Responses to Lollardy and the shaping of English Religion, c. 1400-1450

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Short Abstract

The study of the religious controversies associated with the legacy of John Wyclif has seen extensive expansion in recent years. Lollard religion and spirituality have been studied both at the textual and at the sociological level. This thesis will approach the period instead from a theological and intellectual-historical perspective, focusing on theological texts created in response to Lollardy. It will detail how attempts to defend and preserve 'orthodoxy' led to new forms of diversity and tension in English religion over time. It will suggest, however, that certain characteristic theological positions and strategies were constants even through these diverse voices.

The first chapter examines a set of homiletic and related materials from around the first decade of the century. It tracks common interests in authority, ecclesiology, virtue, and scripture alongside divergent priorities for the church, and varied strategies for opposing Lollardy. The second chapter surveys Nicholas Love's devotional translation, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, arguing that the work is shaped by a similar agenda, which again emerges in discussions of theological authority. Chapter 3 addresses Thomas Netter's 1427 *Doctrinale,* demonstrating that this too is influenced by a polemic and apologetic agenda in its systematic theology. The fourth chapter shows similar preoccupations later on in the very different theology of Reginald Pecock, whose own stated purpose of 'repressing' Lollard error led him into conflict with his emphasis on reason and accessibility in religion. In the fifth chapter this is balanced with the figure of Thomas Gascoigne who demonstrates the continued survival of many of the theological and devotional concerns of Lollardy in the absence of an anti-Lollard agenda.

The conclusion draws together the findings of this study, noting both the rich diversity of responses to Lollardy in form and genre, and the persistence of certain common preoccupations and strategies. Discussions of the nature of virtue and the right locus of authority were deployed not only to debate particular Lollard critiques of the church, but to construct theologies with little or no room for such critiques in principle, and assert an institutional church unaccountable to external criticism. Not only the conclusions, therefore, but the reforming attitude and authority sources of Lollardy were consistently excluded. The

defining feature of Lollardy's influence lay in the constant and varied re-incarnation of this recurring theological agenda.

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Long Abstract

In recent years the study of that movement which scholars have long referred to as Lollardy has seen extensive expansion. Lollard religion and spirituality have been studied both at the textual level (by Anne Hudson and Fiona Somerset in particular) and at the sociological level (in particular by Patrick Hornbeck). In addition, new work has emerged on the ways in which the establishment of the contemporary church sought to suppress it (notably legal studies by Ian Forrest). This thesis aims to approach the period from a theological and intellectual-historical perspective, focusing not on Lollardy *per se*, nor on the social, legal, or institutional structures of repression and suppression, but on theological texts created in response to Lollardy and how they led to new forms of diversity and tension in English religion.

While any significant or lasting influence of the Lollard controversies is still dismissed entirely by some scholars (e.g. Richard Rex, 2002; Eamon Duffy, 2005), who see 'mainstream piety' as essentially unaffected, discussion has in recent decades been more dominated by the hypothesis of Nicholas Watson (1995) that the church after Arundel 'lobotomised' itself by the oppressive rigour with which it sought to 'legislate out of existence' the grounds of Lollardy. Both positions have in turn come under pressure from the growing evidence for both diversity and creativity in the church of 15th-century England, creativity and diversity that were often at least as pronounced amongst those seeking to defend the practice and teaching of the contemporary establishment as they were amongst those seeking to reform them. As such questions have been raised as to whether it is possible to identify a genuine common ground across such writings. Was the very vigour with which many contemporaries sought to preserve what they perceived as 'orthodoxy' so fissiparous as to diversify their religious culture beyond any meaningful commonality? This thesis will explore the extent of consistency and diversity across responses to Lollardy, and the evidence for the impact of anti-Lollard agendas on the emerging shape of their theologies.

The proliferation of different paradigms amongst those who responded to the Lollard challenge was naturally shaped by change over time as well as horizontally between different personal contexts and ecclesiastical traditions, with such writers increasingly becoming interlocutors with each other as well as with the Lollard critiques they aimed to oppose, and influenced by changing social, political, and religious contexts both in England and across a

wider European context. This thesis will therefore track a set of writers diverse in genre, background, and time of writing, choosing from approximately the first half of the fifteenth century. This constitutes a reasonably feasible and stable period from the initiation of the Lancastrian dynasty through the end of the Schism and the Council of Constance to the growing instability following the loss of France and leading up to the Wars of the Roses. The texts chosen illustrate both the diversity and, in certain areas, the commonalities and recurrent themes even across these genres and contexts, of their responses to the debates associated with Lollardy and the way in which their preoccupations developed with their changing context over time.

The introduction will thus present an overview of scholarship on this area, and aim to locate this thesis within existing work and to delineate in detail its proposed contribution to the field, as well as addressing some of the debated questions of terminology surrounding the common vocabulary of study in this area, in particular terms such as 'Lollard', 'Wycliffite', and 'orthodox', and how such terms will be used or avoided throughout the rest of the thesis.

The first chapter will address homiletic materials from the very start of the period, following the condemnation of Wyclif at Blackfriars in 1382 and the institution of legal systems of repression under Archbishop Arundel and Henry V, but with a continued public presence for Lollard ideas through petitions, pamphlets, and the Oldcastle controversies; shaped by efforts to resolve the Schism but not, as yet, by Hussitism and the aftermath of Constance. It will compare three collections exemplifying three different strands of response to Lollard challenges: the largely reactionary polemic of the (probably Oxford Benedictine) Bodley 649 sermons emphasising a high ecclesiology and calling for lay silence and submission, the Digby Poems' combination of shared reforming language regarding church practice with a defence of its teaching, and the endeavour of the Augustinian Canon John Mirk's *Festial* of feast-day sermons to create and articulate a devotional and moral space that is inherently exclusive of the attitudes and concerns associated with Lollardy. It will chart elements of common ground in rhetorical strategies and theological preoccupations, as well as significant differences and discrepancies between these texts regarding whether the key danger to the church is to be identified with heresy or with corruption and the need for reform. It will be argued that there is a common thread through all these sources regarding the individual's relationship to the institutional church and the text of scripture, with sources seeking to oppose Lollardy agreeing in locating correct scriptural understanding within an

institutional church, and identifying individual Christians as bound to a relationship of submission and dependence to that institution.

The second chapter, set in much the same time period but investigating a very different genre of text, will examine the controversial figure of Nicholas Love, and in particular his adaptation of the Pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes Vitae Christi* into a reflective and devotional Middle English *Mirror of the Blessed life of Jesus Christ*, released around 1410 with archiepiscopal approbation, arguing, in spite of recent debate, that this text is indeed shaped heavily by a perceived need to respond to challenges from Lollardy, and that this leads to both conventional and novel strategies in the way he co-ordinates polemical and devotional material. Like Mirk, Love seeks to create an alternative devotional space that excludes Lollardy; like Bodley 649 he articulates a high ecclesiology and explicitly attacks Lollard views on the sacraments; and like the Digby poems he resonates with Lollard methodology in his use of language, his citations, and his emphasis on vernacular accessibility. A growing emphasis on affectivity and the use of 'images' in the meditative imagination alongside a concern about ideas of the literal sense and carefully constructed approaches to scripture and reason point to recurring areas of controversy in trying to lay out an anti-Lollard spirituality.

Chapter 3 engages with the period after Constance, in a context of greater dynastic and ecclesiastical security but influenced by the Hussite Schism, conciliar debates, and continuing war in France. It turns here to a high theological register with the anti-Wycliffite work of the Carmelite Thomas Netter, whose magisterial Latin treatise the *Doctrinale antiquitatum fidei Ecclesiæ Catholicæ*, presented to the Pope in 1427, has usually been examined as a work of systematic theology, but is analysed here as a work primarily of apologetics. As such, it is argued, its polemical priorities often take the driving-seat in the theology it develops, leading to conflicting models of authority and the church and an emphasis on the hermeneutic impenetrability of scripture that is at odds with Netter's ostensible desire to avoid intellectualism and emphasise an accessible, carefully justified, and patristically-orientated church. His adoption of the methodology and sources of Wyclif and some major vernacular Lollard productions in his citation of scripture and authorities likewise points to the significant impact that these controversies had had, and the sympathy that even the most anti-Wycliffite of figures could have for some of the reformer's priorities, but in the end this methodology breaks down in the face of his desire to comprehensively discredit Wycliffite theology. Netter consistently deconstructs ideas of the openness of scripture and the

individual prophetic voice vis-a-vis the church, building an implicit theology that casts individual exegesis and criticism outside the church as inescapably sinful. Netter's church is in the end no more accountable than Love's to individual external critique. Netter's thought ultimately displays an uneasy tension between the acceptance of parts of the Wycliffite critique, seen in sources such as the Digby poems, and the desire to emphasise ecclesiastical authority seen in sources such as Love. At the same time his willingness to address intellectual and theological issues of contention rather than simply crafting an alternative space in the fashion of Mirk or Love points to the divergence of strategies for answering Lollards and strengthening the 'faithful' as the century progressed; in Netter's case perhaps driven by consciousness of a wider learned European readership increasingly interested in these debates due to the Hussite troubles.

Chapter 4 is set towards the end of the period, after the bulk of the conciliar debates and the end of the Hussite Wars in Europe but during a time of defeat for England in France and growing tensions at home in England. It examines the work, produced across the 1440s and 50s, of Bishop Reginald Pecock, whose attempt to create a vernacular alternative to Lollardy can be compared to that of Nicholas Love, but whose emphasis on systematic theology, an intellectual engagement with Lollardy, and a return to the most basic of shared authority-sources also bears parallel with that of Netter. How far Pecock's enthusiastic espousal of the power of reason instead of authority, leading ultimately to his legal condemnation, was truly motivated by a desire to engage with Lollardy is the subject of some debate, but it is shown that once more there is evidence of internal tension in his works; arising from his effort to fit his systematic framework, valuing pure reason, with defences of church practice and authority, suggesting that responding to Lollard challenges was again a powerfully disruptive stimulus to his theological development. Indeed there is evidence for the suggestion that a key part of his agenda was the discrediting of Lollard reliance on scripture as an authority-source and replacing it with, in practice, the pre-eminence of reason. In this there are similarities with his predecessor Netter, whose challenge to Lollardy hinged on the role of patristic authority and tradition as the key loci of interpretative authority, rather than an individual's reading of scripture, but also a key difference in that Pecock largely dispenses with all inherited authority as a foundation in favour of a theological system founded on scholarly reason. As such it is interesting to note the relative absence of some debates hitherto recurring, such as the real presence or verbal confession, in the face of Pecock's sustained

engagement with the specific epistemological foundations of Christian theology. Likewise, the nature of the charges on which he was eventually condemned, emphasising issues of authority, the church and the handling of scripture rather than his provocative statements on soteriology and sacramental theology, hint at the change in areas of sensitivity in contemporary religion since the debates of the late 14th and early 15th century and the continuing centrality of debates over the authority available to the independent individual theologian vis-à-vis the establishment. Meanwhile, Pecock's repeated attacks on patristic authority in particular suggests that the emphasis on the Fathers associated with Netter and the reforming clerics detailed by R. M. Ball (1997) had grown pronounced enough to provoke a counter-reaction of its own, implying that the diversity of orthodox responses was itself becoming a motor of ongoing controversy.

Chapter five deals with Thomas Gascoigne, writing across the very end of this period, a churchman and academic hitherto often presented as a purely reactionary figure defined by hostility to innovation and to Pecock, whose somewhat eclectic and hard to categorise *Dictionarium Theologicum* addresses the period from around 1440 to Pecock's deprivation in 1458. Gascoigne, it is argued here, is in fact one of the most intriguing and suggestive figures of the period, combining priorities, language, and on occasion theology that seem almost Wycliffite; yet never experiencing a break with the established church and ignoring or dissenting from many common Lollard positions regarding issues such as images and pilgrimage. Gascoigne is a fierce critic of Arundel, and may in some sense appear as a 'counter-counter-reformer', hostile to the excesses of many of those who sought to respond to Lollardy, whether by Arundel's limitations on preaching or by Pecock's emphasis on reason. In the same way, Gascoigne's strong interest in hermeneutics based on the literal sense of an accessible scripture, and a moral life emphasising fidelity to the individual conscience over any alternative authority source, place him in at times stark contrast with predecessors such as Netter and Love, and in harmony with the priorities of much Lollard writing, hinting at the continued survival of many of the impulses behind Lollardy even in the Oxford of the mid-fifteenth century. It is suggested that the relative absence of concern about Lollardy may help explain the re-emergence of Lollard-like writing in Gascoigne: absent the concern of responding to and refuting Lollardy, the same reforming concerns re-emerge along with much of the hermeneutic foundation that justified them. Gascoigne thus constitutes an example of what English religion could look like in the absence of a need to respond to Lollardy.

The conclusion draws together the findings of this study, noting the rich diversity of responses to Lollardy in form and genre, alongside the persistence of certain common preoccupations and strategies. Discussions of the nature of virtue and the right locus of authority were deployed not only to contest particular Lollard critiques of the church in practice, but to construct theologies with little or no room for such critiques in principle, and so assert an institutional church essentially unaccountable to external criticism. Not only the conclusions, therefore, but the reforming agenda and justifying authority sources of Lollardy were consistently excluded. Throughout the varied responses to Lollard, these strategies recur. While it was constantly being re-invented, therefore, there was a consistent thread to contemporary 'orthodoxy'. The defining legacy of Lollardy's influence lay in the constant and varied re-incarnation of this recurring theological strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Overview of scholarship: Models of doctrinal development

Since the earliest days of the Christian church, the development of doctrine and practice in conjunction to the relationship between 'heterodoxy' and 'orthodoxy' has tended to be conceived of in binary, asymmetric, and essentially static terms; heterodoxy being deviation from a static and unchanging 'deposit' of orthodoxy that continues, or at least 'should' continue, essentially uncorrupted by it; development being only the fleshing out of this static deposit.[1] Indeed, this paradigm pre-dates Christianity, having some roots in the 'Deuteronomic History' of the Hebrew scriptures and associated prophetic writings, with their story of seeking to preserve a definitive Mosaic covenant against idolatrous influences.[2] Augustine's famous statement that a heretic is one who 'invents or follows false or new opinions' thus articulates the view of heresy that broadly predominated until relatively modern times.[3]

The movement away from this model of understanding can be seen growing in strength from John Henry Newman's influential essay on the development of Christian doctrine onwards, with different models emerging across the historical and theological fields over the past hundred and fifty years.[4] Theological writers have tended to explore questions such as the different causes of development and how it is

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1 See for example 2 Timothy 1:14, 1 Timothy 6:20, Jude 1:3.

2 S. L. Richter, 'The Deuteronomic History', in Bill T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson, eds, *Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Leicester, IVP, 2005).

3 Augustine's dictum was enshrined in the 24th *causa* of Gratian's *Decretum*, whence most medieval writers were familiar with it; it is discussed and referenced in L. J. Sackville, *Heretics and Heresy in the Thirteenth Century – Textual Representations* (York: York Medieval Press, 2001), pp. 190, 32.

4 John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (London: James Toovey, 1845). For a modern treatment that leans on Newman, see Jan Hendrik Walgrave, *Unfolding Revelation: The nature of doctrinal development* (London, Hutchinson, 1972).

to be harmonised with belief in a historic revelation.[5] Others have sought to separate the theological task from the historical.[6] Studies of the early church, meanwhile, often emphasise both the role of conflict in the ongoing process of theological definition, whereby the Christian church was increasingly forced to clarify its statements and positions on key issues through the emergence of conflicting positions on them; and the tendency to divergence. In this divergence model conflict between two positions led both sides to define themselves in opposition to each other and so increasingly to travel in contrasting directions, leaving a polarised theological spectrum characterised by two opposed positions.[7] Thiel notes the recurrence of this theme throughout the development of Christian doctrine, pointing out that the concept of a 'rule of faith' had its origins in the writings of 2nd and 3rd century apologists and their battles with what they classed as 'gnosticism'.[8] As late as the 16th century, Thiel notes, Catholic understanding of tradition only 'began to achieve its present-day definition' through debates with Lutheranism and the emerging Protestant tradition.[9] In particular he suggests that the concept of the tradition of the church as a stream of teaching independent from scripture emerged through opposition to Luther's ideas of *sola scriptura* (although many scholars have noted instances of this particular position in earlier contexts and debates).[10] Theological conflict is thus viewed as creative, not merely defensive.

Meanwhile, work on other areas of theological controversy has begun to suggest more complex models of interaction still. Studies on the Reformation have increasingly emphasised the relationships of mutual borrowing and compromise often hidden

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5 See for example Aidan Nichols, *From Newman to Congar: The idea of doctrinal development from the Victorians to the second Vatican Council* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1990).

6 See for example Terrence Tilley, *History, Theology, and Faith: Dissolving the modern problematic* (Maryknoll N.Y., Orbis Books, 2004).

7 R. V. Sellers, *The Council of Chalcedon* (London: SPCK, 1953), for inherent tensions in orthodoxy see pp. 132-203, for divergent responses to the eventual conflict see pp. 254-301, and for new opposing orthodoxies pp. 302-350.

8 John E. Thiel, *Senses of Tradition: continuity and development in Catholic faith* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 15.

9 Thiel, *Senses of Tradition*, p. 3. Alongside this engagement with Protestantism was of course the ongoing, and increasingly developing, engagement with Eastern Christianity, especially in Poland, Lithuania, and Moldavia.

10 Thiel, *Senses of Tradition*, p. 19. For a concise summary of the medieval history and later life of ideas of an authoritative extra-scriptural tradition, see Peter Marshall, 'The Debate over 'Unwritten Verities' in Early Reformation England', in Bruce Gordon, ed., *Protestant History and Identity in Sixteenth-Century Europe; Volume 1: the Medieval Inheritance* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), pp. 60-77. See also the later discussion of these ideas in the works of Heiko Oberman and others, p. 11 and following of this thesis.

behind ostensible theological hostility; with heterodox ideas often undergoing both attractive and repulsive forces with regard to orthodoxy, and vice-versa, and with orthodox reactions sometimes being further from the 'mainstream' (i.e. the modal centre of contemporary religion; that believed and practised by the greatest number of people) than their nominally heterodox opponents.[11] Studies of the development of doctrine emphasise that 'the doctrinal heterogeneity both within and between various periods of church history is far less malleable that Newman's [formulations] would lead the historically unsophisticated to believe'.[12] Simple and binary models of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, long questioned, are increasingly being replaced with an emphasis on the 'messiness' of religion and the misleading and arbitrary nature of any categories we may chose to apply to it.

The religious controversy of the fifteenth century: an overview of scholarship

The study of Lollardy and the reaction to it in the long fifteenth century has until relatively recently remained somewhat sheltered from this evolution in the theory of doctrinal development. Many studies, dominated by the context of the Reformation, historically approached the conflict in terms of how an essentially static and uniform orthodoxy 'dealt with' a dynamic emerging Lollardy, without considering how the former might have been itself affected or variegated. The historic tendency to treat 'establishment' and 'reform' as exclusive binary categories existing only in conflict or tension has left deep conceptual roots. Often it has meant that reform is conceived of as coming only from an external, Lollard source, unconnected to developments in orthodoxy. Even today some writers argue, albeit with more sophistication, that "the mainstream of fifteenth-century piety was indeed

[11] e.g. J. M. Stayer, Werner Packull, and Klaus Deppermann, 'From Monogenesis to Polygenesis, the Historical Discussion of Anabaptist Origins', *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 49 (1975), pp. 151-72.

[12] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The development of Christian doctrine: some historical prolegomena* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), p. 144.

conventionally censorious of heresy, but not … greatly affected, much less shaped, by reaction to it", with Lollardy little more than the normal 'aberrant few' on the fringe of an essentially unchanging medieval church.[13]

A different perspective has been gaining ground since 1995, however, when Nicholas Watson began to mount a strong argument that the institutional church's victory was essentially Pyrrhic, lobotomising itself intellectually in its suppression of independent thought and emasculating itself spiritually in its refusal to engage with the full potential of emerging lay devotion.[14] In his provocative phrase, the result of attempting to 'censor out of existence' the substance of Lollardy was that 'original theological writing in English was, for a century, almost extinct'.[15] In form, this is a diversion model, the second type discussed above, whereby the establishment is viewed as having moved away from Lollardy's free, independent, and lay-focused theologising into a religion marked by restrictive orthodox conventionality.

This argument *per se* has found both elements of support and a certain amount of challenge from recent scholarship; Catto's and Larsen's studies of academia and particularly of Oxford have tended to strongly support it, finding extensive evidence of a reduction in academic freedom and original or controversial theological output (especially at Oxford), while examination of the fifteenth-century church's bishops and devotional writing suggests a less negative view, emphasising their ability, learning, and creativity.[16] Indeed it has been argued that even some of the expansion of affective writing in the period, initially presented by Watson as a sign of intellectual decline – a

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13 Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (London: Yale UP, 2005), p. xxi; Clive Burgess 'A Hotbed of Heresy? Fifteenth Century Bristol and Lollardy Reconsidered' in Linda Clark, ed., *Authority and Subversion* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), pp. 43-62, at pp. 46, 50. See also Richard Rex, *The Lollards* (London: Palgrave, 2002) for a concise presentation of this traditional position.

14 Nicholas Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change in Late Medieval England: Vernacular theology, the Oxford translation debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409', *Speculum,* 70:4 (1995), pp. 822-864.

15 Ibid., pp. 826, 835.

16 Compare for example J. I. Catto 'Theology After Wycliffe', in *History of the University of Oxford*, Vol II, ed. J. I. Catto and T. A. Ralph (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), and Andrew Larsen, *The School of Heretics: Academic condemnation at the University of Oxford 1277-1409* (Leiden, Brill, 2011), to the more cautious assessments of Vincent Gillespie, 'Chichele's Church, Vernacular Theology in England after Thomas Arundel' and Michael G. Sargent 'Censorship or Cultural Change? Reformation and Renaissance in the Spirituality of Late Medieval England' both in Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh, eds, *After Arundel: Religious writing in fifteenth-century England* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011). In this volume see also Catto's 'After Arundel: The closing or opening of the English mind,' which nuances this position.

muzzled creativity turning away from theological controversy – was in itself a highly creative reaction to the Lollard challenge, one that offered forms of direct and personal engagement to the devout laity in a new and orthodox medium. This is an alternative model of how the church reacted, not so much by undergoing a theological lobotomy as by a reorientation from the more speculative and esoteric aspects of scholastic theology, and likewise from those questions of authority and interpretation that the Lollards sought to popularise in an extra-mural environment. Instead it is portrayed as sponsoring a practical personal devotion centred around the person of Christ, affective writings, and the sacraments as an alternative to the Lollard programme of independent scripture reading and mutual correction.[17]

Meanwhile, however, the expansion of interest in the period has spawned numerous close studies of particular aspects of its religious controversies, which have further problematised existing models. They reveal a growing consensus that it is not possible to draw too sharp a distinction between 'Lollardy' and 'orthodoxy'. The long heritage of Wycliffite criticisms of the established church is increasingly apparent. Questions about images, the authority of the Papacy, transubstantiation, the mendicant orders, predestination, dominion, and the use of images were all present before Wyclif, often in scholarly or reform-minded circles of the established church.[18] Likewise it seems that Lollard writers continued to make use of 'orthodox' resources such as Rolle or even Thoresby's sermons well into the fifteenth century.[19] In the same way, such orthodox figures as Bridget of Sweden and her interpreters and advocates could be seen to have expressed distinctly Lollard-sounding calls for simple biblical preaching, and even towards the end of the period the fiercest defenders of orthodoxy were sometimes also those who showed the greatest concern for the rejuvenation of

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17 Ian Johnson, *The Middle English Life of Christ: Academic discourse, translation, and vernacular theology* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013). See also Ian Johnson and Alan F. Westphall, eds, *The Pseudo-Bonaventuran Llives of Christ, Exploring the Middle English Tradition* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

18 See for example Stephen E. Lahey, *John Wyclif* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), pp. 112, 116, 175, 205; Takashi Shogimen 'Academic Controversies' in G. R. Evans, ed., *The Medieval Theologians* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 233-250, 72-78.

19 Vincent Gillespie, 'The Literary Form of the Middle English Pastoral Manual with Particular Reference to the Speculum Vitae and Other Texts' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1981), pp. 34-41; Fiona Somerset, *Feeling Like Saints: Lollard writings after Wyclif* (Ithaca: Cornell, 2014), pp. 3-29.

parochial ministry and for a return to original sources of authority – rather notably lollard ideas, even if their proponents in this instance were definitely not Lollards, and brought a sacerdotal and patristic flavour to these priorities.[20] At a textual level, too, orthodox polemicists such as Netter can be seen adopting scrupulous citational methodology in response to Wycliffite practice, while at a local level there is mounting evidence for the interwoven nature of Lollard and orthodox communities, with Lollards serving in church offices and living as active members of the local orthodox community.[21] At both individual and personal levels, therefore, the recent trend has been to emphasise places where Lollardy and orthodoxy overlap. In contrast to the historic tendency to an exaggerated binary distinction, modern writers have tended to argue that, in Bose's words 'what was at stake in the Wycliffite controversies was an uncomfortable confrontation between two branches growing from the same stem, two argumentative positions nourished and supported by the same sources.'[22] While a helpful corrective to prior excesses, it will be argued that this risks overstating the commonality and obviating the real fissures between the theological positions characterising each side of the debate.

There is a similar terminological concern to present the historic terminology of 'Lollardy' and 'orthodoxy' as ultimately conceptual constructs imposed to label (necessarily but imperfectly) some very diverse and inherently fissiparous groups within late-medieval religion; neither Wyclif-influenced reformers nor their opponents being homogeneous groups any more than they or their theologies were static.[23] It is

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[20] Susan Powell, *Preaching at Syon Abbey* (Salford: ESRI, 1997), p. 21; R. M. Ball, 'The Opponents of Bishop Pecock', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History,* 48 (1997), pp. 230-62. See below, Chapter 5, for perhaps the consummate example of this trend. The lower-case 'lollard' is here used adjectivally, to denote resemblance but not membership of Lollard groupings – see below for discussion of terminological issues.

[21] Kantik Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and the interpretation of texts* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), pp. 204, 212; Anne Hudson, 'Thomas Netter's "Doctrinale" and the Lollards', in John Bergström-Allen and Richard Copsey, eds, *Thomas Netter of Walden: Carmelite, Diplomat, and Theologian* (Faversham: St. Alban's Press, 2009), pp. 179-196; Richard Lavynham, 'Anti-Lollard Polemic and Practice in Late Medieval England', in Linda Clark, ed. *Authority and Subversion*, p. 64; for social congruence see e.g. Robert Lutton, *Lollardy and Orthodox Religion in pre-Reformation England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006).

[22] Mishtooni Bose, 'Opponents of John Wyclif' in Ian Levy, ed., *A Companion to John Wyclif: Late Medieval Theologian* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp 407-452, at p. 414.

[23] The problems with finding a suitable set of terminological tools for this period will be discussed below; but besides the linguistic problem of finding suitable ways of speaking about the differing tendencies in fifteenth-century religion, the historical caveat must be emphasised that these groups were complex and dynamic, not static monoliths

emphasised that the common orientations across these groups that make them visible must not obscure the differences between individuals within them, nor the presence of substantial and ill-defined penumbras around their nominal 'core', nor the potential evolution and development of both core and penumbra over time. The picture that emerges of contemporary religion is thus increasingly more complex than merely a simple Lollard divergence from orthodoxy, to the point where the usefulness of 'orthodoxy' as a coherent category has been questioned.[24]

There is also a growing awareness of the complexity and breadth of the religious, political, and social context in which this confrontation took place, emphasising that there was more to contemporary controversies than a Lollard-orthodox divide. Kerby-Fulton's *Books under Suspicion* is perhaps the most controversial and influential recent contribution, emphasising both the dangers of assuming too much insular uniqueness to the British experience and also the significance of other heterodox 'systems', most noticeably the nebulous groupings of contemplation, eschatology, and mysticism associated with Joachimism, the Spiritual Franciscans, and the alleged 'Free Spirit' movement.[25] Controversies over the writings of Aristotle and Aquinas, Apostolic Poverty and the Mendicants, and issues such as philosophic realism were present alongside the better known and more obviously 'heterodox' movements.[26] 'Heterodoxy', even in the legal sense of those movements that came into conflict with the ecclesiastical establishment, was no more homogeneous than 'orthodoxy' was. Likewise heterodoxy was far from the only force acting on the development of orthodoxy – Lutton's study of Tenterden, for example, tracks the development of changes in posthumous devotion (that is, how devotion was expressed in wills and bequests) across the later fifteenth century and onto the verge of the Reformation, with a declining interest in devotion to Saints and to purgatorial

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of consensus.

[24] Bose, 'Opponents of John Wyclif', p. 408.

[25] Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), pp. 4, 9, 32.

[26] Larsen, *School of Heretics*, gives a detailed overview of these issues at Oxford into the fifteenth century.

precautions and more interest in the cult of the Holy Name and the Jesus Mass.[27] A similar trend might be observed in the growing popularity of lives of Christ across the century.[28] Such trends cannot be clearly linked to Lollardy, and appear to be broader developments in the general religious consciousness. While such changes may not be visible in the records of other communities – such as Duffy's Morebath – this of itself points to variation and mutability in the religious context, rather than a timeless monolith of orthodox thought and orthopraxic devotion.[29]

In the same way war and social change cannot be ignored as part of the background to religious debates. The unprecedented intensity and duration of the Hundred Years War left its mark on literary culture in many ways, not least a corporate soul-searching about what national sin could have merited this humiliation.[30] Cox has examined in some detail Wyclif's own interaction with the military situation, but as yet its impact on the broader context of fifteenth-century debates remains undefined.[31] Likewise the internal conflicts around the Lancastrian usurpation and again following the end of the Hundred Years War and breaking into the 'Wars of the Roses', while less destructive, were potentially even more disturbing for society, dissolving as they did the illusion of domestic security. The same can be said of the impact of periodic outbreaks of the Plague and of the social unrest expressed in the revolts of 1381 and 1450, phenomena unlikely to be insignificant in shaping contemporary thought, but as yet largely unexamined in relation to religious questions.

More attention has been given to the Schism and its possible role in fostering an environment conducive to doctrinal innovation – Kerby-Fulton writes of it removing the papal 'anchor' to the authority hierarchy of the church; there is certainly reference

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27 Lutton, *Lollardy and Orthodox Religion*, pp. 37-83.

28 Johnson, *The Middle English Life of Christ*, Johnson and Westphall, *The Lives of Christ*, Stephen Kelly and Ryan Perry, eds, *Devotional Culture in Late Medieval England and Europe: Diverse imaginations of Christ's life* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014).

29 Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and reform in an English village* (London: New Haven, 2001).

30 Discussed in the introduction to Thomas Wright, ed., *Political Poems and Songs Relating to English History, Composed during the Period from the Accession of Edward III to that of Richard III* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861), see for example 'On the Corruption of Public Manners', p. 251.

31 Rory Cox, *John Wyclif on War and Peace* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2014).

to it in Gower and other contemporary writers, for whom mending such division of Christendom looms large as a concern.[32] Other writers hypothesise that the Schism thrust universities into the limelight and so contributed to the popularisation of previously obscure debates and distinctions, leading to stricter definitions of heresy and a narrower orthodoxy.[33] In any event, it constitutes another contributor to the changing face of orthodoxy that must be factored into any assessment of the impact of Lollardy, as must the wider impact of the schism in conciliarism and the associated debates about the ultimate locus of authority in the church.

This European dimension is increasingly seeing some work, both on the involvement of English ecclesiastics in the great councils of Basel and Constance and on the impact of English heterodoxy on Bohemia, but as yet little investigation has been made into the opposite consideration: the impact of conciliarism and the wider conflict with the Hussite movements in Bohemia on the English church.[34] Yet the conciliar movement was inextricably caught up with those very issues of authority in the church and the heritage of church institutions central to the debate with Lollardy, and the Hussite movement, with its popular and violent elements, represented the worst fears of many in the establishment faced with Lollardy. England's religious development in the fifteenth century cannot be addressed in isolation from these wider continental issues, especially given the pan-European breadth of the church and of Latin literacy.

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[32] Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion*, p. 6, Wright, *Political Poems and Songs*, p. 11.

[33] R. N. Swanson, *Universities, Academics, and the Great Schism* (Cambridge: CUP, 1979), and 'Academic Circles: Universities and exchanges of information and ideas in the Age of the Grand Schism', in Michael Van Dussen and Pavel Soukup, eds, *Religious Controversy in Europe, 1378-1536* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

[34] See Thomas M. Izbicki and Joellë Rollo-Koster, *A Companion to the Great Western Schism (1378-1417*) (Leiden: Brill, 2009), and Thomas M. Izbicki, Michiel Decaluwé, and Gerald Christianson, *A Companion to the Council of Basel* (Leiden: Brill, 2017) for discussion of the councils in their own right; see Gillespie 'Chichele's Church' for an overview of conciliar involvement in England, and Michael Van Dussen, *From England to Bohemia: Heresy and communication in the later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012).

The current state of the question

It is perhaps symptomatic of the tendency towards both specialist studies and inter-disciplinary emphases that most of the essential current works on the topic of interactions between Lollardy and fifteenth-century religion are edited collections of essays from a range of scholars writing out of multiple fields, addressing particular niches of the controversies. To summate concisely a contemporary consensus is thus far from easy. This is in itself significant: perhaps the most frequent thread throughout contemporary scholarship is to emphasise the disparate and multifaceted nature of religious groupings and the danger of simple categories or models.

In particular Hornbeck, Bose, and Somerset have in recent years co-operated to oversee several such volumes.[35] These present studies by themselves and others that largely seek to separate themselves from older categories and assumptions and de-emphasise the boundaries between 'Lollards,' and 'orthodox'. Thus Bose, writing extensively on these issues from the perspective of literary studies, speaks of the 'heterogeneous composition of the avowedly orthodox establishment' and the shared reforming passions of orthodox reform voices and Lollards.[36] She wishes to emphasise the diversity of responses to Wyclif, embodying 'every kind of view', feeling that this corroborates the imperative of 'resistance to a grand narrative' in Lollard studies.[37] Writing in the same volumes, Hornbeck likewise argues that Lollardy was 'multi-faceted … one among many religious subcultures' and 'less a heretical movement than one among a number of forms of Christianity current in late-medieval England'.[38] Other commentators have joined this consensus. In *Wycliffite Controversies* Ian Forrest suggests 'refusing to treat 'orthodoxy' or 'the Church' as a coherent unity'. In the same volume Peter Marshall notes the interest of scholars such as McSheffrey,

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35 See most notably J. Patrick Hornbeck II with Mishtooni Bose, and Fiona Somerset, eds, *A Companion to Lollardy* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), Mishtooni Bose and J. Patrick Hornbeck II, eds, *Wycliffite Controversies* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), and J. Patrick Hornbeck, Stephen E. Lahey, Fiona Somerset (eds and trans), *Wycliffite Spirituality* (New York: Paulist, 2013).

36 Bose, 'Opponents of John Wyclif' at pp. 408, 451.

37 Bose, 'Their opponents', in Hornbeck, Bose, and Somerset, *A Companion to Lollardy*, pp. 144-158, at p. 146.

38 Hornbeck, 'Their beliefs' in Hornbeck et al., *Companion to Lollardy*, pp. 209, 211.

Lutton, and Forest in 'inviting us to question the orthodox-heresy polarity' as porous, movable, and inherently ascriptional, and he speaks of recognising 'orthodoxy and heresy as a broad continuum'.[39] The main trend in contemporary literature is thus towards continuing to problematise the simple categories of historic scholarship and deconstruct them into spectra that emphasise commonality and de-emphasise the distinctiveness of Lollardy and its opponents.

Ian Levy has meanwhile provided a much broader perspective with a specific theological slant. His *Holy Scripture and the Quest for authority in the later middle ages*, whilst casting its net much wider than the Lollard debates, follows the key issue of locating the authoritative interpretation of scripture throughout the period, and will be an essential starting point for this study.[40] Levy argues that the authoritative nature of scripture was generally assumed at the time: the debates between Lollards and their opponents were over the right way to discern its meaning and resolve disputes in its interpretation. Thus, as he says elsewhere, 'it was a question of locating the authentic *magisterium*, the genuinely authentic teaching office'.[41] Levy, like his counterparts in Lollard studies, still emphasises the common roots and aims of both sides of the conflicts around Wyclif and Hus, and suggests that 'there was a concerted effort to de-legitimize Wycliffite and Hussite biblical exegesis, presenting it as specious and tendentious, beyond the bounds of the generally accepted norms,' but that it was in fact operating in the same tradition and using the same sources of authority.[42]

In this Levy builds on the work of Heiko Oberman, whose *Forerunners of the Reformation* examines a broad selection of pre-reformation writers and concludes that the search for the 'true tradition … is the most crucial issue in late medieval theology'.[43] Oberman, like Levy, argued that the interaction between scripture and

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39 Ian Forrest, 'Lollardy and late medieval history', in *Wycliffite Controversies*, pp. 121-134, at p. 125, Peter Marshall, 'Lolards and Protestants revisited', pp. 295-318, at pp. 317-8.

40 Ian Christopher Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority at the End of the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012).

41 Ian Christopher Levy, 'Conclusion', in his *A Companion to John Wyclif: Late medieval theologian* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 457-462, at p. 458.

42 Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority*, pp. 150, xii.

43 Heiko Augustinus Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation: the shape of late-medieval thought* (London: Lutterworth, 1967), p. 21.

tradition was at the root of these issues. He speaks of two 'notions', that of scripture-in-tradition and that of scripture and tradition: 'in the first case [later termed 'tradition I'] tradition was seen as the instrumental vehicle of scripture … in the second case [tradition II] Tradition was seen as the authoritative vehicle of divine truth …'[44] Oberman's analysis rejects the stereotype of purely biblicist Lollards and Catholics who exalted tradition over scripture, although he does note that 'in theory the material sufficiency of Holy Scripture is upheld long after it has been given up in practice ... the key term of this development is the word "implicit" [referring to assumptions of the authority of scripture], and the history of this term is one of increasing loss of content.'[45] Oberman thus presents a conflict based less in theological theory than in practice, where all recognised the authority in scripture but some in practice subordinated it to the parallel authority of tradition, whereas others (such as Wyclif and his followers) insisted on viewing tradition as the interpretative guide to scripture.

Swanson puts this within a broader geographic and chronological focus; he writes of the tension across the later middle ages 'between the acceptance of tradition as a valid and validating force within the Church, and calls for repristination based on interpretation (and re-interpretation) of the bible as the prescriptive and sole foundation for Christian action'.[46] While insisting on the 'fragmentation of medieval Christianity' and the 'frequent uncertainty about the boundaries between the orthodox and unorthodox', he nevertheless suggests that the sticking point between the church and heretical groups was the existence of 'an independent exegetical tradition', whether it was scripture or the writings of ecstatic mystics that constituted the unauthorised canonical tradition under exegesis.[47] In the case of the Lollards, clearly, it was the bible, as read and interpreted by 'trewe men' like Wycliffe and later Lollard preachers, that constituted the challenge to the church's monopoly of interpretative traditions, and therefore of spiritual authority.

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44 Ibid., p. 55.
45 Ibid., p. 59.
46 R.N. Swanson, 'Literacy, heresy, history, and orthodoxy: perspectives and permutations for the later Middle Ages' in Peter Biller and Anne Hudson, *Heresy and literacy 1000-1530* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994) pp. 279-93 at p. 279.
47 Swanson, 'literacy, heresy, history, and orthodoxy', pp. 282, 285.

This interest in the interpretation of scripture is developed from a different perspective by Ghosh, notably in his *Wycliffite Heresy* volume.[48] Ghosh's study of the textual practice and hermeneutic methodology with which Wyclif and his opponents approached the citation of scripture likewise draws attention to the borrowing between Wyclif and later opponents such as Netter, who 'shares, to one's initial surprise, in the hermeneutic world of his opponent'.[49] Ghosh's study focuses more on Wyclif's methodology than the theological impact of his later followers upon their interlocutors, but reinforces Levy and Oberman's depiction both of the importance of questions of authority and interpretation of scripture to the debates of the time, and of a generally shared world in which these debates took place, with commonality and borrowing between writers.

In the interests of completeness it should also be noted that some contemporary literature continues to view Lollardy as a largely irrelevant 'flash in the pan', whose resonance with the ideas of the later Reformation has led it to be assigned a wholly excessive degree of importance in the study of a period marked less by theological controversy that by burgeoning lay devotion within conventional structures. Eamon Duffy's work is the flagship for this perspective, although others such as Richard Rex have largely echoed this analysis, suggesting that Lollardy's impact on the world of medieval English religion was minimal and ultimately insignificant.[50] While not a widespread position, it remains influential amongst those who see Lollard studies as still suffering from the anachronistic projection of reformation controversies onto late-medieval religion.

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48 Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*.

49 Ghosh, *Wycliffite heresy*, p. 174.

50 Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, Burgess 'A Hotbed of Heresy?', Rex, *The Lollards* (London: Palgrave, 2002).

Methodology and plan of content

This thesis will engage with the theology that developed in opposition to Lollardy through a study of a representative selection of texts, written in range of different genres and ecclesiastical origins across the period c. 1400-1450. Relative dynastic stability for this period in England under the Lancastrians and an ongoing wider context of war in France and debates around conciliarism, before the outbreak of the Wars of the Roses at home and the growth of humanism in Europe, make it a reasonably consistent period for this study. The texts examined are chosen to span both this chronological period and a range of genres and contexts. The thesis will examine them for the influence of Lollardy upon their theology, and investigate consistency and diversity across the range so examined.

The first chapter will cover a selection of key texts from the homiletic genre around the turn of the century, comparing Lollard and orthodox polemics and methods and establishing some of the different forms that orthodox writing could take. By examining the (c. 1400) collection of *English Wycliffite Sermons* edited by Hudson, it will track the distinctive emphasis of Lollard homiletics on hermeneutics and the accountability of the visible church to scripture.[51] It will then compare the ways in which three key orthodox homiletic texts from the same period – the Digby poems, the Bodley 649 sermons, and John Mirk's *Festial* - sought to establish competing and contradictory models of authority and Christian living in opposition to their Lollard interlocutors.[52] In particular it will examine the different ways in which all three works present understandings of virtue and the Christian faith that implicitly exclude the Lollard homiletics seen in *English Wycliffite Sermons*. It will also present what will be a recurring theme of these texts, a focus on the relationships between scriptural interpretation, the institutional church, and the individual. The model of

[51] Anne Hudson and Pamela Gradon, eds, *English Wycliffite Sermons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983-96).

[52] See pp. 29-33 for a detailed introduction to these texts.

interaction between these three will consistently be shown to correlate to a text's position on the Lollard debates.

The second will address Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, an influential example of devotional writing in the vernacular by a Carthusian prior, diplomat, and statesman, combining an ostensible devotional purpose with a clear anti-Lollard rubric. Probably written in the first decade of the fifteenth century, it is frequently connected with Archbishop Arundel's campaign against Lollardy, although some recent challenges to this association will be examined. This chapter will examine Love's engagement with Lollardy, explicit in places but more often implicit in the way he refashions the life of Christ narrative. It will argue that he sets forth a picture of virtue that leaves no room for Lollard spirituality, even as he also presents an understanding of authority and the church that denies any space for the lay challenges so essential to Lollard reform.

