INTRODUCTION

The Englishman John Wyclif, the greatest theologian of his time, held the magisterial chair (as they call it) at Oxford for a great many years. Alongside the truly apostolic life that he led, he far surpassed all of his fellow Christians in England in his genius, eloquence and manifold erudition. In the year 1360 after the birth of our saviour, the eternal Father roused him in his spirit so that he could stand for his truth in the midst of a cloud of impious locusts, as Christ's brave champion, and become the most unconquerable organ of his age against Antichrists. He was the most powerful Elias of his times in his rectification of all distortions. He was as one and the first after the loosing of Satan, who in the darkness of that time bore the light of truth, who dared to acknowledge Christ, and to reveal the supreme infamy of the great antichrist. He shone out like the morning star in the middle of a cloud, and remained for many days as a faithful witness in the church.[1]

These are the words of the Protestant historian and polemicist John Bale (d. 1563), whose exuberant assessment of Wyclif's campaign for church reform in the late fourteenth century did much to secure his reputation among Protestant intellectuals in Reformation and post-Reformation England and Europe. Bishop Bale, who himself became a religious exile after the institution of the Act of the Six Articles in 1539, and then again under the punitive regime of Mary Tudor, clearly felt that Wyclif had prophetically anticipated the course of church history in his own day.[2] For him, the Oxford scholar was like the 'the morning star' shining out in the darkness of his times, an expression that did much to influence scholarly perceptions of Wyclif in the twentieth century, which were dominated by the image of the heresiarch as 'the morning star of the Reformation'.[3] In spite of the

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1 *Illustrium maioris Britanniae scriptorium, hoc est, Angliae, Cambriae ac Scotiae Summarium* (Ipswich: P. van der Straten, 1548), fo. 154v (my translation).

2 Though introduced under Henry VIII, the Act of the Six Articles endorsed and prescribed six fundamental aspects of Catholic teaching, and remained in force until the king's death in 1547. Bale, together with many other reformers, left England for Europe after the act had been passed by Parliament.

3 See the classic studies by A.G. Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959) and *The English Reformation*, second edition (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989). See also Margaret Aston's more cautious and nuanced interpretation of the relationship between

heroic status that Wyclif enjoyed posthumously among prominent Protestants like Bale and the martyrologist John Foxe, a good number of more recent scholars have sought to downplay the significance of Wyclif and the Lollards in the history of the Reformation itself. K.B. McFarlane offered a famously cynical assessment of Wyclif's influence on Reformation culture in his study of Wyclif and religious nonconformity, suggesting that 'he did little or nothing to inspire and in effect everything possible to delay [the Reformation]'.[4] The more recent studies of J.J. Scarisbrick, Eamon Duffy and Richard Rex offer, in their different ways, comparable assessments of the post-medieval influence of Wyclif and the Lollards.[5] Whatever its significance in relation to Wyclif, the Reformation can also be seen, and has increasingly been seen recently, as a potentially distorting lens, which may result in him and other medieval religious dissenters becoming 'a kind of historiographical football, less important in their own right than for the contributions they made, or did not make, to later events'.[6]

This new collection of translations in part seeks to demonstrate that understanding Wyclif solely in relation to his desire for ecclesiastical

Wyclif's followers and Reformation thought in 'Lollardy and the Reformation: Survival or Revival?', *History*, 49 (1964), 149–70, and 'John Wycliffe's Reformation Reputation', *Past and Present*, 30 (1965), 23–51. Both essays are reproduced in her *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Medieval Religion* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), pp. 219–42 and pp. 243–72. Ann Hudson's *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) has done more than any comparable volume to offer a fully historicised study of the activity of Wyclif and his followers. Hudson argues that an accurate understanding of Wyclif's status as a reformer must begin in his own time, rather than in the Reformation (p. 62). See also the more recent study by G.R. Evans, *The Roots of the Reformation: Tradition, Emergence and Rupture*, second edition (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), pp. 214–25.

4 *John Wycliffe and the Beginnings of English Non-conformity* (London: English Universities Press, 1952), p. 186.

5 Scarisbrick is most vehemently dismissive, suggesting that '[Lollardy] scarcely threatened the old order. It lacked political "clout"', *The Reformation of the English Church* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), p. 46. Duffy argues that the influence of the Lollards has been 'overestimated', and Rex maintains that their anticipation of certain aspects of Reformation doctrine does not entail that 'they somehow paved the way for the Reformation'. See Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 6; Richard Rex, *The Lollards* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002), p. 115. A recent study that offers a more sympathetic and wide-ranging account of Wyclif's place in the history of the Reformation is Peter Marshall's superb monograph, *Heretics and Believers: A History of the English Reformation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2017), pp. 100–3.

6 J. Patrick Hornbeck II, *What Is a Lollard? Dissent and Belief in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 18.

reform, whether in relation to the culture of the English Reformation or not, is potentially to underestimate the work that secured his reputation as a leading talent in the Oxford schools (and, indeed, throughout Europe), and to risk obscuring the close interconnectedness of his philosophical, theological and political ideas.[7] Indeed, it is worth noting that John Bale, who was himself in possession of many of Wyclif's most erudite philosophical and theological works, was careful to acknowledge his enviable skills as a scholar and theologian.[8] His disciple John Foxe, in the 1570 edition of his *Actes and Monuments* (popularly known today as the *Book of Martyrs*), described him as 'a great clerke, a deepe scholeman, and no lesse experte in all kinde of Philosophie'.[9]

Until his contentious views on the eucharist became known, even Wyclif's academic opponents spoke highly of him. One prominent academic adversary, borrowing an epithet usually reserved for Thomas Bradwardine, was happy to describe Wyclif as a 'profound clerk', even as he expressed his desire that the doctor should make better efforts to defend his controversial or eccentric philosophical positions.[10] Even Thomas Walsingham (d. ca. 1422), a chronicler who had nothing good to say about John 'Wikkebeleue' (Weakbelief), as he called him, found it difficult to disguise the fact that Wyclif was an influential and popular figure who enjoyed the support of some of the most powerful people in the land.[11] But after a papal bull condemning his teaching had been issued to the university's chancellor in 1376, and following his dismissal from Oxford in 1380, his reputation within the academy abruptly declined.[12] The decision of one commentator, generally assumed to be Adam Stockton, an Austin friar and Cambridge scholar, to scratch

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7 Wyclif's status as a scholar has received welcome recognition in a number of recent studies. See Anthony Kenny, *Wyclif* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Stephen Lahey, *John Wyclif* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Ian Levy, *John Wyclif: Scriptural Logic, Real Presence and the Parameters of Orthodoxy* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2003); Ian Levy (ed.), *A Companion to John Wyclif* (Leiden: Brill, 2006). See also Levy's *John Wyclif's Theology of the Eucharist: Scriptural Logic, Real Presence and the Parameters of Orthodoxy* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2014), a revised and expanded version of his earlier volume.

8 For the list of works known to Bale (which includes some that were erroneously ascribed to Wyclif), see *Scriptorum Illustrium maioris Britanniae, quam nunc Angliam et Scotiam vocant, Catalogus* (Basel: J. Oporinus, 1557–59), vol. 1, pp. 451–5; vol. 2, p. 163.

9 *Actes and Monuments of these latter and perilous dayes, touching matters of the church* (London: John Day, 1583), p. 448.

10 This was the Carmelite friar John Kenningham, who engaged with Wyclif's ideas in a number of academic determinations. See *FZ*, p. 12.

11 For references to John Weakbelief, see *Knighton*, pp. 402–3 and pp. 406–7.

12 See the more detailed discussion in the following section.

out the marginal label 'venerable teacher' from a manuscript of his containing the text of Wyclif's *On the Power of the Pope*, and replace it, within a matter of months, with the defamatory 'accursed deceiver' is a vivid indication of how suddenly scholarly opinion shifted.[13] But it would seem that condemnation and academic estrangement, whilst dealing Wyclif a difficult blow, did not entirely overshadow the perception of his earlier brilliance or his later sacrifices. The contemporary Augustinian chronicler Henry Knighton (d. ca. 1396), before carefully enumerating Wyclif's heretical opinions, chose to describe him as 'the most eminent doctor of theology in his days', who was 'reputed second to none in philosophy', and 'incomparable' across the different fields of philosophical learning.[14] Though Knighton was undoubtedly hostile to Wyclif's beliefs (albeit not as outspokenly hostile as Walsingham), he chose to characterise him (perhaps with unwitting admiration) as a man who 'wished and was ready' to face imprisonment or even death in their defence.[15]

Today, outside the academy, relatively little is said about the fourteenth-century scholar and reformer; he certainly enjoys nothing of the prominence of Martin Luther or John Calvin in the popular imagination, and all but a small number of his Latin works are unavailable in translation; others are only now being edited.[16] Even within the academy, the English Wycliffites or Lollards continue to attract rather more attention than Wyclif himself, especially those who communicated their ideas in the vernacular. The Middle English tracts and sermons that have been ascribed to him are most probably the products of his followers (none of them can be attributed to him verifiably), and offer a subtly different and rather less abstract version of his theology and political beliefs from the one we find in his Latin texts.[17] The

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13 Trinity College Dublin, MS 115, p. 179 (this manuscript is paginated rather than foliated).

14 *Knighton*, p. 42.

15 *Knighton*, p. 250.

