Pastoralia in John Wyclif’s Sermones: Controversial Preaching in Later Medieval England

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Wycliffe College
and the Historical Department of the Toronto School of Theology
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Abstract

This dissertation is an exploration of the extant sermon collections composed by John Wyclif (c.1330–1384), the controversial philosopher, theologian, and reformer. It seeks to illuminate not only those topics where these sermons demonstrate controversial stances, most notably on the sacraments of the Eucharist and penance, but also those topics on which a fair degree of convention and conservatism are demonstrated. The sermons in question have been limited to those containing discussions of the pastoralia, which are those topics legislated by the medieval church to be preached catechetically. These are as follows: the creed, the ten commandments, the beatitudes, the seven works of mercy, the seven deadly sins, the seven virtues, the seven sacraments, the five bodily senses, the pater noster, and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Wyclif’s sermons on these topics are outlined in detail, noting the conventional or controversial nature of his teaching. A final chapter compares Wyclif’s preaching on these subjects with that of several of his contemporaries, where it is demonstrated that Wyclif’s preaching diverged from that of others only on a select few topics, namely the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist, and the worship of images. Apart from these topics, there is a remarkable amount of
common ground, which we would do well to keep in sight even as we acknowledge the profound differences of opinion.
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Chapter 1
Introductory Remarks on Wyclif and His Sermones

John Wyclif (c.1331–1384) has been a polarising figure for the past 650 years. Wyclif was many things: the brightest philosopher at Oxford in the second half of the fourteenth century; first an ally and admirer of the mendicant orders, later one of their fiercest enemies; the impetus for a controversial translation of the Bible, even if not personally responsible; founder, intentionally or not, of a reforming movement that shocked and frightened the powers of church and state; a condemned heretic, posthumously burnt for his teachings; and a powerful image both for sixteenth-century reformers, who thought of him as the Morning Star of the Reformation, and for Roman Catholics, who thought of him as an execrable heretic and corruptor of the faith. Even today, these views are still held popularly, and it has only been in the last fifty years that academics have begun to look at Wyclif in new ways. Recent works have sought to place Wyclif within his late medieval context, exploring the antecedents of his teachings and his influence on succeeding generations. Much work has been done on his philosophy, especially concerning the exact nature of his realism, and on the more technical aspects of his theology. Little to date, however, has been done on his pastoral theology and preaching.

despite the recognition that Wyclif held preaching to be the most important activity for those in holy orders.¹

Wyclif was a famous, and infamous, preacher, and a large collection of his sermons, 245 in number, has come down to us. These sermons represent a preaching career that spans almost twenty years. They are collected into three cycles and two miscellaneous collections. There are also a handful of sermons whose place within these groupings is not entirely clear. One cycle explores the gospel readings for the *temporale* (the regular church year, Sundays and regular feast days); the second responds to the Gospel readings for the *sanctorale* (saints’ days); and the third covers the epistle readings for the *temporale*. The two miscellaneous collections correspond to the readings for various occasions. These two collections are the so-called *Sermones quadraginta*, which represents the earliest known preaching of Wyclif’s career, and the *Sermones viginti* or *mixti*, which represent the preaching of his final years.² These collections contain all of the elements of Wyclif’s theology, and much of his philosophy, and demonstrate a meeting of the controversial and the commonplace. It will be one of my main purposes to bring to light the connections between Wyclif’s theology and his sermons, the sources

¹ This was recognised very early on. Gotthard Lechler in his *Johann von Wiclif und die Vorgeschichte der Reformation* (Leipzig, 1873) devoted a chapter to Wyclif’s preaching, writing (p. 395) that “Vor allem hebt Wiclif die Wahrheit hervor, dass das Predigen von Gottes Wort diejenige Handlung sei, welche ganz besonders zur Erbauung der kirche diene.” (Before all else Wyclif holds the truth that the preaching of the Word of God is that function which serves especially for the edification of the Church).

and methods used to compose these, as well as to compare Wyclif’s preaching with that of his contemporaries. In particular, I will seek to demonstrate that Wyclif’s preaching contained many controversial elements as well as many non-controversial elements. In other words, I will seek to demonstrate what Wyclif held in common with his contemporaries, and where their views diverged. As we shall see, the areas of divergence are much more limited than has often been admitted.

This chapter begins with a brief biographical sketch of Wyclif, followed by an outline of the background to the sermons: the edition of the Wycliffe Society, the division of the sermons into groups, the manuscript tradition, the dating of the sermons, where they were preached, their audience, and their form.

1. John Wyclif

We do not have any clear date for Wyclif’s birth. The first solid date that we have for his career is 1356, when he is mentioned as a bachelor of arts. Assuming a normal course of studies at Oxford, and taking into account the disruption caused by the Black Death, Wyclif might have been born as early as 1331, but probably not any earlier, and perhaps closer to 1335. Wyclif was certainly born in Yorkshire, seemingly at Teesdale (in modern Richmondshire). In 1356 he was a probationary fellow at Merton College, but by 1360 he had moved to Balliol College, where he held the office of Master. It is likely that he made this move because of the connections that Balliol had with Yorkshire. During this period, he was a regent master of arts. He was ordained priest by 1361 at the very latest, and possibly in 1351 by Archbishop Thoresby of York, and was given a license for

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non-residence in 1363 by Bishop Buckingham of Lincoln, in order that he might pursue studies in theology. He was described as a bachelor of theology in 1369 and his inception as a doctor of theology can be dated to sometime between mid-1371 and mid-1372.

The same year that he was ordained priest, Wyclif received his first benefice, the living of Fillingham in Lincolnshire, which was a possession of Balliol College. He seems to have resided in the parish until 1363, when he left for the university to study theology. He later exchanged this living for that of Ludgershall in Buckinghamshire. In 1362 the university put his name forward for a canonry at York, but Wyclif received instead a prebend at Aust in the church of Westbury-on-Trim, Gloucestershire. It is unknown when precisely Wyclif entered into possession of the benefice, but he was holding it by June 1366 and he held it until his death. Wyclif was cited in 1367 for failing to provide a vicar for his prebend for the previous year, although three of the other four prebendaries were also found guilty of the same offence, two of them failing to provide a vicar for four years or more. Wyclif was, then, a non-resident pluralist, even if on a small scale, and this must be taken into account when we regard his reforming legacy, but we must also be aware of Wyclif’s situation. There can be no doubt that later in his career Wyclif opposed negligence in these matters, and he was certainly guilty of not providing a vicar for the year 1366–7, but a recurrence of plague in 1362, coupled with the difficulty of finding a vicar from a distance, might explain the situation. Nicholas Orme is surely correct when he concludes concerning Wyclif’s shortcoming that

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By strictest measures, Wycliffe’s offence at Westbury fell short of his later pronouncements, but he was writing about parish benefices and not canonries, and although his failure to appoint a vicar diminished the worship of a collegiate church, it did not compromise a cure of souls. In the context of his own day, Wycliffe’s tenure of the prebend of Aust was largely unexceptional and unexceptionable ... It is only when he is regarded as a paragon that the episode becomes a serious issue.  

In 1365, Wyclif was appointed by Archbishop Simon Islip of Canterbury to be Warden of Canterbury College, Oxford, which had been founded as a mixed college for secular clerks and Benedictines, but which Islip reformed as a purely secular college in 1365. This new arrangement was not looked upon favourably by the monks, and when Islip died in 1366, a dispute arose over the wardenship. The new archbishop, Simon Landham, ordered the restoration of the Wardenship to Wyclif’s predecessor, a Benedictine monk named Henry Wodehull. Wyclif appealed to the pope, Urban V, who eventually ruled in favour of the monks, and Wyclif was forced to leave Canterbury Hall in 1370. Two of Wyclif’s opponents, William Woodford, O.F.M., and Thomas Walsingham, later suggested that this incident was the starting point for Wyclif’s attacks on the friars. There are some concerns with this interpretation, however, as both of these men were hostile to Wyclif, and both were attempting to discredit him. More important than this, Wyclif had good relations with the Mendicants as late as 1379, nearly a decade after the

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papal ruling on Canterbury College.\textsuperscript{10} It would seem that the roots of Wyclif’s antipathy towards the mendicants lie elsewhere, and I would like to suggest that the roots of Wyclif’s anti-mendicant sentiment lie in his theology, and that even in his most stridently polemical preaching against the Orders it is for theological reasons that he takes umbrage at many of the Orders’ teachings.\textsuperscript{11}

At various times during the 1370s, Wyclif had occasion to serve the Crown.\textsuperscript{12} In 1371 he was an executor for William Askeby, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and that same year Wyclif claims to have been at Parliament, seemingly in the service of either the Crown or Richard, Lord Scrope of Bolton. Royal service had two major consequences for Wyclif. First, it was likely through this sort of service to the Crown that Wyclif came to the attention of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster,\textsuperscript{13} especially through a delegation to Bruges in July 1374, in which Gaunt became involved, although there is no evidence that the two met at this time. Gaunt was to become Wyclif’s lifelong protector. Nonetheless, the relationship was a complicated one, and Gaunt would not follow Wyclif in the latter’s rejection of transubstantiation. Second, it was also through royal service that Wyclif received the parish of Lutterworth, about fifty miles north of Oxford, in April 1374, which was his primary benefice for the rest of his life, and his residence for his final years.

\textsuperscript{10} Larsen, “Wyclif,” 14–5.
\textsuperscript{11} See below, pp. 167–73.
The mission to Bruges has long been seen as the reason behind Wyclif's call for disendowment of the church in England, a call for a radical removal of all possessions from both regular and secular clergy.\textsuperscript{14} The purpose of the mission was to meet with papal delegates and discuss the issues of papal provisions and taxation. This was the second of three delegations, and it achieved little substantive. Wyclif was not reappointed to the third delegation, although several other members of the second delegation were.\textsuperscript{15} Thomas Netter, in his \textit{Doctrinale antiquitate fidei catholicae ecclesiae}, asserts that Bishop Hallum of Salisbury claimed Wyclif's attacks on the church stemmed from disappointment that he did not receive the vacant see of Worcester in 1376, while his fellow members of the delegation, John Gilbert and Ralph Erghum, both received new episcopal appointments.\textsuperscript{16} However, Wyclif was already hoping for a prebend at Lincoln cathedral during this time, and while he may have had hopes for a bishopric eventually, a nomination to the see of Worcester, Wyclif's supposed target, had already been made as of 1373. It seems much more likely that the story was not based in fact, but was designed rather to discredit Wyclif.\textsuperscript{17} As in the case of the wardenship of Canterbury Hall, it would seem that the roots of Wyclif's discontent lay elsewhere than in those incidents and motives identified by his enemies.


\textsuperscript{15} Larsen, "Wyclif," 17–8.


\textsuperscript{17} Larsen, "Wyclif," pp. 21–2.
Wyclif’s opinions on such matters as the right of the church to own property, and the right of secular lords to confiscate such property, began to cause controversy by the end of the 1370s, and attempts to curb his teaching began in earnest in 1377. In February of that year, Wyclif was called before an assembly of bishops at St. Paul’s Cathedral in London to answer questions about his teaching on these matters. The assembly was headed by Archbishop Simon Sudbury of Canterbury, although the most prominent bishop in the records is William Courtenay, then Bishop of London. Wyclif was supported in this affair by John of Gaunt, as well as by Henry Percy, one of the realm’s leading politicians and recently appointed marshal, and four Oxford theologians representing each of the orders of friars. Wyclif was apparently well known by this time, and large crowds came out to see the proceedings. Some members of the crowd might have heard Wyclif preaching the views in question, as he seems to have preached in London in the months prior to the meeting at St. Paul’s. Soon after the meeting opened, an argument arose between Percy and Gaunt on the one side and Courtenay on the other, and the assembly broke up in mass confusion, without a decision on Wyclif’s case.

Further controversy soon followed, as not long after the failed assembly at St. Paul’s, Pope Gregory XI issued a series of five bulls condemning Wyclif’s teachings concerning church property. The first three of these were instructions to Courtenay and Sudbury as to how they should proceed against Wyclif, a fourth was sent directly to King Edward

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asking his assistance in the matter, and a fifth was sent to the University at Oxford, ordering Wyclif’s arrest and banning the teaching of these opinions. It seems likely that the pope had been informed of Wyclif’s teachings on these matters by an English Benedictine, Adam Easton, who was at the papal court in 1376.\textsuperscript{22} It took some time, however, before the bulls were actually published in England; they first had to make their way from Rome, and then the death of Edward in June, followed by the uncertainty of Richard II’s accession as a minor, meant further delays. By the time of Richard’s first Parliament in October of 1377, the bulls seem to have become public, or at least their contents became known, since Wyclif, who was attending Parliament in service to the Crown, was taunted about the condemnation by Bishop Thomas Brinton of Rochester.\textsuperscript{23} The bull meant for Oxford arrived there just before Christmas 1377, and Wyclif was put under house arrest for a short period, before the intervention of royal officials set him free.

Further attempts to bring Wyclif to heel followed in the spring of 1378, when he was called to appear before Archbishop Sudbury once again.\textsuperscript{24} The meeting took place this time at the Archbishop’s palace at Lambeth. At this meeting, Sir Lewis Clifford,\textsuperscript{25} later a

\textsuperscript{22} On Easton’s role, see Margaret Aston, “Adam Easton and the Condemnation of John Wyclif 1377,” \textit{English Historical Review} 113 (1998): pp. 321–34.


\textsuperscript{24} Larsen, “John Wyclif,” pp. 38–42.

suspected Lollard, acting as an agent of Princess Joan, the widow of Edward the Black Prince, appeared before the bishops and instructed them not to pass sentence on Wyclif. The meeting was further interrupted by a group of Londoners who protested on Wyclif’s behalf. In the end, the bishops ordered Wyclif not to preach the ideas in question, for although they were true, they were dangerous to the laity who might misunderstand them.\footnote{26}

Despite nearly a year and a half of fairly intense controversy, Wyclif performed one last act in formal service to the Crown when he addressed the Gloucester Parliament in October 1378, defending the Crown’s position in the Hauley-Shakyl Affair.\footnote{27} The affair began as a dispute over a ransom due to the two men, Hauley and Shakyl, from their capture of the Count of Denia at the battle of Najera in 1367. John of Gaunt owned the primary share in the ransom, but Hauley and Shakyl were allowed to hold the Count’s son, Alphonso, as surety for payment. In 1377, the Crown of England demanded that Hauley and Shakyl turn their prisoner over to royal custody, so that they might release him and further their diplomatic endeavors. Hauley and Shakyl refused, and were imprisoned in the Tower of London, only to escape and seek sanctuary in Westminster Abbey. Sir Alan Buxhill, Keeper of the Tower, was able to lure Shakyl out of the Abbey and arrest him, but when Hauley would not come out, Buxhill sent men in after him. Hauley fled from the soldiers, who eventually cornered him near the altar, where they killed both Hauley and a priest who was trying to protect him. This caused great scandal, and sparked a conflict between Bishop Courtenay and Gaunt. The Crown sought, in the

\footnote{26}{See Larsen, \textit{School of Heretics}, pp. 146–7, Dahmus, \textit{Prosecution}, pp. 66–7.}
\footnote{27}{On which, see Nigel Saul, \textit{Richard II} (Yale: Yale University Press, 1997): pp. 36–8.}
wake of the Hauley-Shakyl incident, to restrict the right of sanctuary, and it is in this context that Wyclif’s advice was sought at the Gloucester Parliament. In the end, the Parliament dissolved without enacting any legislation, and it was not until the following year that the right of sanctuary was restricted by a further Parliament. It was perhaps that the controversy surrounding Wyclif became too much of a liability for his erstwhile patron, John of Gaunt to use him publicly, but whatever the case, the connection between the two men became more distant after the Gloucester Parliament, and as a result, Wyclif’s service to the Crown stopped.\textsuperscript{28}

Wyclif’s movements and whereabouts over the next two and a half years are not well documented, and the next clear picture we have is from 1381, when Wyclif was forced to leave Oxford over his controversial stance on the Eucharist.\textsuperscript{29} In the spring of that year, William Barton, the Chancellor of the university, organised a committee to investigate and censure two of Wyclif’s opinions on the Eucharist, although not naming Wyclif as their author. Wyclif responded initially by appealing to the Crown. John of Gaunt handled the matter personally, travelling to Oxford to meet with Wyclif. What exactly was said between the two is unknown, but Wyclif was ordered to be silent. On 10 May, Wyclif defied both the censure of the university and Gaunt’s command to be silent, and published his \textit{Confessio}, which clarified and defended his position on the Eucharist. This in turn provoked responses from other scholars in the university. That same summer, the Peasants’ Revolt erupted, and much of the blame was placed at Wyclif’s feet, although his connection to the events of the uprising was unfounded. In the fall of 1381, Wyclif

\textsuperscript{29} On the events surrounding this controversy, see Larsen, “Wyclif,” pp. 44–58.
left Oxford permanently, after having spent the greater part of his adult life in the university.

The last three years of Wyclif’s life were spent in his parish of Lutterworth. It was during this retirement from the university that Wyclif took the time to revise his writings, including the dominical gospel, dominical epistle, and sanctorale sermon cycles, as we know from the preface that he attached to them at that time. Wyclif’s retreat from academia did not, however, mark the end of his involvement in controversy, for although Wyclif remained at Lutterworth, news of outside events still reached him, and were reflected in his writing, which took on an increasingly polemical tone. Further, Wyclif’s followers were still in position to influence events at Oxford, and the master’s ideas remained of interest there for some time.

It was also during Wyclif’s retirement that Henry Despenser, Bishop of Norwich, undertook his infamous crusade to Flanders, an event which raised Wyclif’s ire. The

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30 Sermones I, praefatio: “Et ideo ut sentencia Dei sit planior et servus suus inutilis excusabilior, videtur quod in illo oicio quo a scolasticis ociamur et in particulari edificationi ecclesie in fine dierum nostrorum sollicitamur, sint sermones rudes ad populum colligendi, ut si qui sane doctrine Christi consenserint plus notentur, et qui a veritate catholica declinaverint declinentur.”


calling of this crusade was in response to the contested papal election of 1378 which led to the election of two rival claimants to the papal throne.34 Europe split along political lines, with the French supporting Clement VII, who established his court at Avignon, and the English supporting the Roman pope, Urban VI. In late 1378, Urban issued a bull offering indulgences to those taking arms against the schismatics and a second bull, dated 15 May 1382, which empowered Despenser to preach crusade against the schismatics. This he did, sending out collectors to a great deal of success.35 Wyclif was much opposed to this endeavor, which put him in the minority position, as support for the crusade seems to have been very high,36 he preached against the crusade in several sermons and composed a tract, *De cruciata*, condemning the crusade.37

In the spring of 1382, William Courtenay, translated to the see of Canterbury after the death of Simon Sudbury in the Peasants’ Revolt, called a council to meet at Blackfriars in London.38 The purpose of the council was to deal with the danger of Wycliffism, for although Wyclif himself was not named by the council, the ideas condemned were drawn from Wyclif’s ideas and those of his followers. Twenty-four articles were condemned,

37 The sermons are mentioned below, pp. 27, 31, *De cruciata* is found in *Polemical Works II.577–632.*

After the council, Courtenay, with the help of the Crown and Parliament, began a concerted effort to eradicate Wycliffism at Oxford, disciplining Wyclif’s followers there, and receiving recantations from prominent Wycliffites Philip Repingdon,\footnote{Repingdon climbed through the ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, eventually receiving a bishopric, he is discussed more thoroughly below, chapter five.} John Aston, and Nicholas Bedeman. Throughout this upheaval, Wyclif remained quietly at Lutterworth, and was never personally subject to condemnation, likely as a result of Gaunt’s protection, whether directly or indirectly so.

It was sometime during 1382 that Wyclif suffered a stroke which left him partially paralyzed.\footnote{Larsen, “John Wyclif,” pp. 58–62.} This he cites, along with a royal prohibition against his going, as reason for him not to answer a summons from Pope Urban VI in 1383. Despite the stroke and accompanying health problems, Wyclif continued to write until a further stroke on 28 December 1384 paralyzed him completely, leaving him unable to speak. He died three days later, 31 December. Wyclif died in communion with the church, in fact, if his curate John Horn is to be believed, he suffered his fatal stroke while listening to mass, and he was buried in the churchyard. It was not until the Council of Constance, 1414–8, that Wyclif was personally condemned as a heretic, and it was not until 1428 that his remains...
were finally disinterred, ritually condemned and burnt, and the ashes scattered into the river Swift.\footnote{Larsen, “John Wyclif,” pp. 63–4.}

2. The Sermones

2.1 The Wyclif Society Edition

In March 1882, in preparation for the quincentenary of Wyclif’s death, a group of scholars, led by F. J. Furnivall, a philologist who worked on the Oxford English Dictionary,\footnote{On Furnivall, see William S. Peterson, “Furnivall, Frederick James (1825–1910),” \textit{Oxford Dictionary of National Biography} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) [http://www.oxforddnb.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/view/article/33298, accessed 1 May 2013]} founded the Wyclif Society with the express purpose “‘to remove from England the disgrace of having left buried in manuscript the most important works of her great early Reformeer, John Wyclif,’ and to ensure that the 500\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of his death, the year 1884, should see at work a Society which would keep on foot until all his most important genuine writings should be ‘given to the world through the press.’”\footnote{From the first report of the Executive Committee of the Wyclif Society, printed at the end of volume I of John Wyclif, \textit{Polemical Works in Latin}, 2 vols. (London: Wyclif Society, 1883, reprinted New York: Johnson Reprints, 1966).} The task of editing Wyclif’s preaching corpus fell to Johann Loserth, an Austrian historian who came to Wyclif studies through his interest in the Hussites.\footnote{Anton Kern, “Loserth, Johann (1846 – 1936).” \textit{Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online}, accessed 25 July 2011: http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/loserth_johann_1846_1936} The four volumes of this edition appeared between 1887 and 1890.

There are two major problems with Loserth’s edition, both stemming from his reliance on Cambridge, Trinity College MS B. 16.2 (henceforth C) as his base text.\footnote{Discussed by Anne Hudson in her article “Trial and Error: Wyclif’s works in Cambridge, Trinity College MS B. 16.2,” in \textit{New Science out of Old Books: Studies in Manuscripts and Early...}} The first is that
C contains many omissions and other textual problems. Loserth was aware of these problems, but had little recourse, especially for the epistle sermons, because he did not know of two manuscripts in Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Helmstedt 565 (henceforth Wo 565) and Cod. Helmstedt 306 (henceforth Wo 306), which are textually superior to C. The second problem is more complex. The arrangement of the sermons in C is problematic, especially in its fourth grouping, which makes up Loserth’s fourth volume. What C takes to be one group of sermons, which it describes as *de epistolis in sanctorum festiuitatibus cum aliis diuersis sermonibus*, is in fact two distinct sets, the *Sermones quadraginta* and the *Sermones viginti* or *mixti*, plus a handful of less easily identifiable sermons. Loserth recognized that there were two sets, as he characterizes the sermons in volume four of his edition as *Sermones miscellanei* (*Quadragina sermons de tempore. Sermones mixti XXIV*), but he misidentified the second set as containing twenty-four sermons, rather than twenty, despite the manuscript evidence to the contrary. The result is rather confusing, even more so when Loserth writes that “besides these two main parts – the Viginti and Quadragina Sermons – composing the fourth volume of this collection of sermons, four other sermons deserve to

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47 See *Sermones* I, p. xxxvi: “Regular, if not altogether beautiful, as the handwriting is, the text is faulty, full of more or less serious blunders... Sometimes we find such gross mistakes, that we are led to doubt whether the scribe understood the meaning of the text.”


50 C, f. 2v.

51 *Sermones* IV, p. v: “... we must examine more closely the other sermons of the fourth part, which form the section of the XXIV Sermones mixti, and are called in the MSS, *Sermones XX in fine vitae suae*.” The description of these as *Sermones XX in fine vitae suae* comes from the Hussite catalogue of Wyclif’s works, on which, see Anne Hudson, “The Hussite Catalogue of Wyclif’s Works,” Item III in *Studies in the Transmission of Wyclif’s Writings* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2008).
be mentioned, belonging to neither of these groups: they are the two first and the two last sermons.\footnote{Sermones IV, p. vii.} What we have then in the fourth volume is this: 1) two unassociated sermons; 2) \textit{Sermones viginti}; 3) \textit{Sermones quadraginta}; 4) two more unassociated sermons. So in effect Loserth tells us that there is both an entity called \textit{Sermones viginti} and another called \textit{XXIV sermones mixti}, but is rather unclear whether the first of these should be treated as a subset of the latter, or where the latter title is derived. To be fair to Loserth, the manuscript evidence for this set is confused, with different ordering preserved in different manuscripts.\footnote{On which see Hudson, “Wyclif’s Latin Sermons,” pp. 239–40.} The arrangement of the first three groups of sermons in C is less problematic, with the dominical gospel, sanctorale, and dominical epistle sermons being more or less stable in the manuscript tradition.\footnote{See Hudson, “Wyclif’s Latin Sermons,” pp. 243–6.}

What we are left with, then, are five distinct sets of sermons: 1) Dominical gospel sermons; 2) Sanctorale sermons; 3) Dominical epistle sermons; 4) \textit{Sermones viginti} or \textit{mixti}; and 5) \textit{Sermones quadraginta}. There are, however, miscellaneous sermons which are associated variably with these sets in different manuscripts. Altogether, these include three sermons associated with the dedication of a church,\footnote{Sermones I.58–60.} one for Ascension,\footnote{Sermones II.60.} another for Corpus Chirsti,\footnote{Sermones II.61.} sermons for the epistle and gospel for the dead,\footnote{Sermones IV.1–2.} a sermon for the Tuesday gospel for the Missa pro defunctis,\footnote{Sermones IV.11.} and one each for the epistle for the dedication of a church, for the gospel for the Tuesday in Whitsun week, and for a
graduation. Not all of these sermons will concern us, but those that do can be fitted into the scheme of the five sets of sermons as follows:

1) *Sermones* I.60, for the octave of the dedication of a church fits at the end of the dominical gospel cycle, where it is placed in Loserth’s edition.

2) *Sermones* II.60, for Ascension, unique to C, and II.61 for Corpus Christi, both seem to fit at the end of the sanctorale cycle, despite the problematic nature of such a placement, which will be discussed more fully in individual commentary on these sermons in the next chapter.

3) *Sermones* IV.2, 63, the former for the gospel of the *missa pro defunctis*, and the latter for the epistle for the dedication of a church, although with much material relevant to service for the dead, seem best placed at the end of the epistle sermons, with IV.63 being placed first, as Thomas Netter described it as the 60th sermon of this set, and based on internal references.

4) *Sermones* IV.11, for the Tuesday gospel for the mass for the dead, appears to fit in where C places it, as sermon nine of the *Sermones viginti*.

All of these sermons, then, can be associated with one of the five sets that have come down to us, despite the variation in their placement in the manuscript tradition.

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60 *Sermones* IV.63–5.
62 Ibid., p. 247.
63 See ibid., p. 240.
2.2 The Manuscripts

The *Sermones* survive in several manuscripts of both English and Continental origin, but only C contains all five sets. For the dominical gospel cycle, three other manuscripts survive: Vienna, Österreichische National Bibliothek 3934 and 4529 (henceforth ONB 3934 and ONB 4529) and Wo 565. The sanctorale cycle is extant in Vienna, Österreichische National Bibliothek 3928 and 3931 (henceforth ONB 3928 and ONB 3931). The dominical epistle sermons survive in the two Wolfenbüttel manuscripts, Wo 306 and 565, both unknown to Loserth. For the *Sermones quadraginta* there are four other manuscripts, but none which contain the entire set: Cambridge, Pembroke MS 199, London, Lambeth Palace 23, and ONB 3928 and 3931. Finally, the *Sermones viginti* are found in Prague, Universitní Knihovna (henceforth PUK) III.G.11 and III.B.19 as well as ONB 3928 and 3931. In what follows, I will briefly describe each of the various manuscripts, sorted by sermon group, and discuss what is known about their transmission.

C is a large, finely decorated codex completed in several hands, which has been dated to the end of the fourteenth century or beginning of the fifteenth century. This manuscript contains a number of Wyclif’s works, including all but two of the known sermons. The *Sermones* take their place in quires 15–32, folios 159–376, between the treatises making up the *Summa de ente* and the four books of *Opus evangelicum*. One sermon, on the gospel for Tuesday in Whitsun Week, is unique to C, but will not concern us in this thesis. The difficulties inherent in C’s text and arrangement of the sermons have been discussed above at some length, and need not delay us here.

64 For this paragraph, see Hudson, “Trial and Error,” esp. pp. 59–61.
ONB 3934 and 4529 contain the dominical gospel cycle of sermons as a complete set, as does Wo 565. ONB 3934 is an early fifteenth-century manuscript, in a Bohemian hand, which ascribes the sermons to Wyclif. The other works in this manuscript are not by Wyclif, but the sermons take up the majority of space, 132 folios of 151 total. ONB 4529 is another fifteenth century manuscript, Thomson gives a date of ca. 1420, which ascribes the sermons to Wyclif, and this manuscript is again in a Bohemian hand. Once again, Wyclif’s sermons are his only work contained in the manuscript, and they take up the majority of space, 165 of 188 folios. Wo 565 contains both the dominical gospel and the dominical epistle sermons, but there is no ascription of the sermons to Wyclif. Once again, the hand is Bohemian and dates to the early fifteenth century; there are, however, annotations with English-type letter forms, which might be explained as imitation of an English exemplar. The manuscript is listed in Otto von Heinemann’s Die Helmstedter Handschriften (1886) as containing “Sermones in evangelia dominicalia per circulum anni” and “Sermones in epistolas dominicalia per circulum anni,” but it was not

67 Thomson, Latin Writings, p. 98.
70 Thomson, Latin Writings, p. 98.
recognised until 1930 as containing sermons authored by Wyclif.\textsuperscript{73} Heinemann does, however, identify another Wolfenbüttel manuscript, Wo 306, to be discussed below in greater detail, as containing Wycliffite material, with an entry for “Comentarii super epistolas per circulum anni doctoris ewangeliici,” and a clear reference to “Excellentia magistri Iohannis Wicleph.”\textsuperscript{74} This catalogue was published in 1884, but it seems that Loserth, who published the first volume of the \textit{Sermones} in 1887, had not seen Heinemann’s catalogue, or had ignored the clues provided therein. The lack of ascription in the case of Wo 565 would likely have made it difficult to identify, but it seems probable, given the case of Wo 306, that Loserth had simply not seen Heinemann’s catalogue.

ONB 3928 and 3931 contain the complete set of sermons for the sanctorale, as well as most of the \textit{Sermones quadraginta} and all of the \textit{Sermones viginti}, and were both known to Loserth. Both of these manuscripts are Bohemian and have been dated to ca. 1410. ONB 3931 contains, according to Williel Thomson, marginal notations by Peter Payne, a noted Wycliffite.\textsuperscript{75} ONB 3928 is slightly peculiar in that it contains Wyclif’s short tract, \textit{De sex jugis}, both as an independent piece and as incorporated into the sanctorale sermons, in sermons for All Saints’, the feast of St. Andrew, the last of the three gospels for the Common of an apostle, the Common of an evangelist, and the first gospel for the


Common of one martyr. Several other manuscripts also contain De sex jugis, but as a separate, autocephalous piece only. All of these manuscripts are Bohemian in origin, most in manuscripts containing other of Wyclif’s works, and all dating from the first quarter of the fifteenth century.

The complete cycle of dominical epistle sermons survives in two continental manuscripts, Wo 306 and Wo 565. The latter of these has been briefly discussed above. The former is an early fifteenth-century manuscript of Polish origin, and it contains a Polish Wyclif hymn as well as the epistle sermons. It has been suggested by Anne Hudson that the entire manuscript was owned by Andrej Gal’ka, a Polish Wycliffite active 1420–1449, whose name is on the flyleaf. Thomson was convinced that the scribe(s) of these two Wolfenbüttel manuscripts had a superior exemplar before them than the one used by the scribes involved in compiling C. Several other manuscripts, including Oxford, Bodleian e Musaeo 86, which contains the anti-Wycliffite compilation Fasciculi zizaniorum.

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76 That De sex jugis existed as a separate tract prior to incorporation into the sanctorale sermons is argued by Anne Hudson, “Wyclif’s Latin Sermons,” p. 231, where she argues that the material makes more sense as an independent tract than as it is divided amongst five otherwise unrelated sermons.

77 For the mss, see Thomson, Latin Writings, p. 122, and for the sermons themselves see ibid., pp. 131–3. De sex jugis was edited by G. Lechler in Johann von Wiclif und dir Vorgeschichte der Reformation, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1873): II: pp. 591–605. See also Hudson, “Wyclif’s Latin Sermons,” p. 231 for her arguments that the De sex jugis was first composed as an independent tract.


80 98 folios of this manuscript were edited by Walter Waddington Shirley, Fasciculi zizaniorum magistri Johannis Wyclif cum tritico (London: Longmans, 1858). On the manuscript and its
contain fragments or selections from this cycle. Another manuscript, Dublin, Trinity College, C.1.23, a late-fourteenth century English manuscript contains individual sermons from the Epistle cycle, as well as other Wycliffite material, but it does not contain any of the material under consideration here. Three other manuscripts, all of continental origin, contain the tract *De religione privata II*, which corresponds to a sermon for the Fourth Sunday after Easter, but again, this material will not be considered here.

Apart from C, ONB 3928 and 3931, the *Sermones quadraginta* survive in part in five other manuscripts. Most of the sermons are extant in Cambridge, Pembroke College MS 199, a fifteenth-century English codex. In this manuscript only two sermons are missing from the set, with another incompletely copied. Twenty-eight of the forty are preserved in London, Lambeth Palace MS 23, the others apparently having been lost at some point. This manuscript is of English origin, dated ca. 1400, and the sermons are ascribed to Wyclif. Two of the *quadraginta* are preserved in Prague, Universitní Knihovna (henceforth PUK) V.H.27, which is an early fifteenth-century Bohemian manuscript. There are also extracts of two more in Manchester, John Rylands Eng. 86. This is an English manuscript of the late fourteenth/early fifteenth century, which contains fifteen theological tracts, three in English, the rest in Latin, all of which used to be attributed to

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82 *Sermones*, IV, p. iii–iv.
Wyclif, but with no ascription in the manuscript itself.\textsuperscript{87} Another two are excerpted in Oxford, Exeter College 6, an English manuscript dating to the end of the fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{88} By far the largest entity in this manuscript is the Pseudo-Chrysostom’s \textit{Opus imperfectum}, along with two indexes to this work. After the indexes were copied, there remained three folios in the last quire of the manuscript. On these, the same hand copied a selection from Jacobus de Voragine’s \textit{Legenda aurea} on the passion of Christ, as well as the two fragments from Wyclif. The first of these is from \textit{Sermones} IV.41,\textsuperscript{89} on the passion, and the second is from \textit{Sermones} IV.35, on confession, which the scribe has copied onto a loose leaf added to the final quire.\textsuperscript{90}

Eleven of the \textit{Sermones viginti} are found, as well as in C, ONB 3928 and 3931, in Praha Universitni Kinova III.G.11 (henceforth PUK III.G.11), which is a Bohemian manuscript of the early fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{91} Here they are found interspersed among several of Wyclif’s other works, none of which are ascribed to him.\textsuperscript{92} The fifth of the \textit{viginti} survives independent of the rest of the set in ONB 3927 and 3932.\textsuperscript{93} There is no little confusion about the occasion for this sermon, as both Loseveth and Thomson use the


\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Sermones} IV.41, pp. 341/29–342/36.

\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Sermones} IV.35, pp. 299/24–200/13.


\textsuperscript{92} For a complete listing of the contents of this manuscript, see the index of manuscripts in Thomson, \textit{Latin Writings}, p. 314.

\textsuperscript{93} The latter of these is listed by Thomson, \textit{Latin Writings}, p. 174, the former was noticed by Anne Hudson, see Appendix II in \textit{Studies of Wyclif’s Writings}, p. 9.
term *missa de non virginibus*, which seems to be the equivalent of the common for a holy woman in English translations of the Sarum use,\(^{94}\) but the lection, Proverbs 31:10–31, is also that for the feast of Mary Magdalene, which would work well enough if the sermons are arranged in liturgical order, since the sermon falls between ones for the feast of SS. Peter and Paul and the Assumption.

The filiation of the manuscripts is not entirely clear. Of the seven major manuscripts for the *Sermones*: C, ONB 3928, 3931, 3934, and 4529, as well Wo 306 and 565, C is apparently quite early, or at least earlier than the other manuscripts here listed, but its text for the *Sermones* is deficient. ONB 3928 and 3931, which provide better texts, are apparently related one to the other, but not to C, as they coincide closely in their reading, with 3931 following 3928 in lacunae and mistakes, although correcting some of these, and occasionally omitting text.\(^{95}\) Likewise, ONB 3934 and 4529 seem to be related to one another, but neither seems to copy the other, although they seem to have a common source.\(^{96}\) These two pairs do not show any obvious relationship to each other. Loserth knew the manuscripts in the ONB as well as C, and he used the ONB manuscripts to correct problems in C, but with little notation of variants. The two Wolfenbüttel manuscripts, both unknown to Loserth, bear no obvious relation one to the other either, one being Polish (Wo 306) and the other Bohemian (Wo 565), although the latter contains English-type letter forms, as noted above.

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\(^{95}\) *Sermones* I, pp. xxxviii–xxxix.

\(^{96}\) Ibid., pp. xxxvii–xxxviii.
Given the current state of research, it is impossible to know the exact relationship between all of these manuscripts, as there are few clues to the path of transmission from England to the Continent, but there are at least three, quite possibly four or five, groupings (C; ONB 3928 and 3931; ONB 3934 and 4529; and Wo 306 and Wo 565). This would seem to indicate that there was more than one transmission of the sermons from England to Bohemia. The preponderance of Bohemian manuscripts is typical of Wyclif’s works, which were copied in large numbers at the University of Prague, even after a bonfire was made of his works there in 1410. There were also bonfires in London and Oxford (1410), followed by the condemnation of 267 articles taken from Wyclif’s works, but these events did not ensure the destruction of all of Wyclif’s works in England. In fact, as Anne Hudson has documented, the holdings of English libraries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries illustrates the continued interest in his works, although often by enemies rather than allies. Unfortunately, due in large part to the intentional destruction of manuscripts, but also because of the difficulties in tracing the transmission of the sermons from England to the Continent, the manuscripts that do survive do not permit the construction of a stemma.

97 Hudson, “From Oxford to Prague,” passim.
2.3 DATE

The dating of the different sets of sermons is not straightforward; there are no indications, like those in Richard FitzRalph’s sermon diary,\(^{101}\) that tell us the date on which a particular sermon was preached. We can, however, from internal evidence, determine a rough chronology for the sermons, as we now have them, and more precise dating is possible for the *Sermones quadraginta*.

The *Sermones quadraginta* represent Wyclif’s earliest known preaching, dating from the period between January 1375 and September 1379.\(^{102}\) For our purposes here, these sermons represent Wyclif’s preaching prior to what seems to have been a distinct change in his theological thinking in the period between 1379 and 1381, during which period his ideas on various issues seem to have become more radical.\(^{103}\)

The mention of contemporary events in the gospel, sanctorale and epistle sermons allows us to see a possible chronology of their redaction. If the preface to the sermons is correct when it tells us that the work was undertaken after Wyclif’s retirement from the university, then he could not have begun the redaction before October 1381, when he is last known to have been at Oxford.\(^{104}\) From the references to contemporary events, especially in the epistle sermons, it seems that Wyclif was bringing together the last of

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the epistle sermons when he became informed of the Blackfriars’ Council.\(^{105}\) It seems likely that this information would have preoccupied Wyclif for some time in the summer and fall of 1382, after which time the Despenser Crusade to Flanders took over a central position in Wyclif’s consciousness.\(^{106}\)

The question of whether the gospel, sanctorale and epistle sermons were composed or simply revised during Wyclif’s retirement is somewhat open. These three sets, as we have them, reflect Wyclif’s mature theology, as can be seen, for example, in his teaching on the Eucharist, which falls into line with what he was teaching from 1381,\(^{107}\) but this does not give any indication of whether Wyclif was working with previously written material. Likewise, during the period of his retirement, Wyclif was removed from the university context in which he had spent most of his life, and aspects of these sermons reflect this change in situation, as he tells us they are “rough sermons to the masses” (*sermones rudes ad populum*)\(^{108}\) and notes several times that the sermons ought to be changed depending on the audience, but again, this gives no conclusive evidence to how and when the sermons were composed. Michael Wilks thought that these sermons were reworked from an earlier version, although he produced no proof of this contention. His idea was that the compiler of the English Wycliffite sermon cycle\(^{109}\) had access to such a version that was slightly different from what we have now, and this explains why there are so

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\(^{106}\) See above, pp. 12–3; The Despenser Crusade features prominently in the *Sermones viginti*, which will be discussed below. On the dating of the three sets redacted at Lutterworth, see Hudson, “Wyclif’s Latin Sermons,” pp. 235–8.

\(^{107}\) See below, pp. 46–88.

\(^{108}\) *Sermones* I, praefatio.

many parallels between the two sets, but also why the English sermons differ in several respects. Pamela Gradon’s detailed study of the relationship between the two sermon cycles has given some evidence that Wyclif’s sets could have existed in an earlier version.

Perhaps the strongest evidence in this case can be found in what the English sermons leave out. The English sermons make no use of material that exists also as separate treatises. Four such tracts, *De sex jugis*, the *De incarcerandis fidelibus*, the *De religione privata* II and the *De eucharistia minor confessio*, are incorporated into Wyclif’s Latin sermons. Anne Hudson has argued that the first of these existed as an independent treatise prior to being introduced into Wyclif’s sermons, presumably during their redaction at Lutterworth, as the material makes more sense as one piece as opposed to being spread across five disparate sermons. The situation with the other pieces is less clear. The *De incarcerandis fidelibus* seems to fit well with its sermon, and without this material, the sermon would be unusually short. The *De religione privata* II, however, seems to fit less well with the sermon in which it is found and makes the sermon abnormally long. The material, however, is contained in all extant copies of the epistle sermons. The direction of borrowing for the material contained in these two tracts is not clear, but Anne Hudson thinks that the material has been incorporated into the sermons rather than taken

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113 *Sermones* III.27, pp. 209/11–212/40.
from them. The whole of a sermon on the epistle for Corpus Christi, less its opening paragraph, is found appended to four Bohemian copies of the *De eucharistia minor confessio*. It seems, in this case, that the material included in the Bohemian copies has been borrowed from the sermon and not the other way around.

What is more striking is that the English sermons do not refer to the material included in a series of sermons on the Ten Commandments, especially since in other respects, the English sermons follow those of Wyclif’s Latin sermons quite closely. It seems unlikely to me that the material would have been left out intentionally in the English sermons, and I would, on this basis, tentatively argue that the material on the Decalogue was not in the Latin collection which informed the compilation of the English sermons, and that this material most probably was added to already written sermons, probably during Wyclif’s retirement to Lutterworth. It could be argued that since the English Sermons cover this material extensively elsewhere, the compiler decided that no other material was necessary, but such repetition of material was not uncommon in sermon collections, and Wyclif himself repeatedly discusses the Decalogue. It seems safe to conclude provisionally, then, that the material on the commandments was composed for the sermons themselves, and probably added to them during a later redaction of the

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116 Hudson, “Wyclif’s Latin Sermons,” p. 232: “In both cases it seems reasonable enough to assert Wyclif’s responsibility for the present state of the sermons, though to accept that he was incorporating already existent material.”


118 *Sermones* I.13–22, on which, see below, pp. 168–98.


sermons at Lutterworth. However, this conclusion need not apply to the rest of the sermons in these sets, whose composition must remain something of a mystery. Suffice it to say that, as we have them, these sermons on the Decalogue date to the period after Wyclif’s retirement from Oxford, and before his concerns with Bishop Despenser’s Crusade came to the fore, which is to say, sometime between late October 1381 and the fall of 1382.

The Sermones viginti date from the final years of Wyclif’s life, and the Despenser Crusade to Flanders was in the forefront of his consciousness when they were being composed. Despite receiving bulls from Urban VI in March of 1381, it was not until the fall of 1382 that Despenser received the support of Parliament in his effort to raise troops, and it was only with this support, that the preaching of this crusade gained momentum. It seems to have been around this time that Wyclif began to take interest in the enterprise, as it seems to have taken over as his bête noire from the Blackfriars Council of May 1382. Bishop Despenser’s forces left England 16 May 1383, and the bishop returned in disgrace to face impeachment in Parliament, 26 October of that same year. Wyclif, however, never mentions the Bishop’s impeachment, but rather the evils of the contemporary church which the crusade exemplified. It seems likely then, that Wyclif was finished with these sermons by the late fall of 1383. We can, in fact, be a little more precise. The sermon for St. Andrew’s Day included in this set seems to have been intended for use on 30 November 1382, and the final sermon in the set is probably for use on 1 November 1383, the feast of All Saints. Ten other sermons can be grouped in

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121 See above, pp. 12–3.
between these two, giving us a probable date of fall 1382 to fall 1383 for twelve of the twenty sermons.\textsuperscript{122}

The purpose here has not been to discuss precise dating for all of the sermons, as such is not possible. Rather, what we can see is a rough chronology of the composition of the various sets. The first to be composed were the \textit{Sermones quadraginta}, followed by the dominical gospel, the sanctorale, and the dominical epistle sermons, and finally the \textit{Sermones viginti}. This is important to establish since the first of these sets was composed before the period in which Wyclif’s ideas have been seen to become more radical and controversial. We should expect to see, then, less controversial material in the \textit{quadraginta} and more in the other sermons, and this is, in fact, the case, as we shall see in Chapter Two below.

\textbf{2.4 Place}

Where Wyclif preached cannot precisely be determined, for there are again no clear indications, such as those of FitzRalph’s diary, that would tell us beyond doubt the location of Wyclif’s preaching activities. There is, however, some evidence from contemporary sources, as well as one or two reasonable inferences that can be made from what we know about Wyclif’s life and the curriculum and requirements of the universities. For those sermons which can be dated precisely, this date can also give us some clues as to where they were preached, as we know something of Wyclif’s movements, although, again, the exact place where a particular sermon was preached will not be possible to ascertain. Thomas Walsingham, in his \textit{Chronicon Anglie} and \textit{Historia

\textsuperscript{122} Hudson, “Wyclif’s Latin Sermons,” pp. 240–2. The date of individual sermons will be discussed below, chapter 2.
Anglicana, speaks of Wyclif’s preaching activity in London. Some scholars, notably Joseph Dahmus, question Walsingham’s reliability, but while his story about Wyclif’s preaching in London contains exaggeration and a good deal of hindsight, Anne Hudson has given fairly convincing reasons to accept at least that Wyclif did preach in London.

Wyclif must certainly have also preached at the university, both as a student of theology, and after his inception as doctor of theology. Wyclif also presumably preached in his parish of Lutterworth, especially after he retired there fulltime in 1381. There is no way, however, to know which sermons were preached in which location. The most that can be said, given the rough chronology of the differing sets as outlined above, is that the *Sermones quadraginta* were likely preached at the university and in London, and that the *Sermones viginti* were likely preached in Lutterworth, although Hudson thinks that the audience addressed in these sermons “seems to be one nearer to the central powers of church and state than could be found in Lutterworth.”

It is impossible, given the unclear history of their composition, to locate the gospel, sanctorale, and epistle sermons geographically.

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2.5 LANGUAGE

There are no indications within the sermons themselves as to the language of delivery, but there is some evidence that Wyclif, on occasion, preached in English. While what we have of Wyclif’s preaching, at least everything that can be without doubt assigned to his pen, is written in Latin, this is in itself no indication of the language in which the sermons were actually delivered, nor was vernacular preaching at all unusual or problematic in the fourteenth-century. There is some evidence for particular, concrete instances of Wyclif’s preaching in the vernacular. The first is from the *Chronicon angliae* of Thomas Walsingham, who says that Wyclif preached to “simplices auditores ... simplices quosdam Londoniensium cives...” Margaret Aston points to Wyclif’s own assertion in the *De veritate sacrae scripturae* that he had communicated “in lingua duplici,” albeit we only have the Latin version of the tract to which he refers. There is other evidence from the *Trialogus*, a work from later in his life, that Wyclif communicated to the laity his doctrine of the Eucharist in the vernacular: “But there are many errors on the question of the quiddity of this sensible sacrament ... against which I have inveighed elsewhere both scholastically and also in the vernacular....”

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128 To take just the one example, Archbishop Richard FitzRalph of Armagh relates that he preached in English, see Aubrey Gwynn, “The Sermon-Diary of Richard FitzRalph, Archbishop of Armagh,” *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 44 (1937/8): pp. 1–57. A handful of FitzRalph’s sermons will be discussed in chapter 5 below. See also, Wenzel, *Sermon Collections*, pp. 10 and pp. 31–5 for his discussion of FitzRalph.
131 *Trialogus*, pp. 247–8, quoted and translated by Aston, “Wyclif and the Vernacular,” p. 321, emphasis mine. See also, Anne Hudson, “Wyclif and the English Language,” in *Wyclif in His Times*, edited by Anthony Kenny (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986): pp. 88–90. Hudson is convinced that Wyclif communicated his ideas in English, and that, even more importantly, he was part of, and the instigation for, a turn towards a vernacular theology. Siegfried Wenzel also thinks that
thinks that Wyclif is referring to a text here, but does not exclude the possibility of oral delivery: “This promise could, of course, have been fulfilled by speech as well as writing, but Wyclif was in the habit of cross-referencing his written works, and it seems clear from other references later in the Trialogus that he had texts in mind here.”\(^{132}\) Aston points to three texts that might fulfill this role,\(^{133}\) but again, even if the reference is to a written work, the point is that Wyclif was not opposed to expressing himself in the vernacular; in fact, the situation was quite the opposite. Wyclif valued the English language, and instilled this appreciation for the vernacular in his followers.\(^{134}\) We should probably, despite the fact that his preaching has come down to us preserved in Latin, acknowledge that he preached in English, as well as in Latin, as did many of his contemporaries.

### 2.6 Audience

The audience for the various sermons is as difficult to ascertain as the location where they were delivered, and the language in which they were preached, and is mostly based on conjecture. If Walsingham is credible, than Wyclif was probably preaching to mixed audiences in London, audiences of clergy (both regular and secular), nobles, and commoners. The same is probably true at the university in the church of St. Mary, although presumably the mixture here would have been weighted more towards clergy

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\(^{133}\) Ibid., pp. 321–25.

\(^{134}\) Hudson, “Wyclif and the English Language,” passim.
than laity. The audience at Lutterworth would most likely have been predominantly lay, and removed from the political scheming and academic disputes of London and Oxford.\textsuperscript{135}

Despite Wyclif’s protestation that the gospel, sanctorale and epistle sermons are “sermones rudes ad populum,”\textsuperscript{136} there is much material in these three sets that would have been quite difficult for a rural audience to understand, such as Wyclif’s erudite discussions of lightning, the properties of salt, and the properties of light.\textsuperscript{137} It seems that a rural audience was farthest from Wyclif’s mind in the epistle sermons, where he occasionally says things like “for what does it avail to preach to uneducated people the subtleties of the uncreated Trinity?”\textsuperscript{138} The situation is much the same in the Sermones viginti, which seem to have been composed with an audience “nearer to the central powers of church and state than could have been found in Lutterworth.”\textsuperscript{139} Nonetheless, such indications as these do not give us a definitive answer as to even the intended audience, as the sermons could have been preached to any audience, with the contents slightly altered to fit the situation.

Six of the Sermones quadraginta contain the address “fraternitati vestre,”\textsuperscript{140} which would lead one to assume that Wyclif was addressing an audience made up of those in religious


\textsuperscript{136} Sermones I, unpaginated praefatio, line 11.


\textsuperscript{139} Hudson, “Wyclif’s Latin Sermons,” p. 242.

orders, either monks or friars.\textsuperscript{141} Five out of these six form a series within the *quadraginta*, delivered between Sexuagesima and Good Friday 1376, covering many matters that would have interested a clerical audience, whether secular or regular, but not to the exclusion of the laity. These include such topics as the duty to preach (IV.31), the theological virtues (IV.34), penance (IV.35), pride and humility (IV.38), and Christ’s passion (IV.39).\textsuperscript{142} The last of the sermons to use this form of address fits into a series of sermons on the commandments, which again could have been delivered to almost any audience. William Mallard, citing A. B. Emden as his authority, has argued that Wyclif could not have been addressing a group of religious, as friars or monks would not likely invite a secular to preach to them. He likewise rejects the possibility of these sermons being delivered to a synod, as the term is too suggestive of a formal corporation. He instead argues that Wyclif was most likely addressing a group of secular clergy, such as the association of secular priests in London.\textsuperscript{143} If such is the case, these sermons might represent “a kernel of truth in the exaggerated claims for Wyclif’s ‘order of Poor Priests.’”\textsuperscript{144} However, “notice that the anonymous Franciscan author of the *Fasciculus morum* much earlier in the century addressed his dedicatee as ‘vestram fraternelam caritatem.’”\textsuperscript{145} It should also be remembered that Wyclif was on very friendly terms with


\textsuperscript{142} Mallard, “Dating the *Sermones Quadraginta*,” pp. 92–4.

\textsuperscript{143} Mallard, “Dating the *Sermones Quadraginta*,” p. 92.


the mendicant orders when these sermons were being preached, and so we should not
dismiss out of hand the possibility of an audiences of friars.\textsuperscript{146}

None of the sermons give us a clear indication of whom their audience, either intended or
real, was. Even those sermons that give us our best clues as to the composition of their
audience leave room for ambiguity and doubt. The most we can say about the public for
the sermons is that there are elements within them that would appeal to various
audiences, but that there is nothing that gives us a firm answer as to who these were
intended to be or who they actually were.

2.7 Types of Collection

The \textit{Sermones quadraginta} are more representative of Wyclif’s actual delivery than are
the gospel, sanctorale and epistle sermons.\textsuperscript{147} William Mallard argues that the
\textit{quadraginta} are in an intermediate state in the editorial process, seeing them as hastily
put together by Wyclif before he left Oxford, or “as a task cut short by illness and death
at Lutterworth.”\textsuperscript{148} Anne Hudson, on the other hand, sees the group as something of a
miscellany of sermons that another editor had to hand and tried to put in some sort of
logical order, taking a round number of sermons and ordering them by liturgical occasion.
Hudson, on the whole, seems more convincing in this case. Her strongest evidence is that
the editor added cross references, but left in all other indications of the older order of the
sermons (i.e., their chronological order), all of which are verbal (e.g., \textit{sermone proximo})

\textsuperscript{146} There were, for example, the four mendicant theologians who accompanied Wyclif to his trial
at St. Paul’s in February 1377, the year after these sermons were preached. See above, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{148} Mallard, “Clarity and Dilemma,” pp. 20–1.
and would, therefore be more difficult for a reviser to spot and alter. This sort of light editorial activity, whether or not Wyclif was the editor, means that we have something close to what Wyclif actually preached, rather than the polished work of a revised copy of the sermons.

The gospel, sanctorale, and epistle sermons, on the other hand, seem to form a model sermon collection, for the use as exemplars for other preachers. The inclusion of such notes as “the material of the sermon should be expanded as it is expedient for the people listening,” and “this material ought to be expanded as the simplicity of the people allows,” are clear indications that these sermons were intended for the use of other preachers. The inclusion of a preface to the sermons explaining their stated purpose also points in this direction, as does the comprehensiveness of at least the gospel and epistle sermons, which both cover the entire liturgical year. The case of the sanctorale sermons is a little different in that it is much shorter than would normally be the case. It covers the major biblical saints, but includes only two non-biblical saints, Sylvester

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151 See Sermones I. 130/30-1: “(Et dilatanda est materia sermonis secundum quod expedit populo audienti.)” and Sermones I. 133/11-12:“(Et huius materia est secundum exigenciam ruditatis populi dilatanda.)” See further English Wycliffite Sermons, III, p cvii, n. 30. Hudson provides the following list of sermons with such indications: Sermones I. 35/29-31, 128/3-4, 130/30-1, 192/12-14, 223/1-4; II. 79/12-20, 219/30-1; III. 145/9-10. See also Hudson, “Wyclif’s Latin Sermons,” p. 233 and n. 48, p. 233, where she adds the following: I. 38/15, 133/11, 165/1, 197/3; II. 158/36, 159/6, 202/21, 226/30, 247/5, 282/36, 285/11, 419/23, and 459/19.
152 Sermones II.6.
and Martin. Nor does Wyclif provide sermons for all of the lections for the common masses of the saints, but it is not possible to discern his rationale for the selection of lessons. Nor is the use of such sermons particularly easy to identify: “Grosseteste might be a candidate for celebration under the heading of a common of a confessor and bishop (nos. 50-51), but to provide a name for a Wycliffite confessor and abbot (no. 55) or virgin and martyr (no. 58) taxes ingenuity.” Nonetheless, the comprehensiveness of the cycle is an indication of its possible use as a model for other preachers, providing, as it does, material for all occasions, or at least all of those occasions which Wyclif saw necessary.

The Sermones viginti are another miscellaneous set compiled by an editor other than Wyclif, probably after Wyclif’s death in 1384. They were probably gathered in much the same way as the Sermones quadraginta. Unlike the quadraginta, however, the viginti do not seem to have an overarching organizational scheme. These can likely be seen as analogous to the quadraginta in the way that they were collected. That is to say that they have had some cross references added, but there has been no major revision of the text. These sermons, then, represent our closest approximation of Wyclif’s preaching during his declining years.

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153 Sermones II.17.
2.8 Form

By the end of the fourteenth century, there were two main forms of preaching; the homily or “ancient form,” and the “scholastic,” or “modern,” or “university” sermon. This latter form of preaching was based on a small section of biblical text, the thema, which would then be developed at great length by means of a main division and quite often a series of subdivisions. The former dealt with an entire passage of scripture, which was usually dealt with first in the literal sense, and then also in the mystical or moral sense. Wyclif rejected the scholastic form, and his sermons generally follow the ancient, homiletic form, with more or less space devoted to one of the two senses. In almost all of his sermons Wyclif also included a discussion of dubia, doubts or questions arising from the text. In this he was consciously following St. Augustine. The sermons that survive from the fourteenth and fifteenth century are mostly scholastic sermons. The artes predicandi, manuals on preaching, deal mostly with this form, although they do show an awareness that the homiletic form was used in earlier times, as well as in contemporary Italy. It seems that in his choice of sermon form, Wyclif differed from the majority of his contemporaries, although he was not alone, as the homily form was used

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158 For this section, see Wenzel, Latin Sermon Collections, pp. 11 – 16, and Spencer, English Preaching, pp. 235–47.

159 A telling comment on Wyclif’s position on sermon form is found in Sermones IV.31, p. 265/27–266/1: “Nunc enim si quis loquitur non quasi sermones Dei sed gracia exemplandi, predicabat gesta, poemata vel fabulas ext[ra] corpus scripture, vel predicando scripturam dividet ipsam ultra minima naturalia et alligabit more zizannico per colores rithmicos quousque non appareat textus scripture, sed sermo proprius predicantis tamquam auctoris et inventoris primarii. Et ex ista affeccione diabolica qua quilibet appetit a se ipso et non ab alio habere talia insurgit tota vicia novitas huius mundi; propter hoc autem fiunt divisiones sermonum, divisiones ornamentorum et aliorum artificialium ultra solitum; et non dubium quin iste divisiones vel causant vel prenostican divisiones in moribus.”

160 Wyclif writes the following in his preface to the Sermones: “Primo autem in dominicis sermonibus supposito sensu literali intendo breviter sensum misticum explanare et secundo more Augustini salutabo dubia que ex evangelio possent capi,” Sermones I, second page of unpaginated preface, ll. 13–16.
by some late medieval English preachers, such as Wyclif’s one-time follower, Philip Repingdon. In the end, the style of preaching seems to have been a matter of individual choice, with Wyclif and some others choosing to follow the less dominant form of the homily.

While there are more questions than answers as far as the details surrounding Wyclif’s preaching, and much confusion where answers are available, it is plain that the preaching of the Word of God was of the utmost importance to Wyclif. In this, he did not differ from his contemporaries so much in intention as in content. We have had an edition, insufficient as it is, of the Sermones for more than a hundred years, but the contents of Wyclif’s preaching is still generally unknown. It is to this content that we now turn in the next chapter.

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161 Repingdon will be discussed below, pp. 274–81.
162 See Wenzel, Sermon Collections, pp. 354–69.
Chapter 2

Wyclif’s Preaching on the Sacraments

Various interpreters of Wyclif have sought to frame him either as an arch-heretic or as a proto-reformer. The purpose of this chapter will explore what Wyclif actually preached, letting his own words inform our opinion of him. Instead of trying to make Wyclif fit into some preconceived category of heresiarch or proto-reformer, I will proceed with a close reading of several of Wyclif’s sermons. That way, it is hoped, Wyclif can speak without the filter of our preconceptions.

In an effort to make this manageable, however, some limitation of the number of sermons was necessary. Therefore, I have chosen to focus on the pastoral topics elaborated by Siegfried Wenzel in his important study of late medieval sermon collections, which he based on the pastoral syllabi of Robert Grosseteste, in his statutes for the Diocese of Lincoln (1239?), and of Archbishop John Peckham, in the canon ‘De informatione simplicium sacerdotum,’ from the Lambeth Council of 1281, as well as on other pastoral literature. Wenzel’s list includes the following pastoral topics: the creed, the ten commandments, the beatitudes, the seven works of mercy, the seven deadly sins, the seven virtues, the seven sacraments, the five bodily senses, the Pater noster, and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

This approach was chosen for three main reasons. First, these topics were, in most instances, uncontroversial. The purpose of preaching on them was to convey the basic

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elements of the Christian faith to the laity; thus the insistence by church officials that they often be the subject of preaching. This means that Wyclif’s preaching on these topics was not in itself unusual. but if he were to infuse them with controversial elements, which he in fact did, as we shall see, then this made his preaching unusual. Second, these topics were popular amongst Wyclif’s contemporaries and thus offer a basis for comparison. This is especially so because they form the basics of the Christian faith, and should have been presented in much the same way from one preacher to the next, barring any stylistic differences. Third, the elaboration of these topics grew out of the reform movement that included the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) under Pope Innocent III (r.1198–1216), one of Wyclif’s favourite targets for condemnation. Wyclif’s understanding of how and what should be preached differs from that of his contemporaries rather in his understanding of these topics than in their importance to his own reforming movement. Wyclif and his opponents agreed that the laity should be taught about the Eucharist, for instance, but they decisely did not agree on what the contents of this teaching ought to be. Just how and why Wyclif and many of his contemporaries agreed and disagreed on these issues will become clearer in the next four chapters.

This chapter and the next two will be organised around the list of sermon topics enumerated above. Each will be dealt with in turn, beginning with that most often discussed, the sacraments, and working through to the least often discussed, the five bodily senses. The sacraments will be dealt with in three subsections: one on the Eucharist, one on confession and penance, one on baptism; the other sacraments are not

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4 Peckham ordered them to be preached four times a year, see Powicke and Cheney, *Councils and Synods*, 2:900–1.
discussed at any length in the sermons. The other topics will be dealt with in their own sections, because they do not lend themselves to subdivision in the same way as the sacraments. Several sermons deal with more than one topic at a time, and these will be discussed according to which topic is most prominent in the sermon. That is, if the main subject of a sermon is, for instance, one of the ten commandments, but it also includes material on the Eucharist, it will be dealt with most thoroughly in the section pertaining to the commandments.

1. The Sacraments

1.1 The Eucharist

Wyclif’s preaching on the Eucharist is eclectic in the extreme. It is the most discussed pastoral subject; there are twenty-two sermons, spread across all four cycles of sermons, in which he teaches something about the church’s central sacrament. However, it is in his later sermons that Wyclif seems most concerned with it. Only one of the Sermones quadraginta has anything to say about the subject; the rest of the sermons date, at least in the form we have them, from after his rejection of transubstantiation as a valid explanation of the presence of Christ in the sacrament, a rejection which he had made by 1380. Wyclif’s doctrine of the Eucharist, especially in his preaching, is characterized by this rejection of transubstantiation rather than by construction of a systematic

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5 There are allusions to the sacrament of marriage, but these are not substantial. Marriage is dealt with only in the allegorical understanding of the marriage of Christ and the Church, most often used only as an allusion to the mystical union between the two. See, for example, Sermones I.2, p. 12/3–7, I.44, pp. 295/36–296/2, II.59, p. 437/27–31, III.41, p. 351/15–16, IV.5, p. 43/14–21, IV.18, p. 148/1–2. The connection is so ubiquitous and commonplace that Wyclif seems to feel it needs no great explanation. The other sacraments of holy orders, confirmation, and extreme unction are not discussed at any length in Wyclif’s preaching.


understanding of Eucharistic change. What this entails in practice is a polemical bent to almost all of Wyclif’s preaching on the Eucharist. The polemical and occasional nature of his preaching on the sacrament almost defies systematic study, as Wyclif had occasion to use whatever weapon lay to hand in his attacks on transubstantiation.

It should be noted from the start that Wyclif does not use the word transubstantiation in his *Sermones*, but his rejection of this doctrine, outlined in his long, academic tract *De eucharistia*, clearly underlies his later preaching on the topic, despite his use of euphemism. That he does not come out directly to say that transubstantiation is a false doctrine is possibly a (rare) sign of caution on Wyclif’s part, but, as we shall see, Wyclif was ready to name names, so the fact that he did not explicitly use the word transubstantiation does not mean that he did not reject the doctrine as a valid explanation of Eucharistic change, nor would it have been difficult for the better informed in his audience to see through the thin veil and recognize his attacks for what they were.9

In what follows, I shall attempt to broadly categorize Wyclif’s preaching on the Eucharist. Wyclif’s sermons that contain teaching on the Eucharist fall into two main groups: 1) those concerned principally with the sacrament itself, offering substantial commentary on the topic; and 2) those concerned mainly with polemics against the friars, the pope, or the hierarchy, in which their errors concerning the Eucharist are enumerated along with their many other faults. Each of these groups will be dealt with in turn.

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9 See below, pp. 74–87.
1.1.1 The Teaching of the Eucharist

The one sermon of the *quadraginta* on the gospel for Easter Sunday is concerned not only with the Eucharist, but also with the sacrament of penance, which makes a good deal of sense as his congregants would no doubt have had their annual confession quite recently, and because the two sacraments were linked quite closely, Wyclif implying here in this sermon that confession and penance are necessary to proper reception of the Eucharist.\(^\text{10}\) It is quite long, thirteen pages in the Wyclif Society edition, and dates from 18 April 1378. It is in expounding the mystical sense of the *thema* taken from the gospel of the mass, Mark 16:2, “they come to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen,” that Wyclif has occasion to discuss the Eucharist:

> But for the mystical sense to the feeding of this people I note that the sepulchre is the place where the body, which before was dead, is hidden, which, since it is fitting for the Eucharist, it appears that this can be called a memorial. And since the greater part of you will visit this sepulchre today through God’s grace, it appears that it is pertinent to say to you how you will worthily devote this service to God. Which doctrine our *thema* teaches in that sense that everyone communicating today should come to the memorial of the Eucharist bearing only justice in his or her mind.\(^\text{11}\)

Those who are going to partake in the sacrament must do so with a clean mind, and the rest of the sermon, developed around an analogy concerning four properties of the sun, is spent demonstrating how this can be accomplished. The tone of the sermon becomes very scientific as Wyclif shows his erudition in discussing astronomy.\(^\text{12}\) The points that Wyclif seeks to make are rather more simple: one must love not only the Trinity and the martyrs,

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\(^{10}\) *Sermones* IV.42, pp. 343–55.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., p. 344/22–31: “Sed pro sensu mystico ad pascendum hunc populum noto quod sepulcrum est locus quo corpus quod prius erat mortuum est absconditum; quod cum conveniat eukaristie, patet quod ipsa potest dici monumentum; et cum maior pars vestri visitabit per Dei graciam hodie hoc sepulcrum, patet quod pertinet dicere vobis quomodo digno impendetis Deo illud servicium; quam doctrinam docet thema ad sensum istum quod omnes communicandi hodie veniant ad monumentum eukaristie orto sole iusticie in sua mente.” Cf. *Sermones* I.24, p. 164/9–28.