The third will examine Thomas Netter's *Doctrinale*, an explicitly polemical text of systematic theology in a high register of Latinity from the middle years of the first half of the century, written to combat Lollard thought by a monastic author well aware of European as well as English issues. This chapter will investigate in particular Netter's theology of exegesis and hermeneutics, and his construction of a theory of interpretation that, again, intrinsically excluded Lollard approaches. In this case, Netter's articulation of ultimate interpretative authority as resting in the consensus and tradition leaves no room for individuals to rebuke the church from their own reading of scripture, be they lay preachers or Wyclif himself. At the same time, Netter's determination to defend anything Wyclif attacked, including institutions like the papacy, often leads him into assertions that sit awkwardly with this theory, and so hint at the extent to which his polemical agenda could be distorting his theology.

The fourth will address a very different set of works attempting to articulate a systematic theology in the later 1440s, this time in the vernacular: those of Reginald Pecock, with particular comparison and contrast to Netter and Love's ostensibly similar enterprises. Pecock, as a figure condemned by the establishment for works written to oppose Lollardy, bears witness to the tensions between categories such as

'anti-Lollard' and 'orthodox', as well as a witness to the sensitivity of the contemporary establishment to any form of vernacular theology resonant of Lollard approaches. In spite of this, Pecock is as determined as other orthodox writers in this study to deny any rectitude to Lollard attacks on the church, insisting on a need for submission to contemporary institutional authority and denying the authority of personal bible reading. The reasons that so radical a figure none the less repeatedly converges with enforcers of orthodoxy such as Netter and Love will be explored in relation to their shared concern to exclude Lollard critiques of the contemporary establishment.

The final chapter will examine an important exception to the pattern so far: Thomas Gascoigne's *Liber Veritatum* (also known as the *Dictionarium Theologicum*), a text from the 1450s, showing little concern about heresy and, perhaps significantly, also articulating some rather different understandings of scripture and the church to the explicitly anti-Lollard writers. The contrast between his work and theirs will therefore act as a control and counterpoint to analysis of their influence upon contemporary religion. Gascoigne acts as an example of what theologies could emerge from a reform-minded English churchman when the influence of conflict with Lollardy was absent. The extent to which his work appears to recall Lollard approaches to questions of interpretation, authority, and the balance of conscience and church authority will be assessed, especially in relation to his participation in much of the same concern for radical church reform as Lollard writers. Thus the extent to which a shared agenda could lead to similar theologies will be a particular investigation of this chapter.

In conclusion this diverse set of texts will be compared for consistent elements across its otherwise deeply varied collection of writers, and thus the limits of contemporary theological diversity probed. In particular it will explore the extent to which shared polemical strategies resulted in shared hermeneutic theologies, and thus in a greater degree of theological consistency than the modern emphasis upon deconstructing theological divisions and emphasising continuities might suggest. It will suggest that there were real theological positions in conflict, based around

conflicting views of who, and how, the church was to be accountable; and what voice scripture, the laity, and the individual were to have in that process.

A new contribution

This thesis aims to make a threefold contribution to the current state of the field. Least controversially, it will argue in the historical realm that, contra the school that argues for Lollardy's essential irrelevance to late-medieval English religious development, Lollardy had a demonstrable impact on the theology of a range of writers and genres. It will show that the influence of Lollardy, and especially the imperative of opposing it, shaped and influenced even some writers who make no explicit engagement with it, such as John Mirk; and it will chart the consistency of this influence across different periods, genres, and locales. Far from being a brief 'flash in the pan', Lollardy was often an implicit context shaping contemporary theologians' work. Often, the issue of Lollardy is the key to understanding the apparent contradictions in contemporary texts.

Most originally, and most substantially, it will challenge the popular convention of emphasising commonality across the clashing viewpoints of the Lollard debates, arguing that rather than being merely one spectrum of reforming enthusiasm there were discrete, and conflicting, theological positions that remained largely coherent across each side of the debate. It will be demonstrated that these differences were consistently rooted in the Lollard controversy itself, and in the polemical imperatives of differing positions on those questions. Theologically, it will aim to delineate the connection between this polemical imperative and the debates over hermeneutics and the discernment of authority sources noted by scholars such as Levy, Ghosh, and Oberman. A particular view of the nature of the church, and of its relationship to the voice of scripture, specifically scripture as read by an individual, was the key to a text's involvement in the Lollard disputes and to the way in which it framed its engagement with them. The accountability of the church was in the end the underlying question: could an individual, whether layman or scholar, sit down with

the revealed texts the church had inherited and announce that the contemporary church was wrong? This would determine a writer's approach to questions of how to interpret the written word, and shape the roles they envisaged for lay religiosity, preaching, and understanding in the faith. On this point, it will be argued, contemporary religion was less of a spectrum than a dichotomy, and which camp an author fell into on the subject of ecclesiastical accountability could shape, and be shaped by, the development of the rest of their theology.

Hence Thomas Gascoigne, the last writer to be examined (Chapter 5), appears on these issues almost indistinguishable from Lollard writers, in spite of remaining consciously orthodox. Absent the imperative of combating Lollardy, his concern with reform, and frustration with the minimal pace of 'top-down' institutional reform, led him into an emphasis on the church's accountability to revealed ideals and the individual's independence from the institution, that in turn required strong theological underpinnings in views of scriptural authority and hermeneutic method that could almost have been drawn from Wyclif. The connections between these positions have been described causally, but it would be naïve, and perhaps a little reductionist, to assume that such causation was one way, or constituted the 'motive' for Gascoigne or others. It is as possible that a strong view of the objective and accessible voice of historic revelation in scripture and the Fathers came first, and ultimately resulted in that polemical agenda which has been identified, although in some authors, notably Thomas Netter and Reginald Pecock (Chapters 3 and 4, respectively), it will be argued that it is the polemical imperative that is calling the shots and distorting the consistency of their theological systems.

It is tempting, especially given the presence of an avowedly 'orthodox' figure such as Gascoigne on the 'Lollard' side of the divide just described, to resort to the language of 'reform' in place of the problematic categories of 'Lollard' and 'orthodox'. It should be emphasised, however, that this is not a simple distinction between 'reformers' and 'reactionaries'; a recognition of the need for reforms was almost universal in contemporary circles, and writers such as Love and Netter would be

involved in reforms even as they opposed the Lollard position.[53] The great division of the time was not over the need for reform, but over who could demand and initiate it and with what authority. For some, the institutional church was essentially self-regulating, not accountable to ill-informed outsiders, and the sole authoritative channel of divine revelation. It could and should reform both itself and Christendom. For others, it was possible for any Christian to encounter the divine voice in the timeless inheritance of the written word, with more authority than the contemporary institution could muster. Thus they could stand alone before the institutional church and, with prophetic authority, rebuke it and demand reform. Here there might be value in adapting Swanson's language to speak of an 'independent reforming tradition', or at least an independent reforming agenda. Whether such an agenda could be valid was the essential issue, but it was its independence, not its reform, that was controversial. For Love and Netter, and it will be argues even Pecock, reform that the church rejected was invalid. For Gascoigne and the Lollards, there were times when the individual had to pursue the reform against the church's will. The distinction between these positions is significant, theologically determinative, and not purely reducible to a graduated spectrum of views on reform.

Thirdly, and more in the realm of textual studies, this thesis will draw out and demonstrate the significance of the polemical imperative in shaping these works, especially those not normally seen as polemic, and in accounting for many of the apparent problems of their work. While Bose in particular has touched on these issues in shaping the 'voice' of the writer through the text, this thesis will examine their influence on the theology of the work, and thus of the context of controversy upon the development of the period's theology.[54]

In the conjunction of these elements lies the essential argument of this thesis: that polemical imperatives connected to real theological differences led to a visible impact upon contemporary theology. While there were differences within what we

[53] Michael G. Sargent, 'Nicholas Love as an Ecclesiastical Reformer', *Church History and Religious Culture*, 96 (2016), pp. 40-64.

[54] See for example Mishtooni Bose, 'Prophecy, complaint, and pastoral care in the fifteenth century:Thomas Gascoigne's *Liber Veritatum*' in Cate Gunn and Katherine Innes-Parker, eds, *Texts and traditions of medieval pastoral care: essays in honour of Bella Millet* (Woodbridge, York Medieval Press, 2009), pp. 149-162.

might label 'Lollard' and 'orthodox' camps, and commonalities between factions within them, these must not obscure the coherence of their differing positions. Lollard voices sought many things, but all ultimately endeavoured to challenge and change the contemporary church, to hold it accountable to their understanding of the voice of God discerned through scripture (usually scripture-in-tradition). Opponents of Lollardy sought not only to dismiss its various specific critiques of contemporary religion, but ultimately to construct a theological space that excluded its whole attitude of prophetic critique of the church as immoral, and denied its appeal to scriptural authority as unreliable or dangerous. The underlying agenda was to discredit the existence of independent reform: in this case the existence of a way of approaching the bible that was not dependent on the church, and allowed for its correction.[55] So these writers wished not only to discredit particular criticisms, but the possibility of criticism itself. This strategy recurs consistently, albeit in radically different and sometimes contradictory forms. In this curious pattern of theological coherence underlying and expressing itself through a motley diversity lay the influence of the fight against Lollardy on the unfolding development of English religion.

Addendum: a note on terminology

At this point a note must be made of terminological usage. Studies of this field have long struggled with the issue of language. Contemporary labels were charged and contested, while modern labels are of necessity anachronistic. Terms such as 'lollard', 'orthodox', and 'heterodox', in particular, are embedded in the scholarship but have their own long histories and different shades of understood meaning. Many of these associations have become problematic. The words 'heterodox' and 'orthodox', in particular, are anachronisms, while 'Lollard' appears to have been primarily used by

[55] Compare again Swanson 'literacy, heresy, history, and orthodoxy', p. 285, for the wider issue of independent traditions in contemporary Europe.

contemporaries as a term of abuse.[56] In addition there is the problem of definition: while it is possible to point to clear contemporary legal definitions of the distinction between 'heretic' and 'faithful,' in terms of an individual's willingness to accept correction, few of the writers in these controversies were actually put to the test in this regard, and speculation as to whether they would have been willing to submit to the authority of the church cannot ultimately be much more than speculation.[57] Moreover, the focus of this thesis is on the development of theology rather than the affiliations and choices of individuals, and the 'orthodoxy' or otherwise of texts and ideas, as opposed to people, cannot be meaningfully subjected to this test. If one is willing to identify the category of 'orthodox' with the views of the contemporary church establishment then it is clearly possible to identify some ideas as 'heterodox' when they were condemned by councils. The very diversity and mutability of religion discussed above dictates a high measure of caution, however, in relying on such verdicts to define 'heterodoxy' for the whole of the period, and in assuming that they represent all of the 'orthodox' side of religious controversies; such verdicts could clearly owe as much to power struggles and the agenda of an influential minority as to any form of consensus. Likewise, much of the debate studied in this thesis occurs outside the boundaries of those doctrines formally condemned at gatherings such as Blackfriars and Constance, further complicating the task of defining their theology in terms of 'orthodoxy'.[58]

Contemporaries, however, still thought in 'us and them' categories, whatever language they used, whether it were the 'known men' of Lollard dissent or the '*christifideles*' to whom Netter addressed the *Doctrinale.* However much both sides might have laid claim to the label of true or 'catholic' believers or, in the modern theological sense, 'orthodoxy', the existence of the concept, and its antithesis, were undisputed for contemporaries; it was the proper referents that were the subject of

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[56] Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite texts and Lollard history* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), pp. 432-36.

[57] Hornbeck, Bose and Somerset, *A Companion to Lollardy*, pp. 15-21 for a detailed discussion of this terminology: 'heterodoxy is the opposite of orthodoxy, while heresy is the opposite of submission', p. 20.

[58] Norman Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990), Vol. 2, pp. 411-13 and 421-26 give lists of propositions condemned by Constance as outside the bounds of orthodoxy.

contention.[59] Contemporaries on all sides of these controversies claimed to be 'true' or 'faithful' Christians or 'catholics'. Even the alleged contemporary Lollard label 'knowun men' was ultimately a polemical reference to passages such as Galatians 4:9, making it hard to justify simply using the contemporary terms; they were as problematic and divisive then as 'orthodox' and 'heterodox' tend to be now. Yet some form of terminology is inescapable in referring to the different sides in the religious debates of the period and the different ways in which they related to the established church; difficulty in defining exactly the boundaries of a category cannot negate its necessity, and the necessity for some form of terminology, however problematic, with which to describe it.

In this context the concept of 'family resemblance' borrowed from Wittgenstein by Hornbeck and developed in his discussion of identifying suspects as 'Lollard' is a helpful foundation to adopt. It calls not for a single concrete definition to fix the identity of all members of a group or category, but for the participation in a reasonable number of the shared characteristics of the group or identity in question.[60] Thus the phenomena generally termed 'orthodoxy' and 'Lollardy' are both understood, as Swanson also points out, as 'discourse communities' (a term he borrows from B. A. Ratfoth) defined by a degree of participation, usually but not always conscious, in shared language, groups of texts, or modes of performing Christianity.[61] According to this model the term 'orthodoxy' will be used (as it most often is in the scholarship) for those in contemporary English Christianity who substantially shared in the following characteristics: denial of those Wycliffite doctrines known to be condemned by the church (principally at Blackfriars and Constance), explicit condemnation of Wyclif and his avowed followers, recognition of the requirement to submit to ecclesiastical superiors and ultimately to popes or councils on matters of doctrine, or a consistent defence of doctrines and practices frequently condemned in Lollard texts, in particular

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[59] See for example Matti Peikola, 'Congregation of the Elect: Patterns of self-fashioning in English Lollard writings' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Turku, 2000) on Lollard self-identification.

[60] Hornbeck, *What is a Lollard?*, pp. 11-16.

[61] Swanson, 'Literacy, heresy, history, and orthodoxy', p. 284.

transubstantiation, oral priestly shrift, and the reverence of images.[62] Likewise a rejection of a doctrine or position that had been publicly and authoritatively asserted by the church (as discussed in Arundel's Constitutions, articles 4-5, 8-9) would be considered a disqualification for the 'orthodox' category. Underlying this, it will argued, was a 'discourse' that asserted the dependence of authoritative interpretation and reform on the church.

This 'orthodoxy' is not necessarily the same as 'mainstream', it should be emphasised, in the sense of the modal or most common practice and belief of the society. While the mainstream of fifteenth-century English piety was probably dominated by 'orthodoxy' in this sense, it was also inclined to diverge from the strict sense of the explicit teaching of the church in some areas; for example in a more works-orientated soteriology or a more immanent eschatology.[63] Indeed the 'controversial potential of orthodox revivalist movements' in this period, with groups in the church hierarchy responding to heterodoxy by moving more radically in certain directions than the 'mainstream' of religious opinion and practice, is one area that will be encountered in succeeding chapters.[64] Likewise no theological judgement about the objective rightness of doctrines is implied in this terminology, the term is used here in a historical function to denote a contemporary orientation. While this orientation tended inevitably to overlap with the category of 'anti-Lollard', moreover, it should not be necessarily identified with it: writers such as Gascoigne illustrate the presence of 'orthodox' figures who were not concerned with opposing Lollardy.

'Heterodox', conversely, will be used to denote ideas containing deviation, conscious or otherwise, from the general teaching of the official church in so far as that can be identified, without necessarily implying conscious rebellion against its authority by the author. Thus in this context denial of transubstantiation (a question frequently used to identify 'heretics' by contemporary inquisitors), the permissibility of the cult of the Saints, or the legitimacy of church property would all be considered part

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62 For beliefs and practices condemned by Lollardy, see Tanner, *Heresy Trials*, pp. 10-21, Hornbeck, *What is a Lollard?*, pp. 22-24.

63 Hornbeck, *What is a Lollard?*, pp. 40-63, Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion*, pp. 1-32.

64 Soukup and Van Dussen, *Religious Controversy in Europe*, p. 6.

of a heterodox 'family resemblance'. In turn, 'heresy' will be used slightly more specifically in correspondence to Gratian's definition, to denote conscious and deliberate heterodoxy that knowingly rejects the authority of the institutional church: William White was legally a heretic, and sometimes taught heresy, Reginald Pecock, for all the heterodoxy of some of his work, was not and did not, since he submitted to the authority of the church when put to the test.

Following this model, in this study 'Lollardy' will be used to denote that theological stream influenced by the ideas of Wyclif, diverging from the official teaching of the established church in certain areas even where that had been clearly asserted (i.e. being willing to reject the authority of the institution), and sharing 'family resemblances' across a broad set of reforming ideas, in particular hostility to the mediating role of the (institutional) church, transubstantiation, the cult of the Saints, images, pilgrimages, and the authority of the present papacy and hierarchy, and an emphasis on the importance of scripture obediently read or heard by the individual, regardless of clerical or lay status, instead.[65] While the exact boundaries of such a definition are still porous and incompletely defined, this again seems to be the most natural usage in regard to current scholarly practice. Ultimately, it will be argued, this was a 'discourse community' who insisted on maintaining the independence of their discourse from ecclesiastical authority, or from any authorities but scripture, conscience, and in some respects one another. Likewise while 'Lollard' as a noun will be used to denote an individual who appears to broadly conform to a significant number of these distinctive theological bents, 'lollard' as an adjective will occasionally be used to describe works, individuals, or styles that are Lollard-like or evocative of what is seen in Lollardy, even if they cannot demonstrably be shown to be a part of it. Works in the 'grey areas' of fifteenth-century religious literature may therefore be described as 'lollard' in aspects of style even if not clearly or conclusively

[65] Hornbeck, *What is a Lollard?*, pp. 1-8, for 'family resemblances', Shannon and Tanner, *Lollards of Coventry* pp. 15-21, and Tanner, *Heresy Trials*, pp. 10-21, for surveys of common elements in the beliefs of defendants. See also the list of characteristics of Lollard spirituality given by Somerset in Hornbeck, Bose, and Somerset, *A Companion to Lollardy*, pp. 71-74.

Lollard in identity and technically orthodox in theology.[66] Likewise, some emphases associated with Lollardy and articulated by Lollards, such as concern for the purity and education of the parish clergy, may be fairly 'mainstream' in terms of their general acceptance in contemporary religious culture. Far from being heterodox, they were also espoused by the explicitly and clearly 'orthodox', even though the Lollards also articulating them might themselves be often heterodox and indeed fully heretical.[67] Because a preoccupation with reform was almost universal, there was a substantial overlap between the preoccupations of Lollards and orthodox.

'There is no litmus test for lollardy' Somerset notes – nor was there at the time – and inevitably the result of such definitions as these is that 'it is difficult to be sure where you are in the Lollard corpus, and it is even harder to know where its edges are'.[68] Many religious movements are easier to recognise than define, especially for contemporaries, and Lollardy, and the associated concepts of orthodoxy/heterodoxy, are no exception. The 'family resemblance' model has the merit of reflecting that imprecision, and while it will not provide a tool for resolving very precisely where disputed 'grey area' texts are to be placed, it does provide a framework for using these terms with as much precision as the available record permits.

Finally there is the term 'reform'. The language of 'reform' has already been touched upon; Bose in particular has commented on reform being the 'big picture' of the period, and heresy the detail.[69] This in itself makes the word less useful for these discussions, since reform of some sort was an interest of almost all involved. Discourses of reform were embedded in the Christian textual inheritance, fundamental in particular to many of the prophets and to much of Christ's dialogue with the religious authorities of his time in the Gospels. Concerns for reform of one

[66] How to define works that seem lollard in tone, without addressing any of the areas of theology where Lollard teaching diverged demonstrably from that of the authoritative institutional church (making it hard to judge them as conclusively 'heterodox' or 'orthodox') is one of the more challenging questions of the period. Some, such as Somerset, tend to default to assuming such works are Lollard; others, such as Duffy, assume that they are orthodox unless proven otherwise.

[67] This argument is central to Somerset, *Feeling like Saints*, pp. 2-12, where Somerset complains of the readiness of scholars to define any work that does not explicitly take a Lollard position on points of conflict as 'reforming orthodox', arguing that many are in fact Lollard works simply not interested in polemic.

[68] Ibid., pp. 12, 5.

[69] Bose, 'Their opponents', p. 145.

sort or another had recurred throughout the history of Western Christianity. In this period the existence of a need for reform was essentially undisputed.[70] Even Lollardy's most zealous opponents sought reform in their own way.[71] It was the nature of reform and the authority to demand and direct it that were at stake between orthodox and heterodox. If the heart of Lollardy's controversial status was, as suggested above, its 'independent reforming agenda', the 'reforming' part was not controversial, only its independence.

For Wyclif and his followers reform was something that could be demanded, and even instituted, by the individual theologian or the community of like-minded believers, based off the authority of scripture, accessible to them as humble believers and careful readers. For opponents, reform was something that had to come from the church itself, to some extent 'top down' or internal. In this context the anachronistic terms 'intra-mural' and 'extra-mural' become useful, considered with reference to the 'walls' of the church as an institution: Lollards felt that the church had failed to reform itself, and so sought extra-mural reform, opponents insisted that reform must be intra-mural (and usually of a more limited nature).[72] Thus the concept of reform is essential, and it constitutes in a sense the pressure behind these conflicts, but it is not *per se* something that separates or distinguishes the sides. These writers were not so much at different points on a spectrum of 'reform', as they were wrestling over the driving seat and destination of that common imperative.

The term 'reform' itself will be used sparingly here, therefore, and with the emphasis on the priorities of the writer: a 'reforming orthodox' figure, for example, being one who, while remaining within the teaching of the institutional church and upholding its authority, saw its reform as the primary priority, rather than its defence, whereas one might speak of a 'reactionary orthodox' figure who saw the repression of heresy as more important than reform. Lollards, prioritising reform, ultimately differed from opponents in judging this demand to overrule that of submission to the institutional church and its conclusions, priorities, and timetable for

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[70] R. N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p. 313.

[71] See for example Sargent, 'Nicholas Love as an Ecclesiastical Reformer', pp. 40-64.

[72] See the discussion of the English Wycliffite Sermons, Chapter 1 below.

reform. Reform could thus be independent. Their opponents, it will be argued, while they recognised the imperfection of the contemporary church establishment, saw reform as something that was its responsibility, to be directed from within. They therefore attacked Lollardy primarily by denying it the right to demand and direct reform, and the theologies they constructed to do so will be the primary object of this thesis.

CHAPTER ONE
Homiletic responses in the early fifteenth century

The context of the early fifteenth century

The first ten to fifteen years of the fifteenth century were, more even than most, a period of transition and instability, making it a particularly interesting period for the study of the most responsive parts of contemporary theological activity such as homiletic and polemical materials.

In the political realm the usurpation by Henry IV and the uneasy establishment of Lancastrian rule was accompanied by political, and occasionally military, power struggles between king, parliament, and nobles, finding expression in the revolts of the Percies, archbishop Scrope, and Owain Glyndŵr, as well as a series of tumultuous parliaments seeking to control the king and place limits on his power. Royal power and prestige was thus unusually strained until it began to rise again under the strong and successful rule of Henry V from 1413. Popular unrest (as opposed to the regional and dynastic revolts in Wales and the North associated with leading members of the aristocracy) seems to have remained essentially quiescent, but the legacy of 1381, and indeed of the (far more brutal) *Jacquerie* in France remained in the general awareness. Disputes over the proper employment of the legal system in a context of so-called 'bastard feudalism' and strong noble power unfolded in a context of the gradual dissolution of traditional labour services and associated bonds of service in the aftermath of the Black Death, and an associated rise in the number of workers with access to royal (instead of manorial) courts. Meanwhile discussions about re-opening the war in France continued alongside the legacy of the intense warfare under Edward III and Richard II, but the truce with France remained in force until the accession of Henry V, and contemporary military conflicts were mostly the limited campaigns against rebels in England and Wales, or clashes on the Scottish marches.

In the ecclesiastical realm official opposition to Wycliffite ideas had become increasingly clear following the Blackfriars Council of 1382, and over this period the apparatus of practical repression would increasingly be constructed through the statute *De Haeretico Comburendo* in 1401 and the Constitutions issued by Archbishop Arundel at Oxford in 1407-9; the final journey from a controversial academic movement to a persecuted religious group thus very much took place over this first decade. Ideas not inherently Lollard, such as the translation of the Bible, still discussed in Oxford in the early years of the century, soon disappeared from discussion. Nonetheless the sporadic appearance of Lollard ideas near to the seat of power, both in parliamentary contexts such as the discussion of a disendowment bill in 1410, and in the person of individuals such as John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham, a soldier and friend of the Prince, gave it a continued high profile and, at the least, the appearance of a significant threat to the contemporary ecclesiastical establishment.[1] The 'Oldcastle Revolt' at the end of this period, while little actual threat to Henry V's control of the country, eventually solidified the association of Lollardy with subversion and has traditionally been seen as sounding the death-knell to its support amongst the ruling classes, shifting it from (in the eyes of the ecclesiastical establishment) a menacing threat to be defended against to a lingering problem to be aggressively extirpated.[2]

Meanwhile across wider Christendom general frustration with the Schism led to the first attempt at conciliar resolution at Pisa in 1409, but at this point it only added to the complexity of the situation by establishing a third pope. Nonetheless the limited success of the council was sufficient to lay the groundwork for the more (ostensibly) successful endeavour at Constance in 1414-18. The ripples of the growing conflicts in Prague, centred around the reading of the works of Wyclif and the reform preaching of

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1 The presentation of what is generally described as the Lollard disendowment bill to Parliament in around 1410 was probably the most notable example of a continued presence in (admittedly radical) political circles, albeit there is little sign of general support for the Lollard programme, and money problems may have contributed to the appeal of disendowment here – see Anne Hudson, *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. x.

2 K. B. McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972) is the main source for this suggestion.

Ian Hus, were not as yet widely felt, and the end of the schism and the need for reform remained the key concerns in European Christianity.[3] At the same time popular enthusiasm and engagement with religion on the part of passionate minorities of laity, especially in the relatively prosperous and educated urban communities, is well documented, and may be seen bearing fruit in the rapid growth of devotional material (much in the vernacular) and of new iterations of devotion such as the cults of the Holy Blood and the Holy Name.[4]

The homiletic genre in the late middle ages

In terms of generic context, it must be noted that medieval homiletics is a highly diverse field, with an abundance of primary material framed by a growing body of secondary literature.[5] This chapter will therefore form something of a compromise, being built around close examination of the language and theology of one key Lollard collection and three very different orthodox texts from approximately this first decade that seem to typify the main theological reflexes underlying the diversity of responses to Lollardy in the field of homiletics at this time. The distinctive abundance of sermon collections around the first decade or so of the century makes it possible to choose a diverse group of texts all from this one period, giving a degree of chronological

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3 The arrest of Jean de Varennes in the 1390s for criticism of abuses, royal, noble, and ecclesiastical, pointed to continued sensitivity about reform and subversion far beyond England, though Jean Gerson was articulating the same sentiments rather less controversially in this period. It may be, as McGuire suggests, that Varennes was in trouble for saying in French what Gerson would later say in Latin: criticisms of elite abuses were permissible as long as they were kept 'in house' and not spread to the populace, much as the Constitutions of Arundel would later demand that clerical failings not be critiqued before a lay audience – Brian Patrick McGire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 2005), pp. 77-8.

4 John Van Engen, 'Multiple Options: The World of the Fifteenth-Century Church', *Church History*, 77:2 (June 2008), pp. 257-284, at p. 280.

5 Veronica O'Mara and Suzanne Paul, eds, provide an overview of vernacular primary material in the introduction to their *Repertorium of Middle English Prose Sermons* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), as does Siegfried Wenzel for Latin sources in the introduction to *Latin Sermon Collections from later Medieval England: Orthodox preaching in the age of Wyclif* (Cambridge, CUP, 2005): these two collections contain introductions to a large body of homiletic material in the two languages, comprising over 1500 sermons.

coherence to the selection, though reference will also be made to some diachronic comparisons, where these are possible, to test the hypothesis of change over time.

Introduction to the texts

A representative analysis of Lollard homiletics will be taken from the *English Wycliffite Sermons* edited by Anne Hudson, an extensive work of sermons available in multiple manuscript collections, whose Lollard credentials are fairly unquestioned, dated to around 1400.[6] Its professional copying and substantial circulation suggests it was both fairly influential and the product of a large and organised Lollard group; one with access to a scriptorium of some form, a range of texts, and (Hudson and Gradon suggest) some earlier incarnations of Wyclif's Latin work.[7] Like many sermon collections, it shows some signs of having been intended as a potential exemplary text for Lollard preachers, so its significance may extend beyond its direct readership, and indeed it has clearly been drawn on and adapted by other collections.[8] Certainly its consistently polemical tone suggests that it was intended at least partly as a resource for Lollard apologetics. Likewise, it contains a large enough collection of individual sermons to allow some judgement of consistent preoccupations on a wide range of issues, and has a didactic and polemical preoccupation that makes it a strong example of Lollard challenges to and criticisms of the church establishment, as well as a helpful introduction to Lollard doctrines and attitudes more generally. Since the aim here is to introduce a summary of the unique challenges presented by Lollard homiletics in general, some comparison will also be made to the 'Lollard Sermons' edited by Gloria Cigman, a similar collection in many respects but containing a slightly different set of

[6] Hudson and Gradon, eds, *English Wycliffite Sermons,* Vol 1, pp. 1-221, gives extensive background to the collection. Henceforth abbreviated to *EWS*.

[7] *EWS,* Vol. 1 pp. 190-196, for discussion for the evidence for a large and professional central scriptorium, Vol. 3 pp. lxx-cxlviii, for discussion of the use of Wyclif's own sermons, see also comparisons in the commentary provided in Vol. 5. Its circulation was extensive enough that one copy was owned by a Dominican house, though whether as a specimen of heretical polemic or because it was genuinely appreciated as a sermon cycle is unclear (Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 205).

[8] *EWS*, Vol. 1, pp. 98-123.

theological emphases, whose date is harder to fix but is usually placed to the first quarter of the century.[9]

The first orthodox work to contrast with this is MS Bodley 649; a macaronic sermon collection in the genre discussed by Wenzel, itself analysed in additional detail by Horner in his edition of this collection.[10] Their analyses concur in placing this text as a probable creation of a monastic author during the reign of Henry V, probably a Benedictine with ties to Oxford writing either for important occasions such as chapter sermons or with an eye to providing sermon models.[11] This work does not have the extensive manuscript circulation of *EWS* or the *Festial*, surviving only in a single manuscript in a single hand, and so the extent of its intended and actual audience is less clear.[12] Its use of military language and references to the king may, however, indicate a position of greater influence than its limited manuscript tradition would otherwise indicate, and like *EWS* it has a polemic and apologetic tone suggesting that it was intended to be a resource for those involved in the wider Lollard controversy. Repeated references to the campaigns of Henry and praise for him as a monarch are combined with extensive use of chivalric and military metaphor to suggest both political interest and an endeavour to appeal to the extra-mural world, especially the military aristocracy.[13] Classical allusions are found alongside patristic and scriptural fluency, and the (highly rhetorically polished) text thus exemplifies the educated and involved monastic intellectuals highlighted by the work of James Clark.[14] Besides its

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[9] Gloria Cigman, ed., *Lollard Sermons* (Oxford: EETS, 1989) – see pp. xli-xlvi for Cigman's dating evidence. Compare Christina van Nolcken's review in *The Journal of Religion*, 71:2 (1991), pp. 262-263, for a similar dating.

[10] Macaronic sermons mix English and Latin unpredictably; Siegfried Wenzel, *Macaronic Sermons: bilingualism and preaching in late medieval England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994) contains an extensive analysis of the genre, its unique literary culture, and theological comparisons across sermon collections; Patrick J. Horner, *A Macaronic Sermon Collection from Late Medieval England: Oxford MS Bodley 649* (Toronto: PIMS, 2006) offers a helpful edition of the work with an extensive discussion of its distinctive characteristics in the first section, which will be the base for this analysis. The macaronic genre is variously understood as representing a 'classroom patois' that was 'resonant of clerkly authority' and a way of displaying an ostentatiously erudite bilingualism to particular audiences (Fletcher, *Late Medieval Popular Preaching*, pp. 58-66).

[11] See *Macaronic Sermons,* p. 106, Horner, *A Macaronic Sermon Collection,* pp. 2-24.

[12] *A Macaronic Sermon Collection*, pp. 2-6.

[13] Ibid., pp. 27, 28, 39, 51, 109, 136,137, 154, 156, 159, 275, 412, 506, for examples of military language and interest, pp. 159, 168, 412, 524, 530, for examples of overt praise of Henry in person.

[14] James G. Clark, *A Monastic Renaissance at St. Alban's: Thomas Walsingham and his circle, c. 1350-1440* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), pp. 6, 11, 238, discusses the significance of such educated and politically engaged

significance as an insight into this influential grouping, however, it is also significant in exemplifying and clarifying the category of 'reactionary orthodoxy' discussed above.[15] Hostility to Lollardy is one of the most consistent threads through the sermons, either implicitly or explicitly, and it is clearly presented as a major, perhaps the major, threat to the church.[16] Much of the sermon material in this collection is, as will be seen, orientated around either attacking Lollardy directly or defending those doctrines and practices that were traditional Lollard targets and, the sermons both explicitly and implicitly endorse the measures being taken by authorities against Lollards, both burnings and the efforts to restrict theological speculation. While the sermons do contain concern for church reform in places, the existing church is primarily an institution that is defended, not critiqued.[17] This text will thus serve as a detailed exemplar of the reactionary perspective, with reference to other texts that display similar characteristics, in particular other macaronic sermons from Wenzel's collections and some of the Latin works.

The second case study will be Mirk's *Festial*, a late fourteenth or early fifteenth-century text representing a somewhat different social and ecclesiastic background and a very different theological perspective and homiletic method. Here the recent edition by Susan Powell will form the basis for discussion of the text, while Judy Ann Ford's work on the *Festial* manuscripts provides a recent scholarly commentary.[18] The vast popularity of Mirk's work, and especially the *Festial*, to judge from manuscript survivals, suggests that this collection may be taken to be representative of a

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Benedictines to the intellectual life of England in the period, and notes in particular the interest in classical texts. Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, pp. 29-30, similarly notes the association of highly 'crafted', classically allusive sermons with monks, and particularly Benedictines. See *A Macaronic Sermon Collection,* pp. 222, 39, 275, for examples of classical interests.

15 See discussion of terminology, pp.19-25 above.

16 There are at least 29 such instances in *A Macaronic Sermon Collection:* pp. 24, 31, 65, 67, 73, 75, 85, 93, 140, 156, 166, 172, 212, 236, 275, 277, 279, 304, 322, 347, 388, 400, 420, 432, 437, 438, 465, 506, 508; the frequency with which this theme appears is striking.

17 See for example p. 67, where improvements in the clergy are called for, but such instances are rare.

18 Susan Powell, *John Mirk's Festial* (Oxford: OUP, 2009) – henceforth abbreviated as *Festial* – and Judy Ann Ford, *John Mirk's Festial: Orthodoxy, Lollardy, and the common people in fourteenth century England* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2006). Powell dates the text to the very late 1380s.

significant section of contemporary religious attitudes and homiletic practices.[19] Moreover in format it is representative of the large number of sermons that are liturgical rather than lectional: that is, they are rooted in explaining the liturgy and practice of the day or the feast on which they are preached, rather than inspired by or expounding the biblical reading of the day in the fashion of the *EWS*, for example.[20] This approach is found in a number of collections in middle English, usually from the early fifteenth century and presented, at least, as addressed to a parochial context.[21] Ford claims, indeed, that the *Festial* was 'intended to be preached by the most ignorant of priests to the most ignorant of people' – by non-Latinate curates struggling to write their own sermons, in parishes that could not afford an accomplished preacher and so were probably poor and not highly educated.[22] How far large manuscript collections like the *Festial* and related collections were really circulated amongst semi-literate or illiterate priests in the worst off parishes might be debatable, but its breadth of circulation and its adaptation and imitation in other sermons certainly suggest that it was popular. Along with the other liturgical collections, the *Festial* is seldom preoccupied overtly with polemic around church reform or heterodoxy, but appears to prioritise didactic instruction on the basics of faith and practice (although, it will be argued, this conceals a tacit defence of orthodoxy). Given the expressed concern for priestly instruction and the absence of explicit political or polemical commentary, this category is probably as close as it is possible to get to Duffy's alleged quiet 'mainstream of fifteenth-century piety' and parochial religion, though his characterisation of it as 'not … greatly affected, much less shaped, by reaction to

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[19] See Powell's introduction for a discussion of manuscript survival. Spencer notes in *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), p. 319, that most vernacular sermon collections tend to imitate and borrow from either the *Festial* or *EWS*.

[20] The first chapter of Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections,* explores and discusses this distinction, amongst others. It should of course be noted that these categories are not necessarily exclusive; Wenzel notes that some writers such as Repyngdon can be found addressing both (p. 51), but this is unusual.

[21] See for example Cambridge, CUL MS Add. 5338, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 392, Gloucester Cathedral MS 22, Lincoln Cathedral MS 50, or London, BL MS Add. 36791, all fifteenth-century collections employing a similar method. The collection in Cambridge, Trinity College MS B.14521, a rare 13th century example, indicates the relative antiquity of this approach. See O'Mara and Paul, *Repertorium* for dating estimates on these collections and introductions to their content.

[22] Ford, *John Mirk's Festial*, p. 12.

[heresy]' may, as will be argued, be missing subtler elements of polemical engagement in the sermons.[23]

The third text under consideration is the Digby poems collection.[24] While there is some overlap in terms of origins with the Bodley 649 sermons, both being thought to emanate from a Benedictine milieu, the Digby poems represent a very different theological and practical perspective.[25] The close overlap of institution and dating – Barr dates this collection to around 1413-14 – further highlights their very different responses to contemporary debates.[26] This is indeed at one level a very generically different collection, being ostensibly a collection of a monastic author's poems rather than a sermon collection. However, the clear intent of teaching and persuading in the poems does indicate an overlap with other homiletic materials, as does the public remit of the works, which seem to suggest a wider audience than the purely private. Barr suggests an author who, while a Gloucester monk, 'was present in London' with access to 'public occasion and parliamentary politics', Verheij posits a Westminster Benedictine serving in chancery.[27] Given the discussion of parliament and monarchy in that context, a more than private readership seems likely to have been envisaged. The Digby corpus is moreover a convenient example of the 'reforming orthodox' category: aimed primarily at reforming the church, and very sharply critical of abuses and certain contemporary practices whilst maintaining positions on subjects such as the sacraments and, critically, the determinative authority of the church, that require it to still be considered 'orthodox', and amount to a strong defence of orthodox positions.[28] There are therefore valuable comparisons to be made both with Bodley 649's apologetics against Lollardy and with the reforming priorities and rhetoric of Lollard homiletics, in both of which simultaneously the Digby collection shares. This

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23 Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. xxi.

24 Helen Barr, *The Digby Poems* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2009) provides the most recent edition of the text and scholarly commentary, and will be the basis for this analysis.

25 Barr, *Digby Poems*, p. 73, discusses possible links to the Gloucester Benedictines.

26 Ibid., pp. 14-18.

27 Barr, *Digby Poems*, pp. 73-78; Louis J. P. Verheij, 'New Light on the Author of the Twenty-Four Poems in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 102', in *Neophilologus*, 96 (2012), 641-49.

28 Ibid., pp. 21-29, for the key sections of Barr's discussion of the text's fundamental orthodoxy and implicit defence against Lollardy. See the discussion below for further elaboration on these areas.

position it exemplifies is likewise shared with a wider corpus of collections, both in English and Latin, which to a greater or lesser extent present a reforming critique of contemporary orthodoxy without crossing the official boundaries laid out by the institutional church or rejecting its authority; in particular, reference will be made to the sermons of Richard Fleming at the Council of Constance in the next decade, plausibly presented by Nighman as an example of the English reforming platform that emphasised the importance of reform precisely as the best possible response to heresy.[29]

The English Wycliffite Sermons: their polemical content

The challenge from Lollard homiletics in *EWS* is a complex and comprehensive one; it comprises three primary elements: criticisms, both overt and more covert, of the teaching and practice of the church of the time, the development of an alternative theology, particularly in areas of ecclesiology, and a dissenting model of hermeneutics that potentially undermined many elements of contemporary orthodox thought and practice, the more so as these ecclesiological and hermeneutic criticisms effectively undermined the two main sources of theological authority for the contemporary establishment, namely the offices and traditions of the institutional church on the one hand, and the interpreted and applied word of scripture on the other.

Many of the sermons are shaped by an overt criticism of the institutional church and demands for reform, an issue raised explicitly in at least 43 of the sermons and arguably implicit in many others. One sermon goes so far as to claim that the root cause of sin in people is corrupt clerics.[30] The primary mechanism of criticism is a

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[29] Chris Lee Nighman, 'Reform and Humanism in the Sermons of Richard Fleming at the Council of Constance' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Toronto). Similar comparisons can be made to sermon collections by Repyngdon, John Dygon, Chambron, and Wimbledon, all marked by primary concern for the reform of abuses in the church, as well as anonymous collections such as Arras, MS Bibliotheque de la Ville 184, Oxford, Baliol College MS 149, discussed in Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections,* pp. 33-210, which show a similar primary concern for reform of the church's abuses rather than for the defeat of Lollardy.

[30] *EWS*, Vol. 1, pp. 260-3.

consistent and evidently thought-out strategy of co-opting the biblical narrative to apply to the present situation. The text consistently compares the 'prelates', religious, and friars who were the enemies of contemporary Lollardy to the villains of the gospel readings it expounds, who were the enemies of Christ, casting representatives of the established church as Pharisees, false prophets, persecutors, Sadducees, hypocrites, and followers of anti-Christ; while identifying the persecuted Lollards with the heroes of the narrative, primarily Christ and the apostles.[31] The framework for this polemic is introduced by the second sermon in the collection, which presents the religious establishment as the 'proud' set against the 'poor in spirit' they oppose, appropriating for Lollardy the charged language of spiritual poverty.[32]

This rhetorical framework is expanded more explicitly in the following sermon: '*prelates as scribes and religious as Pharisees gruchchen aȝen trewe prestis, membris of Crist, þat comunen with comunesas publicans and secler lordys as synful men, and seyen hit fallyth not to hem to knowe Godes lawe*'.[33] There are five identifications here; prelates are identified with the 'scribes' of the biblical narrative, the religious with the Pharisees, the 'communes' (i.e. the unlearned laity) are identified with the publicans (or 'tax collectors'), and secular lords likewise with the 'sinners' with whom Christ controversially associated. Finally the 'trewe prestis' (i.e. Lollards) are identified as 'membris' (i.e. 'limbs' or 'parts') of Christ, and fill his role in the narrative by associated with the publicans and sinners and being condemned by the authorities: the scribes and Pharisees. Together these five identities form a tightly coherent hermeneutic model for applying biblical stories to contemporary conflicts by identifying biblical groups with contemporary. The fact that prelates and religious persecute the members of Christ is evidence that they are to be identified with the scribes and Pharisees, while the fact that the Lollards are condemned by scribes and Pharisees for associating with and teaching the unworthy is itself evidence that they are 'members of Christ'. The identification is sophisticated, and not casual abuse:

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[31] *EWS*, pp. 232-5, 244-7, 252-5, 264-7, 283-6, 313-6 et al. – compare the presentation of the Pope as Antichrist in Vol. 3, pp. 94-6, 651-5.