16 To date, only *On Universals*, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, *On Simony* and the *Trialogue* have been translated (the second of these only in an abbreviated form), together with a selection of shorter treatises. Luigi Campi has recently edited *De Scientia Dei* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Ivan Mueller is in the process of completing an edition of *De Ideis* (with Vilém Herold), and is also editing *De Intellectione Dei* and *De Volutione Dei*. Mark Thakkar is working on a new edition and translation of Wyclif's logical writings.

17 See, for example, the texts included in *Select English Works*; in *The English Works of Wyclif*, ed. F.D. Matthew, revised edition (EETS: o.s. 74, 1902), and in *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*, ed. Anne Hudson, new edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

text with which he is most popularly associated, the Wycliffite Bible, though it tangibly emerged in the wake of ideas that Wyclif had originally promulgated in his scriptural writings, sermons and commentaries, is almost certainly principally the work of other translators. Mary Dove, in her magisterial study of the Wycliffite Bible, argues that Henry Knighton and Archbishop Thomas Arundel, both opponents of vernacular translation in general and of the Wycliffite Bible in particular, were keen to associate Wyclif with its production. Knighton was certainly explicit in his claim that its translation was Wyclif's personal responsibility. Such a gesture may have been governed by politics as much as by facts, but on the basis of surviving contemporary evidence Dove concludes that it is likely that 'at the least [Wyclif] initiated the [translation] project and actively supervised it'.[18] This remains fully consistent with the likelihood that Wyclif was not directly involved in the production of the translated text of the Middle English Wycliffite Bible.[19]

Wyclif's life

Estimates vary in respect of Wyclif's date of birth, though it is generally agreed that he must have been born between 1325 and 1335, depending upon the age at which he matriculated as a student in Oxford. His family probably lived in the village bearing their name in Richmondshire, North Yorkshire, though little more is known of his early life. He was probably one of the two John Wyclifs ordained

18 Mary Dove, *The First English Bible: The Text and Context of the First Wycliffite Versions*, p. 81. For a brief survey of the context of the translation and its relation to Wyclif's exegetical approach, see Jeremy Catto, 'The Wycliffite Bible: The Historical Context', in *The Wycliffite Bible: Origin, History and Interpretation*, ed. Elizabeth Solopova (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 11–26. For texts relevant to the Bible translation debate, please consult Dove's later volume, *Earliest Advocates of the English Bible: The Texts of the Medieval Debate* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010).

19 See *The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments with the Apocryphal Books, in the Earliest English Versions made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and his Followers*, ed. Josiah Forshall and Frederic Madden, 4 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1850). The text of Forshall and Madden's edition is now more than 150 years old, and the need for a new edition that takes account of subsequent manuscript discoveries and advances in research and in textual scholarship has recently been expressed by Ann Hudson and Elizabeth Solopova. They are currently working on preliminary research towards such an edition. See Elizabeth Solopova, 'Introduction', in *The Wycliffite Bible: Origin, History and Interpretation*, ed. Elizabeth Solopova (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 1–8 (p. 5).

as priests in 1351, and became a Bachelor of Arts at Oxford some
time before 1356, when he is recorded as a probationary fellow of
Merton College. The *Old Catalogue* (*Catalogus Vetus*) of Merton Fellows
contains an entry for Wyclif that has attracted significant scholarly
attention. The catalogue, which was prepared by Thomas Robert ret-
rospectively before his own fellowship came to an end in 1422, contains
a note under the name Wyklyf suggesting that he had neither been a
fellow there nor remained in college throughout the whole of his pro-
bationary year.[20] If he had indeed not been a fellow at Merton there
would be no reason to include his name in the catalogue, but it is clear
that the note indicates a troubled relationship with the college. Wyclif
became master of Balliol by 1360, but there is no clear evidence that
he studied there as an undergraduate, though many scholars have ges-
tured towards the college's strong Northern associations as a possible
reason for his matriculating there.[21] It has been rightly observed, nev-
ertheless, that moving from Balliol, via Merton, back to Balliol would
have marked rather an eccentric pattern of decisions on Wyclif's part.[22]
This might arguably make Merton into a more likely candidate.[23]

It is at this point in his career that he would have become a regent, or
teacher, but records of the existence of two other contemporary John
Wyclifs at Oxford have inevitably frustrated efforts to supply a defini-
tive narrative of Wyclif's early life. Workman's claim that on entering
Oxford as a young undergraduate Wyclif was moving to the location
where he would spend 'all but a few years' of his life is not inaccurate,

20 Merton Record 3690, fo. 64v. The text of the note has been read in contradictory
     ways. In his early transcription, George Brodrick reads it thus: '[Wyclif] was
     first a fellow of this house, [and] kept one year of probation entirely within it'.
     J.A. Robson corrects Brodrick's text so that it has the opposite sense: '[Wyclif]
     was neither a fellow of this house nor kept one year of probation fully within it'.
     The correction would seem to derive from the transcription that appears in P.S.
     Allen and H.W. Garrod (eds), *Merton Muniments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928),
     p. 37 (and facing-page facsimile). Robson fails to acknowledge that Brodrick rec-
     ognised that the text could be transcribed in either way. See George C. Brodrick,
     Memorials of Merton College with Biographical Notices of the Wardens and Fellows
     (Oxford: Clarendon, 1885), p. 215; *Oxford Schools*, pp. 10–11.
21 J.I. Catto, 'Wyclif and Wycliffism at Oxford, 1356–1430', in *The History of the
     University of Oxford II: Late Medieval Oxford*, ed. Jeremy Catto and T.A.R. Evans
     (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 175–261 (p. 187).
22 Andrew Larsen, 'John Wyclif (c. 1331–84)', in *A Companion to John* Wyclif, ed. Ian
     Levy (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 1–65 (p. 13).
23 See, for example, Ian Levy (trans.), *John Wyclif: On the Truth of Holy Scripture*
     (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), p. 4. Workman discusses
     Wyclif's relation to the various colleges in detail, but favours Balliol (*John Wyclif*, i.
     pp. 63ff). Hudson and Kenny are not explicit about the identity of his undergraduate
     college. See 'Wyclif, John (*d.* 1384)', *ODNB*.

but his academic career was not unbroken by other commitments.[24] He resigned from his position as master of Balliol to take up a living in Fillingham, Lincolnshire, in 1361. Wyclif's living provided him with a source of income, but he soon felt the need to return to academic study, thus requiring episcopal approval for a period of leave from his parochial duties. On receipt of a licence of non-residence from John Buckingham, Bishop of Lincoln, in 1363, he was able to return to Oxford, when he is known to have resided first at Queen's College (then known as Queen's Hall).[25] Shortly afterwards, in 1365, Archbishop Simon Islip made him warden of Canterbury College, a mixed college of monks and secular scholars. After Islip's death a year later, the college became a purely monastic establishment at the hands of the incoming Archbishop of Canterbury, Simon Langham, rendering Wyclif's position as a secular master untenable. He did not formally depart from the college until early in the next decade, but in the meantime acquired a more convenient living at Ludgershall, Buckinghamshire, with a licence of absence for academic study for two years from 1368.

Wyclif's early academic career, like those of all secular scholars, progressed from early writings on logic (1360–65), which are mostly unexceptional, to more expansive and original philosophical treatises on metaphysics and epistemology (known collectively as the *Summa de Ente*, written between ca. 1365 and 1372). *On Logic*, the first academic treatise that Wyclif produced, is dated to around 1360, the year in which he became a Master of Arts. The process of becoming a Master of Arts involved a ceremonial 'inception' or beginning, which had to be licensed in advance by the university chancellor, and which typically involved a candidate's tutor swearing on oath that he had attained the requisite academic standard for the award of the Master's degree.[26] Wyclif's more original *Continuation of Logic* and *Third Treatise on Logic* (a simple continuation of the preceding volume) were produced over the next few years, the latter probably having been completed before 1363.[27]

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24 *John Wyclif*, i, p. 59.
25 Payments were made to the college in Wyclif's name for the years 1363–64 and 1365–66. See John R. Magrath, *The Queen's College* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1921), p. 112.
26 See J.M. Fletcher, 'The Faculty of Arts', in *The History of the University of Oxford: The Early Oxford Schools*, ed. J.I. Catto (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 369–400 (p. 388).
27 *Latin Writings*, p. 4. On Wyclif's logical writings, see E.J. Ashworth and P.V. Spade, 'Logic in Medieval Oxford', in *The History of the University of Oxford II: Late Medieval Oxford*, ed. Jeremy Catto and T.A.R. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992),

The *Summa de Ente* is divided into two books, the first of which reveals the core components of Wyclif's metaphysical system. Here we find material on the nature of being, truth, universals, time, and the predicaments (or categories) of Aristotelian logic. This first book supplies the foundation of much that is most distinctive and controversial about Wyclif's philosophical system. It is here that he defines himself as a philosophical realist. The second book applies the metaphysical insights and methods of the first book to the analysis of God: divine knowledge and understanding, divine will, the nature of the Trinity, and divine ideas. Much of what he says in these texts, particularly those of the first book, can be linked to his later theological and political ideas with little difficulty.

From the position of Regent Master, a Master of Arts who had some responsibility for teaching, Wyclif progressed to his Doctor of Theology at some point in 1371 or 1372. The crowning achievement of this part of his academic career is his series of postils, or expository notes, on selected passages from the text of Scripture (now known as the *Postilla super Totam Bibliam*). These together constitute perhaps the most important commentary of its kind since the influential literal postils of the Jewish convert and gifted Hebraist Nicholas of Lyra (d. 1349), now normally known as the *Postilla Literalis*.[28] As is perhaps to be expected of a scholar steeped in Jewish learning, Lyra had chosen to privilege the literal sense throughout his postils, as Wyclif was himself to do. It was not to Judaism, however, that either owed his conception of the literal sense, but to Thomas Aquinas, whose definitive contribution to fourteenth-century exegetical literalism will be explored below.