\(^{12}\) *Sermones* IV.42, pp. 344/35–345/7.
confessors and virgins, but all creation, one’s friends, enemies, those who have gone before, and those who will come after;\textsuperscript{13} one must love justice;\textsuperscript{14} one must, like God, not be an acceptor of persons, but treat each according to his or her merits;\textsuperscript{15} and, as light tends to roundness and spreads, so we ought to grow in virtue, avoiding corners where lies are found.\textsuperscript{16}

These discussions lead Wyclif into digressions on several other topics, the most important of which for our purposes here considers the nature of the Eucharist for which he is preparing his listeners. That the sun indifferently diffuses its light is analogous to God’s omnipresence:

For although God is everywhere presently, potentially and essentially, He is not polluted by the filth of body or spirit, since it would be shameful that he who does not take cleanliness from a creature were to contract uncleanness from a creature. Nonetheless, in the same way a cloud eclipses the light of the sun in part, with the remaining light sent back, in the same way sin carries off the inhabitation of God, through the grace of God, with benevolence remaining through preservation and common influence.\textsuperscript{17}

In much the same way, the Eucharist should not be understood to be in its nature the body of the Lord, since it would then be open to corruption and division. “From which it appears that the Christian perceives the body of the Lord in this venerable sacrament by mental and not bodily sense.”\textsuperscript{18} Transubstantiation, along with the doctrines of the Trinity

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 345/7–346/16.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 346/29–34.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., pp. 349/34–350/8.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., pp. 353/33–354/19.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 350/10–18: “Quamvis enim Deus sit ubique presencialiter, potencialiter et essentialiter, tamen non maculatur ex feditate corporali vel spirituali, cum indignum sit quod ille qui a creatura non capit mundiciam a creatura contrahat inmundiciam, verumptamen sicut nubes eclipsat lumen solis secundum partem remanente lumine remisso, sic peccatum subtrahit inhabitacionem Dei per graciam remanente Dei benevolencia per conservacionem et communem influenciam.”
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 350/19–28: “Et quoddammodo proporcionaliter dicendum est de isto venerabili sacramento; pro quo videtur primo notandum fideli quod illa res alba, rotunda, dura, gravis et
and the Incarnation, are the most difficult points of the faith to believe and understand. The first of these, it seems to Wyclif, leads many people to unnecessary difficulties and errors, some thinking “that the bread is the body of Christ, these that the bread will be made and will be the body of Christ, these that the bread will be converted into the body of Christ by the dropping away of the bread in whatever part, and thus concerning many fictions on account of which the infidels disdain our faith.” It is enough for Wyclif “for a Christian to believe that the body of Christ is in a spiritual, sacramental manner at every point of the consecrated host, and that to that body, after God, is honour to be bestowed, and in the third place to that sensible sacrament is, as it were, an image or sepulchre of the body of Christ. In the same way we worship the cross of the Lord, not believing that that cross is the body of the Lord or a part of him.” It seems that Wyclif has begun to move away from transubstantiation in this sermon and at this point in his career, some three years before he was forced to leave Oxford over his teaching on the Eucharist.

There are two further points worth making here. The first is that Wyclif turns to the science of optics to explain how it is that the body of Christ can be spiritually or sacramentally present to every point of the consecrated host; just as a created nature can be present in similitude to all points of a mirror, so it is easy for an uncreated nature to be present in the consecrated host; just as a created nature can be present in similitude to all points of a mirror, so it is easy for an uncreated nature to be present in the consecrated host.

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Ibid., p. 351/19–23: “putantes hii quod panis est corpus Christi, hii quod panis fiet et erit corpus Christi, hii quod panis convertetur in corpus Christi per desicionem panis secundum quamlibet eius partem, et sic de multis ficticiis ex quibus infideles despiciunt fidem nostram.”

Ibid., p. 351/24–31: “Videtur ergo satis christiano credere quod corpus Christi sit quodammodo spirituali sacramentali ad omnem punctum hostie consecrate et quod illi corpori sit post Deum honor principaliter tribuendus et tercio loco illi sacramento sensibili tamquam ymagini vel sepulcro corporis Christi. Sic enim adoramus crucem Domini non credentes quod illa crux sit corpus Domini vel pars eius.”

present to all points of the host.\textsuperscript{22} The second point is that, for Wyclif, this illustration from optics explains the classical definition of a sacrament: “And thus the body of Christ is both a sacrament because a sign of insensible grace, and the \textit{res sacramenti} because it is signified by the host, which is the \textit{sacramentum tantum}, just as grace is the \textit{tantum res sacramenti}.”\textsuperscript{23}

Throughout his preaching after this, Wyclif consistently denies the validity of transubstantiation as an explanation for what occurs in the Eucharist. There are numerous reasons for Wyclif’s rejection of transubstantiation, just as there are numerous ways in which he develops arguments against it. The rest of his preaching on the Eucharist will delineate these, and I will separate these by grouping sermons that use the same type of

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Sermones} IV.42, p. 352/17–29: “Unde ad concipiendum quomodo corpus Christi sit sacramentaliter, non dimensionaliter in hoc venerabili sacramento, videtur conferre sentencia perspectivorum dicencium quod speculo mundo proportionaliter faciei objecto est ad omnem punctum talem speculi plena similitudo faciei, licet unus videat in uno loco et alius in alio secundum diversitatem radii incidience et reflexi. Si ergo natura creatum potest facere similitudinem suam vel verius esse multiplicatam ad omnem punctum dati medi et speculi secundum esse intentionabile, facilis est nature increata facere corpus sui suppositi esse sacramentaliter secundum totam ad omnem punctum sensibilis sacramenti.” See Heather Phillips, “John Wyclif and the Optics of the Eucharist,” in \textit{From Ockham to Wyclif}: pp. 245–58. Metaphors about mirrors appear throughout Wyclif’s works, including in several sermons, as mirrors seem to have held a particular fascination for him. The explanation of fraction using the analogy of a mirror is found also in the \textit{Summa Qui bene presunt}, apparently drawn from Augustine, David d’Avray, \textit{The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons diffused from Paris before 1300} (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985): p. 85, n. 4.

argumentation, although there is, as always, overlap, because Wyclif is fond of overwhelming his opponents with attacks from multiple angles.

Among the various arguments against transubstantiation are those in the sermons that appeal to Christology as a way of explaining the Eucharist.\textsuperscript{24} A good example of this sort is a sermon for the Missa pro defunctis.\textsuperscript{25} Here, Wyclif argues from the classical definition of Christ’s dual nature, arguing that Christ’s humanity and divinity are joined in a hypostatic union “ypostatice copulatus,” which he grounds in the words of Martha, asking that her brother, Lazarus, be brought back to life, “but now I also know that whatever you ask of God, God will give to you” (John 11:22). This saying of Martha proves for Wyclif that Jesus is both God (being able to keep her brother from death) and man (praying to God to receive whatever he asks), and thus joined together in a hypostatic union, one person with two natures.\textsuperscript{26} Wyclif draws a parallel between those heretics who fail to understand the dual nature of the person of Christ and those who fail to understand the Eucharist.\textsuperscript{27} Wyclif identifies two groups of heretics: those who think

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Sermones} IV.2.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., p. 13/1–7: “Et istud dictum implicans ordinacionem Christi eternam confitetur eius divinitatem, et statim secundo eius vera humanitas explicatur dum dicitur: \textit{Sed et nunc scio quia quaecunque poposceris a Deo dabit tibi Deus; ubi patet quod Christus sic orasset Deum nec tam certe obtinuisset quidquid poposcerit, nisi fuisse verus homo deitati ypostatice copulatus.”
that Christ is only God (or an angel) and only assumed a “fantastical body”;\(^\text{28}\) and those who think that he was only human.\(^\text{29}\) More dangerous, according to Wyclif, are those heretics that conceive the Eucharist improperly:

And likewise, but more seriously, heretics rave concerning the Eucharist, as these more recent and more dangerous heretics believe that the body of Christ is in the sacrament, but that same sacrament they do not believe to be a fantastical body, but in fact an accident without a subject (about which they are ignorant) or nothing. And consequently they need to dream up many lies. Since, however, they need to concede the destruction or separation of the essential materials, they pretend that the totality of essential material that God produced at the beginning of the world and ordained to be perpetual and incorruptible without that cause (so they say) ceases to be in so far as it is taken from the bread or wine that is converted into the body of the Lord or the blood.\(^\text{30}\)

Wyclif had long argued against annihilation in the Eucharist. He held that to annihilate any substance would also be to annihilate its accidents, not to mention the entire created universe, because to annihilate a substance would be to corrupt its eternal idea, which Wyclif identifies as its causal principle, which is essentially God.\(^\text{31}\)

The parallel with the Christological heresies is extremely important. The Incarnation of the Word, more specifically, the hypostatic union of the two natures, human and divine, in the one person of the Christ, provides Wyclif a way of understanding the nature of the

\(^{28}\) This would make these heretics followers of something like Docetism, a heresy which posited that Christ only \textit{seemed} (Greek, \textit{δόκεω} – ‘I seem’) to have a human body and to suffer. See \textit{ODCC}, p. 493, for a brief discussion.

\(^{29}\) These heretics would be something like the Arians, who denied the divinity of Christ. See \textit{ODCC}, pp. 99–100.

\(^{30}\) \textit{Sermones}, IV.2, p.14/16–28: “Et proportionaliter sed gravius delirant heretici in materia de Eukaristia, ut hii recenciores heretici et plus periculosi credunt quod corpus Christi sit in situ sacramenti, sed ipsum sacramentum credunt non esse corpus fantasticum sed unum accident sine subiecto (quod nesciunt) sive nihil; et consequenter necessitantur somniare plura mendacia; cum autem necessitantur concedere destruccionem vel desicionem materialis essencie, fingunt quod tota essencia materie quam Deus produxit in mundi principio et ordinavit esse perpetuam et incorruptibilem sine causa illa (inquiunt), de tanto desit quantum assumptum est de pane vel vino in corpus domini vel sanguinem convertendum.”

Eucharist. Wyclif was not, however, the first to bring the two subjects together; Lothario of Segni (Pope Innocent III, 1198–1216), in his *De sacro altaris mysterio*, describes what takes place in the Eucharist as a conversion by way of transition, rejecting both consubstantiation and annihilation, arguing that the substance of the bread and wine is changed into the true substance of the body and blood of Christ. But whereas Wyclif sees the conversion of the Eucharistic elements and the hypostatic union as somewhat analogous, Lothario distinguishes this sort of conversion or change from the hypostatic union; “the difference here ... is that when the Word became flesh he remained what he was, for he assumed flesh; he did not pass into it. In the case of the Eucharist the situation is just the opposite, since the bread becomes flesh as it ceases to be what it was and passes into flesh.”

Wyclif by contrast preaches: “indeed the truth and the faith of the church is that just as Christ is at once God and man, so this sacrament is at once the body of Christ and bread; the bread naturally and the body of Christ sacramentally.”

A main concern of Wyclif here is to protect Christ’s impassability: “and just as the bread, divided into however many parts, remains continuously that same body, so the body of Christ, divided in to however many parts informing the soul, remains continuously that same man. And just as the divinity of Christ is not enlarged or made smaller because of the variation of the humanity, so the body of Christ is not enlarged or made smaller because

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33 Levy, *Scriptural Logic*, pp. 168–9. See *De sacro altaris mysterio*; PL 217; 871c-d: “Nam verbum manens quod ita erat factum est caro, quod carnem assumpsit non transivit in carnem, sed panis desinens esse quod erat ita fit caro, quod transit in carnem, non assumptum carnem.”
34 *Sermones* IV.2, p. 15/8–11: “Veritas quidem est et fide ecclesie quod sicut Christus est simul Deus et homo, sic hoc sacramentum est simul corpus Christi et panis; panis naturaliter et corpus Christi sacramentaliter.”
of the variation in the bread.” Another concern is to assure his listeners that he is not positing a hypostatic union between the bread and the body of Christ. What he says, pointing to the secret of the mass for the second mass of Christmas, is that this is a matter of the earthly conveying the divine.

Wyclif discusses the connection between the Incarnation and the Eucharist elsewhere in his work as well. For instance, his claim here that the body of Christ is fully present in each fragment of the host is also taken up in the *Trialogus*, although with more precision and in greater detail:

> Although the bread may have been broken into three, or however many pieces, each one is not really, but rather habitually, the same body; just as when gazing upon different mirrors the same face is intentionally in each one of them. ... One should not imagine that the body of Christ descends to [the] consecrated host in every church, but rather that it remains stable and immovable in heaven. Therefore, it possesses a spiritual existence in the host, and not the dimensional existence it has with the rest of its accidents in heaven.

35 Ibid., p. 15/11–17: “et sicut panis in quotcunque partes divisus fuerit manet continue idem corpus, sic corpus Christi in quotcunque partes divisus fuerit informante anima manet continue idem homo. Et sicut deitas Christi non maioratur vel minuitur propter variacionem in humanitate, sic corpus Christi non maioratur vel minuitur propter variacionem in pane.”

36 Ibid., p. 15/18–21: “Et tercio utrobique est conformitas solvendi obiectus infidelium cavendo semper ne credatur esse impanacionem vel invinacionem secundum ypostaticam unionem; est enim vino inferior citra illam.”

37 Ibid., p. 15/21–24: “Et hec racio quare ecclesia Anglicana orat a similitudine quod *sicut homo genitus idem refulsit Deus, sic hec terrena substantia nobis conferat quod divinum est.*” The full text of the secret is this: “Munera nostra, quaesumus, Domine, Nativitatis hodiernae mysterii apta proveniant, et pacem nobis semper infundant: ut, sicut homo genitus idem refulsit et Deus, sic nobis haec terrena substantia conferat, quod divinum est. Per eundem Dominum nostrum.”

38 This paragraph follows on the work of Levy, *Scriptural Logic*, pp. 300–304.

That Wyclif here contradicts what he says elsewhere concerning the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is easily recognizable; “the point is clear, though; the predication is not identical, but relational.”

Another approach to the subject is through logic. In a sermon on the epistle for Easter Sunday, Wyclif brings logical arguments most fully to bear on the question of the Eucharist and his argument against transubstantiation. It is only after a rather innocuous introductory section that Wyclif turns, in a long section, to logic. Here Wyclif draws on a distinction between concrete and abstract terms that he had made much earlier in his career in writing the De logica. Levy explains:

Here we should note Wyclif’s definitions of concrete and abstract terms, since this question plays an integral role in his argument against self-subsistent accidents. In his De logica he notes that a concrete term can stand for an individual thing in personal supposition, or the essence of a thing in simple supposition. Abstract terms, on the other hand, only signify the essence of a thing without connoting the individual supposit in which the essence exists. The whole error regarding the nature of the Eucharist stems from the fact that prelates, in their ignorance of both logic and the meaning of Scripture, have failed to consider this difference between abstract and concrete terms. Abstractions do not possess independent existence; the quality of whiteness, as an accident, presupposes a subject in which it will inhere. And yet the supporters of transubstantiation have annihilated the very subject of this whiteness as they convert the bread into nothingness.

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40 Levy, Scriptural Logic, p. 302. The problems of language and predication occupy Wyclif more than once in his preaching, see below, pp. 62–3.
41 Sermones III.25 on I Cor. 5:7–8, cf. Sermones III.58.
42 Sermones III.25, p. 193/3–32.
43 Levy, Scriptural Logic, pp. 178–9. The reference to De logica is to I, i, 5: “Terminus concretus est terminus significans rem que indifferententer potest contrahiri ad suppositionem simplicem vel personalem; sicut iste terminus, homo, significat in proposicione tam personaliter pro persona, quam eciam simpliciter pro natura. Sed terminus abstractus significat pure essenciam rei sine connotacione aliqua ad suppositum cui inest, sicut iste terminus deitas, humanitas, albedo, canitas etc.”
The point here is that transubstantiation falls down on logical grounds. The concrete term refers to an actual thing, Socrates is white, whereas an abstract term refers to an essence only, and not a concrete thing; whiteness describes a quality of Socrates and not something existing by itself. In the same way, without a subject in which to inhere, there can be no accident. In the case of the Eucharist, Wyclif’s opponents imply that their blessing converts the bread into nothing, and if there is nothing there, then there cannot be accidents or substance or anything else. All spiritual help in the sacrament would be lost, and the blessing of priests more to be feared than their curse. So it is, Wyclif jokes, that the faithful do not let the Friars into the wine cellar, lest their benediction change all of the wine into pure accidents. But it is a great grace that all of the bread and wine which they pretend to destroy remains good to eat for food.

This is one of Wyclif’s most common objections to transubstantiation: it is impossible for accidents to exist without a subject. This would be like creatures existing without God’s sustaining power; they cannot exist per se. “For quantity is nothing but the quantification of a substance or the

44 Sermones III.25, pp. 193/33–194/5: “Et hec ignorancia est radix tocius erroris in materia de quiditate eukaristie, ut dicunt quod ipsa est accidens vel accidencia sine subiecor et sic vere virtute sue benediccionis panis quem consecrant in nichil convertitur; non enim est racio quare plus verteretur in corpus Christi quam in deitate vel formam aliam respectivam, sed sicut nichil fuit pars panis remanet, sic panis, in nichil convertitur virtute verborum sacramentalium, omnino fit nichil. Et ista blateracio ydiotica dicit blasphemis ignorantibus quod hos sacramentum licet sit primitive speciei nichil est, et nichil spiritualis suffragii inde venit; et propter istam benediccionem crulelem dicunt quidam quod benediccio sacerdotis tam maioris quam minoris plus quam eius malediccion est timenda.”
46 Levy, Scriptural Logic, p. 278.
47 De eucharistia, p. 63: “Secundo principaliter ... consecrata.”
quantification itself, while quality is nothing but the qualification of a substance, and so with other respective accidents.”

Wyclif ends the sermon with a syllogism encapsulating his interpretation of the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians:

The whole of this epistle of Paul can be reduced to the form of a syllogism in this way: all pilgrims must prepare and eat the paschal lamb. According to the mystical sense they must purge the old leaven, as the major text says [I Cor. 5:7: “Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new paste, as you are unleavened. For Christ our pasch is sacrificed.”]. But since Christ, the end of this whole figure, is immolated in such a way, it follows third that we ought diligently to feast in the sense expounded. And the syllogism with its premises is obvious from the sense of the Apostle.

In a sermon on the epistle for Corpus Christi, Wyclif is at pains to demonstrate that his opponents do not know how to use syllogistic logic properly. They say that the pronoun in *Hoc est corpus meum* denotes nothing or that Christ was referring to his body, both of which are ridiculous positions. The first would mean that all of Christ’s speech would be meaningless, and the second would mean that Christ simply meant that this body was his body. Wyclif, of course, will hold with the Fathers and the Scriptures that the bread is

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49 *Sermones* III.25, p. 197/23–30: “tota ista epistola Pauli reduci potest ad formam sillogisticam in hunc modum: cum omnes viantes debent preparare et comedere agnum pascalem, ad sensum misticum debent expurgare vetus fermentum, ut dicit maior textus.; sed cum Christus finis tocius huius figure sit taliter immolatus, sequitur tercio quod debemus diligencius ad sensum expositum epulari. Et patet syllogismus cum suis premissis ex sensu Apostoli.”


51 *Sermones* III.34, p.278/7–20: “Decretiste quidam ut glossator ordinarius De Consecracione dist. II tenent quod omnino nichil demonstratur pronomine, cum ipsum et tota oracio summitur materialiter tamquam recitatum a Christo; quod si sit verum, omnino tota oracio sicut et eius subjectum bonum demonstracione significans nichil penitus indicaret. Quomodo ergo foret hec verba Christi in nobis effectiva sacramenti altaris vel panis tam mirabiliter conversiva? Ideo
bread and the body of Christ. The whole problem, it turns out, is that Wyclif’s opponents misapply syllogisms to the articles of faith. First, they run into problems with the doctrine of the Trinity, then with that of the Incarnation, and also about universals. Nor can they respond adequately to Wyclif’s own syllogistic logic: “He [a certain ignorant person] says the genus of the most general substance remains there, and this genus is whatever substance and thus the substance of bread, unless all bread were destroyed entirely, therefore the substance of the bread remains after consecration.” Just
as they cannot negotiate the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, or universals logically, so they cannot negotiate the doctrine of the Eucharist, and his opponents are the ones who open up the sacrament to possible indignities:

If that sacramental bread is thus, that very bread is the body of the Lord, therefore the body of the Lord is such; far be condoning these heresies indeed from the faithful, that in whatever sacrament of the altar they see the body of the Lord with the eye of the body, that a mouse eats the body of Christ or that they tear all the members of Christ to pieces by the breaking [of it] with their thumb or the grinding of their teeth. For such conclusions, although they have been approved by bulls or letter by the Roman curia, are to be refused.\(^{57}\)

Once again, the impassibility of the Saviour is to be protected at all costs, and it is Wyclif’s understanding of the nature of the host that better protects this characteristic.

Wyclif argues further that knowing three kinds of predication, formal, essential, and habitudinal, will help the faithful theologian expose the devil’s sophistry. “Moreover, he who does not know those three, I confidently tell him that he also will not know how that bread is truly Christ’s body; for that bread is not the body of the Lord according to identical predication or identically, but sacramentally and figuratively, just as according to Augustine a person truly and really, but figuratively eats the body of Christ.”\(^{58}\)

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\(^{57}\) Ibid., p. 281/7–16: “Sicut ergo deficit paralogismus expositorius in tribus exemplis propositis, ita defect in ista materia: Si iste panis sacramentalis sic se habuerit, ille panis est corpus Domini, ergo corpus Domini sic se habet; longe quidem sit fidelibus ab istis hereticis concedentibus quod in quocunque sacramento altaris vident corpus Domini oculo corporali, quod mus comedit corpus Christi aut quod dilaniat fractura suorum pollicium vel contricione suorum dencium omnia membra Christi. Tales enim conclusiones licet approbate fuerint per bullas vel litteras a Romana curia, sunt negande.” Cf. De eucharistia, p. 11.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., pp. 282/35–283/3: “Oportet autem fidelem theologum notare predicacionem triplicem pro detegendis argucis sophistratum diaboli in ista materia, scilicet predicacionem formalem, predicacionem essencialem et habitualem. Qui autem ignorat istam ternam illi secure denuncio et ignorabit quomodo panis ille sit veraciter corpus Christi; non enim secundum predicacionem ecclesia quod cum Christo est nostra substancia in celo collata, nedum ergo genus generalissimum sed quia species vel natura humana, que cum sit communis omnium hominum ciuslibet individui hominis est natura.”
Aquaintance with these three forms of predication will not only expose the errors of others, but also help defend the truth in this matter.\textsuperscript{59}

Wyclif is willing to concede that in displaying the sacrament, one is displaying the body of Christ, because the bread is displayed. However, since neither Christ himself, nor any of his parts, is on display, the presence of Christ in these displays must be spiritual in the same way as a soul would be found in all parts of a human. Since Wyclif does not dare to say that the bread is Christ’s head, or any other of his parts, he thinks it best to say that any part of the bread whatever is truly the body of Christ.\textsuperscript{60} Christ says that the bread is his body, and Wyclif will follow him in conceding this, but reminds his reader/listener that there are different levels of predication within scriptural usage, as we must also concede, since scripture so asserts, that Christ is figuratively a lion, a worm, and a calf.\textsuperscript{61}

While Wyclif claims not to want to get into terminological quibbles \textit{extra scholam}, “the faith of scripture says that the sacrament itself is bread which is broken, and it is certain
that neither that bread is identically the body of Christ, nor accidents unknown to the faithful or nothing. And thus I deny that that bread is prior in nature to horse bread or whatever material substance even poison.”

Returning to the text at hand, Wyclif notes that Christ uses metonymy when speaking about “this chalice which is a new testament in my blood” (I Cor. 11:25), the chalice referring to the wine contained therein. He applies this insight to the previous proposition “this is my body” (I Cor. 11:24); the chalice can refer to the wine within and so the body can refer to the bread held in Christ’s hands. Moreover, that Christ speaks not of the chalice being his blood but being a new testament in his blood, points the church to the proper reading, that of habitudinal and not identical predication. The repetition of nearly the same proposition in both Luke and Paul, as well as the prefiguration of sprinkling calf’s blood, are seen to reinforce the point. There follows a short lesson in grammar:

62 Ibid., pp. 283/38–284/9: “Et hinc nolo extraneare in terminis extra scholam, diffiniendo quod hoc sacramentum sit panis materialis, substancia panis vel quocunque alio nomine nominatus, quo supra fidem scripture ecclesia difficultare poterit. Multa tamen sunt vera que scolastice et particulariter catholice possunt dici. Fides autem scripture dicit quod ipsum sacramentum est panis qui frangitur, et certum est quod nec ille panis est ydemptice corpus Christi nec accidens ignotum fidelibus sive nichil. Et sic nego quod ille panis in natura est prior pane equino vel quacunque materiali substancia ut veneno.”

63 Ibid., p. 284/26–37: “Non enim dicit hoc vinum est sanguis meus sed hic calix novum testamentum est in meo sanguine, ubi patet quod secundum figuram methonimie intelligit per hunc calicem vinum contentum in calice, et per hoc docetur quod in priori proposicione hoc est corpus meum uniformiter demonstraretur pronomine illud sacramentum, cum non sit fingenda racio quare in proposicione secunda hic calix novum testamentum est demonstraretur pertinenter liquor sensibilis contentus in calice quin per idem in priori proposicione demonstraretur panis constans quem accepit in manibus.” Cf. De apostasia, p. 253/22–33.

64 Ibid., pp. 284/38–285/2: “Secundo nota quomodo Christus per secundum verbum dicit illum calicem non esse suum sanguinem sed novum testamentum in suo sanguine, ut vel sic doceat suam ecclesiam predicacionem talem esse habitualem et non ydempticam.”

65 Ibid., p. 285/6–14: “Sed tercio patet quod, sicut aspersio sanguinis vituli figurabat remocius confirmacionem veteris testamenti, sic vinum huius calicis figurat propinquius novum testamentum, et est secundum habitudinem ipsummet testamentum, et non est repugnancia, sed Spiritus Sanctus simul dixit utrumque, licet dispariter atque equivoco quod hic est calix sanguinis mei novi et eterni testamenti. Et hic calix novum testamentum est in meo sanguine, quia utrobique est eadem sentencia dicenda.”
“It would be shameful that grammarians say that the pronoun ‘this’ does not demonstrate anything but an insensible thing. The grammar of the Spirit, on the other hand commonly refers to sensible things.”66 The real question for Wyclif is “what, therefore, does Saint Paul understand by bread and chalice?”67 Wyclif anticipates an objection to his position that the Apostle means bread and chalice; his opponents might accuse him of demeaning the sacrament, but they know that the bread is less perfect than other material substances, “and by this they seduce the people [saying] that this sacrament is not in itself, but is insensibly, really the body of Christ. We, however, say that this sacrament is more honorable in nature … but the same (as the faithful people believe) is really the body of Christ.”68 Wyclif sees himself as the one upholding the real presence; he says that the sacrament is the body of Christ, whereas his opponents say that it is merely in the sacrament.

Further recourse is had to logic in a sermon on the gospel for the fourth Sunday after Easter, where Wyclif discusses three theories of motion and their bearing on the Eucharist.69 The question arises over Christ’s last discourse with his disciples, when he tells them “I go to him that sent me and none of you asks me: Where are you going?”

67 Ibid., p. 286/10–11: “Quid ergo per panem et calicem intelligeret sanctus Paulus?”
68 Ibid., p. 286/12–21: “Sed si obicitur quod iuxta sentenciam illam vilesceret sacramentum, dicatur adversario fidei quod sic obiciunt ydolaters creaturam sensibilium tamquam Deum infideliter adorantes; sic eciam garriunt ydiote qui ignorantes voces proprias nesciunt quid sit sacramentum huiusmodi. Sed sciunt (ut falsi fingunt) quod sit imperfeccius quam aliqua materialis substancia signanda, et per hoc seducunt populum quod non hoc sacramentum <sed in ipso insensibiliter sit realiter corpus Christi. Nos autem dicimus quod hoc sacramentum Wo306 and Wo565 add> est honorabilius in natura et nedum in hoc sacramento sed ipsummet (ut credit fidelis populus) sit realiter corpus Christi.”
69 Sermones I.28, p. 186/12–34.
(John 16:5). Wyclif’s own opinion is that “I go to him that sent me” has a double meaning. The first meaning is that “he before whom all time is present, past or future, refers to the time of the Ascension saying that ‘he goes’ to the Father.” The second meaning, “that Christ is continually passing through the time to the Ascension or he passes continually towards his beatitude, because he is going continually,” is the cause of the problem: “For since the whole way that he travels is the means to that end, it can be said truly that he goes continually travelling that road. And since it is not possible that he stand still in that road or by erring stray [from it] before he attain his goal, it can be said truly that he goes continually to that end.” There are “many and great logicians” who err on the question of this “going.” The first contend that “Socrates passes through or is moved but passes through no space nor is moved by another movement.” The second group contend that “it is not possible for something to be successive, but will be or have been.” The third type, the way of truth, hold “all succeeding to be according to whatever of its parts, as with God, who is the first truth, is all that was or will be, not only things existing, but also many things not existing, they have being according to possible

70 Ibid., p. 186/1–3: “Prima pars potest dulciter sane intelligi, primo modo quod ille apud quem omne tempus est presens vel preteritum vel futurum, dicit pro tempore ascensionis quod vadit ad patrem.”
71 Ibid., p.186/4–7: “secundo modo quod Christus continue transiens per media ad ascensionem vel beatitudinem suam tendencia transit continue, quia est continue in vadendo. Cum enim tota via quam viavit sit medium ad hunc finem, vere dici potest quod continue viando in hanc vadit. Et cum non est possibile quod stet in hac via vel declinet errando antequam terminum eius attingat, vere dici potest quod vadit continue ad hunc finem.”
73 Ibid., p. 186/15–16: “Secundo dicunt quod non est possibile esse aliquod sucessionem <successivum Wo 565> sed fore vel fuisse.”
This third way “concedes that a successive indivisible is for this instant, since a continuum is made from non-quanta.” Wyclif refers here to what he has elucidated much further elsewhere, his belief in temporal atomism. Time, for Wyclif, is made up of indivisible instants, that are like points making up a line. “There is a one-to-one correspondence of body to instant ... in which the body’s continuity persists from instant to instant, because the body’s form is anterior to its material existence. For moving bodies, the movement is itself composed of indivisible instants, and these correspond directly with temporal instants.” Stephen Lahey compares this understanding of time to watching a movie: “Each frame of the movie is in itself unified, a moment frozen in time. From one frame to the next, the subject portrayed seems to move, but in fact there is no movement distinct from the time in which it occurs, or the succession of frames.” If temporal atomism is assumed, then the doctrine of transubstantiation falls apart according to Wyclif’s logic, since his understanding of the substantial conversion involved would demand an infinitely divisible understanding of time, and so a continuum, which Wyclif will not accept. So it is that Wyclif complains of “modern heretics” who say in the

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74 Ibid., p. 186/17–21: “Tercia autem via veritatis concedit omne successivum esse secundum quamlibet sui partem [partes?], cum apud Deum qui est prima veritas sit omne quod fuit vel erit, nec solum existencia sed multa non existencia secundum esse possible habent esse.”


77 Lahey, Wyclif, p. 120.

78 Ibid.

79 For a fuller explanation of this reasoning, see ibid., pp.128–131.
matter of the Eucharist that “they consecrate and consecrate nothing, and [they say] that the sacramental proposition was or will be true.”

Wyclif is not afraid to turn to the mystical interpretation of scripture, or to use extended analogies to make his point. In the sermon on the epistle for Easter Sunday in which he is so concerned with syllogistic logic, Wyclif begins with a section on how to prepare for receiving the Eucharist, developing the biblical analogy of the old leaven, analogous to sin, which must be purged: “just as in eating the pascal lamb under the Old Law they ate it with unleavened bread, so under the New Law the faithful should eat the sacrament of the Eucharist in unleavened bread as a figure of spiritual cleanliness.” The analogy of bread is taken further; there are four steps in making bread that are analogous to the steps taken to prepare for communion. First, the grains are brought together from diverse parts, just as the community of the church. Second, the grain is ground to separate pure from impure, which is analogous to contrition and the fear of losing heavenly reward. Third, salt and water are sprinkled on the flour, which is wisdom sprinkled on the people to keep them faithful and virtuous. Fourth, the bread is put into the oven, which is the oven of tribulation, perfecting through the fire of the Holy Spirit. These four steps are concerned only with the true bread, “which is made truly but mystically his body by the

81 Cf. Sermones IV.42.
83 Ibid., pp. 191/32–192/16.
power of Christ’s words.” Moreover, the sacrament is a special sign of love for three reasons: first, because it unifies the faithful in love; second, because it is the body of Christ, who demonstrates greatest love for a neighbour in his passion; and third, because it is done in memory of Christ, who is first love. In the closing sections of the sermon, Wyclif turns back to this mystical interpretation of bread and its preparation. First, the keeping of the feast enjoined by the Apostle (I Cor. 5:8) means taking the Eucharist, and the leaven of malice, which is sin, must be removed before doing so. Second, the circumstances of the paschal feast can be expounded, in the tropological (i.e., moral) sense (ad sensum tropologicum), as referring to the Eucharist.

This sermon also displays another of Wyclif’s tactics, which is to use church law against his opponents. Wyclif will hold to the ancient faith that the sacrament is in its nature bread and wine and sacramentally or mystically the body and blood of Christ, “just as the Decretum of the ancient Roman church says, De consecracione dist. II, Ego Berengarius.” Citing Ego Berengarius was attacking a weak point in the canon law.

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85 Sermones III.25, p. 192/20–9.
87 Ibid., p. 194/2–30: “Teneamus igitur fidem antiquam quod hoc sacramentum sit in natura sua panis aut vinum et sacramentaliter vel mistice corpus Christi aut sanguis, sicut dicit decretum antique Romanee ecclesie De Consecracine dist. II: Ego Berengarius.”
This recantation that Berengar of Tours was forced to sign in 1059, was drafted by Cardinal Humbert of Silva Candida. The language used, however, was unsophisticated and ambiguous, causing great difficulties almost immediately.\(^8^9\) The problem was that the confession might be seen to deny that sacramental presence could be real and could also be seen to cast doubts upon the impassibility of the Saviour: “the bread and wine which are placed on the altar are, after consecration, not only a sacrament, but are true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. And [they are] sensibly, not only in a sacrament, but in truth, handled and broken in the hands of the priest, and crushed by the teeth of the faithful.”\(^9^0\) Berengar and Wyclif both argued that the statement “while denying that the Eucharist was only a sacrament ... also denied that it was only the reality (\textit{res}), that is, only the true body and blood... While Humbert may have intended to negate the substantial presence of the elements, he ended up affirming them.”\(^9^1\) And so it is that since this statement made its way into the canon law collections, Wyclif could argue that he is the one truly adhering to the laws of the church when he states that the bread and wine remain after the consecration. This is, moreover, the proper sense given in the scriptures.\(^9^2\)

One of the more uplifting discourses on the Eucharist occurs in a sermon for Corpus Christi; while it contains elements of polemic and displays of philosophical erudition, it

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\(^8^8\) \textit{Ego Berengarius} is one of Wyclif’s favourite weapons in his attack on transubstantiation, see Levy, \textit{Scriptural Logic}, pp. 258–61.


\(^9^0\) Quoted in Levy, \textit{Scriptural Logic}, p. 139.

\(^9^1\) Ibid., p. 139.

also contains a long section discussing spiritual eating, which Wyclif conceives as a mutual activity between Christ and his church. First we are told that the first word of
the gospel lection (“Caro mea vere est cibus et sanguis meus vere est potus” John 6:56)
might be taken in two ways: as understood of the sacrament of bread and wine,
sacramentally but not identically the body and blood of Christ; or, as the gospel more
intends, the body and blood of Christ are true food and drink for the soul. Spiritual
eating is to be distinguished from carnal eating, and it is by spiritual eating that the
members of Christ eat Christ, which is explained further, following on from the words
of John 6:57: “He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him.”

This passage explains what spiritual eating is:

For since the soul is there where it is loved, it appears that by receiving of
these parts of Christ devout memory according to three orders of spiritual
digestion in the interior man thus devoutly remembering, he remains in
Christ, since his spirit, which is his whole personality, remains in him. Nor
is it doubted, conversely, that Christ remains according to divinity in that
person and through grace. And according to humanity he remains in that
person according to spiritual being to the edification of the soul thus
beloved.

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93 Sermones II.61.
94 Ibid., p. 455/10–21: “Pro quo primo notandum est quod prima verba possunt habere duplicem
sensum satis catholicum, primo intelligendo de sacramento panis et vini, quod est sacramentaliter
non ydemitice caro Christi et sanguis, est vere cibus et potus non spiritualis sed corporalis
secundum naturam suam propriam, sed spiritualis et non carnalis secundum esse quod habet
virtute verborum Domini, sed secundum alium sensum quem credo evangelicum magis intendere,
quod caro Christi et sanguis suus in natura sua sunt vere potus et cibus anime, cum suum
obiectum in cuius consideratione et delectacione anima fidelis pascitur et potatur.”
95 Ibid., p.455/22–26: “Est enim secundum distinctionem famosam duplex comestio, scilicet
corporalis et spiritualis; spiritualis iterum duplex, scilicet mala quals in est detractoribus iuxta
illud (Joh. II, 17): Zelus domus tua comedit me; et bona quals inest obiectum suum pie
recolentibus.”
96 Ibid., p.455/27–31: “Et sic Christus dicitur membra sua spiritualiter comedere iuxta illud
(Johannis IV”, 32): Ego cibum habeo manducare quem vos nescitis, et membra Christi Christum
comedunt, memorando ipsum devocius (quod sepius fit) in eukaristiam assumendo.”
97 Ibid., p.456/2–11: “cum enim anima ibi sit ubi afficitur, patet quod recipiendo de hiis partibus
Christi devotam memoriam secundum tres ordines spiritualis digestionis in homine interiori sic
So spiritual eating is seen as a mutual, spiritual indwelling which links Christ and his members. But Wyclif goes farther, based on the next verse: “As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he that eats me, the same also shall live by me.” (John 6:58):

In this similitude is taught in a twofold manner how a cause gives rise to its caused thing. Indeed by faith it is understood that the Father before his [i.e., the Son’s] origin by birth, eternally caused him; he did not make him, although he made him to be man or made his humanity. And correspondingly, just as the Father eternally causes the Son and does not make his divinity but makes his humanity, so Christ continuously, blamelessly causes man, but does not continuously make him to be a man, although it is probably possible to say that he does not continuously make the soul, but continuously makes the body, because it is continuously being made ... inasmuch as, in the equivocal sense, it is said that God always makes whatever creature. He wants to say, therefore, that just as the Father continually causes the Son and thus the Son is eternally because of the Father, so any who duly eat the Son live perpetually because of him.98

Just as the Father is the eternal cause of the Son, so the Son is the continuous cause of the faithful through their consumption of him. Not only do Christ’s members eat him, but he eats them: “Whence it should be diligently noted that Christ eats his members and this for a different reason. For Christ eats his members by making them like to himself, so that

devote recolens manet in Christo, cum suus spiritus qui est tota personalitas sua manet in ipso. Nec dubium quin eontra Christus manet secundum divinitatem in illo et per graciam; et secundum humanitatem manet in illo secundum esse spirituale ad edificationem anime sic amantis.”

98 Ibid., p. 456/12–31: “Explanat autem Christus clarius istam sentenciam: Sicut, inquit, misit me vivens Pater, et ego vivo propter Patrem, et qui manducat me et ipse vivet propter me. In ista similitudine docetur dupliciter quomodo causa originat suum causatum. Constat quidem ex fide quod patet prior nato suo origine eternaliter causat eum, non facit, licet faciat ipsum esse hominem vel eius humanitatem. Et correspondenter sicut Pater eternaliter causat Filium et non facit eum divinitus sed facit eum humanitus, sic Christus causat continue pure hominem sed non facit eum continue esse hominem, licet probabiliter dici possit quod non continue facit animam sed facit continue ipsum corpus, quia est continue in faciendo ... quamvis ad sensum equivocum dicatur quod Deus semper facit quaslibet creaturas. Vult ergo dicere quod sicut Pater continue causat Filium et sic Filius sit eternaliter propter Patrem, sic qui rite manducat Filium vivit perpetuo propter ipsum.”
they might be blessed in the body perpetually in his church, just as a man eats food by imperfect eating. But the members of Christ eat Christ, that they might be like him spiritually.\textsuperscript{99} There is, however, a great difference between the way in which Christ eats his members and they him, and those foreknown to damnation take no part in such spiritual eating, nor are they eaten by Christ. Thus the foreknown are excluded from the unity of the body of Christ which is especially the Church Triumphant.\textsuperscript{100}

When Christ speaks of bread in John 6:59 ("This is bread which is come down from heaven, not as your fathers ate manna in the desert and are dead."), he speaks equivocally. For there are two types of bread, earthly and heavenly, and there are two types of heavenly bread, the Word of God incarnate, and manna. The host, of course, contains both earthly and heavenly bread, as the sacramental bread is the same in number as the body of Christ sacramentally and not naturally.\textsuperscript{101} To say that the bread is sacramentally the body of Christ is not to take away from its power; both the bread that is substantially the body of Christ and the bread that is sacramentally the body of Christ have the effect that those who perfectly and spiritually eat it shall live in perpetual

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., p. 456/32–37: “Unde notandum est diligenter quod Christus comedit membra sua et ipsa illum secundum dispar maiorem rationem; Christus enim comedit membra sua assimilando illa sibi, ut perpetuo in ecclesia sua cum corpore sint beata ad similitudinem qua homo comedit cibarium imperfeccius comedente. Sed membra Christi Christum comedunt, ut sibi spiritualiter similentur.”

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., pp. 456/36–457/10.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., p. 456/11–27: “Hic, inquit, est panis qui de celo descendit, non sicut patres vestri manducaverunt Manna in deserto et mortui sunt. Constat quidem quod duplex est panis, scilicet panis qui de celo descendit et panis qui ex fructibus terre ascendit sive producitur. Primus panis potest intelligi dupliciter, vel pro verbo Dei temporaliter incarnato vel pro cibo illo qui Manna vel Manhu dicitur ... cum panis sacramentalis constans ex terre fructibus sit idem in numero cum corpore Christi sacramentaliter, non naturaliter.”
beatitude and never die spiritually. Wyclif ends this sermon with a passage that sums up well his preaching on the Eucharist:

For we put it that this sacrament by the power of the words of Christ is truly the body of the Lord, those men, however, dream that it is nothing. We put it that this sacrament is in its nature true bread, just as the Apostle says; those men, however, say that it is a bundle of accidents, of which whatever it is in its nature is infinitely less perfect than a designated substantial material. Third, we put it that by the power of Christ’s benediction and of his sacramental words the bread is made better, because it is made in a certain way the body of Christ, those men, however, put it that by virtue of those words the bread is altogether destroyed or it ceases to be and they add, undoubtedly blasphemously, that [what was] before bread is equivalently annihilated, destroyed totally there remains in a vacuum a wandering accident without any subject.

This is Wyclif’s preaching on the subject in a nutshell: we are asserting the truth, these others are asserting dangerous fictions; we are following Christ and his Apostle, they have no foundation for their argument; we are building up, they are tearing down. This is the mixture of uplifting concern for the truth and the salvation of Christ’s members and polemics that Wyclif evinces throughout his sermons on the Eucharist.

1.1.2 POLEMICAL SERMONS

Sometimes errors about the Eucharist are simply added to the sum of the friars’ sins, another weapon in Wyclif’s polemical battle against the “private religions.” This is

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102 Ibid., pp. 457/37–458/2: “Et patet quod tam panis qui est substancialiter corpus Christi quam panis qui est sacramentaliter corpus Christi habet istam efficaciam quoad perfecte et spiritualiter comendentem quod ipsum in perpetua beatitudine vivificat nunquam spiritualiter moriturum.”

103 Ibid., p. 463/14–28: “Nos enim ponimus quod hoc sacramentum virtute verborum Christi est vere corpus Domini, illi autem sompniant quod est nichil; nos ponimus quod hoc sacramentum est in natura sua verus panis, sicut dicit Apostolus, ipsi autem dicunt quod est accidencium aggregatio, quorum quodlibet est in natura sua infinitum imperfeccius quam materialis substancia signanda; nos tercio ponimus quod virtute benedictionis Christi et verborum suorum sacramentalium panis melioratur, quia fit quodammodo corpus Christi, ipsi autem ponunt quod virtute istorum verborum panis omnino destruitur vel desinit esse et addunt blaspheme indubie quod pane priori equivalenter annichilato destructo totaliter remanet in vacuo unum vagum accidens sine aliquot subiectante.”
especially the case amongst the sermons in the dominical epistle set, where errors about the sacrament of the altar are often placed side-by-side with the friars’ hypocrisy, greed, and pride. The reasons are much the same as those elaborated in the sermons concerned principally with the Eucharist: the friars waver concerning the quiddity of the sacrament and so open the body of Christ and God to being eaten by mice;\(^{104}\) they are heretics who will not say what the host actually is, not wanting to reveal their ignorance;\(^{105}\) they are apostates, on account of envy and the continuation of their filthy order, they multiply scandalous lies against those who ought to be their brethren in the Lord, and publicly teach that the consecrated sacrament, once ingested, is not the body of Christ, but a passover of bread;\(^{107}\) some friars say that the body of Christ

\(^{104}\) *Sermones* III.42, p. 364/3–8: “Sicut enim in ista materia, sic seducunt populum de eukaristia unionis; variant enim infundabiliter de eius quiditate et passionibus eam sequentibus, in tantum quod dicunt corpus Christi et Deum olim fuisse comestum a muribus et laniatum ad quamlibet eius partem et irre recuperabiliter putrefactum.”

\(^{105}\) *Sermones* III.45, pp.391/39–392/9: “Et ultra cum veris infertur quod episcopi et alii prelati tenentes de rege sunt eciam heretici, sed fratres potissime ex consensu dampnabili; et ita sicut homo in peccando nocet primo et principaliter sibi ipsi, sic videntur dampnantes articulos huiusmodi hereticare precipe semetipsos. Nec dubium quin ille sit spiritus inferni qui ad damnaciones in pitaciis inertiis intulerunt, sed laus sit Deo nullus fidelis vel infidelis hanc formam damnacionis alicubi defendebat, sed quod pudet eos cognoscere defendunt quod nesciant, quid non est sacramentum altaris, sed quid sit, ubi iacet difficultas, non reserant ut non sciunt.” *Sermones* III.48, p. 419/11–14: “Et conformiter senciendum est de infidelitate fundata in sacramento eukaristie, ubi non audent vel unam partem vel aliam populo publice predicare.” Ibid., p. 419/18–23: “Dicitur enim patenter fratribus (quod et noscunt) quod maior pars populorum credit illam panem post consecracionem realiter esse corpus Christi, sicut dicit evangelium Apostoli; et quando queritur a fratribus si populus congrue credit in talibus vel tacent vel subdole contradicunt.”

\(^{106}\) *Sermones* II.26, p. 192/25–30: “...patet quod assumptum est impossibile et una de heresibus in quibus frater ac errantes in sacramento altaris illudunt populo, nam fatui concipiunt quod omne accidens sit res que poterit per se esse; quod foret blasphemum de quolibet accidente, cum nullum sit accidens nisi modus accidentalis substantiae.” Cf. *Sermones* III.63, p. 508/18–21.

\(^{107}\) *Sermones* III.47, pp. 409/40–410/7: “Et ex istis colligitur quam diabolice religiosi privati et specialiter frates apostatant, specialiter si propter invidiae et continuacionem sui mardosi ordinis multiplicant super illos qui debent esse frates sui in Domino mendacia scandalosa, ut de fidelibus plebi[s] pronunciant, ubi credunt magis officere, quomodo fideles publice dogmatizant quod
is only there when the sacramental words are spoken, while others that the body of Christ remains only present in medio and not in confinibus illus panis.  

What exactly Wyclif means here in describing this second error is not entirely clear, but might have something to do with the extension of the real presence to all parts of the bread. Whatever he mean here, Wyclif says that he has examined these apostates, and concludes that they, among other things, say that the sacrament is nothing, or accidents without a subject, or that it is the species of bread and is not and cannot be the body of Christ, or that it is the body of Christ, but is not able to be broken or divided. In a sermon for the feast of St. Mark, Wyclif calls the friars murderers, explaining how they commit murder with their tongues, in, among other things, their lying about the Eucharist: they know not what to tell the people about the quiddity of the sacrament. “They call themselves consecrators of accidents and by virtue of their benediction the offered bread is destroyed, not consecrated.” In this they scandalize the faithful, who believe that the sacrament is bread and body, and they should declare their position not from the decrees of Innocent

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sacramentum consecratum a presbytero fractum in tres partes et post masticacionem in ore fidelium inglutitum non est corpus Christi sed solum pascha panis.”

108 Ibid., p. 410/8–12: “Alii autem mencientur quod corpus Christi solum est ibi, dum verba sacramentalia proferuntur, et alii quod non in confinibus illius panis sed solum in medio remanet corpus Christi. Et sic de multis aliiis mendaciis que pater eorum docuit sine causa.”

109 Ibid., p. 410/13–20: “Ego autem examinavi ad partem sed publice istos apostatas, et quidem eorum subtiliores inter alios dicunt quod hoc sacramentum sit nichil. Alii autem dicunt quod hoc sensibile non est sacramentum sed accidens sine subiecto, tercii vero dicunt quod est species panis, sed nec est nec esse potest corpus Christi; quarti autem dicunt quod est corpus Christi, sed non potest frangi vel dividi, nec recipere mutaciones sensibles peregrinas.”

110 Sermones II.12, p. 83/27–29, 32–36: “Quantum ad homicidium a lingua, clamat communis experencia quod fratrum mendacia occidunt populum nimirum multum... Nec dubium quin sint ut huiusmodi homicide a lingua; ipsi enim nesciunt dicere populo de quiditate huius sacramenti quod sensibiliter sentitur, manibus sacerdotum frangitur et per se sine inherencia vel existencia consecratur.”

111 Ibid., pp. 83/36–84/1: “Sed dicunt se esse consecratores accidencium et virtute sue benedicionis panem oblatum destrui, non sacrari.”
III, but out of the doctrine of the gospel and the saints. If temporal penalties were hung over the heads of the friars, they would quickly go back to the source, scripture, as would the popes if likewise coerced, and they would see that their teachings are wrong, and the church would be reformed.

The hierarchy are as much to blame for the problems of the church as are the friars, all of whom are seen eventually to depart from Scripture. This said, there was a point where Wyclif can speak supportively of Urban VI, the Roman Pope supported by the English after the outbreak of the Western Schism in 1378, and this is reflected as regards the Eucharist as well. Wyclif says that the Urbanites believe that the sacramental bread is really and truly the body of Christ, but the Robertines, supporters of the Avignonese Pope, assert that the host is neither bread nor body, but only an accident. The Urbanites are seen to place their trust in Christ who cannot lie, but the Robertines, somewhat ironically, are seen to rest their case on that old villain Innocent III “or some other

112 Ibid., p. 84/1–10: “Fideles autem quos scandalizant tamquam hereticos dicunt cum evangelio et sanctis doctoribus quod hoc sacramentum sit simul vel diversimode verus panis et corpus Domini et addunt quod fidem tam expressatam per millenarium Christi non debent ex declaracione Innocenti III expectare, sed spirituales ceci debent in penam infidelitatis et destruc tionis quiditatem illius sacramenti ex doctrina evangelii et aliorum sanctorum pro illo tempore populo declarare.”
113 Ibid., p. 84/11–26: “Si ergo ista pena temporalium que tantum ponderatur foret eis inflicta quousque sufficienter docuerint huius edulii quiditatem, tunc a verisimili debent operam in scrutandum in fonte scripture huiusmodi materie veritatem. Et idem debent servari in Romano pontifice et quocunque citra auctores scripture, attendendo ad fundaciones sentencie sue sic fite, et forte redditus sancte eccliesie forent in manibus secularium perpetuo sicut olim.”
114 Sermones IV.63, p. 499/29–40: “Et in isto capitulo homicidii et spoliationis regni videntur esse omnes religiones private et specialiter in infidelitate de Eukarisitia. Certum quidem est quod nedum christianismus sed quodcunque regnum eius vel notanda communitas in duo dividitur, quarum prima pars quam quidam vocant Urbanitas vere concedit quod panis sacramentalis sit vere et realiter corpus Christi, alia autem pars infidelis que est longe potencior sive plurior quam quidam vocant Robertinos asserit infideliter quod hoc sacramentum non potest esse panis nec corpus Christi sed unum accidens quod ignorant.”
Eventually, however, Wyclif became disillusioned with Urban, and the rest of the church hierarchy for a number of reasons, although he never entirely gave up hope that Urban would bring reform to the church. They do not know what the nature of the consecrated host is despite the novelties they propound, which are suspect; they replace God’s law with man’s law, which can err, and does in the case of the Eucharist, where scripture, the holy doctors, and the ancient doctrine of the church, *Ego Berengarius*, are abandoned, “so one says, like a fool, that it is quantity, another that it is quality and a third that it is nothing.” There are those who claim that by the power of their benediction and consecration the bread is destroyed and the body of Christ puts on not bread, but a nothing or accidents. Innocent III is especially to blame, as he is the one who brought forth these heresies on the Eucharist: “that it is a quality, quantity, or nothing, and that there it is not a sacrament besides that which is naturally the body of Christ, and consequently these infidels deny that the bread which Christ took in his hands

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115 *Ibid.*, p. 500/1–12: “Differencia autem inter has duas partes est multiplex, cum Urbanite fundant se principaliter in evangelio Christi, qui (ut supponunt) mentiri non poterit. Cum igitur ipse asseruit panem quem sumpsit esse corpus suum, asserunt ex auctoritate Christi panem post consecracionem esse corpus Domini. Robertini autem asserunt contrarie quod hoc sacramentum non potest esse panis nec corpus Domini sed unum accidens incognitum sive nihil. Et non fondant se super lege Christi sed ad summum super Innocencio III vel alio Romano pontifice quem asserunt suam sentenciam affirmasse, et hinc prorumpunt in multas hereses.”


117 *Sermones* II.25, p. 179/4–10: “Et suspecta videtur talis novitas ex hoc quod ambo pape et sui cardinales cum omnibus eorum complicibus nesciunt efficaciter fundare quid in natura sua sit hostia consecrata. Suspecta ergo foret quecunque sentencia quam ipsi vel fratres de novo seminant, cum tam diu in hoc sacramento ecclesie illuserunt.”

118 *Sermones* II.48, pp. 349/38–350/5: “Ad tantum (inquiunt) infatuatur ista generacio quod nescit secundum omnes partes suas quid sit sacramentum altaris vel id quod sacerdos consecrat ad altare, sed relictis scriptura et sanctis doctoribus ac decreto antiquo Romane ecclesie in Berengario tamquam stultis dicit unus quod est quantitas et alius quod est qualitas et tercius quod est nihil.”

119 *Sermones* II.57, p. 421/4–9: “Quarto adinveniunt sibi miracula sacramentalia que Deus non invenit; dicunt enim quod virtute sue benediccionis et consecracionis in Eukaristia totus panis corrumpitur et corpus Christi non pane (ut dicit Apostolus) sed uno nichilo vel accidentibus de novo induitur.”
he made to be his body sacramentally.”¹²⁰ The heresy of transubstantiation is growing in England because “our bishops do not attend to this danger to their subjects” either through ignorance or through desire for earthly wealth and trade.¹²¹ Things are only getting worse in the church as time passes; there is more obedience now to the Bishop of Rome than there is to the Gospel of Christ, which has allowed heresy in word and deed to spring up, especially in the matter of the Eucharist. In the time of Nicholas II, the Roman church understood this matter well, but from the time of Innocent III, it does not know whether it understands in a Catholic or heretical way.¹²²

Wyclif reserves special fury for the Earthquake Synod.¹²³ The satraps, as Wyclif refers to them, have defined the sacrament of the altar to be accidents without a subject, and they have made the opposing view heresy.¹²⁴ It is, however, the satraps who have deviated from Scripture, and, since they have declared the opposing view heresy, they have

¹²⁰ *Sermones* I.60, p. 395/9–14: “Iam enim et fere ab Innocencio III pullulavit heresis de sacramento altaris, quod est qualitas, quantitas sive nichil, et quod ibi non est sacramentum preter illud quod est naturaliter corpus Christi; et ita consequenter negant infideles quod panem quem Christus cepit in manibus fecit esse sacramentaliter corpus suum.”

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 395/15–19: “Et non obstante quod ista heresis sit in Anglia hodie adeo dilitare, tamen episcopi nostri ad istud subditorum periculum non attendunt, vel quia ipsi ut infideles ignorant materiam vel quia terrenum lucrum et singularia negociar magis curant.”

¹²² *Sermones* III.58, pp. 506/33–507/4: “Sed a tempore quo ecclesia plus obedivit privatis prepositis quam episcopum animarum, ut plus Romano pontifici quam evangelio Jesu Christi, surrepserunt hereses tam operis quam sermonis et specialiter in materia de sacramento altaris. Deus tamen ex speciali gracie ad tantum cecavit corda privatorum ordinum et hereticorum in ista materia quod nesciunt quid in natura sua sit sacramentum altaris secundum decretum Romani pontificis; tempore autem Nicolai II valde catholice sensit Romana ecclesia in illa materia; sed a tempore Innocencii III nescitur utrum catholice vel hereticie senciebat...”

¹²³ See above, Chapter One, p. 14.

¹²⁴ *Sermones* III.50, pp. 435/40–437/3: “patet illa sentencia ex ultima synodo Terremotus in Anglia, ubi diffinitum est accidens in sacramento altaris esse sine subiecto et hereticatum opposutum, ac si fuerit summe falsum.” *Sermones* III.51, p. 440/37–8: “satrape in synodo Terremotus diffinierant quod accidencia manent sine subiecto...”
implicitly implied that Christ is a heretic. Moreover, since several recent friars, specifically Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham, have all argued that respective accidents and qualities have quantity as their subject, and since it seems excessive presumption to hereticate these friars, the synod’s position is untenable. What is more, apart from making the king of England and his nobles heretics, since the Friars are the rulers of this synod, it seems in truth that they have made themselves heretics. They have taken the Eucharist, which ought to be a sign of peace, and have sown discord instead.

Wyclif rests his case against the council on four grounds used elsewhere: Scripture, the saints (often grouped by Wyclif with Scripture), logic, and the practice of the church. The first of these seems to be the most important for Wyclif, but he spends the most time on the logical aspects of the problem, which makes some sense, as the question was couched in the terminology of scholastic aristotelianism.

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125 Sermones III.51, p. 441/9–15: “Cum nec racio nec auctoritas subsit unde foret color dicendi accidens esse diffinientes tamquam heresim manifestissimam hoc negabant; et cum evangelium tam crebro ex auctoritate Christi hoc asserit, patet quomodo dicti satrape implicant implicite Christum fuisse hereticum.”


127 Ibid., p. 437/6–10: “et ad tantum procedit ista insania sicut hereticat regem Anglie et eius nobiles, sic hereticat sectes fratrum, et cum fratres dicuntur regulatores huius synodi, videtur cum veris quod hereticant semetipssos.”

128 Sermones III.51, p. 440/28–33: “Et hanc credo racionem quare pax tantum ab hominibus exulavit, nam sacramentum eukaristie quoq tantum infideliter est tractatum, quod vix duos prelatos vel fratres invenies quin dissonant in fide illius sentencie.”
As far as scriptural authority, Wyclif says two things. First, he says that the terms ‘accident’ and ‘substance’ are not biblical. Second, he argues that the only thing close to scriptural authority is what he calls the “legenda mardosa,” which refers to the second reading for the service of matins for Corpus Christi, composed by Thomas Aquinas: “The accidents, however, remain here without any subject. And this, that faith may be exercised when what is visible is invisibly received, hidden under another appearance; furthermore, that the senses, which judge of the accidents according to appearances, may be preserved from the same error.” Whether Wyclif knew that this text was composed by Aquinas is not possible to answer, as it has only been relatively recently that the office has been firmly identified as Aquinas’ work. Whoever Wyclif thought the author to be, and it seems likely that he did not associate it with Aquinas, whom he had just identified as arguing that the accidents inhere in the quantity of the bread, Wyclif denied that the reading had the authority of scripture, since it was an

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130 *Sermones* III.50, p. 437/24–28: “Evidenciam autem ad hoc moventem non video nisi quia in legenda mardosa huius festi legunt accidens esse sine subiecto, sed illud quod est sanum atque autenticum in canone misse, in oracionibus atque ymnis dimittunt ut frivolum.”


apochryphal text: “Who moves, therefore, to catholicize that apocryphum, [which is] so unfounded and false, as Augustine often asserts?”

Wyclif mentions three saints in particular in his polemic against the decisions of the Earthquake Council: Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine. The phrase “ex testimonio Augustini et ceterorum sanctorum” is typical. They are generally held by Wyclif to have believed that the sacrament was at the same time bread and the body of Christ, and Jerome’s letter to Hedibia is a favourite text for Wyclif in this regard. Suffice it to say for the moment Wyclif was certain that he was in agreement with these great Fathers, and in fact, with the whole catholic tradition prior to the loosing of the Father of Lies, an event which Wyclif places not long before the reign of Pope Innocent III.

The third aspect of Wyclif’s polemic against the council, logic, we have seen much of already. The main points here are more fully developed elsewhere, although some new ground is covered in these sermons. Wyclif makes use of an analogy to explain his position on how Christ’s body can be present to all points of the host: in the same way that a man cannot be said to be friendless if he has only friends who live far away, nor

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133 *Sermones* III.50, p. 437/28–34: “In omnibus istis enim plane asseritur quod panis est corpus Christi et vinum eius sanguis, sicut testatur evangelium; sed scriptura in legendis est ypocrifam licet vera (ut testatur Augustinus in libro de Sermone Domini in Monte). Quid enim [ergo, Wo 306, f. 164rb] moveret catholicare illud ypocrifum tam infundabile atque falsum, ut Augustinus sepe asserit?”

134 The phrase, or its equivalent, appears in all three sermons dealing with the Earthquake Council: *Sermones* III.50, p. 436/6–7, III.51, p. 441/36–7, where Jerome stands in for Augustine, and III.54, p. 470/19–20, where Ambrose joins them.


136 See above, pp. 56–67.
penniless if he has money stashed away, even more so, then, in the sacrament, neither can an accident be without its subject, if at all points the subject is limiting and sustaining it.\textsuperscript{137} Likewise, the question of how consecrated and unconsecrated bread and/or wine might be mixed together is brought up, but does not seriously engage Wyclif.\textsuperscript{138} More seriously, Wyclif argues that Christ made the substance of the material bread to be his body, and this for three reasons. First, all essence is substance. Second, everything that conserves material conditions, as such is a material thing. Third, the operation of the sacrament on material substances, such as restoring or intoxicating the body, testifies to the material substance in the sacrament.\textsuperscript{139} Wyclif offers these without further elaboration, as he turns to scriptural arguments against transubstantiation.

The fourth method of argumentation that I would like to note is one that has yet to be discussed, arguments from church practice. In this case, church practice means how the

\textsuperscript{137} \textit{Sermones} III.50 p. 436/10–22: “Illis autem racionibus hic suppositis tenetur probabiliter quod in hoc sacramento non sit accidens sine subiecto. Nam in hoc sacramento est accidens cum corpore Christi existente ad quemlibet eius punctum et ipsum corpus Christi .... est subiectum, ergo etc. Videtur enim vere et particulariter quod homo non est sine socio, dum habuerit socium sensibiliter ab eo distantem, sicut homo non est sine pecunia dum habuerit pecuniam in loculo vel parate in corbano quiescentem; ergo multo maior hoc sacramentum quod est accidens non esse sine subieco, si ad omnem eius punctum intrinsecum et ectrinsecum habuerit subiectum tam notable finiens vel sustentans.”

\textsuperscript{138} \textit{Sermones} III.54, p. 469/11–25: “Sed secundo obiciunt sophiste propinquius, ponatur quod A sit sacramentum altaris sub forma panis et quod ipsum servans prioritatem (sicut fecerat prior panis) intinguatur in vino non consecrato, quod est satis possibile et contingens, sicut casus triplicis decretalis de commixcione albi vini sive ante consecracionem sive post in vocatis accidentibus, tunc arguitur illo modo: substantia vini remanet in porositatibus post consecracionem in sacramento Eukaristie quod supponitur esse sacramentum altaris. Cum igitur illud sit veritas, licet sit prelatis dubia, videtur nimis magna stulticia illam veritatem dampnare tamquam hereticam. Infinite sunt tales instancie sophistice quas fideles multiplicant docentes plane quod non est heresis veritates illas asserere, cum sensus sit probabilis.”

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., pp. 469/35–470/6: “Cum igitur ante plenam probacionem verborum illorum non fuit hoc sacramentum confectum, ut omnes loquentes catholice concedunt concorditer, sequitur quod substanciam panis materialis fecit Christus esse postmodum corpus suum: primo per hoc quod omnis essencia est substancia, secundo per hoc quod omnis res est (eciam accidens conservans condiciones materiales) ut sic res materialis, tercio per hoc quod operaciones illius sacramenti testantur super substancia rei materialis, cum reficiunt et inebriant corporaliter et sicut res consimiles varie transmutantur.”
church prays and sings. Wyclif, like many other medieval theologians, connects the church’s practice and doctrine intimately; what the church believes, she prays, and what she prays, she believes. This is the famous principle of *lex orandi, lex credendi*. Wyclif sees this interaction as a two-way street; we have already seen an instance where Wyclif thought the church had got its practice wrong, but there are also numerous instances where he thinks the practice of the church can be used to correct fallacious doctrine.

Wyclif uses two hymns of Thomas Aquinas to argue his position on the Eucharist. The first of these is the sequence *Lauda Sion*: “Nor a single doubt retain [non vacilles] when they break the Host in twain but that in each part remain what was in the whole before; For the outward sign alone may some change have undergone, while the Signified stays one, and the same forevermore.” Wyclif uses the sequence as an opening to make a joke: “But these satraps tottered [vacillarunt] in their Earthquake synod.” The point Wyclif wants to make is that “but that in each part remain what was in the whole before,” which he quite rightly takes to mean that Aquinas taught that each fragment of the host contains the entire, whole body of Christ. Wyclif would add, however, that this means

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140 See, for example, the useful definition of Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life: A Systematic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980): p. 218: “The Latin tag *lex orandi, lex credendi* may be construed in two ways. The more usual way makes the rule of prayer a norm for belief: what is prayed indicates what may and must be believed. But from the grammatical point of view it is equally possible to reverse the subject and predicate and so take the tag as meaning that the rule of faith is a norm for prayer: what must be believed governs what may and should be prayed. The linguistic ambiguity of the Latin tag corresponds to a material interplay which in fact takes place between worship and doctrine in Christian practice: worship influences doctrine, and doctrine worship.” See also, in the context of the Eucharist, Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology*, edited by Robert J. Daly (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), passim.

141 See the discussion of the reading for Corpus Christi, above, pp. 76–7.

142 *Sermones* III.51, p. 442/15–16: “Fracto demum sacramento/Non vacilles sed memento etc.” This sequence is cited frequently by Wyclif. Besides this sermon, he cites three verses in *Sermones* IV.42, pp. 351/33–4, 352/10–1, and 353/10–3, in the *De eucharistia*, pp. 12/14–17, 13/15–17, 13/21–24, 15/5–7, 25/17–18, 55/19–21 the hymn is cited to much the same ends as here, only more thoroughly.