[32] *EWS*, Vol. 1, pp. 227-31. Compare Hudson's comments, pp. 102-111.

[33] *EWS*, pp. 232-5.

'scribes' in the bibilical narrative were formal religious leaders exercising a measure of secular power, and 'Pharisees' a sect exercising informal leadership due to being seen as particularly devout and conscientious – making the parallels to the Lollards' characterisation of the ecclesiastical hierarchy ('prelates') as scribes and religious orders as Pharisees all the more effective. Likewise the identification of the 'comunes' with the 'publicans' – excluded by the religious establishment in the gospels but endorsed by Jesus as righteous because of their inner attitude of humility, just as the Lollards sought to present the illiterate laity – is more than simple polemic, serving to identify the Lollard 'trewe prestis' with the residual sense of legitimacy still in some respects attached to the concept of 'the Commons'.[34] This rhetorical congruence of contemporary and biblical figures justifies the conclusion, which identifies as Pharisaic, and therefore implicitly anti-Christian, the establishment's opposition to lay learning – this is has no immediate parallel in the gospel accounts, but is identified here with the Judean establishment's opposition to Jesus' interaction with unworthy people so as to discredit it, an identification that gains its credibility largely from the strength of the preceding parallels and the coherent interpretative model that they maintain. By appropriating the gospel narrative and identifying contemporaries with its characters, therefore, the sermons are able to co-opt its value system to discredit their opponents and their opponents' policies.

This ongoing polemical strategy further undermined the spiritual authority of the church establishment by its approach to virtue, presenting the (apparent) holiness of the religious orders by as hypocrisy (the defining sin of the Pharisees, archetypical sinners who 'desired praise before men'), and thus actually hurtful before God, in contrast to the true humility of the '*comun men*' who might be supposed to epitomise the Lollard position.[35] Likewise Biblical criticisms of Pharisees for replacing God's law with man's are readily applied to these 'new sects' who replace Christ's law with their founders'.[36] The parable of the Wheat and the Tares, usually expounded as describing

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[34] John Watts, 'Public or Plebs: The Changing Meaning of 'the Commons', 1381-1549', in Huw Pryce and John Watts, eds, *Power and Identity in the Middle Ages: Essays in memory of Res Davies* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), pp. 243-257.

[35] See, for example, the interpretation of the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, *EWS,* Vol. 1, pp. 260-3.

[36] See for example *EWS,* Vol. 1, pp. 313-6, 283-6, 355-59. Compare Hudson's *The Works of a Lollard preacher*, pp.

the planting of heresy in the church, is slightly re-interpreted as sowing human laws amongst the divine to undermine or supplant them, behaviour then attributed to the new orders in introducing their founders' 'gospels'.[37] Criticism of the Jewish religious leaders for using their position to distort the law are readily applied to prelates: '*This gospel techeþ men how þei schal not by þer hyȝe statis hyde þer synne and distorble þe ordenawnce þat Crist haþ made*'.[38] The 'religious' are similarly condemned in biblical language as hypocrites for separating from the common people and claiming a holiness they do not possess, or for claiming to be the most perfect observers of Christ's law while distorting it.[39] Casting the religious establishment as the villains of the gospel narratives consistently features as a model that discredits them and authenticates their Lollard critics by placing the Lollards in the place of the persecuted Christ, the place of virtue. It is a combined hermeneutic and rhetorical strategy that is distinctively uncompromising – the church is not exhorted to alter its practice, but is consistently written off as almost ontically corrupt. In this in particular there is a key contrast with other reform preaching of the period such as that of Richard Fleming, where the exhortation to reform is addressed to the church, with the expectation that reform will start from within the church; whereas the Lollard sermons identify the church establishment with the enemy and seek reform from those outside. Ongoing attempts in this period to force reform on the church through co-opting secular authority, most noticeably in the disendowment bill of 1410/1411, may well reflect this position, despairing of internal reform and seeking to find reform in external sources.

An interesting correlation to this is in Cigman's *Lollard Sermons*, which do not employ so consistent an identification of the religious establishment with the Gospel villains, but seem to be attempting to co-opt orthodox rhetorical strategies against Lollardy instead. It is noted below that Bodley 649, in its attacks on Lollards,

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18-19, which similarly accuses the new sects of trying to supplant the gospel of Christ.

37 *EWS*, Vol. I, pp. 373-77. Compare Mark 7:10-12 for a gospel example of such behaviour by the Pharisees that may have been in the preacher's mind. In Lollard eyes, the adoption of human laws over divine was of course considered a form of heresy, so to the preacher this was probably a simple application of the traditional interpretation, not a re-casting.

38 *EWS*, Vol I, pp. 283-6.

39 *EWS*, Vol. I, pp. 313-6.

identifies them with the lame because one leg (knowledge) is shorter than the other (devotion) – these sermons also adopt the image of the lame with mis-matched legs, but present the longer leg as referring to an undue affection for earthly things, implicitly associated with worldly prelates.[40] The image of leprosy, traditionally central in orthodox depictions of heresy, is adopted and applied to 'heresie of symonie', a common Lollard accusation at the institutional church, thus turning that rhetoric back on the establishment.[41] More daringly, a later sermon identifies 'wicches and telisteris, and alle þat bileueþ in charmes and writtes maad wiþ wordes vngroundid in Scripture' with those who place the virtue of scripture in the physical writing not the understanding: 'wheþer is þe vertu of þe euangelie? In þe figuris of þe letteris, or in vndirstondynge of þe writyng?'.[42] The orthodox identified Lollards with witches as dangerous outsiders, this text turns that back upon a position taken in some orthodox circles that prioritised the text of scripture as a physical object (a practice Pecock would defend explicitly, implicit perhaps in the emphasis on encounter with Christ through a broader sense of scripture identified by Stephen Pink); contrasting it with a characteristically Lollard emphasis on hearing and understanding scripture.[43] The former, making the virtue of scripture independent upon understanding it, is presented as superstition no different from witchcraft, associating this (common) position with the ultimate villains of the occult.[44] These Lollard Sermons are thus less directly aggressive in their use of an (essentially similar) rhetorical strategy, not

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40 Cigman, *Lollard Sermons,* p. 36.

41 Cigman, *Lollard Sermons*, p. 36. Compare Sackville, *Heresy and Heretics*, pp. 155-173 for orthodox depictions of heretics, and Forrest, *Detection of Heresy in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), p. 159 for specifically English iterations of this theme.

42 Cigman, *Lollard Sermons*, p. 112.

43 Pink, 'Holy Scripture'. Pecock defended the practice of hanging the text of the gospels around the neck as a beneficial gesture of faith, and further insisted that 'þough þo grete clerkis in clerist and liȝtist maner vndirstonde not derk processis of þe bible in latyn, ȝit þei ben in sum maner sweteli fed and edified bi redyng þerin' (*Folewer to the Donet*, ed. by Elsie Vaughan Hitchcock (London: OUP, 1924), p. 7) – explicitly severing the virtue and the understanding of the bible. See below in the discussion on Bodley 649 for its similar attitude to the necessity of understanding scripture.

44 It is noteworthy that condemnation of 'superstition' is found even in Mirk's *Festial*, p. 44; clearly it was generally recognised as a danger. It may be significant that when Richard Walker, 'capellanus', was brought before Chichele for 'sortilegum' he admitted to using books of spells and diagrams but said that he did not believe them, a similar attempt to separate the text from its internal usage (E. F. Jacob, with Harold Cottam Johnson, eds, *The Register of Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1414–1443* (Oxford: OUP, 1937), Vol. III, p. 54.

identifying the institutional church in its entirety with the Gospel villains, but rather defensively reconstructing traditional anti-heretical discourses into criticisms of Lollardy's opponents. It is possible that this reflects a slightly later date, after the Oldcastle rising, when Lollardy was thoroughly on the defensive and looking to survive orthodox attacks (physical and polemical) rather than aspiring to transform the ecclesiastical polity.

Within the *EWS*, however, fundamental criticism of the established church's identity and virtue also shades into a range of critiques of practice, often attacking failures or abuses of the church establishment that 'were accepted as such by dispassionate men of integrity within the hierarchy' (even if this collection takes them farther than others might): thus for example the tendency of pilgrimages to lead to lechery is noted in an aside, as is the danger of possessions, or the unedifying nature of pointless philosophical speculation.[45] Pastors should be poor and dependent upon alms, and the religious should sell their fine houses to give to the needy.[46] Lords and clergy are warned not to exercise judgement cruelly or harshly, and an anonymous bishop condemned for hostility to English scriptures.[47] Cigman's Lollard Sermons likewise condemn abuses of clerical practice such as wealthy prelates with 'gingelinge brideles and gai gurt sadeles', and priests who fail to preach to the people.[48] These criticisms do not themselves condemn the whole establishment, and many would have been shared by 'reforming orthodox' observers, but they are employed here to add force to a dominant discourse of condemnation of the current church.

A couple of these criticisms of current practice are more substantial, and more radical – most interestingly critical references to bishops and to priests who slay '*wiþowten cause of byleue*' and who fight contrary to Christ's command – a complaint that re-surfaces periodically through the sermons, and may be aimed at Henry le Despenser, given his reputation as 'the fighting bishop' from his crusade and violent

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45 *EWS*, Vol. I, pp. 555-59,279-82, 497-99. Quotation from Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 316.

46 Ibid., pp. 322-29.

47 *EWS*, Vol. I, pp. 236-39, Vol II, pp. 60-64.

48 Cigman, *Lollard Sermons,* pp. 1, 20.

suppression of the peasants' revolt.[49] References to crusading violence recur in the sermons, which explicitly argue that Christ's rebuke to Peter for fighting Malchus implied that his fighting was sinful '*and more schulden prestis fi3te not for a cause of lasse valu*'.[50] Later sermons go so far as to criticise pre-emptive warfare, and even warfare and fighting in general.[51] There is a strong echo of Wyclif here, whose statements on war were at times strong enough for Rory Cox to present him as an early pacifist.[52] While not an explicit challenge to the medieval church *per se*, such views held implicit criticism of the church's willingness to sanction war, and the involvement of many ecclesiastics therein, and therefore further helped to undermine its position.

More radical are the attacks on fundamental sacramental practices. Confession as a sacrament comes under attack, with repeated arguments that priests cannot forgive sins and therefore that verbal confession is unnecessary: the essential part of forgiveness is contrition, and the transaction is between the sinner and God, not the church.[53] Pilgrimages and devotion to images is attacked (here as in the *Lollard Sermons*), and transubstantiation itself comes under fire.[54] Interestingly there is a contrast here as well as agreement with the *Lollard Sermons*, which state the need to show penitence with the mouth as well as know it in the heart, implying some form of confession, and state that modern priests are more than prophets in that they handle the body of God, an emphasis on reverence to the host that has a strongly orthodox tone to it, and even if not necessarily in conflict with many Lollard texts' approaches to a consubstantiational sacramentology, is at least in contrast to their normal concern for people to attend to Christ's spiritual presence, not the physical bread, in the

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[49] *EWS*, Vol. II, pp. 401-417.

[50] *EWS*, pp. Vol. II, 267-9, Vol. I, pp. 608-13, 412-17. Compare Hudson's *The Works of a Lollard Preacher*, p. 56, where the Pope's unrepentant wielding of the sword is used to contrast him with the original Peter and deny his claim to that authority.

[51] *EWS*, Vol. III, pp. 60-64, 131-33, 172-87. Compare Dymmok's devotion of several pages in the *Liber contra XII errores*, p. 237, to countering Lollard hostility to manslaughter in battle, execution, and the crusades.

[52] Cox, *John Wycliffe on War and Peace*.

[53] *EWS*, Vol. I, pp. 275-8, 296-99, 524-28.

[54] *Lollard Sermons,* p. 114.

Eucharist.[55] In this particularly sensitive area, Cigman's sermons seem to have a less controversial tone.

The English Wycliffite Sermons: their positive content

The sermons' criticisms of the contemporary church are rooted in a particular understanding of theological authority; which is visible in the interlinked areas of ecclesiology and the understanding of scripture. Here these sermons articulate an understanding that is often radically egalitarian. In place of the normal disclaimer in orthodox texts of being willing to accept correction from due authorities, the sermon on Mt 9:1-8 includes the invitation: '*ȝif any man wyle telle moare pleynly þis sentence by Godis lawe, I wole mekely assent þerto, ȝif þei grounden þat þei seyn*'.[56] Here the (ostensible) openness to correction by due authority is maintained, but the invitation is made to anyone who can '*grounden*' their challenge in '*Godis lawe*' (a synecdoche for the Bible), and the criterion of authority is that they '*telle moare pleynly*'. The speaker claims to be accountable to any individual with a better grasp of the bible. Authority is thus vested not in position or in any institutional source but in whoever has the best knowledge of scripture and the clearest teaching. Traditional exegesis frequently identified the 'surface' sense of scripture with a failure to perceive its deeper, spiritual meaning (a common polemic against the Jews being their inability to see past the literal sense of scripture). Here, however, 'openness' becomes the very criterion of authority, with the more authoritative view to which the writer offers to submit being not the one endorsed by superiors in the church or buttressed by authorities but one that is more plain and grounded in scripture. A sense of scripture being 'open', indeed, is found more widely – the *Lollard Sermons* emphasise that truth in scripture is open

[55] *Lollard Sermons*, p. 43. Compare Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 290, for normal Wycliffite emphases. Note that Roger Dymmok uses exactly this argument for the high office of priesthood in his *Liber contra XII errores*, p. 54.

[56] *EWS*, Vol. I, pp. 296-9.

to those who seek it but 'dark' to those who do not.[57] This 'open-authority' system may be seen in practice in the teachings on the role of the laity: '*here may we see ȝat sugetys schylden blame prelatys when þey sen opynly greet defa*utys *in hem*', '*now in ȝe laste dayes when prestys ben turnede to avarice, stones schullen crie and constreyne prestes ȝat maken hem a privat religioun*'.[58] There was in theory precedent for the idea of '*subditi*' fraternally rebuking '*prelati*' with regard to manifest sin, and indeed of laity correcting priests, but the language of 'constryning' priests that 'maken hem a privat religioun' (language used to describe the religious orders) is stronger, envisaging not only fraternal correction of an individual's public sin, but the 'constraint', forcible coercion, by the laity of a whole clerical caste whose approach to religion was inherently sinful.[59] Authority is not restricted to, or even inherent to, the clergy as a caste, but inheres in understanding and practice of scriptural teaching, and may (and should) be assumed by laity if the clergy fall from it. The preacher appears more as a prophetic or professional figure, distinguished by his knowledge of scripture and his calling to preach, rather than a member of an ontologically distinct caste.

This understanding of authority is thus interwoven with a distinctive ecclesiology: the text discusses the different meanings of 'church' as a building or a group of people (not an institution) and asserts that '*a group of trewe men is the city of Israel*' (i.e. the people of God, i.e. the church).[60] Again, this ecclesiology expresses itself in practice in how the text seems to seek authentication and authority: while it does cite doctors on occasion to articulate (more than to authenticate) certain points, primarily Augustine and Ambrose, it is at least as prone to turn for validation to the opinion of contemporary 'true men': thus when criticising the Pope 'many would think', 'some think' or 'it is often said' are the phrases thrown around, or 'some believe', 'many people suppose', 'some say'.[61] It is of course possible that this is an attempt to evade

[57] *Lollard Sermons*, p. 95.

[58] *EWS*, Vol. I, pp. 227-39.

[59] Edwin D. Craun, '"ȝe, by Peter and by Poul!": Lewte and the practice of fraternal correction', *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 15 (2001), pp. 15-34. It should also be noted that while the idea of a lay person rebuking an erring cleric was established in theory, such a call to laity to put it into practice wholesale was not.

[60] *EWS*, Vol. III, pp. 304-05, Vol. II, pp. 60-64. Compare for example Hudson, *The Works of a Lollard Preacher*, p. 44, which explicitly denies that the religious establishment constitutes the church.

[61] *EWS*, Vol. II, pp. 186-92, 221-25, Vol. III, pp. 84-85, 274-76. Compare again *The Works of a Lollard Preacher*,

culpability for dangerous statements by attributing them to common hearsay, but since such measures are not resorted to when condemning the Pope as Anti-Christ, discussing a figurative view of the host in the Eucharist, or questioning the extent of the church's power of forgiving, it seems unlikely that this is the case.[62] Rather, what is distinctive about the passages where opinion is cited is not their controversy, but the need for a form of authentication for a statement that is not itself justified from the passage being treated. If the primary source of authority in these sermons is the scriptures, then the second seems to be the church, but it is understood as '*a group of trewe men*' – i.e. a community of similarly thinking peers.[63] In contrast, the institutional church – led by a Pope who is Anti-Christ, dominated by modern day Pharisees, and ruled by human law in place of divine, is presented as an obstruction to the flow of authoritative teaching from God to man, rather than as the authoritative channel for it.[64]

These two elements come together in the collection's model of how the church is to approach scripture. This is most evident in the approach to the day's lection, which is always given in English with explanation, and forms the starting point for the sermon, which takes the entire lection as the text, not merely a verse of it.[65] Indeed, the author criticises the church for abbreviating the gospels, taking words out of context, and trying to restrict access to the scriptures, advocating that the lords at least should have access to it in their '*modyr tongue*'.[66] There is a concern here for the text not being manipulated or restricted but 'open' in the sense discussed above.[67] The '*Vae Octuplex*' sermon applies the passage's 'woes' to friars as modern Pharisees, saying that they have shut the kingdom of heaven by not understanding scripture nor allowing others to: 'some prechen fables … somme dockon [edit] hooly wryt and some

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where biblical and patristic references 'abound', with meticulous citation (p. lvi).

62 *EWS*, Vol. I, pp. 524-28, Vol. III, pp. 7-9, 94-96.

63 Compare Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 125, for Lollard appeal to an 'interpretive community'.

64 Compare *The Works of a Lollard Preacher*, p. 44, which explicitly denies the institutional church to be 'the Church'. See also Hudson's comments on this theme, *English Wycliffite Sermons*, p. 89.

65 *EWS*, p. 33, where Hudson suggests this was the first stage in composition.

66 *EWS,* Vol. III, pp. 317-8, Vol. II, pp. 60-64.

67 See below, Chapter 2, pp. 84-86.

feynon lesyngus [lies or untruths]'.[68] These three categories epitomise the text's objection to orthodox hermeneutics: the introduction of extra-biblical material ('fables'), the abridgement or suppression of biblical material ('dockon hooly wryt'), and the distortion of biblical material through false interpretative techniques (implied by the 'lesyngus').[69]

Extra-biblical material is often conceived of as *exempla* or related narratives – scrupulously avoided by these sermons – but is also identified here with ecclesiastical pronouncements. 'The fiend' teaches that:

'whateuere his prelat seiþ is byleue of hooly chirche þat man schulden byleue, as whateuere þe pope seiþ, þat is trewe and stable … and þus may oold byleue be openly suspendit, and new byleue may growe as anticrist casteþ. And cause of þis errours is vnknowyng of byleue, and trowyng of falsenesse, or takung of straunge trewþe as byleue of al þe churche'.[70]

Adoption of extra-biblical material and lack of access to biblical truth leads the whole process of theological discernment astray, and placing ecclesiastical pronouncements above biblical truth does both. This may be behind some of the rigour with which the text distinguishes between the words of the lection and the preacher: even a Lollard preacher is not to be confused with the actual voice of scripture.[71]

Concern about the distortion of biblical material leads to a discussion of proper approaches to interpretation and use of figures; beyond the usual complaints that opponents 'gloson' God's law and the 'oolde doctoures', the author questions the validity of spiritualising passages to the exclusion of the historical sense, and accuses opponents ('Antichrist's followers') of placing a subjectively assigned spiritual sense

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[68] *EWS*, Vol. II, p. 366.

[69] It should be noted that unease about the misuse of glosses to distort scripture is also found in more 'reforming' orthodox texts such as Gascoigne and the sermons attributed to Philip Repyngdon – Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, p. 53.

[70] *EWS*, Vol. 2, p. 376. Compare William Taylor complaining of 'hem þat aȝens Crist and aboue his gospel magnyfien mannys tradiciouns and lawis' (Anne Hudson, ed., *Two Wycliffite Texts: The sermon of William Taylor 1406. The Testimony of William Thorpe 1407* (Oxford: OUP, 1993), p. 10.

[71] See Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 197-98.

above the literal so as to make scripture say what they want – which he cites Augustine to define as heresy: elevating personal choice above God's truth revealed in scripture.[72] This definition of heresy differs significantly from the standard identified by Larsen: instead of prioritising the heretic's choice to go against church interpretation and reject the church's correction, this identifies the key element as elevating human choice over the voice of scripture, sitting (in the modern phrase) over and not under scripture by manipulating it to say what one wishes, rather than submitting to its (presumably univocal) 'open' meaning.[73] The essential relationship of humility, submission, and acceptance is not between the Christian and the church, conceived of as a separate entity, but between the Christian (who is by definition part of the church) and the sacred page. As a consequence the author is suspicious of the use of exegetic or hermeneutic practices that are divorced from the literal text. The sermons do still make use of figurative and allegorical exegesis.[74] Indeed, in articulating an allegory of the healing of the ruler's son as the story of the need for faith the author describes this as the '*secounde wit*' of scripture: here he clearly considers himself to be being an *ancilla* to the divine hermeneutic even through a figurative interpretation, since the figurative interpretation is in line with the rest of scripture and thus not a human imposition.[75] The concern is thus not with any form of allegory *per se* but, at a methodological level, with 'unconstrained hermeneutics' that depart from any accountability to the literal text at all, and at a theological level with interpretive techniques that are perceived to be driven by a human agenda and not open to the leading of the Holy Spirit through the words of scripture.[76] The latter concern is intriguingly revealed by the discussion of whether it is right to preach a pre-written sermon, or whether preaching must be ad-libbed to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, an indication of the author's sensitivity to the importance

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[72] *EWS*, Vol. 2, p. 374, Vol. 1 pp. 317-21, 651-55.

[73] See Larsen, *The School of Heretics*, pp. 6-7 for definitions of heresy; for Wyclif's ideas about the single 'open' voice of scripture see Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*.

[74] *EWS,* Vol. I, pp. 268-70.

[75] Cf. Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 149. Even here it is noteworthy that the figurative interpretation is the 'second' sense of scripture and not the true or deeper sense.

[76] Ibid., p. 135. Compare *EWS*, pp. 71-77.

of personal inspiration (rather than corporate inspiration or traditional authority) as the factor shaping the interpretation of the base material of the text, and the concern of contemporaries to be open to it by avoiding constraints like a pre-written sermon.[77]

The former concern, meanwhile, is apparent in the nature of the figurative and allegorical techniques employed; Wenzel discusses the distinction between divisions *ab intus* and *ab extra* in new style sermons, the former denoting a division based on the words of the theme and the latter a division of a concept suggested by the theme.[78] In this sense any figurative or allegorical interpretations employed here are strictly *ab intus*: the sermon continues to be framed by the structure and contents of the passage, and figurative interpretations are an extension of that content rather than a departure from it. The allegorical interpretation of the journey from Tyre to Galilee does not move the sermon into a discussion of the incarnation, but the substance of the sermon continues to follow the narrative of the gospel story. This exegetic agenda is less obviously radical than the teachings on ecclesiology and authority, but together with them it serves to open up interpretive authority to a wider audience. If the bible is the foundation of authority, made available in translation to the laity, and if the controlling interpretive framework for reading it is found not in relatively inaccessible insight developed through esoteric figures, traditions, or the authority of an institutional hierarchy but in reading it on its own terms with a right openness to guiding by the Holy Spirit, then spiritual authority becomes a much more accessible commodity for those outside the established clerical and intellectual elites. This attempt to level the spiritual playing field is complemented by a dismissive scepticism about intellectual arcana: the sermons at one point pit 'Latyne' and Greek philosophy against each other only to discuss the faults of each, or reference and dismiss the quibbles of 'philosophers and granmarians' as irrelevant to the Christian life, or discard as unknowable speculations as to the state of the Saints in heaven.[79] The

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[77] *EWS*, Vol. III, pp. 25-27. While the author comes down in favour of prepared sermons as still open to inspiration by the Spirit, the fact that this discussion was considered necessary suggests both the concern for openness to personal inspiration amongst contemporaries and the possibility that these sermons were aimed at Lollard preachers themselves (to whom such questions would have been immediately relevant).

[78] *Latin Sermon Collections*, p. 12.

[79] *EWS*, Vol. I, pp. 30, 459-63, 497-99, Vol. II, 280-81.

sermons present themselves as eschewing any speculation irrelevant to the text's moral purpose. Attempts to derive too much from the text are viewed as risky: 'we dur not take of þis tixst þat fiftene ȝer byfore schal be schewwed fiftene signes' one sermon notes, or 'holden vs in hise bowndis' of the overt sense of the passage.[80] Such language further undermines the intellectual elites by presenting them as obsessed with what are at best empty questions and insupportable inferences, not what God wants people to see in the text, and therefore implicitly devoid of the spiritual grace and insight required for any claim to authority.[81] It also further demonstrates the preacher's desire to be accountable to the text of scripture, by refusing to go beyond what can reasonably be derived from it – in implicit contrast to his less responsible opponents. The preacher and the church are alike accountable to the text of scripture, and on this basis the preacher can call the church to account from scripture's teaching.

This distinctive theological foundation probably lies behind the sermons' unusual approach to personal moral teaching. Somerset has argued that most Lollard texts were concerned with the everyday details of Christian living, not polemics of church reform, but in this collection direct teaching on personal moral living is often surprisingly limited, especially compared to its prevalence in many contemporary sermons.[82] Thus for example the sermon on the 'doubting Thomas' passage (John 20:19-31) moves straight into discussing the claim of the church to be able to forgive sins (v. 23) without elaborating on the Thomas story so traditionally applied to the individual hearer's faith.[83] Personal moral instruction does still occur, usually briefly, in the course of many sermons, and is usually fairly conventional as far as it goes: love and fear God, overcome temptation by observing the law, pray to God quietly, contemplate the day of judgement.[84] Interior attitudes are the priority: faith is presented as the first requirement for spiritual healing (based on its role in the

[80] *EWS*, Vol. II, pp. 344, 378.

[81] Compare the New Testament's wariness about empty intellectual knowledge: 1 Tim 6:20, Titus 1:10, Colossians 2:8.

[82] See below on the *Festial* and Bodley 649. For Somerset's arguments regarding the continuing importance of moral and pastoral issues to Lollard writers, see pp. 1-20, 282 of her *Feeling like Saints*.

[83] *EWS,* Vol. I, pp. 424-28. Compare the treatment of this passage in the *Festial*, p. 20. It may be that such transitions reflect an apologetic priority to the collection, seeking primarily to equip hearers for controversy with established practice.

[84] *EWS*, Vol. I, pp. 330-34, 368-72, 395-400.

healing miracles), and as the foundation of virtue, while contrition is the key and only essential component for forgiveness.[85] Thoughts and internal orientations are crucial: '*þus may men be sayvd for þowtis in þer herte, al ȝif þei do not outward meritorie werkys … and þus may men don harm to oþre by þowtis of herte*.'[86] Intriguingly, grace is defined as not a '*substance*' but a '*maner*' towards God – an inward attitude rather than something that could be bestowed or mediated through sacraments.[87] Meditation, where it is prescribed as a spiritual discipline, is on doctrines such as the Day of Judgement, rather than images, verbal or physical, like the wounds of Christ. Materials such as the creed, seven deadly sins, and Lord's prayer are surprisingly absent, perhaps partly because the sermons in general emphasise a didactic more than a pastoral homiletic, either adhering fairly closely to the lection or deviating to discuss church reform, but in either case emphasising understanding rather than application. It may be, given the encouragement for an involved and thinking laity in ecclesiological matters, that the practical details of response to the truths the author aims to teach are left to the individual hearer to work out for their own situation in their own 'open' dependence upon God by faith and grace, the author concentrating on teaching the truth rather than its application. Alternatively, given the strongly apologetic bent of the collection and the periodic evidences of it possessing primarily an exemplary nature, aimed at aspiring preachers, it may be that the focus is on providing a preacher with polemical rhetoric for clashes with the church, whilst conventional moral teaching is assumed to be already available.

When one comes to examine the later collections related to *EWS* one finds an interesting trend. Hudson notes that 'expurgation of suspicious elements and derivation are two ways of using the collection in spite of its heterodox material', and those collections derived from and employing material out of *EWS* generally do exactly this.[88] To take two of her examples: the MS Bodley 806 compiler shows 'sympathy with Lollard causes', condemning letters of absolution, pilgrimages, and the persecution of

[85] *EWS*, Vol. I, pp. 42, 305-308, 368-72.

[86] *EWS*, Vol. I, pp. 313-6.

[87] *EWS*, Vol. 1, pp. 364-67.

[88] *EWS*, Vol. I, pp. 98-123, at 98.

gospel preachers as 'Lollards' by contemporaries.[89] He even keeps the definition of the church as 'a congregation of true cristene men', which seems distinctively Lollard, even if he avoids some of the more controversial material on the sacrament, for example. What Hudson terms the 'N' collection modifies this further to lose these provocative elements, especially regarding indulgences, letters of fraternity, and confession, but keeps criticism of clerical abuses (i.e. breaches of the uncontested expectations for the clergy, such as would have been generally condemned by contemporaries). There is thus a gradual procession away from the more theologically fundamental criticisms in *EWS* and towards a criticism of corrupt practices without a direct challenge to the church's teaching. Such a development might even be suggested by the somewhat later *Lollard Sermons* collection's relatively tamer approach to provocative issues like the sacraments, noted above, suggesting that Lollard and Lollard-influenced preachers were not necessarily 'digging in' and becoming more controversial, but in many cases moving towards milder positions.

The compiler of the collection found in MS Trinity College Dublin 241, likewise, 'seems to have had sympathy with some of the Lollard causes, but not with all', removing controversial questions on the eucharist and the 'more extreme' criticisms of the higher clergy, but keeping a critical focus on worldliness in the church.[90] Examining the detail of the sermons reveals numerous traits generally associated with the orthodox: a frequent emphasis on verbal confession and penance (the standard grouping of contrition, confession, and satisfaction is urged at least six times, often explicitly as priestly confession), pilgrimages are spoken of with reverence, penance is urged as a remedy for temptation and the contemplative life endorsed.[91] Yet the sermons also retain or employ devices normally seen as Lollard 'dog whistles': not only complaining of worldly prelates and insisting on the importance of preaching but also attacking the persecution of faithful Christians by the worldly establishment, suggesting that the creed should be taught 'in moder tonge' (by secular lords if priests fail to do so), and attacking 'strong beggars', a frequent Lollard strategy for critiquing

[89] Ibid., pp. 113-123.

[90] Ibid., p. 105.

[91] *Repertorium*, pp. 198-278.

the orders.[92] The parts of the Lollard message that seem to be retained are again those relating to the reform of existing practice, rather than the revolution of doctrine. In this regard it may be significant that the text also commends the power of the Holy Name and the Five Wounds, affective practices particularly associated with those churchmen from Chichele's time on who sought renewal of the church's liturgy, discipline, and practice on traditional lines but not radical reformation of doctrine.[93] This collection's use of *EWS's* rhetorical devices may be symptomatic of this – it turns the identification of religious with Pharisees in the former text into a statement that there are Pharisees among the religious, making the ensuing passage on the dangers of pride not a wholesale condemnation of the religious orders *per se* as religious orders, but rather a warning to 'bad apples' amongst them. Reform of institutions, and not their abolition is what is aimed at.[94] Interestingly these 'reforming orthodox' collections continue to make use of Lollard textual work, retaining most of the translations of the gospel lection and usually much of the expository content but using it to support their own version of reform.[95]

A reactionary response: the Bodley 649 sermons

The Bodley 649 collection is the clearest example of a hostile reaction to Lollardy in these case studies. Like *EWS*, it displays both explicit and implicit modes of engagement with its theological opponents, both by a critical polemic directed against them and by the implied conclusions of a positive theological alternative it constructs. Polemically, the collection attacks Lollardy in several ways; by identifying

[92] Compare Roger Dymmock's specific attack on the term 'proud prelacy' in his *Liber contra XII errores et hereses lollardarum*, ed. H. S. Cronin (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1922), p. 29.

[93] Gillespie, 'Chichele's church' notes that Bodley 649 also advocates the cultic power of the Holy Name (*A macaronic sermons collection*, p. 133), and that the manuscript of Gascoigne's *Dictionarium Theologicum aut Liber Veritatum* also bears the IHS mark at the head of its first pages (Oxford: Bodley, Lincoln College, MS Lat. 117, 118).

[94] Contrast Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 349, for Lollards' hostility to 'private religion' in principle, not only to the occasional abuses of its more reprehensible members.

[95] Spencer, *English Preaching*, p. 280. Compare Netter's use of Wycliffite citational practice and hermeneutic conventions discussed in Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 174-210.

it with the first sin of pride, rather than virtue, by denying its right to critique the church, and by articulating a narrative in which it is responsible for national decline.

The latter polemic is rooted in a deep concern at national decay both internal and external; especially the sense of a fall from glory. England was once a ship so feared that France, Normandy, and Spain would flee her, now *'ffishers bote of Walis nititur super velificare nos*' (probably a reference to the Glyn Dwr revolt).[96] This decline is, almost without exception, blamed on the Lollards, who are presented as having seduced the nation from faithfulness, bringing about divine punishments of defeats, dissensions, and plagues.[97] This conceptual framework is rooted in the Old Testament, where the people are warned that if they are unfaithful and depart from following God "*mittet Dominus super te famem et esuriem et increpationem … adiungat Dominus tibi pestilentiam … tradat te Dominus corruentem ante hostes tuos*"; a warning that is then worked out in countless examples across the so-called 'Deuteronomic History', especially Judges and Kings.[98] Its presence in more poetic form in the prophets, notably Isaiah and Ezekiel, likewise ensured its transmission into the liturgy of the church and so cemented its position as an available interpretative matrix.[99] Thus the reforming priority of this collection is purifying the church from Lollardy; national reform is in a sense subsumed within church reform, and church reform is dominated by the external threat of heresy rather than internal issues of corruption or simony.[100] While there is a brief call for reformed clergy, for example, the overwhelming sense of danger to the church is from heretical subversion; the church is pictured as a besieged city or an undermined temple, and the Lollards as

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96 'Now we struggle to out-sail a Welsh fishing boat' – Horner, *A Macaronic Sermon Collection*, at 109; such references are numerous and examples can be seen at pp. 530, 520, 442, 438, 418, 304, 300, 236, 212, 140, 93, 75.

97 Ibid., p. 93.

98 Deut 28:20-25 "The Lord shall send upon thee hunger, and thirst, and blaming … The Lord *shall* join pestilence to thee, … The Lord give thee (to) falling before thine enemies;" (Wycliffite Bible). Note that these are the three punishments the Bodley 649 author identifies: defeats, dissentions, and plague. Compare Judges 2:11-15, 3:7-8, 12-13, 4:1-3, 6:1, or the larger narrative in Joshua 7, or the comments in 2 Kings 24:1-7; the theme of disaster, and especially defeat, being a punishment for unfaithfulness is very frequent. For a wider study of the Deuteronomic History see for example Terence E. Fretheim, *The Deuteronomic History* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983).

99 See for example Isaiah 1, 3, 5 or Ezekiel 4, or Hosea 1-2.

100 Horner, *A Macaronic Sermon Collection*, p. 140.

a besieging army '*quod ecclesia docent vellent destruere*'.[101] It is they who are explicitly described as the primary problem to the church, and therefore to the nation: '*Audeo dicere quod numquam erit requies nec pax in isto regno nec bene expedimus in bello corporali nec spirituali donec istud spolium comburatur*' (a choice of verb which, so soon after *De haeretico comburendo*, may well have had very specific shades of meaning), and the final words of the collection are a prayer for reform of the church that Henry and the realm might triumph.[102] For Bodley 649, therefore, church reform is still in one sense a priority, but it is primarily about the destruction of the Lollards, and this is the key to both church and national renewal. Reform of church abuses or social injustice is essentially absent from the collection; the closest the sermons seem to come to the latter is to blame Lollardy for dissensions and sedition in the kingdom leading to its decline, which may be a reference to the common claim that Wycliffite ideas helped catalyse the Peasants' Revolt.[103]

The virtue/vice polemic is more subtle, and evokes in places the Lollard efforts to identify their opponents in the establishment with the scribes and Pharisees, the villains of the gospel story. Thus for example the Lollards are described as being like pots of serpents: meek on the outside and wicked within.[104] While the exact image is not biblical, the concept is taken straight from the Gospels' condemnation of the Pharisees: 'vae vobis scribae et Pharisaei hypocritae quia similes estis sepulchris dealbatis quae a foris parent hominibus speciosa intus vero plena sunt ossibus mortuorum et omni spurcitia'".[105] Lollards are repeatedly accused of hypocrisy; and

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[101] 'That wanted to destroy what the church taught' ibid., pp. 67, 156, 275, 400. The presentation of the established church as being in a position of weakness, threat, and oppression is significant; it hardly fits the reality of the period, and may reflect an awareness of the tendency for the righteous in the biblical narratives to be the powerless, threatened, and persecuted: the established church has to be portrayed as persecuted because that is what righteousness looks like in a biblical worldview.

[102] 'I dare to say that there will never be rest nor peace in this realm, nor will we fare well in war corporeal or spiritual, until this blemish is burned up' – ibid., pp. 75, 530.

[103] Ibid., p. 420. See the discussion by Paul Strohm in *England's Empty Throne; Usurpation and the language of legitimation, 1399-1422* (New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press, 1998), where he notes the association of Lollards with counterfeiters and other rebels as threats to the new and still unstable Lancastrian dynasty.

[104] Ibid., p. 275.

[105] 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness' – Mt 23:27 (RSV). Compare Acts 23:3, which evokes the same image.

specifically of doing their good deeds in public in order to be seen and gain respect and authority while not truly loving God. Thus the author acknowledges that they do good works in abstaining from debts, oaths, and swearing, but insists this is not in good faith; elsewhere their good deeds are said to be 'outward' but from the wrong motives of seeking praise and esteem.[106] Lollards are accused of hypocrisy elsewhere in the collection for hiding pride beneath good works and heresy beneath a reverence for scripture.[107] Revealingly, the author argues that the Lollard concern for understanding scripture has in fact been harmful; playing with the etymology of the word 'Lollard', he describes them as lame because one leg (knowledge, especially knowledge of the law) is longer than the other (living).[108] The pursuit of knowledge has crippled their devotion, and because they have withdrawn their devotion from God, they become critical of everyone else's acts of devotion.[109] While less overtly articulated than in the *EWS* case, this polemic again draws multiple parallels with the Pharisees and scribes in gospels, who are criticised because 'They do all their deeds **to be seen** by men', are called hypocrites, are experts in the law and 'search the scriptures' but do not recognise Jesus, and are critical of acts of devotion or compassion that transgress small laws or sensibilities.[110] This pattern is spread throughout all four gospels, and the resonance with the depiction of Lollardy here is unavoidable. With this goes a condemnation of Lollardy as rooted in pride, the fundamental sin of the devil and of the Pharisees, demonstrated by Lollards in their willingness to pit their personal judgement against the church, to reach above their station as laity, to seek to understand things beyond them, and to correct fathers '*edocti a Spiritu Sancto*'.[111]

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[106] Ibid., pp. 277, 322

[107] Ibid., pp. 463, 508. Compare Mt 7:15, John 5:39.

[108] Ibid., p. 347.

[109] Ibid., p. 277.

[110] Mt 23:5 (RSV), compare Mt 6:1-16, a discourse on 'hypocrites' who do their good deeds to be seen. For knowledge of the law see e.g. John 5:39, or the puzzle of the seven brothers, found in all the synoptics (and based on a clash between Leviticus and Deuteronomy) Mt 22:25, Mk 12:20, Lk 20:29, note also that the opponents of this narrative are referred to on occasion as 'experts in the law' – 'doctoris legis' – in the Vulgate. For pedantically critical opponents who critique small acts of devotion that transgress the law see for example the stories of Jesus' anointing (Mt 26, Mk 14, Lk 7), or disputes over Sabbath observance (Mt 12, Mk 3, Lk 6, Lk 14, Jn 5, Jn 7).

[111] Ibid., pp. 304, 279. For the common device of portraying Lollards as hypocrites see also Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, p. 374. For other examples of condemning them as proud see Fletcher, *Late Medieval Popular Preaching*, p. 94, and Wenzel, *Macaronic Sermons*, p. 335.

Similar allegations can be found in related works: the hugely popular macaronic sermon *Estote Sicut Filii* makes an ambitious hermeneutical jump in claiming that biblical condemnations of idolatry apply not to worship of saints' images but to '*thys cursed ymage of pride*' which is the source of Lollardy.[112] These two polemics are joined in the claim that the nation has faced decline because 'Moses descended and the People ascended' the Sinai of spiritual revelation: i.e. the clergy's role as mediators of authoritative revelation has been usurped by proud and unqualified laity.[113] It is interesting to note that, deliberately or otherwise, both Bodley 649 and *EWS* base their polemics on an attempt to identify their opponents with the villains of the gospel narrative, and as the enemies of church reform. In the moral realm, both seek to portray their opponents as hypocrites, and as proud. Both are drawing on a shared biblical heritage of narrative and values that is shaped through very different interpretive matrices and polemical needs to give two radically opposing interpretations of who contemporary 'Pharisees' are.

The more theologically complex response to the Lollard challenge is to deny Lollardy, and specifically laity, the authority to critique the church. '*Quamvis alligent scripturas et cecas raciones, noli illis credere … crede sicut Ecclesia credit*' commands the author: the ordinance of the church should be sufficient.[114] This is the direct opposite of the paradigm expressed in *EWS's* invitation to correction; here 'grounding' in scripture and reason is not to be considered sufficient, unless confirmed by the judgement of the church. The Lollards, the author says, went wrong because they would not stay within the determination of the church, and the proof of their evil is in the fact that '*quod Ecclesia docent vellent destruere*'.[115] Authority is clearly vested in the church, and there is a clear hierarchical element to this. The lay listener is repeatedly urged to go to their curate for instruction and help: '*Ite ad vestrum* ..

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[112] Fletcher, *Late Medieval Popular Preaching*, p. 94; NB that 'ymage' here was often used with the spiritual sense of 'idol', rather than purely material meaning of 'image'.

[113] Ibid., p. 347.

[114] 'Although they allege scriptures and other reasons, do not believe them, believe just as the Chrurch believes' – ibid., p. 279.

