Trialogus*.

Wyclif's treatises on human justice and its absolute reliance on God's law are ably covered in another chapter, but deserve mention because of the centrality of the Incarnation to their argument. Gregory XI had condemned Wyclif's *dominium* writings in May 1377, decrying their expression of the anti-papal monarchism of Marsilius of Padua. I have summarized the inaccuracy of this condemnation elsewhere, but would add here that Marsilius' conception of the role Christ has to play in the just society is rather less than Wyclif's.<sup>183</sup> For Marsilius, the evangelical code of justice as given in the Gospels has less the force of a law, and more that of a doctrine. That is, the evangelical teaching cannot be the basis for coercive legislation in civil government, but only the doctrinal guide by which civil law ought to be inspired. While Christ is indeed the great legislator of salvific law, his heirs are priests only, not kings.<sup>184</sup> Wyclif, on the other hand, envisioned Christ as the paradigmatic just lord in creation, simultaneously just lord and loyal servant, as all true civil lords ought strive to be.<sup>185</sup> Through His restoration of natural *dominium* in His redemption of mankind and the apostolic poverty of the Church, we have the means by which to realize divine justice in civil law. Wyclif's arguments in *De civili dominio* for the centrality of Christ's place in the life and teachings of both spe-

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unitas essencie cum Patre et Dono, de qua Ioh.X, Ego et Pater unum sumus; secunda est unitas suppositalis in qua secundum benedictam incarnationem utraque natura creata, scilicet, corporea est incorporea, est ipsum Verbum; tertia est unitas in natura communi qua ipsa et omnis creatura sunt unum, cum omnis creatura sit corporea vel incorporea; et sic duplici ratione communicatur cuilibet creature, primo secundum rationes ydeales, que omnes, licet distinguantur racinione, sunt idem essentialiter Verbo Dei, et quelibet creatura est etiam idem essentialiter cum ydea. Et alias declaravi, 'Hec ydea est Deus, quia essentialiter, et hec eadem ydea est creatura, quia sibi accidentaliter; ergo hec creatura est Deus.' Sed bene sequitur quod quelibet creatura esse intelligibile sit Deus." see also *ibid.*, 2.5, p. 198.

183 See my *Philosophy and Politics in the Thought of John Wyclif* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 63-7.

184 Marsilius of Padua, *Difensor Pacis* 2.9.

185 *De dominio divino* 3.6, p. 255/16-21.



cies of authority – the civil lord and the evangelical lord – show the Incarnation as the source of all just human law.

Shortly after writing *De civili dominio*, Wyclif began his monumental treatise on scriptural exegesis *De veritate Sacrae Scripturae* [1377–78]. Here he explains the difference between the eternal truth which is the real nature of Scripture and the physical books to which we usually refer with the term “Scripture.” While the books themselves are subject to the ravages of time, as are the understandings of individual readers, the Truth they embody is eternal. Further, in John 10:35–36 Jesus teaches that the Scripture cannot be destroyed which God sent into the world, which leads Wyclif to conclude that Christ himself is that truth, the book whom “God the Father sent ... into the world in order to save the world ... This book cannot be destroyed, precisely because the divinity and the humanity are insolubly united in the same person in a seven-fold manner.”<sup>186</sup> This identity of the Incarnate Word with Scripture compels every Christian to study the Bible, the very image of Christ.<sup>187</sup>

At the end of his life, the Incarnation remained central to Wyclif's thought. In *Triologus* 3.27 he describes the three natures united in Christ, body, soul and divine nature, just as he had in *De Incarnacione* 1. Here also he warns his lay readers away from the “many wasteful studies and occupations by which the heretics are occupied in formulating and developing responses” in arguments about the metaphysics of the Incarnation. Far better to concentrate on the solid truths Christ Himself teaches.<sup>188</sup> To that end, Wyclif's extended study of Christ's words themselves deserves attention. While much of Wyclif's commentary of Scripture remains unedited, the Wyclif Society has published a number of his later gospel commentaries, including his extensive analysis of Matthew 5-7, in *Opus Evangelicum*, volumes 1 and 2. Here, in his exegesis of the Sermon on the Mount,

186 John Wyclif, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, trans. Ian Christopher Levy (Kalamazoo, 2001), p. 98. See *De veritate Sacrae Scripturae* 1.6, p. 109; for the seven-fold manner in which divinity and humanity are united, see the Grosseteste-inspired quote in *DCH* given above, n. 116.

187 See Ian Christopher Levy, “John Wyclif's Neoplatonic View of Scripture in its Christological Context,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 11 (2003), 227–40.

188 *Triologus* 3.27, pp. 225–6: “[E]t per hoc exonerati sumus a studiis et occupationibus multis superfluis, quibus circa casus et responsiones haeretici occupantur. Salubrius quidem est studere veritates solidas quam inaniter evagari circa fictitias ...”

likely written in 1383, we find Wyclif's most sustained argument as the ideal code by which any member of the human race ought live.<sup>189</sup> "Just as in any creature a vestige of the Trinity gleams, thus in any book of the New Testament, which are books of Christ and the Holy Spirit, a certain perfection gleams which is clear in the book to any creature; because just as looking carefully at oneself in the mirror reveals an image of one's face looking back out, so looking in any particular part of scripture, one sees the beginning, middle and end through which one moves to salvation."<sup>190</sup> While the commentary is, in many places, more a patchwork of long quotations from Augustine, Grosseteste, the *Opus Imperfectum*, and the remarkable *De duodecim abusivis*, it shows Wyclif's determination that the Incarnation and Christ's teachings serve as the perennial antidote to all that continues to plague human life.

189 *Opus Evangelicum* 4:33. ed. J. Loserth and F. D. Mathew, 2 vols. (London: 1895-96), 2:368/18-24.

190 *Opus Evangelicum* 1, 1:1/20-29: "Sicut enim in qualibet creatura relucet vestigium Trinitatis, sic in quolibet libro novi testamenti, cum sit liber Christi et Spiritus Sancti, relucet quecunque perfectio que patet in libris aliquibus creature; quia, sicut intuens se in speculo videt faciei sue similitudinem quotquot specula intuetur, sic videns quamcunque scripture sacre particulam videt principium, medium et finem per que tenderet ad beatitudinem adquirendam."