143 *Sermones* III.51, p. 442/17: “Sed isti satrapes in Terremotu sue synodi vacillarunt.”
also that the substance of the material bread is present. The second of Aquinas’ hymns cited is *Pange lingua*: “Word-made-Flesh, the bread of nature by His word to Flesh He turns; wine into His Blood He changes; what though sense no change discerns?” Only be the heart in earnest, faith her lesson quickly learns.” Once again, Wyclif understands the practice of the church to support his understanding of the Eucharist: “not only in the canon of the mass does that opinion appear that the bread and wine become for us the body and blood of Christ, since that oblation is not permitted to transform [anything] other than those material substances, and the same appears from the new singing of the church which sings thus: ‘Verbum caro, panem verum, etc.’” So, although Wyclif allows that something changes in the sacrament, it is clear from what he says elsewhere in the sermon that he does not see this transformation as one where the bread is destroyed. In fact, he would probably object to the translation of *panem verum* as “bread of nature,” which is rather loose. “True bread” would be closer to the Latin, and closer to Wyclif’s point that the host is truly bread and truly the body of Christ.

Underlying all of this polemic, and all of these erudite pronouncements on the logic of language and the philosophical failings of his opponents, there is a strong pastoral

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144 Torell, *Saint Thomas d’Aquain*, p. 192, n.47 remarks that “Le P. Gy fait remarquer que la formule “Et si sensus deficit” du *Pange lingua*, antérieure à celle de la *Legenda* [the reading for Corpus Christi discussed above, pp. 76–7], ne signifie pas que le sens se trompe, mais bien qu’il est impuissant à aller au dela de son objet propre.” A sentiment, no doubt, with which Wyclif would agree.


146 *Sermones* III.54, p. 470/28–34: “non solum in canone misse patet ista sentencia quod panis et vinum nobis fiant corpus et sanguis domini Jesu Christ, cum illam oblationem non licet fingere aliam quam illas materialis substancias; et idem patet de recenciori cantu ecclesie quo sic canitur: *Verbum caro, panem verum...*”
element to Wyclif’s preaching. At base, he is concerned with the laity and their understanding of the Eucharist. This is best displayed in a sermon on the first commandment, which will be discussed more fully below, but which contains an important section on the Eucharist.\textsuperscript{147} By the time that this sermon obtained its current form, Wyclif had clearly rejected transubstantiation and now considered the adoration of the host idolatry: “Many foolish people break this commandment by adoring images and the consecrated host.”\textsuperscript{148} The conclusion of the sermon is a rather erudite discussion of the nature of the consecrated host, and Wyclif’s favourite polemical targets, Innocent III and the friars, take the brunt of another salvo. Wyclif accuses them of leading the laity astray in their teaching on the Eucharist: “And truly pope Innocent [III] and his disciples could as quickly as you like make many faithful believe that this sacrament itself were the head of an ass or whatever other substance would be named.”\textsuperscript{149} The friars are motivated by greed to keep the laity uncorrected in their errors:

This sacrament itself is, therefore, true bread made by the power of the words of the Lord the body of Christ; and thus, since this act of speaking, following Augustine ‘this is my body’ is figurative, it appears that this sacrament itself should be adored vicariously somewhat more so than images made by man. However, the community of the laity believes that that bread is identically the body of Christ, nor are the friars prepared to

\textsuperscript{147} Sermones I.13, see below, pp. 175–87. Much of the material related to this sermon, although with a different emphasis, has appeared in my article, “The Authority of the Preacher in a Sermon of John Wyclif,” Mirator 12 (2011): pp. 77–93.


dispel this error, not only because they are ignorant of what that sensible sacrament is according to nature, but also because they fear for themselves that they might lose the profit of their temporalities and also their fame, and thus as unfaithful heretics they fall into transgressing the first commandment. And so also the church ought to be purged of this unfaithful transgression and be made completely without wrinkle, which is reserved only to God in the state of heaven.\footnote{Sermones I. 92/24–34: “Est igitur ipsum sacramentum verus panis, factus virtute verborum Domini corpus Christi; et sic cum hec locucio secundum Augustinum \textit{Hoc est corpus meum} sit figurativa, patet quod ipsum sacramentum sit adorandum vicarie paulo supra imagines ab homine fabricatas. Communitas autem laicorum putat quod panis ille sit idempitice corpus Christi, nec audent fratres errorem istum abstergere, tum quia ignorant quid secundum naturum sit illud sensibile sacramentum, tum eciam quia timent sibi quod perderent lucrum temporaliun atque famam, et sic ut infideles heretici incident in prevaricacionem primi mandati, et sic idem foret purgare ecclesiam ab hac infidelis prevaricancia et facere eam penitus sine ruga quod solius Dei est reservata ad statum in patria.” Cf. \textit{De Eucharistia}, pp. 97/29–98/4, and Penn, “Wyclif and the Sacraments,” p. 268.}

Once more, as we saw above, Wyclif’s views on the Eucharist have been brought forward into his polemics. More importantly Wyclif has made a connection between worshipping the host and idolatry. Small wonder then that he objects to transubstantiation, since this pernicious doctrine is, to his mind, turning the people of God into idolators! And no wonder he calls the Friars murderers for their part in spreading this doctrine and perverting the laity.\footnote{Sermones IV.53, pp. 498/10–499/28.}

Wyclif is thus extremely eclectic in his preaching on the Eucharist. We can see him using a variety of methods of argumentation, almost as if he simply grabbed whatever weapon was closest to hand. There is no overarching, grand structure to Wyclif’s teaching on the sacrament,\footnote{Lahey, \textit{Wyclif}, p. 122: “Wyclif never really constructed the kind of philosophically complex, logically coherent position about the Eucharist that thinkers like Aquinas, Scotus, and Ockham did.”} but there are common themes that we can see running through his preaching on the subject. There is, apart from the single sermon from the \textit{Sermones quadraginta}, a continual and pervasive rejection of transubstantiation as a method for
explaining the presence of Christ in the host, and even in that exceptional sermon, Wyclif has already started to move away from transubstantiation. There is, also, the pervasive use of philosophical tools: syllogisms, logic, predication, theories of time and motion. Wyclif brings his extensive training in the arts to bear on the question and is relentless in the application of the science of logic. There is, although they are not as pervasively used as logic and philosophy, and certainly not to be separated from them, recourse to allegory and mystical interpretation. There is the marked tendency for Wyclif to deploy his rejection of transubstantiation in the heat of polemic, whether against the orders, the hierarchy, or the Blackfriars’ Synod. Finally, and most importantly, there is the constant conviction that transubstantiation is a dangerous and pernicious teaching, which corrupts the laity, makes murderers of the Friars, and idolators of the faithful.

2. Confession and Penance

Confession and penance became a controversial topic through the teachings of Wyclif and his followers. This is also a topic on which Wyclif’s opinions changed over time. In earlier sermons, Wyclif is more or less content to give a conventional discussion of penance and confession, noting the division of penance into contrition of the heart (cordis contricio), confession of the mouth (oris confessio), and work of satisfaction (operis satisfaccio) and stating that auricular confession can be useful.¹⁵³ This conception of penance does not change between Wyclif’s earlier and later sermons. What changes in Wyclif’s preaching on penance and confession are his emphases. Whereas in earlier sermons he let the matter rest with these conventional thoughts, in later sermons, he makes a point of denouncing Innocent III, Omnis utriusque sexus, the Friars, and

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indulgences. Not all of these receive the same level of venom, but they all become targets of Wyclif’s reforming zeal as we shall see.

Two early sermons, both part of the *Sermones quadraginta*, demonstrate Wyclif’s early opinions on penance and confession. In the first of these sermons, *Sermones IV.35* (Epistle for Passion Sunday, 30 March 1376), Wyclif is very conventional in his teaching on penance. He couches his discussion of penance in terms of medicine. Three things are necessary to heal a sickness: first, the cause of the sickness must be removed, second, bandages must be applied, and third, a healthy regimen must be followed.154 “Whence, since the cause of all spiritual sickness is sin, I would tell you, therefore, how the sacrament of penance will purge you of sin.”155 Following this, Wyclif enumerates the division of penance into contrition of heart, confession of mouth, and work of satisfaction, “because one has sinned against God in these three ways,” which I take to be a reference to sin in thought, word, and deed, and which forms a neat parallel between sin’s nature and removal.156 This in turn leads Wyclif to a general exhortation to penitence, a suitable sort of exhortation for the beginning of the penitential season of Lent:

Let us consider therefore the goodwill of our God in creation, in bestowal of goods and gracious preservation, [from] how many and more dangers, from fire, water, theft, sickness and other events that have occurred from

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154 *Sermones IV.35*, p.299/21–6: “Cum autem medicina generalis et remedium universale sit fide cognitum, superest videre quomodo nobis infirmis medela tam ex sufficiens sit salutifera; pro quo notandum quod primo omnium necesse est evacuare causam morbi; secundo necessaria est applicacio emplastri et tercio continuacio regimen sanis...”


156 Ibid., p. 299/31–3: “Consistit autem vera penitencia in cordis contricione, in oris confessione et operis satisfaccione, quia hiis tribus modus peccatur in Deum.”
all of which God has graciously preserved us. And then, attending to our ingratitude and contempt for our God, let us deservedly burst forth in tears of sorrow, avoiding the chasm of sin and detesting the horrors of vice, humbly asking the immense clemency and mercy of our God.\textsuperscript{157}

A further point that Wyclif wishes to emphasize is the ability of priests, as successors to the apostles, to forgive sins, which Wyclif associates with the power of binding and loosing.\textsuperscript{158} In the rest of the sermon, Wyclif turns from the theoretical to the practical, bringing forward and solving three problems which keep men from confessing their sins: shame; fear of the penance to be imposed; and excessive hope, presumption, or too little hope, despair. Three answers to each of these are given, but the most space is devoted to answering the problems of presumption and despair.\textsuperscript{159} Most important for my purposes here, Wyclif is insistent “that God redeems no one to the kingdom unless he truly repents after sin.”\textsuperscript{160} Repenting in the context of this sermon means participating in the sacrament of penance: contrition of heart, confession of mouth, and work of satisfaction. In fact, the last thirty-five lines of the sermon deal with the particulars of auricular confession and the need for works of satisfaction.\textsuperscript{161} Once again Wyclif uses the analogy of medicine: “as the sick in body tells the doctor with great diligence the circumstances of their serious

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., p. 300/5–10: “Consideremus igitur gratitudinem Dei nostri in creacione, in bonorum collacione et graciosea preservacione, quot pericula que aliis ex igne, aqua, furto, infirmitate et aliis eventibus acciderant a quibus omnibus Deus nos graciose preservavit; et tunc attendendo nostram ingratitudinem et Dei nostri contemptum merito in lacrimas doloris erumperemus, peccati voraginem devitando et viciorum horrorem detestando, Dei nostri immensam clemenci et misericordiam humilter postulando.”

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., p. 300/31–301/3: “nam apostolis et sacerdotibus eorum successoribus dedit Christi potestatem ligandi atque solvendi ministerialiter et commutandi tamquam Christi vicariis penam in casu (ut patet alias in speciali tractatu istius materie), perpetuam in penam temporalem, faciendique quod merita passionis Christi et tocius ecclesie iuvent ligatos peccatis, qualiter non antea sunt adiuti.” This special tract is probably De eucharistia et poententia sive de confessione found appended to De eucharistia.

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., p. 301/9–303/32.

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., p. 302/20–1: “quod Deus neminem redimit ad regnum nisi post peccatum vere peniteat.”

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., pp. 303/33–304/27.
illness; how much more ought the sick in spirit, where the danger is more serious?"162

And at this early date, Wyclif thinks that work of satisfaction is necessary “because without that, confession with a harp is not complete.”163 As we shall see shortly, Wyclif’s teaching on confession was to change rather dramatically over time.

The second early sermon, Sermones IV.33 (Gospel for the First Sunday of Lent, 15 February 1377) does not contain nearly as extensive a discussion of penance as IV.35. Here the focus is instead on the religion of Christ (religionem Christi), of which penance forms an important part. It was not that Christ needed to do penance, but that “it would be just that the humility of the redeemer correspond to the pride of the men to be redeemed.”164 The reason that Christ went into the desert to fast was, much like the reason he was baptized by John, not because he needed to for his own sake, but for ours:

> Since, however, every action of Christ is our instruction, it appears how by this we are taught about the time when, having been washed with a baptism of flame, our penance and every work of our merit is perfected, since he who cannot sin teaches us that by doing penance after his baptism.165

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162 Ibid., p. 303/35–8: “ut egrotus corporaliter cum magna diligentia exprimeret medico circumstancias gravedinis morbi sui; quanto magis infirmus spiritualiter, ubi periculum est gravius?”

163 Ibid., p. 304/18: “Tercio principaliter est operis satisfaccio annectenda, quia sine illa non perficitur confessionis cithara.” This is an allusion to a recurring theme of the Psalter, confession, usually translated as praise in the Douay-Rheims, with or on the harp, see Psalms 32:2; 42:4; 70:22; and 146:7.

164 Sermones IV.33, p. 284/27–8: “sit iustum, ut humilitas redemptoris correspondeat superbie hominis redimendi...”

165 Ibid., p.284/34–285/3: “Cum autem omnis Christi accio sit nostra instruccio, patet quomodo per hoc docemur pro tempore quo loti sumus baptismo flaminis perficiamur nostram penitenciam et omne opus nostrum meritorium, cum ille qui peccare non potuit post baptismum suum faciendo penitenciam illud nos docuit.”
Wyclif stresses the need for Christians to confess, humbly and obediently, and to do penance. For each of the three kinds of sin arising from the three enemies of man, the devil, the world, and the flesh, a different type of penance, prayer, alms, and fasting, is given. The priests of the church are given the power of the keys in order to heal the spiritually infirm. Three things are needed by the penitent for this healing: to feel the pain of the sickness, to reveal the sickness and its accidents to a spiritual doctor, and to complete the imposed diet or regimen. So also are there three ways in which people can be led by the hand to believe in the power of this sacrament: first that it is rational to lighten a load, especially if taking a long journey, and, since sin is a most heavy weight, who would not want it lightened? Second, the wounds caused by arrows fester and sicken the whole body, and, since sins are arrows damaging the soul, these wounds ought to be healed before they endanger the soul. Third, in the same way that the root cause of a sickness must be purged from the body before medicines can do any good, so it is with sin, which is driven out by prayer, spiritual works of mercy and alms. The final note on penitence in this sermon is that there are three reasons for a forty-day fast: in imitation of Christ and as a tithe of our life, since we give up one-tenth of every year in fasting this

\[166\] Ibid., p.285/20–5: “omnis christianus existens in mortali peccato actuali et obligatus ad penitenciam Quadregesime peragendam tenetur sub pena peccati novi mortalis induere humilitatem et obedienter confiteri peccata sua, ut sic in caritate perficiat dictam penitenciam.”

\[167\] Ibid., p. 285/27–32: “sicut triplex est peccatum, scilicet diaboli, mundi et carnis, sic est triplex penitencia, scilicet oracio contra peccatum spirituale diaboli, elemosina contra peccatum mundi quo avare iniuriatur proximo, et ieiunium contra peccatum carnis quo homo peccat directe in se ipso.”

\[168\] Ibid., p. 286/11–21: “Unde licet non fuerit sacramentum penitencie per impossible constitutum, tamen racio naturalis necessitat quod infirmus spiritualiter dicat potenti et ordinato ad ipsum iuvandum suam infirmitatem poscendo subsidium; ad hunc itaque finem tradite sunt claves sacerdotibus ecclesie (ut patet Matthei XVIII”). Sed cogitare oportet quomodo in sacramento penitencie necesse est primo morbum sentitum dolere, secundo ipsum morbum cum suis accidentibus medico spirituali plane ostendere et tercio medicinalem dietam ac regimen in iuuentum diligenter perficere.”

In a third sermon, also from the *quadraginta*, Wyclif explicitly states the need for communicants to purge themselves of sin before receiving the Eucharist, although he does not expressly state that such need be done by confessing to a priest. He develops the point in two digressions from the main theme of the sermon, which is the Eucharist and preparation for its reception. The first of these digressions is a short discussion on the necessity of peace. This follows on from the necessity of loving all, and from the church’s practice of having the priest give the peace before communion. Three types of peace are mentioned: between God and human, human and human, and humman and him/herself. The latter two are dependent on the first, and the first is only lost through sin, so the communicants must be sure to purge themselves of sin before taking the Eucharist. This purgation is elaborated in another digression following on from Wyclif’s explanation of justice. Here Wyclif tells his audience that “we, therefore [on account of love of justice], for the debt of sin, ought to give back to God contrition and the avoidance of recidivism.” The emphasis is laid on contrition as a necessary component of forgiveness, “for without contrition, God does not remit [sin] and since he

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170 Ibid., p. 289/22–6: “Triplex autem est racio quare secundum numerum quadragenarium ieunamus, primo conformando nos Christo qui sic ex integro ieunavit, secundo quia ille numerus dierum est quasi decima vite hominis per annum.”
172 Ibid., p. 290/1–14.
173 *Sermones* IV.42. This sermon is also discussed above, pp. 47–54.
174 Ibid., p. 345/19–346/3, esp. 345/35–7: “cum sola peccata separant nos a Deo faciendo discordiam, patet quod oportet omnem communicandum hodie purgari a fermento peccaminum...”
175 Ibid., pp. 346/36–347/2: “Debemus ergo pro debito peccati reddere Deo contricionem et recidivacionis precavicionem.”
does not remit, the absolution of the priest is invalid. And therefore first of all, it is required of the sinner to make satisfaction for himself by contrition.”

In several later sermons, Wyclif takes aim at the practices which he supported so strongly in the three sermons just discussed. There is little variation in Wyclif’s complaints in the later years of his life: Innocent III instituted an unlawful obligation on the laity by compelling them to confess to a priest once a year; the Friars are guilty of using the penitential system for their own financial and lascivious gain; indulgences are dangerous fictions foisted upon the laity by corrupt ecclesiastics, and reek of simony. Often, these complaints are accompanied by others about the Eucharist or about Robert of Geneva, the Avignonese Pope, whose election precipitated the Great Occidental Schism. Wyclif’s discussion of Confession in his later sermons is repetitious in the extreme, and it thus makes more sense to deal with each theme in turn rather than try to deal with each individual sermon.

The fullest attack on Innocent III and the decree *Omnis utriusque sexus* occurs in a sermon for Ash Wednesday. Here Wyclif notes that there are “commonly said” to be two kinds of confession: one to God, and the other “by the institution of Innocent III made to individual priests.” The first of these is “more worthy, more established, and more necessary than the second, because scripture speaks generally about the first

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176 Ibid., p. 347/4–7: “Nam sine contricione Deus non remittit et ipso non remittente non valet sacerdotis absolucio. Et ideo primo omnium oportet peccatorem sibi satisfacere conterendo.”
177 *Sermones* IV.6, pp. 49–57. The topic is handled in much the same way in *Sermones* III.9, pp. 67–9, complete with Wyclif’s suspicions concerning *Omnis utriusque sexus*, which is again mentioned by name.
178 Ibid., p. 56/10–3: “Dicitur autem communiter quod duplex est confessio ad propositum scilicet confessio singulariter Deo facta et confessio ex institucione Innocencii tercii facta proprio sacerdoti.”
confession and penance and on no occasion about the second. Therefore it seems to many, since the church fought better for a thousand years and more without this second that it would still fight better without it.”179 Just who these “many” are is not clear, but what is clear is that for Wyclif scriptural foundation for church practice is key. This becomes even more clear in Wyclif’s reasons for calling the validity of Omnis utriusque sexus into question: the church should not be weighed down with new rites and sacraments that are not founded in the law of the Lord, but papal laws will destroy the freedom of the church and weigh it down with more ceremonies than the church of the Old Testament, and on these grounds the introduction of Omnis utriusque sexus is suspect.180 Moreover confession to God is sufficient for the removal of sin, and confession to a priest without confession to God is useless, so confession to a priest is superfluous, and thus it “seems to be blasphemous presumption” to require such a confession annually. But at the same time, “since error is often useful by accident, and specifically contrition and confession made to a discerning priest, I therefore suppose that such confession might be useful for Christians (i.e. “pilgrims” in the broader sense).”181

179 Ibid., p. 56/13–8: “Prima est dignior, fundabilior et necessarior quam secunda, quia de prima confessione et penitencia loquitur scriptura generaliter et nusquam de secunda. Ideo videtur multis, cum ecclesia melius militavit per mille annos et amplius sine illa secunda quod adhuc melius militaret sine illa.”

180 Ibid., p.56/19–26: “Similiter, ecclesia non est oneranda novis ritibus vel sacramentis sine fundacione ex lege Domini. Cum ergo nulla fundacio curie Romane sufficiens est ad illam, quia per idem liceret sibi tollere libertate ecclesie et plus obligare ipsam ceremoniis quam fuit ecclesia veteris testamenti, ideo suspecta est illa introduccio que in lege papali De Penitencia et Remissionibus cap. Omnis utriusque sexus inseritur, postquam satanas est solutus.”

181 Ibid., pp. 56/34–57/10: “Similiter, confessio facta Deo cum contricione debita est sufficiens ad delecionem peccati nec sine illa valet confessio facta proprio sacerdoti, ergo illa superfluit ad salutem. Ordinare ergo legem quod omnis discretionem maturam attingens confiteatur semel in anno peccata sua singula proprio sacerdoti, videtur esse blasphema presumpcio. Sed quia error sepe prodest per accidentis et specialiter contricio ac confessio facta sacerdoti discreto, ideo supposito quod talis confessio sit utilis quandoque viatori, notandum est quod tres partes sunt communiter in huiusmodi penitencia assignate, scilicet cordis contricio, oris confessio et operis satisfaccio.”
The three parts of penitence, contrition of heart, confession of the mouth and the work of satisfaction, ought to be noted, and it seems that if these three are elicited from confession to a priest, then some good has been done. Contrition is the essential part of confession for Wyclif still, as it is “sorrow sufficient for the removal of sin”\(^\text{182}\) as the example of Peter’s contrition after denying the Lord shows.\(^\text{183}\) Nor is there any doubt that the first suffices at times with respect to God.\(^\text{184}\) In another sermon, Wyclif singles out Innocent as an example of a bad prelate for ascribing a penance of 900 marks annuity to the kingdoms of England and Ireland. How is such, he asks, an example of the Lord’s law?\(^\text{185}\) And in a further sermon, he clearly lays the problems with the contemporary penitential system at Innocent’s feet, and once again, the key is that it is of human invention.\(^\text{186}\)

The conduct of prelates and friars in their capacity as confessors is the target of Wyclif’s contempt in numerous sermons. Over and over again Wyclif emphasizes that God alone can truly know what is in someone’s heart, how much they sin, and whether or not they are truly contrite, and thus confessors can neither assign proper penance nor can they absolve from sin. Moreover, they often say that they can so absolve, simply to reap the

\(^{182}\) Ibid., p. 57/16–7: “contricio est dolor sufficiens ad peccatum delendum.”

\(^{183}\) Ibid., p. 57/20–2: “Et isto modo creditur Petrum ex negacione Domini fuisse contritum; et consistit ista contricione maxime in dolorosa respiscencia hominis a peccato.”

\(^{184}\) Ibid., p. 57/10–11: “Nec dubium quin prima sufficit quandoque quoad Deum.”

\(^{185}\) Sermones II.57, p. 424/7–10: “Que (rogo) exemplacio de lege Domini quod Innocencius III iniungeret regi Anglie et regno ut nongetas marcas annuatim pro Anglia et Hibernia sibi solvat?” Wyclif is referring here to the famous struggle between John of England and Innocent III which began over a disputed election to the see of Canterbury in 1205 and ended with John handing over to the pope his kingdoms of England and Ireland and receiving them back for a fixed annual tribute. See, for example, Charles Duggan, “From the Conquest to the Death of John,” in The English Church and the Papacy in the Middle Ages, edited by C. H. Lawrence (New York: Fordham University Press, 1965): pp. 94–7.

\(^{186}\) Sermones IV.12, p. 101/13–15: “De confessione autem humanitus adinventa est tota decepcio quam dicitur Innocencium III ordinasse et ad tempus ac formam absolucionis limitasse.”
material benefits of such lies. A more particular complaint is that it smacks of blasphemy to confess to a Friar. It ought to be recognized that these complaints fit into a wider anti-mendicancy that is rampant in Wyclif’s later works, and which we have already seen in relation to the Eucharist.

Wyclif makes no mention in his earlier sermons of indulgences, but these come under attack in his later preaching. In a sermon for the feast of Mary Magadelen, for instance, Wyclif notes that “prelates often say, in effect, that if you wish to give me so much money, I will absolve you from so much sin, by giving the desired indulgence,” and so he frames it as a straightforward sale of forgiveness, whereas forgiveness of sins is something that can only be given by God. These, along with other blasphemies of the friars and prelates, are “the fruits of the new laws and orders that have been recently introduced into the church beyond the religion of Christ.” In another sermon, Wyclif links indulgences with pride. Indulgences can lead the pilgrim astray in this regard: “for thus certain people exalt themselves because they have above twenty thousand years of

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188 Sermones III.42, p. 358/16–20, where the point arises in a discussion of the illegitimacy of letters of fraternity: “Dicitur tamen quod regibus, dominis et dominabus quorum confessiones audient et aliis religiosis tales literas non concedunt. Item, videtur quod quelibet talis confessio sapit blasphemiam.” The point being that only God can distribute merit, ibid., pp. 358/20–359/33, cf Sermones II.18, p. 139/21–27, where Wyclif calls blasphemous the teaching that entering a fraternity absolves from sin.


190 Sermones II.18, p. 139/28–30: “et prelati dicunt sepius in effectu quod si vis mihi dare tantam pecuniam, absolvam te a tanto crimine donando optatam indulgenciam.”

191 Ibid., p. 139/36–38: “Et hii sunt fructus novitatum legum et ordinum qui ultra religionem Christi sunt in ecclesie noviter introducti.”
indulgences, and since they are certain that the day of judgement will not tarry so long and again they are certain that they will not be punished for sin in Purgatory after the day of judgement, they seem to be certain that they will not be punished after death on account of sin.”

Many delusional things are said about indulgences and many fools believe many absolutely impossible things, like the fool who says in his heart there is no God. Many believe blasphemously that they grant these pretended indulgences. This blasphemy has to do with the difference in how God and humans know things. God understands everything that a human being does, but He does so in a quite different way, since man knows through phantasms and God knows things as they are by knowing Himself. Wyclif directs his reader elsewhere to learn more about indulgences, and remains content to emphasize the distinction between human and divine knowledge: “Man indeed knows everything, but confusedly and imperfectly as God is not able to understand, for that imperfect understanding, God understands most distinctly and most

192 Sermones II.34, p.250/4–11: “Item, de illa inscripciones [that is, inscriptions in the book of life] possunt viantes tam culpabiliter superbire, sicut de aliquo bono opere quod fecerunt. Sic enim exaltant se quidam quod habent de indulgenciis ultra viginti millia annorum, et cum sint certi quod non tam diu tardabit dies iudicii et iterum certi sunt quod non pro crimine punientur in purgatorio post diem iudicii, esse videntur certi quod non puniatur post obitum pro peccato.”

193 Ibid., p. 252/13–17: “Et quantum ad replicacionem de indulgenciis patet quod multa verba de illis sunt deliramenta infundabilia, et multi credunt tamquam insipiens multa dicta absolute impossibilia, sicut insipiens qui in corde suo dixit stolide: Non est Deus.” See Psalms 13:1 and 52:1, as well as Trialogus, p. 40, where Wyclif discusses the passage in much the same way as here.

194 Sermones II.34, p. 252/18–27: “...et sic multi fingentes indulgencias credunt blaspheme se concedere, cum de facto sibi nec Deus potest ipsas concedere nec taliter (ut machinantur tales blasphemi) intelligere; licet enim Deus intelligat omne quod creatura potest intelligere, tamen creature phantastice eliciunt modum intelligendi quem Deus pro sua imperfectione non potest induerre. Deus enim non intelligit plus quam totum ens in suo ambitu, ymmo vere loquendo non plus intelligit vel aliud quam se ipsum...”

195 Ibid., p. 252/29–30: “…de indulgenciis autem patet alibi...”
perfectly.”

Perfect knowledge is needed for the forgiveness of sins, since contrition is the necessary element to forgiveness, and Wyclif says in another sermon that we cannot know in ourselves the difference between attrition and contrition, let along in others, and it is in large part this lack of knowledge that makes the granting of indulgences blasphemous. In another sermon, Wyclif simply says that indulgences and absolusions *a pena et a culpa* are blasphemy and Antichrist supposes that such simoniacal deceptions will bring money.

Moreover, the pope certainly does not absolve from pain, since all, and this is especially true of crusaders and their indulgences, still incur the pain of death.

Indulgences are a blasphemy of the devil, who falsely pretends that he has the power to grant unheard of indulgences. The treasury of merit is likewise a lie: “the most subtle trick invented by his [the devil’s] especial disciples the friars rests in the deceitful fiction of the infinite treasury of the supererogatory merit of the Church Triumphant which God places in the distributive power of whatever cesarian pope.”

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196 Ibid., pp. 252/35–253/2: “Homo quidem intelligit omnia sed confuse et imperfecte qualiter Deus non potest intelligere, licet illam imperfectam intelleccionem Deus distinctissime et perfectissime intelligit.”
197 *Sermones* I.42, p. 283/14–16: “Ideo sicut ignoramus has duas differentias, sic differentiam inter attricionem et contricionem in nobis ipsis et multo magis in aliis.”
200 *Sermones* IV.20, p. 174/7–10: “potes videre quomodo dyabolus ex innata versucia procedit in blasphemas ampliores, nam fingit mendaciter se potestative concedere inauditas indulgencias...”
201 Ibid., p. 174/28–32: “Cautela autem subtilissima a fratribus precipuis suis discipulis inventa stat in mendaci ficcione thesauri infiniti supererogati meriti ecclesie triumphantis quem Deus ponit in potestate distributiva cuiusque pape cesarii.”
This fiction is based on heretical interpretations of scripture, which would lead one to believe that Peter and his successors alone have the power of binding and loosing. Wyclif contrasts these heretical interpretations with his own interpretation, which demonstrates that only in so much as they follow Christ, who is the exemplar for all Christians, can they be followed and believed.202

The main point behind all of these attacks on the practice of penance is that, for Wyclif, there is no foundation for such practice in the Bible. This can be seen in his interpretation of the treasury of merit and the passages from Matthew and John, but one last example will clearly demonstrate the problem. Wyclif identifies a passage from Luke 17 as the basis for the contemporary practice of penance. This is the story of ten lepers who are healed by Christ and told to present themselves to the priests. While Wyclif interprets the lepers allegorically as sinners seeking forgiveness of their sins, he rejects the use of this passage to support confession to a priest.203 Wyclif gives three reasons to reject this interpretation: first, the priests to whom he sent the cleansed lepers were priests of the New Law, and only to priests of the Old Law, according to the letter, should lepers show themselves; second, the legalities under the Old Law are not taken over into the New; and third, the lepers did not fulfill the commandment of Christ by going to the priests, since Christ cleansed them as they went, “as if he wanted to do away with the legalities [of the Old Testament]; therefore, having been cleansed in this way, it would be superfluous to

202 The disputed passages are the loci classici concerning the power of the keys: Matthew 16:18–9, 18:18, and John 22:21–3. Wyclif counters that these passages must be understood in light of I Corinthians 11:1: “Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ.” See Sermones IV.20, pp. 174–6, esp. 175/24–6: “certus sum ex fide quod nihil ad sacerdotes sequentes apostolos verba ista promissoria Salvatoris nisi sequuntur apostolos in moribus.”

show themselves to such priests.”

The Samaritan in this story, who “went back, with a loud voice glorifying God, fell on his face before his feet, giving thanks” (Luke 17:15–16), not pronouncing a particular confession, but rather praising God, becomes an example for the sinner. The Samaritan confesses and falls on his face before Jesus’ feet; “that is, he is ashamed of his own offense and humbles himself to the priest of Christ’s foot. Indeed the one who thus falls on his face, hides the nobler part of the body on the ground, in the same way meritoriously confessing; he is humbly ashamed and restrains the way of sinning, because he does true penance, as the saints say.”

This is not a clear cut rejection of confession to a priest, for while Wyclif points out that the Samaritan did not confess any particular sin, the moral lesson that he wishes to convey is that humility is the central facet of true penitence; the Samaritan, instead of showing himself to the priest at the temple, fell down and humbled himself “to the priest of Christ’s foot” and the sinner should do likewise. Just who this “priest of Christ’s foot” is is not clear, but what is clear is that humility is the key to confession and that Wyclif did not think that the passage in question was being interpreted correctly.

204 Ibid., p. 306/15–25: “prima quia sacerdotes quibus Christus mandat leprosos se ostendere fuerunt tunc sacerdotes legis nove et solum sacerdotibus legis veteris debuit esse ad litteram ostensio leprosorum. Secundo quia legalia veteris testamenti non sunt trahenda in consequenciam ut secundum illa sic in lege nova sit in toto conformiter faciendum. Et tercio quia leprosi non impleverunt mandatum Christi adeundo illos sacerdotes, cum Christus ac si vellet cessare illa legalia mundavit eos dum irent; ideo superfluum foret sic mundatos talibus sacerdotibus sic se ostendere.”

205 Ibid., pp. 306/35–307/12: “Nec sonat in confessionem hodiernam quod Samaritanus regressus cum magna voce magnificabit Deum et cadens in faciem gracios egit Christo, quia in confessione hodiernam non est talis regraciacio grandissona observata, nec particularis confessio huius Samaritani exprimitur sed laus Dei. Ista autem moralitas debet observari ex hoc evangelio quod instar huius Samaritani peccator contritus confitens cadat in faciem suam ante pedes Jesu, hoc est, quod erubescat culpam propriam et humiliet se presbytero pedi Christi. Qui enim sic cadit in faciem nobiorem partem corporis celat ad terram, sicut meritorie confitens humiliet erubescit et viam peccandi restringit quod facit vera penitencia, ut sancti locuntur.”
In much the same way as with the question surrounding the Eucharist, Wyclif rejected what he saw as corruptions of church practice. This rejection was based most fully on the interpretation of Scripture, but it was, like the Eucharist, also based on pastoral concerns; the sinner needs to learn proper penitence, and does not need to be burdened with excessive ceremonies or simoniacal indulgences.

3. Baptism

Wyclif’s views on the sacrament of baptism do not occupy him overly much in his sermons. There are a total of four sermons where he broaches the topic, three of which occur in the dominical gospel series, and one further sermon in the sanctorale series. Wyclif’s position on baptism was much less controversial than his position on the Eucharist or on confession. Even when he is controversial, his greatest complaint is that time and energy are wasted in answering questions about whether or not John’s baptism was a vehicle of God’s grace, and to upbraid those who are too solicitous about the form of the sacrament, and “assert that whoever is not baptized with water according to the form of the church, which can vary greatly on account of a different region and human rambling, that by that he is damned.”

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206 *Sermones* I.4, 9, 32, and II.60. On Wyclif’s teaching on baptism, see Penn, “Wyclif on the Sacraments,” pp. 272–5.

207 *Sermones* I.4, p. 25/2–5: “Nec valet contencio qua quidam altercantur si corporalis baptizacio Johannis dedit graceam; proprium quidem est Deo dare graceam, licet talia corporalia disponant hominem, ut graceam a Deo recipiat.” This same problem is taken up by Peter Lombard, *Sentences* IV, d.2 c.4.

208 *Sermones* I.9, p. 61/21–27: “unde multi solici te musitant circa ista peripsema fidei et permittunt se et alios fidei ecclesiæ necessarium ignorare, ut multi et magni musitant, et alii ut fidei asserunt de quocunque qui non fuerit baptizatus flumine secundum formam ecclesiæ, que secundum diversitatem regionem et humane volucionis quantumlibet variatur, quod eo ipso damnnatur.”
None of the sermons can be dated with any precision, so they will be handled in the order they appear in Loserth’s edition. The first is a sermon for the fourth Sunday of Advent on John 1:19–28, the story of the encounter between John the Baptist and the Pharisees and Levites. The question which occupies Wyclif in this sermon is that those ‘sent of the Pharisees’ asked of John: “‘why John,’ according to a new religious rite ‘baptized’ the people thus, ‘since he was not one of these three’ [i.e., the Messiah, Elias, or the Prophet (John 1:25)] in which the new religion might begin.”

Wyclif’s initial answer is the same as John’s, that he baptizes “preparatorily and rudimentarily; therefore his baptism is coarse, ‘in water,’ but a great prophet whom they secretly seek is to come....” This great prophet is, of course Jesus, born of the flesh after John, and a preacher after John, but greater than he in dignity. After an aside to ridicule the Friars’ disputes over sandals, Wyclif turns once more to the matter of John’s baptism, noting that it is not bodily baptism that confers grace, and so it is not dangerous to be baptized again in the name of Christ after John’s baptism. After baptism in Christ’s name, however, it would be superfluous or reckless to rebaptize someone, since it is neither prescribed by scripture, nor is corporal baptism absolutely necessary to baptism in the Spirit (baptizacio flaminis). Wyclif, in thoroughly traditional fashion, does not think it a mortal sin for

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209 Sermones I.4, p. 23/15–19: “Sed quia nuncii missi erant ex phariseis in quibus credebatur a populo religio floruisse, ideo quesierunt profundius quare Johannes secundum novum ritum religionis baptizavit sic populum, cum non sit aliquis horum trium in quibus nova religio inchoaret.”

210 Ibid., p. 23/19–22: “Sed Johannes respondet quod solum baptizat preparatorie et inchoative, ideo baptizacio sua est grossa in aqua; sed futurus est magnus propheta quem querunt tacite....”

211 Ibid., pp. 23/21–24/3.

212 Ibid., p. 24/4–23. Similar complaints are against the morality of the Orders are found in another of the sermons concerning baptism, see Sermones 1.9, pp. 64–6.

213 Ibid., p. 25/11–17: “sicut corporalis baptizacio non per se confert gracion baptismalem, sic non obest post baptizacionem Johannis fideles in nomine Christi iterum baptizari. Sed post baptismum Christi foret superfluum ac temerarium quemquam rebaptizari, cum nec evangelium
someone to rebaptize someone through ignorance, but nonetheless a conditional form should be used, presumably in cases of doubt, and because of the necessity of the sacrament, it can be performed by both clerics and laymen and women.\(^\text{214}\) Wyclif even holds, in thoroughly Augustinian, orthodox fashion, that a heretic or an infidel can baptize, because “whosoever corporally, properly baptizes, God spiritually baptizes ... Still we must believe that it is God who regularly baptizes, when his ministers do not set an obstacle.”\(^\text{215}\) He is likewise flexible in the form of baptism, giving three possible wordings, two biblical and one “more Grecorum,” nor does the number of immersions matter, since the faith of the church and the power of the sacrament work in a preparatory manner to baptism of repentance.\(^\text{216}\) Nor does it matter whether the baptism be by immersion or by pouring water on the subject, since the Baptist and Apostles did it thus.\(^\text{217}\) The rest of the sermon contains a discourse on lying, which Wyclif uses to attack the Friars once more.

In a sermon for the Octave of the Epiphany, Wyclif takes up the topic of baptism once more, which naturally follows on from the story related in the day’s gospel: Jesus’

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\(^{214}\) Ibid., p. 25/17–24: “Nec video quod ignoranter sed non contemptibiliter iterans corporalem baptismum ex hoc peccat mortaliter, licet quadam sollicitudine prius baptizati non debent baptizari et posito baptizante in formidine debent baptizari sub condicione ego baptize te, si non es prius baptizatus, et propter necessitatem sacramenti baptismi tam clerici quam laici possunt homines baptizare.”

\(^{215}\) Ibid., p. 25/27–31: “quicunque corporaliter rite baptizaverit, Deus spiritualiter baptizat .... Debemus tamen credere quod Deus baptizat regulariter, quando ministri eius non ponunt obicem.”

\(^{216}\) Ibid., p. 26/2–9: “Sive autem fiat baptizacio sub hiis verbis: Ego te baptizo in nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti, sive sub istis: Baptizo te in nomine domini nostri Jesu Christi, sive more Grecorum: Baptizet te Deus, sive ter fiat immersio sive semel, non pono vim, quia fides ecclesie et virtus sacramenti faciunt preparatorie ad baptizacionem flaminis quantum debent.”

baptism. Wyclif tells us that there are three reasons that Christ went to John: “so that he might approve John’s preaching, so that by the touch of his most pure flesh he might give regenerative power to water, and third that the people might hear the testimony of the Holy Spirit from John.” The real purpose behind Jesus’ baptism, however, was to build up the church:

The goal of the baptism of the Lord was not that he would be baptized spiritually in his own person by John, but that the church, by virtue of his humility and merit, might be baptized. Therefore, since baptism is double, namely bodily [baptism] which is commonly done through water, and spiritual [baptism] which is done through the grace of the Trinity, John implied truly that he ought to be spiritually baptized by Christ, as it appears concerning his sanctification in utero, and since without contradiction Christ came to him that he might be baptized by an equivocal baptism for the reasons given above, therefore Christ expressely commanded before John, that he now decrees this by virtue of obedience.

It is through the merit and humility of Jesus Christ that the church is said to be baptized through Jesus’ baptism. It is not that Jesus needed baptism, as is clear from the truth of John’s statement that he ought to be baptized by Christ, and implying a higher baptism than that of the body. So, for Wyclif, Christ’s baptism is equivocal; it is a baptism not with the normal purpose of sanctifying the one baptized, but with the purpose of sanctifying another, in this case, the church.

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220 Ibid., p. 58/14–25: “‘Finis autem baptizacionis Domini non fuit, ut ipse spiritualiter a Johanne in persona propria baptizaretur, sed ut ecclesia sua virtute sue humiliatis et meriti baptizaretur. Ideo cum duplex sit baptismus, scilicet corporalis qui fit per aquam communiter, et spiritualis qui fit per graciem trinitatis, verum implicat Johannes quod ipse debet a Christo baptizari spiritualiter, ut patet de sanctificacione sua in utero, et cum hoc sine repugnancia Christus venit ad ipsum, ut baptizaretur baptizacione equivoce propter causas superius assignatas, ideo Christus prior Johannis signanter mandat ut virtute obediencie hoc nunc sentenciat.’
Further, Christ gives us an example of obedience, in this case to justice: “And the cause [of Jesus’ obedience] is supplied, because it is thus fitting that the lord and the servant fulfill all justice.” This leads Wyclif into a discussion of the virtues of justice and humility, his positions on which will be discussed more fully below; suffice it say for the moment that Jesus in his baptism gives an example of the highest grade of humility, that of the greater obeying the lesser.

Wyclif returns to baptism in his discussion of *dubia*, which in this case occupies the middle section of the sermon. The first doubt is whether the touch of Christ’s flesh can sanctify water everywhere with the power of regeneration. There are three basic problems to be countered: first, most water was too far away to be altered; second, sea water or mixed water are not disposed to receive such power; and third, the power of regeneration would remain perpetually in whatever water thus blessed and it would be superfluous to consecrate anymore.

Before responding to these three problems, Wyclif makes certain that his readers/listeners understand that he is not talking about change in the way of a “coarse philosopher,” who thinks that all change must be sensible; rather, he is directing this sermon to those who believe that no matter how far removed water might be from the Jordan the power of the touch of Jesus’ flesh is acceptable to God, and the water is changed supernaturally, “not

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221 Ibid., pp.58/25–27: “Et causa subditur, quia sic decet dominum et servum implere omnem iusticiam.”
223 Ibid., pp. 60/8–63/14.
224 Ibid., p. 60/10–16: “tum quia aque plurime nimis distant, ut taliter alterentur, tum quia aque mixte, ut aque marine, non sunt deposite recipere hanc vim tam spiritualis qualitatis, sicut nec natura quevis corperea, tum tercio quia ista vis regenerandi maneret in quacunque aqua perpetuo et superflueret aquam aliquam postmodum consecrare.”
that that quality, which is goodness of spiritual water, were a thing that is able to be per se, because this coarseness concerning the quiddity of accidents confounds as much the simple as the subtle.”

Wyclif’s response to the first of the three doubts is very simple: it does no harm to infinite power however far away the water to which one wishes to give such power might be. To the second, he replies that theologians are ambiguous as to how and how much mixed waters receive this power, as there is doubt whether baptism with such water is acceptable to God. Since the faith is not made up of such particulars, what scripture pronounces and experience teaches are enough, “and in many propositions a catholic ought to respond neither by conceding nor by denying nor by doubting but by plausibly supposing.” And finally, to the third, he denies the consequence, emphasizing that the power of regeneration is dependent on the volition of God, and it does not seem to faith or reason that God wants all water to be perpetually blessed. Nor was the sanctification of water by the baptism of Christ so efficacious that blessing does not need to be performed over other water or indeed to invoke the power of the blessing of the Lord. In any case,

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225 Ibid., p. 60/16–26: “In ista materia supponendum est hoc verbum fieri non rudi philosopho qui non concipit alteracionem vel qualitatem nisi sensibilem, qualis consequitur elementa et mixta. Sed dirigatur sermo fidelibus qui credunt quod in quantum aqua quantumcumque distans vel Jordani discontinua est Deo acceprior virtute tactus carne Domini, eo ipso est supernaturaliter alterata, non quod illa qualitas que est aque spiritualis bonitas sit res que poterit per se esse, quia ista ruditas de quiditate accidencium confundit tam simplices quam subtiles.”

226 Ibid., p. 60/27–29: “Ad primum dicitur quod non obest alteranti infinite potencie cuicunque aque voluerit quantumcumque distanti vim talem tribuere.”

227 Ibid., p. 60/30–61/3: “Ad secundum dicitur quod ambiguam est singulis vel multis teologis que aque et quomodo et quantum mixte recipiunt hanc virtutem, sicut dubium est eis quam baptismizacionem Deus per aquas huiusmodi acceptaret; nec obest quod aquam distacionem sic alteret, cum hoc quod aquam propinquiorum non sic moveat. Ideo cum de talibus particularibus non sit fides, satis est quod de maximis fidei quas scriptura exprimit et de factis evidentibus experimento doctis generetur in populo suspicio probabilis sine hoc quod musitet de opposito; et in multis proponendis responderi debet catholice nec concedendo nec negando nec dubitando sed probabiliter supponendo.”
nothing should be asserted as within our power unless with the understanding, “if God
wills.”  

Because of these doubts, many people are solicitous and mutter about baptism, placing
emphasis on the proper form, and ignoring the faith of the church; they assert that anyone
who is not baptised by water according to the form of the church is damned. Wyclif
replies that since there are three types of baptism, by water, by blood, and by spirit or
repentance, through which a person can be saved, so it is permissible to baptize in
another form than by water. Christ’s words from John 3:5, “Unless a man be born again
of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” are understood to
refer to a baptism of repentance “by virtue of the water which flowed from the side of the
Saviour.” While it is true that baptism by water is not strictly necessary, Wyclif thinks
that it is safer for Christians to be baptized if they have opportunity.

The rest of this sermon is taken up with a discussion of “private religions,” as Wyclif
draws a parallel between the variety of forms usable in baptism and the variety of

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228 Ibid., p. 61/4–20: “Ad tercium dicitur negando consequenciam, quia hec vis regenerandi more
luminis dependet a volucione divina et non enitet nobis ex fide vel racione, quod Deus perpetuo
vult aquam talem quantumlibet continue esse sanctam. Nec est sanctificacio cuiuscunque aque
per baptizacionem Christi tam efficax quin probabiliter sine repeticione sanctificacionis liceat
noviter super aliamquam immo eandem virtutem sanctificacionis Domini invocare; per hoc
enim melius aque a probabilis nobis continget et non deterius, et sic diceret aliquis quod panem
consecratum licet iterum consecrare vel (ut placet aliquibus) posito homine in ambiguo de
consecracione priori, non debet iterum nisi condicionaliter consecrare. Et talis condicio
cuiuscunque operis nostri debet intelligi secundum sentenciam beati Jacobi. Non debemus aliquid
asserere nos facturos simpliciter quantumcunque fuerit in potestate nostra nisi subintelligendo, si
Deus voluerit.”

229 Ibid., p. 61/21–27.

230 Ibid., pp. 61/27–36: “Cum enim sit triplex baptismus scilicet fluminis, sanguinis et flaminis,
videtur quos stat hominem salvari, licet non fuerit flumine baptizatus. Et dictum Christi Joh. III, 3
[recte 5]: Nisi quis renatus fuerit ex aqua et spiritu sancto, non potest introire in regnum Dei,
intelligitur de baptismo flaminis facto virtute aque quae effluxit de latere salvatoris. Sed quia in
ambiguis pars securior est tenenda, videtur michi securius quod quilibet christianus habens
opportunitatem, ut a suo proximo baptizetur debet celeriter baptizari.”
religious orders. Predictably, Wyclif is less generous here than in his understanding of baptism, noting that their works are those of supererogation, which are not necessary to salvation, and their rules depart from that of scripture.\textsuperscript{231}

The third sermon dealing with baptism is for Trinity Sunday on the story of Nicodemus from John’s Gospel (John 3:1–15). Much of the sermon is about spiritual birth, as Jesus tells Nicodemus: “Amen, Amen, I say to you: unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” which Wyclif interprets to mean, using Christ’s voice: “you have natural birth and the rudiments of faith concerning my humanity from a miracle previously known, but above this it is necessary that you be born again spiritually and spiritually made an adopted son of God.”\textsuperscript{232} Wyclif thus makes an explicit connection between spiritual rebrith and adoption as children of God; moreover the one who does this is God, speaking once more as Christ: “Since that is not able to be done unless by God, it appears that I, by accomplishing generation in this manner over man, am God.”\textsuperscript{233} Even philosophers by the light of nature can determine that one who gives men power to become sons of God (John 1:12) is God.\textsuperscript{234} If one of the faithful makes another person a child of God through baptism or preaching, they give that person the power to be a child of God, but these are simply Christ’s tools.\textsuperscript{235}

\textsuperscript{231} Ibid., pp. 62–6.

\textsuperscript{232} \textit{Sermones} I.32, p. 216/6–10: “ac sic diceret: Nativitatem naturalem habes et rudimenta fidei de mea humanitate ex priori miraculo cognoscienda, sed super hec oportet quod sis denuo spiritualiter generatus et spiritualiter adoptivus filius Dei factus.”

\textsuperscript{233} Ibid., p. 216/10–12: “Quod cum non potest fieri nisi a Deo, patet quod ego faciendo generationem huiusmodi super hominem sim Deus.”

\textsuperscript{234} Ibid., p. 216/12–19.

\textsuperscript{235} Ibid., p. 216/34–217/5: “Si fidelis facit alium esse Dei filium, sicut facit rite baptizans vel ipsum gignit spiritualiter per evangelium, sicut facit evangelice catecizans, ergo dat ei potestatem filium Dei fieri vel adoptat eum in Dei filium. Revera non plus sequitur quam si dolabra facit lignum esse partem domus, ergo dat sibi potestatem vel disponit architectonicum quod sit ita.
Nicodemus’ question (“how can a man be born when he is old?”) leads Wyclif to posit a distinction between physical and spiritual birth, Christ giving those too focused on the carnal, pharisees and “modern religious,” the way to turn away from the carnal: “Amen, amen I say to you unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5) A problem of interpreting these words exercises Wyclif, who turns to an equivocation to ensure that his audience understands that Christ’s words are true: “it is necessary for all who are to be saved to be baptized in the water and blood flowing from Christ’s side by the baptism of fire. For since it is necessary that everyone be in his own time, it appears that until the end of the world no one who shall be baptized will be saved unless he be saved in the power of this water and this blood.”

One further sermon contains a section on baptism. This is a sermon for the feast of the Ascension on the final chapter of Mark. The section dealing with baptism is concerned with the interpretation of Mark 16:16: “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall he condemned.” Since belief in Jesus Christ, as the middle section of the creed declares, is necessary to any viator if s/he is to be saved, Wyclif emphasizes the connection between preaching and baptism, the first leading to the

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Omnes enim evangelizantes citra Christum sunt instrumentum suum et sarma secundum vaticinium; et hoc patet secundum vaticinium Isaie X°, 15.”

236 Ibid., p. 217/6–29.
Preaching brings the passion and death of Christ to mind and anticipates baptism by Christ in water. Baptism in the Spirit is absolutely necessary to salvation, and so the gospel speaks of believing and being baptized together as leading to salvation. This insight into the connection between believing and being baptized leads Wyclif into a lengthy discussion of the merits of the office of preaching, and priests should be allowed to perform this office without restriction.

Throughout his preaching on baptism, Wyclif seems to have been fairly consistent, and also fairly expansive in his understanding of the sacrament. He is prepared to allow almost anyone to baptize, with any one of a number of possible combinations of words and elements. There is a marked difference between the treatment of this sacrament and those of the Eucharist and penance. In sermons on all three, Wyclif attacks Friars and other religious, but in the sermons on baptism he does so for moral reasons and not because they have misinterpreted the sacrament in question; he takes opportunity to attack their internecine quarrels over Christ’s shoes and to call them liars, but he does not say that they are mistaken in their theology of baptism. What accounts for the difference? It is not that baptism could not be controversial, as it was, for example, during the controversies between Catholic and Donatist in the early centuries of the Christian era, or among various Protestant groups in the sixteenth century. My suspicion is that the

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239 Ibid., p. 448/24–29: “Nam fide credere fuit semper necessarium cuilibet viatori si salvari debeat, et cum tota fides necessario colligitur in media parte simboli credendo in dominum Jesum Christum, patet quod illa fides que est evangelium est necessarius predicanda.”

240 Ibid., pp. 448/40–449/1: “Predicacioni autem oportet baptismacionem adiungere, cum per hoc memoria passionis et mortis Christi devocius memoratur et ideo baptismus fluminis a Christo precipitur.”

241 Ibid., pp.449–52, the comment about priests being free to preach is at the bottom of page 451.


243 Ibid., pp. 26–8.
answer lies rather in the differences in contents and form among the three sacraments and their susceptibility to abuse. Wyclif thought that the Eucharist, as we have seen above, might lead to idolatry, and thus endanger the salvation of those who misunderstood and worshipped the host. Likewise penance could be dangerous, opening confessors to the danger of being led into temptation, and exposing the laity to the danger of being defrauded of their money. Baptism, however, was regarded as necessary and non-repeatable. So necessary was it in fact that it was commonly held that laypeople, both men and women, could perform the sacrament. There were, therefore, none of the dangers inherent in baptism which Wyclif saw in the other two sacraments.

Conclusion

Wyclif’s sermons on the sacraments contain some of his most controversial preaching, on the Eucharist and on penance, but also some of his most conventional and unproblematic preaching, on baptism. If there is an overarching theme to his preaching on the sacraments, then it is a concern for the laity; at every turn he had the laity’s best interest at heart. If he was denouncing the idolatry of worshipping the host, it was to save the common people in the pew from sin. If he was denouncing the abuses of the friars in hearing confessions, it was because they were exploiting the laity. But it is not only in the denunciation of abuse that he was looking out for his flock’s spiritual well-being, for he was also concerned to allay people’s fears as regards baptism by assuring them that this most necessary of sacraments could, in fact, be performed by anyone, in almost any form, and retain its validity and power. As we shall see, this concern for the average layperson was one of Wyclif’s primary motivations.
Chapter 3

Wyclif’s Preaching on Vice and Virtue

1. Vices and Virtues

Wyclif’s understanding of virtue and vice is based in his conception of the *imitatio Christi*, the imitation of Christ. Throughout his preaching, from his earliest sermons to his latest, Wyclif is consistent in his description of the *imitatio Christi*, which is based in humility, poverty, and patient suffering. While he does, on occasion, use the standard list of seven vices and, much less often, the seven virtues, these are less important, especially for his polemical preaching. The reliance on *imitatio Christi* rather than the lists of vices and virtues, leads to his preaching in this area to be largely piecemeal and unsystematic, so I will use first those few of Wyclif’s sermons on the subject that contain systematic constructions to outline his preaching on vice and virtue. A quite early sermon is structured around the seven last words of Christ on the Cross and the seven signs of bodily death. A second is a sermon on the beatitudes, which opposes these, and their inherent virtues, against the deadly sins. Taken together, these two sermons illustrate Wyclif’s teaching on vice. Systematic treatments of virtue are fewer, nor does Wyclif ever systematically expound the seven virtues, the three theological and four cardinal, that were, and are, commonly grouped together in opposition to the seven cardinal sins. So, I shall proceed by discussing first the three theological virtues, which are grouped together in several sermons, and then I shall discuss the cardinal virtues, which are

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1 I will not be distinguishing between vice and sin, as Wyclif does not do so in any substantial way in the *Sermones*, but rather uses such terms almost synonymously to refer to actions or tendencies against God’s will. This does not mean that he does not do so elsewhere, as, for instance, in the *De mandatis*, chapter 24, p. 333/21–25.

expounded, at some length in a single sermon. A third listing of virtues, which is related to neither of these other sets, and related to the performance of Christian ministry, will also be discussed. Finally, I will discuss Wyclif’s use of virtue and vice in his polemical sermons directed against the church hierarchy and against the religious orders.

1.1 Seven Last Words, Seven Signs of Death, and Seven Deadly Sins

In a sermon from Good Friday 16 April 1378, and thus one of the earlier sermons in the corpus, Wyclif opposes the seven last words from the cross and the seven deadly sins, relating the latter to the seven signs of death. The long meditation on the seven last words and the seven deadly sins follows a short exposition on the thema drawn from the gospel reading: “Behold your mother” (John 19:27), which is, of course, among the last words. Wyclif’s transition sets the tone for the meditation to follow: “There are, however, seven words which Christ spoke from the teaching chair of the cross (in cathedra crucis) which when subtly understood, are very powerful against the seven deadly sins. It is proper to note, moreover, these seven words and the seven properties following bodily death. And then keeping these according to the mystical sense will profit us in the annual memorial of Christ’s death.”

Wyclif employs here two sets of verses that I have, as yet, been unable to identify; neither of them appears in Hans Walther’s Initia Carminum or Proverbia sententiaeque, nor

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5 Hans Walther, Initia carminum ac versuum Medii Aevi posterioris Latinorum. Alphabetisches Verzeichnis der Versanfänge mittellateinischer Dichtungen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), and Hans Walther et al., Proverbia sententiaeque Latinitatis Medii Aevi:
have I been able to find them in the *Patrologia Latina* or any other database. It is possible that the verses were composed by Wyclif, but this can only be put forward as a possibility for the time being. The verses are as follows: “Hiis ignosce pater, hodie mecum requiesces/ Filius ecce tuus, eloy, sicio, satis est iam/ Me tibi mando pater/ Deus hec ait in cruce pendens.” And: “Rigidus algescit, pallescit atque gravescit/ Sensu, diviciis privatur, horride fetet.” Wyclif employs the same structure of seven last words opposing the seven deadly sins in a sermon from just about exactly a year earlier, but he does not go into the same detail as here, nor does he bring the seven signs of death to bear on the exposition.

Neither of these verses, as interesting as they are, supplies the organizing principle around which Wyclif constructs his discourse. Rather, Wyclif orders the deadly sins, apart from a slight variation, in a way that originated with the listing of Gregory the Great, one of Wyclif’s favourite authors. The order in which he lists them is: pride (*superbia*), envy (*invidia*), wrath (*ira*), sloth (*accidia*), avarice (*avaritia*), gluttony (*gula*), lust (*luxuria*). The Gregorian order, however, usually places *ira* before *invidia* and *avaritia* before *accidia*, but this is not always the case, and Wyclif’s ordering is not all that strange, as much variety in the ordering of the sins is common. Likewise, Wyclif...

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9 See Bloomfield, *Seven Deadly Sins*, pp. 69–104, esp. 72–3. The origins of the Seven Deadly Sins as a structural set-piece began with Evagrius Ponticus’ “eight generic logismoi (thoughts),”
was by no means the first to oppose the seven last words with the seven deadly sins, which was done at least as early as the Venerable Bede, who does so in a prayer on the seven last words, who also orders the seven deadly sins in a different sequence.\textsuperscript{10} This sermon, with its use of the seven signs of death, and with the Gregorian ordering of the seven sins, represents one of the few instances where extra biblical material forms as important a part of the discussion as the biblical material.

Preaching on the seven deadly sins on Good Friday was a common practice in Wyclif’s time, but Wyclif approached the subject a little differently from his contemporaries. Other preachers usually content themselves with the use of the sins as a rhetorical device, linking each sin to one of Christ’s wounds or Christ’s suffering in general, but “do not seem inclined to belabor the nature of sin or to enumerate sinful behaviour.”\textsuperscript{11} Wyclif, while he is not blind to stylistic and rhetorical matters, does, as we shall see, go into some detail about the nature of sin. Oddly enough, Wyclif approaches most nearly to the preaching of his contemporaries, at least in the matter of the seven deadly sins, in his rambling \textit{De civili dominio}, where he opposes the deadly sins with the wounds of

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\textsuperscript{10} \textit{De septem verbis in cruce}, found in \textit{PL}, 94.0561–2. The order of sins found here is superbia, avaritia, luxuria, invidia, ira, gula, and accidia.

Christ. Elsewhere in that massive work, Wyclif uses the same structure as in his Good Friday sermon, including the verses beginning *hiis ignosce*, opposing the seven last words and the seven deadly sins and discussing the seven signs of death. 13 *De civili dominio* and the two Good Friday sermons all date from roughly the same time period, 1375–1376, and we know that Wyclif was fond of recycling material, so it is not inconceivable that Wyclif had one or the other to hand while at his writing desk. Whatever the exact nature of their composition, it is clear from these works and Wyclif’s many other discussions of the seven deadly sins that they were no mere rhetorical topos for Wyclif, but a live and important question.

Wyclif’s discussion begins with pride, “the first of all sins and the root of all wickedness,” which is associated with the first sign of death, stiffness. It is elsewhere characterized as the first and last of sins by which both the elect and the reprobate are sinful. It is combatted by its opposite, humility, expressed by Christ in the words “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). “Nothing puts stiff inobedience and pride to flight better than to consider humbly how God is omnipotent,

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12 *De civili dominio*, II:202/2–19, where each of Christ’s seven effusions of blood is said to counter one of the deadly sins. Johnson has noticed the dissimilarity of Wyclif’s preaching on the deadly sins, but she makes no mention of the passage from *De civili*, see Johnson, “The Hard Bed of the Cross,” p. 143, n. 24.

13 *De civili dominio*, IV:624/10–626/10.


15 See Anne Hudson, “The development of Wyclif’s *Summa theologiae*,” in *John Wyclif: Logica, politica, teologia*, edited by M. Fumagalli, Beonio Brocchieri and S. Simonetta (Florence: SISMEL–Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2003): pp. 57–70, as well as Hudson, “Wyclif’s Latin Sermons,” pp. 223–48. The *Trialogus*, pp. 158–210, also contains a construction of “contrary virtues.” Richard Newhauser has made the suggestion that this is an expansion on the earlier sermon material, “Preaching the Contrary Virtues,” p. 155, but the situation is probably a little more complicated than that when we consider the material in *DCD*.

16 See Bloomfield, *Seven Deadly Sins*, pp. 188–90 and references there.

17 *Sermones* II.34, p. 249/9–12: “Quando enim alia peccata exultant, surrepit superbia ex instinctu dyaboli, sic quod ipsum est peccatum primum et ultimum quo tam electi quam reproi viciantur.”
the highest judge, whose notice nothing can escape, such that by serving him and by obeying his commandments, by enduring injuries, vengeence might be brought about by his judgement. Thus did Christ for our instruction suffer the scourge, reproach, and mockery.”

A lack of humility is the cause of all of the church’s troubles; from where else could they be, Wyclif asks, if not from pride? If only there were more humility and preparedness to suffer injury, the cause of all the evils could be extinguished. Prelates especially are in danger of the pride which made satan fall like lightning, since they claim powers that they do not possess: “For who knows to establish from works or scripture the power newly invented of absolution, of indulgences and of other remissions of sin? No doubt that their pride stinks exceedingly before God. For Christ with his disciples did not wish to thus celebrate power with pomp in this way.”

Indulgences, moreover, can be a cause of pride among those who obtain them, as these think that they will not suffer for their sins after death if they have accumulated enough years of indulgence.

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19 Ibid., p. 331/3–10: “Defectus itaque huius virtutis quo deseritur doctrina Christi et amplexcitur rigid superbia diaboli est causa tocius perturbationis ecclesie. Unde rogo bella, unde persecuciones vel contenciones nisi a matre superbia? Nam verba rigida et facta inobediencia sunt causa tocius huius perturbationes ecclesie, quia si quis de se ipso sentiret humiliter, parando se ad paciendum iniurias, posset esse causa extinguendi omnes istas malicias.”

20 Sermones II.34, p. 249/19–27: “Nostri autem prelati iactant profundius de potestate, virute et gracia quas non habent; ideo timendum est de illis quod sunt in casu sathane, trahentes secum suos complices more spiritualis fulguris ad infernum. Quis enim scit fundare ex opere vel scriptura potestatem iam fictam de absolucionibus, de indulgenciis et alis remissionibus peccatorum? Non dubium quin nimis fretet eorum superbia coram Deo. Christus enim cum suis discipulis noluit sic pompare de huiusmodi potestate.”

21 Ibid., p. 250/6–11: “Sic enim exaltant se quidam quod habent de indulgenciis ultra viginti milia annorum, et cum sint certi quod non tam diu tardabit dies iudicii et iterum certi sunt quod non pro
Suffering, linked with humility and opposing pride, is for Wyclif an integral part of the Christian life, effectively combatting guilt: “But here worldly people object that through this, if anyone suffers injustice, justice would be extinguished and the world would be full of evil with no one resisting wickedness. Here it is right to substitute objecting in such a way with the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it appears then that anyone ought to put up with injustice, since God the just judge is steadfast and patient, and by this justice will shine forth abundently, which for a time will be extinguished, while the people who suffer thus, conquer by the power of the highest judge, and thus patience effectively resists the evil of guilt.”

The sufficiency of divine law is one of Wyclif’s favourite subjects. Here, Wyclif says that the unfaithful think that the church will fail if human laws are not introduced on top of God’s law, but this is sinful. He appeals to a principle of natural law by stating that *epikeia*, equity, ought to be sufficient for the general populace in bringing harmony out of

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22 *Sermones* IV.40, p. 331/11–20: “Sed hic obiciunt seculares per hoc quod, si quilibet pateretur injurias, extingueretur iusticia et mundus foret plenus nequicia nemine resistente malicie. Hic oportet supponere sic obicienti fidem domini Jesu Christi. Et patet tunc quod quilibet debet sustinere injurias, cum Deus iudex iustus sit fortis et paciens, et per hoc luceret habundanter iusticia que modo extinguitur, dum populus qui sic patitur vincit virtute summi iudicis, et sic paciens efficaciter resisteret malo culpe.”

23 Ibid., p. 331/24–9: “Unde ecclesia servante hanc scolam generaliter sopirenter iniurie, cum lex Christi cum sua gracia sit pro complemento iusticie prestancior lege cesarea. Si ergo nos executores legis Dei faceremus plene nostrum debitum, indubie fieret a Deo copiosius iusticia, innitendo pure legi Dei dimissis humanis legibus.”

24 Wyclif often contrasts the law of God/Christ/the Lord with laws of human invention, especially in discussions of transubstantiation, penance, and the religious orders. See above, chapter two. See also, Benrath, *Wyclifs Bibelkommentar*, pp. 110–23.
injustices. There is an equivalence here between divine and natural law; what Wyclif seems to be saying is that there is no need for excessive laws and regulations where natural law, a sense of equity, prevails.\(^{25}\)

The discussion of the second vice, envy, revolves around charity, just as the discussion of pride revolves around humility. Charity should rule the Christian, who should put off envy, “because otherwise a man will be made spiritually dead, cold and bloodless, just as Christ prophesied in Matthew 24:12: ‘the charity of many shall grow cold.’ And that coldness is put to flight by the second word of Christ on the cross, which is read in Luke 23[:43] is said to the thief: ‘Today you will be with me in paradise,’ where love is expressed in kindness in regard to the good not only for friends, but even for enemies.”