[115] 'They wished to destroy what the church taught' – ibid., p. 172, 275.

curatum, cui Iesus contulit potestam sanandi te'.[116] As this passage hints, the dependence on one's curate is not solely for knowledge, but also upon the sacraments which he alone can administer – when teaching the creed the author modifies the article '*credo remissionem peccatorum*' as '*credo peccata remitti per sacramenta Ecclesie*', presumably to reinforce this.[117] Beyond the curate are the doctors: listeners are to hold by '*quid sancti doctores sencierunt*', and beyond them the Fathers: if in doubt about the doctors one is to follow the Fathers, and the Lollard error peaks in presuming to correct saints '*edocti a spiritu sancto*'.[118] The collection makes heavy use of the Fathers as authorities, (as do other collections in this genre).[119] Other sermons in the same genre also articulate this model: '*horum superbia ad tantum crevit quod postposuerunt omnes constituciones et consuetudines in Ecclesia Dei que fuerunt facte et ordinate per deliberacionem et discrecionem sanctorum patrum precedencium*'.[120] The hierarchy of authority is not, therefore, purely intellectual – relying on invoking the academic authority of learned doctors would presumably have been a risky rhetorical move against the followers of John Wyclif, besides running afoul of the ingrained scriptural mistrust of intellectual philosophy discussed above. Rather, the authority of the church is based in holiness ('***sancti*** *doctores', '****sanctorum*** *patrum*') and special spiritual insight: the fathers are '*edocti a spiritu sancto*'. As noted earlier, these are sources of authority that also appear in Lollard homiletics: right living and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The dispute here is fundamentally over where they are to be found, in the '*trewe priest*' who, open to the Spirit, prophetically rebukes the failings of the contemporary establishment, or in the institution that has enshrined the verdicts of the ancient fathers who received direct communion with God, and thus stands above any presumptuous contemporary.

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[116] 'Go to your curate, whom Jesus bestowed with power for your health' – ibid., pp. 352, 330, 147.

[117] 'I believe in the remission of sins' vs 'I believe sins to be remitted by the sacraments of the church' – ibid., p. 165.

[118] 'Taught by the holy spirit' – ibid., pp. 330, 456, 304.

[119] 'Then their pride rose so high that they put behind them all the constitutions and customs in the church of God which were made and ordained by deliberation and discretion of preceding holy fathers' – Wenzel, *Macaronic Sermons*, p. 321.

[120] 'In [that] hour [their] pride rose to such a height that they put behind them all the constitutions and customs in the church of God that were made and ordained by the deliberation and discretion of preceding holy fathers' – Wenzel, *Macaronic Sermons*, pp. 284, 355.

In particular, the authority of spiritual revelation and understanding is very explicitly denied to be open to the laity: 'a recurrent, almost obsessive, theme of these sermons is therefore that of the limits or termini which the laity must not infringe'.[121] '*Laici nimis vadant in clerimonia scripturis*', he complains, '*tu qui es illiteratus*' must stay at the foot of Sinai and let the clergy go up to receive revelation from God.[122] Even to seek too much understanding, like the Lollards, is dangerous: '*sis laicus vel litteratus, non sis nimis sollicitus scire Dei concilium*'.[123] This seems to be because it is impossible to understand divine things with human intellect: '*minimas punctus fidei est supra humanum sensum*', and what the ostensibly wise (i.e. intellectually accomplished) miss is revealed to the simple (i.e. humble, i.e. submissive to the church's teaching) in '*derke sentens sacre scripture*'.[124] Hence the comparison to Moses, to whom alone God would speak when he wished to reveal teaching to the Israelites, and hence the comparison of the curate to God – this is again a biblical image of one who stands as the only source of authoritative revelation from God: "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, … You are to say everything I command you".[125] Revelation, then, is essential to understanding the faith or scripture rightly, and that revelation only comes through the ordained channel of the established church, in contact through tradition with the Fathers, apostles, and prophets. It is in this sense that scripture is '*derke*' rather than 'open': for its true meaning to be grasped it needs revelation that is not available to the laity.[126] This model of authority and revelation effectively restricts spiritual authority to the institutional church, rather than to all '*trewe*' believers in the Lollard model, and so disenfranchises much of the audience to whom the Lollards

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[121] Kantik Ghosh, 'Magisterial Authority, Heresy, and Lay Questioning in Early Fifteenth-century Oxford', *Revue de L'histoire des Religions*, 231 (2014/2), pp. 293-311, at p. 7.

[122] 'the laity too much rushed into clerical [study] of the scriptures' – Horner, *A Macaronic Sermon Collection*, pp. 279, 347. Compare again Exodus 19, where only Moses can ascend the mountain to speak with God.

[123] 'Be you lay or literate, you should not seek to know too much of the counsel of God' – ibid., p. 369.

[124] 'The smallest point of faith is beyond human sense' – ibid., pp. 345, 304.

[125] Exodus 7:1-2 (NIV).

[126] Compare 2 Corinthians 4:4 "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ." (NIV) – light and darkness are indications of a need for spiritual revelation from God, which has been given to selected individuals to dispense.

sought to appeal. It may also be significant that these sermons were written during the period when the established church had clearly rejected Lollardy, but remained worried by flickers of support amongst the laity (such as the 1410 disendowment bill); this theology effectively fortified the authority of the established church vis-à-vis the laity, even as it attacked Lollardy's own claims to spiritual authority.

These very different conceptions of revelation and spiritual authority led to very divergent practical models in their approaches to scripture and to personal instruction. Where the *EWS* sermons begin with expounding the whole Bible passage in English with explanation, the Bodley 649 sermons are generally based off part of one verse of the reading, cited in Latin and only sometimes translated. Moreover, the Bodley 649 author makes heavy use of *ab extra* divisions for his theme, where the structure of the sermon is based around divisions of a concept suggested by the lection, rather than around the divisions of the lection itself, so that the subject of the sermon is one degree further removed from the content of the reading. Thus for example the mention of a boat leads to a sermon built around an analogy from the components of a ship, or mention of the temple leads to discussion of the building metaphor for the nation of England, leading to a discussion of the nature of the relationships between the estates, or the reference in Mt 4 to Jesus going 'into the city' leads to a sermon on the 'city of mercy' whose structure is defined by examining first the figurative city's towers, then its moat, then its river (the Lollards being presented as a besieging army).[127] This exegetical practice, usually introduced with words like '*moraliter*' and '*spiritualiter*' to explain the figurative meanings of an item in the theme, gives free reign to the author's creativity and allows for division of an elaborate sermon into neat parts and lists tenuously connected to the reading, exemplifying the exaltation of human choice in interpretation critiqued by *EWS*. It does, however, embody and enforce the understanding of scripture as something '*derke*', and not open, whose truer meaning is not obvious from its literal sense. Since such interpretations are manifestly not contained within the text as it stands, but are presented both in theory and in practice as the true or essential interpretation, it moves the essential source of

[127] Ibid., pp. 269, 396, 55.

spiritual insight from the text itself (to which Lollards had access, and encouraged others to have access) to the tradition and the office through which the revelation of such spiritual interpretations allegedly come; thus undermining the Lollard claim to authority through careful attention to the biblical word and exalting the authority of the established church that embodied the tradition and held the offices to which revelation was attached. This hermeneutic thus served to exclude both Lollard methods and most of the probable Lollard support base from spiritual authority, cementing the position of an institutional church in which anti-Lollard views had increasingly become dominant.

Interestingly, this hermeneutic does in fact develop in these sermons into the basis for an explicit attack on Lollard exegesis and, more explicitly, Lollard exegetes, along these lines, arguing that they '*inspiciunt sacram scripturam et solam capiunt litteram et non sensum*': Lollard literal readings are here presented as evidence that they miss the real, hidden meaning, which is separate from the literal sense of the text.[128] Rather than the literal sense being the key sense of scripture, therefore, to which other sentences are accountable, it is a stepping stone to the deeper, truer meaning; and a stepping stone on which Lollard exegetes have stumbled. Ghosh has noted that one of the problems the collection struggles with is the desire to restrict clerical learning to 'sovereign clerks', whilst recognising that the initial source of Lollardy was clerical not lay; it seems that part of the solution is presenting Lollard exegetes as having missed the essential step of *clerimonia* from the letter to the spirit of scripture.[129] Along with their 'proud' 'refusal' to accept the words of those 'edocti a sancto spiritu'; i.e. institutional authorities, this essentially moves Lollard clerics into the lay realm, having deprived themselves of the spiritual senses of scripture and of the relayed insight by which they might have understood them; subtly spiritually disempowering them by very virtue of their distinctive exegetical emphases.

The personal moral instruction in this collection similarly builds an ethical framework that excludes Lollardy. A huge emphasis in its moral teaching is on the

[128] 'They inspected the holy scriptures and solely grasped the letter and not the sense' – ibid., p. 437.

[129] Ghosh, 'Magisterial Authority', pp. 10-11.

importance of humility. Whereas a Lollard homiletic presented faith as the root virtue, Bodley 649 constructs humility as the root of all virtues.[130] This humility is seen particularly in relation to the limits of personal human understanding and the church's teaching: '*crede sicut Ecclesia docet et* ***subicit*** *tibi*'.[131] 'Fle not to hye' emphasises the author, because '*minimus punctas fidei est supra humanum sensum*,' therefore '*teneris cognoscere puncta et substancie fidei, set subtilitates et* circumstancie *ad te non pertinent … cape substanciam tui credo et linque subtilitatem clerici*' '*fide sta, noli altum capere, set time*'.[132] Such humility is modelled by the Virgin Mary, who did not take it upon herself to preside at communion or preach, in spite of her excellence.[133] Hence the repeated exhortations to depend upon one's curate; they constitute at once a reflection of the authority understood as pertaining to the clergy and the church and a demonstration of appropriate humility in the face thereof. This understanding of humility leaves little space for the Lollard emphasis on an active, understanding, and engaged laity holding the clergy to account. Such a paradigm becomes both impossible (because the laity lack spiritual revelation) and immoral (because overstepping their proper limits). This emphasis on humility is thus the flip side of the direct attack on Lollardy for 'pride'; both exclude its attitude of criticism towards the church.

Rather, therefore, than the didactic emphasis in the *EWS* example, Bodley 649 has a much more meditative, affective, and practical emphasis. The hearer (or reader) is repeatedly urged to meditate on the passion as a spur to right behaviour and as a means of emotional transformation: to set the fire of charity in a stony heart with the iron mallet of the nails and the lance, in the language of one example.[134] Doing so will combat sin and induce a right sense of gratitude and humility: '*tu, peccator, intime*

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130 Ibid., p. 320.

131 'Believe just as the church teaches and submit yourself' – ibid, p. 347.

132 'The smallest point of faith is beyond human sense' 'you are bound to know the points and substance of [your] faith, but the subtleties and circumstances do not pertain to you... seize the substance of your faith and leave the subtleties to the clergy' 'stand [still] in the faith, don't reach higher, but be fearful' – ibid., pp. 369, 345, 169, 81.

133 Ibid., p. 423. Compare Nicholas Love's use of this trope, discussed below, chapter 4.

134 Ibid., p. 384.

cogita de pena et passione quam pro te sustulit … quod nostrum cor foret sibi humile'.[135] The language of describing the passion is often immersive, personal, and emotive, aimed directly at the emotions.[136] Likewise, the author goes into detail about temptations and possible responses: the temptations of worldly success are broken down into three categories (delights, honour, and riches), for each of which an argument is provided to explain their danger and deceitfulness and instructions for how to avoid their lure: '*recedite, abite, et nolite tangere*'.[137] This is, perhaps, the corollary to the demand for humility and dependence in understanding; the sermons seek to provide packaged instructions for living and tools for devotion, rather than encouraging their hearers to seek to develop these devotional resources for themselves, the alternative model of lay piety advanced by *EWS*, which seems often to have left devotional specifics to its readers or hearers. Some of the words addressed to a clerical audience by Bodley 649 further suggest this, they are exhorted to *'precipue tales que edificant populum et moveant eos ad devocionem*', and to use discretion in teaching and administering penance (a revealing conjunction), not to administer more of either than the recipient can bear.[138]

Stephen Pink has written of the tradition of identifying teaching and preaching, and more specifically the word of scripture, with the image of eucharistic bread, a tradition exemplified in *EWS*' account of the feeding of the five thousand, where the multiplied bread dispensed by the disciples is identified with the multiplied teaching dispensed by preachers: spiritual bread given freely to the spiritually needy.[139] One has contact with Christ through receiving and dwelling on, and thus understanding and 'digesting', teaching. In Bodley 649 teaching is approached rather differently; it has as its end devotion more than comprehension, and is presented as a difficult thing to be rationed, pre-processed by the clergy into digestible material, not, as in the

[135] 'You, sinner, think deeply of the pains and passion which he underwent for you … that our heart might be humble before him' – ibid., p. 351.

[136] Ibid., p. 374.

[137] 'Go back, stay away, and don't touch' – ibid, p. 242.

[138] 'Preach things that edify the populace, and move them to devotion' – ibid., p. 271. Mirk's *Instructions to Parish Priests* (ed. Edward Pecock (London: EETS, 1868), p. 48) has a similar warning about avoiding driving penitents to rebellion by imposing heavy penance, but no suggestion that teaching is similarly dangerous.

[139] Pink, 'Holy Scripture', pp. 1-32.

Lollard hermeneutic, bread to be fed to the starving to digest themselves.[140] Interestingly *Estote Sicut Filii*, a sermon in a similar genre with a similar emphasis on critiquing Lollardy, unlearned preaching, and undermining of the church's authority, makes the explicit claim that the word of God is like a charm, protecting from ghostly sickness even if not fully understood.[141] This seems to be exactly the attitude critiqued above, in the Lollard Sermons, and identified there with witchcraft; separating the 'vertu of þe euangelie' from the need to understand it. These opposing models of the place and nature of theological understanding (as essential 'digesting' of needful bread, or as hard and unnecessary, even dangerous, and a distraction from a non-rational stirring to devotion that is the essential aim), may therefore have correlated more widely to Lollard and reactionary, anti-Lollard positions.[142]

A particular contrast in the content of this moral teaching is the attitude to warfare, violence, and military matters. Bodley 649 is replete with military language and metaphor: spiritual battles are declared to be '*asperius bellis of Peyteris et Hispanie*' – a reference to the famous military campaigns of the Black Prince in the previous generation.[143] Military books are referred to, and illustrations drawn from the lives of Alexander the great and Hannibal.[144] Elaborate allegorical parallels to the defences of a city feature, as do comparisons to the Lollards as a besieging army using military techniques such as sapping against the church.[145] Christ is depicted as a knight 'riding' the cross as his steed, and the king is pictured as a new Joshua, defeating the people's enemies, and the hearers exhorted to join him as a warrior of

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[140] *EWS,* Vol. I, pp. 248-51.

[141] Fletcher, *Late Medieval Popular Preaching*, p. 88. Compare the Longleat Friar's claim that it is beneficial to say John 1:1 as a charm to ward off witchcraft, night phantoms, and tempests (cited in Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages*, p. 89.

[142] Compare the third sermon in Woodburn O. Ross, ed., *Middle English Sermons* (London: OUP, 1998), p. 13, dated by Ross to a similar period, which anticipates the objection from hearers that the church forbids knowing the law, and insists that it only forbids misusing it. This appears to envisage a context in which the church was indeed perceived by contemporaries – non-Lollard contemporaries, if the concern for the church's authority is an indication – as trying to limit lay understanding of many elements of the faith.

[143] 'Sharper than the battles of Portugal and Spain' – *A Macaronic Sermon Collection*, p. 27.

[144] Ibid., p. 39, 222.

[145] Ibid., pp. 59-63, 156.

God.[146] Lesser use of military language is frequent.[147] Given that the author explicitly complains of the patronage of Lollards by *bellatores*, it is possible that this constituted a deliberate attempt to engage with the military classes and draw them away from Lollardy, though it may simply reflect the interests of the author or of his hearers.[148] In any case, there is a definite divergence here in moral frameworks between this text and *EWS*, which is so frequently critical of improper military activity, however much they may agree on more conventional issues such as the temptations of the world and the need for devotion.

There is a final element to this collection's response to Lollardy, and that is what might be termed defensive, or pre-emptive apologetics: attempts to defend and assert orthodox beliefs traditionally challenged by Wyclif or his followers. This is not always as pronounced in the Bodley 649 collection as one might expect, but does occur, particularly around the issue of confession, the sacrament most critiqued by *EWS*. Several of these passages seem to be explicitly envisaging a context of debate: thus after narrating an *exemplum* of a Lollard saved by confession the author comments '*narra istud Lollardo et faciet inde derisum*'.[149] This subject of confession recurs many times, and the author indeed comments that it is often impossible for Lollards to be saved because they won't admit '*precipicum remedium contra peccatum*'.[150] Similarly, the sermons argue against Lollard hostility to images of the cross, and attack Lollard scepticism on the host by means of an *exemplum* of an eucharistic miracle.[151] Such *exempla* of miraculous confirmations of the eucharistic transformation pre-dated Lollardy, but seem to have been a popular polemical recourse amongst orthodox

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[146] Ibid., pp. 154, 168, 159. Again, interestingly, a similar image appears in *Estote Sicut Filii* (Fletcher, *Late Medieval Popular Preaching*, p. 85).

[147] See for example pp. 51, 137, 136.

[148] Ibid., p. 31. Note that these sermons seem to have been written around the time there was concern about support for the Lollards by soldiers such as John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham.

[149] 'Tell this to a Lollard and he will make derision of it' – *A Macaronic Sermon Collection*, p. 166. Such language gives the impression that the sermon collection is at points trying to equip an audience apologetically to answer Lollard challenges themselves, a recurrent theme amongst surviving texts on both sides of the debate – compare the possibility that *EWS* was intended as a model or resource for Lollard preachers, or the apologetic emphasis in Netter's theology, discussed below.

[150] 'The principal remedy against sin' – ibid., pp. 47, 166, 224, 426.

[151] Ibid., pp. 432, 388.

writers. Indeed it formed a part of the critique of Lollardy that they lacked such miracles, which were held to confirm the sanctity, and therefore inspiration and authority, of the institutional church.[152] In the same category should also be noted the above-mentioned re-phrasing of the creed to make it explicitly endorse the mediating role of the church's sacraments as essential for the remission of sins: a bold attempt to re-define a shared authority source into a form that would support the orthodox side in the fundamental dispute over the role, authority, and importance of the institutional church.

A reforming response: the Digby poems

The Digby poems constitute a very different response to Lollardy. It is different, of course, in terms of genre, being a collection of poems rather than sermons, although these poems have a clear homiletic edge that suggests a very similar purpose in influencing wider thought and life. There is very little explicit condemnation of Lollardy, and at many points the language and concerns of the poems seem very close to those of Lollard texts.[153] None the less, Barr has argued convincingly that the text is still aiming to combat it in an implicit way, both by advancing the orthodox position on certain views and by 'stealing [Lollards'] language and robbing it of its heterodox power'.[154] In many places, however, this seems to go beyond simply appropriation of language and into appropriating the reforming high ground entirely: the author acknowledges the abuses of the contemporary church and critiques them from an orthodox perspective, making a case for church reform without the need to sweep away the current system. R. N. Swanson suggested three categories of late medieval reform movement: one Catholic, 'essentially disciplinary', and associated with

[152] Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, p. 374.

[153] Barr, *Digby Poems*, p. 21.

[154] Ibid., p. 35. Compare Nighman, 'Reform and Humanism', pp. 30 and 42, where it is argued that '[Richard] Fleming and his allies were aggressively trying to retain for the orthodox camp as much of the "grey area" as possible" and continuing Wyclif's pastoral and moral reforms whilst opposing his doctrinal agenda.

humanism, one seeking doctrinal reform, a break with medieval religion, and a new church, and one laicizing, either from a royal or a general perspective.[155] The Digby poems largely fit to the more developed versions of the first category portrayed in recent work on the fifteenth-century church; emphasising renewal of existing structures through reform of practice and discipline without significant doctrinal change.[156]

Rhetoric of reform is therefore abundant within this collection: '*worldis good nes not holi chirche, / Richesse and worschep Y ȝow forbede*' says the author at one point – probably slightly hyperbolic, not actually a denial of all possessions, but of abundant wealth ('*richesse*'), temporalities ('*worldis good*') and temporal lordship ('*worschep*'): this is still a strikingly radical statement in the early fifteenth century, challenging the idea of a church embedded in and part of contemporary wealth and power structures.[157] In a context where disendowment had apparently been debated in parliament, however passingly, the writer's willingness to join in critiques of the church's wealth is remarkable; and in stark contrast to the emphasis of Bodley 649 on defending those points where the church was criticised. In qualification it should, however, be noted that this is still essentially criticism of contemporary practice, not doctrine. Equally striking is the statement that

> '*For gold and syluer and precious stones,*
> *swetnes of floures, earthly bewte,*
> *þe shrines wiþ all seyntes bones,*
> *In heuene were foul felþe to see*.'[158]

The context here is one of dismissing earthly beauties and glories, rather than a critique of the cult of saints *per se*, so the statement is still within the bounds of doctrinal orthodoxy (compare Richard Fleming's concern for the proper handing of

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[155] Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England*, p. 313.

[156] See, for example, Gillespie, 'Chichele's Church', in Gillespie and Ghosh, *After Arundel*, pp. 3-42.

[157] Ibid., p. 150. 'Radical' is used here and below in the original sense of suggesting 'root' change, not merely cosmetic adjustments.

[158] Ibid., p. 245.

temporal wealth, or Bodley 649's warnings about the transient glories of this world) but that dismissal is phrased here in a way that seems purposely shocking, not to make simply the customary criticism of display by wealthy individuals, but to challenge the display even of the church's sanctuaries and shrines as corruption and vanity in conflict (or at least contrast) with heaven.[159] A similar, if less controversial, concern for the due performance of their offices by clergy emerges at various points: a bishop must be a '*by schap*', a fellow sheep teaching the flock, and curates are repeatedly stated to be obliged to preach; indeed restrictions on preaching are criticised: '*when prelat is forbode to preche, / No trewe man trouþe dar teche*'.[160] If Barr is right in dating this to the second decade of the fifteenth century, then these remarks were being made only a few years after the Constitutions nominally banned preaching without a license, making them highly controversial in the church context.[161] They are also, significantly, reminiscent of the concern for preaching and teaching seen in Lollard hermeneutics. The contrast with Bodley 649's emphasis on the ontological and epistemological gulf between clergy and laity is likewise striking: on the surface this language appears far closer to that of *EWS* than its fellow 'orthodox' collection.

None the less, it must be emphasised that the framework within which this need for reform is articulated is doctrinally orthodox and carefully excludes Wycliffite teaching (and it should be noticed that the author seems particularly sensitive to some of Wyclif's philosophical ideas, not simply the polemics of his followers): Barr notes how the discussion of the sacrament in poem 23 adds material to the original poem (Aquinas' *Lauda Sion*) to ensure a statement emphasising the role of the priest and the transubstantiation of the host: '*into flesch passeþ the bred / as holychirche doþ us kenne*".[162] The Wycliffite criticism of the dismembered body is countered, and annihilation (philosophically problematic for Wyclif) asserted, as elsewhere is the key

[159] Nighman, 'Reform and Humanism', p. 63.

[160] Ibid., pp. 166, 237.

[161] Though it should be noted that other reform-minded authors, including Gascoigne and the author of *Omnis Plantacio*, also objected to the Constitutions' restrictions on preachers – see Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 12. Indeed, this legislation was sometimes seen as anti-mendicant rather than anti-Wycliffite (Forrest, *Detection of Heresy*, p. 63).

[162] Barr, *Digby Poems*, p. 25, 298.

doctrine of the need for oral confession to a priest, a common bone of contention.[163] On examination, such examples are fairly frequent: the poems criticise those breaking the Lenten fast, assert the value of the religious ('*þe hiȝest lyf of spiritualte*') and contemplative (they '*haue mede wiþ martyres*') sectors of the church, and asserts the inherent value of liturgical observance (aside from any didactic or pastoral utility) as something owed to God: '*þe duwe dette, deuyne seruyse*'.[164] There may even be an attack on Wyclif's perceived determinism in the statement that: '*ȝe haue fre wille: chese ȝoure chaunce*'.[165]

On the fundamental question of attitudes to authority and the church, the poems are clearly orthodox: amongst the lines added to Lauda Sion is the statement: '*in byleue of holychirche, who wyl hym ȝoken, / Aȝen þis non argument may make*'.[166] Barr notes there is a repeated emphasis on the need for 'byleue' over and against the evidence of senses and reason, belief that is based in the first instance on the church's teaching, not on personal understanding of the bible or inspiration from the spirit: '*lore is ȝouen to cristen men / … as holychirche doþ vs kenne*'.[167] The poems usually draw for authority on old sayings and books, valuing established sources and avoiding more modern ones, which may be a reflection of the same ideology.[168]

This emerges in practice in the teaching on personal values as a pedagogy of trust and unity. Examples of a morally wrong life include seeking debate and despising good teaching; avoiding disunity is a constant concern, both in the church and in society, and concern for corporate conformity seems to be one of the issues underlying hostility to those who break fasts or to bishops who fail to be 'fellow sheep'.[169] The re-casting of *Lauda Sion* concludes with the importance of trusting faith in the efficacy of the church's sacraments, even in the face of one's own eyes: '*Quare*

[163] Ibid., pp. 24-29. See also pp. 159, 295-303 for further examples.
[164] Ibid., pp. 238, 254, 256, 177.
[165] Ibid., p. 114.
[166] Ibid., p. 27, cf. 295-303.
[167] Ibid., p. 28.
[168] Ibid., pp. 55-60.
[169] Ibid., pp. 136, 44, 193, 166, 238.

not, ne drede, not to sen hit so'.[170] '*Byleue*' is indeed a repeated command, calling the reader or hearer to submit their understanding and observation to what the church teaches is true.[171] In this respect it recalls more the humility dynamic of Bodley 649 than the call to engagement seen in *EWS*. The virtue of faith, which in the latter text was directed towards God and his ability to provide, is here the virtue of trust, directed to the church and the reliability of its authoritative preaching. The humble submission and acceptance that *EWS* recommended towards the word of scripture is here directed towards 'holy church', and while the identity of this entity in the author's mind is not entirely defined it does in practice appear to be external to the individual Christian.

The Digby poems share in the essential doctrinal and social conservatism of Bodley 649: they do not envisage change to social structures or to the church's teaching, but they seek the reform of abuses throughout the Christian community. They clearly share many specific Lollard criticisms of the contemporary church, but not the Lollard attitude of condemning the church entirely from outside, nor the appeal to personal scripture reading as an authority source. Their opposition to Lollardy thus takes the form of seeking to reform those abuses of practice that gave Lollards rhetorical traction, rather than prioritising defending the church against all lay critique as Bodley 649 does, but they still articulate a picture of virtue and of right authority that defies Lollard thought and speech.

A quietist response? Mirk's *Festial*

Mirk's *Festial* is the least obvious case of adaptation and response; there is no explicit engagement with Lollardy, and almost none with heresy or marginal belief beyond some warnings against New Year's Day superstitions, so that it would be easy to dismiss it as an example of a stream of orthodoxy unconcerned with Wyclif or his

[170] Ibid., pp. 303, 27.

[171] Ibid., p. 28.

followers.[172] Such dismissal has been common until the recent study by Judy Ann Ford, arguing that 'a close reading of Mirk's sermons indicates that his writing of the *Festial* was motivated by a desire to dissuade the masses from Lollardy and revolt by providing an avenue of vernacularity, lay agency, and participatory ecclesiology within the orthodox church'.[173] Ford argues convincingly that throughout the *Festial* a 'dynamic, lay-directed' salvation is envisaged, that is none the less still dependent upon priests, especially for the sacraments, especially confession. Mirk thus presents the laity as 'active' but 'dependent' upon the institutional church, an alternative system for lay involvement to that of Lollardy.

Close examination of the text supports and extends the hypothesis that a pre-emptive defence against Lollardy is one of Mirk's agendas. When one looks at specifics, it is certainly noteworthy how often the *Festial* sermons end up defending an area of doctrine or practice that drew fire from Lollardy, explicitly or implicitly: thus for example he tells stories where what happens to a saint's image happens to the saint, implicitly validating the idea that honouring an image was a way to honour a saint.[174] He gives details as to how one should act on entering a church building, emphasising the idea of sacred space, and explains and justifies the reasons for the Lenten fast.[175] Elsewhere worshipping the cross is explained and justified, as is terrestrial (lay) patronage.[176] Fasting, hallowing of churches, facing east, and marriage services are other areas of sacramental ritual that the author takes care to explain and justify, whilst separating himself from the abuses and misunderstandings of sacramental theology that could raise Lollard criticism: '*byriing in holy place helputh not hem þat ben dampned*', he notes, and prayer should be made in a language the pray-er understands.[177] It thus seems likely that there is a certain pre-emptive apologetic impetus behind a lot of the text's teaching that aims to defend against Lollard

[172] Powell, *Festial*, p. 44. Powell herself suggests that the text 'avoids controversy' and invokes a simple faith in the Trinity, p. xliii.

[173] Ford, *John Mirk's Festial*, p. 143.

[174] *Festial*, p. 15.

[175] *Festial*, pp. 49, 78. Scepticism about sacred spaces, either physical or chronological (such as Lenten fasts) was a common Lollard trait, seen in their frequent breach of the church's fasts in particular.

[176] *Festial*, p. 108, 218.

[177] *Festial*, pp. 218, 229, 249, 250, 254, 251.

criticism. Significantly, the 13th century collection in Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B. 14521, a very similar liturgical collection of sermons from the pre-Wyclif period, also depending heavily upon telling tales of the saints commemorated on given days, that lacks such insistent explanations and defences, suggesting that this content is indeed aimed at Lollard polemics.[178] Mirk's *Festial* thus constitutes strong evidence for the influence of counter-Lollard priorities even in those parts of English religion hitherto presented as an unaffected mainstream. These pre-emptive apologetics recall those more explicitly made in Bodley 649, emphasising rational explanations and proper uses for those practices whose abuses were the targets of Lollard polemic, even as it also acknowledges abuses in the fashion of the Digby poems.

A similar agenda can be glimpsed behind the personal moral teaching of the *Festial*. It makes conventional exhortation to readers/hearers to 'amend life while you may', and ends many stories of saints with a pointed moral: '*by þys e[n]sampul*' a form of behaviour is taught to Christian people.[179] The author warns of conventional moral dangers such as the risk of lust for newly weds, encouraging them to think on death instead, and offers meditations against temptations and examples of good deeds in the lives of the saints.[180] He exhorts humility and unity: '*meknesse of herte in vnite of pes and reste*', teaches the importance of contrition and fasting, and expounds basic personal spiritual resources such as the deadly sins and the Lord's prayer.[181] Heartfelt responses are better than empty formalism: '*God han lever fewe wordys with devocion þan meny wythoute devocion'.*[182] When the lives of the saints are rehearsed, it is essentially individual virtues such as meekness, compassion, or goodness that are emphasised.[183] This is a model for an essentially quietist Christian life, emphasising meekness, endurance, patience, and personal virtue, rather than active lay engagement, learning, or criticism: '*God abyduþ not þeras debate is and descension*'.[184]

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[178] *Repertorium*, pp. 139-197.

[179] Powell, *Festial*, these quotations from pp. 54, 27.

[180] See for example *Festial,* pp. 61, 79, 67.

[181] See for these examples *Festial,* pp. 266, 263, 213, 229.

[182] *Festial*, p. 262.

[183] See for example Andrew, p. 8, Nicholas, p. 12, Thomas, p. 20, Anne, p. 17, or even Paul, p. 67.

[184] *Festial*, p. 249.

The cardinal virtue of humility is again emphasised and identified with quietness, silence, and the avoidance of contention, in contrast with the emphasis in texts such as *EWS* on humility on the part of those holding church office and on a duty of mutual correction and edification for all others.[185] Such a framework tacitly excludes much of both Lollard polemic and pastoral writing as either irrelevant to the cultivation of the essential virtues, or as actively sinful in its preoccupation with debate and church reform, on the one hand, or correcting others on the other, encouraging the believer to turn their energies inward to personal reform instead.

Being a liturgical collection (that is, based on the hagiography and practices for the feast day rather than on the assigned readings), the *Festial's* approach to issues of authority and ecclesiology is less clear. Scripture is still cited, either directly or paraphrased, in either English or Latin, in many sermons, although a Latin citation is generally accompanied by an English paraphrase.[186] Generally this is to relate details of the life of the day's saint, rather than as itself the locus of teaching, and so allegory is rare, when it is employed it is always *ab intus* and usually to make a link to the themes of the day.[187] The literal sense thus predominates, as in *EWS*. Otherwise the primary authority is the *Legenda Aurea*, providing the majority of the stories of Saints' lives, although Mirk often refocuses his borrowing from the *Legenda* to be more pastoral and less schematic.[188] One interesting glimpse into a nuanced view of authority levels appears in a comment on the Magi: '*what fel aftur [of] þese kynges Y fynde no þyng but in serteyn put by opynyonus*' – an intriguing suggestion that Mirk

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[185] For the duty of mutual correction in Lollard pastoral writings, see in particular the first chapter of Somerset's *Feeling like Saints*. Both Lollards and their opponents theoretically castigated vain disputations in the Schools, but the Lollard emphasis on challenging wrongdoing and proving it wrong by appeal to (usually) scriptural authority demanded a more disputatious practice than the emphasis on humbly accepting authority identified with their opponents. Moreover, it is notable that the Lollard criticism was generally directed at the debates of those in the schools, often in a context where the critique was addressed to a lay audience, whereas sources such as Mirk's *Festial* criticise distension and debate in a lay context, especially debate or criticism by the laity. In sources such as *EWS*, therefore, criticism of debate is a rhetorical tool to strike at an intra-mural intellectual elite, whereas in the *Festial* it has the potential to be an inoculation against disputatious criticism of established practice and teaching by extra-mural individuals.

[186] *Festial*, pp. 6, 8, 14, 20, 23, 30, 50, 52, 67, 76, 78, 82, 86.

[187] See for example the discussion of the Trinity in relation to Jesus' baptism, *Festial* p. 50, or the elaborate analogy of the Virgin Mary as a castle, used to fit her into the day's gospel reading, pp. 207-9.

[188] *Festial*, p. xxxv.

recognises different levels of authority in his sources.[189] The similarly liturgical mid 15th-century '*Speculum Sacerdotale*' collection has a similar comment, mentioning that Candlemas is '*of non auctorite but of custom of folke*': a further distinction between tradition and authority that is in interesting contrast to the undistinguished trust in '*sanctorum patrum precedencium*' presented by Bodley 649 and related sources.[190] Unfortunately such remarks appear to be almost unique, so it would be risky to base any conclusions on them, but they do suggest that there was, at least in these collections, no blind acceptance of all tradition as equally weighty: antiquity was not of itself always authority. Most likely, the approval of the church establishment was needed to transmute age into authority: this recognition by institutional authority was inescapable for any other authority source.

On church reform there are some interesting comments: the author notes that Papal remission of sins requires confession, charity, and faith, which is, if not actually a criticism of church practice, at least a warning against misunderstandings of it.[191] In expounding the Pater Noster, Mirk insists it is better said in English, since understanding is important.[192] Perhaps the closest the sermons seem to come to rebuking the ecclesiastical establishment is an intriguing story that 'Grosthed', bishop of Lincoln (a variant form of Grosseteste) was tormented by fiends on his death bed until he said he believed '*as holy chyrch doth*'.[193] This is a declaration of the fundamental criterion of orthodoxy, accepting the determinative authority of the church, and the implied rebuke of Grosseteste is that he was heterodox, or at least of suspect heterodoxy. It also, of course, assumes and therefore implies the contemporary model of orthodoxy that sees it as defined by obedience to the Church's teaching, whether understood or not – it is significant that 'Grosthed' proclaimed his allegiance

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[189] *Festial*, p. 49.

[190] *Repertorium*, p. 369.

[191] Festial, p. 71.

[192] *Festial*, p. 263.

[193] *Festial*, p. 74. Compare Mirk's *Instructions to a Parish Priest*, which emphasises that the dying are to be asked to assent to all articles and foreswear 'alle heresies & errours & opynyons dampned by the Chirche' (p. 69) – this does not appear to mean that they are to be asked to foreswear each individual error in this long list, which would hardly be practical with a dying person, but simply to agree to reject anything that the church has 'dampned'; i.e. accept the authority of the church unconditionally.

not to any specific doctrine, but to *whatever* the church believed, and it was this that saved him, unquestioning faith in the institution, not knowing agreement with its doctrines. Here is the same ecclesiology as seen in the other two 'orthodox' collections, one that in the end accepts the final authority of 'the church' to determine what is to be believed. The priority of the *Festial* sermons is personal reform within the established system, rather than systemic reform of church or state.

There is another element to this Grosseteste story, however, which should be noted in passing; and that is the question of why he in particular was the object of this example story about the importance of accepting the determinative authority of the church. Grosseteste was never investigated for heresy, and was revered after his death even in orthodox circles as '*magnus clericus*'.[194] While it is possible that Mirk simply sought a name of a famous ecclesiastic from a past sufficiently distant as to offend no-one, this seems unlikely – he is quite capable of telling anonymous *exempla* about archetypical figures elsewhere. More likely is that the heretication of Grosseteste here is a reflection of his frequent usage in anti-papal texts and polemics; the story of his clash with Innocent having been widely circulated (and embroidered) by writers up to Higden and beyond.[195] While most such portrayals seem to have sympathised primarily with Grosseteste it is possible that the congruence with Lollard criticisms of the papacy, and the use of Grosseteste as an exemplar in this and other departments by Lollard polemicists, had tainted him so that he had become suspect by association – or at least linked in Mirk's mind with heresy. If so it is another indication both that Lollardy was not as absent from his concerns as at first appears, and of the extent to which nervousness about heretical material was shaping how otherwise orthodox texts and traditions were viewed.

Otherwise the *Festial* largely eschews the overt polemicism of the other collections here, ostensibly focusing on practical pastoral instruction, but the nature of that instruction is still in practice influenced by the need to respond to Lollardy. This

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[194] Horner, *A Macaronic Sermon Collection*, p. 186.

[195] John Flood and James McEvoy, 'Romanorum malleus et contemptor' in John Flood, James R. Ginther, and Joseph W. Goering, eds, *Robert Grosseteste and his Intellectual Milieu: New editions and studies* (Toronto: PIMS, 2013), pp. 321-378.

response is one of reasserting established practice and teaching in a fashion that tacitly excludes Lollard ideas and practices, presenting an ethic that conflicts with Lollardy's own priorities whilst promoting (by presuming) a devotion to the priestly sacraments and the authority of the church that fundamentally excludes Lollard criticisms and emphasis on the sufficiency of individual and scripture in contemporary community.

Conclusion: diversity and common threads in early fifteenth century responses to Lollardy

There is clearly a huge amount of diversity across the homiletic specimens discussed here. Some is essentially stylistic: the form and language of English liturgical sermons such as the *Festial* is radically different from the lectional macaronic sermons of Bodley 649, for example, but in many respects the attitudes, priorities, and arguments of the content can be seen as divergent as well. Whether the wealth of the church is viewed as dangerous or glorifying God, whether the exaltedness of the clergy 'up the mountain' or the humility of the clergy as 'fellow sheep' is emphasised, even whether the texts seek to overtly engage in confrontation and polemic with Lollardy or simply to strengthen their hearers in an 'orthodox' faith, these factors remain variable across the texts. Underlying them was a difference of attitude and priority as regards the locus of necessary reform and the nature of the key problems faced by the church: heresy, or clerical abuses, or personal immorality. Texts that saw the key problem as Lollardy were prone to prioritise defending church practices over admitting abuses; others like the Digby corpus saw the need for reform as the priority and so were willing to use lollard language and rhetoric to address these problems, even at the risk of bearing an appearance of heterodoxy.

Nonetheless, certain common areas of concern and rhetoric do appear that will remain prominent in later theologising: the sacraments of confession and the

Eucharist are, unsurprisingly, of interest to all three 'orthodox' sources, perhaps more so than to *EWS* in fact, and there is a frequent effort to deploy biblical rhetoric against opponents by identifying them with the villains of the biblical story common to both Lollard and polemically orthodox texts like Bodley 649. Efforts to construct a moral and devotional space either independent of Lollard biblicising or inherently exclusive of it are another theme present to some degree in all sermons that will recur again in later texts. The most significant area of ongoing conflict, however, remains that of the approach to authority, especially hermeneutic and exegetical practices around the word of scripture.

Ultimately, for all their diversity there remains a certain unity to the homiletic texts that are opposed to Lollardy, unity rooted in their attitude to this key area of 'authority'; specifically the relative weighing of the authority of the contemporary institutional church, tradition, and scripture. Essential to this here are nuances of what the church is (institutional or composed of 'true men') and where the essential meaning of scripture is to be found, in the literal sense or in a metaphorical 'spiritual' sense. Fundamentally, the three 'orthodox' sources agree in demanding trusting acceptance and submission to 'the church' *per se.* The Christian must believe whatever the church teaches. He cannot presume to rebuke it independently from scripture, for only the church knows scripture's true meaning. This is in irreducible contrast to *EWS*' calls for the church to be accountable to scripture, as read and understood by individuals and small communities. There is diversity in how far the texts accept or oppose Lollardy's specific criticisms of particular abuses, and how far they are willing to share in its mood of prioritising reform of a corrupt church, but all, tacitly or explicitly, construct models of the faith that exclude its ideas of authority.

CHAPTER TWO

Nicholas Love's *Mirror*: an alternative spirituality?

Introduction to the text

Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed life of Jesus Christ* is a text of a very different nature to the sermon materials examined hitherto. One of the most popular English texts of the late middle ages, judging by manuscript survivals, it is a vernacular re-working of the pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes Vitae Christi* (itself a meditative re-working of the gospel accounts of the life of Christ; henceforth *MVC*). It was apparently produced by Love (a Carthusian who had probably started as a Benedictine), in the first decade of the fifteenth century, when he was prior of Mount Grace Charterhouse.[1] While the bulk of Love's material is translated from this earlier source, Love adds significant material of his own, notably in the 'proheme' at the beginning and in his discussions of the sacraments, and also is selective in his choice of which parts of the original to reproduce in their entirety, which to abridge, and which to exclude, making his final text very clearly a carefully constructed creation in its own right, and not simply a translation of an earlier work. The work presents itself in the proheme and in comments throughout as aimed purely at providing edifying material for the simple, rather than engaging with deep and difficult matters of meditation, theology, or apologetics. Most copies, however, are found with a preceding memorandum noting that the text had been approved by Archbishop Arundel 'for the confutation of heretics or Lollards', a purpose that may or may not have been original to the work.[2]

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1 Sargent, 'Nicholas Love as an Ecclesiastical Reformer', pp. 40-64.
2 Sargent, *Mirror*, p. 7.