Wyclif's postils were introduced by a *principium* (**12i**), a kind of inaugural lecture delivered by an incepting Doctor of Theology. They would have been delivered as a series of lectures within the university. I

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pp. 35–64 (pp. 54–6). Note that Ashworth and Spade choose to follow Ivan Mueller in dating Wyclif's *Continuation of Logic* and *Third Treatise* to 1371–74. See John Wyclif, *Tractatus de Universalibus*, ed. Ivan J. Mueller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. xxxvii–xxxviii. This latter range of dates would certainly explain the philosophical sophistication of these two texts, but it would seem unlikely that Wyclif would have chosen to produce a second logical treatise so long after the publication of *On Logic*.

28 On Lyra see Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (Cornell University Press, 1984), pp. 170–95; *Nicholas of Lyra: The Senses of Scripture*, ed. Philip D.W. Krey and Leslie Smith (Leiden: Brill, 2000); *Nicholas de Lyre, franciscain du XIVe siècle, exégète et théologien*, ed. Gilbert Dahan (Turnhout: Beropols, 2011).

have included here all of the most relevant parts of the commentary that have been edited by Gustav Benrath and Beryl Smalley. Though these together do not represent anything like the full lecture series, they still offer a valuable insight into Wyclif's work as an experienced exegete. In the material from Wyclif's postils translated in the first section, he deals with the interpretation of figurative language (**9ii** and **iii**), the impossibility of literal falsehood in Scripture (**10**), and the expression of time in scripture (**11ii** and **11iii**), topics that are clearly informed by his desire to explain the sometimes elusive truthfulness of the text.

Roughly contemporary with the *Postilla* are Wyclif's academic exchanges with his senior contemporary at Oxford, the Carmelite John Kenningham. These took place between 1372 and 1374, and are recorded as a series of determinations, academic debates which would normally involve an oral response to a question articulated by another scholar. Maarten Hoenen has suggested that there is probably a connection here to the magisterial determination, at which a master (Wyclif) would respond to a question posed by a doctor (Kenningham). This determination was in some ways unusual, he argues, as Wyclif and Kenningham appeal to written documents in order to determine their opponent's position, rather than relying exclusively upon what he had said. This may suggest that neither was present when the other delivered his response.[29] The series is not preserved in its entirety, but survives as six fairly substantial texts, of which four are Kenningham's and two Wyclif's.[30] The substance of the debate is concerned with scriptural exegesis, and Wyclif defends an approach informed by realist metaphysics against Kenningham's objections.

The works for which Wyclif is best known, the majority of which form part of his massive *Summa Theologiae*, emerged between 1375 and his death in 1384. It is here that we find his important views on the constitution of the church, his controversial theory of lordship by grace (and attendant views on the respective roles of secular monarch and pope), scriptural truth and (most importantly) the nature, administration and function of the sacraments. These were to be challenging times

29 Maarten J.F.M. Hoenen, 'Theology and Metaphysics: The Debate between John Wyclif and John Kenningham on the Principles of Reading the Scriptures', in *John Wyclif: Logica, Politica, Teologia*, ed. Mariateresa Fumagalli Beonio Brocchieri and Stefano Simonetta (Florence: Sismel, 2003), pp. 23–55 (pp. 28–9).

30 For Kenningham's opening determination (*Ingressus*), see *FZ*, pp. 4–13. His *Acts* and second and third determinations appear in *FZ*, pp. 14–42, 43–72 and 73–103, respectively. For Wyclif's two surviving determinations against Kenningham, see *FZ*, pp. 453–76 and pp. 477–80.

for Wyclif, both academically and politically. His entry into the service of the Crown probably began shortly after his teaching about lordship became known. The publication of *On Divine Lordship* in 1373 or early in 1374 was followed by the gift of Lutterworth priory, Leicestershire, from the king in April of that year (in exchange for Ludgershall), suggesting that Wyclif may already have been involved with the Crown by this time. His account of the proceedings of the Parliament of 1371 in the second book of *On Civil Lordship* (**37**), together with a gift of tithes from the king in that year, have prompted speculation that he had actively been involved in royal service even earlier.[31]

On 26 July 1374, Wyclif was commissioned to travel to Bruges with six others for the purpose of discussing papal taxation of the clergy. This was his first known public engagement on the Crown's behalf. The mission achieved little, and Wyclif's contribution to the debate is undocumented; he was not included on a second, similar mission the following year. His opposition to papal taxation became apparent only a few years later when he appeared before the king's council in 1376 at the request of the Duke of Lancaster, John of Gaunt. In response to questioning, Wyclif argued robustly that the king was legally entitled to withhold papal taxation of the clergy. His association with Gaunt, which continued subsequently, made him visible as a potentially dangerous ally of the Crown, and the church responded accordingly. A summons to St Paul's to appear before Archbishop Simon Sudbury and a panel of bishops followed shortly afterwards. Wyclif was accompanied by John of Gaunt, Lord Henry Percy and four friars (one from each of the four orders), but the proceedings became heated from the beginning.[32] Lord Percy asked Wyclif to be seated, a gesture that infuriated the Bishop of London, William Courtenay. An argument ensued between John of Gaunt and the bishop, and the proceedings dissolved before meaningful discussion could take place. The anger escalated into a riot among the crowds assembled outside the next day, from which Gaunt and Lord Percy fled.

On 22 May 1377, Gregory XI condemned nineteen propositions attributed to Wyclif in five bulls; the condemned propositions were taken from the first book of his massive *On Civil Lordship*, and related principally, though by no means exclusively, to questions of lordship

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31 G.R. Evans, *John Wyclif: Myth and Reality* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2005), p. 142.
32 *Chronica Maiora*, pp. 80–5; *Anonimalle Chronicle*, pp. 103–4. Joseph Dahmus, *The Prosecution of John Wyclif* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), pp. 7–34; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 65–6.

and ecclesiastical property.[33] Early the following year, in response to instructions from Archbishop Sudbury and the Bishop of London, William Courtenay, Wyclif was summoned to appear at Lambeth Palace, where he was tried by a council of bishops. He was able to argue that his conclusions were orthodox, however, and was dismissed only with the request that he should not to discuss the condemned conclusions within the schools or publicly.[34] The leniency of the inquisitors at Lambeth may owe something to the earlier disruption of the proceedings by Sir Lewis Clifford, emissary of Joan of Kent, the king's mother, who demanded that they should not pass a formal sentence on Wyclif.[35]

Between the winter of 1377 and the spring of 1378, Wyclif began work on his exegetical *magnum opus*, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, which builds on the literalistic method of his earlier scriptural postils. This is the most systematic and comprehensive exposition of Wyclif's exegetical practice (see **7i**, **7ii**, **8**, **9iii**). It was clearly influential in England: almost half of the manuscripts in which it survives were copied by English scribes.[36] It is here that we find the clearest indication of the place that Scripture occupied in Wyclif's religious regime. Though it acted as the embodiment of divine truths, he did not entirely lay aside patristic and scholastic authorities in his scholarship and teaching. A brief perusal of the material translated in this volume will reveal that the Doctor Evangelicus did not quite advocate a *sola Scriptura* theology.[37]

With Gregory's death in March 1378, the pressures of papal persecution receded for Wyclif. Shortly afterwards, he must have begun work on his major ecclesiological treatise, *On the Church*. It is here that he presents his conviction that the true church is represented by the community of the predestinate (**27i** and **27ii**). The following year, he wrote two tracts on related topics, *On the Office of the King* and *On the Power of the Pope*. What unites these treatises, all of which rely on the theory of lordship by grace that Wyclif presented in detail in *On Civil Lordship*, is the conviction that regal power should be exercised in secular affairs (including secular affairs of the church), and sacerdotal power in spiritual matters (**37i** and **37ii**). In *On the Power of the Pope*, he

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33 The text of the first bull is translated in the Appendix (**44**). For a list of the propositions in English translation, see *Chronica Maiora*, pp. 192–7.

34 Dahmus, *The Prosecution of John Wyclif*, pp. 69–70.

35 Dahmus, *The Prosecution of John Wyclif*, p. 68.

36 *Latin Writings*, p. 55.

37 But see Michael Hurley, '"Scriptura Sola": John Wyclif and His Critics', *Traditio*, 16 (1960), 275–352.

challenges the pope's position as head of the church, claiming that only Christ can truly be such (**28**). He also insists that the pope cannot truly be Christ's vicar until he renounces his substantial endowments, which were for Wyclif the main cause of the manifest corruption within the contemporary church. Since it was the king's duty to 'repress the rebel' (**36**), as Wyclif suggests, it was also technically his duty to reform the church.

Between 1380 and 1381, Wyclif produced a trilogy of texts devoted to religious error: *On Simony, On Apostasy* and *On Blasphemy*. These texts together represent Wyclif's most vitriolic attack on ecclesiastical abuses, and it is here that we find a focus for his growing anti-fraternalism. The four orders of friars, the Franciscans, the Augustinians (or Austin Friars), the Dominicans (or Black Friars) and the Carmelites, originated relatively late in the history of the Christian church. All date from the thirteenth century, but it was not the recency of their establishment that offended Wyclif. Indeed, he would earlier have counted them among his allies, committed as their orders were meant to be to the ideal of the propertyless life. Rather, it was the perceived abandonment by many friars of precisely this foundational ideal that frustrated Wyclif. He generally refers to the friars as 'private' religions, by which he seems to mean that these religions were funded by income generated privately, rather than through taxation.