This necessary charity that opposes envy is applied in all directions, both to those who are above and below a person, as well as those on both sides: “Indeed, it thus behooves us crucially to love God above ourselves, just as also humans lower in nature and on the right and on the left as much friends as enemies.”\(^{26}\) The love for enemies is not only necessary because of divine command, but also from natural reason: we profit ourselves more by loving our enemies than by irritating them. Those who traffic in envy, therefore, act irrationally “who labouriously and expensively worsen themselves in order to injure

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\(^{26}\) Ibid., pp. 332/21–31: “Et patet ex istis quod oportet caritatem regulare undique christianos et postponi invidiam, quia aliter fit homo mortuus spiritualiter frigidus et exsanguis, sicut prophetat Christus Matthei XXIV\(^\circ\), 12 quod *refrigescet caritas multorum*. Et illud frigus fugavit secundus sermo Christi in cruce, quo Luce XXIII\(^\circ\), 43 legitur dixisse latroni: *Hodie mecum eris in paradiso*; ubi exprimitur comitativus amor in bonis non solum amicis sed eciam inimicis. Sic enim oportet nos crucialiter diligere Deum supra nos, sicut et inferiora homine in natura et a dextris ac sinistris tam amicos quam inimicos.”
their enemies.” 27 Nothing accumulates enemies so much as envy, we are told, and since the envious establishes for himself a rule that he should hate his enemy, it can be seen how from the interaction of enemies, the people’s charity is cooled. 28 Finally, the workings of Christ and the devil are contrasted. Christ charitably gives the thief, who because he is a sinner is Christ’s enemy, the gift of beatitude. The devil, however, tempts man, not that he should share in some goods, but that he should harm his enemy, which then seems to him a desirable good. Thus this sin of envy is devoid of reason, diabolical and contrary to nature; for God introduced into all cognitive natures affection for those similar in nature, and so envy is contrary to the goodness of God. 29 The spiritual life of the Christian is dependent on charity; it overcomes the unnatural and irrational vice of envy that would have the Christian hate those whom he should love, which envy only leads to his own detriment, both in terms of earthly goods and spiritual well-being.

Wrath is associated with the paleness of death. Its opposite, meekness, is associated with the words “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). The emphasis here is on spiritually eating Christ’s flesh and drinking his blood, which every

27 Ibid., p. 332/31–5: “Et movet ad hoc racio naturalis, cum plus sic quam exasperando inimicos proficimus nobis ipsis. Irracionabile itaque commercium invidorum qui laboriose et sumptuose deteriorant se ipso, ut noceant inimicis.”
28 Ibid., p. 332/35–9: “Nichil enim magis accumulat inimicos, et per consequens, cum invidus statuit sibi pro regula quod odiat inimicos, patet quod ex commixtione inimicie caritas populi refregiscit.”
29 Ibid., p. 333/2–11: “Christus autem communicando caritative dedit latroni inimico quia peccanti beatitudinem. Sed econtra diabolus temptat multitudinem hominum, non ut communicet eis in bonis sed ut plus noceat inimicis quod videtur sibi bonum delectabile. Unde illud serpentimum peccatum absconditum caret omni racione, cum sit peccatum diaboli et nature contrarium. Deus enim indidit omni nature cognitive affectionem ad sibi simile in natura. Ille ergo est nimis bonitati Dei contrarius, qui ad sui detrimentum invidet sibi simile in natura.”
one of the elect must do, and which Wyclif says cannot be done without meekness. \(^{30}\)

Christ is our example of meekness, since he did not get angry at those most ungrateful sons who inflicted his injuries, but rather he said “most meekly: ‘Father forgive them.’” \(^{31}\)

So likewise, it is necessary for all of the elect to put off all rancor in the hour of death, and love all men, but who can do this who serves rancor for so long, which sin pollutes and corrodes? \(^{32}\) The remedy is to put on the virtues that oppose diabolical sin. \(^{33}\)

Sloth (\textit{accidia}) is associated with becoming heavy with the weight of spiritual death or sin. It is chased away by the words “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34). \(^{34}\) The virtue opposing sloth in this case is \textit{theosebeia}, piety or godliness. Christ’s example is central here; without any sign of sloth, he suffered death and the perforation of the lance, all the while serving God. His example is the best medicine against sin, but we fall short of this example: “And granted that we should all confess this \textit{theosebeia}, nonetheless affections and deeds condemn us openly, since we are repeatedly slaves to the world, the flesh and the father of pride, not in order as we ought to

\(^{30}\) Ibid., p. 333/12–16: “Et ex istis patet quod oportet miticiam ire contrariam mitigare pallorem hominis mortui spiritualiter, quia aliter non manducat spiritualiter Christi carnem et bibit eius sanguinem, quod tamen oportet omnem salvandum facere (ut patet Johannis VI\(^{o}\), 54).”

\(^{31}\) Ibid., p. 333/34–7: “Christus autem non prorupit in iram contra ingratissimos filios committentes in eum summam iniuriam, sed dixit mitissime: \textit{Pater ignosce illis}, Luce XXIII\(^{o}\), 34.”

\(^{32}\) Ibid., p. 334/2–7: “Oportet enim omnem salvandum in hora mortis deponere omnem rancorem, diligendo omnes homines; sed quomodo disponitur ad hoc qui servat rancorem per tantum temporis, cum peccatum instar infectivi liquoris vas in quo resedet ex diuturnitate temporis maculat et corrodit.”

\(^{33}\) Ibid., p. 334/11–3: “Ideo necesse est asseveri in virtutibus isti … diabolico peccato contrariis.”

\(^{34}\) Ibid., p. 334/15–20: “Sed necesse est quod volens hanc triplex impetum [i.e., the first three vices of pride, envy, and wrath] au fugere sit semota accidia in servicio Dei assiduus, quia aliter erit mortuus spiritualiter gravedine peccatorum et fugam illius criminis docuit Christus in quarto verbo Marci XV\(^{o}\), 34 quando dixit: \textit{Deus meus, Deus meus, ut quid me dereliquisti?}”
meritoriously serve our God.”

Self-examination is called for then, so that we can make sure that our deeds are pleasing to God, and thus we need to pray always to God that he “forgive us our debts.” The movement then is away from the heaviness of sin and the spiritual death of sloth by way of self-examination and piety in imitation of Christ.

Avarice is associated with both the loss of physical sensation and the loss of wealth. Its opposite, honest poverty, is associated with the words “it is finished” (John 19:30), since avarice cannot be sated. Wyclif’s emphasis here is on the transitory nature of wealth, recalling the words of Paul in I Timothy 6:7–8: “For we brought nothing into this world: and certainly we can carry nothing out. But having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content.” A life of honest poverty is the vita apostolica, the apostolic life, and this life is necessary to bring us to our future state: “It is necessary for humans, in going out from the fleshly mother and going into mother earth, to understand the condition of honest poverty, which condition becomes the state of innocence and will be in the state whither you hurry.” The state between these two (temporal) extremes should conform to them, and we should, therefore, focus only on those things which bring us to

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35 Ibid., pp. 334/29–335/10: “Sic ergo Christus in isto verbo oravit et docuit, ymmo quando lingua sibi defecerat serviendo Deo passus est mortem et lancee perforacionem; et sic sine nota accidie servivit Deo continue. Nec est contra peccata meritorior aut melior medicina. Et licet omnes fateamur lingua hanc theosebeiam, tamen affeccio et facta condempnant nos patule, cum crebrius servimus mundo, carni et patri superbie, non in ordine ut serviamus meritorie Deo nostro.”

36 Ibid., p. 335/5–10: “Ideo necesse est nobis quod examinemus discrete omnia facta nostra, sic quod apud iustum iudicem videatur quod quicquid facimus illud ad honorem Dei provide faciamus. In quo quia peccamus continue, necessitati sumus orare Deum semper in via debita nostras dimittere.”

our future state.\textsuperscript{38} Opposed to the apostolic life is a worldly life which is fraught with danger, danger especially for laypersons and secular clerics in acquiring temporal wealth, in preserving it, and in losing it.\textsuperscript{39} There is danger in acquiring wealth to the detriment of one’s neighbour, even more danger in miserly or imprudent consumption of goods, but the greatest danger is in affection for temporal goods in themselves rather than for their end. All wealth is fleeting, and we should rather look to the end of temporal goods, which is virtue, and we should only seek and have what is necessary for us, following the teaching of the life and words of Christ.\textsuperscript{40} Again the example of Christ shows the way from spiritual death to spiritual life. In this case, we should not worry about temporal goods overmuch, since we will lose these anyway; rather, we should follow the example of Christ and his apostles, owning only what is necessary, avoiding the dangers of a worldly life, so that we can obtain to the future state where we will be satisfied.\textsuperscript{41}

The vice of gluttony is associated with the sixth sign of death, the horror of dead flesh, and is chased away by the words “I thirst” (John 19:28). Moderation in both quantity and quality are to be observed according to Wyclif, the key being to keep to what is necessary. The fourth beatitude is alluded to here as well, as Wyclif tells his audience that

\begin{footnotes}
\item[38] Ibid., p. 335/22–8: “Necesse est enim homines in egressu de matre carnali et ingressu in matrem terre sapere condicionem paupertatis honeste, qualis fuit in statu innocencie et erit in statu quo properas. Ideo oportet quod status medius conveniat cum extremis, specialiter cum non sit nisi medium ad statum futurum. Ideo non est utilis nisi de quanto direccius duxerit ad hunc statum.”
\item[39] Ibid., p. 335/32–6: “Hec est vita apostolica, vita secura; aliam autem vitam mundanam periculosam observant seculares et laici in quibus periculum est in temporalium adquisicione, periculum in eorum observacione et periculum in eorum amissione.”
\item[40] Ibid., pp. 335/36–336/8: “Periculum autem magnum est, ne adquirendo divicias quis inuiuretur proximo, sed magis periculum est ne avare detineat vel imprudenter consumat; maximum autem periculum est ne finaliter affectio in istis temporalibus se nimis immerget; quod fit regulariter quando plus amantur quam finis illorum. Virtus enim est finis possessionis, que virtus remanebit cum homine possessione necessaria derelicta. Ideo non debent divicie appeti vel haberi nisi de quanto sunt necessaria organa ad virtutes quod Christus verbo et vita docuit.”
\item[41] Cf. Wyclif’s discussion of the fourth beatitude, \textit{Sermones} II.27, and below, p. 130.
\end{footnotes}
they ought to hunger and thirst for justice, and all other drinks that do not lead to this end ought not to be drunk.\textsuperscript{42} Gluttony makes the body fat and weak, but what is more, it makes the body abhorrent to God and to the Church Triumphant, since this gluttony goes beyond the law of the Church Triumphant, of the state of innocence, and even of the general behaviour of beasts.\textsuperscript{43} The pasturage of Christ is our example of how we ought to feed our bodies and put aside pride and worldly glory to feed the body according to what reason necessitates. Wyclif ends his discussion of gluttony with an indictment of the English in this regard: “and in this sin we English disappoint very much.”\textsuperscript{44} Once again, Wyclif seeks to move his listeners away from vice and toward virtue through imitation of Christ.

The final sin, lust, is the daughter of gluttony, which often foams over into wantonness and corrupts the virtuous soul before God. This vice is chased away by Christ’s commending his virgin mother to the virgin disciple (John 19:26–7).\textsuperscript{45} The audience is

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\item \textsuperscript{42} \textit{Sermones} IV.40, p. 336/9–22: “Et preter ista necesse est christianum cavere de gula, cum propter illum erratur potissime in cause quare divicie sunt querende. Habentes enim excessivam copiam temporaliun sepe preterent mensuram in assumpcione cibarii; quod fit generaliter, quando assumitur quantitas vel qualitas cibi vel potus preter necessaria ad ministerium Dei complendum in via. Et fugam illius viciei docet Christus in sexto verbo in cruce quo dicit: Sicco. Debet enim viator instar Christi esurire et sitire iusticiam et per consequens salutem anime tam sui quam proximi et omnem alium potum corporalem ut fel respuere, nisi de quanto preparat ad hunc potum, sic quod quilibet christianus cum gustasset quod pocio corporalis non ducit ad hunc finem, debet nolle bibere.”

\item \textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p. 336/23–32: “Debet autem movere ad hanc moderacionem sexta condicio que consequitur corpora mortuorum, quod naturaliter horrescunt eciam in caris suis. Gula namque nedum facti corporulentos et horride infirmos sed (quid est maximum) gula corporis facit ipsum Deo horridum ut ipsum inhabitet per virtutem, et per consequens tota triumphans ecclesia horret gulorum huiusmodi, cum excedit legem quam ipsi habent, quam eciam habuisset in statu innocencie, et quam communiiter observant bestie.”

\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid., p. 336/33–7: “Sit ergo pastus Christi nobis exemplum quomodo debemus pascere corpus nostrum et postposita superbia ac mundi gloria pascere corpus secundum quod racio exigit cum virtute et in isto peccato nos Anglici nimiis deficimus.”

\item \textsuperscript{45} Ibid. p. 337/1–6: “Ideo caveamus ultimo de gule filia que est luxuria. Gullosus namque sepe spumat in libidinem et virtuosus animus corrumpitur apud Deum, et per consequens fetor bestialis
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asked to bring to mind the seventh sign of bodily death, the stench of death, as the lack of ruling virtue in the dead body dissolves into corruption and stench. This leads to corruption in the bridle of modesty after which the guiding prudence, the debt of love to God and neighbour, will fail and cause a stench in the face of both the earthly and the heavenly church.\textsuperscript{46} This in turn leads to spiritual abandonment, as a good angel flees the stench. The angels, Christ, and his well-beloved friends all flee from and hate this fetid corruption: “we must love, therefore, the Bridegroom of the church to whom we are wedded with chaste love under grave penalty of a strong bond. For only spiritual virgins who are members of the virgin and mother church ‘follow the Lamb,’ in heaven, wheresoever he goes.”\textsuperscript{47} Wyclif does not elaborate on what he means by “spiritual virgins,” but presumably, although this is strictly conjecture, he means to say that there is some condition where those who are not physical virgins can attain to some other, spiritual virginity that gives them the blessing of following the Lamb.

This sermon closes with a short summation of what has come before, urging the audience to bear in mind the seven last words, the seven deadly sins, and the seven signs of death, “since nothing is more helpful to the taming of the desires of the flesh than to think how

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., p. 337/6–11: “Recoleremus autem de septima condicione sequente corpus mortuum, quod statim deficiens a virtute regitiva in corrupto freno pudicicie deficiet regitiva prudencia ad Deum et proximum debite diligendum et coram utraque ecclesia causatur fetor.”

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p. 337/12–21: “Unde necesse erit suffragio spirituali destitui; nam bonus angelus fugit fetorem videns quod celibatus qui servaretur cum capite et sponso tocius ecclesie Christo dirumpitur. Angeli itaque servantes perpetuam virginitatem sicut et Christus ac cariores eius amici fugiunt et odiant hanc fetidam corruptelam. Diligamus ergo sponsum ecclesie cui sumus casto amore sub gravi pena forti vinculo affidati. Solum enim virgines spirituales que sunt membra virginis et matris ecclesie sequuntur agnum in patria quocunque ierit.”
it will be to be dead.” Wyclif then expresses the personal opinion that pestilence, war, and the vagaries of the world are signs of Christ’s love for the Church Militant; by these it is castigated, it is taught and required to abandon the world and to remember God’s help. Wyclif ends, as he occasionally does, with a short prayer: “And in this way the memory of Christ’s death is profit to us in eternal life, to which may he lead us who by the gibbet of the cross suffered horribly for our redemption. Amen.”

In the discussion of each vice in turn, along with its sign of death and its remedy in the words of Christ, Wyclif seeks to instill a horror of vice and a love of virtue and imitation of Christ in his listeners. The whole sermon can be understood as a series of seven similar movements: here is a vice, which is horrid because it is a sign of spiritual death, and here is the example of Christ, which is remedy to vice, moving from death to life.

1.2 Beatitudes, Virtue, and Vice

One of the more extensive treatments of virtue and vice in Wyclif’s preaching is contained in a sermon on the beatitudes. The material on the beatitudes takes up the first three-quarters of this sermon, which is preached about the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5. This opening section of the sermon is concerned with the nature of what Wyclif characterizes as the Law of Christ. The Sermon on the Mount, Wyclif tells us,

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48 Sermones IV.40, p. 337/21–5: “Recolamus igitur septicipicis verbi Christi et septicipicis peccati per ipsum fugati addentes memorie septicipicem condicionem corporis mortui, cum nichil plus valet ad domandum carnis desideria quam pensare qualis erit mortua.”

49 Ibid., p. 337/26–34: “Unde videtur michi esse signum quod Christus amat militantem ecclesiam ex hoc quod ostendit sibi exempla pestilencie, bellorum et variacionis instabilis huius mundi. Ex hoc enim castigatur, docetur et necessitatur mundum deserere et Deo suo tamquam infallibili adiutori intendere. Et per istam viam proderit nobis memoria mortis Christi in vitam eternam, quo nos perducat qui crucis patibulo passus est dira pro redempcione nostra. Amen.”

50 The law of Christ is an important theme in the Opus Evangelicum (henceforth OE), which deals in its opening chapters with the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5–8 being one of the portions of
contains the Law of Christ, “which he does not give through angels with terror (as it is said in Exodus 20 and Acts 7), but the true God gives this most fitting law as the final and most complete law.”

Jesus went up onto the mountain to denote the excellence of the law inspired from on high, the excellence of the highest law-bringer and its consonance with the old law. The position of the disciples, half-way between Christ and the crowd, shows that they were to promulgate this law amongst the people, but as it happens, their successors have descended to the level of the crowd, and are disturbed by worldly cares. Whereas in Christ’s day, there were many teachers of the old law, nowadays there are prelates who are not teachers, or who are teachers weighed down by millstones, or papal teachers or cesarean, far removed from the spiritual feeding of their subordinates and the love of Christ, which is the law of God. Wyclif repeats once more for emphasis that the law that Christ delivers in the Sermon on the Mount is delivered, not with trumpets

scripture that Wyclif recommends most highly, OE, p. 1. See also OE, chapters 5–20, which deal with the beatitudes.


Caesarean is the term used by Wyclif to describe worldly priests, those who are endowed and embroiled in the care of temporal possessions.

53 Ibid., p. 196/14–38: “Accesserunt ad eum discipuli eius medii inter Christum et populum ad denotandum quod ipsi erant ab eo dispositi ad legem Christi populo promulgandum. Sed heu igitur qui gerunt hocem apostolorum quod illud quod mendaciter sapit pinguedinem non ascendunt ad Christum in montem, sed stant a longe in valle cum populo, cum secundum omne perturbacionem seculi tamquam stantes in labore mundane prosperitatis cum laicis convolvuntur, in tanta quod tolerabilior fuit condicio Judeorum. Ipsi enim tempore Christi habuerunt multos legis doctores, ut patet de illis inter quos sedit Dominus (Luce II°) et de eo qui temptavit Dominum de mandato magno in lege (Matth. XXII°) ac multis doctoribus eis similibus. Nec dubium quin omnes illi doctores fuerant de lege Dei, nostri autem prelati vel non sunt doctores vel sunt doctores asinaria mola opressi vel alter doctores cesarei vel papales; ideo non sedent cum Christo in monte sed in planicie tamquam laici stant cum plebe. Et cum legis Dei attencio et Christi dileccio correspondant, patet quanto ab amore Christi ut pascant spiritualiter subditos elongatur (nam Joh. XIV°, 23 scribitur: Si quis diligit me sermonem meum servabit et Joh. Ultimo (XXI°, 17) dictum est Petro: Si amas me pasce oves meas); et istud indubie est detestabilius quam degeneracio Judeorum.”
and terror, but according to the voice of a prophet, out of the mouth of the Lord.\textsuperscript{55} The differentiation of the law of Christ from the old law is also demonstrated by the fact that Christ writes his law not on tablets or on the skins of dead animals, but on men’s hearts, as he is the best teacher and the most subtle scrutinizer of hearts.\textsuperscript{56}

Wyclif contrasts the old law, an intolerably clumsy pedagogue according to Galatians 3:24, with a new understanding of the law as consisting of the virtues and their works, and finally of beatitude, for which reason Christ promises eight blessings.\textsuperscript{57} This sets up Wyclif’s scheme for the beatitudes; each is given because of a virtue, which opposes a particular vice. The scheme, as we shall see, is not a neat one, as Wyclif seems to have seven virtues and vices in mind, while there are eight beatitudes.

In his scheme, the first beatitude, blessed are the poor in spirit, represents the opposition of humility and pride. Poverty of spirit is true humility, which greatly disposes a man against pride and toward undisturbed blessedness. Humility’s likesness to beatitude is the reason why those who are humble are said to have the kingdom of heaven. The humbler is the greater in blessedness, and those who are boastful are excluded from this blessedness. So the poor in spirit is the one who is humble, thinking little of his abilities, but this sort of poverty of spirit will only be completely free of pride in heaven; nor is it...

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p. 197/2–6: “Ex hoc enim ore suo hec docuit, ut notetur signancius lex quam tantus legifer impressit; non enim dabatur, ut in lege veteri, per tubam, terrorem et angelum, sed iuxta vocem prophete os Domini locutum est hec.”

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p. 197/6–10: “Nec scripsit Christum hanc legem in tabulis vel pellibus mortuorum animalium sed in cordibus hominum tamquam magister optimus et subtilissimus scrutator cordium et illapsor capacium animarum.”

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., p. 197/10–15: “Unde (ad Gal. IIIº, 24) dicitur lex vetus propter ruditatem intolerabilem pedagogus, quia ergo tota lex consistit in virtutibus et earum operibus ac beatitudine finaliter consequente, ideo promittit Christus octo beatitudines que, licet sint ultime in execucione, sunt tamen prime in intencione.”
possible for such a humble one to fall away from the kingdom, which is the reward of the poor in spirit.\textsuperscript{58}

The second beatitude, blessed are the meek, opposes the virtue of meekness to the vice of envy. Building on the first virtue of poverty of spirit/true humility, the meek are said to possess the earth by adding to the virtue of humility that of curbing their irascible power, and in this way they will possess earthly justice and peace, since ‘all things belong to the just.’\textsuperscript{59} The irascible power is part of the sensitive appetite, which is made up of two powers, the irascible and the concupiscible. It is in these two powers that the passions are based, and it is the irascible power through which a human being becomes angry.\textsuperscript{60} It was commonly thought, and Wyclif is no exception here, that prior to the Fall, the powers of soul and body worked harmoniously together.\textsuperscript{61} What Wyclif is saying, then, is that the

\textsuperscript{58} Sermone II.27, p. 197/15–34: “Adiungit autem virtutes et opera que media sunt ad illas: Beati, inquit, pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum celerum. Ista quidem paupertas spiritus est vera humilitas que contra superbiam magis disponit hominem ad beatitudinem inturbate; ideo propter similitudinem et propinquitatem sic virtuosi ad beatitudinem dicitur quod sic pauper habet pro suo tempore regnum Dei ... quod humilior in beatitudine est eo maior et (ut dicit Lyncolniensis) oportet quod a sic humili excludatur mentis iactatio ... Ille eciam dicitur pauper spiritu qui in mente et cogitacione cum quietacione et ordinacione divina se cogitat parum posse; talis autem paupertas spiritus est solum in patria clara sine peste superbie; nec est possible talem finaliter sic humilem a regno deficere.” I have been unable to track this reference to Grosseteste.

\textsuperscript{59} Sermones II.27, pp. 197/35–198/6: “Secundus gradus beatitudinis in perpetuitate quieta consistens in mititate contra invidiam acquiritur. Ideo dicit Christus: Beati mites, quoniam ipsi possidebunt terram, hoc est, beati sunt illi supra paupertatem spiritus predictam addunt virtutem potenciam irascibilem refrenantem, quoniam sicut hi possident iuste et tranquile terrena, cum iustorum sunt omnia, sic possidebunt terram vivencium.”

\textsuperscript{60} See Peter King, “The Inner Cathedral: Mental Architecture of High Scholasticism,” Vivarium 46 (2008): pp. 253–74. The idea that ire arises from the irascible power is implied in the very name. The division between irascible and concupiscible goes back quite some way in Christian thought, at least to Augustine, who was borrowing from platonism, see Peter King, “Emotions in Medieval Thought,” in The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion, edited by Peter Goldie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): pp. 167–87, at pp. 169–71, see also Bloomfield, Seven Deadly Sins, pp. 80–1 on the connection of the irascible and concupiscible powers with the vices.

\textsuperscript{61} See De statu innocencie, p. 504/5–31.
meek are those who have their irascible power under control,\textsuperscript{62} and so are just, thus equating meekness and justice. And it is this justice that explains their rewards, for, following Augustine,\textsuperscript{63} it is Wyclif’s opinion that the just man possesses all things, peacefully and securely, as much their temporal possessions as their beatitude. These are contrasted to the prideful and envious, who possess nothing securely as they fight with each other, whose boasting will be shown, whose desires will be for naught, for the intentions and works of the disciples of the devil will finally be refuted.\textsuperscript{64}

The third beatitude, blessed are those who mourn, opposes wrath with loving patience represented by dovelike sorrow. In the time of the law of grace the voice of the turtledove is heard mourning the swelling and rancor of the wrathful, wishing with the Apostle to be dissolved and to be with Christ. “However, such mournings aquire the infinite consolation of heaven and a happy exchange, so it is a foolish exchange of irascible and delectable things by which the devil exchanges perpetual sorrow for momentary pleasure. For God from His greatness always exchanges for the better, in a certain way infinitely,

\textsuperscript{62} Wyclif is close to John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham in this regard, who both thought, in opposition to Aquinas, that “at least some emotions [have] an active, perhaps volitional, component: they are actions of the will, not mere passions of the will.” See King, “Emotions,” pp. 176–183, quotation at p. 180.

\textsuperscript{63} Augustine, \textit{Confessions} Book 5, chapter 4, for example: “fidelis homo, cuius totus mundus diuitiarum est, et quasi nihil habens omnia possidet inhaerendo tibi, cui seruiunt omnia.” As translated by R.S. Pine-Coffin (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), p. 95: “a man who has faith in you owns all the wealth of the world, for if he clings to you, whom all things serve, though he has nothing yet he owns them all.” This is a favourite theme for Wyclif, based in his theory of \textit{dominium}. See Stephen E. Lahey, \textit{Philosophy and Politics in the Thought of John Wyclif} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Sermones} II.27, p. 198/6–13: “Nam sic mites parati ad tollerandum iniurias quiete et secure possident tam temporalia quam eciam beatitudinem consequentur, ubi superbi et invidi pugnantes ad invicem nihil secure possident; et licet finis talium peccatorum foret tale dominium, tamen divina iusticia ostendit suam laboriosam iactanciam, que mundum cupiunt esse frustra; nam discipuli dyaboli in tota sua intencione et operacione sunt finaliter redarguti.”
and so the devil does the opposite.”⁶⁵ There are grades of mourning, just as there are of charity, three of which Wyclif lists here. The first grade is those who from love of God mourn for what they neglect in His regard, the second is those who from greater love mourn that they and all people are ungrateful to God, and the third add another grade of love above these two and mourn that they are so far separated from beatitude in this vale of misery. These three levels of charity and mourning Wyclif tells us, ending his discussion of this beatitude, dispose a man against the triplex sin of the devil, which goes unnamed here, but is a possible reference to the three enemies of man: the world, the flesh, and the devil.⁶⁶

The fourth beatitude, blessed are those who thirst and hunger for justice, opposes these and the slothful (acci dosos). Those who are fervently and charitably zealous, through their desires, labours, and expenses, for the completion of justice are contrasted with the slothful, who delight foolishly in their own vanities. Their differing ends are likewise contrasted; those who hunger and thirst for justice will be sated infinitely and the slothful will be tormented infinitely. There are few, Wyclif laments, who hunger and thirst after

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⁶⁵ Sermones II.27, p. 198/14–26: “Tercio commendat lex Christi habentes luctum columbinum in amorosa paciencia contra iram. Beati, inquit, qui lugent, quoniam ipsi consolabuntur. Nam tempore legis gracie audita est vox turturis caritative cantantis et tumorum ac rancorem iracundie deplorantis et dicentis cum Apostolo (Rom. VII [recte, Phil. 1:23]): Cupio dissolvi et esse cum Christo (et Phil. 1: 23). Tales autem sic lugentes consequitur consolacio patrie infinita et felix commutacio, sicut stulta est commutacio irascibilum et voluptuosorum quibus dyabolus commutat pro delectacione momentanea luctum perpetuum. Deus enim ex sua magnificencia semper commutat in melius quodammodo infinite sed sicut dyabolus econverso.”

⁶⁶ Sermones II.27, p. 198/26–36: “Sunt autem gradus luctus laudabilis, sicut et caritatis multiplices; quidam autem ex caritate quam habent ad Deum lugent quod in eum taliter omiserunt, et quidam super hoc ex maiori caritate lugent quod tam ipsi quam totus populus Deo adeo sunt ingrati, et quidam super ista duo addunt gradum tercium caritatis quod a beatitudine in hac valle miserie sunt adeo elongati ... et hec tria contra triplex peccatum dyaboli disponunt hominem in se ipsum.”
justice, and he is certain that without such hunger which is contrary to sloth, no one will be satisfied.\textsuperscript{67}

The fifth beatitude, blessed are the merciful, opposes the vice of avarice with the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Here Wyclif reads the beatitude alongside Matthew 25:31–46 and Luke 6:38: “‘blessed are they who mercifully give to the needy against avarice, because they will receive immense mercy,’ as it appears from Matthew 25, and hence in the same law it is written, Luke 6:38: ‘good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom.’”\textsuperscript{68} The point is that the merciful will receive enormously more in recompense for their mercy than what it is they distribute to those in need, since God is the greatest lord, who can return infinitely greater rewards to those who perform small services, such as the fourteen works of mercy.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., p. 199/1–18: “Quarto beati qui esuriunt et siciunt iusticiam, quoniam ipsi saturabuntur; et ista condicio militat contra accidiosos. Isti enim ferventer et caritative zelant pro complemento iusticie desiderii, laboribus et expensis; accidiosi vero in sua vana quiete inaniter delectantur, et tamen finis consequens est intento suo contrarius ut priores; finis autem accidie est cruciatus et perturbacio infinita et finis desiderii complementi iusticie est beata saciacio infinita ... et cum hodie tantum contempnit lex divina, patet quam pauci sunt qui esuriunt et siciunt illam iusticiam sed pocius temporale proprium, cum tamen certi sumus ex fide quod sine ista esurie que contrariatur accidie nemo saturabitur in beatitudine.”

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., p. 199/19–21: “Quinto beati qui contra avariciam misericorditer sua indigentibus largiuntur, quoniam ipsi immensam misericordiam consequentur (ut patet Matth. XXV), et hinc in eadem lege scribitur (Luce VI, 38): Mensuram bonam et confertam et coagitatam et superfluentem dabunt in sinum vestrum.” Matthew 25:31–46 describes the reward for those who feed the hungry, clothe the naked, house the stranger, and visit the sick and imprisoned.

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid, p. 199/21–35: “Inmensitas retribucionis patet in quadruplici gradu mensure et ydemititas respicit magnificenciam largitoris; satis quidem est quod utroboque sit opus misericordie et proporcionabilitas largiens. Deus enim cum sit infinitum magnus dominus et donacio secundum philosophos debet secundum magnitudinem dominii mensurari, patet quod decet ipsum pro parvo munere infinitum magis retribuere; et patet testimonium (Matthei XII) de retribucione magnitudinis pro quantumlibet parvo bono. Et ista misericordia vel elemosina bipartita opponitur avaricie secundum quatuordecim opera corporalis et spiritualis misericordie.” The spiritual and corporal works of mercy are discussed in some detail in other sermons, see below pp.220–34.
The sixth beatitude, blessed are the pure of heart, opposes the vice of lust with chastity. Wyclif makes reference here to a theme that we shall see again in his preaching on the ten commandments: whatever a man loves most constitutes his god, and so “the lustful man unfaithfully and repulsively makes the most filthy parts of a prostitute his god.”  

The true God cannot be seen without chastity or celibacy, which Wyclif says is called cleanness of heart, for which reason “it is said that all the citizens of heaven ‘are virgins following the Lamb wheresoever he goes.’”  

Quite obviously Wyclif placed a high value on sexual purity, but he does not elaborate here on the difference between chastity and celibacy, and although, as we shall see, he has much to say about the relationship between husband and wife, he remains taciturn on the details of sexual morality.

The seventh beatitude, blessed are the peacemakers, is made to oppose gluttony by moderation. None is more strifeful than the glutton, and if we were content with moderate amounts of food, as in the state of innocence and heaven, we would not fight like animals over food. Wyclif warns his audience that as the vices and virtues support one another, so they should note that gluttony often leads to wantonness, and lust often leads to gluttony.

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70 Ibid., p. 200/1–7: “Sexto contra luxuriam: Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt; cum enim mundicia cogitacionis hominis capitur ab obiecto, patet quantum luxuriosi ab ista mundicia defraudantur ymmo cum quicquid homo plus amaverit constituit deum suum, patet quam infideliter et quam turpiter luxuriosi sibi pro Deo constituunt partes turpissimas meretrices.”


72 As it was, the term chastity, and related words such as continence, lacked precise definitions in medieval parlance, see Pierre J. Payer, The Bridling of Desire: views of sex in the later Middle Ages (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993): pp. 154–178.
The peacemakers by contrast use food stuff moderately and so are called children of God the Father, since moderation according to the wise man corresponds to the Father.\(^73\)

The eighth and final beatitude, blessed are those who suffer persecution for justice’s sake, is not associated with any particular virtue or vice, but is instead related to martyrdom. There is no greater love than that the *viator* freely accept the pain of death on account of God and the observance of His law, and such suffering makes a martyr, and the soul quickly flies, presumably to heaven, from such a death. So the martyr receives the same blessing as in the first beatitude and receives the kingdom of heaven. Martyrs are virtuous; not blown about by the winds of this world, they must be defenders of the law, accomplishes of works, knowledge, exhortations, and doctrine, and so they should be imitated by prelates and apostolic men, ready to suffer persecution for Christ’s sake.\(^74\)

The structure of this discussion of virtue and vice is entirely biblical, drawn from the Sermon on the Mount. And Wyclif has let this structure, rather than another derived from...

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\(^73\) Ibid., p. 200/14–28: “Septimo contra gulum: *Beati pacifici, quoniam filii Dei vocabuntur.* Nulli enim inquiecius per pugnas, lites et contenciones impugnant proximos quam gulosi. Si enim de moderato vescibili quietarentur, ut contingit in statu innocencie et continget in patria, non pro vescibilibus tamquam bestie sic pugnarent. Et per istum ordinem harum virtutum notatur quod tam virtutes quam vicia opposita se causant reciproce. Sicut enim gululosus sepe spumat in libidinem, sic luxuriosus pro exercendo suo facinore fit gulousus. Iste autem pacifici sic accipientes vescabilia pro quibus fit maior mundana contencio pro mensure observancia vocantur filii Dei patris, cum mensura secundum Sapientem correspondeat Deo patri; nec est hoc modicum, quia secundum Apostolum *si sunt filii, sunt heredes.*”

\(^74\) Ibid., pp. 200/29–201/13: “Octavo *beati qui persecutionem paciuntur propter iusticiam, quoniam ipsorum est regnum celorum.* Nullum enim est amoris Dei maius indicium quam quod viator propter causam Dei vel legis sue observanciam gratanter accipiat penam mortis, quia illa paciencia facat martyrem et animam sic mortui subito advolare. Ideo signanter sicut in prima beatitudine, sic in ista, cum eius virtus et sua operacio sit finis meriti viatoris, dicitur pro finali premio, quoniam *ipsorum est regnum celorum.* Sicut enim ventus turbinis vel impressiones aeris non impediunt celum ab ordine sui motus, sic perturbationes seculi non impediunt sic virtuosum ... Nec video quod ali sunt vere martyres vel salvandi, sed quia debent esse legem defendentes et exequentes opere, sciencia, exhortacione et doctrina ... ideo ad ipsos dirigit sermonem exhortacionis et in ipsis non dubium animative loquitur quibuscumque prelatis vel apostolicis qui ipsos debite imitantur...”
common lists of virtues and vices, dictate how he will discuss the virtuous life, its rewards, and the pitfalls to be overcome. This is, as it turns out, a feature of Wyclif’s teaching on virtue and vice; it is almost entirely biblical. The beatitudes, the works of mercy, even the vices, are all drawn from scripture and supported by Wyclif’s interpretation.

1.3 THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

As far as systematic expositions of the virtues, Wyclif never lists the usual heptad of the four cardinal and three theological virtues in the same sermon, even in the sermon on the beatitudes which we have just seen, which is the most systematic exposition of virtue in Wyclif’s sermons. Most of his more structured discussions of virtue concern the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, those drawn, it should be noted, from scripture. 75 Even these discussions, however, lack somewhat in structure. This very lack of structure, at least in the sermons that have survived, is unusual, as there were available to Wyclif several systematic expositions of virtue that he could have borrowed if he did not feel like coming up with his own.

In a sermon on the epistle for the Second Sunday of Advent, Wyclif demonstrates knowledge of such schemes as Grosseteste’s in the Templum Dei, for he draws on Grosseteste’s analogy of the theological virtues as a building: faith is the foundation on which walls of hope are built, and these in turn support the roof of charity. 76 Wyclif says

75 I Corinthians 13:13: “Now there remain faith, hope, and charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity.”
little about the foundation of faith or the roof of charity, focusing here instead on the walls of hope, of which he identifies four. Wyclif diverges from Grosseteste, who identifies four hopes as well, but these in Grosseteste’s scheme are fear of God’s justice, confidence in God’s mercy, boldness in penitence, and munificence in good works.\textsuperscript{77} In Wyclif’s scheme for the walls is this:

that from that formed faith [i.e., belief in Christ] they should abound in fourfold hope as it were the walls of a house built on high. The east wall of which is the hope of predestination to beatitude, the west wall is the hope of the heavenly banquet, built in a man near death, the north wall is the hope of avoiding damnation in the final judgement, but the south wall is the hope of enjoying eternal happiness in Christ.\textsuperscript{78}

The faithful person should be full of these four hopes, built on the strong foundation of faith. The building is brought to completion by the power of the Holy Spirit, which power is the love (\textit{caritas}) that covers and finishes this house in the \textit{viator}.\textsuperscript{79} Wyclif has taken a well known analogy and made it his own to make a point about the nature of the virtue of hope, but he has left aside the rest of Grosseteste’s structured discussion of virtue.

In another sermon, the three theological virtues are once more grouped together, this time each receiving its own analogue: faith “as air abounds with light;” hope “as a farmer abounds with certitude through inspection of seed and flower;” and charity “as a furnace


\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Templum Dei}, p. 33

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Sermones} III.2, p. 15/11–8: “ut ex illa fide formata [i.e., belief in Christ] habundent in spe quadruplici tamquam pariete domus in altum erecte, cuius paries orientalis est spes predestinacionis ad beatitudinem, paries occidentalis est spes cibacionis novissime, erecta in homine prope mortem, paries borealis est spes evadendi damnacionem in finali iudicio, sed paries australis est spes perfruendi leticia sempiternae in Christo...”

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Sermones} III.2, p. 15/20–6: “Iste ergo est paries quadruplex domus fidelium, primo quod sperent suam predestinacionem, secundo quod sperent suam perpetuam cibacionem. Tunc enim fideles habundant in spe, quando quatuor parietes ex fundamento fidei formate alcius erguntur. Virtus autem Spiritus Sancti que nunquam excidit est caritas tegens et consummams in viantibus istam domum.”
abounds with fire." But this is an aside from the main topic of the sermon, which has to do with the keeping of the commandments; rather than a structured discussion of virtue, this sermon introduces virtue only as one of a number of necessities to the Christian life.

While there is little structure in Wyclif’s preaching on the theological virtues, several important points emerge from the various sermons in which he discusses them. Perhaps the most important point is the emphasis that Wyclif puts on caritas. This is the most important of the virtues for Wyclif. To begin with, it unifies the other virtues:

For the one who rightly understands God ought himself, in whatever crowd of things, to strive as to the centre, and who does not understand the rule of charity does not get to know the knowable Trinity … And from those a third is brought in, how the members of the church ought to rest on unity, which is the bond of love.

Christ is this unifying love; just as he is the head of the church as far as his humanity, so he is the love which binds all his members one to another as far as his divinity. All virtue is connected, Wyclif says elsewhere, and the philosophers say that justice, the first of the cardinal virtues, is every virtue, which Wyclif does not deny. But Wyclif would

80 Sermones III.20, p. 154/32–6: “habundetis (inquam) fide, sicut aer luce (ut precipitur II Cor. VIII, 7), spe, sicut agricola certitudine fructuum per inspeccionem germinis et florum (ut precipitur ad Rom. XV, 13), caritate, sicut fornax igne.”

81 See, for instance, Wyclif’s remarks on the necessity of repeating the commandments to the faithful, ibid., p. 155/5–7: “Ista autem præcepta vetera et novissima [i.e., the commandments of the old and new law] debent sepe fidelibus recitari, cum, sicut clavus in rota per inusitatam aures, sic noticia mandatorum.”

82 Sermones III.2, p. 11/18–29: “Qui enim recte sapit de Deo debet ipsum in qualibet multitudine universitatis tendere ut ad centrum, et qui non sapit regulam caritatis non noscit sapide Trinitatem … Et ex istis tercio infertur quomodo membra ecclesie debent inniti unitati que est vinculum caritatis.”

83 Ibid., p. 12/16–18: “Christus autem sicut est caput tocius corporis ecclesie quoad humanitatem, sic est caritas conglutinans omnia eius membra ad invicem quoad divinitatem.”

84 Sermones III.53, p. 460/24–7: “Cum ergo omnes virtutes sunt connexe, sicut et vicia, patet quod nunc possunt intelligi per unam virtutem et nunc per duas vel quotquot homo voluerit
rather speak of caritas as the root of virtue, since it, especially the love of God, is the fullness of the law; without it, the verdant virtues cannot support flower.\textsuperscript{85} Caritas is called by Wyclif, following Gregory the Great, the root of all the virtues and the goal of the commandments; for the observance of the rule of caritas we have the example of Christ and his apostles.\textsuperscript{86} Caritas is the greatest of the virtues, exceeding them in necessity, utility, and stability.\textsuperscript{87} The supremacy of this virtue is beyond all doubt, for as Wyclif says elsewhere:

The Apostle says that, ‘if one has prophecy,’ with future knowledge as Balaam had, ‘if one knows all mysteries’ of divine things as the mystery of the Trinity, according to which things is wisdom, ‘if one has all knowledge’ of the Creator, whether by divine gift or acquired through prophecy, and third, if one has the power of working miracles, ‘so as to move mountains’ (just as the Gospel of Matthew 17[:19] says) from the vehemence of faith, all these gifts, whether in speaking or in thinking or in miraculous workings ‘without charity they accomplish nothing’ toward deserving beatitude. For charity is the supreme virtue which changes all received gifts into better. Therefore it is said among scholars to inform the other virtues, nor without its formation do they obtain appropriately the

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., p. 461/13–23: “Et est <ex Wo 306> istis patet quod multi extra graciam habent bonam consuetudinem ad opera bona de genere inclinantem, licet non sint propter defectum caritatis vel gracie virtuosi. Unde secundum Gregorium super Joh. XV°, 11: \textit{Hoc est preceptum meum etc.: precepta multa sunt et unum, multa in ramis, sed unicum in radice, quia cum plenitudo legis sit caritas sive dileccio, patet quod nichil mandat Christus radicitus nisi ut Deus debite diligatur, sed ex illa radice procedunt multe virentes virtutes que non servant florem viredinis nisi in radice caritatis fuerint stabilitae.”

\textsuperscript{86} Sermones II.29, pp. 210/29–211/1: “Quia autem finis mandatorum est caritas et christiani non solum a Christo sed a suis apostolis ceperunt exemplar observancie caritatis, ideo hoc evangelium docet quomodo huius caritatis regula debeat observari. Observancia itaque tocius decalogi est completa observancia caritatis. Ideo dicit Gregorius \textit{quod sicut rami procedunt a stipite, sic omnes alie virtutes a caritate.” The reference to Gregory is from his Homily 27, \textit{PL} 76.1205.

\textsuperscript{87} Sermones III.18, p. 137/5–6: “Ista epistola [I Cor. 13] magnificat caritatem quomodo excellit omnes virtutes alias in necessitate, utilitate et stabilitate.”
name of virtue and (as the Apostle says) without it the soul is not vivified, but man as far as the first ordinance of the Lord is brought to nothing.  

The supremacy of *caritas* over the other theological virtues is also demonstrated by the fact that it alone of the three will be present in heaven, as faith will be transformed into clear vision and hope into blessed fruition, but *caritas* will remain in both this life and the next.

There is a strong component of *imitatio Christi* involved in Wyclif’s conception of *caritas*; since Christ is love, Wyclif does not see how we can advance according to love unless we imitate the way of life of this first love. This is why the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians (I Cor. 4:16): “Be ye imitators of me, as I also am of Christ,” and only in so far as they (prelates) imitate Christ are we to follow them.

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89 Ibid.,p. 144/30–40: “Nunc autem cognoscit Apostolus et multo magis quilibet viator alius citra Christum *ex parte*, quia imperfecte, noticia speculari, sed in patria, ubi saciabitur appetitus, plene in tantum commune sicut cognoscet, cognitus est a Deo, et ita licet meaneat iste tres virtutes theologicae, scilicet *fides spes et caritas* hic in via, *maior autem horum es caritas*, et dicit *horum*, quia quamvis fides mutetur in claram visionem, spes in beatificam fruiacionem, caritas tamen que utroque remanet tam in via quam in patria superat ambo ista.”

90 *Sermones* III.18, p. 139/10–12: “cum Christus Deus noster caritas est, impossible videtur quemquam secundum caritatem procedere nisi de quanto imitatus fuerit in modo vivendi ipsam primam caritatem.”

Faith is connected with humility in one of Wyclif’s earliest sermons. The connection between the two is drawn out of the lection for the day, which is the story of the centurion in Capernaum, whose servant Jesus heals (Matthew 8:5–13). The main topic of the sermon is the centurion’s faith. Interpreting the mystical sense of the passage, Wyclif seeks to demonstrate three things: “first that faith and humility are the especial ornaments of the virtues by which any Christian pleases God, second that by means of a virtuous work of faith one is able to merit for others, and third that, without any accepting of persons, a Christian whose faith is stronger is more acceptable to God.”

He spends the bulk of the rest of the sermon on the first of these points, praising the centurion’s humble faith and arguing for the interconnectedness of the two virtues, because “faith and humility in connection are the foundation of the Christian religion ... Humility is as it were the substantial form of our religion and faith as it were the matter, or faith as it were the stone and humility the cement.”

Especially important to Wyclif’s argument in this sermon is the idea of *convenientia*, fittingness. A lack of humility is akin to blasphemy, as the prideful assume what is not rightly theirs:

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92 *Sermones* IV.28, dated by Mallard, “Dating the *Sermones Quadraginta*,” pp. 91–2.
93 *Sermones* IV.28, pp. 239/35–240/5: “primum quod fides atque humilitas sunt precipue ornamenta virtutum quibus aliquis christianus placet Deo, secundo quod mediante opere fidei virtuoso unus potest mereri alteri, et tercium quod sine personarum accepzione quicunque christianus cuius fides est pocior est Deo acceprior.”
Truly, disobedience especially indisposes the servant of God ... Whence such pride is implicitly blasphemy, since in three ways blasphemy is committed; first when what is fitting to God is denied him, such as that he is impeccable; second [when] what is not fitting to him is assigned to God, such as that he is able without creaturely defection to desert those hoping in him, and third when a creature assumes to itself that which is proper to God, as positing that he is not able to sin.  

In each of these three cases, the prideful, in their disobedience, deviate from what is fitting and subvert the proper ordering of the universe by assigning creaturely attributes to the divine or divine attributes to the creature.

Wyclif combines two metaphors in his explanation of faith; that of faith as a shield against the attacks of the enemy and that of the church as a ship, in this case a ship whose proper navigation is dependent upon the imitation of Christ and the faith of Scripture.

Wyclif describes three ways in which he and his contemporaries fail in faith: there are many, such as the infidels outside of Christendom, who simply lack the shield of faith and are harmed by the enemy’s darts; there are those whose faith is defective, and their shield full of holes; and lastly, there are those whose shield is thin, and thus they ask with the Apostles “to increase their faith” (Luke 17:5), these last being compared to the servant of the centurion, a paralytic. This leads Wyclif into a short discussion of the disease, the inability of the paralytic to control his body to make it work being compared

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95 Ibid., p. 241/9–18: “Inobediencia vero maxime indisponit servum Dei ... Unde superbia talis est implicite blasphemia, cum tribus modis committitur blasphemia; primo quando negatur a Deo quod sibi convenit, ut quod est impeccabilis; secundo attribuitur Deo quod sibi non convenit, ut quod potest sine defectu creature deserere sperantes in se, et tercio quando creatura assumit sibi quod Deo est proprium, ut posito quod non possit peccare.”


to the Christian who lacks faith who is unable to say the Lord’s Prayer without mixing in worldly thoughts.98

The theological virtue of hope is less often discussed than faith or caritas, although it retains an important place in Wyclif’s discussions of virtue. We have seen Wyclif discuss it in the house analogy above, where he identified four objects of hope, and he also makes an analogy between the Christian’s hope and that of a farmer, although he does not elaborate this second.99 A third analogy identifies the hope of beatification with the helmet of salvation from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, “for just as reason is highest in the human being, so the hope of beatitude raises the fighter, if it comes down from Christ, the head of the church.”100 Wyclif elaborates on the virtue elsewhere, telling his audience that it is “firm adherence, in one’s own way, that because of a virtuous life, a man will achieve beatitude, and just as in faith, doubt is expelled ... so in hope, dread is expelled, since from faith and a virtuous life and from firm intention of persevering, it is hoped without fear [that] happiness will follow.”101 Hope and faith are much alike; hope, like faith, has its effects in the present, in the case of hope the removal of fear. And hope, like faith, has its completion in the future, and will as a result change in the life to come into something else: “but just as faith makes unnecessary a demonstration or natural knowledge, so hope makes unnecessary certainty of the present, since clear intuition and

99 See above, pp. 140–1.
100 Sermones III.55, p. 480/35–40: “Quinta autem armatura qua caput tegitur est galea; ideo dicit Apostolus: Galeam salutis assumite. Tunc autem assumit racio galeam salutis, quando in spem beatitudinis procedentis a capite qui est Christus debite se involvit. Sic enim racio est supremum in homine, sic spes beatitudinis exaltat pugnantem, si a capite ecclesie sit descendens.”
101 Sermones IV.10, p. 86/6–11: “Spes autem est firma adhesion in suo genere quod propter vitam virtuosam homo beatitudinem consequeatur, et sicut in fide dubitatio expellitur ... sic in spe formido excluditur, cum ex fide et virutosa vita et ex firmo perseverandi proposito speratur absque formidine felicitas consequenda.”
enjoyment will succeed to the place of faith and hope.” Yet the two virtues differ in that, unlike hope, faith has its object in past, present, and future, good and bad, pertinent and impertinent, whereas hope has only future goods for its object. Hope would likewise seem less certain than faith:

   for none of us knows presently whether he will be beatified or damned, just as he is ignorant concerning his final perseverance, whether he will endure. Yet from faith he knows most certainly that if he endures right to the end in faith formed by charity he will be saved ... so everyone ought to hope for his beatitude, but not to know or believe, for he ought to have hope mixed with faith, so that if he endures in the forementioned perseverance, he will be saved.

The difference between knowledge, faith, and hope is of degree rather than kind; knowledge is the most certain, although here on earth it is mixed with ignorance, faith is less certain, and hope less certain still, yet all three are related and held mixed together by the viator and the humble theologian.

There are two main points to Wyclif’s discussions of hope in the sermons. The first is that the function of hope is that it drives off fear and focuses the viator on the goal of the virtuous life, beatitude. The second is that Wyclif is careful to distinguish between hope

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102 Ibid., p. 86/11–5: “Sed sicut fides evacuat demonstracionem vel naturalem noticiam, sic spes evacuat certitudinem de presenti, cum loco fidei et spei succedunt in patria clara intuicio atque fruicio.”
103 Sermones IV.25, p. 221/12–5: “Spes vero, ut distinguitur contra fidem, respicit bona sperante futura. Fides vero est de preteritis, presentibus et futuris, tam bonis quam malis, pertinentibus et impertinentibus.” Sermones I.12, p. 86/11–4: “Spes enim non est nisi de bonis futuris, sed fides tam de bonis quam de malis presentibus, preteritis et futuris, et sic actus fidei et spei sunt disparis speciei.”
104 Sermones I.12, p. 85/29–38: “nam nemo nostrum scit modo utrum beatificabitur vel damnpabilitur, sicut nescit de sua finali preserverancia si manebit. Ex fide tamen noscit certissime quod si usque ad finem manebit in fide formata caritate salvabitur ... ut quilibet debet sperare suam beatitudinem, sed non scire vel credere: debet tamen habere spem commixtam fidei, ut quod si manet in finali predicata perserverancia salvus erit.”
105 Ibid., p 85/28–9: “Unde triplex notatur a sanctis ignorancia commixta cum noticia fidei ...”
106 Ibid., p. 86/14–7: “et sic humili theologus non erubesceit concedere quod idem sit simul scitum ab ipso et ignorantum, dubium vel nescitum, sed secundum gradum disparem noticiæ vel disparem racionem.”
and faith, the first being concerned only with future goods, the second with past, present, and future. These two points, together with the outline of four hopes which we saw in the analogy borrowed from Grosseteste, are the sum of Wyclif’s preaching on this virtue.

Wyclif’s preaching on the theological virtues takes its structure, or rather its lack of structure, from the biblical material on which it is based. While he could have borrowed a suitable structure from Grosseteste, and Wyclif demonstrates knowledge of Grosseteste’s *Templum Dei*, Wyclif seems reluctant to do so, preferring to allow the lections on which he is preaching to guide him, following the internal logic of scripture rather than imposing a tidier structure.

**1.4 THE CARDINAL VIRTUES**

The four cardinal virtues are discussed together in a single sermon, forming the greater part of a sermon on the Epistle for the nineteenth Sunday after Trinity, whose *thema* is “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Eph. 4:23). To renew the spirit in our mind, Wyclif says, means to be made new once again in virtue and grace as before.\(^{107}\) This is the work of the Holy Spirit, originally in baptism, but again after recidivism makes the inner man, the inner man meaning the spirit, guilty once more.\(^{108}\) And since it is as difficult to justify a sinner as it is to create a new world, the renovation of spirit is a new man created by God, which creation is accomplished by putting on Christ.\(^{109}\)

The heart of Wyclif’s sermon is an extended discussion of the cardinal virtues. The first virtue, justice, he describes materially and formally. Materially, justice is said to be “to

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\(^{107}\) *Sermones* III.53, p. 455/11–14: “cum enim renovari sit idem quod iterum novari, patet quod tunc homo renovatur spiritu, cum iterum novatur in virtute et gracia sicut olim.”

\(^{108}\) Ibid., pp. 455/21–456/1.

\(^{109}\) Ibid., p. 455/8–33.
assign to everyone what is his,” which is fitting of only God “autonomically,” since He alone is able to give everyone their due. Further, because God does not have habits distinct from His essence, “it appears that the divine essence is the virtue of justice and consequently first justice.” Wyclif deals with the objection that God does not give to everyone what he or she deserves in two ways. First, he reminds his audience that everything that a human has, comes from God. Second, he tells them that worldly injustice does not prove that a person has not received their due, which leads him to one of his favourite topics for discussion, the possession of the just, who have things in a better way than civil ownership. Wyclif engages in the construction of a mental image here, by forming a cruciform conception of justice, which combines extra-biblical Aristotelian material with a central image of the Christian religion:

Since according to Aristole in the fifth book of the Ethics, justice consists of four things, it appears that the four are the ends of two lines in the manner of a transverse cross, in which four ends consists complete justice. On the one hand, the first, longitudinal line begins from God and passing through man ends in the most abject creatures. On the other hand, the latitudinal line of justice begins with friends and proceeding through man advances to enemies. And thus by assigning to the highest extreme of the first line, that is, God, latria and everything which is due to Him, justice is completed. For then, according to the lowest extreme of the same line, is given to things inferior all [their] due by man. And thus according to the other line, to the right to friends is given their due and to the left side to enemies is perfectly given [their] due. And in these lines the subject of justice may be expanded upon as it pleases.

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110 Ibid., p. 457/4–9: “Materialiter autem dicitur unicuique tribuere quod suum est, quod autonomatice soli Deo convenit, cum solus ipse sic potest debite singulis tam largiter impertiri, et cum in eo non sit habitus distinctus in sua essencia, patet quod essencia divina sit virtus iusticie et per consequens prima justicia.”


112 Ibid., pp. 458/40–459/15: “cum secundum Aristotelem Vo Ethicorum iustum consistit in quatuor, patet quod quatuor sunt extremum duarum linearum ad modum crucis transversatilium, in cuius extremis quatuor consistit iusticie complementum. Prima autem linea longitudinis iniciatur a Deo et transiens per hominem terminatur in abiectissima creatura. Linea autem latitudinis iusticie incipit ab amicis et procedens per hominem ad inimicos progreditur. Et sic tribuendo
The image is one of balance, with the individual in the center, surrounded on all sides by everything existing outside of the human being: God above, the lesser creatures below, and other humans on the same level on the left and right. The distribution of enemies on the left and friends on the right is used elsewhere in Wyclif’s preaching, and is probably derived from the gospel parable of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25. The image of a balanced cross is fitting in a discussion of virtue, which is often conceived as a mean between two extremes. Wyclif’s discussion ends with a short definition of the formal aspect of justice, which logicians say is the moral virtue by which a man is said formally to be just, and this applies, according to theologians, to either a man or a woman, since in all women the spirit is the interior man, and it is in the spirit that one is just or unjust.

The second virtue, prudence, receives only a very brief treatment here, so to obtain a more complete picture of Wyclif’s teaching on prudence, we will have to gather together comments from other sermons as well. Prudence completes justice, for without prudence, justice is worthless. It is by the virtue of prudence that we climb the cross of justice for

dupremo extremo prime linee, hoc est, Deo latriam et quicquid est sibi debitum, compleetur iusticia. Tunc enim tribuitur secundum inferius extremum eiusdem linee omne debitum rei inferiori homine, et sic secundum aliam lineam a dextris amicis tribuitur eis debitum et a sinistro latere perfecte tribuitur debitum inimicis. Et in istis lineis potest materia iusticie ad libitum diltari.”

113 See Sermones IV.40, p. 332/29–31, and above, p. 117.
115 Sermones III.53, p. 459/16–23: “Loquendo autem de descripcione iusticie dicta formaliter dicunt logici quod iusticia est virtus moralis, secundum quam homo dicitur formaliter esse iustus, ut illa descripcio sit communis tam viris quam feminis dicunt theologi quod omnis femina secundum interiorem hominem est ipse spiritus est sic iustus vel inustus, nec oportet timere sophistas vel grammaticos in hac parte.”
“as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so also must Christ be lifted up on the
cross,” and so we must be “wise [ prudentes] as serpents” if we wish to put on Christ.¹¹⁷
Elsewhere, it receives greater treatment, and is connected with other virtues, especially
chastity, following on from the parable of the five prudent and the five foolish virgins
(Matthew 25:1–13). Wyclif draws a list of five intellectual virtues from Aristotle:
wisdom, understanding, science, art, and prudence.¹¹⁸ All moral virtue, Wyclif says, has
its own prudence, since prudence is the intellectual habit that directs actions to their end:
“And thus since all human work ought to be directed towards God as its end and
consequent beatitude, prudence seems to be the habit by which the viator directs all the
things he does or makes to this end.”¹¹⁹ The moral virtues are also said here to
presuppose the “three prior virtues” of wisdom, understanding, and science, but art drops
out of the picture for some reason.¹²⁰

The third virtue, fortitude, which builds on the two previous virtues, receives an even
shorter treatment than prudence. Fortitude, and the fourth cardinal virtue, temperance,

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 459/31–460/2: “Est autem prudencia virtus aptans media ad iusticie complementum, et illa debet pro reddenda Deo iusticia per supremam partem crucis ascendere, quia impossibile est quod iusticia debita servetur Deo, nisi servetur eiam cuilibet creature, cum in ipso sunt omnia, et hinc dicitur Joh. III⁰, 14 quod sicut Moyses exaltavit serpentin in deserto, ita exaltari oportet Christum in cruce. Nec dubium quin totum hoc fiebat ex summa prudencia. Unde Matthei X⁰, 16 movet ipse quod simus prudentes sicut serpentes, quia indubie nemo potest sine prudencia Christum induere.”
¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 436/19–25: “Et secundum philosophos oportet quod quelibet virtus moralis habeat suam prudenciam, cum prudencia sit habitus intellectualis directivus a gibilium quod maginem. Et ita cum omne opus humanum debet dirigi ad Deum ut finem et beatitudinem consequam, prudencia videtur habitus quo viator dirigit omnia sua factibilia vel artificialia ad hunc finem.”
receive little treatment elsewhere; the few comments made in this sermon may stand for
the rest of Wyclif’s preaching on the subject, which is sparse indeed. Wyclif rhetorically
asks how a *viator* might complete an act of justice to another person without the fortitude
to act in such a way. It is not natural, bodily fortitude that is needed, however, but rather
habitual or moral fortitude, which Wyclif identifies with the fourth gift of the Holy Spirit
in Isaiah 11:2.\(^\text{121}\)

The fourth cardinal virtue, temperance, is said to regulate fortitude, and to keep it from
deviating.\(^\text{122}\) Temperance, according to Wyclif, at least the kind that regulates fortitude, is
not the virtue of taking food modestly, but of generally applying moral fortitude to a
work with moral modesty.\(^\text{123}\)

In his preaching on the cardinal virtues, Wyclif pays much more attention to the virtues
of justice and prudence, which receive the vast majority of his comments. The other
virtues of fortitude and temperance are passed over in short order, receiving little
attention either in the one sermon devoted to the cardinal virtues or in comments in other
sermons. Why this should be so is not entirely evident, but given Wyclif’s pronounced
biblicism, it is altogether possible that he is more concerned with those virtues that are
more often discussed in scripture, temperance and fortitude not having, strictly speaking,

\(^{121}\) *Sermones* III.53, p. 460/3–11: “Sed cum non sufficit habere has duas virtutes nisi tercia virtus
cardinalis fortitudo scilicet habeatur, ideo oportet secundum ipsam girare circulum vite nostre.
Quomodo (rogo) iaret viator a complecione uniue justicie ad aliam nisi haberet fortitudinem sic
agendi? Sed illa non videtur mihi fortitudo naturalis corporalis aut animi sed habitualis aut
moralis fortitudo spiritus ad constanter et hilariter operandum; et hinc dicitur fortitudo quartum
donum Spiritus Sancti (Ysaie XI%).”

\(^{122}\) Ibid., p. 460/11–17: “Nec sufficit virtuoso habere talen fortitudinem nisi cum hoc habuerit
temperanciam fortitudinem regulantem; sicut enim habens fortitudinem corporis sed corens modo
operandi, fortitudinem illam destrueret infra breve, sic habens fortitudinem moralem nisi habuerit
temperanciam citissime deviarent.”

\(^{123}\) Ibid., p. 460/17–20: “Nec est illa temperancia (ut mihi videtur) virtus sumendi cibaria, sed
generaliter virtus applicandi fortitudinem moralem ad opus cum morali modestia.”
a biblical origin or foundation, while justice and prudence are often mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments.

1.5 OTHER VIRTUES

We have seen that Wyclif’s preaching on virtue lacks a single, systematic exposition of the theological and cardinal virtues. This fact can at least partially be explained as a reluctance to limit virtue in such a way. A good example of this is in a sermon where he lists no less than seventeen virtues that he considers necessary to ministry.\textsuperscript{124} Wyclif’s aim here is not to enumerate a pithy and easily remembered list of virtues; indeed, although he explicitly uses the word “virtues,”\textsuperscript{125} these are certainly not the theological or cardinal virtues, nor do they fit neatly into any predefined category. Rather, this listing of virtues is part of a larger exegesis of II Corinthians 6:1–10, and his discussion of virtue is subordinate to his exegetical agenda. His explanation of the passage opens innocuously enough with a discussion of grace and how it might be lost by being refused or thrown away through sin.\textsuperscript{126} Quite quickly, however, Wyclif goes on the offensive, attacking the idea of pilgrimage to Rome or Avignon to seek the pope’s grace when one can get better from Christ,\textsuperscript{127} and the use of excommunication by prelates, who do so from the false suggestions of pseudofratres for crimes not even yet detected, because such actions do not follow the example of Christ, who could not do such a thing, and show these prelates

\textsuperscript{124} Sermones III.19.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., p. 149/3–4: “Ulterius quoad virtutes que sunt principia bene operandi...”
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., p. 145/30–5: “Unde secundum Lincolniensem dicto XLVII\textsuperscript{a} dupliciter contingit hominem in vacuum graciam Dei recipere, primo dum quis bona gratuita sibi oblata unde salvari posset reunit ... Secundo dum bona gratuete sibi data prevaricans abicit ...” The reference is correctly to Grosseteste’s \textit{Dictum} 87, a transcription of which is available at http://www.grosseteste.com/cgi-bin/dicta-display.cgi?dictum=87.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., p. 146/36–147/1: “Instanter enim laborant Romipete ut presentes sint pape ad porrigendum peticiones suas pro tempore quo gracia est accepta. Sed papa noster Christus graciousius concedit ampliores gracias in hoc tempore, cum viamus; nec oportet currere Avinionam, quia locus est ubique contrito pertinens.”
to be rather the ministers of the devil than of Christ.\textsuperscript{128} This takes us to the heart of Wyclif’s teaching on virtue, an aspect we have noted already, virtue as an imitation of Christ and his apostles. Here Wyclif holds up the apostles as an example of imitation of Christ by reading I Peter 2:23, which speaks of Christ, “who, when he was reviled, did not revile,” alongside II Corinthians 6:4: “But in all things let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience.” Indeed, much patience is the virtue through which the apostles endure nine tribulations listed from II Corinthians 6:4–6.\textsuperscript{129} This list includes tribulations, lack of necessities, distresses, stripes, imprisonments, seditions, labours, vigils (not only of prayers, but in fear of persecutions), and fastings.\textsuperscript{130} It is curious that fastings is included under the list of tribulations, since it could just as easily be seen as an active virtue, as something to be pursued and cultivated. Fasting is a spiritual exercise with a long pedigree, and something that was often sought out and cultivated. Wyclif, however, places the emphasis on the free acceptance of fasting, making it a passive rather than active discipline; it is something which the apostles suffered freely and gained merit from, but not something that they sought out.\textsuperscript{131} So it is with the other tribulations; they

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., p. 147/37–148/4: “Sed quomodo (queso) prelati cesarei excommunicant homines in nomine domini Jesu Christi pro crimine ex falsa suggestione pseudofratrum, antequam illud crimen fuerit eis notum; cumque autem dominus Jesus Christus hoc non posset facere, manifestum est quod hii sic faciendo non exhibent se Christi ministros, sed elati super omne quod dicitur Deus precipuos ministros diaboli.”

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., p. 148/5–11: “...docet Apostolus quod exhibeamus nosmet ipsos sicut Dei ministros in multa paciencia? Christus enim cum malediceretur, non maledicebat (ut dicit beatus Petrus) et generaliter sine vindicta appetita vel capta humanitus summe pacienter tulit omnes injurias; ad similitudinem sui apostoli sufferebant novem tales penalitates pro eius nomine.”