Context-wise, therefore, the text falls in the same chronological setting as the previous chapter, but circulated in high social circles, as is evident from extant MSS, whether or not those were the intended audience.[3] David Falls has suggested that the text may have been written for, and circulated among, religious noblewomen known to Love and associated with the Carthusian order; whether or not this was so, the Archbishop's endorsement indicates that it was at least familiar to the highest ecclesiastics in the land.[4] The abundance of surviving copies, some of de luxe quality, indicates a demand for the text amongst those with some money and literacy.[5] It is not possible reliably to be more specific than this, but it gives some suggestion as to the dominant flavour of the text's social context.

Love's *Mirror* has recently obtained a certain amount of notoriety, first in Nicholas Watson's seminal *Speculum* article, and later in several detailed studies as an example of the alleged 'dumbing down' of ecclesiastical culture post-Arundel, 'a weapon for the archbishop's campaign' substituting orthodox interpretations and polemic for the bare text of the English gospels being disseminated by Lollardy.[6] The hypothesis is that the circulation of the Wycliffite *Glossed Gospels* and the text of the Bible-translation gave Lollardy a head start in the devotional world of fifteenth-century England, popularising texts that originated from a Lollard milieu and reflected a Lollard emphasis on access to the unfiltered text of scripture and authoritative patristic commentary. Love's text, in contrast, provided a nominal access to the gospel story packaged in impeccably orthodox devotional material, rather than reform-orientated polemic, and emphasising an inward affective piety instead of an outwardly-orientated activism. Love is thus seen as writing for the laity to provide an alternative to Wycliffite achievements in making available scriptural texts, offering

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3 Ibid., introduction, pp. 76-95.

4 Falls, *Nicholas Love's Mirror*, p. 197.

5 *Mirror*, introduction, pp. 92-95 – Sargent notes that the proportion of more luxurious texts is greater at the beginning of the period, suggesting a growing popularisation.

6 *Mirror*, introduction, p. 57. Sargent finds supporting evidence for this in possible evidence for Love pushing for the nationalisation of the Constitutions and for stricter monastic discipline in 'Nicholas Love as an Ecclesiastical Reformer', p. 61. See also Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change', pp. 822-864; and Michelle Karnes, 'Nicholas Love and Medieval Meditations on Christ', *Speculum,* 82:2 (April 2007), pp. 380-408, where she argues for the 'systematic demotion' of the potential of Gospel devotions in Love's text, so that his readers are not so much empowered as 'trapped in an unending novitiate'.

instead a safe form of devotion that bore minimal risk of inspiring independent thought but instead inculcated infantilising affectivity; a sort of inoculation against Wycliffite spirituality.[7]

Other writers have echoed the view of Love as at some level restrictive, but located his priority as controlling and limiting the excesses of contemplation and the meditative tradition. Michelle Karnes notes the omission of the *MVC*'s tract on contemplation (comprising 1/3 of the original text) and the replacement of the original second-person speech of the *MVC* with a more overt first-person voice, inserting the mediating figure of the authorial guide between the meditant and scripture, maintaining an authoritative, hierarchical relationship with his audience rather than one of shared participation.[8] Love, she points out, insists on the contemplation of only the humanity of Christ, and so 'places the lay people to whom he directs his translation in an unending novitiate' where he 'insists on treating as permanent a state of the soul [i.e meditating on Christ's humanity] which [other authors] think of as a beginning'.[9] The fullest ambitions of contemplation are thus replaced with a consciously limited text in which the reader can only engage in a limited and controlled exercise of devotion.[10] Others have suggested that this is part of a wider trend at the time: Ellis and Fanous point to the emphasis on church authority and conscious use of the Latin Vulgate in Hilton, and the concern about heresy, individualism, and misleading miraculous experiences in *The chastising of God's Children*.[11] The church, they suggest, was aware of a growing groundswell of interest

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7 See in particular the argument in Karnes, 'Nicholas Love and Medieval Meditations on Christ'.

8 Michelle Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 218, 220, 217.

9 Ibid., pp. 216, 218.

10 There is an extensive debate here: Johnson, in particular, engages with Karnes' argument in his *The Middle English Life of Christ,* pp. 95-119, suggesting that while the *Mirror* is carefully correct in language regarding what one perceives by the meditative imagination, in a way consonant with seeking to limit contemplative ambitions and claims, it envisages referring suitable readers to the more ambitious material of Hilton and others, so that they can then progress in contemplative disciplines. Thus, Johnson argues, it is ultimately concerned to be inclusive, rather than exclusive, offering readers from all stages of life to chance to progress in meditative spirituality. Whatever its attitude to meditative exercises, however, the text is explicitly exclusive in its attitude to Lollardy and any lay questioning of the ecclesiastical establishment.

in contemplation and was seeking to control, mediate, and guide it into safe channels where it would not transgress the bounds of accepted belief and practice.[12] Hence Love's emphasis on the limited and bodily (not divine) remit of imagination and the images it furnishes, and on the emotional (rather than ecstatically mystical) experience of the meditative reader, serves to reign in over-ambitious contemplation to a safer, constrained model of spirituality.[13]

This traditional model has come under a certain amount of pressure lately: Mishtooni Bose has pointed out the rational elements and appeals to reason in Love's work, emphasising the element of common ground between him and opponents, obscured by 'clashing rhetoric' about reason.[14] Ian Johnson has similarly questioned the extent to which Love's text can reasonably be presented as a 'dumbing down' from study of the Bible text, arguing that 'the *Mirror* is, ... about inclusiveness, reliability, accessibility, and efficaciousness' aimed at every age and degree to 'encourage the contemplative ascent' in those capable of it and 'help all souls towards a foretaste of heaven'.[15] Johnson argues that 'Love's exclusion of higher contemplative matter does not have to be seen as restrictive, but simply the targeted tailoring of matter for his lay audience', with the more ambitious referred to the works of Hilton; it is a function, he suggests, of Love's genuine desire to reach the broadest possible spectrum of lay readers.[16] The emphasis on practical devotion, he suggests, stems not so much from a hostility to lay thought as from a recasting of his Franciscan source from a means to higher contemplation to a means to the 'highest degree of good living'; the new text emphasising the cure of sin and the cultivation of virtue.[17]

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12 Compare Robert E. Lerner, 'Ecstatic Dissent', *Speculum* 62:1 (Jan 1992), pp. 33-57.

13 Ibid., p. 156. In support of this, it should be noted that the one part of Love's text that does read like a description of a classic somatic-mystical experience is the anonymous prior's bodily delight at the Eucharist (discussed below); a 'safe', church-controlled locus of ecstatic experience.

14 Bose, 'Reversing the life of Christ: Dissent, orthodoxy, and affectivity in late medieval England', in Johnson and Westphall, *The Lives of Christ*, pp. 55-74.

15 Johnson, *The Middle English Life of Christ*, pp. 102, 116, 95.

16 Ibid., pp. 119, 117.

17 Ian Johnson, 'What Nicholas Love did in his Proheme with St. Augustine and Why', in Johnson and Westphall, *The Lives of Christ*, pp. 375-390; at p. 390.

David Falls has taken up a somewhat similar theme, arguing that the primary context for Love's work is seeking to inform Carthusian *conversi* in the early stages of their devotional development, rather than providing a safely constrained devotion for laity.[18] Thus he suggests that the text addresses traditional materials for teaching novices such as the Ave Maria, Creed, and Pater Noster, as well as emphasising Carthusian virtues such as silence and enclosure.[19] He has also suggested that Love's preoccupation was more to claim ground from the Franciscans within the Life of Christ tradition by adjusting the narrative to support Carthusian practice and to undermine traditional justifications of Franciscan practice.[20] Love is thus seen as more pastor than polemicist, aiming to provide a first step to those under his care rather than a final limit on lay spirituality, or as a writer concerned with debates between religious traditions within orthodoxy, rather than with anti-Wycliffite polemic.

Navigating this plethora of possible interpretations of Love is inevitably somewhat complicated. It should be noted in starting that hypotheses of motive are, of course, not necessarily mutually exclusive; it is quite possible for a text to have been written to kill two birds with one stone. Nonetheless, some frameworks seem to make better sense of the available evidence than others.

As regards a hypothetical anti-Franciscan animus, the argument rests primarily on the excision of 'Franciscan' material from the original, and here there is a problem with the high degree of overlap between material that might have been excluded as overly Franciscan and that which might have been excluded as overly 'empowering' for a lay readership in an age of heterodoxy, making this conclusion rather tenuous.[21] In fact, some of the material that is excised or hurried over includes items that are not especially Franciscan such as the Pater Noster, one of the objects of

[18] Falls, 'Carthusian Milieu' in Jonson and Westphall, *The Lives of Christ*, pp. 211-339

[19] Falls, 'Carthusian Milieu', pp. 315-323, *Nicholas Love's Mirror*, pp. 124-9.

[20] Falls, 'Carthusian Milieu', pp. 325-327.

[21] Lerner, 'Ecstatic Dissent' p. 52: 'The Franciscan order nonetheless became programmatically associated with the theology of spiritual intelligence'. Lerner charts in detail the correlation between those seeking to challenge or shape the church with spiritual authority based on claims of ecstatic experiences and those in the 'spiritual Franciscan' wing of the order. Kerby-Fulton likewise notes throughout *Books under Suspicion* a similar correlation between circles associated with or sympathetic to ecstatic theology of liminal orthodoxy and spiritual Franciscan circles.

that Carthusian *conversi* education which Falls claims as the priority for Love.[22] Moreover, in many cases the text appears aimed at a lay reader not a religious: the discussion of Mary, for example, emphasises her obedience to the 'bishop' of the temple rather than to a monastic spiritual father.[23] Then too there 'is relatively little evidence of Carthusian ownership of copies of Nicholas Love's *Mirror'*, and most surviving manuscripts are prefaced by the famous 'memorandum' noting that the text was approved by Arundel for popular distribution to confute Lollards (so presumably not in Carthusian houses), which suggests that whatever the original intent might hypothetically have been, in practice the text functioned in a wider milieu than training co*nversi,* and was considered as a potential counter to heterodox ideas and methods.[24] It must be remembered, as well, that the marginal notes which survive with the text in many copies, and which are likely to be authorial, are repeatedly explicit about polemical sections being written 'contra Lollardos', while there is no explicit criticism of Franciscan practice.[25] The addition, finally, of several thousand words in defence of the sacrament of verbal shrift, and again of the real presence, suggests further that Lollards, and not Franciscans, were the dominant targets of the text as it stands.[26]

The same is true in regard to the question of controlling contemplative excesses; while Love's careful limiting of the language with which he describes the fruit of contemplation is consonant with a concern about the potential digressions of meditative readers, every overt expression of polemical or restrictive purpose is aimed

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[22] Sargent, *Mirror*, p. 86 – after a brief treatment of the Pater Noster, in Sargent's judgement more about defending authorised prayer against private prayer (again, it should be noted, a priority of Lollard spirituality) than teaching on the prayer itself, the text leaves off discussion of the Sermon on the Mount and the Pater Noster, explaining that they are analysed in depth elsewhere, although it does devote considerable space to the Ave Maria, another of the objects of education cited by Falls in 'Carthusian Milieu', p. 320. It is more probable that, rather than reflecting Carthusian priorities, the text here is shaped by Lollard interests, generally warmer regarding the exposition of the Sermon on the Mount and Pater Noster than on Marian devotion.

[23] *Mirror*, p. 21.

[24] *Mirror*, pp. 89, 153. Falls acknowledges the problem of limited Carthusian survivals (*Nicholas Love's Mirror*, p. 159), suggesting that the work 'took off' outside the context for which it was intended, Love being 'largely unsuccessful' in his purpose of making a Carthusian work.

[25] *Mirror*, introduction pp. 76-153.

[26] *Mirror*, pp. 147, 139 and elsewhere for 'contra Lollardos' notes. See pp. 90-92 on confession and 223-38 on the Real Presence.

at Lollardy, and his rigorous defence of the real presence and of verbal shrift fits with this agenda far better than a concern about ecstatic dissent.[27] Indeed, it will be argued below that there are many areas where the text's agenda aligns significantly with the concerns of opponents of Lollard heterodoxy, reinforcing the traditional hypothesis that opposing Lollardy was a key part of its agenda. In particular, it seems as if Love's text, besides its much-discussed insulation from the biblical page, directly and actively excludes many of the priorities of Lollard 'spirituality,' of the Lollard way of doing Christianity.

Setting the context: Lollard 'spirituality'

While Lollardy is most visible in the form of a critical polemic fighting for reform, Fiona Somerset and Patrick Hornbeck in particular have increasingly argued that we must be careful not to reduce Lollardy to its reforming agenda, but must also recognise the pastoral emphasis of much of Lollard writing and thought.[28] 'Lollard', she suggests, was more about an action ('lolling') than a fixed doctrinal identity, and it was their attitude, agendas, and concerns that defined them more than any doctrinal statement.[29] Lollard 'spirituality' (daily practice and experience of their faith) was characterised, Somerset suggests, by a particular set of priorities: a concern for 'God's law/Christ's law' (especially the ten commandments and the gospel precepts), continuous personal prayer (also often extempore, rather than corporate and liturgical), reform on the model of the Apostolic church, an emphasis on the dignity of living humans over inanimate objects such as saints' images, a 'spiritual simplicity'

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[27] It is doubtless possible, as mentioned above, that the Real Presence in the Eucharist and the potentially ecstatic encounter with it by the faithful is being raised here as an alternative to the ecstatic encounter with the divine through mediation. However, the emphasis of the text is on defending it against clerks influenced by Aristotle (probably, as will be discussed, a dig at Wyclif) and asserting its reality against those who rely on natural reason and sight, not against those who advocate a superior experience through contemplation. The whole thrust of both these extensive additions is definitely 'contra Lollardos'.

[28] Somerset, *Feeling like Saints*, p. 7.

[29] Ibid., p. 20. There may be a resonance here with the work of Barabara Rosenwein on 'emotional communities'; Lollardy being a shared set of attitudes and priorities as much as a systematic theology.

minimising devotional paraphernalia, a communal morality emphasising the importance of mutual accountability and rebuke, and an imitation of Christ that centred on his role as prophetic outsider, critic, and sufferer.[30] To this one might add the significance of (less frequent) discussions about 'what it means to be poor in the right sort of way'.[31] This chimes in many respects with the work of Peikola on Lollard self-identification through language: he identifies the three elements of 'core' Lollard self-fashioning as being 'instructive': teaching scripture, and moral living from it; 'persecutional': seeing themselves as the continuation of the scriptural pattern of a persecuted elect, whose suffering at the hands of a powerful intra-mural establishment is both proof of their election and a consequence of their faithfulness to scriptural teaching; and 'authoritative': that is, presenting themselves as speaking authoritatively both to their opponents and other hearers, by virtue of being the elect and of being true readers of scripture.[32] In practice, this meant that reading scripture and speaking it to others, and thereby seeking the reform of both one's local community and the wider church, was a particular mechanism of Lollard spiritual practice. It was seen as the main way for individuals and communities to grow in virtue, and undergirded by belief in the pre-eminent contemporary authority of the scriptural text and the fundamental usefulness of the spoken word. It is in comparing this 'Lollard spirituality' to the distinctive emphases of Love's *Mirror* that a helpful insight on Love's possible agendas appears.

Love's attack on Lollardy in the *Mirror* is not simply the explicit polemical engagement through areas of controversy (primarily debates on the sacraments) that is so helpfully highlighted in the marginal annotations, though that is clearly important. He also follows a route similar to that of Mirk in developing theologies of virtue and authority that are inherently exclusive of Lollard methods and

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30 Hornbeck, Bose, and Somerset, *A Companion to Lollardy*, pp. 71-74. Compare Mary Raschko, 'Common ground for contrasting ideologies: the texts and contexts of a schort reule of lif' in *Viator: Medieval and Rennaissance Studies*, 40:1 (2009), pp. 387-410 at p. 391: 'each person has a responsibility not only to do rightly but also to teach others how to love a good Christian life'; likewise Jeremy Catto '1349-1412: culture and history' in Fanous and Gillespie, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism*, pp. 113-132, at p. 119, notes that Lollard works are generally about 'the reformation of public religion' not the 'training of personal conscience'.

31 Hornbeck, Lahey, and Somerset, *Wycliffite Spirituality*, p. 14.

32 Peikola, *Congregation of the Elect*, pp. 291-4.

'spirituality'. He attacks, both explicitly and implicitly, the Lollard faith in the accessibility and authority of the word of scripture, and the Lollard attitude and identity as humble outsider critics seeking mutual accountability and learning through that word.

Love's text and authority

The most noticeable attack is that surrounding issues of authority, and especially the authority of the church. In Love's formulation the church largely takes the place that scripture held in Lollard spirituality, as the key authority and source of spiritual nourishment. In turn the accessibility and usefulness of scripture to lay readers is frequently called into question. It has often been noted that Love emphasises the limited ability of his readers and how 'symple creatures … hauen need to be fede with mylke of lyȝte doctrine & not with sadde mete of grete clargye & of hye contemplacion', an assessment expressed repeatedly in his admission that he has skipped chapters that have little in them of edification for 'symple folk', or that he will leave off discussing matters that pertain to 'gostly folk'.[33] This emphasis expresses the radical separation within Christendom, both in terms of hierarchy and vocation, that so frequently formed a foundation of anti-Lollard texts: some matters are not to be looked into by some classes of people.[34] It is accompanied by a profound mistrust of excessive theological ambition on the part of readers: 'study not to fer in þat matere occupy not þi wit þerwiþ as þou woldst vndurstande it, by kindly reson'.[35] 'Curiosite' is dangerous, and the text goes on a lengthy digression to explain this.[36] The Lollard

[33] *Mirror*, pp. 10, 75, 105.

[34] Compare Bodley 649, above, pp. 45-47, on limits to lay theological enquiry, Hoccleve's message to John Oldcastle, or Thomas Netter on the role of the laity (below). Contrast the *Book to a Mother*'s claim that 'who loveth best God, can best Holi Writ' and so 'is best clerk' (cited in Karnes, 'Nicholas Love and Medieval Meditations on Christ', p. 388). Right disposition (love) is not a sufficient key in Love to open either Scriptural comprehension (as witness the disciples' struggles) nor understanding of hidden mysteries such as the sacraments, for such things are meant to be kept dark to those who have not received suitable 'grace'.

[35] *Mirror*, p. 23

[36] *Mirror*, p. 54.

attitude that saw themselves as a community of (mostly lay) learners is thus cast as ambitious and dangerous.

In place of curiosity, simple folk are to cultivate trust in the spiritual authority of the church: 'when þou herest any sich þinge in byleue þat passeþ þi kindly [natural] reson, trow soþfastly þat it is soþ as holy chirch techeþ & go no ferþer', Love writes, in words again strikingly reminiscent of the rhetoric of Bodley 649 and other orthodox polemics.[37] Love inserts into his source's account of the last supper an assertion of transubstantiation justified by the fact that 'þis is þe trew byleue þat holi chirch haþ taught vs of þis blessed sacrament', and declares the Lollards to be damned like Judas precisely because they have not believed 'as god himself & holi chirch haþ taught'.[38] There is here a classic elision of boundaries: what the church has taught becomes identified with what God has taught, so that disobedience to the church is disobedience to God, and trust in the church is faith in God.[39] Here authority overlaps with virtue as an issue, since faith in God is virtuous and disobedience sinful; to question the authority of the church becomes itself a potentially cardinal sin. Believers wishing to find assurance are to obey God's commands, and those of his ministers, and be 'buxum to his vikeres', whether good- or evil-living (a marginal annotation notes explicitly 'contra lollardos').[40] The treatise on the sacrament makes this still more explicit: 'heretiks … in defaut of buxom drede to god & holy chirch presumptuously leuyng vpon hir owne bodily wittes & kyndely reson leue not þat holi doctors hauen tauht, & holi chirch determined of þis blessede sacrament' and the reader is therefore called to leave 'kindly reason' and be observant to God and his church instead of trusting their own 'bodily wittes'.[41] The church's authority, rather than that of doctors *per se*, is central here. Love deftly deals with the inherent challenge posed by Wyclif's theological authority as a famous scholar by associating him with pride and natural

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[37] *Mirror*, p. 23. Compare Bodley 649's '*fide sta, non altum capere, sed tim*e'.

[38] *Mirror*, pp. 150, 151.

[39] Compare Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 148-173 on the ways in which Love elides boundaries of textual authorities, 'running together' scripture and tradition. Contrast the consistent Lollard concern for the distinguishing of different authorities – e.g. Glossed Gospels, Wycliffite Bible, Rolle's Psalter etc.

[40] *Mirror*, p. 25.

[41] *Mirror*, pp. 225-26.

reason instead of divine revelation: 'miche folke is deceyuet in þat party þat raþere ȝiuen credence to þat a grete clerke techeþ acordyng to kyndely reson þen to þat holy chirch techeþ hereof onely in byleue aboue reson,' and Wyclif was thus deceived, Love says, in giving more credence to teachings of Aristotle standing only in natural reason than to the teachings of the church.[42] Indeed, Love says that this is a common error of great clerks unless they have the grace of true meekness, implicitly undermining doctoral authority and its claim to the 'key of knowledge'; Wyclif, as a 'great clerk', is to be trusted less, not more.[43] In terms of authority-sources, the church is thus clearly positioned above natural ('kyndely') reason, which is associated with pagan learning, inability to perceive spiritual realities, and criticism of the sacraments, whereas the church is repeatedly identified with divine authority: the church, Love insists, should be believed even above an angel.[44] Moreover the church is rhetorically associated in these passages with certain virtues, specifically meekness, and its critics with pride.

Perhaps significantly, reason as natural/human reason ('kyndely' reason in Love's English, a similar phrase to the Latin *ratio naturalis/humanae*) usually appears in a negative light, as inadequate or dangerous in comparison to faith. Love does use 'reason' positively in his text, as Ghosh points out, but almost always when it is qualifying some other faculty (the exception here being the appearance of abstracted reason as a divine chancellor in the debate at the start of the book, in a fashion evoking the anthropomorphised figure of divine Wisdom in Proverbs).[45] Thus Love

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[42] *Mirror*, pp. 235-36; possibly an attack on Wyclif's own philosophical challenge to the idea of substanceless accidents rather than a general criticism of his theology, given how much less he drew on Aristotle than many of his contemporaries. Compare Netter, below, in his strategy of portraying Wyclif as drawing on pagan philosophy not Christian tradition. Likewise, the Lollards themselves accused the church and universities of being overly enamoured of pagan learning.

[43] *Mirror*, p. 235. Compare the discussion in Gregory S. Moule, *Corporate Jurisdiction, Academic Heresy, and Fraternal Correction at the University of Paris, 1200-1400* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), p. 33, for a discussion of the tradition that theologians held the 'key of knowledge' (and debate as to whether they could also exercise the 'key of power', i.e. legal correction). Love seems here to question even the former, suggesting that it is common for theologians of great standing to be led astray by their reliance on natural reason.

[44] *Mirror*, p. 237. Galatians 1:8 is probably the source of this criterion of authority, seen also in Pecock with a different agenda: see below. It may also draw on 2 Corinthians 11:14 for emphasising the dangers of depending upon angelic revelation, and possibly be in implicit critique of the Qur'ran, believed to have been delivered by an angel. Thus not only does angelic deliverance feature as an apparently high authority to exalt the church's by simple contrast, but the implicit association of the alternative to believing the church with angelic visitation could serve to link them with apostasy (in Galatians), the Devil (in Corinthians), and Islam.

[45] Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 161-5.

uses 'resonably' almost synonymously with 'justifiably' to defend the acceptability of his writing: 'we mowe resonably suppose', 'we mowen haue resonably gret compasion'. 'Resonable ymagynacioun', as Ghosh suggests, seems to be used to defend Love's speculative departures from the strict letter of biblical authority for the purposes of devout imagining. It is opposed to both excessive ambition in imagining or speculating, and to scepticism about imagination, asserting that these imaginings are 'reasonable'. In this it takes a role similar to 'open,' another Lollard word found in Love with a similar idea but a different remit; while Lollards used 'open' and 'reasonable' to defend and authenticate particular interpretations of scripture as arising naturally and obviously from the literal sense without appeal to other authorities or unconstrained human exegesis, Love uses them to validate his own speculation beyond or beside the text of scripture along channels consonant with the church's teaching. Ghosh suggests that in practice 'open' in Love means 'in accordance with the church's teaching' or the authoritative tradition, instead of evoking an 'unmediated clarity' of biblical interpretation; in the same way 'resonable' here seems to carry a similar sense: a reasonable interpretation or speculation is one accordant with the larger framework within which Love is working, in his case church teaching. Since interpretation, and even more so imagination, are not uniform or unanimously univocal, Love cannot assume that all will 'suppose' and imagine as he does. Thus to ensure that the interpretations and imaginations he authorises are in line with the rest of his teaching, Love has recourse, like other writers of the time, to this slightly subjective concept of 'reasonable interpretation'; specifying, in practice that it be done according to his methods and framing assumptions.

When he writes specifically on scripture, the authority-source to which Lollard writers sought to hold the church accountable, the waters are more muddied, perhaps deliberately. Love's proheme stitches together various extracts from Augustine to support his interpretation of Paul's words '*quemcumque scripta sunt ad nostram doctrinam scripta sunt*' as 'all thynges þat ben written generally in holy chirche ande specialy of oure lorde Jesu cryste þei ben written to oure lore'; this is a significant

eliding of traditional boundaries around the uniqueness of scripture to include everything written in the church as under the Apostolic approval, and thus not only undermines but reverses the *sola scriptura* tendencies associated with Lollardy.[46] 'Scripture' as a distinct category is here replaced with devotional writings in general: 'all thynges that ben written'. In place of the Lollard concern for discerning and demarcating authorities, especially that of scripture, there is a concern for the context of a text ('written in holy chirche'), the content ('specialy of oure lorde Jesu cryste') and its purpose, to inspire and promote devotion. Blurring the special authority of scripture with that of the church as producer of devotional writings makes it impossible to adopt a Lollard rhetorical position of calling the church to account on the basis of scripture, since scripture/writings are not a separate and superior source of instruction but rather something produced by and identified with the church.

Underlying this blurring of authority-sources is a comprehensive scepticism about the clarity and univocalism of scripture: 'it is significant that the defence of the spiritual efficacy of non-scriptural devotional material should shade off into a defence of the flexibility of biblical interpretation … because of the unfathomable profundity of the Bible, all such rhetorical reinventions of the text … are regarded as fully justifiable'.[47] This theology is not as clear or explicit in Love as it will later appear in Netter, but there is still a sense that scripture is multivalent and can justifiably be made to say many things. Devotional works of the church are thus justified expressions of some of its meanings, and its own voice is not really heard outside of these interpretative settings: scripture and devotional writings are blurred together in part because the latter are the only way to understand the unmanageable potential meanings of the former.[48] The justification for such an interpretation, Love suggests, is the 'fruit' of devotion, identified later specifically with affective emotion; the devotional practice of imagination is 'reasonable' and justified not only because it stands within the church's authority, and because it is not really separated from scripture, but

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[46] *Mirror*, p. 9; see also Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 148-158 for much of the ensuing discussion.

[47] Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 154.

[48] Compare Netter's similar strategy, discussed below, chapter 3, pp. 289-291.

because it produces the 'fruit' that is the mark of a right instantiation of scripture's many potential meanings.

Thus, Love emphasises the slippery and dangerous nature of scripture if understood 'according to the letter'; thus the disciples, he insists, had understanding of the Pater Noster not only 'after þe lettur' but also by grace received the 'gostly vndurstandyng', something entirely independent from (and superior to) the apparent sense of the words recorded on the scriptural page.[49] Understanding is here clearly not 'open' to everyone, and even the disciples only received it by faith, not study. The danger of literal understandings is more explicitly highlighted in the Eloi cry from the Cross, on which Love inserts a passage emphasising that this caused Jesus' friends to despair of his Godhead because 'þei vndirstode it þat tyme bot nakedly after þe letter sowneth'.[50] Literal understandings of scripture are thus linked to not only misunderstanding but despair and Christological unbelief, both potentially mortal sins. Instead of being the foundational and only authoritative understanding, as in some prominent Lollard hermeneutic discourses, literal readings become at very best inadequate and at worst deeply dangerous.

The very nature of Love's project has, of course, been understood by Nicholas Watson and others as an effort to insulate devout readers from the letter of scripture by providing a theologically safe, ecclesiastically sponsored alternative.[51] Love does indeed tend to evade or paraphrase the gospel text even when recounting stories, and while he does refer to them being 'opunly & pleynly written in þe gospel', implicitly referring readers to scripture for more information, this is a reference translated from his original and may not in fact indicate an expectation that his own readers would have a gospel text available.[52] Actual biblical citations are surprisingly rare, usually being covered by paraphrases, and there is very little interpolation of biblical language in the fashion of Lollard texts. Indeed, while the Lollard sermons often appear to have

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[49] *Mirror*, p. 83.

[50] *Mirror*, p. 177.

[51] Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change'; compare Karnes, 'Nicholas Love and Medieval Meditations on Christ', p. 384: 'Love … was intent on removing the Bible, whether Latin or vernacular, from the meditator's view'.

[52] *Mirror*, p. 46.

sought to maximise the amount of biblical language in a piece, Love appears at times to make the opposite endeavour, minimising direct encounter with the words of scripture. Many parts of the text, of course, are omitted altogether, usually on the grounds that they would not be edifying to the simple hearer, though whether this refers to the gospel narrative or the Pseudo-Bonaventuran commentary with which it is bound is not so clear. It may be significant that they often include stories such as the cursing of the fig tree that lend themselves to traditional critiques of the religious establishment.[53] Given the consistency with which *EWS*, for one, adopts and employs these passages to critique the contemporary establishment, it may be that Love is deliberately restricting access to passages that provided such ready ammunition for Lollard polemics.

When Love does come to handle the scriptural text itself the picture is slightly more nuanced. Scriptural citation is, interestingly, often accompanied by fairly detailed scriptural references, with the apparatus essentially constant across the various versions of the MS (including those Sargent identifies as 'draft' and 'final'), which do make attempts to distinguish between biblical and non-biblical material.[54] There are even attempts to identify other authorities cited in the margins. It suggests that the methodological emphases of Wyclif may have been exerting a broad pull, in spite of Love's theology pulling in the opposite direction.[55] Nonetheless, scriptural text is seldom handled and is often, as in the case of Lazarus, placed behind the exposition when it is, making the latter in practice the dominant aspect of the text, and scripture an ensuing citation rather than a controlling force.[56] In practice scripture does not appear as a priority in shaping either the structure or the language of the text.

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[53] Sargent, *Mirror*, introduction, p. 43. See for example Mark 11:12-25 and Mark 12: 1-12 for passages rich in implicit criticism of the Jewish religious establishment of the time, completely missing from Love's account.

[54] *Mirror*, p. 106; Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 169.

[55] Ghosh notes, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 172, that Love is 'caught between two worlds: one insisting on the identity of the authority of scripture and that of the ecclesiastical establishment, the other emphasising the disjunction between the two'; and while the *Mirror* adopts the outward structures of separation, such as detailed citational apparatus, in practice it 'does not subscribe to any conception of textual fidelity' in its treatment either of the *Meditationes* or of the scriptural text.

[56] Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 156.

In the key area of authority-sources Love identifies clearly with the pattern of more 'reactionary orthodox' sources emphasising the authority of the church over and above reason and scripture. The authority of scripture is, of course, not denied, but its unique status is elided and its understanding is presented as obscure and dangerous without the provision of special grace. Reason, similarly, is presented in an almost wholly negative light when it is considered in the guise of 'kyndly' reason, human reason unaided, being a misleading guide not to be trusted, one that blinds the proud to seeing the truth. Instead the reader is to trust the church even in contradiction to their 'kyndly' reason, and to treat all good devotional texts produced by the church as part of scripture, and likewise all 'reasonable' and 'open' interpretation that accords with the teaching of the institutional church. There is no space for scripture as an external authority calling the church to account, especially not in the hands of an ambitious learning laity.

Love and Virtue

A subtler exclusion of Lollard ideas and values is evident in Love's depiction of virtue. Ian Johnson has commented that, while the pseudo-Bonaventuran original offered a higher level of contemplation as its end, Love's work offers as its end the highest degree of good living, specifically through the promise of being an inculcator of virtues.[57] Love is explicit that his aim is to nourish hope through 'ensaumple of virtues and gude liuyng of holy men written in bokes'.[58] In his text he is careful to exemplify and emphasise the virtues he wishes to stimulate, presenting his characters as epitomes of meekness, obedience, and submission. In this he does not merely, in Sargent's phrase, 'close ranks' around those text-genres most abhorred by Lollards, but he rather presents a subtle polemic against their characteristic programme of

[57] Johnson, 'What Nicholas Love did in his Proheme with St. Augustine and Why', in Johnson and Westphall, *The Lives of Christ*, pp. 375-390; see especially pp. 385-7;

[58] *Mirror*, p. 9. There is another notable blurring of boundaries here as Love seems to lump scripture and hagiographies together as means of virtue.

prophetic challenges to the contemporary church, exegesis, teaching, and rebuke (none of them particularly 'meek') that is all the more powerful for being implicit. Perhaps more significantly, this is a way of challenging Lollardy in a vernacular context without recourse to theological argument, which inherently accomplished part of the Lollard programme by drawing the laity into habits of critical thinking and accustoming them to theological vocabulary and thought. Not only this, but such a polemic deftly claims the moral high ground by avoiding the charges of being argumentative, disputatious, and uncharitable that were inherent in attacking an opponent directly, and instead covering itself with the authoritative mantle of teaching the life of Christ to the laity, making it an anti-Lollard text that could be acceptable in every setting precisely because its criticism is implicit and embedded in traditional pastoral and devotional writings.

Love's characters thus exemplify those 'virtues' that he wishes to inculcate in his readers; the virtues most opposed to the Lollard project as it was perceived in orthodox sources. First and foremost of these is that these characters are presented as recognising his structuring of authority-sources and making trusting acceptance of teaching from due authority their rule of faith. Thus, for example, his account of the Last Supper twice emphasises that the Apostles 'laft alle hir kyndely reson of manne, & onely restede in trew byleue to alle þat he seide & dide'.[59] In an aside from the Gospel story, the legend that St. Cecilia 'bare alwey þe gospel of criste hidde in her breste' means, Love insists, that she had certain extracts always in her thoughts, not that she read a whole gospel; the saint thus becomes an example of limited ambition and the sort of devotional 'chewing' over extracts from the Gospels that Love later enjoins on his readers, whilst avoiding the dangers inherent in seeking to understand the bare word of scripture.[60]

The ultimate exemplar, unsurprisingly, is Mary: presented as an example for her love of private prayer and especially her keeping silence.[61] She prays for grace to be obedient to the bishop of the temple (in spite of being holier than he), keeps the law

[59] *Mirror*, p. 149.

[60] *Mirror*, p. 11. Compare p. 220.

[61] *Mirror*, p. 24.

of purification proclaimed by the Jewish 'church,' although she has no need to, out of obedience, and her meekness, like that of Jesus, is constantly emphasised.[62]

Meekness and silence are constantly repeated themes in the *Mirror*: it is proclaimed that without meekness one will not be saved; an encomium on meekness is preserved from Pseudo-Bonaventure; the 'mekenes' of the Holy Family is shown in their flight to Egypt; Jesus' meekness is emphasised in his submission to his parents, in his lack of youthful ministry, his willingness to minister to individuals, his washing of feet, even his greetings to the Marys after his resurrection.[63] Jesus is, significantly, the 'mirrour [example] of mekenes'.[64] When the beatitudes teach that 'blessed are the poor', Love asserts, they mean the poor in spirit, not the materially poor, and this being poor in spirit in turn primarily means not being 'proud'.[65] While this could be construed simply as a blow at the excessive Franciscan emphasis on material poverty, Love frequently includes approving references to the voluntary (material) poverty of Jesus and the Holy Family, so that it seems more plausible to view it as a further articulation of his model of virtue: meekness instead of pride is the ultimate virtuous state, and this meekness is a psychological attitude not merely a financial condition, to which all Christians are therefore called, whatever their worldly status.[66] Love raises the question of whether Jesus begged when he remained in Jerusalem as a child and concludes 'þerof litel forse, so þat we folowe him in perfite mekenes & oþer vertues'.[67]

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[62] *Mirror*, p. 21, 47. Mary's meekness and obedience could of course be a polemic against female ecstatics (as suggested by Kerby-Fulton's model) or a model for female contemplatives and noblewomen (as Falls suggests). The fact that her meekness is expressed by silence about what she knows and a refusal to correct the less holy (as discussed below) seems to fit best into the wider model of opposition to Lollardy, however.

[63] *Mirror*, pp. 27, 35, 60, 61, 199. For the first statement compare Hebrews 12:14: 'pacem sequimini cum omnibus et sanctimoniam sine qua nemo videbit Dominum'; 'holiness' as an essential virtue without which one cannot see God in the Biblical text has become 'meekness' as the essential and foundational virtue in Love's phrasing.

[64] *Mirror*, p. 88. The sense here is that he is the place one goes to see meekness: he is the consummate example of meekness.

[65] *Mirror*, p. 82.

[66] There may also be an engagement here with the Lollard concern for 'what it means to be poor in the right sort of way' – the voluntary material poverty of the Holy Family is emphasised in opposition to Lollard suspicion of mendicant poverty, whereas the benediction of the 'pauperes spiritu', cast by Lollards in opposition to 'proud prelates' with worldly wealth and standing, is here cast in opposition to 'pride' associated with preaching and speaking out. As part of Love's re-envisaging of pride, therefore, he re-envisages gospel poverty as something intrinsically opposed to Lollard conceptions of virtue.

The focus on inward imitation here deftly avoids the debates over mendicancy and property and inverts the moral high ground which extreme advocates of poverty had often claimed, since it makes true humility and virtue independent of the outer form of life. Lollard polemic often attached the label 'proud' to 'prelates', associating high standing in the church with this fundamental sin; Love undermines that association by asserting the importance of inner orientation, not worldly status, for one's pride or meekness.[68] Likewise, it should again be noted that debates over mendicancy and concern for the right sort of poverty were two characteristics of Lollard spirituality, here dismissed by the text. It also reinforces 'meekness' as the core of following Jesus and therefore of the Christian life, as the essential virtue that cannot be dispensed with and upon which others are contingent. Meekness is presented as the Ur-virtue, the opposite of pride (root of sin in Augustinian thought) and root of salvation.[69]

Love's emphasis on the inner virtue of meekness lays the foundation for the more polemical model he outlines of the outer virtue of silence. Silence is usually presented as the concrete expression of meekness, a refusal to assert one's own opinion or knowledge, however qualified one might seem – in direct contrast to the Lollard emphasis on correction and instruction. Sometimes it is presented in terms of keeping silent about holy things that should not be revealed – a slightly different idea, but similarly opposed to the Lollard concern to share knowledge of God. Thus, for example, Mary kept silence about her special knowledge of the things of God and 'þerefore it is an abhominable þinge, and grete reproue to a maiden or virgyne to be a gret iaunglere & namly a religiouse' – this is emphasising the virtue of not asserting one's knowledge or opinion, however knowledgeable one may be.[70] The other type of silence is seen in the statement that Mary did not explain that she was with child through the Holy

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[68] Anne Hudson, 'A Lollard Sect Vocabulary?' in Michael Benskin and M. L. Samuels, eds, *So Meny Peple, Longages, and Tonges: Philological Essays in Scots and Medieval English presented to Angus McIntosh* (Edinburgh: Middle English Dialect Project, 1981), pp. 15-30 (reprinted in Hudson, ed., *Lollards and their Books*) discusses this linguistic conjunction amongst others.

[69] *Mirror*, p. 63.

[70] *Mirror*, p. 24. It may be significant that other contemporary writers such as Hoccleve display particular unease with the alleged articulacy of female Lollards. This emphasis on the 'silence' of Mary, who is presented as the model for Christian women, could thus be a way to separate them from taking Christ as a role-model (whose opposition to the religious establishment could be appropriated as licensing theirs) and instead emphasise an alternative, gender specific, role-model of silence.

Ghost because she would rather bear the disgrace of being thought an adulteress than 'she wold make opun þat gret sacrament of god' – re-asserting the idea of certain things being rightly beyond common knowledge, not so much because they are obscure or hard to understand as because they are sacred and rightfully arcane, which in turn reinforces the message of limited lay spiritual ambition discussed above.[71] Similarly, Love claims that even Jesus refrained from preaching and let John preach, although John was less worthy, this being a display of meekness in not putting himself forward even though he had much to say.[72] John the Apostle, it is claimed, did not reveal what Jesus told him at the Last Supper because contemplatives should not reveal their revelations; some things are not to be commonly revealed.[73] Such depictions of virtue are inherently exclusive of the Lollard programme of preaching and education, which emphasised the need for anyone with knowledge to share it, so that popular knowledge of God was available to all.

Love's presentation of the virtue of silence is also noticeable in what it chooses to omit: Jesus' teaching is scarcely ever mentioned, and almost never recounted, and his use of scriptural argument to refute the devil at his temptation is likewise skipped over with a passing reference, removing or muting two classic Lollard inspirations for teaching and bible learning.[74] Notably, the teaching of Jesus on the law and the gospel precepts in the Sermon on the Mount, so central to Lollard spirituality, is entirely excised from Love's account.[75] Meekness and silence as virtuous imperatives are bound together in the explicit instruction (specifically inserted by Love in the second person for unusual additional directness) that even if you think you could profit others by your words, you should be meek and silent, because if you can really help others God will tell you so.[76] This is a much sterner standard than previous discussions had suggested: it was customary to argue from Paul's correction of Peter in Galatians 2

[71] *Mirror*, p. 35.

[72] *Mirror*, p. 76.

[73] *Mirror*, p. 147.

[74] *Mirror*, pp. 71-72.

[75] *Mirror*, p. 86. Love explains his excision with the claim that these matters have been covered in detail elsewhere, a somewhat unconvincing justification given the time he devotes to other commonplaces of medieval devotion such as the Ave Maria and the Passion.

[76] *Mirror*, p. 68.

that subordinates ('subditi') could rebuke 'prelati' fraternally when they observed manifest sin, so long as they were careful about how and when they did it.[77] Love severely extends prior restrictions on correction to apparently exclude all and any correction. Such arguments seem tailored to undermine the Lollard justifications for preaching, teaching, and mutual correction at several levels. At the simplest, Love contradicts the belief that the Christian is bound to speak out to correct an erring brother or sister, casting this as pride instead of charity. More subtly, he attacks the Lollard 'radicalised life of Christ' as a prophetic voice outspokenly challenging his establishment, used to legitimise Lollard dissent, in favour of a narrative that presents Christ almost exclusively as a 'meek' victim characterised by submission to his fate.[78]

This emphasis is further reinforced by the other main virtue Love seeks to exhort his audience to, which is compassion. The tribulations of the Holy Family call for the reader to be stirred to compassion for their plight and hard conditions, to imagine them on their journeys, to visit them in spirit, and to imagine the child Jesus comforting a weeping Mary.[79] The chapter on the passion makes this an overwhelmingly central theme: Love promises that contemplating it will bring 'many deuout felynges & stirynges þat [the reader] neuer supposede before'; and accompanies this by prompts to emotional experience in the text: 'here is grete matire of sorowe and compassione', 'we oweth to haue inward compassion', this is 'a matire of grete compassion'.[80] In many cases this language has been added by Love to the original text. He likewise inserts and emphasises examples of compassionate and emotional engagement with the story by the characters in his text, acting as models of virtue for the reader, such as when Mary and Magdalene weep at being told of the institution of the sacrament, or the frequent depictions of the women and disciples weeping at and

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[77] Craun, '"ȝe, by Peter and by Poul!"', pp. 15-34, charts this position. While the nuances of correct circumstances in correction were much debated, Love is unusual in appearing to exclude the concept of mutual rebuke or edification, even regardless of relative rank. Also, see his book on the subject.