Though the friars were not the only problem, and not all of them were strictly a problem for Wyclif at all, they become a regular irritant for him at around this time. The two avaricious daughters of the horseleech of Proverbs 30:15 are frequently alluded to by him at this time in his criticism of the excesses of the contemporary church (**28**). In the clergy, he suggests in the fourth chapter of *On Blasphemy*, there are no fewer than twelve such daughters: 'the pope, his cardinals, bishops, archdeacons, officials, deacons, rectors, presbyters, monarchs, friars, door-keepers and pardoners'.[38] Elsewhere, the friars are included within the 'four sects' introduced into the church by Satan: the secular clergy, the canons, the monks and the friars. At the feet of the friars are laid some of the most egregious errors of the church by Wyclif from this point in his life onwards (see **13**, **20**, **26**, **27ii**, **31**, **33**).

Later in 1381, with the publication of *On the Eucharist*, new issues presented themselves. Since as early as 1372, Wyclif had been wrestling with the metaphysical implications of transubstantiation. Whilst he accepted that Christ's body and blood were really present in the

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38 *De Blasphemia*, p. 54.

bread and the wine of the consecrated eucharist, his philosophi-
cal realism prevented him from accepting that the substance of the
bread and wine themselves ceased to be, as the canon law decrees of
Pope Innocent III had insisted. Wyclif's understanding of eucharistic
change therefore required that the substances of the bread and the wine
should *coexist* with the body and the blood of Christ (thus anticipating
the Reformation doctrine of consubstantiation). Though Wyclif had
certainly denied that annihilation of substances was possible in his
Fragment on Annihilation (part of *On the Externally Productive Powers of
God*, his last properly philosophical work (**6**)), and had even applied this
insight explicitly to the metaphysics of the Eucharist in this same text,
it was not until the publication of his lengthy dedicated treatise, *On the
Eucharist*, in 1380 that his ideas met with official censure. A committee
of twelve scholars was assembled by the Chancellor of the University
of Oxford, William Barton, in 1380 to consider Wyclif's teaching. It
included six friars, two monks and four seculars.[39] The council found
two conclusions to be particularly worthy of censure, among others
that Wyclif and his followers had advanced within and outside the
university:

> First, that the sacrament of the altar, the substance of the material bread
> and wine, which were there prior to consecration, really remain after
> consecration.
>   Second, which is more execrable to hear, that in that venerable sacra-
> ment, the body and the blood of Christ are not there either essentially
> or substantially, or even corporally, but only figuratively or tropically;
> therefore, Christ is not truly present in his own, physical person.[40]

Wyclif was supposedly present as his teaching was condemned, but
refused to accept that he was in error. He called upon the king for pro-
tection, but, when John of Gaunt arrived in Oxford, he demanded only
that Wyclif should say nothing more on the subject.[41] In response, the
following year, Wyclif published his Confession, which summarised his
eucharistic doctrine, making no concessions either to Barton and his
committee or to Gaunt.[42]

    In June of that same year, there was political upheaval in the shape
of the Peasants' Revolt, which resulted in the murder of Archbishop
Simon Sudbury and others. The chaplain and radical preacher John

39 See the list in *FZ*, pp. 112–13 (**45**).
40 *FZ*, p. 110 (**45**).
41 *FZ*, pp. 113–14 (**45**).
42 A full translation of Wyclif's *Confession* is available in Lahey, *John Wyclif*, pp. 226–43.

Ball, among the leaders of the revolt, was in contemporary and slightly later accounts represented as one of Wyclif's disciples.[43] The chronicler Henry Knighton regarded Ball as the 'precursor of [Wyclif's] pestiferous contrivings'.[44] Ball had certainly done much to challenge hierarchies and encourage social equality, but whether he knew Wyclif personally remains unclear. Wyclif later observed in *On Blasphemy* that the protesters were 'motivated by good impulses', even though the murder of the archbishop had been regrettable and wholly unnecessary (**39**). Indeed, if Wyclif sought to distance himself from the revolt in this treatise, it is not difficult to understand why some of his contemporaries felt that his teaching did much to encourage it.[45]

The appointment of William Courtenay as Sudbury's successor brought with it further condemnation the following year when he assembled the Blackfriars Council on 17 and 21 May to consider Wyclif's published conclusions. The council became known as the Earthquake Council because of the violent earth tremor that ran through it (recorded in Wyclif's *On the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (**41**)). On 21 May, it published a total of twenty-four conclusions that it deemed worthy of condemnation, of which the first ten were said to be heretical (**46**).

Wyclif's removal from Oxford to his living in Lutterworth did nothing to silence him, nor to stem the flow of inflammatory publications. Here he produced the *Trialogue*, which offers a kind of conspectus of his main ideas, broadly following Peter Lombard's *Sentences* in its structure. It takes the form of a series of fictional debates between the characters Alithia, Phronesis and Pseustis, whose Greek names identify them respectively as truthful, wise and mendacious speakers. Alongside this and the *Evangelical Opus*, which was unfinished at his death, he produced a number of provocative letters and pamphlets, including two that explore the state of the papacy after Gregory XI's death in 1378 (during which time Wyclif would have been at work on his massive exegetical treatise, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, and *On the Church*). In his last years, Gregory had restored the papacy to Rome from Avignon, and the papal conclave of predominantly French cardinals that had assembled on his death had been compelled by

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43 See R.B. Dobson, *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*, second edition (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983), pp. 373–8, for translations of the relevant texts.

44 *Knighton*, p. 277. See p. 276 for the Latin text.

45 See Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 68. Hudson looks especially at William Rymington's *XLV Conclusiones*, which suggest that Wyclif's teaching was the cause of the uprising. See Oxford MS Bodley 158, fo. 202r.

increasingly riotous crowds to elect a Roman successor. Bartolomeo Prignano, Archbishop of Bari, became the new pope, adopting the name Urban VI. Though he had answered the need for an Italian, if not a Roman, pope, Urban had been restless and bent on reform from the outset. He went about it brutally, insisting that his cardinals should renounce benefices and gratuities, and that the curia should be cleansed of its accumulated luxuries and endowments. Predictably, Wyclif welcomed this change, as the pleasantries with which he greets the pontiff in his 'letter' of 1384 seem to suggest (**32**), but it was not long before Urban's French cardinals grew tired of his intemperate manner, and, within months, his controversial election was declared invalid. That autumn, having fled from Rome, the French cardinals elected Robert of Geneva as a rival pope, who took the name Clement VII and established his curia in Avignon. This marked the beginning of a schism that extinguished any brief hope that Wyclif seemed to have had for the papacy,[46] and seemed only to confirm his belief that he was living in the last days, as he clearly states in his short condemnatory tract, *On the Schism* (**33**). The rivalry between the two popes perhaps articulated itself most violently in the abortive crusade against Clementists in France led by Henry Despenser, Bishop of Norwich (d. 1406), that began on 17 May 1383, and which gained momentum from existing Anglo-French tensions.[47] Indeed, from this point onwards until September of the same year, the ongoing war with France, as Michael Wilks eloquently observed, briefly became a holy war.[48] Despenser's crusade (usually known as the Norwich Crusade or the Despenser Crusade) was supported, and possibly even initiated by, Urban VI, who offered plenary remission to all who would agree to participate in the military effort. Plenary indulgences of this kind, which could be administered uniquely by the pope, offered remission of all temporal punishment for sins committed (and which had been absolved through the confessional), which meant that purgatorial punishment

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46 For a concise account of the events leading up to the schism, see Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, third edition (London: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 168–9.

47 Most notably, the conflict between the two nations that dated back to 1337 (the so-called 'Hundred Years' War'), and the revolt of the Flemish weavers against the Clementist Louis de Male, Count of Flanders, in 1382, which Henry's crusade had in part been intended to support.

48 'Roman Candle or Damned Squib? The English Crusade of 1383', an inaugural lecture delivered in 1980 at Birkbeck, University of London, and reproduced in *Wyclif: Political Ideas and Practice*, selected and introduced by Anne Hudson (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2000), pp. 253–72.

could effectively be avoided. They had been used since the time of the first crusade (1096–99), and their exploitation by the church during military campaigns attracted justified criticism. Wyclif condemns the Despenser Crusade openly in several of his last Latin writings (two of which are translated here: **33** and **42**), as well as in his 'letter' to Archbishop Courtenay (**40**).

Wyclif's last years saw his health degenerate; he suffered a stroke in 1382, which was clearly debilitating (it possibly lay behind his inability to answer the citation of Urban VI, for which he apologises to the pontiff in **32**). His second stroke, late in December 1384, left him with only days to live; he died on the last day of that month. After his death, Archbishop Arundel condemned eighteen items taken from his *Trialogue*, and then in 1407, in the first version of a notoriously draconian document known as the *Constitutions*, he forbade the reading of Wyclif's works or the ownership of English translations of the scriptures.[49] It was not until the Council of Constance, which concluded in 1418, that many of Wyclif's ideas were condemned as heretical. The council recommended that his body should be exhumed. It was not until 1428, however, that his remains were dug up and burned, and thereafter removed from holy ground.