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., p. 148/14–36: “Paulus autem passus est in tribulacionibus ... Secundo tribulati sunt in necessitatibus, hoc est, in penuriis necessariorum vite ... Tercio tribulati sunt in angustiis ... Quarto tribulati sunt in plagis ... Quinto tribulati sunt in carceribus ... Sexto tribulati sunt in sedicionibus ... Septo tribulati sunt in laboribus ... Octo tribulati sunt in vigiliis, non solum propter iusticiam oracionem et diligenciam predicationum sed propter timorem persecucionum. Nono tribulati sunt in ieiuniis ...”

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., p. 148/36–7: “Nono tribulati sunt in ieiuniis, que gratis acceperant, ut corpus anime meritorius.”
are mostly things done to the apostles rather than by the apostles. Even vigils are seen to
be passive when they are done out of fear, for example. All of this tribulation is seen
positively in Wyclif’s understanding, and a lack of such suffering he sees as detrimental
to contemporary ministry: “the ministers of Christ practice these nine to the humble and
meritorious pursuing of their office, which because they lack in us altogether, we are
exceedingly lax, negligent in the ministry of God.”

The listing of seventeen virtues which follows are the active pursuits, the active virtues of
Christian ministry. These virtues do not have neat titles, and as such is the case, they defy
a simple listing, and instead the list takes the form of a phrase by phrase commentary on
the lection and so, as is so often the case, scripture is what gives structure to Wyclif’s
preaching. The first virtue is chastity, which is clarified as purity of mind overflowing
into cleanness of the flesh or body. This protects the reputation of the minister, but also
enables him to diligently and pleasingly perform his ministry. Building on this first
virtue, the second, knowledge, is said to be the familiarity with things divine and human,
at least to the extent that it is necessary to salvation. The third virtue, longsuffering,
builds on the first two. Longsuffering expects the reward of faithful ministration from
God, and he is called longsuffering who from constant faith over a long time hopes for

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132 Ibid., pp. 148/37–149/2: “Et hec novem exercitant ministros Christi ad suum officium
humiliter et meritorie exequendum, que quia deficiunt omnino in nobis, sumus nimis vage in Dei
ministerio negligentes.”

133 Wo306, f. 55ra: “... oportet ministrum Christi vivere in castitate que dicitur ad puritatem
mentis redundantem in corporis carnis mundicium, et hec nedum precipue servat famam sed
habilitat ministrum Christi ad eius ministracionem diligencius et placencius exequandam.”

134 Ibid., p.149/9–11: “Et ista castitas secundo disponit ad scientiam que est noticia divinorum et
humanorum, quantum est necessarium ad salutem.”
reward, just as a farmer hopes for fruit.\textsuperscript{135} The fourth and fifth in the list are kindness and kindness in the Holy Spirit; the former being displayed in sweetly enduring something and gently converting the neighbour, and the latter being an especial illustration of the Holy Spirit “to which benevolence is appropriated.”\textsuperscript{136} The sixth, unfeigned charity, is necessary as much to the blessèd as to the \textit{viator}, for everything that we do, we must do in charity, loving God and neighbour, but Truth clearly sees when we do so falsely, so anyone has false or feigned charity who simulates charity contrary to God’s word.\textsuperscript{137} Following from this is the seventh virtue, communicating with the brethren “in the word of truth,” and we ought not speak to false brethren, “unless either by remaining silent or by speaking the truth openly as we understand it.”\textsuperscript{138} Eighth, all of our works ought to be performed in the power of God, not only by verbal acknowledgement, but also in deed. Our actions, for Wyclif, are completed in the power of God when they are done because of our conformity to His power, which is the wisdom of God; if we seek to conform ourselves to this power, “truly we say without falsehood that [we do things] ‘in the power of God.’”\textsuperscript{139} Truthful men have many enemies, so “ninth the Apostle teaches that we need

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., p. 149/14–8: “Tercio habitis istis duabus virtutibus longanimiter expectat Dei promissio pro fidelí ministerio premiantis. Ille enim vocatur longanimis qui ex constancia fidei per longum tempus sperat premium, sicut \textit{agricultor} secundum beatum Jacobum [James 5:7] \textit{sperat fructum}.”

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., p. 149/19–23: “Quarto succedit \textit{suavitatis} ... qua quis propter spem remuneracionis cum quadam dulcedine patitur et cum proximos leniter conversatur. Quinto talis affabilitas fit specialiter illustracione \textit{Spiritus Sancti} secundum quam appropriatur benevolencia.”

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., p. 149/24–31: “Sexto vivendum est \textit{in caritate non ficta}, et hoc est necessarium continue tam viatori cui libet quam beato. Omnes enim fingimus quod sumus \textit{in caritate}, diligendo tam Deum quam onmen proximum ut debemus; sed Veritas clare intuens cogitaciones, verba et opera videt quod fingimus (ut plurimum) menciendo. Ille ergo falsam caritatem aut \textit{fictam} habet, qui quandocunque simulat se habere caritatem ad discrepanciam verbi Dei.”

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., p. 149/32–7: “Et ex istis sequitur septimo quod debemus communicare cum fratribus \textit{in verbo veritatis} ... numquam debemus communicare cum falsis fratribus, nisi vel faciendo vel veritatem (ut mente concipimus) publicando.”

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., pp. 149/37–150/4: “debemus \textit{in virtute Dei} quidquid facimus operari, non solum verbaliter confitendo sed de facto propter conformitatem nostri ad virtutem (que est Dei
to be protected ‘by the armour of justice,’ by doing complete justice as much to friends as enemies.” Justice is one of the cardinal virtues, but Wyclif does not go into any great detail here about what this virtue entails beyond saying that “in all things we ought, as far as is in us, always and everywhere to observe justice.” Items ten through eleven in Wyclif’s listing have to do with ministry in the face of the vicissitudes of life. Ten in the list is to minister justly to God as much in honour as in dishonour, not being puffed up by the first nor cast down by the second. Eleven is to minister constantly whether in evil or good report, as did the apostles who were sometimes reputed liars and magicians and other times humble and faithful; just as it was with Christ, so it happens with those now following the rule of truth. Again, there is a strong emphasis on imitatio, and more an identification between Christ and those following the regula veritatis. Twelve is to minister in the face of being judged as seducers by some and truthful by others. Thirteen is constancy even if unknown to the world, since it suffices to be known to God “in constancy of virtue.” These thirteen virtues can be reduced to a life of suppressing pride, drawing on 1 John 2:15–16: “Love not the world, nor the things which are in the

sapiencia), cuncta nostra opera faciendo, ita quod quesito a nobis in cuius virtute vel potestate hac facimus, vere dicamus sine ficticia quod in virtute Dei...”

140 Ibid., p. 150/5–8: “Sed cum tales veredici habent hostes multiplices, ideo non docet Apostolus quod tuti simus per arma iusticie, faciendo tam amicis quam inimicis iusticie complementum.”

141 Ibid., p. 150/11–12: “In omnibus ... debemus quantum in nobis est semper et ubique iusticiam observare ...”

142 Ibid., p. 150/12–5: “... sic ministremus iustae Deo nostro tam in gloria quam in ignobilitate, ne in primo inflemur nec in secundo propter oppressione hostium precipitemur ...”

143 Ibid., p. 150/18–22: “Undecimo debemus constanter ministrae Christo in casu quo contingat nos impellere per infamiam vel elevari per bonam famam, sicut apostoli reputati sunt quandoque falsi et magici et quandoque humiles et fideles, sicut fuit de Christo, sic contingit modernis observantibus in plana iusticia regulam veritatis.”

144 Ibid., p. 150/24–6: “Decimo secundo debemus constare in ministerio nobis credito, licet ab aliquibus iudicemur seductores et ab aliis veraces.”

145 Ibid., p. 150/27–9: “Decimo tercio debemus constare in Christi ministerio, licet apud mundum sumus qualitate ignoti, cum sufficit quod apud Deum simus in constancia virtutis cogniti.”

146 Ibid., p. 150/30–1: “Et omnia ista tredecim reduci possunt ad vite superbiam deprimendam.”
world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life, which is not of the Father but is of the world.” The first thirteen virtues make up a defense against pride.

The final four virtues from the list have to do with the taming of the flesh and the rejection of the world, again drawing on 1 John 3. The fourteenth item is to be “as if dying” with respect to concupiscence of the flesh. The actions of devout men are not needlessly worldly, and “they are prepared by this according to the inner-man to live delightfully with respect to God.”

Death to the world is a strong Pauline theme, found across his letters, and Wyclif here invokes that theme, implicitly contrasting worldly men with the devout who live “as if dying,” but alive in Christ. Fifteenth is to minister to Christ “in the time of our pilgrimage,” not as rejected by God, but as amicably chastened, because “such as I love, I rebuke and chastise” (Apocolypse 3:19). Chastisement must come from God alone, we must not take mortification by switch or rod upon ourselves.

The sixteenth virtue receives the longest treatment. This is living “as if sad” on account of the delay in our glorification and the perils of fleshly or worldly concupiscence, but also “always rejoicing” in the Lord because of the consolation of the reward for which we hope. Wyclif makes a strong connection between what he calls evangelical poverty and the avoidance of concupiscence: “but as far as concupiscence of

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147 Ibid., p. 150/32–5: “Sed quarto decimo quantum ad concupiscenciam carnis viri devoti sunt quasi morientes non actus vitae vel mundanos indebite exercentes, et ecce parati sunt ex hoc secundum interiorem hominem delectabiliter vivere quoad Deum.”

148 An allusion to I Peter 1:17: “converse in fear in the time of your soujourning here.”

149 Sermones III.19, p. 150/36–40: “Et sic quinto decimo debemus ministrare Christo in tempore nostre viacionis, non ut Deo abiecti sed ut amicabiliter castigati, quia Apoc. Ego quos amo arguo et castigo; et per consequens non debemus nos supponere mortificatos virga vel baculo consolatorio tam pii magistri.”
the eyes we must be considered ‘poor,’ since Christ ‘for us became poor’ (II Corinthians 8:9).” Wyclif contrasts the voluntary poverty of Christ, which does not burden neighbours, with that of the friars, who “falsely pretend they are poor.” The evangelical poor physically and spiritually enrich their neighbours, but how, Wyclif asks, does he who despoils the poor (who are the basis of temporal wealth), who augments his dwelling places above Christ and who oppresses the whole people and the whole of the earth, enrich the commons, lords or rulers? There is no doubt that such a colluder and liar does not directly enrich anyone. The final virtue is that “truly evangelical men ought to be ‘as if possessing nothing’ civilly or secularly ‘and possessing all things’ by title of justice, since ‘all things belong to the just.’” This last is a favourite theme for Wyclif, one which we have already seen in his preaching on the beatitudes. The final virtue in the list leads Wyclif into a discussion that clerics “ought not to rule civilly” and a long discussion of how Christ did not beg in earnest, “as the friars blasphemously claim.” Wyclif’s argument follows from what he has said about the just possessing all things:

150 Ibid., p. 151/1–7: “Sexto decimo debemus vivere quasi tristes de tardacione nostre glorie et periculo nostre carnalis vel mundane concupiscencie, et tamen debemus semper gaudere in Domino tamquam turtures propter consolacionem premii quod speramus. Sed quoad concupiscenciam oculorum debemus videri egentes, cum Christus pro nobis egenus factus est (IIº Cor. VIIIº, 9).”

151 Ibid., p. 151/7–17: “Et loquitur Apostolus de voluntaria egencia que non est proximo onerosa, ut patet fratres fingunt mendaciter se egens; tales enim pauperes evangelici et non mendacii validi proximos tam corporaliter quam spiritualiter locupletant. Quomodo queso locupletaret plebem, dominos vel rectores qui spoliat egens qui sunt basis omnibus illis in temporalibus et augmentat sua habitacula supra Christum et onerat totum populum et totum medium spere terre. Non dubium quin talis prevaricator et mendax in Christum non directe aliquem locupletat.”

152 Ibid., p. 151/18–21: “Secundo notant quidam ex hoc textu quod Christus non valide mendicavit, ut fratres blasphemant in ipsum.”

153 See above, pp. 133–4, and the bibliography in note 63.

154 Sermones III.19, p. 151/27–9: “... dictum Apostoli sicut suum Iº ad Tim. VIº et dictum Christi Luce XIVº vere testantur quod clerici non debent civiliter dominari.”

155 Ibid., p. 151/30–1: “Secundo notant quidam ex hoc textu quod Christus non valide mendicavit, ut fratres blasphemant in ipsum.”
“how did Christ, the most just and innocent man, beg, since he had the strongest title not only having temporal things, effortlessly but most justly possessing all things?”\textsuperscript{156} For the friars to say, therefore, that God begged, is to blasphemously imply that he had fallen from the state of innocence and was no longer the lord of all the goods of God.\textsuperscript{157}

These tribulations and virtues which form Wyclif’s exegesis of the lection do not conform to the usual listing of theological and cardinal virtues, but rather take their form from the biblical passage in question. That is to say that rather than being a mere listing of virtues to which his listeners ought to conform or aspire, Wyclif has given a description of proper, virtuous ministry, which aspires to conform to the ministry of Christ and his apostles. And it is this focus on \textit{imitatio Christi} which is so important to Wyclif’s conception of virtue that is the main reason why Wyclif does not confine himself to the list of cardinal and theological virtues. Such a listing would exclude the virtue of humility, which might be considered as second only to \textit{caritas}. Examples of humility’s importance to Wyclif can be expanded almost \textit{ad infinitum}, and certainly \textit{ad nauseam}. We have seen humility’s importance to Wyclif in several sermons already discussed, for instance in his opposition of pride and humility. Less visible, but still present and crucially important is evangelical poverty, which would also be overlooked if the focus were restricted to the theological and cardinal virtues. A third virtue, patient suffering, we have seen repeatedly, and it likewise is not among the theological and cardinal virtues. These three virtues form the basis for Wyclif’s conception of the

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., p. 151/37–40: “Quomodo ... Christus summe iustus et innocens mendicavit, cum fuit titulo fortissimo non solum habens perfunctorie temporalia sed iustissime omnia possidens...”

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., p. 152/1–4: “Fratres ergo imponentes Deo mendicacionem huiusmodi implicant blaspheme quod non continue stetit in statu innocencie nec fuit vere dominus omnium bonorum Dei...”
imitation of Christ, and, as Gustav Benrath has pointed out, are the watchwords in Wyclif’s commentaries on scripture, the *Postilla super totam biblia*m. It is not surprising, given the close relationship between the *Postilla* and the *Sermones* that we should find Wyclif’s emphases to be much the same, but this is an important point to keep in mind, since it explains why and how Wyclif was organising his homiletic material; for much the greater part of his preaching, Wyclif let his reading of Scripture provide the structure for his preaching, even when he was preaching on subjects not, strictly speaking, found therein.

1.6 **Vice, Virtue, and Polemic**

Preaching on vice and virtue would seem, on the face of it, to be a natural forum for polemic; it would follow easily from a description of a particular vice to attack those practising it, and conversely to praise those performing virtuous actions. Wyclif takes the opportunities presented by these topics to attack his favourite targets – the orders, the church hierarchy, and the actions these groups perform that so inflame his reforming zeal. In particular, since his conception of virtue is so grounded in the imitation of Christ and his apostles, Wyclif seeks to contrast those, presumably like himself and his followers, who follow Christ in their preaching and ministry and those who, like the friars and most prelates, fall away from the true *imitatio Christi* by seeking to gain worldly advantage through deceitful practices and other vicious acts. We have seen already how Wyclif is critical of both of these groups in his preaching on the sacraments, and his arguments

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here are similar, as we shall see. I will deal with Wyclif’s criticisms of each group in turn, beginning with prelates.

The single greatest complaint that Wyclif has about prelates when it comes to virtue is that they act in ways counter to the ways of Christ and the apostles. This is most visible in his complaints about excommunication. Wyclif consistently contrasts the gentle rebukes of the apostles with the excommunications of prelates. In a sermon for the second Sunday of Lent, with the *thema* “we pray and beseech you in the Lord Jesus” (I Thessalonians 4:1), Wyclif writes:

> In this epistle the Apostle encourages the Thessalonians, and in them each Christian, how they ought to obey God and their spiritual fathers. And note you that this most pious father (*papa*), who is more worthy than all cesarian popes (*pape*), does not command his sons ‘to firmly obey his command under pain of excommunication,’ but prays them humbly and beseeches, that is, he entreats with abjuration, and he says many times such a pattern should be preserved among subsequent prelates, not domineeringly as our prelates, who in this [way] are blasphemously raised up above the Lord, nor does he warn by his own authority, but [does so] in the Lord Jesus, remembering that [in] Colossians 3:17: ‘All whatsoever you do, do in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.’

Wyclif’s complaint is basically that the prelates do not follow Paul’s example of gentle rebuke; they have left aside humility for ruling power and have exalted themselves above Christ. As with so much of Wyclif’s preaching on virtue and vice, the imitation of Christ and his apostles is key; the prelates have failed in their office because they have failed to

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159 *Sermones* III.20, pp. 152/32–153/6: “In ista epistola hortatur Apostolus Thessalonicos et in ispis singulos christianos quomodo debent Deo et spiritualibus suis patribus obedire, et nota quod iste papa piissimus qui est dignior quam omnes pape cesarii non mandat filios suos *sub pena excommunicacionis mandatis suis firmiter obedire*, sed rogat eos humiliter et obsecrat, hoc est, cum adiuracione deprecatur, et ut ista forma servetur in prelatis sequentibus dicit pluraliter, non dominative ut nostri prelati, qui in hoc blasfeme super Dominum extolluntur, nec auctoritate sua hoc precipit sed in domino Jesu memorans illud <Coll. 3º add Wo306> *Omnia quecunque facitis in nomine Jesu facite.*” Cf. *Sermones* III.28, p. 213/18–27, where the example of gentleness is St. Peter.
imitate their spiritual superiors. Wyclif is explicit about this a few lines later: “the Apostle commands [in] I Corinthians 5:16: ‘be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ’ ... And if only the church would learn that perfectly, for then it would attend only to the words of Christ spoken among prelates, because if they teach anything in the Lord Jesus Christ, Christ speaks it in them.” In another sermon Wyclif once again points to the duty of prelates to follow Christ, who once again fail to live up to the standard:

For Peter teaches, I Peter 2:23, that every Christian, and especially prelates, ought to follow Christ in morals. But Christ, as Cephas teaches, ‘when he was cursed, did not curse,’ but prelates presume to curse with cursings and this, which is shameful to say, on account of observance of the law of Christ.

Prelates sin in excommunicating and cursing the innocent, even though they pretend that they cannot sin in this way, and worldly princes ought to be careful not to get caught up with them in this kind of sin. The kingdom of England is blind, so that whoever is excommunicated is jailed more than forty days, with the authority of the king, and the jails of the kingdom are filled, a thing that is founded neither in the law of the Lord nor the law of the pope. Prelates relieve the simple folk of their temporal goods and draw

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160 Ibid., pp. 153/39–154/6: “...mandat Apostolus I. ad Cor. IVº, 16: Imitatores mei estote, sicut et ego Christi ... Et utinam ecclesia istud perfecte cognosceret; tunc enim solum verba Christi loquentis in prelatis attenderet, quia si in domino Jesu Christo quiquam precipiunt, Christus in eis illud loquitur.”


162 Ibid., p. 209/28–30: “Ideo si in malediccione peccare vel errare non poterunt (sicut fingunt), audeo dicere quod peccare non poterunt in aliqua causa mundi. Cum ergo tam crebro peccant excommunicando et malediciendo insontibus, timendum est mundi principibus ne ex consensu defensorio participent eorum criminibus.”
secular lords into graver sins, blinding the kingdom so that they can burden their faithful with their laws.\textsuperscript{163}

A second complaint about prelates relates to the question of papal provisions. Wyclif says that many believe that they should be stopped, since these do not imitate the ways of Christ or his apostles, as they give benefices to unknown or unsuitable foreigners.\textsuperscript{164} In another sermon, Wyclif says that it is against divine precept if anyone gives in to the iniquity of mammon, but it is especially so if done by ecclesiastics, but each person should be content with the temporal goods necessary for fulfilling their office; kings, magnates and prelates should all be content with such moderation, but clerics fall into this temptation more readily: “for falling down they worship the Devil, that their offices might be enriched with superfluous and impertinent possessions, since they do not say to the Antichrist falsely distributing ecclesiastical prebenderies and other dignities: ‘Go away Satan, thou shalt not tempt the Lord your God,’,\textsuperscript{165} but rather they worship him and serve him more than God.”\textsuperscript{166}

Whether or not Wyclif’s ardor on this topic was affected by

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{163} Ibid., p. 209/31–8: “Iam enim cecatum est regnum Anglie ultra cetera, ut quicunque in excommunicacione duraverit ultra quadraginta dies ex auctoritate regis et regni carceri mancipetur. Hoc enim nec fundatur in lege Domini nec papali. Sed corrigunt simplices de suis temporalibus et ut includant seculares dominos in culpis gravioribus, excceant regnum, ut ad onus suum fideles sui legii onerentur.”
\item \textsuperscript{164} Sermones III.20, p. 154/8–12: “... videtur multis quod provisio paparum cesaria qua dat inhabilibus vel sibi incognitis beneficia ecclesiastica de regnis exteris omnino cessaret, cum in hoc nec Christum nec apostolos imitatur...”
\item \textsuperscript{165} See Mark 8:33 and 4:7.
\item \textsuperscript{166} Sermones I.18, p. 126/4–19: “Et quoad ... temptacionem de superba avaricia cogitemus recencius quomodo contra deitatis preceptum est quemcunque hominem et specialiter ecclesiasticum iniquitatis mammona pregravari, sed quilibet contentetur in affluencia temporalium que sunt necessaria ad ministerium sibi debitum adimpendendum. Nam sive reges sive magnates sive prelati debent in isto moderamine contentari ... clerici tamen specialius in ista temptacione ... superantur; nam cadentes adorant diabolum, ut possessione superflua ac impertinenti ad eorum officium sint diti, cum non dicunt Antichristo false distribuenti prebendas ecclesiasticas et alia dignitates: Vade satana non temptabis Dominum Deum tuum, sed pocius adorant eum et sibi servienti plus quam Deo.”
\end{itemize}
his own experiences with the system of papal provisions, what lay at the center was the idea of the imitation of Christ and the apostles, and papal provisions were just another example of the failure of the contemporary church.\textsuperscript{167}

A further theme has to do with endowments; Wyclif is of the opinion that prelates do more good when they are unendowed.\textsuperscript{168} The Apostles, after the sending of the Holy Spirit, defined that “it is not right that we should leave the word of God and serve tables” (Acts 6:2); therefore they elected seven deacons to perform the office of distributing alms and dealing with temporal goods. Further, since civil \textit{dominium} is an occasion for at least venial sin, it would seem that ecclesiastical endowment is likewise an occasion for at least venial sin. Wyclif does not contend that the Church will not finally be freed of this sin, but he knows that it would be safer if the endowment of the Church were removed.\textsuperscript{169}

Elsewhere, Wyclif says that God would not burden his prelates with possessions, and those who by their authority impose such riches on prelates blaspheme against God.\textsuperscript{170}

“For since prelates ought to be the more eminent eye of the Church, the eye however is contented otherwise than the hand or the tongue, with a singular office and is opposed to terrestrial shadow and dust, it is manifest by mystical similitude that prelates ought not to

\textsuperscript{167} See Larsen, “John Wyclif,” pp. 18–22 and bibliography noted there.
\textsuperscript{168} \textit{Sermones} II.50, p. 367/19–20: “videtur mihi supponendum a catholico quod prelatus sine dotacione huiusmodi plus prodesset …”
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., p. 367/21–36: “Nam Act. VI", 2 legitur quod post missionem Spiritus Sancti ex eodem Spiritu sic fuit ab apostolis diffinitum: \textit{Non est equum nos derelinguere verbum Dei et ministerare mensis}, ideo pro isto officio ex eodem spiritu elegerunt septem dyaconos … Sicut ergo civile dominium capit peccatum ad minimum veniale, sic videtur de ista dotacione ecclesie. Nec contendo quin a culpa ista finaliter liberabuntur, sed scio quod foret securius tempestive dotacionem istam excutere.”
\textsuperscript{170} \textit{Sermones} III.3, p. 23/14–7: “Item, non est Dei boni onerare prelatos suos precipuos onere possessionum quibus forent a suo officio prepediti; ideo blasphemat in Deum qui auctorizacionem sibi imponit quoad istas divicias prelatorum.”
dispense so with temporal goods." The worldly wealth of the Church, and in particular that derived from her endowment, is in Wyclif’s estimation a constant source of sin, especially for prelates, who are the ones most directly effected by it.

The religious orders also come under attack in many sermons. Wyclif attacks the friars in two different ways. First and foremost, Wyclif attacks them on the grounds of their teaching and preaching; they spread lies and dangerous doctrines, charges we have seen already in Wyclif’s preaching on the sacraments. But Wyclif is not above attacking their general morality; they are guilty of pride, lust, greed, and many other immoralities. It is this second sort of attack that is our concern here, as the immorality of the orders is couched in terms of vice. Wyclif’s basic principle in attacking the orders for their immorality is to make them examplars of vice rather than virtue.

Probably the most common complaint is about the rapaciousness and avarice of the orders, especially the friars. They are greedy hypocrites, stained with all sorts of crimes; they ought to follow the religion of Christ which does not burden the church, and should work with their hands as the apostles did. Wyclif says that the friars are so burdensome to the church in England because the four orders have more than a thousand souls in their power, and in a few years they have defrauded more than one hundred

171 Ibid., p. 23/17–22: “Cum enim prelati debent esse eminencior oculus ecclesie, oculus autem aliter quam manus vel lingua de unico officio contentatur et terrestribus opaci atque pulveribus contrariatur, manifestum est ex similitudine mistica quod prelati non debent sic cum temporalibus dispensari.”


173 Sermones IV.6, p. 51/3–38: “Et quantum ad onus ecclesie, patet ex fide scripture quod Christi religio et suorum ut venenum ne sint fidelibus onerosi ... Et ... patet quod imminente casu quo ex fratrum copia populus graverentur, laborarent manibus colendo terram pro suis fructibus preparandam vel alium corporalem laborem quem Spiritus Sanctus eos docuerit exercerent.”
thousand pounds from the poor of the kingdom.\textsuperscript{174} They contravene the tenth commandment with their begging, which is worse than that of someone begging for his own needs.\textsuperscript{175} In one sermon, Wyclif lists seven problems concerning the friars’ preaching, all of which have to do with their financial motives and greed for temporal wealth. They choose preachers for their ability to gain temporal goods from the crowd, rather than those who sincerely, usefully, and prudently speak the word of God.\textsuperscript{176} They preach not to remove sin, but to gain temporal wealth.\textsuperscript{177} They do not choose audiences where sins reign and hurt the church, as the apostles and other evangelical men did, but they choose rather audiences that they can deceive and they choose times when they can gain the most goods rather than edifying their audience in the law of God.\textsuperscript{178} They are quick to leave off preaching and attend to plundering where more profit is to be had.\textsuperscript{179} The doctors of the orders, as well as the rich friars and others who know better ways to

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[174]{\textit{Sermones} II.7, p. 49/17–26: “Unde instar Apostoli fratres debent interpolatis temporibus laborare, antequam sint sic ecclesie onerosi. Onerosi, dico, quia quatuor ordinres fratrum habent a probabil  in Anglia plus quam mille animas validas in potencia corporali, et cum quilibet eorum expendit annuatim de regno iu vante reliquo centum solidos, quia aliqui centum marcas, patet quod habent in paucis annis plus quam centum millia librarum; quod cum captum fuerit de egenis per fraudes, patet quod regno sunt nimium onerosi.”}
\footnotetext[175]{\textit{Sermones} I.22, p. 153/27–33: “Nec sunt fratres immunes ab isto crimine [i.e., avarice], cum impetrant temporalia persone sue aggregate quam intendunt esse perpetua, sed hoc est maius facinus quam simplex persona perpetrat pro sua brevi periodo, quia consensus est amplior, obligacio dissoluta maior et defensio persone hec perpetuantis diucius est longe potencior.” On this sermon, see below, pp. 202–5.}
\footnotetext[176]{\textit{Sermones} II.8, p. 57/32–6: “primo quia tales predicantes adaptant, non qui magis sincere et utiliter ac prudenter dicere popul o verbum Dei, sed illum quantumcunque pseudo fratres qui copiosius congregat eis bona populi cui predicat...” Cf. \textit{Sermones} III.43, p. 372/11–22.}
\footnotetext[177]{\textit{Sermones} II.8, p. 58/1–3: “Secundo signum est hoc quod non aptant sermones pro peccato populi plus purgando sed pocius palliant pro cumulo temporalium acquirendo.”}
\footnotetext[178]{Ibid., p. 58/4–9: “Tercium signum est quod non visitant illa loca in quibus peccata plus regnat et plus nocent ecclesie, sicut fecerunt apostoli et alii viri evangelici consequentes, sed notant rudem populum per eos deceptum et non secundum legem Dei edificare...”}
\footnotetext[179]{Ibid., p. 58/16–9: “Et quartum signum est quod deceptata opportunitate qua omittendo predicacionem plus lucr perquirerent opus predicacionis gratis omittunt et spoliationi abscondite diligenter intendunt.”}
\end{footnotes}
make profit than preaching pursue these other means instead. They neglect preaching to the poor and lowly because they despair the acquisition of the *temporalia* which they desire. It is an infallible argument that the cause and end of a work is that which the one working attends to most, and since the friars attend more to the consequent profit of preaching rather than to the saving of the souls of the people listening, the end and cause of their preaching is not the saving of souls, but the gaining of temporal wealth. The friars build sumptuous basilicas like the Temple of Solomon on the backs of the poor instead of following Christ. This greed is not always spoken of strictly in material terms; in one sermon they are said to rob England of its best treasures, seducing the population with their blasphemous pardons and defrauding the treasury of virtue.

Wyclif often compares the orders to the Pharisees in their pride. The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18:9–14) is interpreted to refer to private religious and simple Christians, “for it seems that all of those private religions, just as the Pharisee

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180 Ibid., p. 58/30–5: “quintum signum est quod diciores eorum, ut doctores, fratres divites et alii qui per cautelas reliquas sciunt copiosius quam per evangelizacionem perquirere ista bona, omittunt evangelizare et in mediis ad finem quem plus diligunt magis congruis preeligunt laborare.”

181 Ibid., p. 59/3–7: “Sextum signum est quod notato pusillo populo et paupere quantumcumque capaci et verbo Domini indigente fratres illuc non properant, cuius causam non est facile illus fingere nisi quia desperant de fine acquisicionis temporalium quam plus optant.”

182 Ibid., p. 59/11–6: “Septimum signum est et argumentum infallibile quod illud est finis et causa operis ad quod operans plus attendit, sed fratres predicando plus attendunt ad lucrum consequens quam ad salutem anime populi audientis, ideo acquisicio temporalium est finis et cause predicacionis et non salus anime populi auditorii quod Deo adquirerent.”

183 Sermones II.16, p. 120/24–33: “sub inusticia similata construunt domos alias quas de rapina pauperum fabricant ultra apostolos, et pro construccione sue basilice allegant in sumptuosa construccione templis sapienciam Salomonis ... mirum videtur fidelibus quare tantum imitantur facta regis sacrilegi atque adulteri de lege veteri et non secuntur exemplum a Christo qui est caput et rex regum.” Cf. Sermones III.21, p. 163/32–8.

184 Sermones IV.7, p. 62/26–9: “talis absolucio a pena et culpa sapit manifestam blasphemia ... nulla est plus infundabilis blasphemia attemptate, et cum magna pars Anglorum per fraudes fratrum in ista perfidia sunt seducti, patet quomodo contrattam nostram defraudant in thesauro virtutum que valerent anime super omnia bona regna.”
according to the interpretation of the name, are proud.”

In the same way that the Pharisee exalts himself above others in virtue, so do the religious orders, the sects, but since they often do the opposite of virtue, they commit prideful blasphemy by saying they live more meritoriously than those in the world. The new sects are protected by the father of lies, who is king over all the sons of pride, and his habit clamours, according to his interpretation, that he is holier than other Christians. They ought to admit that their way of life is more meritorious than that of the apostles, since they admit that they surpass the apostles when it comes to clothing and food, vigils and votives. They in fact set themselves above Christ, since his is the only status higher than that of the apostles; the orders claim that their status is equal to Christ’s, and when they take in new members, these enter a better status than the apostles, so the orders ought to concede that they think themselves above Christ, since they beget better spiritual sons than he.

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186 *Sermones* I.43, p. 288/16–23: “Phariseus enim iste dicit implicite vel expresse quod excedit alios in virtute. Et argumentum huius est corporalis habitus vel alia distinctio secte sue et cum sepe contingit oppositum, ymmo quod ex illa differencia hoc foret blaspheemia, videtur quod in re dicit superbam blaspheamiam, et interrogatus talis quare factus est de tali ordine dicit vocaliter quod hoc ideo ut vivat meritorius quam in mundo...”

187 *Sermones* I.43, p. 288/33–8: “omnes iste secte novelle patronantur a patre mendacii qui est rex super omnes filios superbie; nam habitus suus clamat secundum interpretacionem suam quod sit sanccior quam alius de publico ordine...”


The quarrel between the Franciscans and the Dominicans over Christ’s footwear was an opportunity for Wyclif to denounce both groups for not following Christ:

From which text [John 1:27: “the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose”] the Friars Preachers object against the Minors that Christ, as themselves, wore shoes; for otherwise the Baptist said this impertinently. But the Minors on the other hand object that Christ often went barefoot, since otherwise Mary Magdalene would not have had the opportunity at the solemn banquet to wash and kiss the feet of the Lord. But neither of those contentions is without false utterance, since neither follows the footsteps of Christ, nor [is either] without culpable affection of temporal goods, for Christ went now wearing shoes, now barefoot, just as it pleased him, but he did not have at all the disposition of avarice to temporal goods.¹⁹⁰

Wyclif sounds almost modern in his criticism here, in effect saying that both groups have missed the point of what the Baptist was trying to convey. He is more contemptuous in another sermon on the subject, where he says that the friars contend “foolishly,” that the Franciscans “babble,” and where he makes a joke about the two orders being worse than cobblers, since their vain religion rests in vestments and “cords [i.e. the Franciscan belt - ‘cordeliers’] above the buttocks ... and it is certain there are more holy martyrs and confessors in the art of cobbling than in the new sects of friars; it is evident that these young sects, as far as the order which they put together, do not attain the perfection of the order of cobblers.”¹⁹¹ John’s real meaning, according to Wyclif, probably was that he was


¹⁹¹ Sermones I.8, p. 55/5–14: “Religio autem eorum stat ... in vestibus et cordulis supra nates, et huuiusmodi secte secundum vocem beati Jacobi est vana religio, cum tanquam generacio adultera signa querens consuit irracionalble cum iusto deterius quam suores. Cum enim persone religionum ipsas significant, et in arte sutorina constat fuisse sanctos martyres et confessores
not worthy to loose the binds of the religion of Christ, “but Antichrist, in these pseudo-friars, dares to do this, when they build for themselves, surpassing the Baptist and the Lord himself, sumptuous buildings in which they avariciously gather the temporal goods of the poor by their made-up lies.”

Both the Dominicans and the Franciscans are seen to fail in their imitation of Christ and the apostles. In this they fail in their Christian calling, since the imitation of Christ is key to the Christian religion. “We should often devoutly say, therefore, ‘Hail, good master, who for our sins, not for your own, sustained the passion in this way in greatest charity,’ and we should live in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, because it behooves us, if we want to be saved, to imitate the same in morals.” Only inasmuch as they follow Christ, then, is any one in authority, even the pope, to be followed, since Paul said: “‘Be ye imitators of me as I also am of Christ,’ teaching for a rule that we ought to follow no prelate except inasmuch as he himself is a follower of our leader.” This is the point of Wyclif’s whole attack on the virtue of popes, bishops, and religious orders; they do not imitate Christ, so they are not virtuous.

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192 *Sermones* I.4, p. 24/17–23: “Et sic intelligunt quidam probabiliter Baptistam intelligere se non esse dignum ligamentum religionis huius Christi dissolvere. Sed Antichristus in pseudofratribus hoc presumit, cum ultra Baptistam et ipsum dominum edificant sibi sumptuosa edificia in quibus avare congregant pauperum temporalia per sua ficta mendacia.”

193 *Sermones* IV.7, p. 65/16–20: “Dicamus ergo crebro devocius Ave magister optime qui pro nostro crimen non pro tuo sustinuisti in caritate maxima huiusmodi passionem et in fide vivamus domini Jesu Christi quod oportet nos si salvari volumus ipsum in moribus imitari.”

Conclusion

The centrality of the imitation of Christ and his apostles is clearly the most important aspect to Wyclif’s preaching on virtue and vice. In everything that a Christian does, he or she ought to follow the way of Christ, and if the Christian fails in this imitation, then he or she falls into vice and sin. This is especially the case for those with cure of souls, whom Wyclif holds to a higher standard than the average layman or woman. This conception of *imitatio Christi* is based on Wyclif’s reading of scripture, which we can see in the consistent way in which Wyclif allows the biblical material to structure his preaching; he is not wont to use outside material, even material from a favourite authority such as Grosseteste, to provide structure or material to his sermons. It is also on account of his conception of *imitatio Christi* that Wyclif finds the contemporary church lacking; the prelates and religious orders, those who claim to be holy and to act on Christ’s behalf and in succession to the apostles, are the ones who lack most in virtue and abound all too much in vice.
Chapter 4
Wyclif’s Preaching on Major Pastoral topics

This chapter will review Wyclif’s preaching on the major pastoral topics of the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, the seven works of spiritual and corporal mercy, and the gifts of the Spirit. All of these receive detailed discussion and were clearly important for Wyclif. Much of the material dealt with in these sermons is uncontroversial, involving nothing more than a simple explanation of a basic element of Christian theology. That said, large sections of Wyclif’s preaching on these topics are quite controversial, his preaching on the commandment against idolatry, for instance. As with the rest of his preaching, these sermons too exhibit a mixture of the prosaic and the trenchant.

1. The Decalogue

Wyclif treats the Ten Commandments several times in the sermons, sometimes very thoroughly, for instance in a series of ten sermons for Epiphany and Lent each dealing with one of the commandments, and sometimes he treats them more summarily. In total, there are eighteen sermons that discuss some aspect of the decalogue, and these cover the entire length of Wyclif’s preaching career as represented in the extant sermons. The earliest sermons that we have concerning the decalogue are from the spring of 1377, and the latest were redacted during Wyclif’s retirement at Lutterworth, with the material on the commandments possibly composed at that time.

The first series of sermons concerned with the commandments are from the Sermones quadraginta, on the Gospel for Passion Sunday, the Epistle for Palm Sunday, the Gospel
for Good Friday, the Gospel for the First Sunday after Easter and the Epistle for the Second Sunday after Easter: 5, 22, and 27 March and 5 and 12 April 1377.¹ The sermon for this Easter Sunday, which would presumably have completed the set, does not appear in the *Sermones quadraginta*, or anywhere else that has been identified. The series’ treatment of the commandments is not complete as we have it; the fourth commandment is left out. The first of these sermons treats the first three commandments in rather less technical language than the other sermons in the series, and for that reason Mallard argues that it was delivered to a simple village congregation.² The second deals with the fifth commandment, the third with commandments six, seven, and eight, the fourth with commandments nine and ten, and the fifth and final sermon provides an epilogue.

Another pair of sermons from the *Sermones quadraginta* deal with the ten commandments from the starting point of the two great commandments.³ These two sermons form a set, on the Gospel for the eighteenth Sunday after Trinity and the Epistle for the nineteenth Sunday after Trinity respectively, but the year of their composition is a mystery, perhaps 1377 or 1378, as suggested by Williel Thomson.⁴ At any rate, they were composed after the series from spring 1377 and before the other three sets of sermons.

*Sermones* I.13–22 form a series of ten sermons on the Ten Commandments, preached between the fourth Sunday after the Octave of the Epiphany through to the fifth Sunday of Lent. The dating of these sermons is difficult, but they were certainly redacted by

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² Ibid., p.96.
⁴ Thompson, *Wyclif’s Writings*, p. 186.
Wyclif during his retirement at Lutterworth. Further, there is some evidence that the sections in these sermons concerning the Ten Commandments were in fact added at the time of redaction, although this is not certain. At any rate, these sermons certainly reflect Wyclif’s later thinking, as we shall see.

One last sermon, for the gospel for the eighteenth Sunday after Trinity, covers the topic of the Decalogue in its reduction to the two great commandments to love God and one’s neighbour. The sermon reflects material that is more extensively covered in the earlier sermon for the same Sunday concerning loving God with all one’s heart, mind, and soul, but this sermon’s concern is mostly with the nature of love itself. Thomson does not assign a date for this sermon, nor does Hudson give a precise date, although she does suggest that, at least in the form that we have them now, the dominical gospel sermons might have been redacted starting, at the earliest, in late October 1381 when Wyclif went into retirement at Lutterworth, and so this sermon in its current form probably dates from that same period. There is no internal evidence suggesting a date for the sermon, and the contents are so innocuous that it could have been preached at almost any time by almost any preacher, or at least by any preacher that was as concerned as Wyclif about the law of love. This sermon will not be discussed further, both because of the conventional nature of the discussion of the commandments and because the same material is covered more thoroughly in the earlier sermon.

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6 See above, pp. 30–1.
7 Sermones I.50.
There are several themes that are common to the sermon material on the Decalogue, which is not surprising given their common subject. For instance, throughout these sermons, Wyclif uses the traditional division of the Ten Commandments into two tablets, the first of three, and the second of seven commandments, and the division is explained as between those which teach us our duty to God and our duty to neighbour. He also insists that the commandments can be reduced to the law of love, following from Christ’s response to the Pharisees concerning the greatest commandment, love of God and love of neighbour. These two concepts form part of a long tradition of exegesis and are of themselves noteworthy for just this reason in so controversial a figure as Wyclif. Wyclif also seems to be particularly fond of grouping things in threes, which he does to rhetorical effect in several of these sermons. A particularly elaborate instance of this occurs in *Sermones* IV.53, where Wyclif treats the first three commandments, those relating our duties to God, by associating each one to a part of the first great commandment (see Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27): “Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy

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9 *Sermones* IV.53, pp. 411–12; IV.54, p.424; I.13, p. 89. This was a medieval commonplace, the same idea being found in Grosseteste, *De decem mandatis*, 2/23–3/3, for instance, and in Peter Lombard, *The Sentences, Book 3: On the Incarnation of the Word*, translated by Giulio Silano (Toronto: PIMS, 2008), d. 37, c. 1, p. 151, who derives it from Augustine, *Sermo 9, De decem chordis*, which can be found, with introduction, in *CCSL* 41.100–51 and translated in *WSA* III/1, pp.259–81.

10 This idea is again found in the prologue to Grosseteste, *De decem mandatis*, pp. 1–5, where he goes so far as to say “Omnia enim redegit ad brevissimum numerum unicum, videlicet caritatis mandatum, quod et intellectu est facillimum et ad faciendum in opere suavissimum. Hoc mandatum est etiam unicum verbum: ama!”

11 See, for example, *Sermones* I.13, pp. 90/23–91/14, where Wyclif discusses three kinds of sin that are idolatry; I.14, p. 98/11–99/18, where Wyclif enumerates three ways in which God’s name is taken in vain; IV.53, p. 412/5–10, where three threes are said to correspond: “Specificat autem Veritas modum quo debemus diligere Deum per tres particulias, Trinitati et tribus mandatis prime tabule respondentes, scilicet *ex toto corde*, hoc est, secundum ultimam intellectus, *ex toto anima*, hoc est, secundum ultimam affectus, et *ex toto mente*, id est, secundum ultimam memorie intellectus.”
whole mind:” the first commandment, against idolatry, is associated with the idea of loving God with the whole heart; the second, against taking the name of God in vain, to that of loving God with the whole soul; and the third, about keeping the Sabbath, to that of loving God with the whole mind. Each of these in turn is connected to a person of the Trinity, a slight variation on a commonplace taken from Isidore and incorporated into the Glossa ordinaria: loving God with the whole heart and keeping the first commandment is connected to the Father, who is characterized as omnipotent creator; loving God with the whole soul and keeping the second commandment is connected to the Son: “we must love God with the ‘whole soul’ and consequently ‘not take the name of our God in vain,’ lest we offend against the second divine person, who is in the form of God the Father and is the Word and consequently the name of God,” associating the Son, as the form of God, with the soul, the form of the human body; loving God with the whole mind and keeping the Sabbath are connected to the Holy Spirit, where memory and the grace of final perseverance are key: “Third, we must love God with the ‘whole mind.’ For since

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12 *Sermones* IV.53, p.412/5–10: “Specificat autem Veritas modum quo debemus diligere Deum per tres particulas, Trinitati et tribus mandatis prime tabule correspondentes, scilicet ex toto corde, hoc est, secundum ultimum intellectus, ex tota mente, id est, secundum ultimum memorie intellectus.”

13 James McEvoy, “Robert Grosseteste on the Ten Commandments,” *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 58 (1991): pp. 167–205, at p. 184; see Glossa ordinaria, PL 113.0250, where Isidore is quoted to the effect that the first three commandments each refer to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in turn. This same construction is also used in Jacobus de Voragine, *Sermones dominicales per totum annum: eximij doctoris magistri Iacobi de Voragine Ordinis Praedicatorum quondam archiepiscopi Ianuensis* (Venice, 1572): p. 337: “Primum praeceptum est: Non habebis deos alienos, & istud pertinet ad patrem qui tanquam fontale principium totius deitatis est principaliter adorandum.”

14 Ibid., p.412/10–414/19.

15 Ibid., p.414/20–4: “Secundo debemus diligere in tota anima et per consequens non accipere nomen Dei nostri in vanum, ne offendamus contra secundum personam divinam, que est in forma Dei Patris et Verbum et per consequens nomen Dei.” The entire passage concerning the Son and the second commandment can be found at pp.414/20–417/29.

16 This was a standard scholastic conception of the soul–body relationship in humans, based on the aristotelian understanding, see for example Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, Ia q. 1 art. 1.
the mind (*mens*) is so called because it remembers (*meminit*), inasmuch as I will love God with intellect and affection, unless I will remember to heed the truth of perseverance, the preceding pair is useless to me to salvation. The Trinity therefore rests all meritorious works of a man on three, of which the third is that we love God ‘with the whole mind,’ this is, that we remember only our God, or, whatever else we remember, this is finally ordered to principally thinking about the grace of God.”

Wyclif opens his series of sermons on the commandments with a trope: “Moreover, concerning this sermon and the nine following, as I have been commanded by a certain devout layman, I propose to speak briefly the meaning of the commandments.”

The trope in this case is a figure of speech that Wyclif uses to broach a topic which interested him greatly, as evidenced by the number of expositions on the decalogue throughout the sermons as well as the enormous *De mandatis*. So despite what he says about plain preaching and the avoidance of rhymes, which we have already seen him use, Wyclif does sometimes use rhetorical elements and embellishments in his sermons that we do not expect.

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18 *Sermones* I.13, p. 89/22–4: “Circa istum sermonem et novem sequentes (ut mandatus sum a quodam devoto layco) propono compendiose dicere sentenciam mandatorum.” The phrase “ut mandatus sum” is the trope, as first suggested to me by Stephen Lahey in an email, who pointed me to Paul Rorem, *Hugh of St. Victor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), who discusses this sort of trope at pp. 69–70, where he discusses Hugh’s prologue to his *De sacramentis* and especially 168–9, where he discusses Hugh’s prologue to his commentary on the Pseudo-Dionysius.

19 See *Sermones* IV.31, pp.265–71.

Individual commandments are treated in similar ways across the corpus. In his various comments on the first commandment Wyclif covers some common themes. In particular, Wyclif mentions more than once that the sins of gluttony, avarice, and pride are all forms of idolatry.\textsuperscript{21} In one instance, the connection is made between the sins of covetousness, idolatry, and pride and the three classical enemies of man: the world, the flesh, and the devil, a theme that we have seen before in Wyclif’s preaching on patience.\textsuperscript{22}

In his earlier preaching on the first commandment, Wyclif does not discuss the complex problem of images, which was a matter of some controversy in the later Middle Ages. This is a little strange, as it would seem to be a logical topic for a sermon on idolatry, either in defense of images or in opposition to them, a popular topic amongst late medieval preachers.\textsuperscript{23} It was one of a number of controversial topics which characterized later medieval Oxford theology,\textsuperscript{24} along with such topics as the Eucharist and auricular confession, but the question of image worship was a serious and important one: “by Wyclif’s time, attacks against image worship and its defense had had a long history in the

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western church, and the last two decades of the fourteenth century as well as the following generations witnessed a sharp revival of the controversy.”

When Wyclif does turn to the subject of images, he demonstrates some ambiguity. This is best demonstrated with reference to his full length treatment of the decalogue, the *De mandatis*, in which Wyclif offers his longest commentary on images. He writes that images can be made for good or ill, and that the laity often err in thinking that there is something inherent to the image itself, rather than what is depicted, that makes them worthy of devotion. Wyclif draws on Grosseteste and Origen to the effect that all images and sculptures are outside the divine nature, and so do not participate in it, the point being that such things are “significantly called ‘false gods’, falsely or nominally fashioned.” So also in *Sermo* I.13, Wyclif points to the dangers of such images and the confusion that they cause the laity: “As far as images, it is clear that they smack of idolatry, if they are adored not by vicarious worship but by the worship of God [i.e., the worship due God alone, *latria*]. Since this often occurs among the laity, it is clear that it would be safe, as under the old law, were all such images destroyed.” However, despite the dangers in their use, Wyclif still saw the value of images, and there was no outright

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27 *De Mandatis*, pp. 155–66.
28 Ibid., p. 156–7.
29 Ibid., 159/3–10: “Patet quod omnia que formavit Dei creacio vel confixit ymaginacio vel fabricat artificis operacio nata sunt extra regionem nature divine. Et licet ex infidelium ficcione introducta sunt, ut participant deitate, tamen nihil est illis commune cum tribus personis divinis, que sole sunt huius regionis indigene: ideo signanter vocantur dīi aīeni, false vel nominetenus fieri.” Quoted in Aston “Lollards and Images,” p. 140. The references to Grosseteste and Origen are at the bottom of *De mandatis*, 158.
30 *Sermones* I.13, 91/15–9: “Quantum ad ymagines, patet quod sapiunt ydolatriam, si non adoracione vicaria sed adoracione Dei ydemptica adorantur. Quod cum sepe contingit in laicis, patet quod securum foret, ut in lege veteri, quod omnes tales ymagines sint delete.”
call for their destruction. In fact, in the *De mandatis*, immediately following the opinions of Origen and Grosseteste, Wyclif turns to Bede’s discussion of the Temple of Solomon and the good effects of images.\(^{31}\) Likewise in *Sermo* I.13, Wyclif is quick to point out that the laity can obtain much benefit from images, at least under the instruction of a good priest: “Yet I know that the people, having been fully instructed by a suitable curate (who are very much disappearing), he could make such sculptures be useful books for the laity.”\(^{32}\) But again, there are grave dangers in the use of images, as the clergy are just as susceptible to idolatry as the laity.\(^{33}\) The real problem is that there is no scriptural warrant for the creation of images, which give rise to avariciousness and worldliness:

Therefore since neither Christ nor the apostles nor their writings cherish such images, it seems to many that it is a rash presumption, smacking of greed among curates as much as among artists, that so copious a variety of images is introduced.\(^{34}\)

They also lead to the abuse of the poor:

Likewise the error is very grave by which the poor people of the realm and the common people are defrauded, that very costly and superfluous things are gathered around such images and sepulchres of gold, silver, and precious stones, with which not only the poor of the kingdom might be lifted up, but the kingdom itself pulled from ruin.\(^{35}\)

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\(^{31}\) *De mandatis*, 159/11–160/13.

\(^{32}\) *Sermones* I.13, 92/1–3: “Scio tamen quod populus plene instructus per curatos idoneos, qui nimis deficiunt, posset facere quod tales sculpture sint libri utiles laicorum.”

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 92/3–5: “Sed tam in clero quam in laicis capitur occasio infideliter ydola (que nichil sunt secundum apostolum) venerandi.”

\(^{34}\) Ibid., 91/31–5: “Ideo cum nec Christus nec apostoli nec scriptura eorum tales ymagines coluerunt, videtur multis quod sit temeraria presumpcio, sapiens tam in curatis quam in artificentibus avariciam, quod sit tam variarum ymagonum copia introducta.” This same point is made in Robert Holcot’s popular commentary on the book of Wisdom, see Aston, “Lollards and Images,” pp. 156–8.

\(^{35}\) *Sermones* I.13, 92/5–11: “Error eciam nimis gravis quo fraudantur pauperes regnicole et vulgares est quod nimis sumptuose atque superflue congregarunt circa tales ymagines et sepulcra aurum, argentum et lapides preciosi cum quibus nedum pauperes regnorum sed ipsa regna abstracta ruinis poterunt elevari.”
The money used to adorn these shrines could be used more effectively to ensure the safety of the kingdom and to help the poor, an idea linked to what Wyclif has to say elsewhere about clerical disendowment.³⁶ “Our Pharisees” are more interested in jewels and sumptuous basilicas than in helping the poor.³⁷

Wyclif is concerned here with two issues involved in the question of images: the possible danger inherent in the practice on account of the susceptibility of human beings to commit idolatry, and the possibility of abuse by those in a position to gain financially from the laity’s commitment to images. Underlying these issues is a struggle between two sorts of authority: clerical and scriptural. The clergy, and here it seems that Wyclif is referring very generally to all who are in holy orders, but especially those who are charged with cura animarum (cure of souls) since he refers specifically to curates, are the ones who are supposed to act as authorities in the matter of images; they regulate their use and are to ensure that the laity, who are so susceptible to being led astray in the matter, are properly instructed in this use. Alas, the clergy are seen to be as susceptible to ignorance and idolatry as the laity, and thus fail to live up to the authority vested in them. Opposed to this (failing) authority of the clergy is the authority of scripture, and it is on the basis of this authority that the use, or destruction, of images rests, and it is on the authority of scripture that Wyclif builds his case against “our Pharisees” and their like.


³⁷ Sermones I.13, 92/11–4: “Et ad tantum pharisei nostri exaltant iocalia, sicut sumptuosas basilicas, quod dicunt propter eorum sanctitatem abstraccionem non esse licitam, ymmo neminem posse in sumptuositate talium racionis limitem preterire.”
Wyclif himself is not entirely clear about how scripture should be interpreted in this regard, as his position on images contains some ambiguity, as we have seen. Nevertheless, it is still to the authority of scripture that Wyclif turns first in his discussion, noting that there is little scriptural warrant for the use of images, despite their potentially good use. These layers of authority are complex and intertwined, but what comes through clearly is that there is a tension between the authority of scripture and the authority of the clergy; the clergy are prone to the same vices as the laity and they fail to interpret scripture correctly.

As we saw in chapter two, Wyclif’s understanding of the Eucharist demonstrates some development over time. This development has an important impact on his preaching about the first commandment. In the same sermon dealing with images, Wyclif says that “many foolish people break this commandment by adoring images and the consecrated host.” This connection of worship of the host with idolatry was also caught up with Wyclif’s polemical agenda. He concludes the sermon with a rather erudite discussion of the nature of the consecrated host, while accusing Innocent III and the friars of leading the laity astray in their teaching on the Eucharist: “And the revered pope Innocent [III] and his disciples could as quickly as you like make many faithful believe that this

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38 Ibid., p. 91/31–5 as above, p. 181.
sacrament itself were the head of an ass or whatever other substance would be named.”

The friars are motivated by greed to keep the laity uncorrected in their errors:

This sacrament itself is, therefore, true bread made by the power of the words of the Lord the body of Christ; and thus, since this act of speaking, following Augustine ‘this is my body’ is figurative, it appears that this sacrament itself should be adored vicariously somewhat more so than images made by man. However, the commonality of the laity believes that that bread is identically the body of Christ, nor are the friars prepared to dispel this error, not only because they are ignorant of what that sensible sacrament is according to nature, but also because they fear for themselves that they might lose the profit of their temporalities and also their fame, and thus as unfaithful heretics they fall into transgressing the first commandment. And so also the church ought to be purged of this unfaithful transgression and be made completely without wrinkle, to which state it will be restored only by God in heaven.

Once more, Wyclif’s views on the Eucharist are at the centre of his polemical agenda. Wyclif has made a connection between worshipping the consecrated host and idolatry; although the host is more worthy of worship, vicarious worship, than are images, nonetheless, it is a transgression of the first commandment to identify the host identically with the body of Christ. At heart, this is again an argument about the way in which scripture ought to be interpreted. Wyclif says that he is following Augustine in his interpretation of the words of institution, hoc est corpus meum, as figurative language.


The veracity of the saviour is what is at stake here, the one whom Wyclif calls Veritas, and Christus qui mentiri non potest.\textsuperscript{43} Christ’s words, this is my body, meant for Wyclif that the host was more worthy of devotion than images, but there was the danger that the laity would understand the host to be identical to the body of Christ, and thus, to offer it worship due only to the Second Person of the Trinity. The friars, “our Pharisees,” are both ignorant of the correct interpretation of the Eucharist, and unwilling to give up their ill-gotten gains by correcting the laity’s understanding, and so, just as in the case of images, those in authority, in this case including the Pope, are found to be abusing their authority for worldly profit.

Wyclif’s treatment of the second commandment, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain” (Exodus 20:7), provides him with an obvious opportunity to talk about oaths, which seems to have been a particularly important subject for him; he consistently and thoroughly denounces false swearing as a particularly heinous sin;\textsuperscript{44} in fact, he seems to have thought the issue of idle swearing so important, that he spends nearly three full pages of Sermo IV.53 on the subject.\textsuperscript{45} Wyclif sets the command of God and the command of the devil in opposition here: God orders you not to take His name in vain, but the devil orders a falsehood opposing this, “that you swear by the wounds and members of Christ, so that you might be made great in the estimation of men by


\textsuperscript{44} Sermones I.14, p. 98; Sermones IV.36, pp.306–7; Sermones IV.53, pp. 414–6. This was an idea that the Lollards later picked up on and made their own, with some divergence from Wyclif, who held that, in any case, it was lawful to swear before a legitimate judge. See Henry G. Russell, “Lollard Opposition to Oaths by Creatures,” American Historical Review 51 (1946): pp. 668–84; Margaret Aston, “Devotional Literacy,” in Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion (London: Hambledon, 1984): pp.110–11; Workman, Wyclif, II, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{45} Sermones IV.53, p. 415/1–417/29.
audacious words. And as such, in that it strengthens the doctrine of the devil, that the greater part of humanity think that it is not a sin to swear thus. Which undoubtedly contradicts the words of Truth who cannot lie.” Wyclif exhorts his audience to avoid illicit swearing, telling them that it is enough to swear, following Jeremiah (4:2), “in truth and in judgment and in justice.” Wyclif does not expand here on what this sort of swearing means, but in another sermon, he does. There, he divides the passage from Jeremiah into its three parts. The first, swearing in truth, means that what is sworn is true, and so “one ought not to swear falsely to save the whole world.” The second, to swear in judgement, means to swear in order to explain the truth, as when it is necessary to ensure the confidence of the people swearing. The third, to swear in justice, is to swear with a just intention, as when a man swears he is telling the truth. In another sermon, Wyclif says much the same thing about the verse from Jeremiah, again dividing the verse according to its three parts, but for the third, he says that oaths must not be taken for money or envy, but in defense of the justice of the church.

46 Sermones IV.36, p. 308/4–12: “Deus eciam precipit in secundo mandato prime tabule quod non assumes nomen Dei tui in vanum; sed diabolus precipit falsitate contraria quod iures per vulnera et membra Christi, ut sic fias in reputacione hominum maior ex verbis audacibus. Et ad tantum in isto invalidit doctrina diaboli quod maius pars hominum putat non esse peccatum sic iurare. Quod indubie contradicit verbis Veritatis que non potest mentiri.”


49 Sermones I.14, p. 98/32–4: “Et sic tercio iurabis non conductus pro pecunia vel invidia inimici sed propter iusticiam ecclesie declarandam.”
Wyclif makes a distinction between oaths that are sworn either idly (*vaniloqui*) or falsely (*falsidici*). In the first case, if the testimony is idle, then swearing by the Lord’s name is taking that name in vain: “if the whole story is idle (*vana*), how will the invocation of so venerable a testimony [i.e., by God’s name] not be exceedingly vain (*vana*)?” As to the second, Wyclif makes a comparison between the king of England and God: “And if the king of England disdains to be produced in witness for deceit or a trifling matter, how is the king of the world, who is first truth, not offended to be invoked in false testimony?”

Wyclif’s treatment of the third commandment, “Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day” (Exodus 20:8), the first of two positively phrased commandments, also demonstrates, in a much more innocuous way, how Wyclif’s thought developed over time. Wyclif explains in two of the three sermons dealing with this commandment the reason that Christians commemorate the Sabbath on Sunday rather than on Saturday as do the Jews; it was on the first day of the week that the Son of God rose from the dead and on which the Holy Spirit was sent, an old idea which was adopted by Grosseteste and Peter Lombard among others. In each of the three sermons, Wyclif exhorts his listeners to attend to their spiritual duties: attending church, saying their prayers, and doing their spiritual works. There appears between the earlier of these sermons and the last, however, a slight difference in emphasis or a softening of Wyclif’s position on physical

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50 *Sermones* IV.53, p. 415/8–15: “Sed notemus huiusmodi iuratores et inveniemus in maiori parte quod sunt vaniloqui atque falsidici. Si ergo tota narracio sit vana, quomodo non erit invocacio tam venerabilis testimonii nimirum vana. Et si rex Anglie dedignaretur produci in testem pro truffa vel causa levi, quomodo rex mundi qui est prima veritas non offenderetur invocari in testimonium falsitatis?”


labour on the Sabbath. In the earlier two sermons from the *Sermones quadraginta*, Wyclif is very negative in his attitude toward agricultural labour on the Sabbath, insisting that it should in no way be done, even during the harvest season,\(^\text{53}\) and telling his rural audience that they spend their time on the Sabbath sinning and that they are thus members of the devil.\(^\text{54}\) But in the last of these sermons, Wyclif emphasizes that immodest acts and the like break the Sabbath much more so than agricultural labour.\(^\text{55}\) This stress on keeping the Sabbath by means of adhering to a stricter morality is also emphasized in the *De mandatis divinis*, where Wyclif places a great deal of emphasis on piety and utility (“For it is allowed us to work bodily on the Lord’s day, whatever piety induces, utility stirs, or necessity demands, only avoiding works or acts of sin...”),\(^\text{56}\) and on prayer and Sabbath keeping.\(^\text{57}\) While this is not a dramatic change in outlook, the emphasis here is on interior morality, doing the right and proper thing, rather than on external adherence to a law. Wyclif’s longest discussion of the Sabbath occurs in IV.53, where memory is the key link between loving God with all one’s mind and keeping the third commandment.\(^\text{58}\) In this sermon Wyclif makes the claim that all the days of a person’s life ought to be Sabbaths, not in the sense that they ought not do work, but in the sense that their days should be

\(^{53}\) *Sermones* IV.53, p.421/6–16.

\(^{54}\) *Sermones* IV.36, pp. 308/30–309/4.

\(^{55}\) *Sermones* I.15, p.107/2–8.

\(^{56}\) *De mandatis*, p. 228/9–12: “Licet enim nobis die dominico corporaliter operari, quicquid suadet pietas, movet utilitas vel urget necessitas, solum cavendo ab opere vel actu peccati ...” Cf. the long discussion of the nature of servile work on the Sabbath, which is interpreted first and foremost as sin, *De mandatis*, pp. 216–24.

\(^{57}\) *Ibid.*, chapters 19–21, pp. 229–93, which form a long commentary on prayer, including a commentary on the Lord’s Prayer.

\(^{58}\) This is part of the elaborate construction discussed above, pp. 171–2, see *Sermones* IV.53, p.417/30–418/13.
holy. Our days are holy when we remember our creation, associated by Wyclif with God’s rest after creation, and our mortality, associated with Christ’s rest in the sepulchre on the Sabbath, and our resurrection to damnation or glory on the Lord’s day. There follows Wyclif’s explanation of the change in observance of the Sabbath and then a long explanation connecting the six days leading up to the Sabbath as analogous to the six ages of man. The virtue most necessary for moving through these six days or ages and attaining the crown of beatitude is perseverance. Failing to persevere to the end, despite good beginnings is the unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit; we must always look to the health of our souls by keeping the Sabbath, for the man who goes six days being a slave to the flesh and the world will fail of charity in the end. Wyclif’s preaching here is

59 Sermones IV.53, p.418/19–23: “Cum enim sanctificare tempus sit facere ipsum sanctum, quod non fit nisi per vite sanctitatem, sicut dies dicitur homini leta qui letatur in illa, patet quod omnes dies hominis debent esse sibi sancti…”

60 Sermones IV.53, p. 418/24–31: “nam illo die debemus memoraliter retinere creacionem nostram de terra et reversionem nostram ad terram per mortem, sicut Deus post opus creationis hominis sabbatizavit et sicut Christus per illud sabbatum iacuit mortuos in sepulcro; et debemus tercio memorari resurrectionem nostram ad damnacionem vel gloriam, que fuit in feria octavo quam dicimus diem dominicum…” Cf. De mandatis, pp. 210/18–211/13, where Wyclif explains this reasoning more fully, quoting extensively from Grosseteste, De decem mandatis, pp. 32/24–33/3.

61 Sermones IV.53, pp. 419/8–420/28. This motif is also used in Sermones IV.29, pp.247/33–248/9, although it is not as much elaborated. Wyclif uses other schemes as well, tied to seven ages, see De mandatis divinis, pp. 211–14; De civili domino, III.60; De veritate sacrae scripturae, I.383, and Wilks, “Wyclif and the Wheel of Time.”


63 Ibid., p.420/14–18: “Ideo inchoantes meritorie in principio et procedentes sic in medio, dum desinuerint in termino perseverando in gracia correspondenter ad Spiritum Sanctum sunt ut sic damnnabiles. Idcirco dicit Christus Matthei VII”, 21: Non omnis qui dicit mihi Domine, Domine intrabit in regnum celorum, cum correspondenter dicitur Matthei XXV, 11, 12: Domine, Domine aperi nobis. At ille: Amen, dico vobis, nescio vos, scilicet approbando ad beatitudinem, quia deficitis in tercio signo quod est peccatum finalis impenitencie in Spiritum Sanctum. Istas itaque causas debemus colligere et in sabbato salutem anime nostre studiose recolere, quia deficit illi homini caritas ordinata qui post sex dies quibus servit carnip et seculo non servit post spiritui, cum omnis caritas incipit a se ipsa.” Cf. De dominio divino, p.248/13–18 and Opus evangelicum, I.221/9–12, part of a very long quotation of Augustine’s De sermone domini in monte (PL 34.1267). Impenitence is one of the options explored by Peter Lombard in Sentences II d.43, c.1, pp. 211–15, which also quotes from Augustine’s De sermone domini in monte.
anything but controversial; he has adopted commonplace teachings on Christian observance of the Sabbath, leaving aside theological controversy. The most contentious issue at hand here, especially in a more rural setting such as Lutterworth, is that of agricultural labour on the Sabbath, and since we can see a softening of Wyclif’s position in this area, the issue does not seem to have been particularly contentious in the end.