[78] Bose, 'Reversing the life of Christ', p. 56, discusses the Wycliffite envisioning of the life of Christ.

[79] *Mirror*, pp. 35-58.

[80] *Mirror*, pp. 160, 161, 163, 166, 172.

reverencing the physical locations and implements of the passion.[81] The joy which some holy people have at contemplating the Cross may also be a similar prompt to the affective and compassionate experience the reader should be seeking to experience. The reader is thus constantly nudged to approach the passion narrative as a source of strong devotional emotions, and especially of pity for the suffering Christ, rather than as a source of theology or a resource for critiquing a corrupt religious establishment. Distance is thus opened between the Gospel narrative and the ways in which it was internalised and adopted in Lollard spirituality, making the latter appear alien to it. Lollard identification with a prophetic, critical Christ is thereby cut off from its roots in engagement with the Gospel narrative.

The impulse towards compassion is further reinforced by the heavy use of emotive language, and in particular language emoting the tragedy of suffering: Jesus is repeatedly emphasised as 'fair' and 'swet' [sweet], and his 'fairest and cleanest' flesh said to be torn by his tortures.[82] In part this may simply reflect the early influence of the wider 'affective turn' upon English devotional writing, already seen in some of the period's poetry, but such a stream must also have been a highly convenient one to tap into for Love's polemic purposes; not only does it offer an alternative to the emphasis on engagement with the original text in Lollard practice, but it encourages a very different approach to the life of Christ as an exemplar. An emphasis on compassion for his sufferings further removes the devotee from seeing him as a model of prophetic or radical challenges to the establishment of his day, placing the emphasis on his passive acceptance of injustice rather than his courageous confrontation of it. As such, it again

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[81] *Mirror*, pp. 190, 218. Compare their reverence for physical things to the Lollard emphasis on living images instead of inanimate objects discussed above; it should also be noted that Archbishop Arundel's Constitutions explicitly commanded the encouragement of public expressions of devotion to physical objects via physical acts of affective piety: "sed ab omnibus seinceps communiter doceatur atque predicetur crucem et imaginem crucifixi, caeterasque imagines sanctorum, in ipsorum honorem et memoriam, quos figurant, et ipsora loca et reliquias, processionibus, genuflexionibus, inclinationibus, thurificationibus, deosculationibus, oblationibus, luminarem accensionibus, et peregrinationibus, necnon aliis quibuscunque modis et formis, quibus nostris et praedecessorum nostrorum temporibus fieri consuevit " (David Wilkins, *Concilia Magnae Brittaniae et Hiberniae ab Anno MCCCL ad annum MDXLV,* Vol 3 (London: 1737), p. 318, article 9). Jeremy Catto notes this support of physical adoration in '1349-1414: culture and history' in Fanous and Gillespie, *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism*, pp. 113-132. The construction of an account of these devotions in the Gospel narrative again fits a model of Love buttressing, deliberately or otherwise, the official campaign against Lollardy.

[82] *Mirror*, pp. 159, 168.

constructs a religious and devotional world to which the impulses of Lollard spirituality are essentially alien: while the 'persecutional' aspect of Lollard identity highlighted by Peikola did emphasise identification with the suffering Christ, it was a Christ suffering as a fearless prophet, inspiring imitative courage, not a source of pity and intensely emotional compassion. The Passion narrative at the heart of the Christian story is thus re-glossed in a way that excludes the resources of Lollard spirituality.

Love and the means of virtue

The means to cultivating these virtues are similarly in contrast with Lollard practices. While Love does include some passing comments on preaching, including the statement that preachers should be willing to displease those who feed them (which seems to be aimed at those enjoying the patronage of secular lords, whether Lollard or orthodox), he mostly avoids relating the teaching ministry of Jesus, and only mentions that of John to emphasise Jesus' meek deferral to him. Bible reading, as seen above with St. Cecilia, is explicitly reduced to meditation on certain extracts, a practice emphasising the internalising of a fragment of scripture rather than the emphasis on understanding it in context seen, for example, in Lollard privileging of the expositional homily.[83] Mutual correction is likewise, as has been discussed, discouraged. In contrast Love emphasises the value of hagiographies: 'ensaumple of virtues and gude liuyng of holy men' and of being attuned to the liturgical year, which he suggests should shape which extracts from his work the reader meditates on when.[84] Again there is a certain resonance here with movements in the wider English church; Gillespie notes the 'ostentatious use of the baroque splendour' of the liturgy of the Sarum rite at Constance and that the Saint's life was 'one of the characteristic

[83] Helen Leith Spencer, 'English Vernacular Sunday Preaching in the Late Fourteenth Century and Fifteenth Century, with Illustrative Texts' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Oxford, 1982), p. 76 (this argument is actually more developed in the thesis than in the ensuing book).

[84] *Mirror*, pp. 9, 220.

genres of the post-Arundalian English Church'.[85] Love's depiction of the means of virtue thus moves the focus from the fundamentals of Lollard spirituality such as biblical exegesis, preaching, and mutual correction, all of which are 'problematised' in one way or other in the text, to establishment approved sources such as saints' lives, liturgy, private meditation, and the sacraments.[86]

The sacraments are, of course, the foremost means of grace in the *Mirror*'s depiction; and here Love focuses almost exclusively on the two most attacked by Lollards: Eucharist and confession, adding long discussions of both to his source-text. Confession is included in regard to the story of Mary Magdalen's conversion, identified with the sinful woman anointing Jesus' feet; and takes the form primarily of an apologetic defence against potential critique: 'sume men þenken aftur þe fals opinion of lollardes' that there is no need for verbal shrift because she made no verbal confession – a challenge to which he responds with a complex Christological argument that Jesus combined Godhead and manhood and so could receive her confession in both natures without words by knowing her heart in his Godhood and being present in his manhood, but now the penitent must make confession both inwardly to God and outwardly to men in the form of a confessor.[87] This is a somewhat convoluted argument for a writer supposedly so concerned about the understanding of simple souls, besides its invocation of famously difficult topics like the dual natures of Christ, normally considered a dangerous mystery to popularise suggesting again that Love's presented concern not to burden simple readers was in fact less of a priority than his concern to combat Lollardy. The polemical imperative of combating Lollardy shapes the work more strongly than Love admits, leading him to include difficult and profound material where needed to combat a Lollard idea: here is strong evidence that

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[85] Gillespie, '1412-1534: culture and history' in Fanous and Gillespie, *Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism*, pp. 163-194, at pp. 169 and 179. Gillespie speaks here of a slightly later date than the composition of the *Mirror*, so it is not clear whether Love was foreshadowing or buttressing these developments.

[86] Exegesis can be seen to be 'problematised' by the doubt cast on literal understandings of scripture and the confusing of devotional writing and scriptural study in the proheme discussed above; preaching is almost entirely excluded from Love's version of the Gospel accounts; and both preaching and mutual correction are problematised by his emphasis on silence and his version of meekness.

[87] *Mirror*, p. 90.

Love's opposition to Lollardy is formative, not incidental, to the shape and contents of the *Mirror*.

On the Mass, Love is generally conventional: while in passing he notes its purpose as a gracious gift to sustain man, his essential concern is in defending transubstantiation, the part of the doctrine most consistently denied by Lollard critics, as the means of the Real Presence, rather than in extolling the Mass' virtues and uses.[88] This defence is enacted by entirely conservative means: assertion of the authority of what the church teaches over what seems 'possible' to the beholder, backed up by a long list of miracle stories. The main text indeed seems to express a certain wariness of traditional miracle stories, describing them as accounts of 'straunge bodily sihts', and sees the story of a prior he knew who experienced sensations of bodily joy at the Eucharist as better; though this does not stop the appended 'Treatise on the sacrament' including many traditional stories to back up its assertions.[89] It is possible that this unease at bodily sights reflects the tension such arguments have with his emphasis on faith over and above what is merely seen; Love critiques sceptics for putting their bodily sight and 'kindly' (natural) reason above faith in the church's teaching, and having the miracle confirmed by physical visuals undercuts that. Nonetheless, the bodily sensation of the prior is still seen as firm confirmation sealing the traditional stories and the word of the church and as a desideratum, suggesting that ecstatic personal experience is still something Love is willing to endorse and appeal to as a resource against Lollardy, at least so long as it is located within the safely church-sanctioned area of Eucharistic devotion, and takes a form cognisant with his theological imperatives. In place of hearing the voice of God through scripture and preaching in a community of believers, then, Love holds out the chance of experiencing the presence of God through trusting engagement with an ecclesiastically demarcated area of devotion in the Mass.[90]

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88 *Mirror*, p. 148.

89 *Mirror*, pp. 153, 228-234. It is notable that one such narrative, that of a Roman matron seeing the host turned into a finger (p. 230), is itself in conflict with the theology Love articulates on p. 227, whereby all of Christ is in all of the host. It suggests that these lists of miracle stories are not integral to Love's theological thought, but appended (perhaps hurriedly) as an obligatory topos for defending the sacrament.

Conclusion: Blueprint for a counter-Lollard Spirituality

While explicit attacks on Lollardy are rare in the *Mirror*, implicit exclusion of Lollard theology and spirituality is a consistent theme. Most fundamentally, Love attacks the foundations and authorities of Lollard learning and criticism of the contemporary establishment: the church is in practice the ultimate authority, to which believers are called to submit; scripture is slippery and dangerous and requires neither educational equipment nor a right disposition (as in the Lollard model) to be rightly understood, but grace, which is entrusted to the apostles for whom the church speaks. Reason as an independent guide to understanding scripture and the Christian life is dangerous, and must be set aside in favour of accepting church teaching. There is thus no room for 'accountability': seeking to call an erring church to account based on an individual's personal or rational understanding of scripture: spiritual authority runs through the channels of the institutional church, and ultimately not outside of it. The Lollard reform project, calling the church to account from scripture, is thus shorn of its foundation.

Love's presentation of the nature and means of virtue extends this implicit assault on Lollardy, and brings elements to it that are unique to him. Virtue is characterised by meekness and submission, not by zeal in teaching or contending for communal righteousness, and fed by compassionate meditation on stories and the passion, not by understanding biblical texts in context. Both the sources and the forms of virtue and holiness in Lollard spirituality are thus tacitly excluded or critiqued. Preaching, in particular, appears as a minor office only a few are clearly called to, and mutual correction as sinful pride, while the sacraments take centre-stage as means of grace, justified not by argument but by church declaration and miracle stories. Virtuous meekness is seen not in an attitude of reforming zeal but in humble and quiet reception of sacraments and teaching.

In all this there is a crafting of a devotional and pastoral space that inherently excludes the Lollard project, and does so without (by and large) adopting its methods of popular argument and biblical authority. Unlike more obviously polemical authors, Love thus largely avoids carrying intra-mural forms of debate into an extramural environment of address to the laity, whilst still teaching 'simple folk' a form of devotion inoculated against Lollard spirituality.

CHAPTER THREE

Thomas Netter's *Doctrinale*

Introduction to the *Doctrinale*: the context

The Carmelite Thomas Netter of Walden is perhaps the best known of all Wycliffe's opponents; his *magnus opus* against Wycliffite doctrine, the *Doctrinale antiquitatum fidei Catholicae Ecclesiae* proving of such wide and lasting interest that it was utilised at the council of Basel by opponents of the Hussites and re-printed in Venice much later with notes emphasising its utility against Lutherans and Calvinists.[1] The first two books of the *Doctrinale* were presented to the Pope in 1427, the third presumably following some time before Netter's death in 1430, although some have suggested it might reflect earlier material.[2] As such it has its roots in a context a decade or two later than the *Mirror* and the sermon collections so far discussed, one where domestic political stability was ostensibly much improved, with Lancastrian control of the throne largely undisputed and imbued with the prestige of Henry V, albeit with the underlying problem of a minor on the throne.[3] War in France and jockeying for influence and power in the regency government remained larger issues, alongside the continuing financial problems associated with war and minority, so that this stability was a relative and uneasy one.

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1 *Thomae Waldensis Carmelitae Anglici: Doctrinale antiquitatum fidei Catholicae Ecclesiae,* eds, Giovanni Rosso and Giordano Siletti (Farnborough: Gregg Press , 1967), introductory pages. See also A.N.E.D. Schofield, 'England at the Council of Basel', *Annuarium Historiae Conciliorum*, 1:5 (1973), pp. 1-108 and E. F. Jacob, 'The Bohemians at the Council of Basel' in R. W. Seton-Watson, *Prague Essays: presented by a group of British historians to the Caroline University of Prague on the occasion of its six-hundredth anniversary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1949), pp. 81-123, for discussion of some of the use of Netter at Basel.

2 Kevin J. Alban, *The Teaching and Impact of the 'Doctrinale' of Thomas Netter of Walden* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), p. 26, suggests that book three in particular might have originated in Netter's time as a student at Oxford.

3 See Christine Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the Constitution in England, 1437-1509* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), pp. 67-86, for an analysis of the domestic political situation at the time.

Ecclesiastically, however, the context of writing sits between the two dramatic milestones of Constance and Basel; the former a high-water mark of conciliarism, ending the schism and providing both a resounding pageant of Latin Christendom and a plethora of assertions of the importance of general councils, the latter's ambitious attempts to end schisms in Bohemia and the East becoming caught up in clashes between council and Pope leading to a new division, albeit one more swiftly resolved in favour of the Papacy.[4] Netter, writing between Constance and Basel, may have been further influenced by the concern of the English church to reassert itself after the disgrace of Wyclif (and in direct competition with the French church for prestige and influence as the war increasingly spilled over into ecclesiastical realm).[5] Ostentatious and splendid orthodoxy was the face presented to the world at Constance, and increasingly emphasised at home.[6] He is certainly very clearly influenced by the developing Hussite crisis, addressing parts of his work to them, and it may be no coincidence that his work, while ostensibly aimed at Wyclif, was in practice more used on the continent against adherents of Hus (and, later, Luther). Certainly there was an awareness, perhaps an exaggerated awareness, of the significance of Wyclif to the Hussites, so that an attack on the English scholar could have been seen as a subtle way to undermine the Czech movement. How far the European context or domestic took precedence in Netter's composition remains a field of scholarly debate, with some arguing that it was primarily the European audience that Netter had in mind.[7]

However, it must be remembered that Netter's own context included not only being present at European councils such as Pisa (and possibly Constance), but also significant encounters with English Wycliffism, via his presence at the trials of figures such as Oldcastle, William Taylor, and William White, as well as preaching at St.

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4 Izbicki and Rollo-Koster, *A Companion to the Great Western Schism,* and Decaluwe, Izbicki, and Christianson, *A Companion to the Council of Basel,* again provide introductions to these seminal occasions.

5 Alban suggests, that the work itself might have been a compensation for the failure to provide men and money for the campaign against Bohemia, *Teaching and Impact of the* Doctrinale, p. 30.

6 See Gillespie, '1412-1534: culture and history' and 'Chichele's Church'; he emphasises the 'ostentatious use of baroque splendour' in liturgy and the concern to emphasise and assert orthodoxy.

7 J. Patrick Hornbeck II and Michael Van Dussen, 'Introduction' to their *Europe after Wyclif* (New York: Fordham UP, 2017), p. 2.

Paul's Cross.[8] The *Doctrinale* is not only ostensibly a response to Wyclif, citing his work heavily, but also engages by name with English Wycliffites such as Oldcastle and Taylor.[9] Netter's aim may have been at Hus, but the texts and encounters on which the Oxford-educated Carmelite drew were primarily, if not exclusively, those of English Lollardy.[10]

Half a century on from Wyclif, and fifteen or twenty years after Love and others had written, the English Lollard context was not unchanged. Lollardy had clearly lost the battle for influence and control of the political establishment, being subjected to an extensive regime of persecution. The Constitutions of Arundel regarding preaching and academic theology and the more elaborate provisions for local investigation of orthodoxy under Chichele left a domestic setting in which there were increasingly active endeavours at identifying those who had 'crossed the line' into heresy, even as fear of heresy led to some being wrongly accused. John Barton who, in 1416, arrived at Chichele's court and sought to be tried that he might clear his name from the allegations of heresy that were destroying his reputation in the community, bears witness both to the extent of concern about heresy and to how easily those fears could be misapplied.[11] A context that had been one of increasingly controversial debates on the church was now clearly one dominated by accusations of heresy and the enforcement of 'orthodoxy', even if the recognition of that heresy was in practice mired in rumour, misunderstanding, and prejudice. The Lollard presence at Oxford had already been largely dismantled, although concern about the purity of university education would rumble on for some time, and suspects under investigation were increasingly showing more laity than clergy. At the same time it must have been becoming apparent to observers that simply destroying the 'fount' of Lollardy in the posthumous condemnation of Wyclif and the extirpation of his followers from Oxford

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8 Kirk Stevan Smith, 'An English Conciliarist? Thomas Netter of Walden' in Stanley Chodorow and James Ross Sweeney, eds, *Popes, Teachers, and Canon Law in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1989), pp. 290-299, at p. 292.

9 Netter explicitly engages with Taylor's views in Vol. III, p. 687, and refers to 'Wiclif & magister eius Guillelmus', possibly a reference to Taylor. *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 266. An imagined speech by Oldcastle is included in the *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 21.

10 Hus is, in fact, seldom if ever cited, although at points the text addresses itself to the 'Praguers'.

11 Jacob, *Registers of Archbishop Chichele*, Vol. III, p. 21.

was not going to be enough to silence the movement: the whole Lollard system of thought would need to be discredited. It is this at which the *Doctrinale* seems to have been aimed.

Theological context

The *Doctrinale* seeks, then, to engage with the full breadth of Wycliffite thought, citing not only from Wyclif (in exhaustive detail) but even, as has been mentioned, from more recent Lollards whose trials Netter had been involved in. Discussing its full theological context would thus require an overview of much of Lollard thinking and practice, an undertaking beyond the remit of this chapter. But there is value at this point in particularly highlighting several areas where the *Doctrinale* can be seen clashing particularly violently (and, in all probability, deliberately) with Wycliffite ideas.

The importance of rightly locating authority has been a recurring thread through previous chapters, and issues of exegesis, hermeneutics, and the proper methods and authorities for the interpretation of scripture remain central to both the Lollard debates and Netter in particular. An instructive comparison therefore is Wyclif's *De Veritate Sacre Scripture*, a seminal document in setting forth his attitude to the interpretation and application of scripture.[12] Wyclif was highly critical of 'sophists', probably meaning his opponents in the scholastic world, implying that they were too attached to Aristotle (who, he emphasises, was pagan, and needed to be refuted), and he was uncomfortable with unconstrained 'glossing' whereby one word was said to mean another thing, by which he feared one could 'gloss away the whole faith'.[13] Wyclif's hierarchy of authority is notably flatter and simpler than that of his contemporaries: he attacks papal letters being treated as on a par with scripture, emphasising scripture, the patristic commentaries, and the early creeds, but also

[12] *John Wyclif: On the truth of Holy Scripture*, ed. and trans. Ian Levy (Kalamazoo, MIP, 2001). Henceforth *On the Truth of Holy Scripture.*

[13] Ibid., pp. 28, 54, 59.

presenting these latter as theoretically fallible.[14] He emphasised the reverence due to Augustine, but it was a limited reverence: Augustine should be accepted because he is in accordance with scripture and reason, and because of his sanctity, and so 'children such as we' should not deny or repudiate his teaching without definite evidence.[15] Thus he allowed in theory for the saint to be corrected, and for his teaching to be proved wrong by a contemporary reader reading independently of Augustine, and comparing him to the ultimate authority of scripture as the reader understood it. Indeed he proclaimed in radical language that 'every Christian must be a theologian' and that the faithful interpreter of scripture can be 'clerical or lay, man or woman'.[16] Scripture, he says, is the one law of God (other laws being 'private' and a hindrance), and as the sword of the Spirit is not to be constrained.[17] In practice, little stands between the reader and the heavy duty of determining the true sense of scripture. Rather than leaning primarily on the scholarly tradition, he insists on the importance of learning the scriptural 'grammar' and language so that one can discern the sense that the Holy Spirit intends.[18] This he identifies with the 'literal' sense, which is for him the foundational sense of scripture, with 'equivocations' or apparent contradictions leading the reader into the other three senses.[19] Hence the reader needs to approach scripture in its 'wholeness' and accept it 'in totality', so as to learn the language of scripture and discern the intent of the Spirit. The essential keys to understanding scripture are thus faithfulness (that will lead to the Spirit's illumination), attention to the context of the rest of scripture (so that one learns its language), and concern for the literal sense (as that intended by the Spirit) as the key to the other senses. Crucially, the essentials of proper reading are thus internal to the text or to the reader, not dependent on any third source.

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[14] Ibid., p. 19.

[15] Ibid., p. 62.

[16] Ibid., pp. 23, 103.

[17] Ibid., pp. 116, 130.

[18] Ibid., pp. 48, 90-107.

[19] Ibid., pp. 78-99. It should be noted that for Wyclif the emphasis in authorial intent is primarily upon the divine, not the human, author of scripture – in contrast to Netter, as will be shown below.

Fundamental to Wycliffite thought, and particularly to its impetus to critique the establishment of the day, was a model of reading that drew authority from an individual's engagement with an essentially independent scripture that was self-interpreting to the rightly-disposed reader, mistrusting the involvement of other sources and external glossing. It could thus speak directly to the virtuous contemporary, authorising a prophetic ministry of rebuking contemporary failings and calling the establishment to account. With this went a model of the church that defined membership by fidelity of doctrine and *modus vivendi*, placing the emphasis again upon the individual. Hence the possibility for an individual, member of the invisible church by faith and virtue, to act as an external critic of the institutional church. This theological opponent shapes Netter's work more than he admits, and appears to be the real target aimed at by his more specific objections: it is this system of thought and authority that he is aiming to discredit comprehensively, even, sometimes, at the cost of the coherence of his own theology.

Purpose and Readership

The exact domestic readership of the *Doctrinale* is hard to assess; while it was employed at the highest levels in the European context, and twenty years later Thomas Gascoigne was certainly familiar with the work, which he describes, there is little evidence of even Gascoigne having owned or read a copy, and few manuscripts survive in England in comparison to more popular works such as Love's *Mirror*. The arguments and issues the text addresses are found in both Wyclif's Latin works and in the vernacular debates, so that it could potentially be relevant to a range of audiences. In all likelihood, however, the *Doctrinale's* size, complexity, and Latinity probably restricted its ownership fairly extensively to the higher levels of the clergy.

Given this size, systematic nature, and counter-heretical agenda, it is no surprise that the *Doctrinale* displays all the central themes emergent from the works

considered previously: shared polemical resources between orthodox and heterodox, convergent hermeneutical methods, and sharp division on issues of authority and ecclesiology. Nor, given its purpose, is it any surprise that it comes down firmly on the orthodox, and generally the 'reactionary orthodox' side of these issues. Inherent tensions in its theology, however, reveal the extent to which maintaining a consistently anti-Wycliffite theology was a strain, imposed by its polemical purpose, and not inherent to its theological axioms. These tensions, hinted at in Love, become evident in Netter, especially in the crucial areas of authority and ecclesiology.

Genre-wise, therefore, the *Doctrinale* is, like Gascoigne's *Liber* (chapter five, below), complex. It is clearly not simply a treatise in systematic theology, in spite of its vast scope and the traces of Aquinas in its structure and ambitions.[20] It has sometimes been treated as such, leading to questions over the fundamental confusion, ambiguity, and even contradiction of parts of the work, especially regarding ecclesiology and sources of authority.[21] It will be argued here that the *Doctrinale*, while retaining the overall structure of a systematic treatise, in fact retains an apologetic agenda as its determining focus; hence some of the apparent break-downs in methodological and doctrinal consistency one encounters in Netter's argumentation.[22] To discredit Wycliffite thought in the eyes of the faithful and equip them to answer it appears to be his primary aim. His *Doctrinale* thus weaves together apologetic and systematic theology with a simultaneous purpose of polemic and education. This symbiotic nature goes some way towards accounting for its length and complexity, but also means that it remains a far more systematic expression of an orthodox theology than is available from many of those who opposed Lollardy. Indeed, in being an attempt to present a coherent system of thought and faith inherently exclusive of Lollardy it is perhaps most reminiscent of Pecock's work (chapter 4), even if the content of its system is

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[20] Notably, the *Doctrinale* lacks any systematic treatment of individual ethics, a preoccupation of the age; compare van Engen, 'Multiple Options, pp. 264-284.

[21] Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority* and Santiago Madrigal, 'The Place of the Doctrinale in the History of Ecclesiology', in Bergström-Allen and Copsey, *Thomas Netter of Waldren*, pp. 218, 225.

[22] Compare Smith, 'An English Conciliarist?', p. 298.

radically different, and like Pecock, the tensions between its polemical imperative and the directions in which its systematic theology leads are periodically apparent.

This study will therefore proceed by a somewhat different methodology, examining first the *Doctrinale's* structure and the rhetorical strategies Netter deploys for his apologetic purpose and then examining the more systematic theology that emerges from it and the extent to which it is shaped by that polemical imperative and rhetorical framework.

Form and Structure of Netter's *Doctrinale*

In form and appearance the *Doctrinale* is something of a mixed bag: its threefold structure of Christ, the church, and the Christian life is profoundly systematic, starting from fundamentals and proceeding to practicals, but the chapters within that structure are built around rebutting Wycliffite ideas (or, later on, defending orthodox practices). Netter himself at points seeks to present it as a work of pure doctrine, evading the idea of reasoning or persuading as presented in 1 Timothy 4:2 and presenting the work not as a personal argument but as a handing on of the truths of true religion.[23] Yet in practice an apologetic focus is overt from the start; the preface states that the Pope, having read it, handed it to Cardinal Jordan to use '*ad instructionem veritatis, et confusionem haereticae falsitas*'.[24] The opening sections in particular often break away from the ostensible dialogue with Wycliffism to address the faithful: '*quando ergo auditis Wicleffum vestrum … Episcipos nostros vocare simplices idiotas*', '*cavete item Christi fideles a doctrina Pharisaeorum Wiclevistarum*' '*cavete item christifideles, maxime simplices*'.[25] Mishtooni Bose has commented that by

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[23] Mishtooni Bose, 'Vernacular philosophy and the Making of Orthodoxy in the 15th Century', in *New Medieval Literatures*, 7 (2005), pp. 73-97, this reference p. 80.

[24] 'For instruction in truth and the confusion of heretical falsity*'– Doctrinale,* Vol. I, p. ix. The wording is somewhat similar to Arundel's endorsement of Love's *Mirror* 'for the edification of the faithful and the confutation of heretics or Lollards'.

[25] 'When therefore you hear your Wycliffites call our bishops unlearned simpletons'; 'beware then, Christ's faithful, of the Pharisaic doctrine of the Wycliffites'; 'beware then Christ's faithful, especially the simple'. Ibid., pp. 17, 20.

the mid-fifteenth century 'discursive responses to Wycliffite arguments were increasingly produced to protect the *fideles* and *simplices*, rather than actually to convert real or imagined heretics', and this is clearly the case for Netter; giving the faithful confidence in orthodox theology and practice, and drawing the teeth of the Wycliffite challenge from their perspective, are his primary concerns, and it is this, rather than converting Lollards, that is the real focus of his apologetics.[26]
It seems to be this, too, that informs the work's occasional forays into a debate format, envisaging for example an interlocution from Oldcastle testifying to how Lollard doctrines had transformed his life; such interjections are of course introduced only to be countered, and appear more as a guide to how to refute a Lollard than as an investigative *determinacio*.[27]

Similarly, at the broader level of the work's general method, even Netter's famous promise to treat Wyclif's works fairly, with due referencing and complete quotations, and to make use of only those authorities whom Wyclif recognised, cannot be aimed at facilitating dialogue with the long-dead Wyclif, but rather serves as a way to strengthen the authority of the *Doctrinale*, thus presented as 'fighting fair' in its clash with Wycliffite doctrine.[28] Indeed given that Netter is profoundly sceptical about the possibility of heretics being converted by argumentation, seeing the problem as one of the heart and of obedience, such rhetorical flourishes are aimed at strengthening the orthodox reader's faith in Netter's work, rather than opening Lollard hearts.[29] Netter's adoption of the rigorous hermeneutic methodology of his opponents thus appears as an essentially apologetic manoeuvre, validating his rebuttal of Wycliffism by engaging it upon its own terms (a common scholarly criterion for engagement seen, for example, in Fitzralph's contribution to the Armenian controversy).[30] At the same time it may be, as Ghosh has argued, that Wyclif and his followers had succeeded in making such sources and the meticulous citation and

[26] Mishtooni Bose, 'Opponents of John Wyclif', p. 454.

[27] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 21.

[28] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, pp. 6, 23.

[29] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, pp. 18-22.

[30] Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority*, p. 15. It may be significant that reunion with the Armenian church was again a hot topic in the first half of the century, being an issue at the council of Ferrara.

rubrication of them a characteristic of authoritative discourse, so that adopting them was intrinsically necessary to be considered an academically adequate rebuttal of them.[31] While the work is framed at this point as if for a debate with Wyclif, therefore, this is a part of its own rhetorical clothing, giving the work both the intellectual cachet of being a debate on even terms and not a polemic treatise, and the moral high ground of being a pastoral appeal to reclaim a lost sheep, rather than simply an intellectual effusion or uncharitable scholarly controversy.

Netter's rhetorical strategies

In his effort to confirm the faltering faithful, Netter is not above making use of the standard polemical tactics seen in previous chapters, notably prejudicial characterisations of his opponents by biblical associations: Wyclif especially is identified with the villains of the biblical narrative, especially in the opening prayer.[32] Disconcertingly, he is frequently identified with figures of power who oppressed the church: with Nebuchadnezzar, leading the church into a new captivity, or as '*Tyrannus Aegyptius*' holding God's people captive.[33] At one point Netter devotes a chapter '*Ad calumnitas Wicleffi in Praelatos & Clericos quos vocat Caesareos … quodque ipse et ejus sequaces sunt multo magis Caesarei*' – suggesting that being identified with positions of power (certainly, in this case, secular power) is seen as disadvantageous in the war of ideas that he is contesting.[34] Such rhetoric seems slightly forced at a time when the long-dead and recently-condemned Wyclif could scarcely be said to be wielding much worldly power and his followers were being hunted and occasionally executed with the co-operation of the secular arm. It may reflect unease with Hussite military victories, but these hardly seem sufficient to

[31] Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 203-207.

[32] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, pp. 24-33.

[33] Ibid., pp. 24, 33.

[34] 'Regarding the calumny of [the] Wycliffites on prelates and clergy, whom they call Caesarians … also [that] he himself and his followers are much more Caesarians' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. II, p. 703.

justify the language of a tyrant ruling over the church. It may be, instead, another iteration of that dependence upon biblical categories and identification with biblical models of heroes and villains discussed earlier in relation to the figure of the Pharisees. Just as both sides in sermons sought to identify the other with the 'villain' of Pharisaic hypocrisy, so these rhetorical formulations reflect an uneasy consciousness of the extent to which in biblical narrative the persecuted and weak minority are usually those in the right: oppressed Israel or the hunted Apostles, a pattern that normally gave the Lollards easy access to the rhetorical high ground of biblical language in identifying their opponents with the oppressive villains of the bible story and themselves as the persecuted elect whose suffering is proof of their election and righteousness.[35] For Netter to seek to invert this, portraying Wyclif as a figure of power (albeit presumably intellectual power) is a significant rhetorical turn, potentially abandoning the earlier tendency to identify the church with the establishment and with authority (manifest in the works of Walsingham and Whethamstede).[36] That approach functioned to discredit Lollardy by association with subversion, linking it with the undermining and overthrowing of the social order, but Netter identifies it instead with tyrannical power. This may mark awareness of a more European audience, less concerned with subversion, or it may, more plausibly, be a product of the focus on a clerical audience, for whom the patterns of biblical history might be expected to have more weight than concerns for social order. The comparison here with Bodley 649's employment of both rhetorical strategies in a work hypothesised to be accessible to laity and clergy is interesting, suggesting an effort to appeal to both secular and spiritual value-systems. As with his hermeneutical methodology, therefore, Netter's rhetoric seems to be trying to, as it were, steal the Wycliffites' clothes by presenting the established church as the victims of a persecuting tyranny by heretics, rather than vice versa, and so identifying them with

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[35] Peikola, *Congregation of the Elect*, p. 293. Compare William Taylor's argument that the Lollards were persecuted because they preached the true gospel –Hudson, *Two Wycliffite texts*, p. 22.

[36] David R. Carlson, 'Whethamstede on Lollardy: Latin styles and the vernacular cultures of early fifteenth-century England', in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 102:1 (2003), pp. 21-41, this reference pp. 24-25. Compare C. William Marx, ed., *An English Chronicle 1377-1461* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), p. 42, which makes a similar claim of Lollard plans to destroy king, lords, and clergy.

the long succession of oppressive villains in positions of power that characterised the biblical narrative and hence informed a contemporary worldview.[37]

A better-documented aspect of Netter's polemical priority and rhetorical strategies is his characterisation of Wyclif. This takes several mutually complementary forms: besides the tyrant he consistently portrays Wyclif as the quintessential philosopher and sophist, a scholastic associated with the pagan tradition and intellectual pride, not with true devotion. He depicts Wyclif as morally and intellectually flawed, and he paints him as standing in a long tradition of heresy outside the line of Christian tradition. The similarity to Wyclif's own strategies in describing opponents as sophists, as associated via Aristotle with pagan philosophy, and as (ultimately) 'limbs of Antichrist' standing outside the Christian church altogether, is again marked.[38] Clearly the two inhabit a similar rhetorical world. Frequently these identifications of Wyclif are supported by close analysis of Wyclif's own arguments and methodology. Wyclif as philosopher is a target Netter announces early on: '*quod Wicleffus a Sanctis Patribus non habet fundamenta sua, sed a Gentilibus & philosophis reprobatis*' is the heading of chapter 34 of his first book.[39] While this chapter engages specifically with one part of Wyclif's thought, endeavouring to demonstrate a dependence on pagan and not Augustinian sources for Wyclif's understanding of the soul of man, it also leads into and supports one plank of Netter's rhetorical strategy, portraying Wyclif as both outside the safe tradition of the church and drawing on tainted sources due to intellectual pride. Later on he accuses Wyclif of drawing his '*rationes*' from nature: implying a dependence upon reason not

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[37] There seems to be a similar endeavour in Capgrave to portray Lollardy as based on coercion not conviction, perhaps motivated by the same rhetorical necessities – see Karen Anne Winstead, *John Capgrave's Fifteenth Century* (Philadelphia, University of Philadelphia Press, 2007), p. 79.

[38] It should be noted that the language of 'limbs/members of Anti-Christ' is itself an evocation and reversal of the language of 1 Cor 12:12 – 'sicut enim corpus unum est et membra habet multa omnia autem membra corporis cum sint multa unum corpus sunt ita et Christus', specifically implying an evil 'shadow' to the true church, just as Netter portrays a heretical tradition that forms an evil shadow to the true Christian tradition at the centre of his hermeneutics.

[39] 'That Wyclif does not have his foundation from the Holy Fathers, but from the gentiles and reprobate philosophy'. *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 184.

revelation.[40] Attacking as heterodox his formulation on the Eucharist, Netter insists that Wyclif '*non salvatur in glossa sua logicali, quod corpus Christi est ibi corporaliter, id est, per modum corporis,*' portraying him as a logic-chopping sophist hiding behind definitions of words.[41] Elsewhere, Wyclif is accused explicitly of 'siding with the philosophers', and therefore implicitly against the theologians or the Christians.[42] Bose has commented on the 'rhetoric of anti-scholasticism' in Netter, and Wyclif is its primary target; what starts as a general criticism of Wyclif's alleged sources becomes a specific critique of his methods (to show him as a sophist) and finally an assertion about his identity, that he is in a camp ('the philosophers') that is, in this context at least, exclusive of Christian faithfulness, and associated with the targets of early Christian apologetic.[43] Again, the correspondence between the rhetorical resources and assumptions on which this strategy builds and the expressed hostility of both Wyclif and later Lollards to scholastic distinctions, glosses, and dependence upon pagan sources should be noted.[44] Just as Netter engages in a conflict over the 'moral high ground' of the persecuted and the powerful with regards to biblical rhetoric, seeking to place the established church as the oppressed victims on the 'right side' of biblical history, so he here disputes the Lollard tendency to occupy the contemporary rhetorical high ground of condemning excessive intellectualism, scholasticism, and irresponsible glossing, endeavouring to place Wyclif as the epitome of this corrupted tradition rather than (as in Lollard polemic) its opponent. Interestingly, though, it should be noted that elsewhere in his work Netter is also concerned to show '*quod determinatio Innocentii, & Ecclesiae de accidente sine subjecto suo non est contra*

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[40] *Doctrinale*, Vol. II, p. 332: '*ad rationes wicleffi, quas collegit a natura*'.

[41] 'Wyclif is not saved by his logical [perhaps 'logic-chopping'] glosses, that the body of Christ is there corporeally, that is, according to the mode of bodies' – *Doctrinale*, Vol II., p. 357; see also p. 427 '*Qualiter Wicleffus sophisticat de conversione et transubstantione*' ('How Wyclif sophistically formulates of conversion and transubstantiation'), or references to how '*respondet sophisma*' ('he responds with a sophism'), Vol. III, p. 687.

[42] Ian Levy, 'Thomas Netter of Walden on the Eucharist', in Bergström-Allen and Copsley, eds, *Thomas Netter of Walden, Carmelite, Diplomat, and Theologian*, pp. 273-316, at p. 305.

[43] Compare for example Stone's praise of Richard Fleming that 'after this for philosophy / he did not have a care, but all for theology' as a result of a religious experience of maturation –Nighman, 'Reform and Humanism' p. 45. See also Catto: 'After Arundel' in Ghosh and Gillespie, *After Arundel,* pp. 43-54 for the general unease with academic theology.

[44] *On the Truth of Holy Scripture* p. 1-28; Ghosh, 'Wycliffite Affiliations', in Bose and Hornbeck,*Wycliffite controversies*, p. 25; *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 1-5.

omnes philosophes'; it seems that Netter does in fact ascribe some authority to philosophy, at least in certain technical areas such as this, so that his effort to position Wyclif as a philosopher in an entirely negative light is a matter of rhetoric against Wyclif rather than actual hostility to the discipline.[45] Such tensions recur throughout the *Doctrinale* as Netter's theological consistency is placed under strain by the overriding imperative of comprehensively discrediting Wyclif's position.

A more fundamental attack on Wyclif, however, is the presentation of his heterodoxy as a fundamental part of his identity. Bose comments that more than his predecessors, Netter was concerned to prove Wyclif not only 'wrong', erroneous, but 'heterodox', isolated from the tradition of 'orthodox logic'.[46] The corollary is equally true. Netter seeks to show Wyclif as part of a stream of 'heterodox logic', continuing the errors of all history's heretics. Thus he early on describes Wycliffism as a '*vetus error*', and goes on to attribute various of his views to the Pelagians, Jovians, Donatists, Waldensians, Cathars, Peter Abelard, Eliphaz the Temanite, Parmenides, Anaxagora, the Arians, the Saracens, and the pagans.[47] Specific critiques, that this or that argument has been declared heretical, thus merge to form a more fundamental critique, that Wyclif himself is ontically a heretic, not one of the 'faithful', as shown by his participation in all the heresy of the past. Just as Netter presented the voice of the church's tradition as in some sense monologic, so he implicitly presents the heterodox tradition as monologic, one long line of united error.[48] All heresy ultimately runs together. Netter does not explicitly use the Augustinian concept of the two churches (the church of God and the church of the Devil, between them inescapably embracing all humanity), since it does not, as will be seen, fit his ecclesiology, but it seems at times to be implicit in his view of theology: in stepping outside the bounds of the orthodox tradition Wyclif has inevitably been caught in the heterodox stream, and as

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45 'That the determination of Innocent and the church concerning an accident without its subject is not against all philosophers' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. II, p. 458.

46 Bose, 'Opponents of John Wyclif', p. 442.

47 *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, pp. iii, 16, 18, 248, 277, 319, 370, Vol II., pp. 134, 470, Vol III., pp. 685, 769.

48 For Netter's presentation of the church as monologic and speaking with a single voice see discussions in Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority,* pp. 118-149; Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 174-207. The phrase is Ghosh's, p. 183.

such there is no room for him as a flawed but respected scholar.[49] Instead, his identity is now defined by membership of a powerful tradition of ultimately anti-Christian figures, discrediting his entire teaching.

In Netter's presentation, therefore, it is not simply that Wyclif's thought is in error, but that he himself is spiritually lost, and a symptom of this fundamental problem is flawed reasoning and argumentation. Netter's specific critiques of his theological and scholarly methods build up to and authenticate his general allegations about his moral and spiritual character; presenting him as intellectually flawed and exegetically irresponsible leads to presenting him ultimately as consistently sinful and outside divine guidance or insight. Challenges to Wyclif's scholarly method as flawed are thus almost as frequent as criticism of his theology as sophistic: for example, Netter attacks his concept of synecdoche as fundamentally invalid, since (in Netter's estimation) one cannot transfer properties from figurative speech to proper speech.[50] Wyclif, he insists elsewhere on the subject of Petrine authority, '*male arguerit, arguendo argumento negativo*'.[51] '*O tunc pauperem theologum, perniciosum magistrum, & inopem rationum*', he apostrophises.[52] Clearly, in spite of wishing to present Wyclif as a scholastic philosopher, and even adopting many of the hermeneutic strategies of his opponent, Netter is still not willing to credit him with the intellectual high ground; rather he repeatedly presents Wyclif's argumentative methods as rationally flawed and problematic in detail, not simply based on the wrong authorities.[53] Since correct argument is associated with a healthy mind and divine illumination (especially in Augustinian thought, emphasising the epistemic dimension of sin), and since arguing honestly likewise has a moral dimension (not being '*perniciosum*'), identifying and highlighting these methodological flaws in detail allows

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[49] Netter's avoidance of the two church model may also, of course, be driven by it's popularity with Wyclif and his followers: Netter consistently seems to avoid giving any legitimacy to ideas associated with Wyclif.

[50] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 212.

[51] '[he] argues badly, arguing by a negative argument' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 253.

[52] 'O then [what a] poor theology, pernicious teaching, and unworkable reason' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 258.

[53] Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 174, for the extent to which Netter 'shares … in the hermeneutic world of his opponent'.

Netter to present Wyclif once more as inherently unreliable in his nature, and thus all his thought as '*pauperem theologum*'.