Wyclif's metaphysics

At the core of Christian philosophical systems in late medieval Europe were theories about the nature of being, which served as the foundation for questions about God and the created universe. Being is the unifying theme of Wyclif's early philosophical works, those metaphysical texts comprising his *Summa de Ente*, which were composed ca. 1365–75, following his earlier work on logic.[50] Though the generic title *Summa*

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49 See Nicholas Watson's influential analysis of the effects of the *Constitutions* on English vernacular writing, 'Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409', *Speculum*, 70 (1995), 822–64. See also Vincent Gillespieste, 'Vernacular Theology', in *Middle English*, ed. Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 401–20, and Kirsty Campbell, 'Vernacular *Auctoritas* in Late Medieval England: Writing after the *Constitutions*', in *Author, Reader, Book: Medieval Authorship in Theory and Practice*, ed. Stephen Partridge and Erik Kwakkel (London: University of Toronto Press, 2012), pp. 178–97.

50 For a detailed discussion of Wyclif's metaphysical system, see Alessandro Conti, 'Wyclif's Logic and Metaphysics', in *A Companion to John Wyclif*, ed. Ian Levy (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 67–125.

de Ente is not one that Wyclif is known to have used himself, it is clear that these texts were intended to form a whole or a *summa* of sorts. By comparison with his later writings, these texts were slow to attract editorial interest, and the lack of easy availability of all extant copies of a single text further hampered early efforts. Indeed, it was only with the publication of Ivan Müller's *De Universalibus* in 1985 that scholarly curiosity about Wyclif's philosophy was adequately rekindled, and the task of editing the unedited texts addressed. This has resulted in the recent appearance of Luigi Campi's edition of *On Divine Knowledge*, and editorial work on the remaining texts of the *Summa de Ente* is now well under way.

Agreement about the structure of Wyclif's *Summa de Ente* has emerged only gradually, and it seems that the arrangement of texts he finally decided upon had been preceded by rather different plans.[51] It is now generally accepted nevertheless that the final version of the summa must have been divided into two books of seven and six volumes, which respectively address issues of a philosophical and theological nature. This is evident from their titles:

Book 1	Book 2
On Being in General	*On Divine Intellection*
On Primary Being in General	*On Divine Knowledge*
Eradicating Errors Concerning Truths in General	*On Divine Volition*
Eradicating Errors Concerning Universals in General	*On the Trinity*
	On Ideas
On Universals	*On the Externally*
On Time	*Productive Power of*
On Predicamental Being	*God*[52]

In the first five, as their titles generally suggest, he began recording his convictions about the reality of universals systematically, presenting

51 On the ordering of the contents of the *Summa de Ente*, see the pioneering study of S.H. Thomson, 'The Order of Writings of Wyclif's Philosophical Works', in *Českou minulostí: Essays Presented to V. Novotny* (Prague: Jan Laichter, 1929), pp. 146–66. Luigi Campi has recently argued that a reference to 'Tractaus 13' in the two extant copies of Wyclif's *On Divine Knowledge*, which was classified by Thomson as identifying a chapter of *On Time*, is actually a reference to the internal structure of *On Predicamental Being*, which, he contends, must therefore have existed as discrete treatises before being combined in a single volume. Each of these would have dealt with a separate category. See 'Yet Another "Lost" Chapter of Wyclif's "Summa de Ente": Notes on Some Puzzling References to "Tractatus 13"', *Vivarium*, 49:4 (2011), 353–67 (p. 355).

52 An accurate overview of the structure of the *Summa de Ente* and the themes of its constituent texts is provided by Williel R. Thomson in *Latin Writings*, pp. 14–17; see also Lahey, *John Wyclif*, pp. 7–15.

his most detailed account of their nature and significance in the fifth, *On Universals* (1368–69). To believe in universals as Wyclif did was to maintain that the act of identifying a dog as a dog or a man as a man was to identify a particular with its real universal nature. Such a nature was as real as any particular dogs or men, but was necessarily anterior to them. Unlike them, however, it was not subject to degeneration or decay. Indeed, if all particular dogs and men were to cease to exist, their universal natures would remain. Quite how these natures were shared, and exactly how they were to be defined, was much debated among realists, but none doubted that universals were as real as particulars, in range of different ways.

As a realist, Wyclif opposed the teaching of philosophical nominalists, whose position on universals he emphatically rejected. Nominalist thinkers, both contemporary and historical, maintained that a proposition such as 'John is a man', far from identifying a particular man with a universal essence, simply identified him with a universal label, *man*, or a universal concept in the mind (defenders of the latter view are generally known as *conceptualists*).[53] In *Eradicating Errors Concerning Universals*, he presents knowledge of universals as a moral imperative, equating the origins of all modern sin with a failure to understand or believe in universal natures (**1**). In the second chapter of his definitive *On Universals*, which was probably written shortly after *Eradicating Errors* and shares much common ground with it, Wyclif offers his elaborate scheme of five kinds of universal, in part of an extended refutation of contemporary claims that Aristotle had rejected universals (**2**). Here, he draws on Robert Grosseteste's commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*, offering a typology of universals that descends from the supreme universal as an idea or exemplar in the mind of God to written or conceptual signs that might be applied to a given class of entities in the world. In order to stress the lack of significance of the latter, he is careful to suggest that Grosseteste had felt that they were of such negligible value as to be irrelevant to philosophical enquiry. The references to ideas at the two highest levels of Wyclif's fivefold scheme anticipate his later comments in this treatise about Aristotle's response to Plato, which suggest that, far from rejecting universals outright, Aristotle had only questioned the possibility of Platonic ideas. Such

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53 For an accessible introduction to debates about the nature and reality of universals, accompanied by a selection of philosophical texts in translation, see *Five Texts on the Medieval Problem of Universals*, ed. and trans. Paul Vincent Spade (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994).

ideas were problematic for Wyclif because Plato represented them as being self-subsistent, unlike his own divine ideas, which were sustained by the mind of God or the superior causes.

Though Grosseteste certainly influenced Wyclif's metaphysical ideas profoundly, the most notable source for his views on the nature of universals was the earlier Merton scholar Walter Burley (d. ca. 1344), who had famously engaged in academic disputes with the English Franciscan philosopher William of Ockham (d. 1347), perhaps the most famous exponent of nominalist logic and metaphysics in Oxford in the first half of the fourteenth century. Wyclif mentions Ockham by name only once in *On Universals*, and speaks of him respectfully, even as he rejects his teaching. Throughout the *Summa de Ente* and his later writings on theology and politics, nominalist scholars are repeatedly dismissed as victims of meaningless fantasies or modern philosophical fashion. Burley wrote extensively on the topic of universals, and, like Wyclif, produced a dedicated treatise on the topic.[54] His beliefs about the reality of universals became gradually more extreme as his career progressed.

The fact that Wyclif believed in universals at all might tempt us to regard his metaphysical system as a largely conservative one, a consequence, perhaps, of his broadly Augustinian theology. His regular complaints about the threats presented by contemporary philosophical fashions certainly seem to appeal to the cherished philosophical standards of a former age. Nominalism had been at the height of its influence in Oxford and Paris in the first half of the century, however, so nominalist ideas were not the exclusive province of Wyclif's fashionable contemporaries in the schools. Indeed, complaints about the errors of the 'moderns' were common in scholastic debate, and the Latin label *modernus* was a convenient term of abuse for an academic adversary. Wyclif was himself identified as 'a certain teacher of modern errors and heresies' by William Rymington, a contemporary opponent who criticised him principally in relation to his teaching on the church.[55]

The final philosophical idea that informs Wyclif's later teaching, and which had the most controversial consequences, is his insistence that annihilation is metaphysically impossible. He first presents his arguments against annihilation in the *Fragment on Annihilation*, part of his *On the Productive Power of God*. I have included the whole of the

54 Walter Burley, *Tractatus de universalibus*, ed. with German translation by Hans-Ulrich Wöhler (Leipzig: Verlag der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999).
55 See Rymington's rejoinder to the Wyclif's *Responsiones ad Conclusiones XLV*, Oxford, MS Bodley 158, fo. 188r (my translation).

first section of the *Fragment on Annihilation* in the first chapter (**6**).
It is a highly technical text (though I have included explanations of
unfamiliar scholastic terms in the Glossary at the end of the volume),
and its central claim about the impossibility of annihilation, if unusual
and potentially controversial metaphysically, was not in itself offen-
sive, and certainly not heretical. It was only when it was applied to the
Eucharist in order to deny the possibility of the substance of the bread
and wine being destroyed that it became a dangerous and heretical idea.

Freedom, necessity and divine omnipotence

Necessity, Wyclif claims repeatedly throughout his philosophical and
theological works, lies behind all that happens in the created universe.
There was an important sense in which this belief could not be untrue:
if God was truly omniscient, as the Christian community believed, then
all moments of time had to exist in the divine mind eternally, which
meant that he had to know about future events in the world before they
actually happened. Such a belief, in its simplest form, is ostensibly a
deterministic one, since God's knowledge of something happening in
the future cannot not entail that it will come to pass at a given time.
It would therefore seem that Wyclif's position was necessarily incon-
sistent with any meaningful understanding of human free will (or, by
extension, of merit, righteousness and sin). Yet his writings indicate
that his views about the workings of necessity were subtler than this.
Whilst they certainly contain elements that could be classified as deter-
ministic, they were far from incompatible with a Christian belief in
human free will. In the first chapter of *On Divine Volition*, he insists that
God must necessarily know about all instants of time, including future
instants. Such knowledge, he argues here, is eternally present to God,
and all that God wishes must be (**3**). He goes on to explain in chapter 7
of the same treatise, however, following Richard Fitzralph, that human
will must be causally prior to divine will when a human chooses to
do something, even though God necessarily knows about it (**4**). This
explanation of the compatibility between divine foreknowledge and
human freedom is more accessible than what is said by Wyclif on the
topic elsewhere, though it remains seemingly paradoxical: what is done
by a person in the world is rendered necessary by God's knowledge of
it (and his will that it should happen), yet God's knowledge of what that
person does does not act as a causal antecedent to their doing it.