The fourth commandment, the first of the second tablet, is the other positive commandment, in this case, to honour your mother and your father (Exodus 20:12). Two sermons deal with this commandment, in the first of which, IV.54, Wyclif spends most of his time distinguishing two types of birth and two types of parentage, natural and spiritual. A similar division is at work in the other extant sermon, I.16, but here Wyclif distinguishes between three types of parents: natural parents, prelates, and Christ’s humanity/the Universal Church/the Virgin Mary. As well, whereas in the earlier of these sermons Wyclif is focused more on the commandments of the second tablet, and especially on the commandment to honour one’s parents, in the later sermon, Wyclif seems to have simply added a section on the fourth commandment to a sermon concerned almost entirely with preaching. In fact, Wyclif is at pains to point out that prelates, as spiritual parents, must frequently instruct their sheep. Wyclif exhibits a high mariology in this later sermon, extolling the virtues of the Blessed Virgin, telling his audience that she is specially to be honoured, since she was the “ark of faith and virtues on the holy Sabbath while Christ was dead, and more than ordinary prelates, she has the power of

64 Sermones IV.54, pp. 424–5.
66 Sermones I.16, p.112/26–30: “Oves autem talis prelati debent diligi tam corripiendo quam corrigendo quam eciam in necessitatis articulo relevando secundum regulas caritatis in quibus prelatus debet oves suas frequenter instruere. Et sic dilataretur caritas per totam ecclesiam.”
begetting Christians in virtue; just as she is the mother of mercy, so she is the mother of the other virtues that have been brought forth spiritually in the children of God.”

Bonaventura, Aquinas, and Ockham, as well as some canonists, considered the possibility that the church resided solely in the Mother of God during the Triduum, so Wyclif is not alone in seeing the Blessed Virgin as receptacle of faith and virtue. What is happening in the latter half of this passage, however, is a little less clear. What Wyclif seems to be doing is setting up the Blessed Virgin as the exemplar of a proper spiritual parent, which is the role of the prelates in the church. These ought to look to her as the example of how to perform their spiritual duties, since she brings forth *christicolas*, literally “worshipers of Christ,” more effectively than they do, expanding her motherhood to include all Christians. The two sermons end on different, yet mutually reinforcing notes. Sermon IV.54 ends with a short section relating Wyclif’s discussion of the commandment back to the love of neighbour; the following of this commandment teaches us to love all.

Sermon I.16 closes with a discussion of how other sins follow from the breaking of this

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67 Ibid., pp. 112/37–113/5: “Sed Maria mater Domini videtur ex hoc specialiter honoranda, cum ipsa fuit archa fidei et virtutum in sancto sabbato Christo mortuo, et plus quam privati prelati habet rationem gignendi christicolas in virtute; sicut est mater misericordie, sic est mater aliarum virtutum que in filiis Dei spiritualiter procreantur.”


69 *Sermones* IV.54, p.425/15–39, especially 15–18: “Ex quo patet quod illud mandatum se extendit ad honorandum effectualiter omnes iustos et per consequens ad diligendum omnes proximos tam amicos quam inimicos” and 23–5: “cum omnes inimici ecclesie sint bona sua per accidens sibi utilia, debet diligere omnes inimicos ecclesie, quia non honorat matrem suam qui bonum eius oderit…"
commandment and how honouring Christ and his mother, and thus keeping this commandment, is accomplished through virtue.\textsuperscript{70}

The fifth commandment, “thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13), is mentioned briefly in IV.54, where it is included in a list of the commandments of the second tablet, and it is covered more thoroughly in IV.37 and I.17. Sermon IV.37, the earlier of the two sermons with more than cursory comments on this commandment, presents us with some difficulties, for the sermon only covers the fifth commandment, rather than the fourth and fifth as we would expect following on from sermon IV.36, which covered the first three commandments. As well, the sermon uses the address \textit{fraternitati vestre}, which is not used in the other sermons of its series,\textsuperscript{71} but placing them in the series where this address is used (IV. 31, 34, etc., see above, Chapter One) would raise further difficulties. Mallard supposes that the two problems are solved if the section on the fifth commandment, which contains the address \textit{fraternitati vestre}, has been interpolated into the sermon.\textsuperscript{72} If this is the case, then dating the material covering the fifth commandment becomes more difficult; there is no internal evidence in this section of the sermon to suggest a date, for example. None of the material in either IV.37 or I.17 is particularly polemical – Wyclif gives a fairly straightforward discussion of homicide, although he does give us another medieval commonplace in IV.37 when he discuses how murder can be committed in

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Sermones} I.16, pp. 113/10–24: “Et patet quomodo totum peccatum regnans in seculo ex prevaricancia huius precepti exoritur. Nemo enim offendit in Deum nisi in hoc mandatum et alia cuncta offenderit ... Et si vis Christum vel matrem suam diligere, scias quod de tanto illos diligis atque placas de quanto declinas a malo et facis bonum virtutis.”

\textsuperscript{71} See above, pp. 37–8.

\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Sermones} I.16, p. 96.
thought, word, and deed, a division which he spends the rest of the sermon explaining, and even subdividing.

In his discussions of the sixth commandment, “thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14), Wyclif has only a little to say in his sermons, something which he himself recognized with a note at the end of I.18, where he tells the preacher who would use his sermon that “the preacher can expand upon the material of this exhortation, however, according [as it is] pertinent to the audience.” This is, of course, a clear indication that Wyclif meant his sermons to be used by others, and also a sign that Wyclif knew he could have said more about the subject. There are three sermons that deal at some length with this commandment (once again, IV.54 simply lists this commandment without further comment), but none of them is much related to the subject. Sermon IV.44 has mostly to

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73 Sermones IV.37, p. 312/31–3: “Nec posssumus nos excusare ab homicidio [sic], licet non ferro percutimus, quia tripliciter committitur homicidium, scilicet mente, verbo et opere.”

74 Murder committed with the mind is divided into that done by conspiracy, anger, and hatred (p.312/33–4: “Mente, machinando, irascendo et odioendo”); that committed in word is done by accusing, counseling or passing sentence, if these are done with the wrong intention or illegitimately (p.313/11–15: “Ore incurrit homo homicidium tribus modis, vel accusando vel consulendo vel sentenciando, que si non fiunt in personam ream sed immunem, si non intencione proficiendi sed officiendi, si non in forma et circumstancia legitima sed informi…”); and in deed through unjustly harming someone, including ourselves, and bringing them closer to death (p.313/23–34: “Facto autem incurrit homo culpabiliter homicidium tribus modis, primo modo qui inuste vulnerat hominem… Et ex isto videtur quod gulosus abbrevians vitam ex crapula … se ipsum incurrit homicidium…”), when someone is killed by someone who is prohibited from killing, such as a priest (p.313/35–314/7: “…quando persona occisa est rea, sed persona occidens ex Christi consilio est prohibita facere tales opus…”), and finally by refusing someone help, the refusal of which leads to their death (p.314/8–16: “…quando faciendo opus extraneum subtrahit subsidium debitum, racione cuius substraccionis proximus moritur…”). See Siegfried Wenzel, “The Continuing Life of William Peraldus’s Summa vitiorum,” in Ad Litteram: Authoritative Texts and their Medieval Readers, edited by Mark D. Jordan and Kent Emery Jr. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992): p. 137, who notes that it arose from scholastic analyses of sin, following from Augustine’s definition in the Contra Faustum (22.27, PL 42:418), and quoted by Peter Lombard in his Sentences (II d.35, c.1, pp. 174–5), and suggests that this might have led to the development of Peraldus’s treatment of “sins of the tongue.” See also Bloomfield, Seven Deadly Sins, pp. 171, 174, 186, 187 for examples of the same division in other authors.

75 Sermones I.18, p.128/3–4: “Materiam autem exortacionis poest evangelizans secundum pertinentiam auditorii dilatare.”
do with the distinction between God’s peace and peace in this world, during which discussion Wyclif uses an exemplum comparing the fight for worldly wealth and *dominium* with the struggle of boys over cherries, the sermon having more to say about the folly of searching for wealth and thus about the seventh commandment against stealing, which is also dealt with at the end of the sermon.\(^{76}\) Sermon I.18 is almost entirely concerned with Christ’s temptation in the wilderness, which is the lection for the day (the first Sunday of Lent). Wyclif relates the two topics through the image of Christ as the church’s, and every Christian’s, spouse: “and as Christ must be the spouse of the whole church and each one of its members, it appears that any Christian who offends in any of the Commandments, as such commits spiritual adultery.”\(^{77}\) In a sermon for Good Friday, Wyclif spends about ten lines on commandments six, seven, and eight (against adultery, theft, and false testimony). The short discussion of the commandments ties each of the three commandments discussed to one of the seven last words, Wyclif once again using these as a structuring element: the commandment against adultery is reinforced by Christ commending his virgin mother to his virgin disciple (John 19:25–7; “Woman, behold your son ... behold your mother”); the commandment against theft is tied to the words spoken to the penitent thief (“Truly I say to you this day shall you be with me in paradise” Luke 23:43), whose penitence led to Christ’s forgiveness of his sins; and the commandment against false testimony is tied to Christ’s words “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).\(^{78}\) These three commandments are set up as

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\(^{76}\) For the exemplum see pp.362/24–363/13.

\(^{77}\) *Sermones* I.18, p. 127/1–2: “Et cum Christus debet esse sponsus tocius ecclesie et cuiuslibet membri sui, patet quod quilibet qui offendit in mandatum aliquod, de tanto est mechus spiritualis...”

\(^{78}\) *Sermones* IV.41, p. 343/1–14: “Quorum verborum tria sunt contra prevaricatores trium mandatorum scilicet non mechaberis, non furtum facies, non dices contra proximum tuum falsum
“contrary virtues” opposed to the seven deadly sins, a structure which we have seen before in Wyclif’s Good Friday preaching. The sermon ends with a reference to another sermon on these three commandments covered here, a promise that is fulfilled in IV.44, where Wyclif deals shortly at the end of the sermon with the troubles caused by theft and adultery: “nothing returns a man greater infamy as far as the world than theft and adultery ... for the beginning of natural law is that a man do to others what he wants to be done to him...” These sins are thus acts against nature, which only lead to trouble in this life and misery in the next: “all of these, however, happen from adultery and besides this, violence in the way and perpetual woe in Gehenna.” All of this is, of course, fairly straightforward and commonplace, giving us an excellent example of Wyclif’s use of traditional themes.

The seventh commandment, “thou shalt not steal” (Exodus 20:15), as we have seen already, has a less than prominent place in Wyclif’s general discussion of the later commandments in IV.41 and IV.44, and forms just another item in the enumeration in IV.54. It does, however, receive more extensive treatment in I.19, where Wyclif’s discussion takes up fully half of the sermon. Here Wyclif describes three ways in which theft is committed against three different laws. The first sort of theft is according to the

testimonium. Contra primum eorum est quod Christus commendavit matrem virgini discipulo virgini ... Contra furtum est illud Luce XXIII°, 43 quod promisit latroni: Hodie mecum eris in paradiso ... Contra falsum testimonium adversus proximos est illud Luce XXIII°, 34 quo rogavit Patrem illis ignoscere, cum ignorant quid faciunt.”

80 Sermones IV.41, p. 343/14–15: “De istis tribus erit processus, de quibus patet superius sermone proximo.”
81 Sermones IV.44, p. 365/4–19: “nichil enim reddit hominem magis infamem quoad seculum quam furtum et adulterium ... nam principium legis nature est quo homo faciat alteri quod sibi vult fieri ...”
82 Ibid., p. 365/17–9: “Omnia autem ista contingunt ex mechia et preter hoc pugne in via et Ve perpetuam in iehenna.”
law of God; as God is the ruler of the whole world, all creatures, even emperors and kings, owe Him service, and not ministering properly to God is theft. This first sort of theft is explained rather straightforwardly as living sinfully.

The second sort of theft is according to the laws of man, by taking the goods of a neighbour. The explanation of this second sort of theft leads Wyclif into a discussion of church property and the poor:

But the second [sort of] theft which is weighed only by the world often savours of injustice, since, in accordance with such human inventions, very many traditions of men are unjust; whence it is, as it were, in times of necessity permitted to take the goods of the church without [it being] theft, thus it is always permitted for the virtuous to take the goods of whomsoever according to the law of nature, by which all ought to be in common. And this is the reason why some people assert that the common people and the poor of the kingdom ought not be oppressed with unwonted taxes, before the whole patrimony which the clergy is given fails. Indeed, since according to many laws … these [goods] ought to be the goods of the poor, it appears that it pertains to the great and the peers to take these goods in the name of the poor in case where it is right; nor is there danger in spoliation of the church, because it is consonant to the laws and ordinances of God that the clergy possess nothing of this sort at all.

This second sort of theft is characterized by improper treatment of the poor through excessive taxation. Wyclif places the onus for the correction of such a situation on the

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83 Sermones I.19, pp. 130/33–4: “Generaliter autem loquendo, cum Deus sit universalis dominus tocius mundi et quilibet imperator vel rex est servus huius Domini vel ballivus, patet quod quicunque, consumendo bona huius Domini et non ministrando sibi fideliter, de tanto est huic Domino fur et latro...”

84 Ibid., p. 131/20–4.

85 Ibid., pp. 131/24–132/8: “Secundum autem furtum quod pensatur tantummodo apud mundum sapit sepe inusticiam, cum in talibus adinvencionibus humanis tradiciones hominum ut plurimum sunt inique; unde sicut licet in tempore necessitates accipere bona ecclesie sine furto, sic licet virtuoso pro semper accipere bona cuiuslibet secundum legem nature, qua cuncta debent esse communia. Et hec racio quare quidam asserunt quod vulgares et pauperes regnorum non debent onerari tallagiis insconsuetis, antequam totum patrimonium quo clerus dotatur deficiat. Cum enim secundum leges multiplices … illa debent esse bona pauperum, patet quod magis pertinentis et paracius in casu quo oportet etiam <est Wo565> ipsa bona in nomine pauperum acceptare; nec est periculum in spoliacione ecclesie, quia legi et ordinacioni Dei foret consonum quod clerus nichil talium penitus possideret.”
secular nobility, and assures them of the justice of disendowing the church to distribute these goods to the poor, since they are more the goods of the poor than of the church. This is especially the case for the king, whose office in Wyclif’s conception is especially to reform the church and to hold temporal jurisdiction over it. The king should protect the poor of his realm, since he ought to rule others as he would want to be ruled in similar circumstances, and it is dangerous to the welfare of the kingdom for the poor to be oppressed: “nothing is more destructive in a kingdom in its political life than immoderately to deprive the lower classes of the goods of fortune.” The disendowment of the church is likewise the duty of the king when clergy misbehave: “when an ecclesiastical community or person habitually abuses wealth, kings, princes, and temporal lords can legitimately take it away.” So it is that “it pertains to the great and the peers to take these goods in the name of the poor in the case where it is right.” Although it is not clear in this sermon how this case is to be determined, elsewhere, Wyclif suggests that the advice of theologian-doctors is to help temporal lords make these decisions.

The third kind of theft is a combination of the first two. It is also tied to the misdeeds of the clergy and prelates, who are lumped in with “pirates of the sea, plunderers in war, despoilers in secular dominium, robbers in the public way, thieves hiding in concealed places and robbers secretly seizing the goods of others in the shadows of the night. But

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87 *DCD* I, p. 231/16–8: “dicitur quod dominus non debet facere servo suo nisi sicut racionabliter debet velle sibi fieri in casu consimili...”
all of these types and many others are gathered among the prelates and clergy.”\textsuperscript{91} These are false pastors, since they do not have the salvation of their sheep in mind.\textsuperscript{92} Wyclif is most concerned in this sermon with spiritual theft, where the perpetrator leaves off the duties and obligations of his station. The only mention of theft of physical goods is in relation to the poor, and even here it has to do with the proper conduct of office; those in a position to impose taxes ought to keep in mind that there should be limits on these. Wyclif is quite controversial in his statement that the goods of the church can be confiscated by secular lords, but he limits himself to only those cases where this would be right. He is perhaps showing here some reticence in expounding his views in full, at least in front of certain audiences, when he states that “this material ought to be expanded according to the exigency of the people’s simplicity.”\textsuperscript{93}

The earliest mention of the eighth commandment, “thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour” (Exodus 20:16), occurs in IV.42, where it is linked, as noted above, to Christ’s words on the cross (Luke 23:34): “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”\textsuperscript{94} There is no explanation of this connection, however, and Wyclif promises to take up this commandment and the two others mentioned in IV.42 (six and seven) in the next sermon. He does not follow through on his promise for this commandment, focusing instead on theft and adultery while mentioning also

\textsuperscript{91} Sermones I.19, p.133/12–17: “Sunt enim pirate in mari, predones in bellis, spoliatores in seculari dominio, raptore in meatu publice, latrones in locis absconditus latitantes et fures in tenebris nocuum bona aliorum clandestine capientes. Sed omnia hec genera et longe alia sunt in prelatis et clericis congregata.”

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., p. 133/17–20: “Ideo dicat Christus Joh. X”, 8: Omnes quotquot venerunt non tracta a Deo, ut intrem per hostium pure proper salutem ovium, fures sunt et latrones.”

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., p. 133/11–12: “Et huius materia est secundum exigenciam ruditatis populi dilitanda.”

\textsuperscript{94} Sermones IV.42, p. 343/11–14: “Contra falsum testimonium adversus proximos est illud Luce XXIII”, 34 quo rogavit Patrem illis ignoscere, cum ignorant quid factunt.”
commandments nine and ten.\textsuperscript{95} The most extensive commentary is again in the series from the dominical gospel sermons, I.20. Here, the first part of the sermon deals with the demon who makes the man he possesses mute (Luke 11:14–28), and then moves to a discussion of a commandment concerned with speech. This allows Wyclif to make a very smooth transition between the two sections of the sermon.\textsuperscript{96} Wyclif explains that there are three kinds of speech (mental, real, and vocal),\textsuperscript{97} and that evil living, including priests who fail to follow Christ’s example,\textsuperscript{98} false testimony,\textsuperscript{99} and slander\textsuperscript{100} are the three ways this commandment is broken; false testimony is itself broken down into another three (false testimony by word, by deed, and by both together).\textsuperscript{101} All of these statements are more or less innocuous, pointing to common understandings of sins of the tongue.\textsuperscript{102}

Wyclif deals with the final two commandments, which are intimately connected, in four sermons.\textsuperscript{103} In the three sermons dealing with the ninth commandment (the two earlier sermons, IV.44 and 54, and one later sermon, I.21), this commandment is connected with the commandments against theft and adultery, as all three are said to have a common source, the concupiscence mentioned in the commandment itself (\textit{non concupisces rem proximi tui}) or inordinate desire (\textit{cupiditas inordinate}).\textsuperscript{104} Wyclif is also consistent in

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\textsuperscript{96} \textit{Sermones} I.20, p. 138/25–8: “Circa hoc evangelium est notandum quod generacio predicta pessima videtur plane solvere octavum mandatum decalogi; nam Exodi XX\textsuperscript{o}, 16 scribitur: \textit{Non loqueris contra proximum tuum falsum testimonioum}.”

\textsuperscript{97} \textit{Sermones} I.20, p. 138/28–30: “… sit triplex locucio, scilicet mentalis, realis et vocalis…”

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., p.138/30–139/20.

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., pp.139/20–31.

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., pp.139/31–140/13.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., p. 139/20–22: “Et patet quod false testificator in proximum potest fieri tribus modis, scilicet verbo, opere vel utroque…”


\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Sermones} IV.44 and 54 and I.21 and 22.

pointing to Christ’s words in Matthew 5:27–8: “You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart” and to Paul’s words in First Timothy 6:10: “For the desire of money [cupiditas] is the root of all evils.”

Wyclif is more explicit in I.21 about the origin of sin in the mind: “For according to the Apostle: ‘the desire of money is the root of all sin.’ Therefore it is obvious to the faithful that the origin of all wickedness is in the mind, nor does one perform an extrinsic act increasing the burden of sin except in so far as one increases the mental guilt.”

This idea remains implicit in the discussion of concupiscence in IV.44, where Wyclif’s focus is more clearly on the reason for the splitting of the final two commandments. In fact, Wyclif is trying to reconcile two distinct authorities on the division and treatment of the final commandments; Grosseteste and Augustine. It was Augustine who first suggested that the coveting of another’s wife or goods referred to two distinct commandments.

Grosseteste accepted this division, but he treated the two commandments together in the De decem mandatis, seeing them as rooted in the will, “and that being the case he has the opportunity to analyse the very root of evil, which is disordered desire and wilful abandonment of the true order of love.”

Wyclif is keen to emphasize both the separateness of the commandments and also their distinction. In order to do this, he begins first with the illicit desire for a neighbour’s goods: “thou shalt not covet your neighbour’s possession,” and only then does he move to illicit desire of a

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106 Sermones I.21, p. 144/16–21: “Nam iuxta Apostolum: Radix omnium malorum est cupiditas. Ideo est per se notum fidellibus quod origo tocius nequicie est in mente, nec facit opus extrinsecum ad gravamen criminis, nisi de quanto auxerit culpam mentis.”
108 Ibid., pp. 184–5, quote on p. 185.
neighbour’s wife. Thus, he can move from the general to the specific, saying that concupiscence of the eye is more general than that of flesh and “therefore the ninth commandment opposes that [concupiscence of the eye] and the prohibition of pleasure in the person so loved is [opposed by] the last commandment that scripture expresses under these words: ‘thou shalt not covet his wife …’ For the more general things are prior by nature, yet following the Apostle in First Timothy 6:10: ‘the root of all evil is cupidity.’ Therefore the commandment [concerning] coveting the goods of a neighbour precedes the commandment [concerning] wishing to commit adultery.”

This discussion of these two kinds of concupiscence is thoroughly Augustinian, and quite similar to Grosseteste’s discussion in his *De decem mandatis*, where Grosseteste distinguishes between concupiscence of the flesh and of the spirit. These two kinds of concupiscence are opposed, since “the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh” (Gal 5:17). What Wyclif calls the concupiscence of the eye is what Grosseteste calls the concupiscence of the spirit. Grosseteste draws a further distinction between two sorts of concupiscence of the spirit: “the concupiscence, which is called concupiscence of the spirit, is the will or appetite situated in the rational part of the soul, which appetite when it is ordered, is a virtue; but when it is disordered, it is cupidity. But it is ordered when it

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109 The discussion of the ninth and tenth commandment together is, of course, traditional and logical, and Wyclif’s emphasis on concupiscence is also traditional, see Grosseteste, *De decem mandatis*, pp. 84–91, where he speaks in much the same terms as Wyclif, both of them referring back to Augustine’s discussion in *De nuptiis et concupiscencia*, book 1 (CSEL 42).
110 *Sermones* IV.44, pp. 364/33–365/2: “ideo eius oppositum est nonum mandatum et prohibicio voluptatis in personam tam dilectam est mandatum ultimum quod scriptura exprimit sub his verbis: *Non desideribus uxorem eius …* Communiora enim sunt priora natura sed secundum Apostolum Timothei VI°, 10: *Radix omnium malorum est cupiditas. Ideo mandatum concupiscencie bonorum proximi precedit mandatum volendi mechari.*”
111 Grosseteste, *De decem mandatis*, p. 85/8–10: “Sciendum autem duplicem esse concupiscenciam vel appetitum. Una namque est concupiscencia que dicitur carnis, et altera que dicitur spiritus.”
loves the creator for himself, and it does not love creatures except for the creator. But it is disordered when a creature is loved for itself and then, as it was said, it is cupidity. But when it is ordered, it is love.”

This distinction, though left unmentioned in IV.44, underlies Wyclif’s discussion; concupiscence of the eye/spirit, can either be the vice of cupidity, if it is disordered, by disobeying the ninth and tenth commandments, for example, or it can be the virtue of charity, which, if practiced with the other virtues, is true peace and leads to beatitude, in which all disturbance is settled. There is one final difference between the earlier sermons on these two commandments and the later ones; in I.22 Wyclif accuses the friars of breaking this commandment in their begging: “nor are the friars immune from that crime, when they beg temporalia for their collective person which [begging] they intend to be perpetual, but this is a greater outrage than [when] a simple person begs for themselves for a short time, because the consent is broader, the dissolved obligation is greater and the defense of the person perpetuating this for a longer time is far more powerful.” Apart from this passing swipe at the mendicants, Wyclif’s preaching on the last two commandments is relatively tame and uncontroversial.

Throughout the sermons on the Ten Commandments, Wyclif’s teachings demonstrate little in the way of controversy. Mostly his explanations of the commandments are

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112 Grosseteste, *De decem mandatis*, p. 88/3–9: “Altera autem concupiscencia, que dicitur concupiscencia spiritus, voluntas est sive appetitus, situs in parte anime racionali, qui appetitus, cum ordinatus est, virtus est; cum autem inordinatus est, cupiditas est. Ordinatus autem est cum diligit creatorum propter se, et creaturas non diligit nisi propter creatorem. Inordinatus autem est cum propter se amatur creatura et tunc, ut dictum est, cupiditas est. Cum autem ordinatus est, caritas est.”

113 *Sermones* IV.44, p. 365/21–3: “Vera itaque pax consistit in virtutibus ducentibus ad beatitudinem in qua omnis perturbacio est sedata.”

114 *Sermones* I.22, p.153/27–33: “Nec sunt fratres immunes ab isto crimine, cum impetrant temporalia persone sue aggregate quam intendunt esse perpetua, sed hoc est maius facinus quam simplex persona perpetrat pro sua brevi periodo, quia consensus est amplior, obligacio dissoluta maior et defensio persone hec perpetuantis diucius est longe potencior.”
commonplace. Yet there are some notable exceptions, as when his discussion of the commandment against idolatry leads him to discuss controversial issues surrounding the Eucharist and images, or when he mentions the possibility of clerical disendowment in his discussion of the commandment against theft. What we see, then, is a mixture of controversial and commonplace, but far more that is commonplace than is controversial.

2. The Lord’s Prayer

Wyclif’s sermons on the Lord’s Prayer represent his preaching at its most pastoral: there are no attacks on the papacy or the hierarchy here, but instead uplifting teaching about the usefulness and efficacy of prayer as taught by Christ, about the unity of all believers, and the necessity of ever increasing in love for God and neighbour. There are three sermons that deal with the subject, two from the Sermones quadraginta dating to 2 and 9 November 1376, respectively\(^\text{115}\) and one further sermon from the dominical gospel cycle.\(^\text{116}\) The sermons from the quadraginta are part of a series that it seems Wyclif preached in London in the fall of 1376 and winter/spring of 1377, and which seem to have caused some controversy.\(^\text{117}\) These three sermons, however, stay clear of polemics, despite parallels with a polemical piece, De oracione dominica.\(^\text{118}\) These parallels are simply that Wyclif states in both the sermons and the polemical tract that the Lord’s Prayer exceeds all others in authority, and that the three discussions all contain the same division of petitions. The difference amounts to Wyclif’s taking the opportunity in the


\(^{116}\) Sermones I.29

\(^{117}\) Mallard, “Dating the Sermones Quadraginta,” pp. 98–9 follows Workman, Wyclif I.278–9 in placing some of Wyclif’s preaching in London for this period. Hudson, Premature Reformation, pp. 64–6, also thinks that Wyclif preached in London some time around this period.

\(^{118}\) On the polemical nature of the tract, see Thomson, Latin Writings, p. 291 and Loserth’s introduction to the piece, Opera Minora (London: Wyclif Society, 1913): p. xlvi.
tract to attack the friars and the Blackfriars’ Synod, something missing in his preaching on the subject.\textsuperscript{119} Another sermon, IV.58, contains one section on the fifth petition. This sermon is one of the \textit{quadraginta}, but its dating is uncertain, despite a cross-reference in IV.57. It is for the same liturgical occasion as IV.57, so the cross-reference appears to be a later addition. Mallard offers a date of perhaps 25 October 1377 or 14 November 1378.\textsuperscript{120}

Wyclif divides the Lord’s Prayer into seven petitions, the first three in symmetry with the Trinity, and the second four dealing with our physical and spiritual needs.\textsuperscript{121} Oddly, in \textit{Sermones} I.29, Wyclif says that the prayer has ten parts, corresponding to the Decalogue: “it is divided, however, just as the Decalogue into two parts, of which the first contains three petitions according to a likeness of the Trinity and the second contains seven corresponding to the seven commandments of the second table.”\textsuperscript{122} This division is abandoned, however, as the second part, as in the other sermons and the tract, is divided into four petitions.\textsuperscript{123} At any rate, this is how Wyclif divides the petitions:

1) \textit{Pater noster, qui es in celis, sanctificetur nomen tuum} – corresponds to the Father, not that He be sanctified in Himself, but that we honour His name and conform ourselves to His holiness.

\textsuperscript{120} Mallard, “Dating the \textit{Sermones Quadraginta},” p. 103.
\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Sermones} I.29, p. 197/6–10: “Dividitur autem sicut decalogus in duas partes, quorum prima continet tres peticiones secundum congruencias trinitatis et secunda continet septem correspondenter ad septem mandata secunde tabule.”
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., p. 198/28–29: “Secunda vero pars in qua quatuor continentur peticiones...”
2) *Adveniat regnum tuum* – corresponds to the Son, whose kingdom, the teleological goal of the church, is to be desired fervently.

3) *Fiat voluntas tua sicut in celo et in terra* – corresponds to the Holy Spirit; conformity to the will of God and the fulfillment of His justice is the only way to be pleasing to Him.

4) *Panem nostram quotidianam da nobis hodie* – that our bodily needs might be met, to give us strength for the pilgrimage.

5) *Et dimitte nobis debita nostra, sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris* – that our spiritual needs might be met, our burden of sin removed, to give us strength for the pilgrimage.

6) *Ne inducat nos in temptacionem* – not that God not tempt us, but that we be not led into temptation and sin.

7) *Libera nos a malo* – that we be freed conditionally from pain, and unconditionally from guilt.

The third petition acts as a bridge between the two sets of petitions, as in all things, conformity to God’s will is paramount, and if we are zealous for God’s honour, the more will we have advantage.\(^{124}\)

In *Sermones* IV.56, Wyclif also separates the words *Pater noster*, identifying them as a preamble to the prayer, and notes that we say ‘Our Father’ and not ‘My Father’: “From

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\(^{124}\) *Sermones* IV.57, pp. 443/32–444/26.
which is appears, since we are mutually brothers, we ought to love one another; and this is the reason why it is better said Our Father rather than Lord God or another name of God not so well chosen.”

125 This emphasis on love in the opening address of the prayer is characteristic of Wyclif’s interpretation in the Sermones, and undergirds the rest of his exposition. There is also a connection made here between the Lord’s Prayer, and specifically God the Father, and the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity.

126 This passage is echoed in I.29, where Wyclif emphasizes the communal nature of praying ‘Our Father.’

The first petition, addressed to the Father, emphasizes holiness. Wyclif says that “we do not pray that in His nature He be sanctified, but that devout faith might be formed in us, according to which bond, that sanctity itself might effectually shine forth in us.”

128 In the longer discussion of this petition in IV.56, Wyclif connects the petition with the commandment about taking the Lord’s name in vain, which he sees as a major problem among Christians: “And there are followers who with polluted mouths pronounce the holy name of God by swearing in vain, just like the greater part of the world, therefore the protection of that name fails us.”

129 The result is that these Christians are worse than

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125 Sermones IV.56, p. 437/22–25: “Ex quo patet, cum simus invicem fratres, debemus alterutrum diligere; et hec racio quare pocius dicitur Pater noster et non Domine Deus vel aliquid nomen Dei non tenum allectivum...”


128 Sermones I.29, p. 197/33–36: “non oramus ut in sua natura sanctificetur, sed ut conformetur fides devota in nobis secundum quod glutinium illa per se sanctitas effectualiter in nobis reulement.”

129 Sermones IV.56, p. 439/1–3: “Sunt et secundi qui ore polluto nominant nomen sanctum Dei iurando in vanum, sicut maior pars mundi, ideo deficit nobis proteccio illius nominis.”
the devil in their blaspheming.\textsuperscript{130} This petition is likewise linked with the first beatitude: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”\textsuperscript{131} The poor in spirit are those, then, that honour the name of God and sanctify it.

The second petition is addressed to the Son, and longs for the coming of His kingdom. It receives the shortest treatment of any of the petitions, in which Wyclif says two things. First, Wyclif notes the three reasons why the devil fights against the coming kingdom, first because of the envy he feels for Christ, second because of his affection for doing evil, which he cannot do after the Day of Judgement, and third because after the Day of Judgement his punishment will be accomplished.\textsuperscript{132} Second, he notes that Kingdom Come is the culmination of the church, and therefore, the culmination of the church’s activities: meditating, praying, chastening and ministering to the faithful.\textsuperscript{133}

The third petition honours the Holy Spirit and receives a long treatment that bridges the two sermons from the \textit{quadraginta}. Conforming our wills to God’s will does nothing but good for us, and so we should pray that all so conform their wills to that of God.\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., p. 439/12–22: “videtur mihi quod falsi christiani plus quam diaboli blasphemando nomen Domini degenerant ... Et tamen illud dignum nomen a nominetenu Christianis tota die frontose blasphematur; quod diabolus non audet facere, ideo falsus christianus ut sic est peior diabo.”

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., pp. 439/23–440/2.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., p. 440/16–23: “Unde Sathan inter alia quibus adversatur Christo nostro tardat adventum huius regni propter tria, primo propter invidiam qua invidet honoris, Christo suo domino triumphatoris. Secundo propter affecionem quam habet malefacere, illudendo Dei famulis, quale nocentum non inferet post diem iudicii. Tercio quia post diem iudicii erit pena sua consummata ex cumulo multitudinis damnnatorum.”

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., p. 441/3–6: “Ille ergo digne orat: \textit{Adveniat regnum tuum}, qui in effectu procurat prefectum celerem hinc regno, meditando, orando, castigando vel aliter fidelibus ministrando.”

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., p. 441/12–18: “Scit eciam quod voluntas signi vel mandati non potest esse nisi ad bonum, cum hoc sit \textit{voluntas Dei sanctificacio vestra}. Ideo patet quod debet pura oracione rogare pro eius iemplecione in terra, sicut iempletur in celo, quod iempleatur in ecclesia militante, sicut iempletur in Christo, quod iempleatur et in ecclesiasticis et in laicis.”
Wyclif ends the first of these sermons with a long discussion of suffering, saying that we must accept whatever suffering is sent our way:

We ought as well to joyfully suffer all punishments inflicted upon us, because if so, we ought to know that there is no punishment unless it is just and is inflicted by God. But we ought to conform our whole will to the will of God. Therefore, we ought to wish all penalties to be inflicted upon us. It is proven from this that just as we ought to love God, the gracious giver of the gift, so we ought to love Him, the most just punisher, because we know that He is not able to punish unless justly to His honour and to the good of the church. Therefore whoever hates this [punishment] hates God as well as justice, indeed [also] the church his mother. But no one loves God the just punisher unless he loves the punishment; therefore anyone ought to love all punishment, namely by rejoicing for the completion of justice, and by lamenting for the cause occasioning it, namely the sin of the world.\footnote{Ibid., p. 441/26–39: “Debemus eciam omnes penas nobis inflictas gaudenter sufferre, quod si sic, debemus scire quod nulla sit pena nisi iusta et a Deo inflicta; sed debemus omnem voluntatem nostram voluntati Dei conformare. Ergo debemus omnem penam in nobis inflictam velle esse. Confirmatur ex hoc quod sicut debemus amare Deum graciosum premii largitorem, ita debemus ipsum amare iustissimum punitorem quia scimus quod non potest nisi iustè punire ad honorem sui et bonum ecclesie. Ergo qui odit hoc odit Deum atque iusticiam, ymno ecclesiam matrem suam. Sed nemo amat Deum iustum punitorem nisi amet punionemem, ergo quilibet debet amare omnem punionem, gaundendo scilicet de iusticie compleimento et lugendo de causa occasionante scilicet peccato seculi.”}

God’s justice and will are inseparable for Wyclif, and the just punishment of sinners through suffering, identified later on as including the deaths of friends and parents, and our own bodily infirmity,\footnote{Ibid., p. 442/18–24.} is an integral part of that justice, which must be embraced and loved along with it. The suffering is beneficial: “For all man’s punishment is a herald of God hastening the final purgation of the church to its honour and advantage.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 443/1–3: “Omnis enim pena hominis est nuncius Dei accelerans purgacionem finalem ecclesie ad honorem eius et commodum.”} It is insane to murmur against God’s will, which we will be able to fulfill only when death is swallowed up in victory, when we attain a deified status of perpetual enjoyment of the
holy Trinity, when the Bride of Christ will be purified from all spot and wrinkle, brought
in to the most high, joyful, glorious embrace of the king.138

This same petition acts as an introduction to the following sermon, which deals in the
main with the four petitions of the second part of the prayer. Here, Wyclif again notes
that conforming our will to God’s and seeking his honour is to our advantage.139 “The
end and completion of the Christian religion,” Wyclif tells us, “is that man might
conform his will to the divine will that is necessary to grasp from scripture.”140 The
Christian religion is then allegorized as a journey to Mount Horeb, the Mount of God,
with the four final petitions praying for the necessities for the journey: bread for physical
strength, forgiveness of sins to lighten our burden, protection from snares in the way
through being freed from temptation, and the removal of stumbling blocks by being freed
from evil.141

The first of these petitions, for daily bread, receives a long treatment, which explains
three types of bread and four notable words in the petition. The three types of bread are
physical bread for bodily sustenance asked for, as it were, by a child stammering, the
three theological virtues, asked for by the more advanced voice of a son, and finally the

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138 Ibid., p. 443/3–12: “Insanis quidem est qui contra Deum remurmurat, quia ut sic impossibiliter
se frustrat atque damnificat, ubi Deo placenter consenciens sibi lucifaceret. Voluntatem autem
eius non possimus plene compleere, antequem absorpta sit mortis victoria, quando attingetur
status deificus fruicionis perpetue beate Trinitatis, quando sponsa Christi ab omni macula et ruga
finaliter depurata erit in eterni regis cubiculum ad ipsius regis amplexus summe gaudiosos
gloriosius introducta.”

139 Sermones IV.57, pp. 443–444.

140 Ibid., p. 444/27–29: “Finis itaque et complementum religionis christianae est quod homo
conformet voluntatem suam voluntati divine quod oportet capere ex scriptura.”

141 Ibid., pp. 444/32–445/5.
bread of life asked for by a cleric “of the portion of the Lord,”142 who asks with an excellent idiom, better than the other two. All three of these are somehow gathered together by Christ in the Eucharist.143 The first word of note is bread; we pray for bread and not delicate foods. Second, we ask for our bread, not my bread or another’s bread. Third, we ask for daily bread, not just once, but daily sustenance. Fourth, we ask for it to be given today, that we not worry about tomorrow’s bread, which would lead to gluttony and avarice.144

The fifth petition, about being forgiven and forgiving, leads Wyclif into a discussion of the necessity of loving one’s enemy, and the repugnance of Christian fighting Christian over temporal wealth, especially when prelates abuse their subordinates for such things, leading him to something close to pacifism: “it opposes the Law of Christ that Christian fights Christian particularly because of perishable goods (bona fortune). Indeed the one fighting thus is necessarily an infidel because of a defect of following Christ, who teaches by word and deed in no way to fight in this manner. And although all fighting of Christians is horrible, even more detestable is the fighting of Christian prelates against their subjects for temporal things. For the arms of the militant priests of Christ are spiritual, not the material sword, but the word of God.”145 This petition is further

142 Ibid., p. 445/17–20: “Sed tercius tamquam clericus de sorte Domini petit ultra puerum balbucientem, ultra laicum qui peticionem porrigit in vulgari, excellenti ydiomate panem vite in patria.” Possibly a reference to the religious life? See also, De civili dominio, p. 71, where Wyclif uses the phrase “de sorte Dei.”
143 Sermones IV.57/9–24.
expounded in *Sermones* IV.58, where it fits into the general topic of forgiveness, as proof that we ought to forgive from fraternal love.\(^{146}\) Wyclif also makes note of the conditional nature of this petition— we are forgiven as we forgive others, and judged by how we judge others.\(^{147}\)

In his discussion of the sixth petition, lead us not into temptation, Wyclif places the emphasis on the freedom of the will. God tempts us as a means of our acquiring merit, as with Abraham and many patriarchs, nor do we pray that God not tempt us, but that we not be led into temptation, which only happens with the consent of the will.\(^{148}\) Our will is in fact so free that no angel, good or evil, can compel us to sin, and since all actual guilt lies in the will of the sinner, it follows that he is not able to be forced to sin.\(^{149}\) The “foot of pride” (Psalm 35:12) is inordinate appetite for something against what is pleasing to God, whence it is of the same order of the temptation that snared the first parents, and the dangers of the temptations of the flesh remain real: “For just as Eve tasted of the forbidden fruit and presented it to the man and second, he consented and third, rushed into the act of eating, so sensuality, by pondering, tastes carnal pleasure and offers it to the reason, just as to the man, who in consenting commits mortal [sin].”\(^{150}\) So, while the

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\(^{146}\) *Sermones* IV.58, p. 452/14–27.


\(^{148}\) *Sermones* IV.57, pp. 447/37–448/2: “Sexta peticione petimus Dominum ne nos inducat in temptacionem. Temptat autem nos Deus ad nostri meritum, ut patet de Abraham et multis patribus; nec petimus ne temptatur sed in temptacionem inducamur, quod fit, quando racio consentit facinori talis.”

\(^{149}\) Ibid., p. 448/27–31: “Potencia vero volitiva nostra est facta tam libera quod nullus angelus, bonus aut malus, potest iam cogere ad volendum. Et cum omnis culpa actualis consistit in volicione radicitus, sequitur quod non potest cogi ad peccandum...”

\(^{150}\) Ibid., pp. 448/36–449/6: “Pes dictus est afflicio qua inordinate appetitum bonum aliquod contra divinium beneplacitum iuxta illud Psalmi XXXV, 12, 13: *Non veniat mihi pes superbia* ... Unde conformiter est de ordine temptacionis in posteris, sicut fuit de primis parentibus. Sicut enim Eva gustavit et presentavit viro de fructu vetito et ille secundo consensit et tercio prosiliit in actum
actual guilt lies in the will, the flesh offers the will temptations when it encounters carnal pleasures. These temptations, however, can be used to good, as was the case with Abraham and other patriarchs.

There are two sorts of evil from which we pray to be delivered in the seventh and final petition of the Lord’s Prayer. The first of these is punishment, but we only pray to be delivered from this conditionally, in as much as it pleases God and His church and is expedient for us, since we know by the authority of Augustine and by reason that all punishment is just.\textsuperscript{151} The second of these is guilt, and this we pray to be delivered from simply, absolutely and mercifully, since this is much greater and leads to eternal torment, from which we especially ask for deliverence.\textsuperscript{152} Wyclif notes elsewhere, however, that the final four petitions are prayed conditionally, “if it please God.”\textsuperscript{153} This apparent contradiction can be explained when we remember that Wyclif placed the highest emphasis on the believer’s conformity to the will of God in his discussion of the third petition, so that it might be said that all prayer is conditional in this manner, that it must conform to the will of God.

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., p. 449/9–14: “Septima et ultima peticione petimus \textit{liberari a malo} simpliciter. Est autem duplex malum scilicet pene et culpe; a malo pene petimus liberari solum condicionaliter, scilicet de quanto Deo placuerit et sue ecclesie et nobis fuerit expediens, quia scimus ex testimonio Augustini et racione quod nulla est nec esse potest pena nisi iusta.”

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., p. 449/15–24: “Sed a malo culpe quod est infinitum magis malum quam aliquod malum pene et specialiter a malo peccati finalis impenitentie petimus a Deo simpliciter et absolute nos misericorditer liberari, quia illud malum summe abominabile terminans vitam nostram totam viacionem nostram precedentem inficeret, a Deo nostro nos miserabiliter seigeret et in tetro carcore infernali horrende caterve demonum sine fine miserabilissime sociaret, a quo malo specialiter tot maliciis involuto nos petimus simpliciter et finaliter per graciam liberari.”

\textsuperscript{153} \textit{Sermones} I.29/25–6: “Et in omnibus istis quatuor peticionibus condicio debet intelligi: \textit{Si Deo placuerit}...”
Just as he opened his discussion of the Lord’s Prayer by grounding it in love, so Wyclif ends his discussion. This form of prayer beckons us to love; love must abound more and more, and since love has two parts, love of God and love of neighbour, we must love each of these more and more. In fact, we are obligated to increase in love, and if we stand still or backslide in this progression, we sin.\textsuperscript{154} Thus we can see once more how foundational love is to Wyclif’s understanding of the Lord’s Prayer and the Christian life in general; it is the beginning, the means, and the end.

3. The Creed

The Apostles’ Creed is discussed in sermon I.44, on the Gospel for the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity, Mark 7:31–7, about the curing of a man deaf and dumb. This sermon begins with an allegorical interpretation of the Gospel pericope, which brings Wyclif to discuss faith and belief, a natural lead in to a discussion of the Creed. The Apostles’ Creed developed from the earliest creeds in use at Rome around the year 200 AD, with the \textit{textus receptus} appearing by the eight century, when it was included in baptimal rites and the divine office, but popular legend had it that the Apostles, gathered together and filled with the Holy Spirit, composed the Creed before dispersing to preach the Gospel.\textsuperscript{155} One of the more detailed legends, once attributed to Saint Augustine, in a sermon in a series \textit{de symbolo}, was that each of the twelve Apostles composed one article of the Creed, giving a total of twelve.\textsuperscript{156} This legend was very widely accepted as the origin of the Creed, and one of the popular divisions of the \textit{articula fidei} (the Articles of Faith derived

\begin{footnotes}
\item[154] \textit{Sermones} IV.57, pp. 449/25–450/2.
\item[156] PL 39.2189.
\end{footnotes}
from the Creed) followed this twelvefold formulation. Wyclif does not discuss this legend, nor make any mention of the origins of the Creed, but his division is much different, as he uses a division into twenty articles. He was not alone in using a different schema for the Articles of Faith; in fact there was a large degree of freedom in defining and numbering the articles of faith, although they were seen as both fundamental and comprehensive. As Joseph Goering writes: “One is struck ... by the unproblematic way in which they [i.e., the Articles of Faith] are presented, and by the sense that the articles are seen as encompassing, on the one hand, the bare bones and irreducible essence of the Christian revelation, and on the other hand, the entire content of theology or sacra doctrina.” Wyclif’s sermon on the creed falls into this tradition of discussions on the articula fidei by breaking down the creed into small snippets suitable for his flock’s instruction. The breakdown of his twenty articles is as follows:

1) The Trinity, One God in Three Persons  
2) The world created by God  
3) Jesus Christ is of two substances, namely fully eternal God, and fully human  
4) The same was conceived of the Holy Spirit  
5) His temporal nature is taken from the Virgin Mary  
6) After more than 32 years, the same suffered under Pontius Pilate  
7) He was crucified; His soul miraculously beatified, His body abandoned to greatest pain  
8) He was truly dead, His soul separated from His body  
9) He was laid in the tomb bodily, but His flesh did not see corruption  
10) During the Triduum, He descended into hell, according to His soul, which is personally the Word of God and He rescued His predestined from the Devil whereby He beatified them  
11) The third day, after 36 hours, He rose from the dead, reuniting soul and body  
12) After 40 days, He ascended into heaven

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13) Christ is seated at the right hand of God the Father, that is, He is beatified in the superior gift of God, but only according to His human nature
14) At the Day of Judgement, humanity will be “in that part of the air which please Him” and He will judge the saved and the damned
15) The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity, equal to the Father and the Son
16) There is one, holy, catholic church, the bride of Christ, through the perpetual love of the Holy Spirit joined to Christ
17) This church has three parts: the Church on its pilgrimage, the church dormant, and the church regnant, having communion of assistance and love
18) By the power of the merit of Christ, the church regnant is purged of all sin
19) In connection to the fourteenth article, the saved and the damned will be raised bodily
20) The saved will live eternally in beatitude with the Trinity, Christ’s humanity, and the blessed angels in infinite bliss.

Wyclif says that he will leave the difficulties of these matters to the scholastics, believing that these articles suffice for the flock. But he does not quite leave things there, stating that these twenty articles arouse men to love God, to hate sin, and to hope for reward. Obdurate sinners who continue in their obstinacy until death without contrition will be damned, Wyclif says, but souls in purgatory will be brought to perfection by their punishment, and be purged before the Day of Judgement and have complete happiness. And since it is impossible to please God without faith or to sin without faithlessness, it is proper that all men be either scholars of the Devil or of God. Those that are of God hear and perform the word of God, but those of the Devil are either deaf or disobey the faith of Christ. This leads Wyclif into a discussion of a series of triads: three types of faith,

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161 Ibid., p. 296/18–36: “Isti autem viginti articuli expergefacerent homines ad amandum Deum, ad odiendum peccatum et sperandum premium, quia indubie quicunque viator usque ad mortem sine contricione duraverit in peccato damnabitur perpetuo, cum peccatum sine contricione ambarum naturarum unitarum non tollitur, eo quod oportet ad omne peccatum viantis tam spiritum quam sensualitatem et sic corpus conterere et per consequens oportet illos simul fructus penitencie in via incipere. Sed spiritus in purgatorio, quia peccavit gravius, per se penam plenius consummabit, et purgatus ante diem iudicii gaudium diuci et complecius habebit. Et sic cum sit
three ways that the shield of faith can be damaged, and three deceits of the Devil. These three deceits undermine the Articles of Faith. The first deceit is false dogmatizing concerning things which are not of the elements of faith. Consequently those who do this, do not speak in language pleasing to God, but rather speak barbarously.\textsuperscript{162} The second the devil seduces us with is a superfluity weighing down the sacraments and sacramentals with other teachings, which burden the church. Included under these teachings is that which contends that a pope can create new articles of faith and destroy old ones, “as certain people feign that whatever canonisation by the bishop of Rome is the introduction of a new article of faith.”\textsuperscript{163} This would seem to be an attack on canonists, who in Wyclif’s stereotyped view argued that the pope could make and undo the Articles of Faith, nor was Wyclif alone in finding the positions of some canonists troubling.\textsuperscript{164} The third deception is a paucity of articles, as with a Saracen, who is seduced into believing that Christ was an extraordinary prophet, but not God.\textsuperscript{165} The underlying point is that the Articles of Faith are founded in Scripture: “the faith of scripture holds the middle, to which one may not add or subtract.”\textsuperscript{166} This is the faith to which the viator must hold, for

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\item \textit{impossibile sine fide placere Deo} vel peccare sine perfidia omnemque hominem necesse sit salvari vel damnari, oportet omnem hominem esse scolarem Dei sive dyaboli. Ille autem est scolaris Dei qui diligenter mente audit et perficit verbum Christi; ille autem est scolaris dyaboli qui vel est surdus vel obaudiens fidem Christi.”
\item \textsuperscript{162} Ibid., p.297/13–6: “sic dyabolus in perfidia tripliciter seducit suos discipulos: primo in falsitate dogmatizando que non sunt elementa fidei, et per consequens, non principiant linguam Deo placentem sed barbaram.”
\item \textsuperscript{163} Ibid., p. 297/16–23: “secundo in superfluitate preponderando sacramenta et sacramentalia cum aliis doctis hodie nimis explicite, cum quibus necessariis postpositis oneratur ecclesia. Iam enim contenditur quod papa potest novos fidei articulos condere et antiquos destruere, ut quidam fingent quod cuiuslibet canonisacio per Romanum episcopum est novi articuli fidei induccio.”
\item \textsuperscript{164} See the discussion in Ian Christopher Levy, \textit{Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority at the End of the Middle Ages} (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012): pp. 45–53.
\item \textsuperscript{165} Ibid., p. 297/23–5: “tercio in articulorum paucitate ut Sarracenos seducit credendo quod Christus fuit prophetæa eximius sed non Deus.”
\item \textsuperscript{166} Ibid., p.297/25–27: “Fides autem scripture tenet medium cui non licet addere vel ipsa minuere.”
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no one is damned except by infidelity, and those who have been given faith and change from it are more guilty again.\textsuperscript{167}

4. The Seven Works of Spiritual and Corporal Mercy

Wyclif discusses works of mercy in three sermons. Sermon I.37 speaks of the seven spiritual works of mercy, and I.39 of the seven corporal works of mercy. Sermon IV.13 discusses four corporal works of mercy; three from the list of seven found in I.39, plus a fourth, all four drawn from Isaiah 58:7. The first two of these sermons are rather moderate in tone, the first containing a more elaborate discussion of spiritual works of mercy, and the second more concerned with the relationship of Christ to his church and the interpretation of scripture than with the corporal works of mercy listed. The third sermon is concerned with the nature of almsgiving, but also with the nature of the Friars’ poverty and the Despenser Crusade. In all of these sermons, the works of mercy can be seen to reflect the Christian life and the duties of one believer to another, even one’s enemies.

The spiritual works of mercy are introduced with a verse: “\textit{Doc. consul. castig. solare, remitte, fer. ora}”—teach, counsel, reprove, console, forgive, suffer, pray.\textsuperscript{168} Each of these

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., p. 297/28–38.
is treated in turn, with the majority of comment reserved for the first, which Wyclif equates with preaching, which is the duty of all Christians: “For all the faithful and especially curates ought to preach, not tragedies or comedies, not fables or trifles, but the pure law of the Lord, as Christ and his apostles did, because in that law lies life through which the church is vivified.” 169 Just as God proclaims himself to the blessed and to other creatures after their capacity, so men ought according to the laws of nature to teach others to expect God’s retribution, and a prelate is especially obliged to perform this office, since he ought to be a pastor of Christ’s flock, and to feed them spiritually, which is to teach. This teaching is the same spiritual feeding that Christ enjoined on Peter, who is told three times to feed Christ’s sheep/lambs (John 21:15–17), and all curates ought to attend to this commandment, for they know that they are not otherwise pastors; if they fail in their spiritual teaching, they seem more damnable than simoniacs, because they sell and buy spiritual things for temporal. 170 They ought to be diligent in this teaching, avoiding laziness, and learning their art most thoroughly: “Therefore just as it is not enough for a teacher of grammar that he tell his students that they should know the art of speaking and writing properly according to the principles of that science, but he ought to labour particularly in destroying ignorance in them, and [this should be done] so much

169 Sermones I.37, p. 248/5–9: “Omnis enim fidelis et curatus precipue debet predicare non tragedias sive comedias, non fabulas sive ludicria sed pure lege Domini, ut fecerunt Christus et sui apostoli, quia in ipsa lege latet vita per quam vivificaretur ecclesia.”
170 Ibid., pp. 248/9–24: “Unde sicut Deus necessario indicat se ipsum, docens beatos et secundum capacitatem suam alias creaturas, sic debet homo de lege nature sub obtentu beatitudinis docere alios retribucionem a Deo magistro unico expectando, et prelatus ut talis obligat se ad illud officium, cum debet esse pastor ducens per Christi semitam gregem suum, et cum pastus corporalis sit laicale officium et sibi impertinens (ut patuit in Petro et aliis sanctis apostolis), manifestum est quod debet spiritualiter pascere, quod est docere. Unde in Petro sub obtentu dileccionis Dei mandat Christus specialiter pascere oves suas (ut patet Joh. ultimo). Et ad illud mandatum debent omnes curati attendere, scientes quod non alter sunt pastores; ideo videntur plus dampnabiles quam symoniaci, quia ipsi vendunt vel emunt spirituale pro temporali.”
the more so in the school of the Lord concerning curates; and thus the knowledge of this art is more damnable when it is accompanied in the curates by laziness.”\textsuperscript{171}

The second spiritual work of mercy, counsel, is advice that must not be worldly, but ought to lead the hearer to beatitude. “And thus they are to be evangelized only to virtue or its works, not so that anyone might join a private religion or do works neutral with respect to customs, but by leaving this up to the incitement of the Spirit which is never wanting in the virtuous.”\textsuperscript{172} Private religion is one of Wyclif’s names for the orders of monks and friars, and we would not be wrong to see here a dig at these, whose way of life does not, for Wyclif, necessarily lead to beatification in the kingdom of heaven.

The third work of spiritual mercy is the chastisement of sinners. Wyclif says that this work is feigned, especially among prelates: “you will discover hardly one, in fact, either because of pride or avarice or not following the keys of conscience, or with Eli the priest he sins by idling. Where is he [that is] in the manner of the Baptist, who reproved Herod publicly for a public sin?”\textsuperscript{173} Wyclif says that he has more confidence in temporal lords in this regard than he does in clergymen.\textsuperscript{174}

\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., p. 249/24–31: “Ideo sicut non sufficit pedagogo grammatico quod dicat suis scolaribus ut noscant artem recte loquendi et scribendi secundum principia illius scientiae, sed oportet ipsum tollendo ignoranciam in eis particulariter insudare, et sic multo magis oportet in scola Domini de curatis; et sic damnumilior est huius artis noticia dum in curatis assit accidia.”

\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., p. 250/5–9: “et sic solum ad virtutem vel eius opera videtur esse evangelice consulendum, non ut quis fiat de religione privata vel faciat opera quoad mores neutra sed reliquendo hoc impulsui Spiritus qui in virtuosis nunquam deest...”

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., p. 250/13–18: “Tercium opus spiritualis misericordie est subjectos cum prudencia castigare. Sophisticatur [sic] autem hoc castigacio specialiter in prelatis, cum vix unum reperies qui vel propter fastum aut lucrum vel non secundum claves conscientia vel cum Heli sacerdote peccet desidia. Ubi est modo Baptista qui Herodem propter peccatum publicum publice arguebat?”

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid., p. 250/19–34.
Fourth in the list is consolation of the discouraged and disabled, to which curates, who ought to be doctors of souls, ought to resort freely. And since higher-ups abandon even their brothers who want to build up the church following the law of the Lord, by establishing their own jurisdiction and reserving to themselves in an unfounded way the absolution of certain sins along with other censures and pharisaical traditions, and if anyone is able to help them, they are consoled with temporal and not heavenly things, so this whole arm ought to be reputed cut off from from the body of Christ and weighed down by earthly things; “therefore unless the church of Christ has consolation from someone else through them, it does not savour of heavenly things but earthly.”\footnote{175} The emphasis is therefore on heavenly consolation and not worldly consolation, since the worldly consolation does no real good, but instead leads to separation from the body of Christ.

The fifth work is that of forgiveness of injuries done to oneself. In this regard, Wyclif sees much more merit in the secular arm than the spiritual arm; for on the one hand, the secular arm forgives even the greatest injuries done to it by the clergy, but on the other hand, the laity are duped by the clergy, who seem to make the forgiveness of pena et culpa into something fit for the marketplace.\footnote{176}

\footnote{175} Ibid., pp. 250/35–251/11: “superiores tantum desolant eciam fratres suos quod volentes secundum legem Domini edificare ecclesiam persequeuntur, statuentes sibi iurisdiccionem et reservantes sibi infundabiliter certi peccati absolutionem cum aliiis censuris ac tradicionibus magis nephandis, quam erant pharisaice, et si aliquem qui de mundo ipsos iuvare poterit ipsum secundum temporalia et non celestia consolantur, quia totum brachium secundum iudicia hominum reputatum est a vero corpore Christi discontinuatum et cum terrestribus aggravatum, ideo nisi ecclesia Christi consolationem habuerit aliunde per ipsos, non sapiet celestia sed terrena.”

\footnote{176} Ibid., p. 251/12–20: “Quintum opus spiritualis misericordie est injurias sibi illatas remittere quod aliquantum sed nimis remisse competit brachio seculari; ipsi enim remittunt maximas injurias sibi illatas a clericis sed meritorius remitterent in casu in quo illis benefacientes
The sixth work is patience in bearing in a Christlike way the injuries done to us in words and deeds of our neighbour, “which I wish both arms of the church [i.e., the secular and spiritual arms, the clergy and the laity] to prudently recognize, and to sharply inveigh against the Pharisees, in the likeness of the first rule (instar prime regule).”\textsuperscript{177} I take this to mean that Wyclif wants both clerics and laypeople to suffer injury with patience, but to also rebuke those he calls Pharisees. These Pharisees would be those who bring suffering on themselves, so that they can then feign virtue: “For it is not virtuous endurance to provoke dangerous and manifest injuries, as he can turn wisely away from these following the teaching of Christ, but [it is] to suffer insults and reproaches because of this that he shows forth and defends the part of Christ.”\textsuperscript{178} Rebuke and suffering are to be done, of course, in imitation of Christ, who, as we have already seen, was the model of virtue to be imitated.\textsuperscript{179}

The seventh spiritual work of mercy is to pray humbly for everyone, even our enemies. The first requirement for this work is a virtuous disposition, and here Wyclif comes very close to a donatistic position: “If prelates transgress the law of their status, none are more poorly disposed to pray for the people or minister the ecclesiastical sacraments.”\textsuperscript{180} The

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., p. 251/21–5: “Sextum opus spiritualis misericordie est iniurias in dictis vel factis proximi instar Christi equanimiter tolerare; quod vellem utrumque brachium ecclesie prudenter cognoscere et contra phariseos instar prime regule acute invehere.”

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., p. 251/25–32: “Non enim est virtuosa tolerancia fovere periculosas et manifestas iniurias, ut quis posset ab illis secundum contumelias et opprobria propter hoc quod quis partem Christi detegit et defendit; hoc est opus spiritualis misericordie, sed quod licet non in presenciarum, cum postmodum homines quantumcunque primo in opere et verbo asperi postmodum quietantur.”

\textsuperscript{179} See above, Chapter Three.

\textsuperscript{180} \textit{Sermones} I.37, p. 251/33–8: “Septimum opus spiritualis misericordie est pro omnibus eciam inimicis humiliter exorare; ad quod requiritur in orante prima disposicio virtusosa, unde si prelati
effectiveness of the sacraments performed by an unworthy prelate is not explicitly mentioned here, but stating that a virtuous disposition is a requirement to perform this work of spiritual mercy might lead one to suspect that they are at least less effective than those performed by worthy prelates. This virtuous disposition is shown more in deed than in word, since this is more pleasing to God: “Since, however, a deed is more accepted by God than is a sound, it appears that the prayer which pleases God ought to consist more in a just work than in word.” This justice is necessary to salvation: “unless your justice abound more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:20)\textsuperscript{181}

Wyclif adds a postscript to the list of seven works by saying that the highest work of mercy would be to correct the sins of the Pharisees, since “mercy (misericordia) is in effect to relieve the wretched (miserum) from his wretchedness (miseria),” and what could be more merciful than to turn others away from the sin which makes them wretched? These should be returned to their primeval state and by this have the tinder-box of sin reduced: “for then they might succeed in catching the faithful in their nets, where now, working in the night of shadows and sin, they take hold of nothing unless

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\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., pp. 251/38–252/12: “Cum autem factum sit Deo accepcius quam est sonus, patet quod oracio qua Deus placatur debet magis constar in iusticia operis quam in verbis. Fructus tamen laborum est in virtuoso laudabilis, unde signanter mandando docet Dominus ut omnes homines sint misericordes (ut patet Luce VI\textsuperscript{°}), sed secundum formam captam a Christo (ut exponitur sermone proximo). Estote, inquit misericordes, sicut et Pater vester misericors est. Tales enim secundum promissionem Christi Matthei V\textsuperscript{°} misericordiam consequentur. Sed indubie nisi habundaverit iusticia vestra in ista spirituali misericordia plus quam scribarum et phariseorum, non intrabitis in regnum celorum. Ideo oportet illis relictis attendere aliud virtutis principium quod est Christus.”
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perhaps in the snare of the devil; but it is right that the faithful be taken with the word of Christ."\textsuperscript{182}

The seven corporal works of mercy are first discussed in a sermon on the feeding of the four thousand from Mark 8:1–9. Here, they are introduced by a verse similar to that used to introduce the seven spiritual works: *Visito, poto, cibo, redimo, tego, colligo, condo.* – visit, give drink, feed, redeem, clothe, take in, bury.\textsuperscript{183} The first six of these are found in Matthew 25,\textsuperscript{184} and the last of these in Tobit I.\textsuperscript{185} The seven corporal works of mercy are a second interpretation of the gospel lection offered, the first having given an allegorical interpretation of the numbers in the story.\textsuperscript{186} The corporal works of mercy are to follow the example of Christ, who did not feed the rich and powerful in this story, but the poor.\textsuperscript{187} The laity must be taught the seven corporal works of mercy, in the same way as Wyclif has taught the seven spiritual works of mercy, because they will be judged on

\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., p. 252/13–28: “Ex istis colligitur quod summum opus misericordie viatoris foret in phariseis prudenti misericordia peccata corrigere. Patet quia misericordia est in effectu relevare miserum a sua miseria. Sed hoc fieret exercendo misericordiam in illis potissime; sunt enim magis miseri per peccatum et magis misere captivant subditos, cum secundum Judam sunt *nubes sine aqua* celeste lumen et graciem a fidelibus eclipesantes. Non enim videtur mihi quod sint secundum misericordiam iusticiariorum corporaliter occidenti, sed prudenter ad statum primevum et per subtraccionem fomitis sui criminis reducendi; tunc enim proficerent in capiendo fideles in suis retibus, ubi iam laborantes in nocte tenebre et peccati nichil forte capiunt nisi in rete diaboli; oportet autem quod fideles capiant in verbo Christi.”

\textsuperscript{183} Sermones I.30, p. 259/30. This same verse is found also in *The Lay Folk’s Catechism*, p. 70, and Wyclif uses it in *De civili dominio*, 4.460/13. See above, note 168.

\textsuperscript{184} Loserth has “Marci XXVº”, but this is obviously mistaken, as the Gospel of Mark contains only 16 chapters. The correct reading is provided in Wo 565, f.75vb: “M’ 25.”

\textsuperscript{185} Sermones I.30, p. 259/31–2: “Sex istorum patent Marci XXVº, et septimum de mortuorum sepultura patet Thobie I.”

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., p.259/5–22. The seven loaves are understood to stand for the four gospels and three books of wisdom, the prophets and history of the OT, the few fishes are the epistles, the people sitting represent humble folk, the seven baskets are seven, unidentified, “sapienciales postillaciones”, and the 4000 represent the totality of the just, who are led by the four cardinal virtues.

\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., p. 259/24–28: “Christus enim pauperrimus ex eternis diviciis miraculose pavit non phariseos vel principes sed plebem pauperem, sic secularis habundans in bonis fortune debet prompte et provide dare egentibus.”
these at the Day of Judgement,\textsuperscript{188} where Christ will sit in his majesty and separate the goats from the sheep.\textsuperscript{189} The sheep are saved because of the fivefold fruit that they bear for the church, but what these fruits are is not identified. The goats for their part are damned because of their diabolical pride, because of the stench of their sins, because they destroy the trees of the church, and because of the worthlessness of their flesh.\textsuperscript{190} The first six corporal works of mercy are easily dealt with here, as Christ explicitly lists them as reasons to be damned or saved,\textsuperscript{191} but the seventh requires a little more explanation:

The seventh work of mercy, however, about which see Tobit I, although it is not expressed here, yet it is understood well enough in the third [to give shelter],\textsuperscript{192} for the tomb in which the corrupting body is housed is a hospice of the dead. Christ, however, because he was not corrupted in body (according to that Psalm 15:10: ‘You will not give your holy one to see corruption’) and thus neither soul nor body was then in misery, does not explain this work of mercy, just as it was neither explained in itself, nor did the good seek affirmations, nor the bad denials, because of ignorance of the deed. But they might meditate by turning this over in their hearts because of admiration at the mercy done for the elect in the grant of beatitude and because of astonishment at the wretchedness done to the reprobate in the denial of happiness.\textsuperscript{193}

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., p. 260/9–15: “Septem autem opera corporalis misericordie debent declarari populo (sicut supra Sermone XXXIIIIV <recte, XXXVII>, Wo 565, f.76ra> de septem operibus spiritualis misericordiae declaratur), specialiter cum Christus in finali iudicio et presencia angelorum, salvandorum hominum ac eciam reproborum recitabit hec opera activis viantibus plus sensibilia.”


\textsuperscript{190} Ibid., p. 260/23–29: “Oves autem Domini salvandi propter fructum quintiplicem quo prosunt ecclesie, hedi autem dicuntur dampnandi propter extollenciam qua diabolice petunt alta, propter fetorem peccati, propter destruccionem arborum ecclesie et propter vilitatem finalem qua carnes eorum non sunt sapide ut beati.”

\textsuperscript{191} Ibid., p. 260/29–37.

\textsuperscript{192} This is third according to the listing in Matthew 25:35, not according to the listing in the verse cited above.