As the core of this presentation Netter depicts Wyclif as an irresponsible exegete, mishandling the word of God in dangerously unconstrained ways in the details of his arguments because too proud to submit to authority; as several scholars have noticed, he criticises him for adding words to the text on the subject of the bread in the Eucharist, and 'is continually taken aback by Wyclif's willingness to exegete [sic] scripture as he sees fit despite the received tradition'.[54] '*Wicleffus per tres glossas generales corrumpit omnium antiquorum & citeriorium Patrum sententias orthodoxas*', Netter argues, presenting Wycliffe's scriptural commentary as 'corrupting glosses'.[55] The repeated criticism of orthodox glossing seen in Lollard sources is thus turned back on them in criticism of Wyclif's habit of defining (often idiosyncratically) the fuller meaning of terms both biblical and scholastic. Likewise, his freedom from 'the received tradition' of exegesis Netter presents as dangerously irresponsible and unaccountable: '*ipse, si sua protervia licentiatus evagetur effroensis, qualiter capietur? Detur mihi ista licentia intra fidem, & videat quando captrus est me. Fabrico ego mihi novam logicam, metaphysicamque novellam; non quod opporteat, sed quia libet*'.[56] If one is not bound by the interpretative tradition, in Netter's conception, one is essentially unconstrained, and can make one's interpretative freedom essentially limitless. Again there is an inverted parallel with Wyclif's thought, and his concern with the potential abuse of glossing by interpreters to make the text say whatever they choose: '*non est finis potencie sic glosantis*'.[57] Both want the exegete to be accountable to an external authority to constrain their human wandering. But where Wyclif saw the exegete as needing to be bound (and, perhaps more significantly, capable of being bound) by the internal logic of scripture, Netter does not see such a constraint as effective, since he

[54] Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 178; Levy, 'Thomas Netter on the Eucharist', in Bergström-Allen and Copsey, *Thomas Netter of Waldren*, pp. 276, 287; quotation from p. 276.

[55] 'Wyclif by three general glosses corrupts all the orthodox sententiae of the more ancient and authoritative [lit. 'more citable'] Fathers' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. II, p. 484.

[56] 'he himself, if his shameless licence should wander uncontrolled, how may it be restrained? Give to me this licence and it will be seen when [i.e. whether] I am restrained. I [may] make for myself a new logic, a new metaphysic, not what should be but what suits me.' *Doctrinale*, Vol. II, p. 358.

[57] 'There is no end to the potential of such glossing' – Wyclif, cited in Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 1.

does not see the voice of scripture as either clear or monologic (he argues early on that heretics and the devil both frequently make use of scripture, so that things cannot reliably be proved from it alone), and thus he believes the exegete must be bound by the voice of the interpretative tradition.[58] To cast off this constraint as Wyclif has is grossly irresponsible, leaving the exegete unaccountable amid an infinite potential to distort the meaning of scripture. While their concerns are very similar, therefore, both seeing the biblical scholar as needing to be held accountable to something greater than himself, in Netter's presentation Wyclif's methodology is egregiously flawed, because he is not willing to let himself be bound by inherited authority. Wycliffe's concern for accountability is turned back on him as an individual exegete.

Underlying Wyclif's flawed methodology, Netter suggests, both intellectual and exegetic, is personal sinfulness, which in true Augustinian fashion Netter sees as having epistemic consequences. Heretics, he asserts, usually seem to live a good life so as to cover up their evil and win converts, and in this as in their teaching the Wycliffites are characteristic of the heretical tradition.[59] While he has no obvious scandals to report of Wyclif or his followers, therefore, he does not hesitate to accuse Wyclif of two of the greatest moral failings in contemporary thought: pride and lack of charity. On predestination he comments '*sub hoc praetextu non solum malos excludunt Wiclevitae ab Ecclesia, sed etiam bonos et sanctos, si eos sibi videant adversari*'.[60] Doctrine is thus used as a selfish weapon against good Christians which, since charity is the rule that unites the church, shows the culprits to be disconnected from the faith.[61] Pride is an even more frequent complaint, and constantly associated with his individualism: Netter criticises the presumption of Wyclif trying to judge who is saved or not, his pride in not submitting to the pope, unlike Jerome, his pride in condemning apostolic men writing after the apostles, and in standing against the 'whole' church by rejecting the authority and arguing the sinfulness of councils.[62] Pride, in Netter's

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[58] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 12.

[59] *Doctrinale*, Vol I, p. 22.

[60] 'Beneath this pretext the Wycliffites not only exclude wrongdoers from the church, but also the good and holy, if they seem hostile to them'. *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 274.

[61] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 316.

[62] *Doctrinale*, Vol I., pp. 278, 369, 370, 376.

portrayal, causes Wyclif to reject the authority of the tradition, the Pope, and the Fathers, and seek to impose his own interpretations, while lack of charity means that those interpretations are characterised by jealousy and hostility. Netter consistently presents Wyclif's theological position as the consequence of personal pride, discrediting him as a Christian and an exegete.

Wyclif is thus compared to Judas, a false disciple, and to Jacob in disguise: '*noli seduci fideles; haec vox quidem, vox Jacob est, quamquam manus sunt Esau*' – his sin makes him unreliable and dangerous, but is hidden under his scholarly reputation and apparent good life.[63] It was a medieval commonplace that the holiness of an interpreter was generally accepted as the best accreditation of his interpretative authority; by casting Wyclif as demonstrating pride, the root sin, in his very independence from the interpretative tradition, Netter can render his discourse self-discrediting by virtue of its own, 'proud', methodology.[64] Details of this methodology, be it use of 'philosophic' sources and ideas or definitions of words, can then be presented as confirmation of this critique, as can any instance of Wyclif's own challenges to the established church and the contemporary theological consensus. To challenge the church is to show pride, to be proud is to be morally flawed, to be flawed is to be an unreliable exegete and theologian. Again there is a resonance with Lollard rhetoric, which characteristically identified opponents with 'proud prelates'; discrediting them by association both with power (hence putting them on the 'wrong side' of much biblical narrative), and with pride, the root sin behind the fall. Whereas Lollard polemic made the allegation of pride plausible by identification with high institutional position, however, Netter's strategy identifies it with individualism: Wyclif is accused of pride not because of his abuse of high position, but because of his willingness to set

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[63] 'Do not be deceived, faithful ones, this voice is the voice of Jacob [whose name means 'deceiver'], although the hands are the hands of Esau.' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 370.

[64] Compare the need of early bible translators to defend themselves against the allegation that they should not be translating scripture because they were not as holy as Jerome: they argued that he was still less holy than the apostles, and that the issue was therefore not absolute holiness but a right disposition – Mary Dove, *The Earliest Advocates of the English Bible: The texts of the medieval debate* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2010), p. xxiii. In general Lollards seem to have followed Wyclif in emphasising a right disposition or attitude, specifically a humble openness to the inspiration of the Spirit; Netter casts this openness as pride, a disqualification, because it allows for the individual to receive something the church has not. He thus makes his opponents' self-justification a condemnation.

himself against the wider church. Such a rhetorical strategy is not calculated to build dialogue with Wycliffism, since it starts from rejecting its premise, but it functions very effectively as an apologetic gambit in the eyes of an already sympathetic orthodox reader; casting the very starting point of Lollard discourse, the corruption and need for reform of the church's teaching, as inherently evidence discrediting its moral authority.

Netter's theology: scripture

Wyclif's independence from the interpretative tradition is of course itself a product of the ongoing debates over authority sources that form the heart of the *Doctrinale*. Netter's approach to the issues of authority underlying Wycliffism has been analysed in detail recently, with abundant secondary material available on this aspect of his work.[65] Scripture and ecclesiology are again the key (and closely interwoven) categories, with the relative weighting and understanding of competing senses and interpretations dominating the first category, and the relative authority of patristic writings, unwritten traditions, the contemporary *magisterium*, the papacy, and the general interpretative traditions all composing the latter.

Netter's view of scripture is an interesting one; in many ways falling between those extremes of 'reforming' and 'reactionary' orthodox perspectives hitherto identified. He recognises – like, Levy points out, almost every other writer at the time – the supreme authority of scripture in theory: '*authoritas universalis Ecclesiae subdita est authoritati Scripturarum tam novi quam veteris testamenti*'.[66] The church, he says, bears witness to scripture but does not supersede it. Unlike his 'master' Woodford, moreover, Netter does not make play of the messy codicological issues surrounding contemporary biblical manuscripts and shuns 'the academic …

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[65] Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority*, Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, Bose, 'Opponents of John Wyclif', Madrigal, 'The Place of the *Doctrinale*'.

[66] 'The authority of the universal church is subordinated to the authority of scripture, as much the New as the Old Testament'. *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 348.

consciousness of the contingency of authorities and interpretations'.[67] Scripture *per se* continues to occupy a very elevated role in his thought; but he challenges its clarity and accessibility on its own. Seeking to present Wyclif as a crude advocate of bare *sola scriptura*, Netter constantly attacks this position, emphasising the importance and authority of sources other than scripture, and the risks inhering in a simplistic reliance on it.[68] Thus, he suggests that the article of faith in the apostolic church was added to the creed to show that it was the church following the apostles '*non solis scripturis, sed vivis documentis & tradicionibus*'.[69] The church is to be believed beyond scripture and the revelation of the spirit, he insists, pointing out that the Apostles at the Council of Jerusalem declared that their conclusions seemed good '*spiritui sancto & nobis*', and not '*spiritui sancto & scripturae*'.[70] '*Universalis Ecclesiae … infallibiliter tradit & docet omnes articulos fidei, & cuncta credenda de necessitate salutis*,' he asserts, including everything implicit or explicit within scripture, making the church's tradition a more sufficient guide to salvation.[71] Not only is scripture not the only source of salvation, but it is itself dangerous to rely on, being prone to abuse and distortion: against the claim that all things necessary must be proved from scripture he insists that heretics and the devil cite scripture in support of their claims, and that this shows reliance upon it to be unsafe.[72] Wyclif, he says, has worked '*usurpata scriptura*' and '*in sui favorem male intelligendo,*' being able to distort it to suit his doctrines.[73] His theoretical recognition of its supreme authority is thus in practice tempered by extensive scepticism about its safe usage.

This balance is evident in Netter's own exegetical approach: he frequently engages with Wyclif over texts of scripture and their correct interpretation, but almost invariably within a framework of patristic authority. It has been noted above that he

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67 Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 174.

68 Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority*, pp. 118-149.

69 'Not the Scriptures alone, but the living documents and traditions' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 330.

70 'To the Holy Spirit and to us'; not 'to the Holy Spirit and to scripture' – ibid., p. 337.

71 'The universal church infallibly hands down and teaches all the articles of faith and all that must be believed for salvation' – ibid., p. 370.

72 Ibid., p. 12.

73 'By the usurpation of scripture' and 'by misconstruing it in his favour' – ibid., pp. 246, 257.

presents Wyclif's independence from the interpretive tradition as dangerously unconstrained, and this stems from his own understanding of the multivalent nature of scripture. Discussing interpretations of 1 Corinthians 10-11 on the Eucharist, Netter revealingly declares:

> sic igitur cum de haec scriptura Apostoli fideles communicant, dilligant id solum de textu elicere quod intellexit Apostolus, ... Nec obviat, quod plures sensus eliciantur ex eodem loco, si nullus eorum fidei integrae contradicat.[74] '

Netter's conception of scripture is thus as a fundamentally multivalent entity, with many possible meanings, of which the '*fideles*' preserve the Apostolic intent as the most authoritative and exclude certain false or heretical interpretations.[75] Here is perhaps the heart of his divergence from Wyclif on the subject of authority. Wyclif considered scripture to be internally self-interpreting and so clearly monologic to the attentive reader.[76] Netter, perhaps drawing on Woodford, whom he calls 'my master', does not accept this and instead views it as a minefield of competing interpretations through which the external guidance of tradition is necessary to identify the correct interpretation.[77] Indeed Wyclif's willingness to believe that he had attained the correct interpretation prompts Netter to compare him to a Saracen in his approach to scripture.[78] '*Scripturae intelligentiam pervenire non valemus, nisi per Doctorum expositiones*', says Netter; scripture is explicitly not safely 'open' to understanding by an individual on their own, regardless of their claimed disposition, nor does there seem to be a place for setting the individual's conscience against the teaching and practice of the general church, as Wyclif clearly assumes.[79] Hence, when Netter refers to the meaning of a passage of scripture as being open, '*patet*', it is not that the text is

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74 *Doctrinale*, Vol. II, p. 241.

75 Levy, 'Thomas Netter on the Eucharist', p. 309. Compare *Doctrinale*, Vol. II, p. 247 for another passage on multivalent scripture.

76 Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 7, 42.

77 See Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 1-66, on Wyclif's view of scripture; Alban, *Teaching and Impact*, p. 14 for Netter's relationship with Woodford.

78 *Doctrinale*, Vol. III, p. 301.

79 'We are not able to find the understanding of scripture, unless by the Doctors' expositions' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 352. Compare Love's emphasis on the need for trusting faith, and the dangers of understanding from 'kyndly reson'.

inherently unambiguous but that the tradition of its interpretation is unanimous – here there may be a comparison with Love's use of 'open' to refer to the church's teaching.[80] What is not open in the scriptures is made open by the church.[81] Thus, whenever engaging with Wyclif over the correct understanding of a biblical passage, Netter constantly has recourse to patristic testimony; '*si glossis nostris non credas, saltem audies Damascenum dicentem*'.[82] Netter explicitly contrasts his exegetical technique with Wyclif's 'shameless licence': '*sed nos semper petimus glossae huiusmodi fundamentum in doctore catholico*'.[83] Because scripture is multivalent, unconstrained interpretation is, as discussed above, irresponsible and can be made to say anything; instead, the guidance of the interpretative tradition is required to ensure one is bound to the correct interpretation.

This can appear to be in uneasy tension with Netter's own practice: in his endeavour to disprove all of Wyclif's arguments, Netter at times must develop new ground that does not have copious patristic support, or critique Wyclif's own use of scripture without patristic back-up. When he does so, the locus of patristic support can therefore shift to verifying his methodology: thus for example he attacks Wyclif's argument from 1 Cor 10:16 for the continued existence of material bread, insisting that the passage better supports the opposite conclusion: '*certe non sequitur: panis est corpus, ergo panis est panis; sed melius oppositum : Ergo panis est aliud a pane, quia corpus*'.[84] He is quick to demonstrate patristic support for this method of glossing. A few lines later he displays this reasoning more fully, having argued that if one reads it in the Wycliffite way so that '*corpus christi esset panis naturalis propter primum, aeque totus chorus christianorum esset unus panus naturalis propter secundum*', he then insists '*non ego devio, sed haec est norma scrutandi abdita scripturarum per circumstantias earum ibi vel alibi*' and cites Augustine in support.[85] Thus Netter seeks

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[80] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 254.

[81] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 361.

[82] 'If you don't believe our glosses, at least hear what Damascus says…' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 241.

[83] 'But we always seek glosses of this kind founded in catholic doctors' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. II, p. 358.

[84] 'Surely this does not follow: "the bread is the body, therefore the bread is bread"; but better the other way around: "thus the bread is other than bread, i.e. body".' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. II, p. 241.

[85] '[If] the body of Christ should be natural bread for the first point, equally the whole company of Christians [lit.

to demonstrate accountability in his methodology even where he cannot simply verify his conclusions themselves through patristic citation.

A stress on interpreting scripture through examining the wider context of a text is of course a key theme in Wyclif, as is the concern about unconstrained glossing.[86] The difference is that for Netter the wider context includes the patristic testimony, and the interpretative tradition provides the appropriate constraint to glossing. Thus with regard to Wyclif's use of authorities he says:

> Ecclesia sancta docet vos oppositum, ne quidquam de litera scripturarum sine spiritu Christi praesumatis accipere. Litera occidit: spiritus autem vivificat. Si in litera legis spiritum Wicleffi sumpseritis, iam bibistis mortiferum : si spiritum Pauli, Victorini post eum, postremo Hilarii, demum Augustini, ac interim Gregorii, ac per successinem eius, Isidori; et sic per seriem Sanctorum Patrum, a tempore Christi, & Apostolarum, quos in hac Scriptura Christus inclusit iam potum percipitis; secure credatis.[87]

The '*series Sanctorum Patrum*', envisaged as an unbroken and unanimous line, is '*inclusit … in hac scriptura*' so that to read scripture alone is not to truly read scripture, since the commentary is an integral part of it. Hence, while deeply critical of Wyclif's 'glossing' texts by adding interpretative adverbs and other definitions of words, Netter is quite willing to rely on contextual glosses from the Fathers, such as that in Matt. 6 the disciples put away their possessions only temporarily; such patristic glosses are not to him an intrusion on authoritative scripture but part of it.[88]

'chorus', again placing an emphasis on the untied voice of the corporate entity] would be one natural loaf for the second'; 'I do not deviate, but this is the normal way of scrutinising the secrets of scripture by their context there or elsewhere' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. II, p. 241. Frederic Goubier, 'Wyclif and the Logica Augustini' *Medioevo*, vol. XXXVI (2011), discusses in depth Augustine's approach to reading scripture with regard to its internal logic.

[86] Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 1, 45.

[87] 'Holy Church teaches you the opposite, lest anyone should presume to receive the letter of scripture without the spirit of Christ. "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life": if in the letter of the law you obtain the spirit of Wyclif, now you drink death; if you receive now as a drink the spirit of Paul, Victor after him, afterwards Hilary, then Augustine and again Gregory, and in succession to him Isidore, and thus in order the holy fathers from the time of Christ and the Apostles, whom Christ included in this scripture, you believe securely.' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p.15.

[88] Alban, *Teaching and Impact*, p. 152. The debate here seems to have been over poverty and the injunctions to give away wealth, Netter cites patristic testimony that this was a temporary giving away, in order to foil Lollard use of the passage as an argument for dis-endowment.

Wyclif's glosses are wrong because they are not part of the tradition, not because they are not part of the original text.

Interestingly, though Netter identifies here the 'letter' of scripture with false approaches to reading it, he does not appear to be hostile to the literal sense in the fashion manifested by Love, the Bodley 649 author, and others. In fact, he manifests more wariness regarding figurative senses: '*figurae scripturae sacrae non sunt extendendae sine evidenti necessitate & authoritate; maxime ubi vergit in dispendium veritatis extensio figuralis*'.[89] Again, this is on the face of it exactly the same unease seen in Lollard and reforming orthodox sources about a reliance on linguistic figures which cannot be justified from the text.[90] In Netter's case, this may have been driven in part by the rhetorical demands of his assault on Wyclif's doctrine of the Eucharist: part of his critique is that by saying Christ is figuratively present it denies his actual presence and so contradicts scripture and the tradition; *'figura non debet cum rei veritate coextendi; et per hoc figuraliter solum corpus Christi, non est vere vel realiter corpus Christi'*.[91] The figurative cannot, he argues, be meaningfully real: 'figurative speech encompasses neither being [*esse*] nor true being [*vere esse*]'.[92] In this there may be an intriguing echo of Wyclif's unease with interpretations of the sense of scripture that held a text to be literally false but figuratively true; Netter is equally uneasy with

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[89] 'The figures of holy Scripture are not to be extended without evident necessity & authority; since the extension figures inclines greatly to dispensing with truth' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. II, p. 512. Compare Whethamstede's hostility to too much attention to the literal sense of scripture, alongside other allegations aimed at the Lollards – Carlson, 'Whethamstede on Lollardy', p. 27. Figurative language, largely biblical, is common in more orthodox documents such as the letters of Oxford University, or the foundation charter of Lincoln College – see Henry Anstey, ed., *Epistolae academicae Oxon. (Registrum F): A collection of letters and other miscellaneous documents illustrative of academical life and studies at Oxford in the fifteenth century* (Oxford: Oxford Historical Society, 1898), p. xl; Kantik Ghosh, 'University Learning, Theological Method, and Heresy in Fifteenth-century England', in Van Dussenand Soukup , *Religious Controversy in Europe*, pp. 289-308.

[90] Both Netter and Wyclif seem to have operated here in the shadow of the controversies concerning issues of *virtus sermonis* in the middle years of the 14th century: Wyclif following the 1340 condemnation in rejecting the idea of any bible statement being 'false', and asserting instead the primacy of a *virtus sermonis* identified with a sensitivity to contextual guides and to authorial intention, Netter following in an ostensibly similar way but emphasising the tradition, not the context, as the entry into understanding authorial intent and so the authoritative meaning of the words according to the literal sense – see William J. Courtenay, 'Force of Words and Figures of Speech: The crisis over *Virtus Sermonis* in the fourteenth century', *Franciscan Studies*, 44 (1984), pp. 107-128.

[91] 'A figure ought not to have extension with true things, and in so far as this is solely figuratively the body of Christ, it is not truly or really the body of Christ' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. II, p. 502. NB also p. 357, another attempt to pin Wyclif down as denying the Real Presence; cf. Levy, 'Thomas Netter on the Eucharist', p. 275.

[92] Pink, 'Holy Scripture', pp. 163-172, quotation from p. 171.

such equivocations, especially when applied to the host.[93] Netter seems to be uncomfortable with, if not outright to reject, the idea of the figurative being really true in regard to the Eucharist, and this perhaps spills over into limiting the role of figurative exposition, although he does, perhaps slightly inconsistently, seem to permit it if not 'extended without evident necessity and authority'. The old idea of the text as 'a great code containing a deeper, hidden meaning: the mystery of salvation through Jesus Christ, which could in principle be detected even in those passages which did not seem to address salvation history directly' is seldom in evidence in the *Doctrinale*; the focus in practice is on explications with historical context in the Victorine school.[94] Nor is there any suggestion that the literal sense is to be identified with spiritual childhood, the uninitiated, or the laity, as had sometimes been the tradition.[95] Instead, it feeds into the ostensible concern for accessibility of the *Doctrinale*, since the proofs of the text can thus be construed as 'open'.[96]

That emphasis on 'pure', simple theology unconfused by scholastic complexities, on which Bose remarks, probably also feeds into this unease with extended figurative language, demanding a more simple approach to verities of the faith.[97] In arguing with Wyclif, Netter does indeed make relatively little use of the sort of extensive figurative interpretations seen elsewhere, instead sticking, as Augustine had demanded for theological debate, to the literal sense, identified with the authorial intention, except occasionally where he has strong patristic support for a figurative reading.[98] In this there was some common ground between him and the demands of Wyclif regarding biblical discourse, and indeed a convergence of methodology in their common emphasis on minimising exegetical dependence on figuration and seeking the 'literal sense' via

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93 See Levy's introduction to *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*; Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 32-5.

94 Frans van Liere, 'Biblical Exegesis through the twelfth century', in Susan Boynton and Diane J. Reilly, eds, *The Practice of the Bible in the Middle Ages – Production, Reception, and Performance in Western Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), pp. 157-178, this quotation p. 159.

95 Rita Copeland, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages – Lollardy and ideas of learning* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), p. 7.

96 Compare again Lollard desires for access to scripture 'on its own terms … unclouded by subtleties' (ibid., p. 7).

97 Bose, 'Opponents of John Wyclif', pp. 441-445.

98 *Doctrinale*, Vol. II, p. 242, is an example of using Rabanus to argue for a figurative understanding of bread in 1 Corinthians 10, though even here this is based on the figurative use of bread in John 6 rather than on an idiosyncratic gloss.

patristic understandings. For Wyclif identifying and understanding the literal sense was caught up with grasping the intention of the Holy Spirit through following the internal logic of scripture. For Netter, as the above quotations make clear, knowledge of the intention of the apostolic author (whom he emphasises more than the Holy Spirit, in contrast to Wyclif, perhaps because it sets up his insistence on the need for a human tradition to communicate understanding of that intention, rather than an openness to direct personal contemporary illumination) was primarily preserved in the extra-scriptural tradition, so that fidelity to the external interpretative traditions and to the literal sense were intertwined, and perhaps inseparable. Different understandings of the nature of scripture thus turned the same methodology into divergent models of biblical reading.

Where Netter does distance himself more clearly from some of his more reform-minded peers is in his use of biblical language. While he does use biblical figures polemically – notably in comparing Wyclif to Nebuchadnezzar, Pharaoh, Judas, and Jacob – and in his prayers, the main body of his text is not rich in interpolated scriptural vocabulary in the way of the Wycliffite sermons, for example (see above, chapter 1). Indeed, Netter explicitly distances himself from an excessive reverence for the specific language of scripture or even of the fathers: '*Patres sanctos non semper imitandos esse in verbis*', he insists, Paul '*ductus spiritu, dux verbi erat, non ductus a verbo*', while Wyclif, he alleges, pays reverence to the words whilst distorting the sense.[99] While Wyclif saw attention to the form of scripture as a criterion of learning to read its logic and so discern its meaning, making it an essential guide through the various possible interpretations of scriptural texts, Netter presents it as at best erroneous and perhaps dangerous (being 'led by the word' would doubtless have carried associations of 2 Corinthians 3:6). Right scriptural understanding is arrived at not by attention to the vocabulary of scripture but its sense. Perhaps significantly, part of Netter's argumentative agenda is to defend the church's use of a-scriptural terms such as transubstantiation as not being thereby inherently un-scriptural, but as

[99] 'The holy fathers are not always to be imitated in their words'; Paul 'led by the spirit, was leader [or ruler] of the words, not led by the words' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 216.

expressing the spirit of the scriptural sense more explicitly and so drawing out the truth inherent within it.[100] The sense is not to be identified with the letter, but is inherent in it and can often be more faithfully expressed in a more specific vocabulary. Even while adhering to the theological concept of the literal sense (which for him constitutes authorial meaning located in the interpretative tradition), therefore, Netter distances himself from reverence for the letter of scripture.[101] His regard is not for the *nudum textum pe se*, but for the sense of scripture that emerges from the text as it is set within an interpretative framework of established determinations which function as an organic whole.

Stephen Pink has argued that the late-medieval church reacted to a Wycliffite tradition that emphasised the identity between the spoken word in preaching, the written word in scripture, and the incarnate Word in Christ in part by broadening the definition of 'scripture' to include visual images and meditations and so dilute its identification with prophetic preaching and the authoritative Christ.[102] Netter here shows something of the same broadening of definitions; eliding boundaries between the authority of scripture and commentary and decrying a reverence for the raw words of scripture, even as he undermines its role as an unmediated 'clear' meeting-place with God by emphasising its ambiguities and need to be considered through a lens of theological interpretations sanctioned by tradition. Instead of being a place where an individual (if rightly disposed) can have communion with God and access to his authoritative message directly, independent of the institutional church, Netter's theology of scripture makes clear that this encounter must be mediated and guided at

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[100] *Doctrinale*, Vol. II, p. 453. See Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority*, p. 145; Levy, 'Thomas Netter on the Eucharist', p. 306.

[101] It may be that Netter is here influenced by the debates witnessed in the 1340 Paris declaration on concepts of *virtus sermonis*: 'a conflict between the primacy of literal meanings and the primacy of mental intentions on the part of authors' – Netter aligns himself firmly with the latter primacy, even while distancing himself from the tradition of extended figurative digressions from the literal sense; see Courtenay: 'Force of Words and Figures of Speech'(quotation p. 125). Compare Wyclif, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture.* Wyclif, of course, similarly distanced himself from those who associated the literal sense of words according to contemporary rules of grammar with the only true sense, opposing to them the idea of the rules of scriptural logic, by which all scripture is true *de virtute sermonis*, so that the only real difference between the two is how they advocate identifying the 'mental intentions' of the author: by understanding the logic of scripture or by following the authoritative tradition of those who knew the author's mind.

[102] Pink, 'Holy Scripture'– This argument runs throughout the thesis, but see especially pp. 159-200 on Netter.

every point by the church.[103] In this there is perhaps a resonance with Love's Proheme, identifying as it does Paul's '*quemcumque scripta sunt'* with 'all thynges þat ben written generally in holy chirche' – the best way to an encounter with God and an understanding of his message in 'scripture' is when that scripture is not the bare biblical text but the text-in-tradition, its meaning as drawn out by authoritative commentary.[104] Even when it is being commented on, it is not the central medium of encounter: preaching is demoted, Pink points out, to a way to 'blow the trumpet' to assemble the people to meet God in the Mass: the word, whether read or preached, is not in practice the medium of human reception of the divine.[105] Rather God must be found in the corporate church: the tradition which is the record of it reading scripture together, and the sacraments that are a corporate act of the church catholic.

Netter's theology: Ecclesiology and tradition in exegesis

Netter's passages on scripture quickly make clear the importance of church and tradition in his perspective. Inevitably the two concepts are inseparably intertwined: his reverence for the tradition is based on his understanding of the nature of the church that generates it, and his ecclesiological agenda centres on demonstrating the authority of the church's tradition. Many scholars have noted that the church's traditional interpretation in practice assumes for him the central authoritative role.[106] It is normal in the *Doctrinale* for each paragraph's argument to be based on a citation, usually patristic and frequently one of Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, or Gregory. Generally, such a citation is assumed to be sufficient for the argument he wants to make: '*probatur in Petro magisterii eminentia, sanctorum testimoniis*' is a typical

[103] Compare how the English Wycliffite sermons see scripture as speaking 'to men in Þeir soul' without the church's interpretative mediation, as pointed out by Pink, 'Holy Scripture', p. 87.

[104] Love's *Mirror*, p. 9;.

[105] Pink, 'Holy Scripture', p. 178.

[106] Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority,* p. 118; Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 183; Madrigal, 'The place of the *Doctrinale',* pp. 217-220.

heading: '*sanctorumque testimoniis veritas manifestatur*'.[107] Like Gascoigne (see chapter 5), like the Wycliffite Glossed Gospels, patristic commentary massively outweighs scholastic, and in Netter it leads and frames the vast majority of discussions in the first two books of the *Doctrinale*. There are two main threads to this practice: his dependence upon the tradition in general, and his particular dependence upon the Fathers.

Netter's general dependence upon tradition has already been touched upon in the context of his understanding of scripture: a guide is needed through the multiple interpretations of the text and to constrain the exegete from simply drawing any conclusion he wishes. Netter is keen to demonstrate that even Augustine turned to the tradition when in uncertainty, and that doing so is fundamentally safer and more reliable: others have gone before and tested the ground, many minds are better than one, and it is more certain to journey to faith by popular consent.[108] There is a certain tension here: these arguments are disconcertingly pragmatic compared to his principled insistence discussed above on a tradition descending from Christ and preserving the Apostolic intent, which tradition he presents as an unshakeably reliable object of trust: '*secure credatis*'.[109] Likewise there is a jarring combination of arguments regarding the Council of Jerusalem: Netter initially argues, defending his

[107] 'The highest authority is proved [to be] in Peter, by holy testimonies'; 'by holy testimonies the truth is demonstrated' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, pp. 261, 270.

[108] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 339.

[109] Netter may have been influenced at this point by the ideas of probabilism associated with Jean Gerson who, faced with the uncertainty of identifying with the correct Pope in a time of schism, 'allowed all moral agents to adopt bona fide the opinion they regarded as most reasonable *as long as it was supported by a reputable group of experts*' [my italics]: Rudolf Schüssler, 'Jean Gerson, Moral Certainty and the Renaissance of Ancient Scepticism', *Renaissance Studies: Journal of the Society for Renaissance Studies*, 23:4 (2009), pp. 445-462, p. 452; M. W. F. Stone, 'The Care of Souls and "Practical Ethics"' in Robert Pasnau and Christina van Dyke, eds, *the Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), pp. 517-535; Jeremy Catto 'The Burden and Conscience of Government in the Fifteenth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 17 (2007), pp. 83-99. This seems at first glance to correspond closely to Netter's agenda, except that he does not (at least ostensibly) envisage a situation where authorities are divided and seek to reassure the fearful that they are not damned for taking the 'wrong' side; Netter instead has insisted on the fundamental unity of the church vis-à-vis Lollardy and argued that therefore taking the orthodox 'side' is the *only* safe, secure, and right way. While he may have drawn on the probabilism tradition to reinforce his argument at this point, therefore, piling up reasons why it is 'probably' the best way to buttress assertion that it is reliably and 'certainly' the best way, the conjunction of probable with certain is incongruous, and suggests a search for any argument that will bolster his position regardless of consistency. See also the entry by Rudolf Schüssler on 'Probability in Medieval and Renaissance philosophy in *Stanford Encylopedia of philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Winter 2016 edition) <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/probability-medieval-renaissance/>.

reliance on tradition that as the Apostles, when unsure, had recourse to ancient histories and oracles, so should the contemporary scholar have recourse to the historic tradition of the church. Later, opposing *sola scriptura* ideas, he advances an interpretation of the statement in scripture that their conclusions seemed good '*spiritui sancto & nobis*', placing emphasis on the last word, which he interprets as asserting that the Spirit was been working in and through the Apostles as a community instead of through scripture.[110] One argument presents the early church as inspired in themselves (rather than depending on scripture), the other presents them as seeking inspiration from the written tradition, not themselves. Most likely the inconsistency stems from the different apologetic needs of the two passages: in one he opposes dependence on written traditions to an alleged Lollard dependence upon individual judgement, in the other he opposes the independent authority of the church (present in the Apostles) to Lollard emphasis on scriptural authority. While the specific arguments are inconsistent, therefore, behind them stands a consistent commitment to authority rooted in tradition-through-the-church.

Wycliffites, Netter alleges, occupy the opposite, individualist, position, not believing one unless one brings scriptures or spiritual revelations to them alone: '*antiqua est haec haereticorum versutia*', he says, and recalls the Fathers' complaints of false prophets.[111] Wyclif he accuses of teaching that in doubt only scripture or the spirit can help, not the Fathers.[112] Netter instead insists upon a theology of communal revelation and inspiration: Christ promised to be '*vobiscum*' not '*tecum*', with the corporate church, and not any one individual; hence '*Ecclesia Catholica fidem habet firmam, errareque non potest*'.[113] As a result '*scripta authoritas non certificat sine concordi intellectu Ecclesiae; nec revelatio sine teste*': the church's united agreement is what guarantees an interpretation, not the individual's right orientation towards

[110] *Doctrinale*, Vol I, pp. 337-338.

[111] 'This is an ancient heretical strategy' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 336.

[112] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 370.

[113] 'The Catholic Church has the faith firmly, and is not able to err' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, pp. 333, 337. Netter consistently paints the Wycliffite position as an almost exclusively individualist one, exalting personal choice and judgement alone without any recourse to a wider community.

scripture.[114] Unity is thus the guarantee of authority, for interpretation as also for the church. Just as the unity of the church's teaching, even though spread by the twelve apostles across the world, is evidence of its miraculous nature and origin, and just as the uniformity of the seventy versions of the Septuagint demonstrated its divine origin, so acceptance by the universal church is the test of a doctrine's truthfulness.[115] In turn, '*An sit vera Ecclesia, utrum mendosa, cognoscemus, si silicet teneat Catholicam unitatem*' – the test of a lesser church is its conformity to the unity of the whole church.[116] This unity is ultimately universal: the promise of the church's indefectability given to Peter '*non est ergo specialis Ecclesia, non Africana, ut Donatus dixit; nec utique particularis illa Romanae: sed universalis Ecclesia, non quidem in generali Synodo congregata, quam aliquotiens errasse percepimus … sed est ecclesia Christi Catholica per totum mundum dispersa*'.[117] The unity in question is dispersed through time as well as space: '*Jam habemus evidentibus signis quae sit Ecclesia Catholica; Omnis scilicet feries illa fidelium a Christi prima congregatione in ripa Jordanis, usque ad nostra tempora, & deinceps usque ad finem mundi successive descendens*'.[118] The unbroken tradition, descending successively from the first church by the Jordan to the present, links the contemporary church to the gathering that first heard the teaching of Christ directly, guaranteeing (to Netter) that their theology has remained the same. Unlike Wyclif, who saw this descent as broken and increasingly corrupted in recent centuries, or Pecock, who saw the tradition as unclear and the early church as underdeveloped and less authoritative (see chapter 4 below), rather than closer to Christ, Netter sees clear unity across time between Christians today

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[114] 'Written authorities do not give certainty without the united understanding of the church, nor revelation without witness' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 339.

[115] *Doctrinale*, vol. I, pp. 328-9.

[116] 'We may recognise whether it is a true church or a false one, by whether it holds to Catholic unity' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 328. There is, of course, a certain circularity here: a truth is reliable if held by all the true church, and church is true if it holds to 'Catholic unity'.

[117] '…is not therefore to a particular church, not the African, as Donatus said, nor even particularly the Roman: but the universal church, not a particular congregation in general Synod, which which any number of times we have observed to err, but it is the Universal Church of Christ spread through all the world.' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 334.

[118] 'Now we have [proof] by clear signs of what the Universal church is: all bearing the faith first gathered by Christ on the banks of the Jordan, even up to our own times, and thence even unto the end of the world successively descending' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 327.

and in the time of Christ, both the institutional unity of an unbroken line '*successive descendens*' and theological unity of an unchanging message.[119] This unity is therefore the ultimate guarantee of interpretative fidelity: '*necesse est ad inveniendam veritatem Fidei, praeter Scripturas rimari dicta Majorum*'.[120] Safe interpretation is interpretation that follows the general consensus, rather than any particular exegetical methodology. Turning to scripture alone in matters of doubt is intrinsically heretical: '*quam impia sit haec positio, & quam apta ad destruendum articulum illum, qui dicit Credo Sanctam Ecclesam Catholicam … nonulla ab Ecclesia definita sunt, quae in Sacra scriptura aperte non inveniuntur*'.[121] Theology, and especially exegesis, cannot safely be done by an individual; instead, he or she must be in concert with and submitting to the concordance of the church.

Ecclesiology and tradition: justifying the praxis of the church

For Netter, then, the interpretation of scripture is dependent on following the guidelines of the tradition, handed down unbroken from the first days of the church and validated by its unanimous recognition around the world and through time. This dependence upon an allegedly united tradition has a second element; beyond the interpretative element of shaping exegesis, such a tradition is also constitutive of the practices laid down by the church but not openly found in scripture. Heiko Oberman identified two theological approaches in this period: tradition I he defines as 'single source', seeing scripture (rightly interpreted) as the source of authority and the church as its interpreter, tradition II as 'dual-source', seeing an authoritative tradition

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[119] See Levy's introduction to *John Wyclif: On the truth of Holy Scripture*, pp.3-28; see Kantik Ghosh, 'Bishop Reginald Pecock and the idea of 'Lollardy'', in Helen Barr, and Ann M. Hutchinson, eds, *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale: Essays in honour of Anne Hudson* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 251-261.

[120] 'To find the truth of the faith it is necessary, beyond the scriptures, to probe the sayings of the majority' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 361.

[121] 'How impious may this position be, and how apt to destroy that article [of the creed] which says 'I believe in the holy Catholic Church' … many things are defined by the church, which are not openly found in Holy Scripture' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 361.

external and independent to scripture, preserved in the church's traditions.[122] While Netter's discussion of hermeneutics can appear like a tradition I perspective in its dialogue with Wyclif, when it comes to defending the practice of the church he has extensive recourse to the ideas of tradition II.

This approach becomes central in the later sections of his work, dealing with sacraments and church practice: he asserts '*quod ritus Eucharistiae, Baptismi, & aliorum Sacramentorum a Christi consuetudine & Apostolorum dantur Ecclesiae sine scripto propter haereticos, execratos, & infirmos*'.[123] The Epilogue of the work bases itself on 2 Thessalonians 3 to argue that all the various traditions such as making the sign of the cross and praying to the East were in fact handed down by Paul and the other Apostles in speech but never in writing. The argument that all church practices not found in scripture were relayed from the Apostles in unwritten tradition is Netter's answer to the Wycliffite (and perhaps Hussite) critique of 'unbiblical' contemporary practice, constructing a model where, instead of anything not found in scripture being suspect, as in Lollard thought, any practice not explicitly condemned in scripture is assumed to be legitimate by default, since it is held to have its origin in authoritative tradition from the Apostles.[124] Such a conceptual framework raises the importance of 'tradition' as a theological justification to substantial heights, making it not only the guide to interpretation of scripture but also a sufficient justification for any practice of the church not explicitly condemned in scripture (as read by the church). Unlike Wyclif, whose tendency was to bring the understanding of 'tradition' into line with his understanding of scripture and by it to critique contemporary practice, Netter locates contemporary practice within an invisible tradition of unwritten practice that is essentially a separate and parallel authority-stream to exegesis, making it both binding and, in practice, almost independent of biblical

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[122] Heiko Augustinus Oberman, *The Harvest of Late Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1963), pp. 361-422.

[123] 'That the rites of the Eucharist, Baptism, and other sacraments were instituted by Christ and given to the church by the Apostles without writing because of heretics, haters, and the infirm' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. III, p. 301. In contrast, the English Benedictines had defended their practices before Henry V with heavy use of more recent authorities – Sargent, 'Nicholas Love as an Ecclesiastical Reformer', pp. 40-61, reference to p. 54.

[124] Netter may in part have been reacting here to the Hussite criticism of large sections of church practice as being '*infundabilis*'; see Jacob, 'The Bohemians at the Council of Basel', p. 99.

criticism.[125] Tradition thus becomes virtually a blank cheque for any practice, doctrine, or interpretation found in the church but not in scripture, and at the same time beyond accountability to criticism from scripture, coming from an alternative tradition left unwritten precisely to protect it from such ignorant criticism. While Stephen Pink has argued that for Wyclif, as the apogee of the late medieval preaching tradition, 'in Scripture, as Christ, lies the source of the powers that the church vested in its visible rites', in Netter's model, tradition is the source of those rites and the guarantee of their connection to Christ, the fount of power.[126] Tradition thus becomes more than simply a guide to exegesis, and the central plank in Netter's rebuttal of Wycliffite criticism.

Levy has sought to emphasise the continuing supremacy of scripture for Netter, who he says confined the dependence upon tradition to 'liturgical rites and practices of piety' so that 'Netter was certainly not setting up a parallel extra-scriptural source of doctrine that might rival the principal authority of scripture on matters necessary for salvation'.[127] While, as noted, Netter certainly asserts the supremacy of scripture in theory, this theoretical supremacy becomes tenuous and nominal given such a crucial role for tradition both in determining the correct understanding of scripture and in authorising anything scripture does not mention. Like Pecock's 'reson' (see chapter 4 below), tradition, whatever its theoretical subordination, seems in practice to assume the dominant determinative role. Indeed, while Levy asserts that tradition, in Netter, cannot rival scripture on matters necessary for salvation, it is tradition that, in Netter's argument, established rites such as baptism that actually spiritually constitute membership of the church, and so are necessary for salvation. As Netter argues at the beginning, scripture is not the rule of faith, but the teaching of the church, guaranteed by succession through the Fathers from Christ and the Apostles, is.[128] Tradition, whether regarding hermeneutics or religious praxis, is functionally dominant.

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[125] For Wyclif's emphasis on bringing tradition into accord with his understanding of scripture, see Michael Hurley, *'Scriptura sola*: Wyclif and his critics', in *Traditio,* 16 (1960), pp. 275-352, in particular pp. 299-302.

[126] Pink, 'Holy Scripture', p. 31.

[127] *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority*, p. 144.