Wyclif's beliefs about necessity impacted on significant aspects of

his theology and ecclesiology, including his views on free will, merit and salvation. His exegetical method also explicitly recognises the need to acknowledge divine omniscience and the infallibility of divine fore-knowledge. It was in response to this that he developed his idiosyncratic theory of temporal ampliation, which he used to explain apparent linguistic anomalies in the text of Scripture, and hence to uphold his belief that all scriptural propositions were literally true. This theory, and the conception of time, eternity and necessity that underpinned it, were vociferously opposed by John Kenningham in his determinations against Wyclif, and will be considered in more detail in the following section.

Scripture and the nature of scriptural truth

Wyclif was dignified with the title 'Evangelical Doctor' in recognition of his belief in the supreme authority of the scriptural text, a belief that informed all parts of his teaching. His biblical postils and *On the Truth of Holy Scripture* together represent his attempt to offer a systematic account of the nature of the holy text, as well as to illustrate his exegetical method in practice. For him, the text of scripture was nothing less than God's word, present eternally in the divine mind and mediated by his grace through the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New. Since the divine author was incapable of falsehood, the text had to be true in all of its parts, as he goes to great lengths to demonstrate in his exegetical and homiletic writings. If contemporary scholars found what they believed to be errors or inconsistencies in Scripture, this probably meant that they were naively reading it as an ordinary book. In its truest reality, by the profoundest of contrasts, Scripture was the Book of Life inscribed in the divine mind, as Wyclif famously maintains in *On the Truth of Holy Scripture.* The physical codices into which its text was copied were merely imperfect images of this eternal document. This conception of the scriptural text is so manifestly informed by Wyclif's Christian realist ontology and epistemology that it would be difficult not to notice it. This would be true even if we were to ignore the strikingly close correspondence between the five 'levels' of holy scripture delineated in the sixth chapter of that treatise (**7i**) and his fivefold typology of universals recorded earlier in *On Universals* (**2**). His enduring conviction that we should look beyond the scribal inscriptions on the manuscript page, which he felt were only the text of scripture in an equivocal way, lies behind all of his exegetical observations.

Medieval exegetes adopted the Alexandrine division of scriptural

meaning into four senses: the literal, the allegorical, the moral (or tropological) and the anagogic. The literal sense had been regarded as the least noble of the four in patristic exegesis, as throughout much of the early medieval period. Only within the Jewish exegetical tradition was it accorded supreme value.[56] In the West, its relation to the other three senses had for long been held to be comparable to that of the body to the soul: the literal sense concealed the spiritual senses as the body hid the soul. To this extent, Christian exegetes could claim to perceive truths that had always been invisible to Jewish readers, however reliable their knowledge of the literal sense of the text may have been. The classic mnemonic about the nature of the four scriptural senses is cited several times in Wyclif's writing (**7ii**, **9ii**):

> The letter teaches history
> What to believe is allegory
> The moral teaches what to do
> The anagogic, our end to pursue.

The literal sense was the domain of the human author, and pertained to deeds and events in human history, whereas the spiritual senses were the products of divine authorship. The first of these was the allegorical sense, which was used in order to interpret things, people and events in the Old Testament as prefigurations of those in the New, and hence to reconcile differences or inconsistencies between their respective narratives. The moral or tropological sense conveyed meanings about righteous behaviour, and the anagogic about the next life.

The twelfth century witnessed a revival of interest in the literal sense, which was aided by the rediscovery of the remaining logical works of Aristotle. A new form of academic prologue, now generally described as the Aristotelian prologue, began to be used as a preface to scriptural commentaries. The new prologue considered the scriptural text in relation to the four Aristotelian causes (the material, formal, efficient and final cause), and accorded new priority to the efficient cause of the text, its author or authors.[57] Thomas Aquinas, the most celebrated of Aristotelian scholars, defines the literal sense in two

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56 Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, second edition with a new preface by the author (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), pp. 85–7.

57 The material cause of the text was its substance, the formal cause its layout or structure, and the final cause, its purpose. The most exhaustive study of the Aristotelian prologue, in secular as well as scriptural commentaries, remains Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*. The prologue is introduced on pp. 28–9, and its application in scriptural exegesis is examined in detail on pp. 75–7, 82–4, 92–3 and 146–7.

ways. He is careful to acknowledge the properly literal nature of the historical sense, the most immediate sense that the letter (*litera*) has, but he also defines literalism in a more radical way. The literal sense of the holy text was necessarily also the meaning that its divine author intended, which potentially contained all three of the spiritual senses, as well as their historical foundation. Unlike the human author, who used words to signify things, the divine author could also use things to signify other things, thus giving rise to the spiritual senses.[58] Aquinas was careful to observe that the spiritual senses were founded on the historical literal sense, an observation which accorded a new dignity to the most humble of scriptural meanings.[59]

As we have suggested, Wyclif's literalism was influenced conspicuously by the version of Thomistic literalism found in Nicholas of Lyra, but he was also indebted to the Irish scholar Richard Fitzralph. Both, like Aquinas, understood the literal sense to be of two different kinds. Unlike Aquinas, however, they used the phrase *twofold literal sense* to explain this dual phenomenon. They did not invent this expression, but their writings certainly gave it currency, and though Wyclif himself did not use this term he was conspicuously influenced by it.[60] Indeed, it provided him with the necessary hermeneutic model to defend his controversial claim that all scriptural statements were literally true. To describe the intended sense of the divine author of scripture, Wyclif borrowed an expression from contemporary logic, suggesting that all scriptural statements were true *de virtute sermonis* (by the force of the sentence). To say that something was true 'by the force of the sentence' was originally, in the language of the logicians, to claim that something was true in a direct, non-figurative sense. Wyclif had himself used it in this way many times in his own logical works. However, there emerged in the early fourteenth century a tendency to use 'by the force of the sentence' as a way of characterising the intended sense of scriptural propositions.[61] Using the expression in this way, Wyclif could maintain that all passages in scripture were literally true (since,

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58 *Summa Theologiae*, Ia q. 1, a. 10.
59 *Summa Theologiae*, Ia q. 1, a. 10.
60 See the classic study by A.J. Minnis, '"Authorial Intention" and "Literal Sense" in the Exegetical Theories of Richard Fitzralph and John Wyclif', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, lxxv, section C, i (1975), 1–31, and his *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, pp. 73–117. For a more recent analysis of scholarly discussions of the literal sense, which places Wyclif, Lyra and Fitzralph in a broader historical context, see Ian Levy, 'The Literal Sense of Scripture and the Search for Truth in the Late Middle Ages', *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 104:3/4 (2009), 783–827.
61 See William Courtenay's detailed analysis of the use of this term in the schools,

as he recognised, the divine author could not lie). The logicians against whom Wyclif complains so regularly in his discussion of scriptural exegesis, those who refused to look beyond the material text to truths inscribed in the eternal Book of Life, could not help but find inconsistencies and untruths within Scripture, since they understood 'by the force of the sentence' to mean 'according to the literal sense of the words on the page'. Passages that were in any way oblique (such as any of the three spiritual senses), therefore, would unavoidably have given rise to such problems. On Wyclif's interpretation, however, the three spiritual senses (the allegorical, the tropological and the anagogic) were part of the literal sense, as all were brought about by divine intention ('by the force of the sentence'). When Wyclif uses the term *literalis* (literal), he normally refers to the historical sense. In my translated extract from chapter 6, below, I have generally rendered *de virtute sermonis* simply as *literal*, except in contexts when this might prove confusing. When Wyclif refers to the historical sense, I have indicated this by including the Latin adjective in parentheses.

Wyclif's conception of the supreme reality of Scripture as a divine idea meant that the nature of its very being was different from, if analogous to, the being of copies of scripture in the world. What God, the 'immediate' author of Scripture, understood of its text, therefore, was the intelligible being of it words.[62] Its 'proximate' authors, as Wyclif called the human authors who contributed to the vast text, were divinely inspired, so that the text that they produced, though it existed only in the world, coincided as closely as possible with the intelligible being of the divine text. Its community of readers, Wyclif insisted, required the gift of God's grace to apprehend the intended meaning of its immediate author. In doing so, they effectively had access to the text in all of the purity of its intelligible being. In the absence of God's grace, however, readers of scripture were falling foul of precisely those exegetical errors that Wyclif attributes to the sophists and the doctors of signs. He is frustratingly vague about the identity of such readers, a tendency that has tempted some to speculate that they were probably figments of the Evangelical Doctor's imagination. There is one reader, nevertheless, whose exegetical methods and metaphysical beliefs seem to suggest that he may have been an oblique target of Wyclif's

'Force of Words and Figures of Speech: The Crisis over *Virtus Sermonis* in the Fourteenth Century', *Franciscan Studies*, 44 (1988 for 1984), 107–28.