\textsuperscript{193} Sermones I.39, pp. 260/37–261/9: “Septimum autem opus misericordie (de quo Thobie primo), licet non hic exprimitur, tamen in tercio satis intelligitur; nam tumba in qua colligitur corruptus est hospicium mortuorum. Christus autem quia non fuit corruptus in corpore (iuxta illud Psalmi XV, 10: Non dabis sanctum tuum videre corrupcionem) et sic nec anima nec corpore fuit tunc in miseria, non explicat hoc opus misericordiae sicut nec fuit explicitum in semet ipso, nec querent boni affirmaciones nec male negaciones propter ignoranciam facti. Sed dicent volvendo hoc in
The corporal works of mercy extend beyond death because human bodies are still liable to corruption after dying, and so they should be given shelter and burying the dead can be in some way contained under that other work of mercy. Why Christ’s incorruption in the tomb, and the general ignorance of those to whom he was explaining the works of corporal mercy, should have led him to leave the seventh work unmentioned is less clear. Wyclif must deal with the fact that Christ did not list the burial of the dead as the seventh corporal work of mercy, and his argument as to why this should be so revolves around Christ’s divinity and his mercy. Even if no one else understood that Christ would not be subject to corruption, as he was subject to the bodily needs relieved in the other works of mercy, he understood it, in sign of which he did not mention the burial of the dead. Besides, much more important is to meditate on the mercy of God in the gift of beatitude and the rejection of happiness by the reprobate.

The rest of the sermon does not deal with the works of mercy, but is taken up with the unity of Christ and his members, and several other subjects, including the difference between formal, subjective, and habitudinal predication, which we saw above in Wyclif’s preaching on the Eucharist.¹⁹⁴

In a sermon for Ash Wednesday, dating from some time after the preaching of the Despenser Crusade had commenced,¹⁹⁵ Wyclif takes up works of mercy again. His concern here is with four works described in Isaiah 58. The first three, feeding the

corde propter admiracionem misericordie facte electis in concessione beatitudinis et propter stuporem miserie facte reprobis in negacione felicitatis.”

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., pp.261–265. See above, p. 61.
¹⁹⁵ See Sermones IV.13, p. 110/36–112/35. Possibly this sermon was written in early 1383, but it is also possible that it was redacted from an earlier sermon some time in late 1382, see above, Chapter One, p. 28.
hungry, giving shelter to the homeless, and clothing the naked, match others from the standard list of corporal works of mercy, and are treated in much the same way, but the fourth is not included on either list. This fourth is to despise no one, especially since all men are brothers, of the same nature, and the predestined are members one of another and members of Christ. Wyclif shows some ambiguity concerning this last work of mercy, stating that it is either a spiritual work of mercy or a corporal. All works of mercy are important and helpful, for just as water puts out fire, so do acts of mercy extinguish sin. Nonetheless, serpentine prudence must be taken in almsgiving and works of mercy, especially the corporal works of mercy: “For feeding a traitor and common thief, knowing this to injure the church greatly, does not seem to be the work of mercy that Christ taught, advised or commanded.”

The question at hand is whether or not the recipient is worthy of the proferred alms. Only certain people are to be given alms, as laid out in the Gospel:

And it seems to me that Christ explains in Luke 14:12–13 the sense which [a corporal work of mercy] had in the Old Testament: ‘When you make a

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196 Wyclif is less precise here than in the other sermons, as he says that “there are three of the seven works of mercy which Christ mentions in Matthew 25”, whereas as we have just seen, he places the scriptural warrent for burying the dead in Tobit 1. See Sermones IV.13, p. 104/12–14: “Et sunt tres de septem operibus misericordie que Christus commemorat Matth. XXV...”

197 Sermones IV.13, p.104/17–30: “Primo ergo precipit Deus omnipotens quod viator prudenter frangat esurienti panem suum, pascendo esurientes proximos sicut debet; secundo debet in domum recipere egenos et vagos secundum prudenciam supradictam, tercio cum viderit nudum debet ipsum misericorditer secundum predictam prudenciam operire et quarto debet secundum opera spiritualis misericordie vel corporalis nullum dispicere, specialiter cum omnes homines sint fratres et singulus caro alterius, hac est, eiusdem nature. Et omnes predestinati sunt alter alterius membra et singuli membra Christi. Sicut ergo aqua extinguit ignem, ita elemosina extinguit peccatum, ut dicit Sapiens et ut dicit Christus Luce XI”, 41: Date elemosinam, et ecce omnia munda sunt vobis.” That members of Christ are each members one of the other is a Pauline commonplace, see Ephesians 4:25, Romans 12:5, I Corinthians 12:27.

198 Sermones IV.13, p. 104/31–6: “Sed oportet viatores esse prudentes prudencia serpentine, quia in ista elemosina consistit magna sophisticacio et specialiter in elemosina corporali. Nam pascendo proditorem et furum publicum, noscendo ipsum multum nocere ecclesie, non videtur esse elemosina quam Christus precipit, consulit sive mandat...”
dinner or a supper,’ he says, ‘call not your friends but call the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind.’ Whereby it seems to me that he specifies completely to whom ought to be given bodily alms. Whereby it seems right that the poor be tripled in the words following, so that a rich bishop or other potentate of this world might be blind, but it is not the sense of the Lord that a man ought especially to feed him with corporal alms. Therefore, Christ intends [this] with regard to the poor blind, and for a similar reason he understands [it] with regard to the poor lame and the poor deformed as far as the body. And, as it seems to me, only to those ought the faithful to give bodily alms, because Christ, the most wise, is generally giving the doctrine of his church.  

This is not so much to say that the faithful ought to give alms to the worthy poor, but that he or she ought not to give alms to the wealthy. The rich of this world might be called blind, but it is not to this sort of blind person that Christ commands the faithful to give alms, but to those who are poor and blind, poor and lame, poor and maimed or deformed.

Wyclif deals with several objections to this position. The first objection is that Jesus accepted alms, though he was neither lame, nor blind, nor maimed. Wyclif’s reponse is that there are four reasons that people feast one another, and that Christ feasted for these reasons. First, that he might be honoured; second, for a wedding; third, to increase friendship and charity; and fourth, so that he might feed the poor. The second objection is that men might be miserable without being lame or blind. Wyclif replies that there are a number of reasons to feed others; to the honour of God, on account of natural friendship, and because of debility or a need of the body. He does not, therefore, limit

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199 Ibid., p. 105/9–23: “Et vide tur mihi quod Christus Luce XIV”, 12, 13 exponit sensum quem habet in veteri testamento: Cump fas, inquit, prandium aut cenam, noli vocare amicos sed voca pauperes debiles, claudos et cecos. Ubi videtur michi quod specificat quibus complete debet dari elemosina corporalis; ubi certum videtur quod oportet pauperes in verbis sequentibus triplicare, ut posito quod dives episcopus vel alius potentatus seculi sit cecus non est sensus Domini quod homo debet specialiter pascere ipsum elemosina corporali, ideo Christus intendit de paupere ceco, et conformi racione intelligit de paupere claudio et de paupere debili quoad corpus. Et (ut videtur michi) solum illis debet fidelis tribuere elemosinam corporalem, quia Christus summe sapiens dans generaliter doctrinam sue ecclesie.”

200 Ibid., pp. 106/10–107/11.
almmsgiving to just the poor blind, lame, and disabled. The rest of the sermon is taken up with the third objection, that limiting alms to the poor blind, lame, and disabled would exclude giving alms to the friars. Rather predictably, Wyclif has a laundry list of complaints against the friars. He argues that their orders are not founded in scripture, that they ought to work like St. Paul did, that the poor ought to be supported with the money that goes to the friars, and that their poverty is not truly evangelical. Wyclif concedes that they might be given alms as private persons, but they ought not to be given such alms as friars.

Curates and bishops fare a little better, but Wyclif thinks that they ought to have only enough for their temporal needs and no more, just as the Apostles did. Furthermore, Christ himself was said to have only 200 pence to his name. A limit cannot be set on the

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202 Ibid., p. 108/9–12: “Hic dicitur quod tam ex parte fratrum quam ex parte populi ecclesia est in isto nimium criminosa, quia tunc nec introducendo fratrum nec completa vita eorum est fundabilis ex scriptura.”

203 Ibid., p. 108/31–37: “Nam facilius et consolabilius est bene facere quam male, cum Deus primum ducit et adiuvat et secundum cum multis impedimentis alii contradicit, et sic necessitati forent in fratres intendere manuali laboricio sicut Paulus, et non forent ecclesiam quoad sterilitatem et alia incommoda taliter aggravantes.”

204 Ibid., p. 109/19–23: “Nam Christi pauperes debent per bona temporalia ecclesie que fratres consummunt foveri et secundum legem evangeli sustentari. Et cum ecclesia nostra sit tam fundata in diviciis assisente hac fraude fratum, necesse est pauperes evangelicos deperire.”

205 Ibid., p. 109/24–28: “Paupertas autem evangelica non consistit in sophismatibus mendacibus que in ista materia fingunt fratres, dicentes quod nichil habent maneria vel castella que eructant de bonis pauperum...”

206 Ibid., p. 109/7–13: “Contingit autem econtra de cunctis statibus sive ordinibus qui non fuerant patenter ex auctoritate Domini introducti, et huiusmodi sunt indubie secte fratum; et sic videtur mihi quod licet fratres tribuere corporales elemosinas de quanto sunt private persone, observantes fideliter legem Christi, non autem de quanto sunt professores vel emuli talis secte.”
exact amount a curate can receive, but a curate ought to beware avarice and worldliness. A curate should receive what he needs, but he must do his duty and office.\textsuperscript{207}

In the last part of the sermon, Wyclif takes up the Despenser Crusade, and says that a new begging for warrior bishops has been introduced by the friars contrary to the rule of charity.\textsuperscript{208} The church ought to pray for such prelates, that they might be freed from the danger of false friars and perverse counsels. It might happen that these false friars deceitfully inform our pope (Wyclif was still clearly on the side of Urban VI) that through the elevation of a crusading cross and by promising spiritual aid, that the bishops and all their subordinates might gain beatitude, and by such deceits might despoil the people.\textsuperscript{209} Indulgences, \textit{a pena et a culpa}, are once again seen as dangerous deceits that make men think they will fly to heaven, when they should be taught better that no such pope as would issue such indulgences is a Christian, let alone head of the church.\textsuperscript{210} Evangelical men ought to encourage the pope to arm himself with patience and the other arms of the gospel, which will assure him of victory.\textsuperscript{211} Greed for worldly wealth and

\textsuperscript{207} Ibid., pp. 109/37–110/35.
\textsuperscript{208} Ibid., pp. 110/36–111/1: “Ex istis videtur quod novella mendicacio episcopis guerrantibus a fratribus introducta est ommino infundabilis et contra regulas caritatis.” Cf. \textit{De dissensione paparum} and \textit{Cruciata}, which both deal extensively with the Despenser Crusade.
\textsuperscript{209} Ibid., p. 111/7–23: “Et sic debet ecclesia orare pro illis episcopis, ut a periculo falsorum fratrum et perverso consilio liberentur, quia evenire potest quod falsi fratres illi informent subdole popam nostrum quod per elevacionem talis crucis promittendo spiritualia suffragia adiuveret et quod episcopi in causa illa cum omnibus suis adiutoribus beatitudinem promerentur et eo tenore spolient populum infideliter quem paulo ante subdole spoliarunt.”
\textsuperscript{210} Ibid., p. 111/23–29: “Aliter enim non publicarent ut fidem catholicam quod quicunque laborat cum tali episcopo ad hunc finem vel iuvat ipsum notabiliter in expensis, erit absolutus a pena et culpa, et sic infallibiliter ad patriam advolabit, cum debent scire quod nullus talis papa est ex fide catholica vel membrum sancte ecclesie et per consequens non est caput.”
\textsuperscript{211} Ibid., p. 112/4–8: “Viri ergo evangelici hortarentur papam armare se cum paciencia et aliis evangelicis armaturis et quod tunc foret securus de triumpho optabili, licet corporaliter sit occisus.”
honour are the motives behind the friars’ deeds, and so the faithful can gather from all of this how they ought to regulate their almsgiving.²¹²

Overall, Wyclif’s preaching on works of mercy is rather innocuous. It is only after his ire has been raised by the friars and their preaching of the Despenser Crusade that Wyclif becomes polemical. In the first two sermons, Wyclif is content to give a list of works and some basic rationale for their completion, and in this, he uses mostly positive language. In the third sermon, however, Wyclif becomes much more negative, arguing what the works of mercy are not meant to be and assigning limits and conditions to their completion. This is a marked shift, apparently caused by Wyclif’s obsession with, and outrage against, the Despenser Crusade, coupled with his growing antagonism toward the mendicants.

5. The Gifts of the Spirit²¹³

A single sermon, composed on the Epistle for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity, speaks of, and enumerates the gifts of the spirit. The nine gifts of the Spirit are variegated, but their possessors, if they are truly of Christ, are unified:

Moreover a sign that viatores are of the family of Christ is that they do not wish to compete over such variations [i.e., among the gifts of the Spirit], but are content with the beauty of the divine work. There are nine different ranks, just as there are nine orders of angels, in which the spark of the

²¹² Ibid., p. 112/9–18: “Et ex istis potest patere fidelibus quomodo candens fratrum cupiditas bonorum fortune vel honoris mundani movet eos contra populum, personam et regnum infideliter procurare... Et sic ex ista narracione potest fidelis colligere cum quali prudencia suam elemosinam regulabit...”

²¹³ Wyclif discusses a different seven gifts of the Spirit, drawn from Isaiah 11:2 in a short polemical tract, De septem donis Spiritus Sancti, printed in Polemical Works in Latin, I.201–30. The purpose of that tract is to contrast human traditions, those of the popes and the orders, against divine, but there is no such purpose to Wyclif’s discussion of the gifts here; there is a polemical section at the end of the sermon, pp.380–4, which attacks the Blackfriars’ Council, but the gifts of the Spirit are not used in this polemic, which deals instead with the uselessness of special prayers.
Lord’s beauty is intimated. Therefore the text says: ‘And the manifestation of the Spirit is given unto everyone unto profit.’ For diverse members of the church have diverse experiential knowledge of their offices, and from faith they understand that all these yield to the necessary utility of the one church (which is not division or apostasy in the Church Militant, but that it be of use to praise) and redound to the honour of our mother.\textsuperscript{214}

The use of the gifts of the Spirit among neighbours is not to the profit of the servant, but rather to Holy Mother Church, which is shown forth in the nine gifts of the Spirit and the nine orders of angels.\textsuperscript{215}

There follows an enumeration of the nine gifts: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, works of power, prophecy, discernments of spirits, tongues, interpretation of speeches.\textsuperscript{216}

Wisdom is the highest of the gifts, and it guides the Church Militant, how and why it ought to proceed.\textsuperscript{217} Knowledge is a little lower and guides the particular councils and works of the church.\textsuperscript{218} Faith is the foundation of the others, prior in nature and in time, since the \textit{viator} usually knows the truths of faith generally before he or she knows them.

\textsuperscript{214} \textit{Sermones} III.44, p. 377/22–33: “Signum autem quod viantes sint de Christi familia est quod de tali variacione nolint contendere sed de pulchritudine divini operis contentari. Novem autem sunt gradus varietatis tamquam novem angelorum ordines in quibus scintilla Domini pulcritudinis intimatur. Ideo dicit textus: \textit{Unicunque datur manifestacio spiritus ad utilitatem;} nam diversa membra ecclesie habent diversas noticias experimentales de suis officiis, et ex fide concipiant quod omnia ista cedunt ad utilitatem unius ecclesie necessaria (quod non est divisio vel apostasia in militante ecclesia quin prosit ad laudem) et honorem reducuntur matris nostre.”

\textsuperscript{215} Ibid., p. 377/37–41: “unicunque membro ecclesie manifestatur in proximo effectus spiritus Dei, non ad utilitatem servi sed ad utilitatem sancte matris ecclesie; quod de novem gradibus tamquam de novem ordinibus angelorum ostenditur.”

\textsuperscript{216} I Corinthians 12:8–10.

\textsuperscript{217} \textit{Sermones} III.44, p. 378/1–4: “Alii, inquit, \textit{per Spiritum datur sermo sapiencie.} Iste autem gradus tamquam altissimam attingit divinam noticiam et alcius diriget ecclesiam militante quare et qua racione debet procedere.”

\textsuperscript{218} Ibid., p. 378/4–10: “Secundo autem datur \textit{alii} membro ecclesie \textit{sermo scientiae secundum eundem Spiritum,} cum apostoli habuerint noticiam veritatum fidei ad ecclesiam alte et fundabiliter instruendum. Ipsi autem posteriores eorum vicarii habuerunt noticiam bassiorem ad consilia et opera particularia ecclesie dirigenda.”
by interior illumination or *a posteriori* demonstration.\(^{219}\) The miracles of healing comfort and confirm the rude members of the church.\(^{220}\) The works of power are those like Joshua’s making the sun stand still or the parting of the sea in Exodus 14, and these are not miracles, but rather demonstrations of God’s power: “for it is one thing to perform miracles for the common people and another to show forth the powers of God among them, since the infidels are able to discern miracles and yet disbelieve.”\(^{221}\) Wyclif’s comments on the sixth gift of the Spirit, prophecy, are particularly interesting:

> Sixth ‘prophecy is given to other’ members of the church; whereas the apostles had from the prophets of the old law a greater certainty of prophecy, so we who constantly believe their writings have a moderate spirit of prophecy allowed, since we constantly preach these writers, who are distant from the people as much by acquaintance as by time. And that is necessary for providing for the future perils of the church, to knowing God and to loving his salutary governance.\(^{222}\)

Prophecy has not died for Wyclif; in fact, he, and others like him who believe what the apostles and prophets wrote, exercise that office, preaching about those distant figures to protect and guide the church.

\(^{219}\) Ibid., p. 378/11–15: “Tercio datur *fides alteri*, quia generaliter prius natura vel tempore cognoscit viator veritatis fidei, antequam ipse illas cognoscat per interiorem illustracionem vel a posteriori demonstratione; ideo istud donum tercium oportet supponere tamquam aliis fundamentum.”

\(^{220}\) Ibid., p. 378/18–24: “Quarto quia miracula sensibilia et specialiter circa sanitates hominum confortant et confirmant rudes ecclesie, ideo dicit Paulus quod *alii* membro ecclesie *datur gracia faciendi* in proximo *sanitates*, ut Christus promisit Matthei ultimo et patuit de Petro et Paulo apostolis cum multis aliis, ut patet Act. ... et XXVI.”

\(^{221}\) Ibid., p. 378/25–30: “Quinto *datur alii* membro ecclesie *operacio virtutum* ostendencium in populo Dei potentiam et virtutem, ut contingit de stacione solis Josue ... et divisione maris Exod. ... cum eis similibus; aliud enim est miracula plebi facere et aliud virtutes Dei in illis ostendere, cum infideles miracula possunt cernere et tamen discredere.”

\(^{222}\) Ibid., p. 378/31–9: “Sexto *datur alii* membro ecclesie *prophecia*, cum apostoli habuerunt prophetis legis vetere maiorem certitudinem prophacie, et nos qui scripta eorum constanter credimus, habemus licet remissius spiritum prophacie, cum ista que sunt procul a populo tam noticia quam tempore constancius predicame; et illa est necessaria ad providendum pro periculis futuris ecclesie ad cognoscendum Dei noticiam et ad diligendum eius salubrem gubernacionem.”
The discernment of spirits, whether they are good or evil, blessed or diabolical, is the seventh gift. This is no easy task, and it should never be doubted that such discernment is a godly gift: “Satan indeed disguises himself as an angel of light and various spirits appeared to many of the fathers of both the old and the new law. No doubt but that it is a spiritual gift of God to learn to distinguish the nature of those spirits.” A gift necessary to the Fathers of both Testaments can hardly fail to be necessary to their spiritual descendants. The eighth gift, the gift of tongues, is given so that one might know how to speak the faith of scripture to various nations. The last gift is the discernment of speeches “of faith in scripture,” which faithful doctors and preachers show the church even today. Once again the unity of the gifts is stressed, that they derive from one and the same Spirit; wisdom is not given by Minerva, nor eloquence by Mercury, but these gifts are all from God. The reason the gifts are divided among members of the church is because God, who knows what will profit the church, wills it to be so, and it is useless to question this.

Wyclif’s preaching on the gifts of the Spirit is rather straightforward and unexceptional. There is strong emphasis on the utility of the nine gifts, as well as their continuing

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223 Ibid., p. 379/1–6: “Septimo alii datur discrecio spirituum utrum sint boni vel mali, diaboli vel beati; satan quidem transfert se in angelum lucis et multis patribus tam legis nove quam veteris sunt spiritus varie apparentes. Nec dubium quin spirituale donum Dei sit spirituum istorum qualitates scire distinguere.”
224 Ibid., p. 379/7–9: “Octavo dantur alii genera linguarum, ut sciat eloqui fidelis scriptura variis gentibus (ut patet de apostolis Act. 1).”
226 Ibid., p. 379/12–16: “Et hec omnia novem dona unus ac idem Spiritus, et non sicut gentiles crediderant errando, putantes quod Minerva dedit a proprietate sapienciam, Mercurius eloquenciam, et ita de aliis donis Dei.” Cf. ibid., p. 378/15–17: “Nec dubium quin ab uno eodemque Spiritu eidem membro ecclesie istud event.”
presence in the church. There is also an insistence on the unity of the diverse gifts, both as to their source, one and the same Spirit, and as to their end, their usefulness in the church. The closest thing to controversy that Wyclif says is that he and other faithful interpreters of scripture share, moderately, in the office of prophecy, but since he emphasizes the role of scripture in this office, and does not claim to read the future, even this is not particularly scandalous.

6. The Five Bodily Senses

There are two sermons in the dominical gospel cycle that discuss the five bodily senses. Wyclif deals with the senses in a moralizing way: working from their physical characteristics, for which he is dependent on unnamed philosophers, as well as the physical placement of the sense organs, the particular abuses to which each of the senses is subject are then outlined, and more particularly how the senses can be led into mortal sin. In this sort of moralization, Wyclif was far from alone; medieval understandings of the body linked the moral and the physical closely together, and the senses were implicated in this construction intimately.

For Wyclif, the most subtle of the five exterior senses is that of sight. Here he gives three reasons for sight’s exalted status among the bodily senses: first, because the eyes

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228 On the five senses, see also Trialogus, pp. 93–100.
230 There was some disagreement about the ordering of the hierarchy of senses, with hearing often receiving pride of place. See Stephen G. Nichols, Andreas Kablitz, and Alison Calhound, eds., Rethinking the Medieval Senses, pp. vii–ix, which gives the examples of Grosseteste, who apparently favoured hearing, for example in the opening chapters of his Hexaemeron, edited by Dales and King (London: British Academy, 1985), and his student Roger Bacon, who favoured sight, for example in his Perspectiva, edited and translated by David C. Lindburg (Oxford:
can perceive objects at a distance, even the stars; second, because they are located in the highest position of any of the sense organs and their anatomy is more ingenious than that of the other sensitive organs;\textsuperscript{231} and third because the sense of sight is closest to the interior senses, as evidenced by the imagination’s use of visual impressions when dreaming.\textsuperscript{232} But, just as sight is the most powerful and noble of the senses, so it is the most open to abuse, for its wandering is more dangerous than that of the others, more distracting from knowledge, and much worse if the sense is used in a forbidden way (\textit{muito magis si sensus sit vetitus}), as it is written in Matthew 5:28: “whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”\textsuperscript{233}


\textsuperscript{233} \textit{Sermones} I.30, p. 205/4–9: “Ex istis patet quod inordinata evagacio sensus visus est ceteris periculosior et plus distrahans scienciam ab illo quod prius cognosceret, et molto magis si sensus...
Commenting on Matthew 6:22: “If your eye is single, then your whole body will be full of light,” Wyclif says that we should understand that if the eye is single, it serves the intellect as it ought, so the light is virtue for the whole body. Since all the virtues and vices are connected, and since virtue and vice cannot be cultivated at the same time, it follows that this simplicity in any organ is the soul’s virtue. But, the eye can lead into mortal sin: a base look can lead to pride and envy, a wanton look to wrath, accidia, gluttony and lust. All of the senses are capable of being led astray, but the real guilt, of course, lies in the sinning soul, not in the sense or its object. Wyclif mentions a demon as the root of sin, but does not give any particulars about the demon; this is likely a reference to demons who were thought to have dominion over particular deadly sins.

The second external sense in Wyclif’s hierarchy is that of hearing; the ears have the second most noble position among the sensory organs, hearing can perceive sound from all directions, and in this ability exceeds sight, but it cannot perceive its object at so great a distance as the eye can see, and it is through hearing the word of God that faith and the other virtues are instilled. It is open to abuse as well, so the viator must be careful; as

sit vetitus; unde Matthei V", 28 dicitur quod qui viderit mulierem ad concupiscendam eam iam mechatus est eam in corde suo.”

234 Sermones I.30, p. 205/13–21: “Si, inquit, oculus tuus fuerit simplex, totum corpus tuum lucidum erit, quia si organum huius sensus habuerit officium simplex non bifurcatum, serviendo intellectui sicut debet, non dubium quin totum corpus residuum lucidum est virtute, quia sicut et virtutes sic et vicia sunt connexa. Et cum utrumque sit subiective in anima que non potest simul informari vicio et virtute, patet quod si ad sensum dictum sit simplicitas in visu, est eciam simplicitas in quilibet organo virtutis anime.”  

235 Sermones I.31, p. 213/6–15: “Visus enim indignatus sicut stimulat ad superbiam atque invidiam, sic oculus petulantis excitat ad iram, accidia, gulam atque luxuriam. Et ita est de quinque sensibus intrinsecis et suis sensibilibus senciendum. Nam neque in sensibus nec in suis objectis est per se culpa fundabilis, cum sint pure naturalia et per accidens infecta, sed culpa est primo et per se in anima peccatrice et primo radicaliter in ipso demone. Ideo anima regulata virtute potest uti omnibus hiis naturalibus virtuose.”

236 Sermones I.30, p. 205/27–36: “Secundus sensus exterior est auditus qui post visum est specialior, unde situs sui organi fere in eodem circulo capitis existens cum oculo habet situm
sounds coil in the ear, lest the auditive power be confounded, so the mind ought to
observe the circumstances in which the horrific sound of the Devil and the world is to be
expelled and the hearing of the sweet sound of the spirit to be enjoyed: “For the hearing
of slanders, lies, blasphemy and the others of this sort [of speech] by the devout soul is
horrendous, but the hearing of the words of the Lord which sound the opposite, is
sweet.”

The dangers of words are apparent here, as they can lead to both sin and virtue.
There is also a strong social element to hearing, as the words of the devil, for instance,
turn humans against one another: “For in fact, the Devil, both the worst murmurer and
also the father of lies, suggests to the ears of the viator dissension and war...” In this
regard, men given over to the world, generally clerics and prelates, cannot hear the Spirit,
who is drowned out by the noise of the world and the Devil. To combat this
worldliness, we must follow Christ’s advice to be as wise as serpents and innocent as
doves, which Wyclif explains using a common medieval understanding of the traits of the
two animals. The asp, following Psalm 57:6, will not listen to charmers, and, it is said,
puts one ear to the ground and stops up the other with its tail; so should we do likewise
when we perceive the whispers of the Devil or the world. This is done, Wyclif tells us, by

tribus sensibus sequentibus eminenciorem, et sicut virtus auditiva excedit visivam, secundum
condicionem aliquam naturalem, quia ex omni latere percipit suum objectum, qualiter visus non
poterit, sic secundum philosophos auditus per accidens plus proficit ad doctrinam et secundum
Apostolum fides et alie virtutes quas evangelizantes imprimunt sunt singulariter ex auditu...” Cf.
Sermones IV.51, p. 402/20–25.

Ibid., pp. 205/36–206/7: “sicut in auribus sunt amfreactus, ne soni excellencia confundat
auditivam virtutem ... sic mens debet notare circumstanciam secundum quam expelli debet
horribilis sonus diaboli atque mundi et in auditu dulcis soni spiritus delectari. Nam auditus
detraccionum[,] mendacii, blasphemie et ceterorum huiusmodi devote anime est horrendus, sed
auditus verborum Domini que sonant opposita est suavis.”

Ibid., p. 206/9–11: “Diabolus namque et susurro pessimus et pater mendacii suggerit auri
viancium dissensionem et bellum...”

Ibid., p. 206/11–17: “Unde homines mundo dediti, ymmo generaliter clerici et prelati ... in
auribus namque ipsorum diabolus et mundus tantum tumultuante quod in ipsis tamquam surdis
sonus suavis Spiritus non auditur.”
the interior man by contemplating that he is made from the mud of the earth, earth made fragile by the corruption of the humours. Wyclif further explains the wisdom of serpents by reference to a medieval commonplace, the contemplation of death: “and since nothing is stronger to the mastery of fleshly desire than to contemplate how one will be dead, it is obvious how useful is this serpentine wisdom to a man.” Doves delight in the sound of their own kind, but when they hear the sound of a hawk or other preditory bird, they rest on a flat rock, against which the bird of prey is scared to dash itself. In the same way, when the faithful are tempted by the devil or some other enemy, they ought to rest humbly on the corner stone, a reference to Christ, who according to Acts 4:11, *inter alia,* “is the stone which the builders rejected, which is become the head of the corner,” nor should they then fear a man’s attack or the devil’s insults. This last section concerning the abuse of the sense of hearing is replete with medieval commonplaces, and these are,

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240 Ibid., pp. 206/31–207/5: “Serpens quidaem dicitur habere istam industriam et Psalmus LVII⇒, 6 meminit quod, cum incantatur verbis stupefacientibus incantatis, unam aurem terre applicat et aliam aurem cum extremitate caude obturat; sic fidelis cum audierit sonum diaboli sive mundi unam aurem interioris hominis terre aplicat, fragilitatem suam considerans, quomodo ex audicione vocis serpens qui primo fuit limus terre, factus est terra fragilis, racione defectus humoris gracie corrumpenda (ut patet Genesi III⇒). Et cum nichil plus valet ad domanda carnis desideria quam pensare qualis erit mortua, patet quantum prodest homini ista prudencia serpentina.” The idea of *memento mori* and life as preparation for death was a stoic idea that became very important in Christianity, especially for monastics, see Adalbert de Vögué, “Avoir la mort devant les yeux chaque jour comme un événement imminent,” *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 48 (1986): pp. 267–78. The Christian understanding of death in the Middle Ages was informed to a large extent by the writings of Gregory the Great, see Carole Straw, “Purity and Death,” in *Gregory the Great: A Symposium,* edited by John C. Cavadini (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995): pp. 16–37. This is a theme that Wyclif used elsewhere in his sermons, see *Sermones* IV.25, p. 220/1–3.

241 *Sermones* I.30, p. 207/5–14: “Et de multis columbe simplicitibus hoc ad propositum est notandum quod naturaliter delecatur in amorosis vocibus sui similis, et audito sono accipitris vel avis alterius rapacis in plano lapide requiescit et avis rapax que impulsu feroci columbam raperet ex timore collisionis pectoris sui ad lapidem hoc obmittit. Et sic fidelis temptatus a diabolo vel hoste alio humiliter requiesceret in lapide angulari, nec oportet cum illo timere invasionem hominis vel diaboli insultantis.”
as we shall see in the next chapter, a point of stylistic commonality amongst Wyclif and his contemporaries.

The third sense, midway between the highest and lowest senses, is smell. The nose is beneath the eyes and ears, and while it can perceives its object at a distance, it can only do so if the wind should carry the scent, and does not perceive its object at as great a distance as either sight or hearing perceive theirs. Speaking of odours in a mystical sense, we can say that the sweetness of meritorious deeds and the fetid stench of vile ones reaches up to heaven, whence good angels are said to flee a place of sin because of the stench. The potential for abuse here is that smells can intoxicate us, leading us into gluttony or lust: “For in fact the gluttonous are unduly delighted by sweet smelling food and the luxurious, what causes shame in women, they sumptuously consume snuff and clothes and bedsheets and veils, fragranced with precious perfumes, with which a great people might be sustained. And in fact it seems the cause is that the stench of a luxurious woman is lessened, and the ardour of a man is eagerly excited.”

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242 Sermones I.31, p. 212/9–17: “Ideo de sequenti sensu extrinseci triplici est dicendum et primo de olfactu. Sicut enim visus excellit auditum quoad obiecti sui distancium, cum apprehendit celestia, auditus autem ad maximum non apprehendit nisi tonitrua, sic auditus excedit olfactum cum fumalis evaporacio est obiectum olfactus, nisi forte per delacionem ventorum non percipitur ad tantam distanciam, et correspondent nares que sunt organum olfactus inferius in capite situantur.”

243 Ibid., p. 212/18–24: “Loquendo autem de odore ad sensum misticum, ut dicit famam vel Dei delectacionem in opere virtuoso, est satis equivocum et huic sentencie non repugnans. Sic enim dicitur Deus a summno celo flores virtutum delectabiliter odorare, et viciosi dicuntur fretere coram Domino; unde angeli boni dicuntur loca peccancium propter fetorem relinquere.”

244 Ibid., p. 212/26–35: “Sed quoad corporalis odoris patet quod sophisticatur multipliciter in peccatis carnalibus ut gula et luxuria. Gulosi namque in vecibilibus odoriferis indebite delectantur et luxoriosi quod pudet in feminis consumunt sumptuose in subfumigationibus ac panorum et lintheorum et flanneolorum odoribus preciosa aromatizancia, cum quibus magnus populus poterit sustentari. Et revera causa videtur ut fetor luxuriantis feminine mitigatur et ardor viri avidius excitetur.”
can lead *per accidens* from the carnal sins of gluttony and lust to the spiritual sins of accidia and avarice, just as the other senses can lead in the same way to other sins.\(^{245}\)

The fourth sense is that of taste, whose organ is the tongue and the palate, which are situated lower in the head than the preceding senses. It cannot perceive its object from a distance, and, according to (again unnamed) philosophers, the tongue is an organ of touch.\(^{246}\) Yet, taste should be differentiated from touch for they are different species of sense, although the proportions of the objects of these senses and the number of their species along with the anatomy of their organs would require a long philosophical discussion to explain, Wyclif tells us. It suffices to note that it is not delight in taste *per se* that leads to sin, but a neglect in divine service arising from this sense, as, for example, when Esau sinned through this sense by selling his birthright (Genesis 25:30). The *viator* ought, therefore, to take as much food and drink as promotes divine service, both as far as quantity and quality, and that is enough.\(^{247}\) Wyclif interprets the story of the meal at Bethany (John 12:1–11) to mean that the use of precious things ought to be regulated by reason. During the meal, Christ’s anointing with precious spikenard, and subsequent

\(^{245}\) Ibid., p. 213/1–6: “Omnes autem hii tres sunt secundum quandam proprietatem stimuli carnalium peccatorum, licet olfactus per accidens excitet ad accidiam et avariciam, sicut omnes hii quinque sensus promovent per accidens ad singulum peccatorum mortalium.”


\(^{247}\) Ibid., p. 213/20–34: “Oportet autem distinguere inter tactus, quia licet tactus sit concomitans ad sensum gustus, sunt tamen sensus disparis specie. De proportionibus autem obiectorum istorum sensuum et numero suarum specierum cum anotomia suorum organorum ac aliis difficultatibus est philosophis longus sermo. Satis autem est nobis notare quod non per se in delectacione gustabilis sed in omission divini servicii que exhinc provenit est peccatum. Tantum enim potuit Esau peccare in gustacione decoccionis rufi (de quo Gen. XXV”, 30)... Accipiat ergo viator mensuram quantitates et qualitatis cibarii secundum quod ad servicium divinum plus promovet, et est satis.”
questioning by Judas, whose motives of greed are clear, serve as subtext for Wyclif to rebuke traitors of the church. Wyclif says that the servants of Christ ought to serve a most subtle and precious mix, but the gluttonous must beware of taking too much or of too high a quality of food. Since this happens easily, the best defense is to subject the judgment of sense to that of reason, so John the Baptist and his followers did well by abstaining, but Christ and his followers did better by consuming precious food according to the rule of reason. The mendicant (privata) orders are seen, then, to be blind in their superadding to this rule of reason vows and rules of abstinence.248

The final and most material sense is that of touch, which “is a subjective, apprehensive power in the greater part of the body, rightly called nerves of touch by philosophers. Whence a nervous body is more sensitive in this sense.”249 Once more this sense is open to abuse, having a propensity to err in lustful acts, as in embraces, kisses and the act of procreation. This itch can be avoided by punishing the body and by occupying oneself with mathematics, astronomy or other insensible things.250

248 Ibid., pp. 213/34–214/15: “Et hoc videtur Christum docere Johannis XII”, 3, quando ordinavit alabastrum unguentii pistici preciosi super caput suum effundi, licet quidam proditores ecclesie affectantes sibi singulariter inesse talia hoc abhorrent. Nam mixta subtillissima et preciosissima debent Christi famulis subservire, sed caveat gulosus in isto ne excedat in quantitate et qualitate cibarii. Quod cum sit facile evenire, declinet a sensus iudicio ad extremum parvitatis secundum iudicium racionis; sic enim bene egit Baptista cum suis sequaciibus abstinendo, et melius egit Christus cum suis discipulis secundum racionis regulam preciosa cibaria consumendo ... Et patet quantum ordines private superaddentes in istis vota ac regulas abstinencie sunt cecati.”

249 Ibid., p. 214/16–20: “Ultimus sensus et ceteris materialior est tactus non mathematicus consistens in mediacione quarumlibet linearum, sed vis apprehensiva subiectata in corpore retili per maiorem partem corporis expanso, et hoc recte vocatur aput philosophos nervus tactus. Unde corpora nervosa sunt plus sensibilia isto sensu.”

250 Ibid., p. 214/20–7: “Et habet hic sensus proritatem erroris in actibus venereis, ut in amplexibus, in osculis et opere procreandi. Valet autem contra istam pruriginem corporis punicio et magis occupacio in rebus insensibilibus, ut celestibus et mathematicis ...”
Although not mentioned in these particular sermons, it will be convenient to speak here about sins of the tongue, since this was a popular topic in medieval pastoral literature, William Peraldus, for instance, devoting a section to these sins in his *Summa de vitii*, and since speech was sometimes numbered in the sensorium. These sins were important to Wyclif, and he speaks of them in his sermons on more than one occasion. In a sermon on the Epistle for the Third Sunday of Lent, Wyclif mentions that there are small sins that should not be mentioned to the faithful. This is perhaps an indication that this sermon was meant for a clerical audience, since he mentions three of these sins, including two of the tongue. The first of these sins might also be considered a sin of the tongue (or at least the mouth), but it is more properly a sin associated with touch, although, as we have seen, these two senses are closely related. This first sin is immodesty, “which is in kisses and embraces of women;” the second is foolish speech, “in flattery and inciting to lust and vengeance;” and the third is scurrility, “which rests in superfluous and dishonest words, which do not pertain to salvation.” These three do not pertain to salvation; rather they distract from it and incline toward base things. Instead, the soul ought to be occupied with spiritual things, and if one speaks, it should be redolent of the Saviour’s ministry.

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251 Siegfried Wenzel has made an edition of the text of this section available online at: http://www.unc.edu/~swenzel/Sins%20of%20the%20tongue%20trial.html, which he prepared from the 1688 Lyons edition of Peraldus. A new, critical edition of the *Summa de vitii* is in preparation by Wenzel, Richard Newhauser, Bridget K. Balint and Edwin Craun.


253 *Sermones* III.21, p. 167/11–21: “... inferetur quod peccata minora non sunt fidelibus nominanda, ut *turpitudo* que est in oculis et amplexibus mulierum, *stultiloquia* in verbis blandis et incitativis ad luxuriam et vindictam, et terto *scurrilitas* que stat in verbis superfluis et inhonestis, que non pertinent ad salutem [Ephesians 5:4], sed pocius distrahunt et inclinant ad turpia ... Nam semper debet anima circa spiritualia occupari, et si quis loquitur, redoleat in ipso ministerium Salvatoris.”
Another sin of the tongue, lying, is especially important to Wyclif, and there is some equivalence between lying and sinning: “Lying, according to Anselm and others, can be taken analogously for any sin whatsoever, since in as much as a man sins, he is a liar, just as Satan, the opponent of truth, is the father of lies not only in himself but in any sinner whatsoever.” Wyclif gives a familiar etymology in support of this claim: “and the reason is, because to lie is to go against the mind, and in the mind is necessarily that first truth [i.e. God], it appears that either no one can go against God or contradict himself, or a man as much as he sins is against the truth.” Similarly, since every necessary thing expresses itself, according to the principles of Augustine, even every liar or sinner, says that it has both an obligation and a debt of service to its God, and since in so far as he sins, he revolts from that [God], it is clear that insomuch as he sins, he lies.

The vocalization of lies is to be judged lightly unless it is first in the mind and discordant to man’s obligation to God, because lying generally exists in the

254 *Sermones* III.53, pp. 461/27–31: “Mendacium autem in sua analogia secundum Anselmum et alios pro peccato quolibet potest sumi, cum quanto homo peccaverit, est mendax, quomodo satanas contrarius veritati est pater mendacii non solum in se ipso sed in quolibet peccatore.”

255 Ibid., p. 461/31–5: “Et racio est, quia cum mentiri contra mentem ire et in mente illa sit necessario prima veritas, patet quod vel nemo potest ire contra Deum vel esse sibi contrarius, vel homo de quanto peccat est contrarius veritati.” This etymology was common in the Middle Ages, used for instance by Alexander Carpenter, Jean de La Rochelle, and Thomas Aquinas, see Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity*, pp. 37–47.


257 Ibid., p. 462/1–4: “Similiter, cum quilibet in quantum peccat est contrarius menti sue ymno illi conscience qua vult naturaliter beatitudinem, patet quod omnis peccator in quantum huiusmodi est mentitus.”
operations and passions of the soul before being spoken.. Lying is such a serious matter according to Augustine, Anselm and others, that we should not do it to save the human race nor the whole world.

The connection between the physical attributes of the tongue and sins of this member is made in another sermon. The tongue has four natural offices deputed to it according to Wyclif: to taste food, to place food between the teeth, to form the voice to the end of friendly communion with neighbours in speech, and especially to praise God and invoke His help, “but alas all these are turned to their contrary by diabolical poison. For the infected tongue does not taste the word of scripture (which is the food of the soul), but falls into scurrilities and foul speech, slanders and flatteries. And that venom pouring forth into the world sows all evil.” The double capacity of speech is easily recognized here; just as the tongue is specially designated to praise God and ask for His help, so also it is capable of “sowing all evil,” since it can do the opposite of all of its natural functions. Wyclif develops a metaphor here concerning the first office of the tongue, to taste; a tongue that is poisoned by scurrilous language can no longer discern the taste of the food its soul needs to survive – scripture.

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258 Ibid., p. 462/4–9: “Vocale autem mendacium est modicum ponderandum nisi subsit prius mendacium in mente et realis discrepancia obligacionis hominis ad Deum, quod mendacium communiter consistit in opere et in passionibus anime ante vocem formatam.”
259 Ibid., p. 462/31–3: “Et ex istis patet sentencia quam Augustinus, Anselmus et ceteri sepius inculant quod non est menciendum propter salvacionem humani generis sive mundi.”
The other three offices of the tongue are taken up in the same manner. The tongue ought to speak, distribute and teach edifying opinions about those absent and not give back trifles or unfruitful opinions about neighbours; we ought to ruminate on words “to the edification of neighbour, as Augustine teaches, inscribing at the back of his hall, not apocryphal stories in sumptuous cloth, but these two lines: ‘Whoever likes to gnaw at the lives of those absent/ Will know that at this table there is no place for him.” The third office is specifically to use speech in a friendly manner with neighbours, a thing which birds and beasts do, to the limits of their nature, but a thing which humans do not, instead committing innumerable frauds and the like against their neighbours; therefore by perverting the ordinance of God, they become infinitely worse than birds, since they damnably pervert the order instituted by God, which is a condition worse than anything that can happen to an irrational creature. The overturning of the final office, changing the praise of God into blasphemy, is understood in terms of the commandment against taking the Lord’s name in vain, and the violation of this commandment is taken to cause a visceral reaction: “For all taking the name of God in vain is blasphemy ... in detestation of which sin men become accustomed to spit because of the horror.”

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261 Ibid., pp. 228/25–7: “Quoad secundum officium debet lingua narrare, digerere et docere sentenciam edificatoriam de absentibus et non nugas aut vanitates proximo infructivas revolvere.”

262 Ibid., p. 229/29–33: “rumemus verba ad edificationem proximi, ut docet Augustinus, scribens in dorso aule sue non historias ypocriphas in pannis sumptuosis sed hos versus: Quisque novit dictis absentum rodere vitam/ Hanc mensam indignam noverit esse sibi.”

263 Ibid., pp. 229/34–230/6: “Quoad tercium patet quod aves et bestie regulariter laudant Deum servando vociferaciones secundum limites sue nature ad amicabiliter communicandum cum sibi similibus. Hombres autem secundum innumerabiles fraudes. Irritaciones et dolos circumveniunt fratres suos, ideo pervertendo ordinacionem Dei fiunt infinitum poeores volucribus, cum damnabiliter pervertunt ordinem a Deo institutum; quod est peius quam aliqua condicio que posset consequi creaturam non racionabilem.”


265 Ibid., p. 231/5–11: “Quoad quartum patet quod lingua non honoramus Deum sed blasphemamus, cum nomen in vanum sumimus, non impetramus oracionibus nostris nobis utile,
One other sermon outlines three sins of the tongue: murmuring against God, slander, which we have already seen, and mockery/abuse. The first of these is simply called foolishness, and the third is barely mentioned, but the treatment of the second is interesting in that Wyclif uses animal imagery, which was a commonplace in medieval literature on sins of the tongue, although Wyclif says that these images are drawn from scripture. Wyclif describes the slanderer as like a dog, a pig, and a serpent. A slanderer is like a dog because a dog has bloody lips, commonly barks without cause, and it possesses a prostrate nature. S/he is like a pig because a pig shamelessly stains its snout and mouth, when entering a garden prefers a pile of turds to a bunch of fragrant flowers, and puts its feet into its food. Finally, s/he is like a serpent because a serpent bites from hiding, advances torturously, and eats earth. These qualities of dogs and pigs are used in much the same way in a collection of *distinctiones* identified by Edwin Craun, where the pig is said to stick his mouth as readily as his foot into filth; has his mouth open for dung, but not for flowers, and adds that a “pig is disdained because of the grain it has in its mouth.” The dog is likewise said to have bloody lips. The differences are slight; Wyclif includes a characteristic of the pig which the collection does not and misses one that the collection includes. The *distinctiones* include more material relating to the dog and the

cum irritamus Deum derisorie. Omnis enim vane assumens nomen Dei est blasphemus ... in cuius peccati detestacionem solent homines spuere propter horrorem.”

266 *Sermones* IV.52, p. 30–7: “Unde detractor comparatur in scriptura cani, porco et serpenti: cani quia canis habet labia sanguinosa, latrat communiter sine causa et naturam suam prostratum invadit; porco quia rostrum et os turpiter inquinat, intrans ortum preeleget congregationem stercorum ante cumulum florum redolencium et deicit pedibus in cibum suum. Serpenti vero comparatur, quia mordet in abscondito, tortuose incedit et terram comedit.”


serpent. So, while Wyclif did not necessarily consult this particular collection of *distinctiones*, it is not unlikely that he drew his material from some such collection.

Wyclif’s preaching on the bodily senses is his most conventional; he relies on the the same philosophic and scientific understandings as his contemporaries, and draws on the same imagery. Even where he is unconventional, or at least extreme in his formulations, for instance in his determination that lies should not be told even to save the whole human race, he differs from his contemporaries in intensity rather than kind, as all were agreed that lying was sinful, and Wyclif drew on conventional authorities such as Anselm and Augustine.

*Conclusion*

Wyclif’s sermons on these pastoral issues are not nearly as controversial as those on the sacraments or on virtue and vice. Here instead Wyclif follows, by and large, the conventions of his time and place. Most of the controversy in these sermons surrounds the same topics as before, the Eucharist and penance, and these are only mentioned in the sermons on the decalogue. The other area of contention is the subject of images, again confined to the sermons on the decalogue. Here, however, there was a good deal of ambiguity, as Wyclif mentions that images can still be of use despite the dangers involved. Overall, the topics covered in this chapter seem to have angered Wyclif far less than the subjects of the Eucharist and penance.
Chapter 5

A Comparison of Wyclif’s Preaching with that of Some of his Contemporaries

In this chapter, I will compare the preaching of Wyclif and several of his contemporaries, in order to demonstrate some of the similarities and differences between his preaching and that of some contemporary and near-contemporary preachers. As with Wyclif’s preaching, I will limit myself to those topics legislated in the pastoral syllabi of Grosseteste and Peckham, as elaborated by Siegfried Wenzel. The choice of authors has been facilitated by Wenzel’s excellent study, which gives a table of sermons dealing with such topics from numerous sermon collections.¹ This selection of preachers is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather demonstrative; I have chosen to focus on these authors in part because their sermons survive, but I have also selected them because they were considered orthodox preachers in their time, and because they bear some, at least tangential, relationship to Wyclif. It is on this basis that the controversial nature of Wyclif’s preaching can best be demonstrated; it is in Wyclif’s deviations that we can see how and why he was considered so dangerous by his contemporaries. Likewise, such comparison will demonstrate what these authors held in common, and so demonstrate an often neglected, but no less important aspect of Wyclif’s preaching, where and how he conformed to the conventions of his time and place.

¹ Wenzel, Latin Sermon Collections, pp. 349–50.
1. Richard FitzRalph

Richard FitzRalph (b. before 1300, d. 1360) was not an exact contemporary of Wyclif or any other of the preachers, save one, to be discussed in this chapter, but is included because of his great influence on Wyclif, who called him “sanctus Ricardus episcopus Armachanus,” and because he was also an influence on many other preachers of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Born in Dundalk, north of Dublin, Ireland, FitzRalph studied at Oxford, where he held the office of chancellor in 1332–4, and later at Paris. Moving within the circles of power in the church, FitzRalph made four extended visits to Avignon, where he impressed the curia with his theological and homiletic acumen. FitzRalph was elected Archbishop of Armagh in 1346, but he did not reach his diocese until early 1348, when there is a record of his preaching in his native Dundalk on 24 April of that year. He was most influential through his *Summa de questionibus Armenorum*, composed during a long stay at Avignon (1337–44), in which he discussed issues raised by debate with representatives of the Armenian church, as well as through his theory of *dominium*, which he developed in opposition to the Michaelist party of the Franciscans, and which had profound influence on Wyclif, and through his antipathy toward the mendicants, which arose through FitzRalph’s opinion that they were causing strife in his diocese.  

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FitzRalph left behind a sermon diary containing some ninety-two items, covering the period 1335-59. Much of this preaching is concerned with the conduct of the pastoral office. In particular, two synod sermons, one from 1352 and the other from 1355, deal with his reforming program for his diocese. His zeal for reform matched the intensity with which Wyclif attacked abuses in church practice. The first of these sermons, addressed to “Reverendi patres et fratres et amici carissimi,” has three principal parts which outline the characteristics of the ideal prelate: holiness of life, vigor of rule, and wisdom of teaching. These three are expanded upon at length, with the first principal part receiving the most attention. By far the most space, however, is devoted to a denunciation, in the strongest of language, of simony, with an explanation of the distinctions between the sins of Simon Magus, Gehazi, and Balaam.

Much of the rest of his preaching is concerned with the vice of avarice, in particular the practice of post mortem gifts, which he believed would be of no benefit to the donor. In a sermon on the Lord’s Prayer, he says that “seeing that whatever is done by one’s self in life, if it is done from charity, is deserving of eternal reward in heaven, all things given after death merit at least a lessening of Purgatory, and the least joy of heaven is better

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5 These have been edited by Aubrey Gwynn, “Two Sermons of Primate Richard FitzRalph,” Archivium Hibernicum 14 (1949): pp. 50–65.
6 Ibid., p. 53.
7 Ibid., p. 54: “In quibus verbis [Viri pastores sumus servi tui (Gen. 46: 34)] probos prelatos et deo acceptos ordine constructionis tria commendant: sanctitas in vivendo, sicuti dei servos: strenuitas in regendo, tanquam viros: et sagacitas in docendo, tanquam pastores.”
8 Ibid., pp. 54–7.
9 Ibid., pp. 59–63.
than the lessening of any pain of worldly flesh.”

L. L. Hammerich sees this as a softening of the rhetoric from an earlier sermon for Pentecost in which FitzRalph claimed that anyone giving post mortem gifts does not receive any relief in Purgatory: “nor through the distribution of their goods after death can they be helped in Purgatory, since they do not go to Purgatory, but to the depths of Hell.”

The ambiguity of this passage is clarified somewhat in a sermon for Palm Sunday: “one farthing given during life will be more useful to you than the whole treasure of the world distributed by your executors after death.”

Whatever his final position, FitzRalph was clearly annoyed with those who put off the work of charity until after death.

The area in which the two preachers’ sermonizing most overlapped was that of antipathy to the mendicant orders. The two follow a similar arc in which they move from a generally congenial relationship with the begging orders to an outright attack on their privileges, and for much the same reasons, as they both saw the mendicants abusing their privileges for worldly gain, and were convinced that these same privileges, as well as the mendicants’ claim that Christ and the apostles lived by begging, had no grounding in

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10 Oxford, Bodleian ms. 144 (henceforth Bod. 144), f. 40r: “quoniam factum quodcunque per ipsos in vita, si ex caritate fieret, mereretur premium eternum in celo, omnia data post mortem saltem inminucionem purgatorii merentur, et minimum gaudium in celo melius est quam inminucio aliqua pene temporalis carnis.” This manuscript is of 15th century English provenance, iv +280 folios, written in four successive hands. Its sole contents are FitzRalph’s sermons. Information about the manuscript is taken from Gwynn, “The Sermon Diary of Richard FitzRalph,” pp. 2–4. All transcriptions and translations from this manuscript are my own unless otherwise noted.


12 “amplius vobis proderit vnus quadrans datus in vita quam totus mundi thesaurus per executores vestros post mortem distributus.” Quoted in Hammerich, p. 39.
Likewise, the two were not shy about letting their views be known from the pulpit, as we have seen already in Wyclif’s preaching, and as is demonstrated in FitzRalph’s famous *proposicio* of 1350 and in a series of sermons in London in 1356–7. The agreement was not perfect, however, as FitzRalph sought to undermine the Franciscans by appealing to a literal interpretation of the Rule of Francis, a document which Wyclif viewed as a superfluous if not dangerous addition to the plain rule of scripture, and by a strictly literal interpretation of the title *proprium sacerdos*, the officer to whom all Christians were bound to confess according to *Omnis utriusque sexus*, a decree for which Wyclif demonstrated utmost contempt. Nonetheless, both Wyclif and FitzRalph shared in the common struggle against the mendicants, though neither man could claim to be the originator of antimendicant feeling, which had its genesis almost contemporaneously to that of the orders themselves, as tensions developed between seculars and mendicants over the latter’s privileges, way of life, and place in the church.


15 Coleman, “FitzRalph’s *proposicio,*” pp. 381–2; Dawson, “FitzRalph and Poverty,” 332–44; Gwynn, “FitzRalph and the Friars.”

The influence which FitzRalph’s works exerted on Wyclif extended beyond the simple adoption of FitzRalph’s theory of *dominium*; Wyclif borrowed liberally from Armachanus, and even lifted a passage from one of the Archbishop’s sermons out of context to prove a point about pilgrimages.\(^\text{17}\) FitzRalph’s point in the sermon is that the faithful ought to be careful in their veneration of saints’ shrines, whereas Wyclif’s point was that such veneration should not be done at all. In other sermons, FitzRalph is an enthusiastic supporter of the cult of the saints.\(^\text{18}\) The divergence between the two is also illustrated by the fact that FitzRalph promoted the pilgrimage site of St. Patrick’s Purgatory, endorsing the story of the penitent George of Hungary,\(^\text{19}\) and his prolonged attempts to secure the benefits of the jubilee for those in England and Ireland unable to travel to Rome.\(^\text{20}\)

One important area of disagreement was in the matter of the Eucharist. FitzRalph was clear in his teaching that transubstantiation was the correct understanding of the sacrament of the altar. His basic teaching on the subject is outlined in a sermon for Maundy Thursday, 24 March 1345, preached at Lichfield Cathedral.\(^\text{21}\) Katherine Walsh states that “clearly FitzRalph regarded this sermon as the definitive statement of his own opinions, and he frequently referred back to it whenever a matter concerning the doctrine


\(^{18}\) See, for example, his sermons on St. Catherine, Bod. 144, ff. 2r–v; 2v–3; 179v–187; the first and third of which have been translated by Siegfried Wenzel, *Preaching in the Ages of Chaucer: Selected Sermons in Translation* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008): pp. 191–219; Walsh, *Fourteenth–Century Scholar*, pp. 185–6, 189–90.


\(^{20}\) FitzRalph was commissioned by Edward III to take a special plea to the Curia in this matter, see Walsh, *Fourteenth–Century Scholar*, pp. 288–90.

\(^{21}\) Bod. 144, ff. 4r–7r. Undated in the manuscript, but see Walsh, *Fourteenth–Century Scholar*, p. 225, n. 13.
of the Eucharist came up for discussion in later sermons.” These views are “impeccably orthodox” and could not be used by Wyclif as support for his own views on the subject. Their views on the other sacraments are likewise dissimilar, for while FitzRalph attacked the jurisdictional privileges of mendicant confessors, he did not challenge the orthodoxy of the practice of auricular confession.

Despite areas of agreement, there are marked differences between Wyclif and FitzRalph’s sermons; while FitzRalph was a formative influence on Wyclif, especially as far as his theory of *dominium* is concerned, the differences run deep. Wyclif’s rejection of transubstantiation marked a major departure from the doctrine of his predecessor, as did his criticism of images and the cult of saints, both of which were strongly endorsed by FitzRalph. At the same time that there were these important divergences, it is clear that the two were part of an intellectual and religious tradition which valued the highest moral standards and was prepared to criticise and attack those elements perceived to be dangerous to the Christian religion.

2. John Waldeby

John Waldeby was a member of the Order of Saint Augustine (Austin Friars), who died sometime after 1372. He was ordained acolyte in 1334, and probably studied theology at Oxford in the 1340s, obtaining his doctorate by 1354, in which year, or perhaps 1366, he was possibly prior provincial of his order. He represented his order in the dispute with FitzRalph at Avignon in 1358. He was apparently also a friend of the Benedictine monk

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23 Ibid., p. 225.
Thomas de la Mare, who was abbot of St. Alban’s from 1349–96. He wrote extensively on pastoral subjects, leaving behind a treatise on the Creed, dedicated to de la Mare and written at his instigation, another on the Lord’s Prayer, and a third on the Ave Maria, all based on his preaching, and each containing stylistic elements, such as *thema* and forms of address, common to sermons. These seem to form part of his catechetical program, which was wider than simple preaching. The focus of his teaching was devotion to the Virgin Mary and meditation on the humanity and suffering of Christ. One of the most famous preachers of his age, he was, in Bale’s estimation, “exceedingly pious and learned, as is proved by his writings, and was gifted with unusual eloquence and readiness of wit.” I will examine two sermons here, taken from his *Novum opus dominicale*, a dominical sermon collection. One of these is on the seven deadly sins and the other is on the decalogue; as we shall see, there are several points in common between Waldeby’s preaching and that of Wyclif.

The *Novum opus dominicale* is a *de tempore* collection of sermons, composed to cover the lections for the church year. The audience for Waldeby’s collection seems to have been a more educated one, groups with access to books. Waldeby writes that he will not always give the names of his authorities, nor always relate stories in full, “so that my hearers may look them up more diligently in their books,” yet at the end of his sermons,

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27 Quoted in Gwynn, *English Austin Friars*, p. 117.
he has copied out some of the material to which he had made passing reference, as a
cession to those who might not have access to the books in question.28

In a sermon for the fourteenth Sunday after Trinity, with the *thema* ‘The man who was
dead sat up’ (Luke 7:15), Waldeby preaches on the seven deadly sins. This *thema* is
divided into two distinctions, ‘the man who was dead’ and ‘he sat up,’ which lead to the
development of two principal parts. In the first principal part, Waldeby lists the Devil’s
punishment of six of the seven deadly sins, since the wages of sin are death (Romans
6:23) and the consequence of the first parents’ transgression:29 “The devil hangs the
proud, tears the envious limb from limb, kills the angry by storm, brains the gluttonous,
crucifies the slothful, and drowns the lecherous.”30 The rest of the first principal part is
spent explaining all seven deadly sins through the use of *figurae* and *historiae.*31 This is
all fairly standard; for example, pride is defined as the root of the other sins, the death of
the soul, and the elevation of oneself over others.32 The sin of envy leads to a death of

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29 Oxford, Bodleian ms. Laud. Misc. 77 (henceforth Laud 77), f. 4r: “primo dico notat horribilis sequela paterna prevaricacionis ... Mors nature vel mors iehenne sed etiam mors culp est regula et pena peccati primi parentis ade” This is a manuscript of the 15th century, composed of 119 folios containing the *Novum opus domincale.* See H. O. Coxe, *Bodleian Library Quarto Catalogues II: Laudian Manuscripts*, reprinted with corrections, additions, and an historical introduction by R. W. Hunt (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1973): p. 90. All transcriptions and translations from this manuscript are my own unless otherwise noted.
31 Laud 77, ff. 4r–5r. *Historiae* are historical snippets used by a preacher as *exempla* relating to a point to be made in his preaching; *figurae*, as used in Waldeby’s sermons, are *exempla* drawn from scripture wherein a biblical person, thing or event serves as an archetype for someone or something else in another time. See Akae, *A Study of the Sermon Collection of John Waldeby*, pp. 153–62.
32 Laud 77, f. 4r: “Primo dico quod superbia est prima et principaliter mors anime. Job 28 [18:13], ‘Consumet [brachium illius] eius primogenita mors,’ id est, superbia dicit glossa. Quod est inicium omnis peccati et hec mors est suspencio, id est, superius se et alios elevacio nam superbus est superius alios ire.”
tearing and pain felt at another’s good fortune, “since the envious believes himself to be separated from that which he sees a neighbour acquire.” The object of this first principal part seems to be to instill a healthy fear of sin’s consequences in the audience. The second principal part presents the remedy: “the wholesome remedy of heavenly compassion ... For just as death is the horrible consequence of the first transgression, so the resuscitation of grace is the wholesome remedy against that death.” The remedy for pride is, of course, humility, so if one would be raised up on high, he should think on his fragility and carnality and humble oneself like Abraham (Gen 18:1–8), who said to himself, when he saw three men approaching, “I will speak to my Lord, although I am dust and ashes.” This sermon represents a fairly straightforward exposition of the deadly sins and the contrary virtues, a topic on which Wyclif wrote several sermons. The major difference between the two lies in the fact that Wyclif was willing to bring controversy into the pulpit, and accuse his enemies of vice, whereas Waldeby’s preaching on the seven deadly sins, at least as recorded here, is straightforward and conventional, without the least mention of controversy.

Waldeby’s preaching on the decalogue is likewise conventional. In a sermon for the sixteenth Sunday after Trinity, preached on the thema “Master, what is the great commandment of the law?” (Matt. 22:36), he broaches the topic of the ten...
commandments. The closest that Waldeby comes to polemics is his denunciation of false swearing, a vice which we have seen Wyclif denounce vociferously in his own preaching. The second commandment, “you shall not take the name of your God in vain, that is, not without necessity urging, etc. You shall name him reverently and if necessity demands it, you shall swear truthfully by the same. The moderns break that commandment, who name the name of God in vain and swear falsely and deceitfully.” Waldeby relates an exemplum drawn from Gregory the Great’s Dialogues in which a small boy perishes because he blasphemes God’s name. If this story is believable, than “it is no wonder if now-a-days men, who are of greater age and knowledge and have arrived at the age of discretion, should perish through the vengeance of God.” Waldeby ends his discussion of this commandment with a catena of biblical passages (Ecclesiasticus 23:12, Psalm 14:4, and Isaiah 52:5) describing the consequences of blasphemy. The rest of the sermon deals with the remaining commandments in the same manner, demonstrating a conventional, uncontentious exposition, in contrast to Wyclif’s more polemical and controversial teaching.

The absence of polemic and controversy from Waldeby’s preaching is noteworthy. Albeit he was probably long dead by the time real controversy over Wyclif’s teachings arose in the late 1370s, there had been plenty of occasion before that time to engage in polemics.

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36 See above, pp. 187–9.
37 Laud 77, f. 6r: “Secundum mandatum non accipies nomen dei tui in uanum, id est, non sine necessitate urgete et cetera. Illud nominabis reverenter et si necessitate fuerit per illud iurabis veraciter. Istut mandatum soluunt moderni qui nomen dei in vanum nominat et false et falaciter iurant.”
38 Book 4, chapter 18, PL 77.0349.
39 Laud 77, f. 6r: “non est mirum si modo homines qui magne sunt etatis et scientie et peruenerunt ad annos discretionis per vindictam dei pereant.”
40 Ibid., ff. 6r–7r.
There was, for instance, the controversy with FitzRalph over the mendicant orders, in which Waldeby represented the Austin Friars. This does not enter into the written record of his preaching on our pastoral topics, and I would venture to guess that this would have to do with Waldeby’s consideration of his audience; it seems likely to me that the exposition of catechetical information was more important than engagement in polemic. In this regard we must also consider, of course, the differences between written sermons and those delivered orally; it has been emphasized over and again by modern scholars that model sermon collections such as Waldeby’s are often the barebones outline on which another preacher can then build his own sermons, and in such cases, the absence of polemic does not necessarily mean that the composer did not make pointed comments in his oral delivery, if the written sermons were even delivered orally,41 but the absence of polemic in Waldeby’s written sermons is nonetheless remarkable. For one, Waldeby tells us that what he wrote, he actually preached, although there is still a considerable gap between oral delivery and written form.42 More importantly, it is, in fact, this absence of polemic that is the profound difference between the two sermon collections; we have seen already that the two preachers approach the teaching of the seven deadly sins and the decalogue in a similar manner, but Waldeby’s exposition lacks the intense polemics of Wyclif’s.

3. Thomas Brinton

Thomas Brinton (c.1320–1389), bishop of Rochester from January 1372, consecrated 20 March 1373, and a member of the Benedictine Order, was a staunch opponent of Wyclif

and his teachings. Educated at both Cambridge and Oxford, Brinton was also a papal penitentiary from at least 31 December 1362 and spent much time at the papal court of both Urban V and Gregory XI, the latter of whom issued bulls against Wyclif in 1377. Brinton was among those at the Blackfriars’ Council of 1382 which sat in condemnation of Wyclif’s ideas.⁴³

In his preaching, Brinton covers several of the pastoral topics, most notably the Seven Deadly Sins (seven times), the Creed (twice), the Lord’s Prayer (once), the decalogue (once), and the sacraments (once). In many of these sermons, especially those dealing with the sacraments, Brinton opposes what he perceives to be Wyclif’s teachings. Yet at the same time, there is much common ground between the two bitter enemies, which is not surprising, given their common education in the university classroom and their common religious and reforming convictions.

A particularly useful comparison between Brinton and Wyclif is that of their Good Friday preaching, where there are strong similarities in outlook.⁴⁴ Here both men use a traditional *topos* of medieval preaching when they juxtapose Jesus on the cross and the seven deadly sins. Wyclif, as we saw above, opposes the seven last words and the seven deadly sins in his Good Friday sermons, and Brinton does the same with the wounds of Christ and the sins:

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For if we swell with pride, let us consider Christ humbled and despised; indeed, he humbled himself until death, death moreover on a cross. If we are moved to anger and envy, not loving our neighbour or also our enemy, let us consider Christ praying for his crucifiers. If we delight in gluttony and pleasures, let us consider Christ who drank gall and vinegar. If we are charmed by feasts and clothing, let us consider Christ hanging naked on the bare cross.  

Wyclif had a similar construction, making the seven wounds of Christ the remedy for the seven deadly sins in his De civili dominio. Although Wyclif shows more concern to explain the nature of the deadly sins, with little meditation on the last words or the wounds of Christ, there seems little doubt that the two men, so opposed in other areas, can only agree as to the seriousness of sin and the usefulness of this topos in explaining to their congregations how to avoid it.

The two likewise had a similar outlook on reform. Brinton was as keen as Wyclif to reform the morals of the church and its members. Several of his sermons are concerned with the behaviour of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, calling them to preach and to fulfill their other duties; his constant refrain is that bishops need to preach and teach. The greed of prelates, according to Brinton, has led to the corruption of the church and the neglect of her offices and duties:

Wherefore those who, as pillars, ought to support the church on their shoulders, and to give their lives for defense of these liberties, although they see Christ daily crucified in his members, the innocent to be condemned, poor ecclesiastics to be robbed of their benefices and the freedom of the church to be profaned to such a degree that the holy church of God is nowadays in greater servitude than it was under Pharaoh, when he had no knowledge of the divine law, nevertheless in all these, they

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45 Translated by Johnson, “The Hard Bed of the Cross,” p. 140, from Devlin, Sermons of Thomas Brinton II.253. All other translations of Brinton, unless otherwise noted, are my own.
46 DCD, II.202/2–19.
47 Something also held in common with FitzRalph, Rypon and other preachers, see Owst, Literature and Pulpit, pp. 243–7.
reveal themselves to be hirelings and not shepherds. And the reason for this is, according to report, either because they covet great offices, or aspire to be translated to richer bishoprics.  

How much of this is hyperbole is hard to tell, but Brinton clearly sees avarice as a major problem in the church of his day in much the same way as Wyclif does. The allusion to the parable of the Good Shepherd (John 10:11–8) demonstrates the fundamental agreement between the two men as to the root problem facing the church. In the parable, Jesus says that the Good Shepherd gives up his life for his sheep, but that the hireling, because the sheep are not his, will flee when the wolf attacks, and the sheep will be scattered and lost. At heart, Wyclif and Brinton are concerned about the same thing, the care of the sheep, the cure of souls, and they both see the office of shepherd as one neglected in the late medieval English church.

While the two can be seen to have a similar outlook on hamartiology and both were keen on reform, there are profound differences in other areas, particularly in matters of sacramentology. For instance, Brinton argues that solemn public confession “received by prelate and church” (a prelato et ecclesia) is more meritorious than many hidden confessions, but despite Brinton’s insistence on humility of heart, a sentiment with which Wyclif could only agree, the difference between the two is clear – key to Brinton’s position is the role of the priest and the church, whereas Wyclif came to reject this role,

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49 Sermons of Thomas Brinton, II.132: “solemnis penitencia humili corde sumpta a prelato et ecclesia est maioris meriti quam multe penitencie occulte...”
or at least its necessity.\textsuperscript{50} This is demonstrated even more clearly in their respective positions on excommunication. Brinton includes an \textit{exemplum} in one of his sermons relating the story of a certain sailor named Roger, who was known to Brinton while he was studying at Cambridge. Roger had been excommunicated by the chancellor for his “manifest wickednesses and disobediences.”\textsuperscript{51} Overtaken by despair at his excommunication, Roger cried out in pain during a long session of drinking with his companions, who asked for the reason behind the outburst. When informed of Roger’s excommunication, they urged him to return with them to Cambridge to receive the Chancellor’s absolution. Along the way, Roger attempted to drown himself, but was restrained by his shipmates, before he tricked them into letting him help man the oars and finally succeeded in drowning himself “by the inspiration of the devil.”\textsuperscript{52} Three days after the event, Brinton himself saw the body, which “in life ... was handsome and noble, yet in death I saw it black and loathsome.”\textsuperscript{53} The difference is much more than stylistic, for while Wyclif only very occasionally uses \textit{exempla}, he also and more importantly had

\textsuperscript{50} See above, pp. 88–102.

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Sermons of Thomas Brinton}, I.134: “Tempore quo studui Cantabrigie fuit quidam nautam nomine Rogerus, qui pro suis sceleribus et contumaciis manifestis a cancellario illius universitatis nominatim excommunicatus.”

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., I.134: “et quodam tempore in taberna cum sodalibus suis nimiis potacionibus diucius indulsiisset, cepit in pariete attente respicere ac horribiliter clamare, ‘Heu, heu, excommunicacio.’ Et de causa tam subiti doloris a sociis requisitus, respondit se a cancellario Cantabrigie fuisse excommunicatum et de salute anime desperare. At illi consilium dederunt vt cum eis Cantabrigiam rediret et a dicto cancellario statum suum et absolucionem humiliter peteret et optineret. Qui consenciens nauem cum illis intrauit, et cum prope pontem Magdalene in Wygenhale deuenerunt, ipsi subito exiliens seipsum voluit submersisse sed a sociis detentus et ligatus aliquandiu cum videret se propriis viribus de ipsorum manibus euadere non posse, finxit se velle cum remo eos iuare vt expedicius nauigarent. Quod et ipsi permeruerunt. Et sic instinctu diaboli circa Prestishouse in aqua saltauit. Ipsos autem nauem reducentes et baculos ei porrigentes contemptis et vlulando dixit, ‘Heu, quod vmquam fui natus, quia pro excommunicacione sim damnatus,’ Et sic desperando miserabiliter est submersus.”

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., I.134: “Ego autem infra triduum de scolis versus Lenniam rediens, et de hoc casu audiens et dolens quia solebat michi deferre litteras ab amicis, quesuii videre corpus eius, et licet in vita corpus fuerat pulcrum et procerum, in morte tamen vidi illud nigrum et deforme.”
very serious reservations about the power to excommunicate, and it is unlikely that he
would lend credence to such a story, since he did not believe that the pope, let alone a
university chancellor had the power to excommunicate anyone who had not already been
excommunicated by God.\textsuperscript{54}

Their disagreement over the nature of the Eucharist was likewise profound. While
Brinton does not often discuss the Eucharist, when he does, he describes the presence of
Christ in the host in the most fleshly of terms: "as far as sight, smell, taste, and touch it
seems to be bread, but as far as hearing through faith, by the word of Christ it is the very
same body which was assumed from the virgin, suffered on the cross, rose, and
ascended..."\textsuperscript{55} The bodily senses are enlisted only so that they can be shown to be fooled
by the marvel of the Eucharist; only hearing, aided by faith, can understand the true
nature of the consecrated host, which is not the bread that it seems to be, but is the very
same body of the Saviour that was flesh and blood, died, rose, and ascended. In another
sermon he makes it clear that it is erroneous to say that the bread remains after
consecration.\textsuperscript{56} This is where the two differ most profoundly; Wyclif, by the end of his
life, would not accept that the host after consecration did not remain bread.\textsuperscript{57} On this
issue, their views were fundamentally incompatible.

\textsuperscript{54} See above, pp. 163–5.
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Sermons of Thomas Brinton}, I.200: "quantum ad visum, olfactum, gustum, et tactum videtur
 panis sed quantum ad auditum per fidem, per verbum Christi est idem corpus quod sumptum est
de virgine, passum est in cruce, resurrexit, et ascendit..."
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Sermons of Thomas Brinton}, II.495: "Pseudoprophetas voco illos qui falsa predicant et
affirmant de ecclesie sacramentis ... de eukaristia, quod substancia panis materialis et vini manet
post consecracionem in sacramento altaris."
\textsuperscript{57} See above, pp. 46–88.
These and other disagreements about the church’s sacraments come together in a passage from one of Brinton’s sermons for the Feast of Mary Magdalene and recycled in an Easter sermon, where he attacks “false prophets,” who would seem to be Wyclif and his followers, for while the “false prophets” are not named specifically, the sermon follows quickly on the heels of the condemnations of the Blackfriars Council of May 1382, in which Brinton had taken part. He mentions in the sermon that “the church concludes with the Psalmist, ‘unjust witnesses have risen up against me; and iniquity has lied, etc.’ [Psalm 26:12], because their assertions (dicta) have been condemned publicly … through the mandate of the Lord [Bishop of] London.” This last is a reference to a mandate issued to the Bishop of London by Archbishop Courtenay ordering the publication of the condemned articles, and which uses the language of false prophets, drawn from Matthew 7:15 (“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep”). Brinton makes three points in his sermons:

First, about baptism, when they say that a bishop or priest who is in mortal sin cannot baptize or administer the sacrament. About confession they say that as long as one is rightly contrite, external confession is superfluous and useless. About the Eucharist they say that the substance of material bread and wine in the sacrament of the altar remains after consecration.

All of these points are drawn from the articles condemned at Blackfriars, and I will deal with each in turn. The first point, that these false prophets hold a Donatistic position,

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58 On this council, see above, p. 14.
59 Sermons of Thomas Brinton, II.466: “concludat ecclesia cum psalmista, Insurrexerunt in me testes iniqui et mentita est, et cetera, quia eorum dicta publice sunt dampnata. Dic quomodo per mandatum domini Londonie...”
60 The text of the mandate is found in Concilia, III.158–65.
61 Translated by Wenzel in Preaching in the Age of Chaucer, pp. 130–1, from Sermons of Thomas Brinton, II.495, where the pseudoprophetas are identified by Devlin as Wyclif and his followers.
62 Concilia, III.157: “Quod substantia panis materialis et vini maneat post consecrationem in sacramento altaris ... Item, quod si episcopus vel sacerdotus existat in peccato motali, non ordinat,
was not, however, Wyclif’s position, certainly about the sacrament of baptism, as we have already seen, nor even about the sacrament of the altar, although he came closer to a donatistic position in this latter case. The second assertion is much closer to the truth of Wyclif’s understanding of the sacrament of penance, which denied the strict necessity of confession to a priest. Brinton replies to this position from canon law: “I reply that if confession was neglected without reasonable cause, it deprives a person of the right of church burial (Decretals, On penance and remissions, canon ‘Omnis’).” The canon “Omnis” is, of course, the famous decree of the Fourth Lateran Council to which Wyclif was so vehemently opposed. Brinton’s understanding of the eucharistic doctrine of remanence is the closest to a position actually held by Wyclif, to which position Brinton replies with a reference to St. Ambrose (De sacramentis 4): “As Ambrose says in his book On the Sacraments, before the words of consecration, there is bread on the altar; but after consecration, by the power of the words bread becomes the body of Christ. And thus what was bread before the consecration is now the body of Christ after consecration.” Brinton ignores the ambiguity of this passage, the true meaning of which he thinks self-evident; the bread is no longer there on the altar after consecration, there is only the body of Christ. Wyclif, of course, would have no problem assenting to Ambrose’s words, since he did not deny the real presence, but he would interpret them to mean something quite

consecrat, nec baptizat ... Item, quod si homo fuerit debite contritus, omnis consessio exterior est sibi superflua vel inutilis.”

63 See above, pp. 103–13.


65 Preaching in the Age of Chaucer, p. 131; Sermons of Thomas Brinton, 2.495.

66 See above, pp. 95–7.

67 Preaching in the Age of Chaucer, p. 131; Sermons of Thomas Brinton, 2.495.
different from Bishop Brinton’s understanding.\textsuperscript{68} For good measure, Brinton covers the subject of images in the same sermon: “Further, recently those false prophets have been preaching and affirming that the cross of Christ and images must not be worshipped. This is manifestly false.”\textsuperscript{69} Perhaps in the oral delivery of this sermon, Bishop Brinton went into a more detailed defense of the worship of images, but here in the written record, he left it as a self-evident truth that the position of the “false prophets” was false; Wyclif’s own position on images was ambiguous,\textsuperscript{70} but that of his followers became more hardened against images.\textsuperscript{71} While it remains unclear whether Brinton has Wyclif or Wycliffite positions in mind, given the earlier references to the Blackfriars condemnations, it is not too much of a stretch to think that he might.

Comparing the preaching of Wyclif and Brinton, we can see that they are both clearly part of a larger tradition of reform within the English church; they are both concerned with the salvation of their flocks, highlighting the efficaciousness of the Cross against sin, and they are both eager to have those in ecclesiastical office perform their duties conscientiously. Both men seem to have been cut from the same cloth, attacking perceived abuses with vigour and constancy; the difference lay in their conception of what reforms were needed. The most profound differences were those related to sacramentology, where the two disagreed over the nature of the Eucharist and the practice of penance. Nevertheless, disagreement, even about so important an issue as the sacraments, should not blind us to the similarities in outlook that these two men held.

\textsuperscript{68} See above, pp. 46–88, passim.
\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Preaching in the Age of Chaucer}, p. 131; \textit{Sermons of Thomas Brinton}, 2.495.
\textsuperscript{70} See above, pp. 181–5.
4. Robert Rypon

Robert Rypon was a Benedictine monk from Durham Priory, a doctor of theology at Oxford by 1406, and prior of Finchley 1397–1405. He died some time after 1419.\(^{72}\) His sermon collection is very orderly; 59 sermons ordered *de tempore* and indexed, written in a careful script. The sermons are often addressed to the clergy, but others have indications of a mixed audience, and all are in the academic, university style.\(^{73}\) Several of his sermons deal with the topics here under discussion, especially with the seven deadly sins, the decalogue and the works of mercy. There are no extant sermons dealing with the more contested issues of the Eucharist, however, and little enough is said about confession. Nonetheless, the comparison is worthwhile; there are many overlapping themes in the two men’s preaching, and Rypon seems to have seen some value in Wyclif’s works, or at least his philosophical works, as he left a copy of a “Summa Wycliffe” to Durham priory, “probably containing the whole or parts of De logica.”\(^{74}\)

In a sermon for the ninth Sunday after Trinity, Rypon draws on Grosseteste’s *dicta* number seven in his discussion of the five bodily senses. In this *dictum*, Grosseteste describes the five senses as doors to an inner hall of memory.\(^{75}\) Using this imagery borrowed from Grosseteste, Rypon connects the senses and the Deadly Sins in a way similar to Wyclif: sight allows concupiscence to enter the individual, “with the most shameful people of thoughts of lust, of adultery, of incest ... of pride, avarice, vainglory and their followers...”; hearing allows “lies, detractions, words scurrilous, dishonest,

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\(^{72}\) On Rypon, see Wenzel, *Sermon Collections*, pp. 66–73; *BRUO*, III.1618.


\(^{75}\) Grosseteste, *Dictum 7*, transcribed from Oxford, MS Bodley 798, found at http://www.grosseteste.com/cgi-bin/dicta-display.cgi?dictum=7
lustful, perjuries, false testimony ... and they permit to enter all the followers of anger and envy”; taste and smell are grouped together and allow the gluttonous and slothful to enter; once all of the others have allowed vice to enter, “they certainly put the exterior workers, namely the hands, to illicit works, to works of avarice, lust, gluttony, envy and anger.” 76 There is more poetry in Rypon’s sermonizing, but the two are drawing on a common tradition of the senses as potential entrances for vice, an idea that goes back to at least Philo of Alexandria, 77 but which they drew, no doubt, from more proximate sources such as the writings of Grosseteste, with which they were both familiar.

Rypon, like Brinton and Wyclif, was also gravely concerned about the seven deadly sins and preached about them often. As a matter of fact, we have more sermons on the deadly sins by Rypon than by all of the other preachers here considered combined. 78 They were apparently a favourite subject of his, and he would go into much more detail than other preachers. In a sermon for the second Sunday of Lent, to take but one example, Rypon goes into elaborate detail about the nature of the seven deadly sins. In particular, Rypon is fond of naming the sins, defining them, and naming and explaining their species. Here is a short sample of what he says about pride:

76 Harley 4894, ff. 170v: “visus permittit intrare concupiscenciam cum populo turpissimo cogitacionum luxurie, adulterii, incestus ... superbie, auaricie, inanis glorie, et omnium sequacium suorum ... Auris auditus permittit intrare mendacia, detracciones, verba scurilia, inhonesta, luxuriosa, periuria ... falsa testimonia ... permittunt ista intrare ... omnes sequaces ire et inuidie permittunt intrare. Gustus et olfactus permittunt intrare populum gulosum ... Et tunc sequitur alius populus, scilicet, accidiosus ... Et tunc postquam iste populus malus inhabitauerit istam villam, tunc certe operarios extrincecos, scilicet, manus mittit ad opera illicita, scilicet, ad opera auaricie, luxurie, gule, inuidie atque ire.” Except where indicated, I follow the transcriptions and translations of Holly Johnson, who has kindly lent me her work on these sermons. All transcriptions have been checked against the manuscript, and I have modified translations where appropriate.
77 Bloomfield, Seven Deadly Sins, pp. 64–5.
78 There are eighteen extant sermons from Rypon’s pen on the deadly sins. They are listed in Wenzel, Latin Sermon Collections, p. 350.
Pride is to love our own excellence because it is to be proud, that is, to go above. So everyone who is proud, goes above himself. And it takes root in the heart, but its species appear externally, namely either in clothing or another ornament; it appears often in words and in ostentatious deeds. For example when anyone does or speaks wickedly, if his superior or his equal charitably says this to him, he immediately grumbles and justifies to him whatever he said or did. This species is called the conceit of the heart. On the other hand, if he did well and another boasted about his doing this, at once he points out about himself that he is the most wise and that no one else now knows how to do what he does. And about this deed done he commends himself, and that is called vainglory...79

Rypon’s method comes through quite clearly here: the capital sin is defined, and its various species, in this case there are nine in total, are seen to flow from it. The very extent and thoroughness of the treatment is indicative, along with the great number of sermons on the seven deadly sins which Rypon left behind, of how serious an issue these sins were for the preacher; one might almost say that he was obsessed by them, outlining them in sermon after sermon after sermon.

Where Wyclif and Brinton gave their audiences the crucified Christ as model of opposition to the seven sins, Rypon here gives his audience Mary Magdalene as a model of contrition, imitation of whom would lead to forgiveness of sin: “for the love of Jesus Christ, let us take an example from this woman ... and we will find in her deeds remedies against every sin mentioned.”80 Her weeping is seen to counteract lust and gluttony;81 her

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79 Harley 4894, ff. 87v–88r: “Superbia est amore excellencie proprie quia superbire, id est, superire. Ideo quilibet superbit, superit semet ipsum. Et radicaliter est in corde, set eius species apparent in exterioribus vtpote aut in vestibus aut alio ornatu, apparet sepe in verbis et in ostensione factorum, exempli gracia quando quis male facit aut dicit, si suus superior vel sibi equalis hoc sibi caritatue dicat, statim murmurat et iustificat quam in ipso est dictum vel factum suum. Ista species vocatur elacio cordis. Ex alia parte si bene fecerit et alius ipsum de hoc iacetet, statim indicat de seipso quod est discretissimus et quod nullus alius sciat iam bene facere sicut ipse. Et de facto composito se ipsum commendat, et hoc vocatur vana gloria.”

80 Harley 4894, f. 88v: “propter amorem Christi capiamus exemplum de ista muliere ... et inueniemus in factis eius remedia contra omnia peccata predicta.” This is not, of course, to the exclusion of the memory of Christ’s passion, to which he refers later on in the sermon, f. 89v. Cf. Ibid., f. 182v.
kissing of Christ’s feet is seen to counteract anger and envy;\(^{82}\) wiping his feet with her hair opposes cupidity;\(^{83}\) anointing his feet opposes gluttony;\(^{84}\) and all of the acts together oppose sloth.\(^{85}\) This is not unlike Wyclif’s preaching on the Magdalene, which sees her four acts of contrition as necessary acts for all those who would have true contrition.\(^{86}\)

In another sermon, again in common with Wyclif, Rypon opposes the beatitudes to the seven deadly sins.\(^{87}\) Rypon is, however, much more concerned with the species of the seven deadly sins, listing and explaining these species for each sin, both here in this sermon, and elsewhere.\(^{88}\) Rypon’s preaching on the deadly sins is more complex than that of Wyclif or Brinton; where Wyclif and Brinton oppose the vices with the same sort of lists as Rypon, Rypon goes deeper in his analysis of the sins, discussing “their offspring and ... how several sins are interrelated and progress from one to another, and what forms of misbehaviour may spring from each deadly sin.”\(^{89}\) He uses natural science to explore the inner workings of sin and human psychology, linking, for example the ages of man

\(^{81}\) Ibid., f. 89r: “In ista lacrimacione ostendit remedium contra luxuriam et gula quia in luxuria et gula est maxima carnis delectacio, set in lacrimacione fuit dolor cordis cum qua non stat delectacio carnis.”
\(^{82}\) Ibid., f. 89r: “Et in remedium peccatorum oris, puta mendacii, vaniloquii, perjurii, osculabatur pedes Christi, et osculum signum est amoris vnque in osculo datur remedium contra iram et inuidiam.”
\(^{83}\) Ibid., f. 89r: “In hoc eciam quod pedes Christi capilli tersit, dedit remedium contra cupiditatem quia capilli sunt superflua capitis per quos signatur superfluitas terrene substancie quam debemus dare pedibus Christi qui sunt infimi partes corporis, id est, pauperibus qui sunt infimi inter homines.”
\(^{84}\) Ibid., f. 89r: “In hoc eciam quod vnxit pedes eius vnguento datur remedium contra gulam quia per vnguentum signatur deuocionem oracionis, vnque vntio pedum signat deuociem oracionis quae sit cum humilitate cordis. Set oracio non est efficax sine abstinenencia et ieiunio quia pleni ventris non disponuntur deuote orare, set ieiunium est remedium contra gulam.”
\(^{85}\) Ibid., f. 89r: “In omnibus istis simul habetur remedium contra accidiam quia in omnibus hiis fecit sicut debuit.”
\(^{86}\) See Sermones II.18, especially pp. 133/1–134/8.
\(^{87}\) Harley 4894, ff. 191r–192v. Another sermon, found in Cambridge, Pembroke MS 199, ff. 125r–127r, also opposes the beatitudes and seven deadly sins.
\(^{88}\) Harley 4894, ff. 181v–182v.
\(^{89}\) Wenzel, “Preaching the Deadly Sins,” p. 166.
and the complexions to the deadly sins. And while “none of this natural science is necessarily original with Rypon, yet his way of connecting the vices to what, at that period, must have been state-of-the-art psycho-physiology could easily have found its way into a fifteenth-century equivalent to *Time* or *Psychology Today*.”

All of this is not to say that Rypon did not preach *imitatio Christi*, as, for instance in a sermon for the fourth Sunday of Advent, where he unites initiation into the church through baptism and imitation of Christ. The example of John the Baptist’s response to his questioning by the Pharisees illustrates this connection: “When John was believed to be Christ in person and he was asked, ‘Who are you?’ he responded, ‘I am not the Christ’ ... yet he was Christ in imitation just as all good men are called Christ not only because of the chrism oil at baptism, but also because however much is in them, they imitate Christ in their habits.”

John speaks truly when he says that he is not the Christ, but Rypon makes it clear that John was “Christ in imitation,” and not only John, but all good men. This is not far removed from Wyclif’s understanding of the *imitatio Christi*, but there is a crucial difference between the two treatments, for Rypon couches his in language which exalts the monastic state. He gives his audience an *exemplum* of a drunken man clothed in the habit of a friar by his wife while he sleeps, and his behaviour is restrained while he wears the habit. With a play on words, Rypon tells them that “the habit of a friar (*habitus fratris*) is your Christianity because in baptism you were made the brother (*frater*) of

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90 Harley 4894, ff. 190r–193v.
92 Ibid., f. 5r: “Quando Iohannes credebatur de esse Christus in persona et querebatur ab eo, “Tu quis es,” respondit, “Non sum ego Christus” ... tamen fuit Christus in imitacione sicut omnes boni viri dicuntur Christi nedum quia crismate vncti in baptismo, verum eciam quia quantum in eis est imitantur Christum in moribus.”
Christ." The wife in this story is said to be the church, the bride of Christ, the one church which is the one spiritual body of the faithful, who puts the habit on Christians while they are sleeping by baptizing them while they are infants, “sleeping as it were, since we did not have understanding nor the use of reason.” The point is that most Christians are only nominally Christian, since they do not do the works of a Christian. Wyclif mostly saw monks and friars as hypocrites, seeming to outsiders to be perfect, but in the end doing so only to defraud the poor. Wyclif could, however, only agree with Rypon’s statement that “if he [a Christian] is asked, ‘Who are you?’ and he responds, ‘A Christian,’ and does not do Christian works, he speaks and demonstrates falsely. If therefore he will respond well and truly, it is necessary that he be Christian in deed as he is in name.”

Rypon discusses the decalogue in a sermon for the second Sunday of Lent with the thema “so also you would walk, that you may abound the more” (1 Thessalonians 4:1). Here, the dominant theme is how to walk the road that leads to heaven: “your spiritual walk is a

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93 Ibid., ff. 5r–v: “Set dicis sicut narratur de quodam quem ebrium dormientem, vxor sua induit habitu fratris, qui eugilans diu dubitauit de se ipso quis esset ... Et quamdui fuit in habitu fratris, vxor sua refutavit eum. Reuera sic est spiritualiter. Habitus fratris est Christianitas tua quia in baptismo factus fuisti frater Christi.”

94 Ibid., f. 5v: “Vxor tua est sancta Ecclesia cui fuisti copulatus tanquam sponsa. Immo Ecclesia dicitur sponsa Christi, set vt dicit Apostolus sentencialiter omnes fideles sunt vnum spiritualiter in Christo et cum Christo. Vnum dico corpus misticum spirituale et sic, quasi, vnum corpus et vnum homo habemus vnam sponsam, id est, vnam ecclesiam que, vt dixi, induit nos dormientes habitu fratis. Quia baptizati fuiamus recentre nati quando fuiimus quasi dormientes. Quia tunc non habuimus intellectum nec discursum racionis.”

95 Ibid., f. 5v: “Vnde Iohannes Crisostomus super Mattheum Operis imperfecti, omelia 20 [?], ‘Non omnes (inquit) qui Christiani dicitur Christiani sunt. Christianorum enim opera aspiendi sunt non nomina.’”

96 See above, pp. 181–5.

97 Harley 4894, f. 5v: “Si ergo queratur ab eo,"Tu quis es?" et respondeat, “Christianus” et non facit opera Christiani, false dicit et demonstrat. Si igitur bene respondebit et vere, oportet quod sit re sicut et nomine Christianus.”

98 Ibid., ff. 69r–72v. Transcriptions and translations from this sermon are my own.
passing from this life to its end and then to heaven.”99 There are several roads, but “it is expedient to walk in the way of the commandments.”100 This way is a way to life, for “if you would enter life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17).101 A person needs two feet, Rypon tells us, and these feet are morally the love of God and love of neighbour “in which hang the whole law and the prophets,” the right foot being the love of God and the left the love of neighbour.102 The decalogue is thus reduced immediately to its distillation as the law of love, which Rypon follows with a general exploration of the love of God and neighbour, which can be summed up “walk therefore in love just as Christ loved us,” and “you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your strength and your neighbour as yourself.”103 Wyclif could only be delighted with such an exposition. Rypon goes on to give the common division of the ten commandments into three concerning God and seven concerning the neighbour.104 The first commandment belongs to the Father, the second to the Son, and the third to the Holy Spirit.105 The first commandment, you shall not have strange gods, but only one God, pertains to the Father, who is the beginning of the Trinity (principium trinitatis), and to whom the honour of latria is first to be shown.106 The second commandment, you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, pertains to the Son, “for the Son is the

99 Ibid., f. 69r: “ambulacione uestra spiritualis est transitus huius vite ad suum terminum et deinde ad celum.”
100 Ibid., f. 70v: “In via mandatorum ambulandus est expedite.”
101 Ibid., f. 70v: “Et hoc via est via ad vitam vnde Matthei 19[:17]: ‘Si vis vitam ingredi, serva mandata.’”
102 Ibid., f. 70v: “Primo inquam, oportet quod habeat pedes, qui pedes sunt moraliter dileccio dei et dileccio proximi in quibus tota lex pendet et prophete, Matthei 22[:40] ... pes dexter ... dicitur amor dei et pes sinister amor proximi.”
103 Ibid., ff. 70v–71r. The quotations are biblical, Ephesians 5:2 and Matthew 22:37 respectively.
104 Ibid., f. 71v: “tria mandata sunt penes deum et septem penes proximum.”
105 Ibid., f. 71v: “Tria inquam sunt penes deum, scilicet, vnum quo ad patrem et aliud quo ad fillium et tercium quo ad spiritum sanctum.”
106 Ibid., f. 71v: “Primum est: ‘Non habebis deos alienos set solum vnum deum istud pertinet ad patrem qui est principium trinitate et cui honor latrie est primo et originaliter exhibendus.”
name and word of the Father.” The third commandment, remember that you keep holy the sabbath, pertains to the Holy Spirit, since the Trinity is finished in the Holy Spirit. This construction is almost identical to one which Wyclif uses in one of his sermons and indeed, the closeness in wording between Rypon and Wyclif is remarkable. This does not mean, of course, that Rypon was following Wyclif, it is much more likely that they were using a common source. Which source is likely Jacobus de Voragine, who writes in his third sermon for the eighteenth Sunday after Trinity: “The first precept is: ‘you shall not have strange gods, etc.’ That pertains to the Father, who, as the font, the beginning of all deity, is principally to be adored.”

The commandments of the second tablet are analyzed in a commonplace manner, with the first of these precepts ordering to do good to the neighbour, and relating to an earthly father in the same way as the first precept of the first tablet relates to the heavenly Father, and the other six ordering away from doing evil to the neighbour, followed by an explanation of sin in work, mouth, and heart, related to each of the remaining

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107 Ibid., f. 71v: “Secundum pertinet ad filium, scilicet, ‘Non assumes nomen dei in vanuum,’ nam filius est nomen et verbum patris.”


110 Harley 4894, f. 71v: “sicut primum preceptum prime tabule pertinet ad patrem celesteni [sic], sicut et hoc primum preceptum secunde tabule pertinet ad patrem terrenum, scilicet, ‘honora patrem et matrem...’

111 Ibid., f. 71v: “Iam dicendum est de quibus preceptis penes proximum, que dicuntur precepta secunde tabule, quorum primum est preceptum affirmatum precipient cuius benefacto prosum et alia sex precepta intimare malum.”
commandments. Rypon returns once more to the commandments of the first table to say that when sin in work, mouth, and heart are taken in reverse order, they can be related to the first three commandments: the first commandment to not worship other gods implies that one ought to believe in and love only one God, but belief and love are in the heart; the second commandment prohibits an illicit speech act, so it pertains to the mouth; the third commandment requires rest from corporal works. The way of the commandments is expedient to the Christian, because it allows them to move more quickly to their heavenly goal. The love required in the two great commandments is shown through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, which Rypon outlines in a completely conventional fashion in the rest of this sermon.

Rypon’s preaching on the pastoralia bears many similarities to Wyclif’s. As with Brinton, the two are seen to share similar outlooks as to the nature of, and remedy for, sin. They likewise have similar outlooks on the decalogue and the works of mercy, and their preaching on the bodily senses invokes a long tradition, drawing on common authors, especially one of Wyclif’s favourite authorities, Robert Grosseteste. Yet Rypon’s preaching is at odds at times with Wyclif’s teaching, or with what was popularly received.

112 Ibid., f. 71v: “Sex aliis preceptis que percipiunt declinare a malo proximo est nondum quod facimus malum proximo seu ipsum ledimus tripliciter, scilicet, opere, ore, et corde ... Ledimus ipsum in opere aut in proprio corpore et sic habemus 5 preceptum, ‘Non occides’... Item ledimus proximum in ore ... ergo preceptum 8, ‘prohibebis falsum testimonium’ ... Tercio et ultimo ledimus proximum in corde ... dicit 9 preceptum ... ‘Non concuposces vxorem proximi tui nec ancillam nec bonum.’

113 Harley 4894, f. 71v: “Et corresponditer [?] modo retrogrado, scilicet, corde, ore, et opere, possunt tria, scilicet, premissa prima precepta prime tablem accipe. Nam primum preceptum est prime tablem, ‘Non adorabis deos alienos in quo precipitur solum credere et diligere vnum deum, set fides et dileccio sunt in corde. Secundum est ‘Non assumere nomen dei in vanum, quod vt constat est in ore. Tercium est diem sabbatum sanctificare quod pertinet ad regimeni operis corporalis.’

114 Ibid., f. 71v: “Ista inquam est via mandatorum in qua vt permittitur currendus est et sic expedite ambulandus.”

115 Ibid., ff. 71v–72v.
as Wyclif’s teaching at any rate. He preached a sermon with an entirely conventional view of image-worship, for example. His position, while recognizing that images bear only a likeness of what they represent,\textsuperscript{116} is expressly anti-Lollard. For instance, in a sermon for the first Sunday of Lent, Rypon asks “whether it is permitted to make images and sculptures for churches for the purpose of worship, as all Lollards and several others deny?”\textsuperscript{117} Rypon, drawing on Grosseteste, Gregory the Great, and John Damascene, answers this question in the affirmative, arguing that “pictures should be had in church, in order that those who are ignorant of letters, should at least read upon the walls what they are not able to read in books”\textsuperscript{118} and that “the universal usage of the church approves the collection of images of the saints in churches; therefore it is permissible to make them.”\textsuperscript{119} Of course, Wyclif’s position on images was somewhat ambiguous, and he wrote at one point that they could be books for the laity.\textsuperscript{120} Nevertheless, Rypon was engaging in polemic in which Wyclif, or at least his followers, were seen to hold the opposite position.\textsuperscript{121} In another sermon, Rypon defends the practice of auricular confession, although denouncing abuses related to indulgences in the same sermon, writing:

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\item \textsuperscript{116} Harley 4894, f. 19v: “sicut patet de ymaginibus in ecclesiis quorum quedam representant petrum quedam paulum, set si petrus [aut paulus?] starent iuxta illas ymagines forent eis longe dissimiles ... Sunt igitur tales ymagines solum similitudines remote, non ymagines rerum vere et propinque...” My transcription. See Owst, \textit{Literature and Pulpit}, pp. 136–41.
\item \textsuperscript{117} Harley 4894, f. 31v: “An licet facere ymagines et statuere ecclesiis ad colendum quod omnes lollardi \& alii/ nonnulli negarit.” All transcriptions and translations from this sermon are my own.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Ibid., f. 31v: “picture in ecclesiis habentur vt hii qui litteras nesciunt, saltem in parietibus videndo legant que in codicibus legere non valent.”
\item \textsuperscript{119} Ibid., f. 32r: “Sic vsus vniuersalis ecclesie ymagines sanctorum in ecclesiis collectum approbat, ergo licet eas facere.”
\item \textsuperscript{120} \textit{Sermones} I.13, 92/1–3 and above, pp. 173–7.
\item \textsuperscript{121} Aston, “Lollards and Images,” pp. 177–87.
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Those who place hope of pardon in indulgences are often in many ways deceived, especially those who, by obtaining papal indulgences from penalty (\textit{pena}), as it is commonly said, and from guilt (\textit{culpa}), believe that by the power of bulls of indulgence together with verbal confession to a selected priest, all such penalty and guilt will be altogether remitted to them. O frivolous and also vain hope, since letters of indulgence are written in this manner, not only “truly confessed” but also “contrite” by which the aforementioned sorrow must be followed necessarily so that by means of confession either penalty or blame is remitted.\footnote{Ibid., f. 102v: “... illi qui in indulgenciis spem venie reponunt quandoque multipliciter sunt decepti, presertim illi qui optenta in papale indulgencia a pena, vt vulgariter dicitur, et a culpa, credentes quod virtute bullarum indulgentie vna cum verbali confessione facta electo sacerdoti, omnis tam pena quam culpa eis totaliter remittetur. O spes friuola atque vana, cum in huiusmodi litteris indulgentie scribatur, ’vere’ nedum ‘confessis’ set et ‘contriti,’ qubus predictus dolor secundus est omnino necessarius ad hoc quod per confessionem seu pena remittetur vel culpa.” Transcribed in Owst, \textit{Preaching in Medieval England}, p. 358, my translation.}

The focus, as in Wyclif’s understanding of confession, is on contrition, without which even an indulgence does no good. But, if true contrition does exist, then, Rypon tells us, by the power of the papal indulgence, with confession to a knowledgeable priest exercising legitimate authority, perpetual punishment is converted into temporal.\footnote{Ibid., f. 102v: “Quod si vera precedent contricio, tunc cum confessione electo scienti sacerdoti iurisdiccionem sui officii legitime exercenti, virtute papalis indulgentie, commutatur pena perpetua in temporalem.”} In the end, then, Rypon sees the possibility of problems in the use of indulgences, but he is willing to affirm the power of indulgences to turn eternal punishment into temporal, something which Wyclif rejected.\footnote{See above, pp. 98–100.}

The sermons of Wyclif and Rypon demonstrate, on certain issues such as the use of images and the place and function of confession, certain differences in approach to the pastoral office. Nevertheless, there is much more in common between the two than there is disagreement; the two are both alert to the abuses possible in the distribution of indulgences, and they are alike in their denunciation of sin. As with the comparisons to FitzRalph, Brinton, and Waldeby, there are a limited number of issues that were the cause
of controversy, while the majority of material shows common interests, approaches, and traditions.

5. Philip Repingdon

Philip Repingdon was born in or before 1345, and died in 1424, five years after resigning the office of bishop of Lincoln to which he had been provided 19 November 1404, the temporalities of the see being restored 28 March 1405. He incepted in theology at Oxford in 1382.125 A sometime follower of Wyclif, the Augustinian friar preached two controversial sermons upholding Wyclif’s doctrine of the Eucharist in that same year, one on 5 June at St. Frideswide’s churchyard, Oxford, for the university’s Corpus Christi sermon, reportedly proclaiming:

Whosoever offers up the pope or bishops before temporal lords [in prayers of petition] goes against holy scripture, and that his master, Master John Wyclif, is a most catholic teacher, and that Wyclif has never determined or taught with regard to the eucharist other than what the whole church of God holds, and that his opinion on the eucharist is most true.126

The Blackfriars Council held in that year to condemn Wycliffite heresies, on 15 June ordered the chancellor of Oxford to suspend Repingdon. Repingdon, along with fellow Wycliffite Nicholas Hereford, was condemned and excommunicated on 1 July for not explicitly condemning the Wycliffite articles. Repingdon recanted and was reinstated to his regular academic status on 23 October and publicly abjured his heresies on 18 November, and began teaching once more. From this point forward, Repingdon’s career

126 FZ, p. 397, quoted and translated in Forde, “Repyndon.”
demonstrates an upward trajectory; he was elected abbot of Leicester in 1393, presided over the Augustinian order’s general chapter in 1401, served as chancellor of Oxford between 1400 and 1403; by 1404 he was chaplain and confessor to Henry IV, and that year was provided by the Roman pope to the see of Lincoln, in which he was consecrated 29 March 1405. He seems to have remained at least somewhat sympathetic to the beliefs of his youth, retaining links with “Lollard knights” and taking no action when the Council of Constance ordered Wyclif’s body exhumed and burnt.127

Repingdon’s extant sermon collection, which dates from between 1383 and 1393, is a model collection, compiled from set sources, and probably never preached in this form.128 The sermons are stylistically similar to Wyclif’s in that they take, for the most part, the ancient, homiletic form and avoid the use of exempla. The collection is a dominical gospel sermon cycle, extant in twelve manuscripts.129

Repingdon’s sermons on the pastoralia are entirely conventional. In a sermon for the third Sunday after the Octave of Epiphany, for example, Repingdon speaks of the seven deadly sins in terms of disease, quoting from Jacobus de Voragine and Nicholas de Gorran. From Voragine he draws the idea that lepers can be generally understood as any sinner,130 and from Gorran the idea that seven species of leprosy can be understood as the seven deadly sins: “Or we might understand, according to Gorran, the seven species of

129 The manuscripts are described by Forde, “Writings of a Reformer,” pp. 109–92.
130 Oxford, Corpus Christi College ms. 54 (CCC 54), f. 51ra: “Secundo per leprosum intelligitur generaliter quilibet peccator, et hinc ait Januensis sermone primo quod ‘Per leprosum possumus intelligere quemlibet peccatorum...’” All transcriptions and translations from this manuscript are my own unless otherwise noted.
leprosy as seven properties of sin: ‘For pride is signified in a tumour of the flesh, and this
is the leprosy of Ozias in Second Paralipomenon 26, after his heart was lifted up, leprosy
arose on his face. In burning wrath is signified; this is the leprosy of Simon, Matthew 26,
when Jesus was in the home of Simon the Leper...”\textsuperscript{131} The association of disease with the
seven deadly sins was a commonplace, and akin to Wyclif’s discussion of the seven
deadly sins and the seven signs of death.\textsuperscript{132} Repingdon uses another commonplace
exposition of the seven deadly sins when he associates them each with their own demon,
commenting on Luke 11:26 (‘‘Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more
wicked than himself: and entering in they dwell there’’), this time drawing on William
Peraldus: ‘‘Or by the seven wicked spirits they are able to be understood as the seven
demons mentioned in scripture, which can also be connected with the seven capital sins.
The first of the demons is Beelzebub, who in today’s gospel is called the prince of
demons. To which demon pride pertains, which is as it were the queen of sins...”\textsuperscript{133}
Repingdon’s preaching on the seven deadly sins is as conventional as Wyclif’s\textsuperscript{134} and the
two authors take part in the same homiletic and catechetical traditions with regard to this
important pastoral topic.

Repingdon’s mentions of the creed in his preaching are likewise conventional. For
instance, in a sermon for Passion Sunday, he promotes the connection of the twelve

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., f. 52va: “Vel possumus secundum Gorham per septem species lepre intelligere septem
peccati proprietaes: ‘Nam signatur in carnis tumore superbi, et hec est lepra Osee secundo
paralimpomenon 26, postquam eleuatum est cor eius orta est lepra in facie eius. In exusione
iracundia, hec est lepra Simone Matthei 26, Quando esset Iesus in domo Simonis leprosi...” Cf.
Ibid., ff. 92v–93v, where the authority is Jacobus de Voragine.

\textsuperscript{132} See above, pp. 116–30.

\textsuperscript{133} CCC 54, f. 117vb: “Vel possunt per septem spiritus nequam intelligi septem demonia de
quibus fit mencio in scriptura qui eciem septem viciis capitalibus poterunt applicari. Primum
demonium est belzebub qui in euangelo hodierno vocatur princeps demonorum ad quod
demonium pertinet superbia que est quasi regina peccatorum...”

\textsuperscript{134} See above, chapter three.
articles of faith with the twelve apostles, and emphasizes the need for these to be taught, writing that “the twelve loaves of atonement designate the twelve articles of faith, symbolically expressed by the twelve apostles standing on the table of holy scripture, which loaves are to be broken and divided up by priests and handed out to their subjects.”

The ten commandments are also dealt with in a conventional manner in a sermon for the twenty-second Sunday after Trinity. Here, the servant who owes his master ten thousand talents (Matthew 18:24) is interpreted to signify the sinner and the debt owed for transgressing the commandments: “it is said that the servant owing ten thousand talents signifies whatsoever sinner bound to punishment because of violation of the ten precepts.” Interpreting the talents as observance of the commandments is not incongruous, because “just as with the talents we acquire the temporal things necessary to us, so with observation of the commandments we acquire life eternal.” On each of these topics, Repingdon is straightforwardly conventional, drawing on trusted sources, using trusted interpretations, and avoiding controversy. There is much here that agrees with Wyclif’s usage and interpretations; the notable difference is the absence of controversial material in these sermons.

This does not mean, however, that Repingdon shied away from controversy. Simon Forde has argued that Repingdon’s sermon collection was written in order to

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135 CCC 54, f. 135vb: “Duodecim panes propiciosis signant duodecim articulos fidei per duodecim apostolos simbolice expressatos stantes super mensam sacre Scripture, qui panes sunt frangendi et digerendi per sacerdotes ac deinde transfundendi in subditos.” Quoted and translated by Forde, “Writings of a Reformer,” I.313.

136 CCC 54, f. 367*rb: “dictur quod seruus debens decem milia talenta signat quemlibet peccatorem obligatum ad penam propter transgressionem decem preceptorum.” Note that there are two folios numbered 367 in CCC 54, the second of which will be designated 367*.

137 Ibid., f. 367*va: “Vnde non incongrue obseruacionem preceptorum talenta dicuntur quoniam sicut cum talentis res nobis necessarias emimus temporales, sic cum obseruacione mandatorum vitam emimus eternam.”
disseminate the latest biblical research from the schools to a wider clerical audience, part of a larger program “to eradicate heresy and win back ground lost to Lollard preachers” by reforming clerical abuses “which promoted scandal and anti-clericalism.”

A prime example of Repingdon’s reforming concerns comes in an *excursus* in a sermon for Trinity Sunday, where he tackles the problem of Donatism. A marginal notation in Corpus Christi MS. 54 flags the passage as “A note against the opinions of the Lollards in which he says that the sacrament is conferred equally by the bad as the good, as is shown by many proofs.” Repingdon emphasized the role of the church, on whose behalf the minister offers prayer, rather than the role of the minister himself. “It is the voice of that church which he [the minister] carries in his mouth and its petition which he offers up and hands to the mercy of the Father.”

The emphasis then is on the merit of the church, and since the church’s merit is sufficient, the personal sanctity of the minister is not necessary, and “if they should say that the merits of the church are not sufficient without the holiness of the priest, this is ridiculous.” Who “they” are is not specified explicitly, but the Donatist position had been associated with Wyclif and Lollardy, the latter mentioned explicitly in the marginal notation to Repingdon’s *excursus*, and it is possible that Repingdon had these in mind, although far from certain.

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141 CCC 54, f. 212va: “concludere possimus quod sacerdotales oraciones ex parte ecclesie et nomine fiunt. Vnde non dicit ‘orem’ set ‘oremus,’ nec ‘exaudi me’ set ‘exaudi nos.’”
142 Ibid., f. 212va: “et vox est ipsius ecclesie quam ore gestat et peticio quam patri misericordiam offert et porrigit.”
Yet, while Repingdon was keen to undermine the Donatist/Lollard position, he was as keen as they were to reform the abuses which gave rise to such positions in the first place. His own position on the question of bad ministers comes down to three propositions: first, bad priests who perform the sacraments sin gravely in doing so, but God allows such sacraments to be effective; second, those who appoint such bad priests knowingly also commit grave sin; and third, the offerings of such priests irritate rather than please God.145 The corollary to this position is that good priests, since they add merit to the church’s practices, should be promoted, and bad priests, since they detract from this merit, are to be demoted, and so ultimate responsibility lies with the prelates who promote such bad priests,146 a task which Repingdon himself took very seriously indeed.147

Simon Forde has analysed the authorities used by Repingdon and compared them to those used by Wyclif and by John Eyton, an Austin Canon, who was never tainted with Wycliffism, and who was a regent master of theology at Oxford in the late 1380s.148 He found that all three men used much the same sources — Augustine, Pseudo-Chrysostom,

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145 Forde, “Writings of a Reformer,” I.323, see CCC 54, f. 215va–b: “Quamuis dominus in sua collacione sacramentorum eciam per malos ministros operetur, non tamen propter hoc minus sed magis peccat sacerdos a quo corpus Christi indigne conficitur vel consecratur, vel laicus a quo indigne sumitur. Patet istud per hoc quod quanto dominus liberior est seruo, tanto eius ingratitudo est amplius pena digna. Secunda: quamuis tam per bonos quam per malos sacerdotes oblata sacrificia oblate ecclesie preces a liberali domino acceptantur non tamen mediocriter peccant illi a quibus scierent vel ex probabilibus suspiciione ad sacramentorum vel precum ecclesie oblationem vel eciam prelacie suspepcionem sacerdotes mali prepositis bonis constituuuntur vel conducuntur ... Tercia conclusio: deus a quo oracio ecclesie per malum sacerdotem obleta acceptatur spirituali oracione talis sacerdotis nomine eius facta non placatur sed pocius irritatur.”

146 Ibid., f. 216va: “Et ex istis michi videtur patere quod cum bonis minister addat meritum speciale a deo acceptabile specialiter, sicut et malus demeritum detestabile. Boni malis in ministerium sunt preponendi, et notorie mali in administracione huiusmodi deductis necessitate refutandi.”


148 For what follows, see Forde, “Writings of a Reformer,” I.280–5.
Gregory the Great, Jerome, and several others. But while their choice of authorities was similar, it does not follow that their theology was likewise: “this selection of sources cannot \textit{ipso facto} be proof of Wycliffite sympathies; it can merely show a common temperament and approach.”\textsuperscript{149} This, along with Repingdon’s views on subjects such as Donatism outlined above, led him to conclude that “whilst there are similarities between Repyngdon and Wyclif in their concerns, their approach to them and general outlook, the example of John Eyton warns us against drawing exclusive direct debts but suggests a common cultural phenomenon and religious temperament to have existed in the late fourteenth century.”\textsuperscript{150} The evidence of the several authors studied in this chapter, and their comparison to Wyclif, bears out such a statement.

\textbf{6. Oxford, MS Bodley 649}

The anonymous preacher of MS Bodley 649, likely a Benedictine monk and possibly one John Pauntley, a monk of St. Peter’s Gloucester, wrote his sermons in a macaronic blend of Latin and English.\textsuperscript{151} In this he differs markedly from Wyclif and most of the other preachers discussed in this chapter. The differences between this preacher and Wyclif are, however, much more profound than linguistic and stylistic choices, as the preacher of Bodley 649 explicitly set himself in “opposition to the Lollards whom he regards as the single greatest threat to the proper functioning of the church and, indeed, to the stability of the kingdom of England.”\textsuperscript{152} I do not wish to equate the doctrines of Wyclif with those

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., I.285.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid., I.326.
\textsuperscript{152} Horner, \textit{A Macaronic Sermon Collection}, p. 2.
of the Lollards in a simplistic way, but rather to point to the profound differences between Wyclif’s preaching and that of an anti-Lollard preacher seeking to defend the “orthodox” understanding of penance and the Eucharist, an understanding which we have already seen Wyclif to oppose. These differences, however, should not cause us to dismiss the points held in common between the two sermon collections, for, as we shall see, there is an admixture of striking opposition and agreement between the two.

A good example of this admixture is Sermon 4 of the collection, which is a sermon for the second Sunday of Lent, and consists of a long discussion of the vices and contrary virtues, with several calls to confession and penance.\textsuperscript{153} The basic scheme of opposing Christ’s virtues to the seven deadly sins is akin to Wyclif’s scheme of opposing the seven last words to the seven sins,\textsuperscript{154} and both authors focus on the remembrance of Christ’s suffering as remedy to sin. Bodley 649 is quite explicit in this regard:

> But finally the merciful Father of heaven ... had great compassion and out of his deep goodness sent ... his own son ... who fought so powerfully on Good Friday on the cross that he conquered the fiend of hell and opened the book of the human race ... For when he, who was eternal life and Lord of all the world, humbled himself so much to become mortal and a servant ... he removed the seal of pride. When the false Jews falsely accused him, spit in his face, thoroughly beat and buffeted him – and he himself did not murmur, but patiently suffered like a lamb – he undid the seal of anger. When he poured out the blood of his heart for men’s sake, and by the excellent love and charity that he had for them died on the cross, he broke the seal of envy.\textsuperscript{155}

\textsuperscript{153} The text of the sermon, with facing page translation, is in Horner, \textit{A Macaronic Sermon Collection}, pp. 100–29. For a discussion of how this sermon fits into the tradition of preaching on the contrary virtues, see Newhauser, “Preaching the Contrary Virtues,” pp. 156–7.

\textsuperscript{154} The preacher derives his scheme from the book with seven seals from Revelation 5:1, which seals he takes to be the seven deadly sins, each of which Adam committed, locking the book of salvation for his progeny. Christ through his virtues and by his work on the cross, breaks each seal in turn, opening the book. See Horner, \textit{A Macaronic Sermon Collection}, pp. 100–2.

\textsuperscript{155} Horner, \textit{A Macaronic Sermon Collection}, p. 102.
It is through Christ’s virtues, more of which are given in the continuation of the passage just quoted, that human beings can have their sin forgiven, and penitents are told to “think deeply on his passion, and beg for aid.”\textsuperscript{156} The major difference between Wyclif and this sermon collection, is that for the author of the macaronic collection, the necessity to confess one’s sins orally is paramount:

And if [you depart] from this world in mortal sin, you will go to the fire of hell without any grace or mercy and will be damned eternally. And so Holy Mother Church ... having concern about that harsh punishment and fearful judgment, that her daughter, every Christian soul that is vexed by the devil and bound with the chains of mortal sin, may be able while she is here to confess her sins and repent of them with Peter, fully forsake them with James, and by grace with John to such an end in this age that in the fearful judgment Christ ... not only will he show her his utmost punishment but mingle his mercy with justice, shouts to him with all her heart and says, “\textit{Lord, help me},” as I took for my preaching.\textsuperscript{157}

The church stands as mediator of grace through the sacrament of penance; penance is needful to avoid eternal damnation, and as the preacher had made clear earlier, confession, an integral part of penance, is to be made to a “spiritual father.”\textsuperscript{158}

In another of these sermons, conformity to Christ, a theme we have already seen in Wyclif, is explained by means of an analogy in which the Christian’s clock needs to be made to follow the sun, Christ, by visiting the watchmaker, the curate, again highlighting the necessary function of the priesthood in the sacrament of penance,\textsuperscript{159} but also the

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., p. 102.
\textsuperscript{157} Horner, \textit{A Macaronic Sermon Collection}, pp. 106–8.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., p. 104–6: “you must confess your offence and your sin. You shall not just display the beautiful, tell one part [of your sins] and hide the other, but you must tell your spiritual father plainly as you have offended.”
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., p. 36: “If you do not conform yourself to Christ, your clock moves falsely, you do not follow the sun. In this way, examine yourself in every kind of sin. If your clock moves too fast or too slow, if your conduct does not conform to the life of Christ, set it better and make it go regularly. If it be so broken that you do not know how to repair it or put it together yourself, go in these holy days to our watchmaker, your curate, show him your defect that he may help you.”
common tradition on which the two authors were drawing, which focused especially on Christ’s passion.\textsuperscript{160} Wyclif had not rejected the necessity of penance, but had undermined contemporary practice by removing the necessity of confession to a priest and placing all of his emphasis on internal contrition.\textsuperscript{161} Yet the nature of sin, and even the nature of the virtues opposing sin is much the same in the two conceptions. Where they differ is not even in the ultimate source of the forgiveness of sins, which is seen in both to be the work of Christ on the cross, but rather in the mechanism of how Christians acquire the grace of forgiveness. For Wyclif, there does not need to be an intermediary between the individual sinner and God, but for the author of Bodley 649, there is a necessary intermediary, the church and its ministers.

In fact, the author of Bodley 649 is of the opinion that Wyclif and the Lollards are trying to undermine the church and the Realm of England. In one sermon, Lollardy is spoken of as a danger to the church and kingdom as their numbers grow:

\begin{quote}
Wycliffe … was armed in heresy in every way and was the leader of the devilish war … Many sharp attacks were made on the courtyard of God, Holy Church. First, those Lollards hurled many vicious words at the poor friars, they slandered their poverty and the order that the church approved … Then they laid a tunnel under the column of the possessioners, dug deep for the treasure of the church, set up the means for the temporal arm to seize our possessions … So much did they grow in number and error, so much did they begin to be bold and foolhardy that they rose up against our lord the king to destroy him. They planned to make Lollards of clergy, and, what is worse, to have subverted our faith and all the true laws of the Lord God.\textsuperscript{162}
\end{quote}

Here the attack which we saw Wyclif level against the mendicants has been reversed; Wyclif and the Lollards are seen as being motivated by greed to attack and undermine the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[160] On this tradition, see Pantin, \textit{The English Church}, p. 190 and passim.
\item[161] See above, pp. 88–102.
\item[162] Sermon 6, \textit{Macaronic Sermon Collection}, p. 156.
\end{footnotes}
church. It is a little strange that Lollards should be seen to “set up the means for the temporal arm to seize our possessions” and then seen to grow bold and attempt to overthrow the king, until we read a little further and realize that the king is seen by the preacher as a “heavenly soldier who lives blessedly, our liege lord the king, whom God sent to us in defense of the church and the salvation of the whole realm.” The king is armed with the “golden arms of grace” with which he survived the treacherous rebellion of Oldcastle and the Lollards, and survived the battle of Agincourt and winter war in Normandy. The preacher is effusive in his praise of the king, making of him a Christ-figure, a saviour in the battle against Lollardy:

Joshua is interpreted as ‘savior,’ and signifies our lord the king whom God sent for the salvation of all of us. This spiritual Joshua raises the shield of faith on high. He does it through exercise of holiness of life, through building of holy places, through support of God’s ministers, through disputing of false Lollards. Our shield is raised high, our faith is much strengthened through the death of Lollards and especially their captain who recently burned.

Here is not the place to discuss the Oldcastle revolt, which is clearly the context of this passage, but suffice to note that the preacher is concerned as much with political matters as with salvation of souls; the good of the church and the good of the kingdom are inextricably interwined.

163 Ibid. p. 156.
164 Ibid., p. 158: “Unless he had been armed with the golden arms of grace, he had been overthrown among the rebel lords and the Lollards who rose against him. Unless he had been safely armed with the arms of grace, he was likely to have died on the field or been captured in war at Agincourt. Unless he is protected with the golden arms of grace, he could not endure the battles of Normandy in winter.”
165 Ibid., p. 168.
The necessary role of the church in the distribution of grace is a theme oft-repeated in Bodley 649. In the preacher’s formulation of the Articles of Faith, for instance, that dealing with the forgiveness of sin is articulated as “I believe sins are forgiven through the sacraments of the church,” thereby placing the emphasis on the role of sacrament in the forgiveness of sins. In another reference to the Articles of Faith, the preacher equates the communion of saints with the sacrament of the altar: “I believe in the communion of saints. That is: I believe that the blessed body of Christ, true flesh and blood, is under the aspects of bread and wine on the altar through the power of the words of Christ that the priest says at Mass.” It seems that the preacher has a lay congregation in mind, as he tells his audience that they should “not marvel about this interpretation for it is the interpretation of the holy doctors.” Clerical authority is invoked in the interpretation of the Eucharist; the laity are supposed to know and believe that the host is the true flesh and blood of Christ after consecration, but they should not inquire into how this might be so: “the circumstances of this article, how the color and taste of bread and wine remain without the substance of bread and wine, and the other circumstances … you are not required to know, they do not pertain to you. So do not make fine distinctions within, do not wrack your brain about it. Take the substance of your creed and leave the subtlety to the clergy.” The argument from authority here is directed against Wyclif

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169 Ibid., p. 168.
170 Ibid., p. 168.
and the Lollards, who in this same sermon are taken for rebels against God and king, and are seen elsewhere to err in their understanding of the Eucharist.\textsuperscript{171}

Bodley 649 counters the Lollard position on images as well. He counsels his audience to avoid irreverent behaviour in church by meditation on their “calendar and cross;” bringing to mind the sufferings of Christ, they should venerate the cross. Here he once again names the Lollards directly as his target:

\begin{quote}
But, perhaps, you say as the Lollards teach … “Why should I genuflect to the cross since it is stone or tree trunk?” To this I say that even if the image of the crucifix that you see with bodily eyes is made from stone or wood, nevertheless it represents the pains that he suffered for you on the wood, and so each image represents him whose image it is.\textsuperscript{172}
\end{quote}

This is a rather moderate defense of images, and Wyclif had said much the same thing, as far as representation.\textsuperscript{173} However, Bodley 649 goes farther, giving the use of images apostolic sanction: “And that you who are a layman should see the passion of Christ and the meritorious life of other saints and more quickly be moved to devotion, the apostles introduced the use of images.”\textsuperscript{174} If further proof were needed, the “miracles and marvelous deeds” done through images provide ample evidence of their apostolic foundation.\textsuperscript{175} This, then, is where Wyclif and the author of Bodley 649 diverge on the issue of images, as Wyclif saw them as a much more recent invention, and claimed that the more important authority, that of the scriptures, mentioned nothing of images.\textsuperscript{176}

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{171}] Sermon 19, \textit{Macaronic Sermon Collection}, p. 458: “Jerome tells in \textit{Lives of the Fathers} … of a certain old hermit of noteworthy life and behavior … But he was blind, that is he wandered in error on one point, on the sacrament of the altar just as the Lollards.”
\item[\textsuperscript{172}] Sermon 17, \textit{Macaronic Sermon Collection}, p. 432.
\item[\textsuperscript{173}] See above, pp. 181–5.
\item[\textsuperscript{174}] Sermon 17, p. 432.
\item[\textsuperscript{175}] Ibid., p. 432.
\item[\textsuperscript{176}] See above, pp. 183–4.
\end{itemize}
Despite these major differences and the attack on Wyclif and Lollardy exhibited in Bodley 649, there are many themes and *topoi* that the two share. We have already seen a strong likeness in regard to the vices and contrary virtues, but there are other points in common as well. One major Pauline *topos*, drawing on the Epistle to the Ephesians 6:10–17, that the two bring forward regularly in their collections is that of the spiritual armament of faith, hope, and charity. In both this is an extremely important *topos*, and described in near-identical terms: the Christian must be armed with the shield of faith, the helmet of hope, and the armour of charity.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has surveyed the sermons of a number of authors in an attempt to demonstrate some of the similarities and differences to be found between Wyclif and his contemporaries. On the whole, the similarities far outweigh the differences. It is clear that all of these authors were part of a common catechetical tradition; over and over again, the same *topoi*, the same themes, the same approaches to the preaching of the *pastoralia* can be seen. Moreover, most of these collections demonstrate a desire to reform the English church, and our preachers are generally concerned about the same problems; the abuses of simony, of greed and avarice, the abuses associated with indulgences, and the abuse of power, all at the expense of the cure of souls. Yet, while there was certainly a common culture to these sermons, there were sometimes profound differences over a limited number of topics. Two issues come to the forefront: penance and the Eucharist; it is beyond doubt that there was great controversy in this period over the nature of these two sacraments, and that Wyclif’s teachings were at the heart of this controversy, as he and/or

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177 See Sermons 1, 4, 6, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, and above, pp. 139–49.
his ideas are singled out for condemnation more than once. The issue of Donatism can also be seen to have been controversial, and while Wyclif himself did not hold a Donatistic position, it was popularly associated with his name. Images are another area of controversy, and again, while his own position demonstrates much ambiguity, iconoclasm was also popularly associated with Wyclif. While these disagreements cut right to the heart of the Christian message, this should not stop us from seeing the important similarities of outlook amongst Wyclif and his contemporaries; they shared a common religious culture, and above all, a common concern for the cure of souls demonstrated in the desire to teach the laity the fundamentals of church dogma and to reform the abuses of the church hierarchy.
Conclusion

John Wyclif was essentially a conservative preacher. His concerns were much the same as those of his contemporaries: the need for basic, but thorough, catechesis in the fundamentals of the Christian faith, what we today might call Christian formation; the need for moral instruction, the need to go beyond mere rote knowledge of the Articles of Faith, the sacraments, and the other pastoralia to a lived faith of virtue and good works; and the need to protect the sheep of Christ’s flock, the faithful, from the ravening wolves, those hypocrites and antichrists, false prophets and Pharisees, who for worldly gain would send countless souls to perdition.

At the same time, Wyclif’s preaching on the pastoralia is a mixture of controversial and conventional elements. There are five major areas that were sources of controversy: the Eucharist, penance (including indulgences), images, disendowment, and certain church structures, i.e., the mendicants and prelates. Not all of these are directly related to the pastoralia; Wyclif’s sermons on virtue and vice, for example, are full of polemic against the friars, but this material is only tangentially related to the subject of virtue and vice, that is, the friars enter into the conversation about virtue and vice only because they are, to Wyclif’s mind, exemplars of vice.

Nor do all of these receive the same amount of attention from Wyclif and his contemporaries. Penance and the Eucharist are far and away the most discussed issues, which is to be expected, as they cut straight to the heart of Christian practice and late medieval piety. These were the topics that seem to have upset both Wyclif and his contemporaries the most. On one side, Wyclif formulated a position that denied
transubstantiation on all conceivable grounds, arguing that it was a dangerous lie perpetuated by avaricious forces within a church become too worldly, designed specifically to bilk the faithful of their money and goods. On the other side were those who viewed transubstantiation as an irrefutable article of faith, necessary to salvation, to deny which would be to exclude oneself from the church outside of which no salvation is possible. The doctrine of penance seems to have been even more troublesome. On the one hand, everyone thought that it was a necessary part of Christian practice, focused for the most part on the contrition of the penitent. On the other hand, there was the practice of auricular confession, which Wyclif seems eventually to have thought was not strictly necessary, a position opposed by most of our other preachers. Yet there was no unanimity on the related subject of indulgences, for the otherwise “orthodox” preacher Robert Rypon recognized the dangers of indulgences, although he did not go so far as to denounce them in the same manner as Wyclif had done.

A very important controversial topic after Wyclif’s time, image worship, received relatively little attention from Wyclif, whose position appears not to have been as solid as that on the Eucharist, and the topic received only slightly more attention from some of his contemporaries. Yet the issue became much more important as time went on, as Wyclif’s putative followers engaged in iconomachy. It seems that the controversy surrounding this issue was not yet in full flower, but the seeds of controversy were already sown and beginning to take root, as can be seen in the preaching of Thomas Brinton, for instance.

Disendowment, on the face of it one of the more radical and dangerous positions in Wyclif’s teaching, receives very little attention from his contemporaries. Those who knew his work best, the likes of Thomas Brinton, for instance, who sat in condemnation
of Wycliffite ideas at the Blackfriars Council, makes no mention of this doctrine, preferring instead to take a stand on the issues of transubstantiation and images. Of all the authors surveyed here, only the author of Bodley 649 attacks Wyclif’s position in this regard. Nor does this teaching take away from our conception of Wyclif as a conservative preacher, for the ideal was apostolic. This had been the main reason for Wyclif’s earlier sympathy for, and friendship with, the mendicant orders, for they all espoused the ideal of apostolic poverty. Over time, Wyclif’s sympathy changed to antipathy, but not because he moved away from the ideal of apostolic imitation indeed we have seen that the imitation of Christ and his apostles was the centrepiece of his conception of virtue. Rather, it was because he came to see the mendicants as failing in their practice of the apostolic life; they were not *viri apostolici*, but rather hypocrites and Pharisees, claiming holiness but practicing secret vice and deception.

In all, there is a perhaps surprising amount of common ground between Wyclif and his contemporaries, although it probably should not be so surprising at all. For while the differences of opinion were sharp and profound, nonetheless, all of these authors were, of course, co-religionists worshipping the same Triune God. Not only did they hold a common religion, but they were part of a common reforming and catechetical tradition, one that stretched back to at least the Fourth Lateran Council. Wyclif and the other authors surveyed here, inasmuch as they were preaching the same *pastoralia*, were part of this tradition, which developed the very syllabi that legislated the preaching of these topics. More than this, these subjects are handled in much the same way across different authors, the same *topoi*, the same structural elements, the same authorities. The prime example of this is the contrary virtues, preached by Wyclif, Brinton, Rypon, Waldeby,
and in Bodley 649. The range of authors employing this scheme gives evidence to its perceived value despite what could be very profound, even intractable, differences of opinion. Common authorities, such as Augustine, Grosseteste, Anselm, Jerome, Gregory the Great, demonstrate the reliance of our authors on the common intellectual inheritance of the medieval West; the composers of these sermons are inheritors of this tradition, receiving it and handing it on again in their own writings, protecting and conserving the tradition as they perceived it.

In the end perhaps the best way to summarize Wyclif’s place in the history of preaching in the Latin West is to say that his sermons were conventional and conservative, concerned with the traditional catechetical program of the pastoral legislation emerging from Lateran Four. The disagreements with his contemporaries amounted to a few select, but profoundly important, issues, each side convinced that they were the upholders of the tradition. Wyclif’s positions on these topics brought the admiration and devotion, although not always understanding, of many of his contemporaries and successors, and raised the ire and fury of a good many more.
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