62 Wyclif uses notion of intelligible being to describe the ontological status of things in the divine mind. The idea derives from Henry of Ghent, but Wyclif uses it in a distinctive way.

complaints: John Kenningham. One of the areas to which Kenningham devoted particular attention in his determinations with Wyclif was the representation of time in scripture, and Wyclif's theory of temporal ampliation.[63] Because all instants of time were visible to the divine author, Wyclif felt that words pertaining to time could be expected to signify in subtly different ways from the ways in which they would conventionally signify. In scriptural language, he suggested, the temporal reference of verbs could therefore be 'ampliated' or extended to include more than their grammatical tense suggested.[64] Ampliation was itself an uncontroversial part of the late medieval science of logical terms, but Wyclif uses it in a subtly subversive way. For him, as a metaphysical realist, ampliation is as much a theory about metaphysics as it is about properties of terms. He introduces his own interpretation of ampliation in his *Third Treatise on Logic*, and applies it in a less technical way in his scriptural postils to maintain that all parts of Scripture must be literally true (see **5**, for example).

Lordship, the king and the church

Wyclif's theory of lordship was outlined in two complementary treatises, *On Divine Lordship* and the massive *On Civil Lordship*, which was completed in 1376. The distinction between these two kinds of lordship had been described in detail in the principal source on which Wyclif relied, Richard Fitzralph's *On the Poverty of the Saviour* (1356).[65] He inherited from Fitzralph not only a theory of lordship but also a deep scepticism towards the teaching of the friars. Fitzralph became notably hostile towards the friars quite abruptly after he became Archbishop of Armagh in 1347, though it is clear that he had earlier had friends and colleagues within the mendicant orders, as Wyclif had done himself.[66] His earliest expression of dissatisfaction with the mendicants came in 1350, with the delivery of his *Proposition* before Clement VI in 1350.[67] It was not until *On the Poverty of the Saviour*, however, in which his

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63 *FZ*, pp. 43–72.
64 For an accessible discussion of Wyclif's ideas about scriptural time, see Beryl Smalley, 'The Bible and Eternity: John Wyclif's Dilemma', *JWCI*, 27 (1964), 73–89.
65 The first four books of Fitzralph's *De Pauperie Savatoris* are edited by Reginald Poole in an appendix to his edition of Wyclif's *De Divino Dominio* (London: WS, 1890), pp. 273–476.
66 Katherine Walsh, *A Fourteenth-century Scholar and Primate: Richard Fitzralph at Oxford, Avignon and Armagh* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) pp. 349–50.
67 For an edition of the *Proposition*, see L.L. Hammerich, *The Beginning of the Strife*

antifraternalism reached its fullest expression, that he presented in detail the theory of lordship on which Wyclif would rely. This text, like his later treatise *On the Armenian Questions*, took the form of a dialogue between the characters Richard and John, the former representing the views of the author.[68] Wyclif cites Fitzralph frequently, and undoubtedly admired him as a scholar and theologian.[69] The influence of the latter is conspicuous in Wyclif's distinctive exegetical theory, but it is also evident in his nuanced conception of divine foreknowledge (**3**, **4**).[70] The dialogic style of Fitzralph's two most widely read treatises may even have influenced Wyclif's experimentation with scholastic literary dialogue in the *Dialogue* and the *Trialogue*.

On Divine Lordship marked the beginning of Wyclif's career as a theologian, and represented a reworking of his lectures on the fourth book of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, a prescribed text in the schools. The works that followed it, including *On Civil Lordship*, together constituted Wyclif's *Summa Theologiae*, an eight-year undertaking to which this early theological text acted as a preface. The decision to devote a separate treatise to the respective forms of lordship was a very natural one for Wyclif, since divine and civil lordship corresponded respectively to universal, eternal lordship and particular, transient forms of lordship. The relationship between universal and particular here is neither accidental nor artificial; the latter kind of lordship was seen by Wyclif to be causally bound to, and therefore conditional upon, the former.[71] Divine lordship, on Wyclif's interpretation, was lordship of the truest kind, existing from the time of creation to be exercised by God over his subjects. Civil lordship, by contrast, was necessarily in God's gift (as Fitzralph had argued earlier), and was available only to rational creatures in receipt of his grace. This meant that any kind of civil lordship, including ownership of lands or goods of any kind, was available only to the predestined, the only assured recipients of God's grace. Even the predestined could commit mortal sin, however, which

between Richard Fitzralph and the Mendicants (Copenhagen: Levin and Munksgaard, 1938), pp. 53–80.

68 *Summa de Quaestionibus Armenorm*, ed. J. Sudoris (Paris: 1511).

69 On the relationship between Fitzralph, Wyclif and his followers, see Stephen Lahey, 'Richard Fitzralph and John Wyclif: Untangling Armachanus from the Wycliffites', in *Richard Fitzralph: His Life, Times and Thought*, ed. Michael W. Dunne and Simon Nolan, O.Carm. (Scarborough: Four Courts Press, 2013), pp. 159–85.

70 On the former, see the important essay by Minnis, '"Authorial Intention" and "Literal Sense" in the Exegetical Theories of Richard Fitzralph and John Wyclif'.

71 See Stephen E. Lahey, *Philosophy and Politics in the Thought of John Wyclif* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 95.

meant that lordship could still be withheld until their sin had been absolved.

Anyone who enjoys the gift of lordship, Wyclif suggests, has ownership not merely of his or her own lands and goods, but common ownership (shared by all members of the elect and righteous members of the church militant) of all of the lands and goods in the universe (**35**). The gift of lordship crucially required not only that its recipients should be righteous but also that they should exercise their lordship in a righteous way. The most obvious difficulty with the premise that true lordship was conditional on God's grace was that the bestowal of this gift was imperceptible to its recipients. Nobody could presume to be entitled to God's grace, just as no one could presume to be in receipt of it. Yet signs of mortal sin were not invisible, and were clearly evident within the ecclesiastical hierarchy itself. The very endowments that had been enjoyed by the church since the Donation of Constantine, a decree that purportedly recorded Constantine's gift of Rome and most of the Western Roman Empire to Pope Sylvester I and his successors, and which was held to be authentic throughout the medieval period, seemed to nullify any righteous claim that either the pontiff or his inferiors could have to be heads of any part of the church.

Wyclif's understanding of the church bears all the hallmarks of his realist conception of the universe. There is only one true church, he suggests in the first chapter of *On the Church*, which is the 'the congregation of everyone who is predestined to salvation', the community of all the elect (**27i**). This church may coincide with members of particular churches, but such churches were in no way equivalent to the one true church. It is at once the bride of Christ and the spiritual body of Christ. At its head is Christ himself, and all parts of his body are united to him through charity. As a corollary to his pronouncements on lordship, Wyclif declares that no member of the church, including the pope, may assume that he is the head of the church, or indeed even to be a member of the church. Throughout his theological work, Wyclif observes the conventional distinction between the *church militant* (or the *sojourning church*), those members of the church on earth who resist the enemies of the soul (the world, the flesh and the devil), and the *church triumphant* in heaven. But there is also a third part of the church, representing its members in purgatory. This was generally known as the *church expectant* or the *church penitent*, though Wyclif identifies it consistently as the *church dormant*.

Wyclif's understanding of lordship thus conveniently rendered the process of papal election, or any form of ecclesiastical election,

effectively meaningless, as he went on to argue in *On the Power of the Pope* (**28**). St Peter, after all, whom Wyclif regarded as a true pope and vicar of Christ, was not formally elected. Popes could have no prospect of being true heads of the Christian church unless they strove to imitate Christ and St Peter in their manner of living, hence renouncing all property and benefices. Their principal concern, and that of their bishops and priests, he believed, should be with the spiritual welfare of the Christian community. Many of the problems with the contemporary church, on Wyclif's interpretation, had originated with the Donation of Constantine, a document in which the Roman emperor Constantine the Great (d. 337) bestowed rich privileges and endowments, as well as significant administrative power, on Pope Sylvester I (d. 335) and his successors.[72] The document was exposed as a forgery in the fifteenth century by the Italian humanist Lorenzo Valla (d. 1457), who demonstrated through stylistic analysis of its Latin that it must have been produced in the eighth or ninth century.[73] Throughout Wyclif's period, however, it was believed to be genuine and was treated accordingly.

The king had responsibility for the secular welfare of his nation. In *On the Office of the King*, Wyclif presents a theoretical outline of the monarch's status and duties, but also further develops some of what he had said earlier in *On Civil Lordship*. Wyclif's belief was that the king is God's vicar, among whose principal secular duties is to regulate the church (**30**). Just as the pope should act as Christ's vicar, so the king, Wyclif believed, should be God's vicar. Though the priest's authority was seen by Wyclif as the more dignified of the two, the king's authority permitted him to intervene in the secular affairs of the church. As Wyclif suggests, the priest was required to uphold Christ's image, and to renounce personal property or financial endowment.

The eucharist and the other sacraments

The publication of Wyclif's ideas on the nature of Eucharistic change met with unequivocal censure: they ran contrary to Catholic dogma and the established liturgical beliefs that had been enshrined in medieval

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72 For the text of the Donation, see *CICaPP* part 1, dist. 96, chs 13–14 (cols 342–5).
73 *The Treatise of Lorenzo Valla on the Donation of Constantine: Text and Translation into English*, ed. and trans. Christopher B. Coleman (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

canon law centuries earlier. What the process of change involved, according to Catholic teaching, was the removal of the substances of the bread and wine at consecration and their replacement with the substance of Christ's body and blood. This was the essence of transubstantiation. The claim that Wyclif was making about this process, however, was an ostensibly simple one, based on a reasonable realist metaphysical premise: substance *a* cannot be annihilated and replaced by substance *b*. This idea is rehearsed by Wyclif countless times, but it is supported by another argument about the appearance of the bread and wine. When the host is consecrated by the priest, the appearance of the bread and wine does not change. If the substances of the bread and wine have been annihilated, then their appearance should not remain. To suggest that they did was to believe that accidents, such as colour, form, smell and taste, could remain after the annihilation of their subject. If Wyclif is to be believed, many theologians were suggesting that the accidents of the bread did indeed remain in the absence of its substantive subject. This view of the eucharist informed the words of two important records of Catholic eucharistic theology: Innocent III's letter to the Archbishop of Lyons of 1202, known by its incipit *Cum marthae circa*, and the first constitution of the Fourth Lateran Council, known by its incipit *Firmiter*.[74] The fact that an idea was enshrined in canon law was for Wyclif, of course, no guarantee of its accuracy. The alternative that he was suggesting, however, did not amount to a denial of the real presence of Christ's body and blood (**22**).[75] It was simply a denial of the possibility of the annihilation of the substances of the bread and wine and of their appearances being sustained without such substances. Wyclif certainly discusses the presence of the body and the blood in the host in detail, but he never denies it.

In the first chapter of *On the Eucharist*, Wyclif explains that the body of Christ, though really present in the consecrated host, is present not physically but spiritually. Hence, we do not eat Christ's body or drink his blood in a physical way, as we would consume food or drink, nor is his body or his blood perceptible to the bodily senses. If it were, as Wyclif goes on to suggest, then the results would be truly terrifying. Yet he insists that the fact that we taste the bread and the wine cannot

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74 *Decretales D. Gregoriani IX*, lib. III, tit. 41, ch. 6, *cum marthae*, *CICaPS* vol. 2, cols 636–9.

75 Some, however, have assumed that Wyclif was indeed denying real presence. See, for example, McFarlane, *John Wyclif and the Beginnings of English Non-conformity*, p. 94.

be accounted for according to traditional doctrinal explanations, either. If the substance of the bread and the wine had indeed been annihilated, then their physical accidents would have nothing in which to inhere. Those who sought to explain this by arguing that the accidents of taste, colour, texture and smell inhered in another accident had to be mistaken. For Wyclif, no accident could be sustained in the absence of a substantial subject.

Wyclif's discussion of the other sacraments was often subtly provocative, though it did not attract formal condemnation of a comparable kind. The only exception to this relates to penance. Wyclif felt that confession should essentially be between the confessing subject and God (**17**).[76] His interpretation of marriage was provocative, since he maintained that the priest played no necessary role in the procedure, but it was not heretical according to the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council (**20**). His belief that the matrimonial vows should be spoken in the future tense (but without requiring coital consummation) was also potentially controversial, but rendered less so by the fact that he insisted that spoken vows were strictly subordinate to the mental vows that necessarily preceded them (**21**). Indeed, the articulation of spoken vows was not an essential part of the legal binding of spouses for Wyclif, since only God could effect such a conjunction.

Biographical studies

A number of scholarly article-length biographies of John Wyclif exist, together with longer studies of his life and career in the Oxford Schools. Andrew Larsen's 'John Wyclif (c. 1331–84)' is the most comprehensive recent short survey, but the entry by Anthony Kenny and Anne Hudson in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* remains an indispensable overview of Wyclif's life, and contains a convenient bibliography of primary and secondary sources.[77] See also Hudson's entry in the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, vol. 12, pp. 706–11, which also has an extensive bibliography.

Probably the earliest scholarly biography that should be mentioned here is John Lewis's *The History of the Life and Sufferings of the Reverend*

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76 For details, see the introduction to Chapter 2.

77 Anne Hudson and Anthony Kenny, 'Wyclif, John (*d.* 1384)', *ODNB*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, September 2010 [www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.stir.ac.uk/view/article/30122, accessed 19 October 2014].

and Learned John Wicliffe, D.D., which was first published in 1720.[78] Though an early account, this biography, as its title indicates, offers a sympathetic description of Wyclif's life and teachings that still has some value today. Lewis Sergeant's *John Wyclif: Last of the Schoolmen and First of the English Reformers*, which was published in the Heroes of the Nations series in 1893, also remains an accessible introductory study.[79] The classic and most extensive modern book-length biography of John Wyclif was written by Herbert Workman and published in two volumes in 1926 (and subsequently in a single-volume edition). Though some of Workman's conclusions may now appear questionable, this remains the most detailed study, and contains a wealth of valuable information.

These classic biographies have recently been joined by a number of more recent studies of his life and thought. G.R. Evans's *John Wyclif: Myth and Reality* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2005) is the most exhaustive and the most recent, but mention must also be made of Anthony Kenny's concise but authoritative biographical account of Wyclif's thought in the Oxford *Past Masters* series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985). This latter text is the first biographical account of Wyclif's philosophical system since J.A. Robson's foundational study, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), but has recently been joined by Stephen Lahey's more detailed introduction, *John Wyclif*, which appears in the Oxford *Great Medieval Thinkers* series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), and Alessandro Conti's intellectual biography of Wyclif in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.[80] Joseph H. Dahmus's *The Prosecution of John Wyclif* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952) also contains extended biographical sections.

The selection of texts

Wyclif was a prodigious writer, and it would have been impossible to include more than a representative sample of his Latin works in

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78 *The History of the Life and Sufferings of the Reverend and Learned John Wicliffe, D.D.* (London: Printed for Robert Knaplock and Richard Wilkin, 1720).

79 *John Wyclif: Last of the Schoolmen and First of the English Reformers* (London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1893).

80 Alessandro Conti, 'John Wyclif', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2011 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/wyclif/.

a single volume of this kind. Because of the length of the majority of these, I have generally included extracts of one or more chapters from the major and most extensive works, though I have also included some shorter excerpts. Some sermons, pamphlets and polemical tracts have been included in their entirety. Though my intention at the outset had been to prioritise hitherto untranslated material in this volume, it has nevertheless been necessary to include some material that has been translated elsewhere. A translation of the whole of the *Trialogus* has been published recently by Stephen Lahey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). I have therefore included translations of only a few short extracts from this text. Other modern translations include Anthony Kenny's *On Universals*, which forms a companion volume to the Latin *De Universalibus*, edited by Ivan Mueller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, both 1985). Because of the availability of Kenny's translation, I have included only one very short extract from it in the Appendix. I have also included translations of some material from Wyclif's *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae* because of the significance of this text in the development of his exegetical method. There is therefore some overlap with Ian Levy's carefully abridged translation of *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, published as *John Wyclif: On the Truth of Holy Scripture* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001). Selected chapters from *De Civili Dominio* appear in *The Cambridge Translations of Medieval Philosophical Texts*, including the first, which I have translated here. Again, the justification for this duplication lies in the importance of Wyclif's theory of civil lordship, which is concisely outlined in this initial chapter. Much of the material that appears in the Appendix has been translated elsewhere, but these documents are included because of their value as records of official responses to Wyclif's teaching.

Language and written style

In the introduction to his indispensable *Latin Writings of John Wyclif: An Annotated Catalog*, an itemised register of works attributed to Wyclif that had originated in the labours of his late father, S. Harrison Thompson, Williel R. Thompson remarked that the intellectual issues explored by Wyclif often seemed to his modern readers 'arcane, abstruse and even unintelligible'.[81] This is not untrue, but we should expect some degree of abstruseness and opacity from a scholastic theologian, and Wyclif is

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81 *Latin Writings*, p. xxi.

no worse than many of his contemporaries in this respect. What makes him especially challenging, however, is the nature of his Latin, which is uniformly dense and rather eccentric, and his written style, which often appears tangled, repetitive and highly digressive. Reginald Poole, editor of Wyclif's magisterial *On Civil Lordship* for the Wyclif Society, found his Latin to be ubiquitously 'base', but also commented perceptively that Wyclif was clearly part of a new generation of English scholastic writers who thought in their native language as they wrote in Latin.[82] This is certainly borne out by some of the most characteristic aspects of Wyclif's syntax, which often adheres broadly to the predominant subject-verb-object declarative paradigm of fourteenth-century English. This may explain in part why many scholars have found his Latin to be so degenerate. Most linguists today would hesitate to characterise a departure from the Classical Latin subject-object-verb syntax as a deficiency, and it might more usefully be characterised as a medieval variation on the classical standard inherited from the ancients. Another reason why Wyclif's Latin has been found wanting, however, is its tortuosity; whilst at the level of the clause it is often relatively straightforward, Wyclif had a tendency to conjoin large numbers of clauses, often in complex, embedded patterns of dependency. These account for the dense, periphrastic flavour of his prose, and an often tangled and protracted expository style, which creates its own problems for the translator. To imitate Wyclif's syntax slavishly would be to render any translation potentially as opaque as the original Latin texts; to resort to broad paraphrase, on the other hand, would be to sacrifice an important quality of those texts. As a compromise, I have sought to offer a reasonably literal translation of the text where the Latin allows, and to offer a close paraphrase where it does not.

A final word should be said about Wyclif's use of technical terminology, which he scatters liberally throughout his writings. Such terminology is common in scholastic writing, but many words and phrases can seem disorienting or simply opaque when they are first encountered. I have therefore included at the end of the volume a glossary of those terms that Wyclif uses frequently. Words and expressions that are used infrequently, or whose context contributes significantly towards their meaning, are explained in the footnotes.

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82 *De Civili Dominio*, p. xviii.