[128] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 13.

Ecclesiology and tradition: Dependence upon the Fathers

We have seen, then, that Netter opposes to Wyclif's emphasis on the authority of scripture that of tradition, both as the authority for disputed practices and the guide to the correct interpretation through the multi-valency of scriptural interpretation. The authority of this tradition is derived partly from its catholicity, but also partly from its antiquity. It is, as earlier quoted, *'per seriem sanctorum Patrum, a tempore Christi & Apostolarum*'.[129] Continuity from Christ, the foundation of faith and the church, is essential, and it is here that Netter's methodological emphasis on patristic citation and antique sources acquires an epistemological edge. '*In dubiis fidei inquirere debemus quid senserunt Apostoli, quid eorum successores, & deinceps viri probati usque ad haec nostra tempora nobis reliquerunt*', says Netter, and this he puts into practice in his search for the most antique citations to justify his arguments.[130] Temporal continuity is of dual value, not only expressing that authenticating unity through time discussed above, but also in demonstrating connection to the fount of original authority. Hence Netter's willingness to treat '*sanctorum testimoniis*' as sufficient proofs in his arguments: their authority is derived from their connection to the unquestioned authority of Christ and validated by their general acceptance. In his depiction of authority as a '*series*' proceeding from biblical times there is no sign of a qualitative fracture between Scriptural authority, patristic authority, doctoral authority, and the accepted teaching of the modern church, simply a graduated

[129] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 15.

[130] 'When dealing with doubtful questions in the matter of faith we ought to inquire what the Apostles thought, what their successors [thought], and then [what] approved men even up to our own times have left us' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 334.

succession of *viri probati*.[131] The Fathers are preferable in being closer to the source of authority, but this is not to render more recent doctors worthless (as he accuses Wyclif of saying), nor possessing a qualitatively different authority, but simply less directly connected to the source of authority.[132] Interestingly, Netter in fact incorporates Grosseteste, in particular, heavily and seeks to demonstrate his opposition to Wyclif with rather more vigour than he did for many Fathers, whether because he believed him to be an exception to the generally lower authority of recent doctors in his model, or because he was so central to many Wycliffite arguments and so he wished to emphasise his orthodoxy to better discredit Wycliffism.[133]

Epistemological reasons aside, however, Netter also has apologetic reason for emphasising the use of patristic sources, in his expressed desire to use only those sources that Wyclif would have recognised.[134] Whether English Wycliffites were really the target of this concession, or the emerging situation with the Hussites (at Basel both parties agreed to accept '*lex divina, praxis Christi, apostolica et ecclesia primitiva*', a very similar formulation to Netter's 'Christ, the Apostles, and the church of the Fathers'), or as suggested simply whether it was aimed at maintaining the confidence of Catholic *fideles* by 'playing fair' with opponents, Netter usually adheres consistently to this promise.[135] Indeed he shows a particular sensitivity to Wycliffite critiques of orthodox authorities when discussing the authority of the papacy, announcing: '*at ne dicat Wicleffus, sicut dicere solet, quod hunc errorem praesumpsit Gregorius post dotationem principis Constantini, annosus pater Annacletus Papa Romanus, sucessor Sancti Clementis accedat*'. In countering this imagined interlocutor, he recognises Wycliffite mistrust of the endowed church as thereby corrupted and unreliable, and so makes use of a source believed to precede this endowment.[136] Like Pecock, Netter thus displays a burgeoning historical

[131] Hurley, '*Scriptura sola*', pp. 279-80.

[132] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I., p. iii.

[133] James McEvoy, '*Robertus grossatesta lincolniensis*: an essay in historiography, medieval and modern', in Maura O'Carroll, ed., *Robert Grosseteste and the Beginning of a British Theological Tradition* (Rome: ISDC, 2003), pp. 24-68, at p. 67. See the earlier discussion of Grosseteste's significance above, Chapter 1 pp. 84-85.

[134] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 6.

[135] Madrigal, 'The Place of the Doctrinale', p. 203; *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 23.

[136] 'And lest Wyclif should say, as he is accustomed to, that Gregory assumed this error after the donation of Prince

consciousness, even if it is deployed somewhat erratically: he draws upon an awareness of history in dealing with Wycliffite challenges to the integrity of the witness of a wealth-corrupted church, but does not, in contrast, engage with any of the issues one would expect such historical awareness to raise for his depiction of a historically unanimous church.[137] His depiction of the development of theology over time is the classic linear progression to greater clarity with no real treatment of historic divides such as the schism with the East. Again therefore historical sensitivity is deployed not systematically but contingently, according to apologetic needs.

In the same way, Netter largely imitates, as Ghosh has shown, Wyclif's careful citation of sources and authorities and maintains 'an anxious display of textual and contextual fidelity,' quoting full extracts from the original sources (not books of extracts) and rubricating authorities.[138] Perhaps in response to Wycliffite polemic about misusing and mis-quoting authorities, Netter establishes a practice of using authorities that is designed to be beyond reproach, as well as building his argument on authorities that they generally acknowledged. In the third book, it will be argued, this rigorous methodology appears to break down in places, suggesting that its use in the earlier parts of the work is polemically driven, since when such references are not available it is abandoned. Again the apologetic imperative remains functionally paramount.

Ecclesiology: Authority and the Church

Netter's defence of the contemporary establishment builds, then, to presenting the church as apostolic by default, both in its traditions of practice and interpretation.

Constantine, the aged father Annacletus, Pope of Rome, Successor to St. Clement, agrees' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 331.

[137] Compare Arthur B. Ferguson, 'Reginald Pecock and the Renaissance Sense of History', in *Studies in the Renaissance*, 13 (1966), pp. 147-65.

[138] Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 194-207.

Inevitably this leaves the major question of what 'the church' actually is, and how its identity and authority are to be recognised and located in the event of disagreement.

It is here, as Levy notes, that Netter is at times rather less clear than elsewhere, since it is not always defined where the authoritative tradition of the church is to be located in the context of contemporary disputes, especially when the Catholic consensus he appeals to is in fact missing or disputed. The starting point for Netter's discussion of ecclesial authority is Petrine authority, which Netter wishes to defend against Wyclif, though he never quite takes his defence to the same extent as many papal canonists.[139] Thus the second book of his work opens with an exposition of Petrine primacy; arguing for Peter as prince of the Apostles, as the one to whom Jesus entrusted his church on his departure (based on John 22), as the modern version of the Levitical high priest, and as receiving the headship of the church with his name of Cephas (which he erroneously interprets to be from the Greek for 'head' instead of the Aramaic for 'rock').[140] Peter's primacy he then defends from various Wycliffite challenges including the suggestion that all apostles were equal (which Netter identifies as Jovinianism) and the suggestion that Paul was equal or superior (leading to a protracted analysis of the confrontation in Galatians and heavy use of quotes from Augustine and Jerome).[141]

This desire to rebut Wycliffite attacks on Petrine authority, without elevating the Pope above the universal tradition he so values, is what leads Netter into his complex balancing act between the authority and role of Peter and of the other apostles. As Alban notes, Netter defies definition as either a concilarist or a curialist.[142] There may be shadows of that emphasis on episcopal independence

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[139] Interestingly, Netter does not seem to engage at all with the criticisms of papal abuses found in the works of Gascoigne, Fleming, or Ullerston, or expressed in the Oxford petitions of 1414 and the English position at Constance, deviating here from the moderate reformism that Margaret Harvey suggests to have been the majority perspective in England at the time: Margaret Harvey, *England, Rome, and the Papacy 1417-1464: the study of a relationship* (Manchester, MUP, 1993), p. 242; Gillespie, 'Chichele's Church', in Gillespie and Ghosh, *After Arundel*, pp. 3-42, this reference pp. 16-20. Whether this represents a genuinely pro-papal conviction in Netter's case or another example of his refusing to cede any validity to Wycliffite criticisms of the established church is impossible to say for certain, though the latter seems more likely.

[140] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, pp. 241-252.

[141] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, pp. 253-270.

[142] Alban, *Teaching and Impact,* p. 3. See also Alexander Russell, *Conciliarism and Heresy in Fifteenth-Century England: Collective authority in the age of the general councils* (Cambridge: CUP, 2017).

discussed elsewhere as part of the English tradition, especially in relation to conciliarism, in Netter's insistence that, in spite of Peter's primacy, '*omnes Apostoli petrae sunt, non tamen Petrus: Praecipuae tamen Petrus, in quo omnes Petrae nomen sumpserunt*'.[143] The role of rock of the faith and foundation of the church is thus firstly that of Christ, and secondly that of all Apostles, but Peter is first of these and '*fundamentorum fundamentum*'.[144] The Pope of Rome inherits the associated authority, but it is not always clear what this means in practice; as Levy points out, the Pope's decisions appear to be indisputable but not infallible, and Rome has primacy but not indefectability, which Netter reserves for the universal church and not any particular church.[145] '*Inter omnes Ecclesiae Antistites, Romano Pontifici summa fides adhibenda est*,' and yet any one man, however wise or holy, or even any one council or synod can err; it is only in the unity of the church that security can be found.[146] It seems as if the Pope is to be obeyed and trusted as if possessed of infallible authority even though he is not.[147] The universal church is, he insists, to be believed over any individual, but has no mouthpiece or means of expression, so that in practice the papacy seems to be the highest individual authority source.[148] How one should resolve a conflict between Pope and tradition is not addressed, perhaps on the assumption that it could never occur, but perhaps also because it is not relevant to Netter's purpose; his aim here is refuting Wycliffism in all its criticisms of the

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[143] 'All the Apostles are rocks, not however the Rock, first however was that Rock, in whom all received the name of Rock' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. II, p. 269. For the complicated history of English attitudes to the papacy see Harvey, *England, Rome and the Papacy*, pp. 215-18. See also McEvoy, '*Robertus grossatesta lincolniensi*' for the development of a tradition of Grosseteste as an opponent of abuses who denounced the greed of the papal court and was excommunicated; this tradition was drawn on by many reforming orthodox figures such as Ullerston and Richard Fleming, but generally emphasised the criticism of papal corruption not the office. Compare the *Festial*'s ambiguous portrait of Grosseteste, seeming to suspect him of heresy, above pp. 71-2.

[144] 'Foundation of the foundations' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 269.

[145] Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority*, p. 125. See above on the indefectability of the universal versus any particular church.

[146] 'Among all the priests of the Church, the Roman pontiff is to be adhered to with utmost faith' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, pp. 365, 340.

[147] Interestingly, this is the same conclusion as the very different figure of Reginald Pecock will come to (below, pp. 180-182), from a very different starting point. Their congruence in this conclusion from contrasting theologies of authority and revelation again hints at the extent to which both were driven by the same polemical imperative to contradict Lollardy's authority to critique the church, rather than their theology unfolding in a vacuum.

[148] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 337.

contemporary church, not providing a roadmap for a functioning ecclesiastical polity.

A similar tension is inherent in Netter's discussion of councils.[149] In opposing Wyclif's denial of the authority of modern councils, he is fiercely critical of Wyclif's pride in standing against the 'whole church', citing Jesus' promise that where two or three are gathered together he will be with them and emphasising the church's position as the bride of Christ to assert her authority.[150] Yet he has also twice asserted that a general synod can be fallible, and that ultimate indefectability is an attribute solely of '*ecclesia Christi Catholica per totum mundum dispersa*'.[151] Councils are not infallible, and are not truly the whole church. General councils are to be obeyed, but only if not rebuked by a sentence of the Fathers, though who could proclaim such a patristic verdict is again not made clear.[152] In doubtful questions of faith, one is to turn to the apostles, their successors, and the tradition up to one's own day, rather than to council or pope, though this is essentially what he condemned Wyclif for doing.[153] In practice what the institutional church believes is to be believed and what it commands is to be obeyed. In particular, it seems as if both councils and popes are to be trusted and obeyed even though they are not actually infallible. It is possible that, as Levy suggests, a need to remain on good terms with the current papacy could have underlain Netter's delicate balancing act with regard to authorities.[154] It seems more likely, however, that the roots of this tension again lie in Netter's reluctance to concede any ground to Wyclif, so that Netter opposes all views associated with Wyclif even when they conflict with his own understanding of authority articulated elsewhere. Hence the congruence with the very different Pecock, who is forced into a similar confusing instruction by his own desire to oppose Lollardy while articulating a model of authority that does not allow for infallible popes and councils.

In either case, it leaves Netter unclear on how interpretative disputes amongst

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[149] Madrigal, 'The Place of the Doctrinale', p. 218.

[150] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 376.

[151] 'The Catholic church of Christ dispersed throughout the world' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, pp. 334, 340.

[152] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 14.

[153] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 334.

[154] Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority*, pp. 118-25.

those who *are* following the tradition through the fathers are to be authoritatively resolved. In the short term, the individual believer is to submit to authorities such as the papacy and councils, but in the long-term discernment of truth by the church he is more vague '*Qua rationes cognosci posset, si haeretici Sanctorum Patrum corrupta testimonia adducant*,' he discusses at one point, though here his target is Wycliffites using patristic quotations in ways he considers to be out of step with the tradition (which is to guide interpretation of patristic authorities even as the Fathers themselves guide scriptural interpretation).[155] The assumption appears to be that such a methodology will lead to consensus; hence Netter ends up using language of scripture being '*rite intellectam*' and '*patet*' reminiscent of Wycliffite insistence upon the accessibility of scripture to a 'rightly' disposed interpreter: for all his methodological rigour in constructing hierarchies of interpretative authorities around the understanding of scripture, Netter still cannot evade a certain subjective element, an appeal to right orientation in the reader.[156] This right orientation, however, is identified with a humble submission to the church: '*est prima praesumptio heretici, quod se praeponit omnibus doctiorem*,' and the pride of Wyclif and heretics in setting themselves against the whole church is constantly a target.[157] His final word in the *Doctrinale* is a rebuke to the Hussites for being willing to read scripture idiosyncratically.[158] Just as Lollard sources emphasised the need to be humble in approaching scripture, therefore, so did Netter; but whereas the Lollard target was pride associated with scholastic reason and institutional high office in the church, Netter's is pride in individual reason, revelation, or conscience *vis-à-vis* the church, i.e. anything which causes one to set oneself independently against the consensus. It is evocative of the attacks on Lollard 'pride' and 'presumption' seen in texts such as Bodly 649 or Love's *Mirror*, but here the objection is not to lay presumption but individual presumption. Individualism is thus the constant target: Netter criticises

[155] 'By what reasons we can recognise if the heretics are putting forward corrupted testimonies of the Holy Fathers' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, pp. 353-61.

[156] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 254, Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 186-88.

[157] 'It is the first presumption of a heretic, that he puts himself before all as more learned': *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, pp. 15, 16, 336, 376, 369. Compare his comment that Wyclif is '*sine verecundia*' ('without modesty'), Vol. III, p. 558.

[158] *Doctrinale*, Vol. III, p.1008.

the presumption of believing that the Spirit spoke to you alone, insists that one must believe the universal church over any individual, and asserts that Wyclif is on his own with scripture but '*scripta authoritas non certificat sine concordi intellectu Ecclesiae; nec revelatio sine teste*'.[159] Where previous reactionary orthodox texts such as the *Mirror* and Bodley 649 attacked lay presumption in placing their opinion before the church, Netter, writing in Latin and probably to a mostly clerical audience, attacks individual presumption in much the same way and for much the same reason. Authority is vested in the universality of a general tradition that is inherently not individual, but corporate and institutional. For any one scholar to set themselves against the wider body is sinful pride. The individual is accountable to the church, but not vice-versa: there is a careful and systematic exclusion of any space for an individual to call an erring establishment to account in the way the Lollards envisaged and sought to practice.

There is, then, little room in Netter's conception for the sort of appeals to personal conscience envisaged in Gascoigne's writing or made by Hus at Constance.[160] To be rightly disposed is to be open and submissive to the church's teaching and practice, not sceptically critical of it. As such, it is almost inherently exclusive of the sort of reforming dialogue epitomised by many Lollard sources that centred on systemic critique of the present church. Netter will not cede an inch of ground to Wycliffite criticisms of the church, and presents even their tendency to adopt a position of prophetic denunciation as inherently sinful. In his model, nothing of the church's public teaching seems to require change, and to critique the church is *ipso facto* to lose one's authority as a rightly disposed interpreter.

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[159] 'Written authorities do not prove [anything] without the agreement of the the church's understanding, nor revelation without witness' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, pp. 336, 337, 339.

[160] See for example Thomas A. Fudge, *The Trial of Jan Hus: medieval heresy and criminal procedure* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), on Hus's appeal to conscience in refusing to recant the propositions laid before him. See below, Chapter 5, on Gascoigne's interest in conscience. Appealing over the head of the church to a higher authority, as Hus did in appealing to Christ or as Gascoigne does in calling on church officers to answer to their conscience before the papacy, seems to have no place in Netter's formulation, since it is only the universal church that can call the offices of the institutional church to account.

Ecclesiology: the nature and structure of the church

Netter presents the church as effectively above criticism, since its traditions are flawless and for an individual to critique it is to fall into the sin of pride. When it comes to the nature of this church Netter is again ambiguous, being neither entirely communal nor entirely institutional. His first priority in ecclesiology is attacking Wyclif's view of a community of believers constituted through predestination; instead he insists on the church as a mixed entity constituted through baptism.[161] He condemns as impossible and presumptuous any effort to identify who is and is not elect and separate them out, since all are equally part of the church: '*rebrobi non modo sunt in Ecclesia, verum etiam ex Ecclesia*'.[162] This is an essentially pragmatic and institutional definition: those who are visibly part of the institutional church are really part of the church, so that the church is in practice institutionally defined. At the same time he defines the church at points as a transcendent community: all the faithful throughout time from the first gathering at the Jordan.[163] This appears closer to Wyclif's concept of the church as a timeless community defined by predestination rather than by institutional membership.[164] Further examination, however, reveals that this transcendent entity is still characterised by being a gathering on earth ('*congregatione in ripa Jordanis*') under due authority, so that it is in a sense still a transcendent *institution* rather than a community; it is the gathering itself that is timeless. Likewise, by placing the origins of the church with Christ and dating its descent from those first gathered to hear his teaching instead of (like Augustine and Wyclif) starting the church with Abel and so envisaging it as the community of the righteous across time, regardless of what religious institution they were involved in, Netter can emphasise institutional continuity as the key factor rather than shared personal faith: his church does not emerge from the gathering of individuals with a shared faith but is herself constitutive of the faith of individuals who trust in her

[161] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, pp. 274, 282.

[162] 'Reprobates are not only in the church, but of the church'. – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 295.

[163] Ibid,, p. 327.

[164] Wyclif writes of the church as 'the congregation of the predestined,' where the foreknown are excluded not only from the church triumphant, but also the church militant – Ian Christopher Levy, 'Grace and freedom in the soteriology of John Wyclif', *Traditio* 60 (2005), pp. 279-337, at p. 331.

testimony.[165]

Hence, for Netter, the structure of the church as an institution is almost inseparable from its nature as a body of faith; when he speaks of the different roles within the body of Christ he envisages different ecclesiastical offices: '*quibusdam accesit affectio contemplandi, & facti sunt corda Ecclesiae, ut sunt sanctissimi Anchoritae. Quibusdam psallendi votum Dei die ac nocte; et facti sunt collum Ecclesiae ut sunt omnes pene Claustrales. Quibusdam docendi exarsit devotio, & facti sunt oculi, ut Doctores*'.[166] The church here seems envisaged as consisting solely of churchmen of one sort or another. Likewise, he eschews the Adalberon tripartite division of the church into *oratores*, *bellatores*, and *laboratores* in favour of the Augustinian: '*Praepositos*, *Continentes* & *conjugatores*', identifying the *praepositos* with *rectores* and those who set rules; so that leadership and authority is entirely clerical, the laity having a role but a passive one.[167] This appears very close to the concept of 'the church' as essentially the clerical institution, seen in more 'reactionary' sources. Yet Netter elsewhere asserts explicitly that the laity are part of the church, just unable to properly analyse theology and so excluded from any role in the formation of doctrine and practice.[168] Alban suggests that for Netter there was no bi-partiate division between laity and clergy, but one structure of belief and practice in which the laity played an essentially passive role.[169] In fact Netter is willing in theory to give the laity an independent voice at the highest levels, if not a determining authority: *'fides Ecclesiae symbolicae testimonium laicorum fidelium non excludit*'.[170] On the one hand, the laity can even be called to testify in councils; on the other, leadership and authority are located with the clergy, and simply believing is the laity's job.[171] When

[165] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 15.

[166] 'To some fall affective contemplation, and they are made the heart of the church, as are the most holy anchorites. By others prayers are to be chanted to God day and night, and they are made the head of the church as are all those who are shut in the cloisters. Others kindle devotion by teaching, and they are made the eyes [of the Church], like the doctors'. *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 306.

[167] 'Prelates, celibates, and married' – *Doctrinale*, p. 298; cf. Madrigal, 'The Place of the Doctrinale', p. 214.

[168] Alban, *The Teaching and Impact of the Doctrinale of Thomas Netter of Walden*, p. 112.

[169] Ibid., p. 140.

[170] 'Faith in the church of the creed does not exclude the testimony of the faithful laity' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 340.

[171] *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, p. 381; see Levy, 'Thomas Netter on the Eucharist', p. 311. Russell's book also discusses varied conceptualisations of the role of the laity.

addressing the laity directly in his opening sections, Netter appears to strongly emphasise a passive acceptance of church authority, referring to them as '*maxime simplices*', and warning them of Wycliffites trying to get them to read Wyclif's books: '*cavete, Sancta Mater Ecclesia de salute vestra sollicita est*' and has banned them for good reasons.[172] Accepting the testimony of the church is, as has been shown, a constant theme, and the authority of priests and ultimately of the papacy and the councils is to be submitted to. Lay judgement is clearly not something Netter is willing to trust in practice.

Netter's defence of contemporary practice

When he comes to defend the practices of the church in detail, in the final two books of the *Doctrinale*, the tensions in Netter's theology become more obvious. Determined to defend all the minutiae of church practice as apostolic, Netter at points seems to deviate even from his own earlier methodology.[173] Rather than restricting himself to 'Christ, the Apostles, and the Fathers', Netter often has recourse to measures such as citing a papal decree to explain the practice of standing to hear the gospel.[174] Likewise, later, on the subject of images, Netter's argument becomes surprisingly pragmatic: 'Christians adorn images sufficiently differently from the worship of idols', 'the images in Christian places are useful signs, lack superstition, and are books to the illiterate', 'artificial images are more appropriate to men's worship than the image of a naked man, or of natural intellect'; such arguments are familiar rebuttals of Lollard critiques but owe little either to patristic tradition or scripture.[175] They had clearly failed to gain any traction on Lollards, and make no appeal to sources of authority they recognised: again, these arguments are those which

[172] 'Beware! Holy Mother Church is solicitous for your health' – *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, pp. 19-20.

[173] See *Doctrinale*, Vol. III, pp. 126, 145, 149 for Netter's willingness to argue an apostolic origin for liturgy, prayers, and songs in the contemporary fashion.

[174] *Doctrinale*, Vol. III, p. 224.

[175] *Doctrinale*, Vol. III, pp. 909, 922, 927.

might encourage and strengthen a faltering orthodox believer, or provide a response to a Lollard challenge in debate, but could not be a way to resolve the fundamental conflict or persuade Lollard opponents. Gayk has noted that 'many Lollard writers did not hold heterodox beliefs about images' nor oppose their use in theory, but rather embodied a reformist critique concerned with the dangers and abuses of contemporary practice.[176] It is significant that Netter makes no visible attempt to engage with this tradition, nor to recognise the 'traditional warnings against abuse' that formed the basis for Wyclif's critique of contemporary practice; here his concern is purely to vindicate the church of his day to an already sympathetic observer and not to present a balanced systematic theology of images.[177] He leaves no space for traditional scruples in his determination to exclude all elements of Wycliffism.

Likewise, it is noteworthy that in defending the practice of image usage Netter appeals to figurative anthropomorphism in scripture (speaking of God as if he had a body, for example) as a justification for image-making, and emphasises the value of the image as a real way of meeting with the divine. In this model, worshippers gain value not from the physical form but from the spiritual reality formed in the recipient – an uneasy tension with Netter's earlier insistence that figures cannot be extended to entail reality, when critiquing Wyclif's 'figurative' 'spiritual' concept of the Mass.[178] Indeed, Netter's language of the believer's encounter with an image is frequently resonant of Wyclif's of the Mass. When worshippers refer to an image as God, he says, they are really referring to that which it images, and here he is very close to the language with which Wyclif glossed, to Netter's horror, scriptural discussions of the host. Beholders even grasp the truth of an image by a non-rational apprehension not entirely divorced from Wyclif's understanding of how a rightly disposed exegete gains insight into the voice of scripture. It may be, as Pink suggests, that Netter seeks at this point deliberately to construct the *sacramentalia* of Mass, ritual, and images as an alternative to the word (read and preached) in mediating an encounter with the

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176 Shannon Gayk, *Image, Text, and Religious Reform in 15th Century England* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), p. 19.

177 Ibid., p. 9, pp. 3-13.

178 Pink, 'Holy Scripture', pp. 181-190.

divine, and so to undercut a Wycliffite model of the word in scripture and preaching as the primary locus of divine activity in the church.[179] More simply, it seems possible that the driving force of these sections is again a practical apologetic imperative to defend everything that Wyclif condemned, in service of which Netter is able to suppress his earlier qualms for the sake of presenting a comprehensive refutation of every Wycliffite position. In either case, it seems that in desiring to construct a justification for this part of contemporary church practice, Netter not only abandons the rigour of his patristic methodology, but seems perilously close to employing the sort of arguments he had earlier condemned. The polemical imperative is again distorting his theology.

In his argument concerning the canonisation of saints he likewise argues '*quod item canonizantur sancti probatis miraculis, quae ultra modum displicent Wiclevistis, sicut olim saracenis, Arianis, & Paganis*': here is the familiar argument that sects cannot perform miracles, and that miracles prove the orthodox doctrine, but this is not an appeal to an evidence source that Wyclif would necessarily have acknowledged, nor his followers (and certainly not William Taylor, who seems to be Netter's actual target at this point).[180] It seems as if the necessity of rebutting every Wycliffite critique of the contemporary church has again forced Netter to cast his probative net wide. It may be that to him these practices were already self-justified by being part of the tradition of the 'universal' church, so that these arguments become something of a post-hoc confirmation for the sceptic's benefit or, perhaps more likely, for the benefit of strengthening the uncertain *fidelis* who had been exposed to Lollard polemics, so that Netter does not feel the need to maintain such a rigorous methodology by this point in the book. Either way, these passages now assume that the reader is already convinced of the authority of the church's traditional practice, and seek to simply rebut challenges to this, largely abandoning his commitment in the first book to use only authority sources Wyclif would recognise. The apologetic imperative of making all

[179] Pink, 'Holy Scripture', pp. 194-201.

[180] 'That the saints are proved to be canonised by miracles, which limitlessly displease the Wycliffites, just as they once did the Saracens, Arians, and Pagans'. William Taylor, a Lollard critic of the cult of saints, amongst other things, would probably not have accepted most of the (extra-scriptural) miracle stories to which he here appeals.

tradition authoritative thus continues to lead to a visible breakdown of patristic methodology in the third book, reinforcing the impression that this is at the end of the day the dominant concern of his works.

Netter's location of ultimate interpretative authority in the tradition of a united universal church ultimately becomes problematic, as Levy and Madrigal both note.[181] Just as Wyclif had to postulate a flawless celestial scripture above the messy complications of individual codices, open through the Spirit to the understanding of the rightly orientated believer, Netter envisages a united 'universal' church above the complexities of schism, councils, and disagreements; and just as Wyclif offered little resolution to any genuine disagreement over the meaning of scripture, Netter does not make clear how hypothetical conflicts between councils, Popes, and the apparent voices of the Fathers and the tradition are to be resolved. Instead he seeks to vindicate the practices of the contemporary church from all charges, and bring the reader to full acceptance of the current institution, rather than perfect understanding of how its mechanisms are to function. To this end the *Doctrinale* not infrequently displays inconsistencies and even contradictions when considered systematically, as the necessary price of constructing a comprehensive and polemically powerful defence of all aspects of the contemporary church.

Conclusion: An Apologetic Ecclesiology

The uniqueness of the *Doctrinale* does not lie simply in its size and erudition, considerable as both are. Its defining features are the comprehensiveness with which it seeks to address specific Wycliffite problems, and the systematic way in which Netter critiques, discredits, and replaces the Wycliffite hermeneutic methodology. Whereas texts such as the *Mirror* sought primarily to build a devotional space that

[181] Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority*, pp. 138-49; Madrigal, 'The Place of the *Doctrinale*', pp. 218-25.

excluded Wycliffite praxis and markers of virtue, such as preaching and mutual edification, Netter builds a hermeneutic and ecclesiological space that excludes as foolish, unchristian, and prideful the Lollard effort to critique the contemporary church as external individuals. Thus he denies the openness of the Bible to individual reading, casting any attempt at personal interpretation as dangerously unaccountable and presumptuously prideful; and he casts the mark of authoritative theology as being harmony with the general tradition of the church, hugely limiting the scope for the prophetic challenges to the contemporary establishment that characterised Lollardy. There is a reason that the opacity and susceptibility to multiple interpretations of the Biblical text is one of the first objections he makes to Wycliffism: it is also, along with his expressed mistrust of individualism, the foundation of his philosophical attack on Wyclif and the dependence upon personal bible reading that characterised his successors. Thus Netter inherits and adapts the rhetoric of earlier sources against lay presumption in seeking to understand scripture for themselves and applies it to individual theologians seeking to understand scripture apart from the tradition. Wyclif's concepts of the need for accountability and the dangers of unconstrained or irresponsible exegesis are turned back on him by Netter in a systematic attack on such individualism.

'Whatever the status of Wycliffism per se, anti-wycliffism remained a distinctive and sometimes substantial component in the mentality of fifteenth century theologians,' writes Bose, and of Netter this was certainly true.[182] The anti-wycliffite imperative is evident most visibly in Netter's hermeneutics, but is sustained throughout the work's vast scope, even at the cost of its methodology and coherence. In the end, attacking Wyclif, and by extension Lollardy, was the determining influence of Netter's work. It led him into a new theological creativity in his emphasis upon patristic sources and the tradition as the essential requirements for understanding scripture, an emphasis that would influence Gascoigne and others after him. Yet underlying this distinctive approach was ultimately the same polemic strategy observed hitherto, that of cutting Lollardy off from its authoritative roots in the appeal

[182] Bose, 'Opponents of John Wyclif', p. 437.

to an individual's reading of scripture.

CHAPTER FOUR

Exporting Theology in the Vernacular: Reginald Pecock

Netter was not the last to attempt to vindicate the contemporary establishment by articulating a systematic theology inherently exclusive of Lollardy, its theology and its methods. Reginald Pecock, one of the most colourful and idiosyncratic of all those who wrote against Lollardy, attempted a similar project, albeit with a very different theological starting-point, writing a few decades later, in the 1440s and 50s. He too challenged the Lollard reliance on the interpretation of scripture, but from an emphasis not on tradition but on natural reason, and writing in English not Latin. In doing so he is generally seen as having fallen afoul of the very establishment he sought to defend.

Contemporary context: the 1440s and 50s

The years from 1440-60 saw the relative stability of the 1430s begin to unravel under the joint pressure of defeat in France and the personal weakness of the crown. From 1449-53, the English possessions in France, maintained in some form or other since 1066, were (with the exception of Calais) re-taken by France. The blow to national pride was vast, and created much searching for explanations. The common assumption that defeat was a divine punishment for national unfaithfulness made this pressure felt in the theological realm as well, making the climate a risky one for churchmen as well as nobles.[1] Frustration and a search for scape-goats led to worsening rifts amongst the noble classes and a collapse of the fragile unity of the regency, even as local disorder increased.[2] The lack of an effective royal will made the

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1 See Chapter 1, above, for the discussion of how contemporaries adopted the Deuteronomic framework of reward for faithfulness/punishment for sin and applied it to contemporary affairs.

2 Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses*, pp. 87-155. The pliable nonentity of Henry VI made conflict resolution and structural reform almost impossible, even as it created a vacuum at the centre of power which the great men of the country struggled to fill.

enforcement of order increasingly tenuous, especially in the localities, and deprived the polity of its focus of unity and guarantee of security even as fears and frustrations mounted in the face of disorder and defeat. It was thus a particularly high pressure period in public affairs, at once hungry for new solutions and easily spooked by controversy.

In the European context, ecclesiastical affairs had become more settled, with the large-scale discrediting of the attempt at an independent conciliar movement at Basel leaving a reunited papacy in largely undisputed control of the international church, even as the schism years had often cemented princely control of national churches. Many English churchmen had exhibited interest in Basel at first, although the Crown and Canterbury appear to have been more hesitant; how far the lack of later interest was due to the Council's own somewhat divisive actions and how far to fear of royal or ecclesiastical displeasure is unclear.[3] By the 1450s papal authority was clearly triumphant, certainly in England, although the papal collector reported widespread hostility to abuses and desire for reform.[4] Meanwhile controversy remained in Bohemia as the aftershocks of Hussitism continued to echo and the Roman church sought to reassert its authority, but English attention was increasingly focused inwards as the war with France reached its conclusion and the polity began to unravel.[5]

In English religion, the marginalisation of Lollardy appears to have continued, with no further presence being exerted in national forums and little in the way of new material emerging, although periodic inquisitions did continue to turn up Lollards in fairly substantial numbers.[6] R.M. Ball has argued that these years saw a strong 'back to the Fathers' movement, with an interest in patristic authority and a renewed emphasis on pastoral care, especially preaching, centred around a group of well-

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3 Margaret Harvey, 'England, the Council of Florence, and the End of the Council of Basel' in Giuseppe Alberigo, ed., *Christian Unity, the Council of Ferrara-Florence 1438/9–1989* (Leuven: LUP, 1991), pp. 203-225, at p. 208.

4 Ibid., p. 218.

5 Ibid., p. 225.

6 Norman Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich* (Toronto: PIMS, 1984), pp. 164-167, and 'Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Norwich', pp. 1-30; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 82-90.

connected and dedicated graduates.[7] It was perhaps connected with, if not inspired by, Netter's emphasis on patristic authority as well as by the interest in pastoral reform associated with the conciliar movement and demonstrated especially in the sermons of the English delegation.[8]The foundation charter of Lincoln College, Oxford, an institution dedicated to orthodox theologians who would combat heresy, expresses similar language and priorities, suggesting that these priorities were not isolated.[9] Meanwhile the 'affective turn' continued to be a part of European religiosity, with deeply immersive meditations on the Passion in particular becoming increasingly popular.[10] Illustrated manuscripts of the five wounds and other forms of complaint literature exemplified the trend, combining increasingly didactic and schematic records of the minutiae of the passion with the language even of romantic sensibilities in devotions, both to Mary and to Christ, whose body was depicted as 'sweet' and fair and its defacement by suffering and death dwelt upon.[11]

Introduction to Pecock's work: his career and scholarly interpretations

It was this context that saw the public career of Reginald Pecock. Born in Wales and educated at Oxford, he had a distinguished early career including holding the mastership of Whittington College in London, in 1431, a collegiate church with a strong tradition of preaching and involvement with the mercantile classes of the city. Bishop first of St. Asaph and then of Chichester, he wrote extensively in English, and in 1457 was investigated for heresy, forced to recant, deprived of his bishopric, and made to retire. After an abortive appeal to the papacy, Pecock passed out of the contemporary limelight, only to be 'rediscovered' fairly quickly at the Reformation.

7 Ball, 'The Opponents of Bishop Pecock'.

8 Nighman, 'Reform and Humanism', p. 130.

9 Kantik Ghosh, 'University Learning',pp. 289-308.

10 See for example Celia Sisam and Kenneth Sisam, eds, *The Oxford Book of Medieval English verse*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), pp. 393-6, 357.

11 Rosemary Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), pP. 2, 185, 240-281; Frederick J. Furniwall, ed., *Political, Religious, and Love Poems* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1866), pp. 140, 180-190.

Interpretations of his writings and career have since then been distinctly varied; Brockwell comments that 'the history of the interpretation of Pecock tells us more about the theology and ecclesiology of his interpreters than it does about him' – Foxe included him in his *Book of Martyrs* as a proto-Protestant, but there are also signs that Hooker may have drawn on him when writing against the Puritans; meanwhile the surviving manuscript of Pecock's *Reule of Crysten Religioun* bears occasional marginal annotations suggesting that an eighteenth-century reader has 'mined' it for anti-Catholic material.[12] Contrastingly, nineteenth-century writers were keen to portray him as essentially orthogonal to the Reformation divide: in the eyes of Babington he was 'the enlightened advocate of [humanist] reform'.[13] In the twentieth century he has been variously portrayed as a scholastic intellectual, educationalist, or 'renaissance man'.[14] Recent work has presented him as a linguistic and didactic innovator painfully aware of the dangers and tensions in his work, seeking to release academic ideas and methods into the vernacular under an orthodox aegis, staking out new rhetorical territory and supplanting Wycliffite achievements.[15]

Challenges of using Pecock's corpus

Any attempt to engage with Pecock's writings has to address certain key aspects of his works: their radical rationalism, their choice of the vernacular tongue, their

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[12] Charles W. Brockwell, 'Answering the Known Men: Bishop Reginald Pecock and Mr Richard Hooker', *Church History* 49: 2 (1980), pp. 133-146, at p.136. *The Reule of Christian Religion*, ed. William Cabell Greet (London: OUP, 1927) records these annotations where legible.

[13] Churchill Babington cited in Vivian Hubert Howard Green, *Bishop Reginald Pecock: A study in ecclesiastic history and thought* (Cambridge: CUP, 1945), p. 5 .

[14] For discussion of Pecock as more scholastic than reformer, see Mishtooni Bose, 'Reginald Pecock's Vernacular Voice' in *Lollards and their Influence*, ed., Fiona Somerset (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), pp. 220-227. For Pecock as educationalist, see Wendy Scase, 'Reginald Pecock' in M. C. Seymour, ed., *Authors of the Middle Age*s, no. 8 (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996), (pp. 77-114, and Elizabeth Palmer, 'Reginald Pecock' (unpublished MPhil. dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2001), pp. 14-15. The term 'Renaissance Man' born 'before his time' is attributed to J. Morison: see Green*, Bishop Reginald Pecock*, p. 5.

[15] Sarah James, '*Langugis, whose reules ben not written*: Pecock and the uses of the vernacular' in Elizabeth Salter and Helen Wicker, eds, *Vernacularity in England and Wales, c. 1300-1550* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), pp. 101-118; Bose, 'Reginald Pecock's Vernacular Voice' in Somerset and Havens, *Lollards and their influence.*

aspirations to systematic comprehensiveness, and their repeated claims to have been written against the 'bible-men' of the 'lay partie', traditionally identified with Lollards.[16] How far Pecock was in fact personally familiar with Lollardy, and thus how valuable the insights gleaned from his engagement with it can be, remains, of course, an open question: certainly he does not cite any known Lollard works explicitly, nor is there hard evidence of his having come into direct contact with Lollard texts.[17] On the other hand, Pecock claims to be working from personal conversation rather than any text, and contact with Lollard individuals is far from implausible, especially given the amount of time he apparently spent in London both during and after his spell at Whittington. Moreover the objections he sets out to counter in his apologetic sections do share in what Hornbeck terms the 'family resemblances' of Lollardy; 'the portrait of Lollard biblicism which emerges ...must be admitted to be entirely commensurate with what recent research into Lollard scholarship and hermeneutics has established'.[18] Thus they include the claim that only ordinances rooted in scripture are authoritative, that the 'meke' Christian will find true understanding even in hard passages, and that the worship of images constitutes idolatry, associated with particular reverence for the ten commandments, the word of scripture, and the vernacular tongue.[19] In addition they appear to encompass a high degree of scepticism against the institutional church, although Pecock does not, interestingly, directly discuss a discrete Lollard ecclesiology, and a tendency to challenge the ecclesiastical establishment based upon scriptural authority.[20] In the circumstances identifying these opponents of 'the lay partie' with Lollards is plausible.

Use of Pecock as a window into contemporary 'orthodoxy' has two further challenges: firstly whether he is in any way representative of his time, or was too

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16 Reginald Pecock, *The Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy*, ed. Churchill Babington (London: Longman, Greene, Longman, and Roberts, 1861), p. 36; *The Reule of Crysten Religioun,* ed., William Cabell Geet (London: OUP, 1927), pp. 17, 19. Henceforth '*Repressor*' and '*Reule*'.

17 Green, *Bishop Reginald Pecock*, p. 90.

18 Ghosh, 'Bishop Reginald Pecock and the Idea of Lollardy' in Barr, and Hutchinson, eds, *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale*, p. 257. See Hornbeck, *What is a Lollard?*, pp. 3-25 for discussion of family resemblances.

19 *Repressor*, pp. 4-7, *Donet*, pp. 118-148.

20 Defending the institutional church from such attacks is of course the avowed purpose of the *Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy*.

inchoate or simply too unique to be a reliable window on to his context, and secondly whether his fall can confidently be attributed to religious causes and thus used as an indicator of the boundaries of fifteenth-century orthodoxy.

In the latter case it must noted that not only do all extant accounts of his fall attribute it primarily to religious causes, and more particularly his provocative writings, but Pecock himself repeatedly expresses concern at how his works will be received, framed almost entirely within theological considerations (though implying personal – not political – animus to be present as well).[21] 'Y drede hasti iugementis', he says explicitly of his writings, and asks therefore that his works be read carefully and not misrepresented.[22] His message, he acknowledges, will be unpopular at first, and so his readers should 'sadly and oft overrede [read over] tho bokis' to do them justice.[23] More revealing is his protestation in the *Reule* that 'it is not in myne entent forto holde, defende or fauore in this book or in eny other bi me writun or to be writun in latyn or in the comoun peplis langage eny errour or heresie,' a protestation he backs up by offering to abandon any teaching at the instruction of 'myn ordinaries fadris of the chirche', an offer he repeats elsewhere.[24] While doubtless issues of personality and politics were never entirely absent from his condemnation, the consensus of contemporary sources seems focused on his religious teaching as at least the formal cause of his fall, even if other considerations might have influenced the decision to enforce theological boundaries rigorously in this case.

In regards to the question of Pecock's representativeness it must be acknowledged that he is, at points, unquestionably eccentric in both the content and presentation of his theology, so much so, indeed, that it is scarcely necessary to posit unseen political causes to account for his downfall. Nonetheless, even as an outlier to the theological spectrum of his times, Pecock is informative in two ways: he provides

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[21] Gascoigne does mention a provocative letter to the Mayor of London, *Loci e Libro Veritatum*, p. 212, but implies that this simply made the secular power amenable to his condemnation.

[22] *Book of Faith*, p. 118.

[23] Ibid., p. 116.

[24] *Reule*, p. 29, *Donet* p. 4. Such protestations, eventually honoured when he recanted, suggest Pecock cannot truly be classified as a heretic (even if his teaching was often heterodox), since he was not in deliberate rebellion against the institutional church.

another example of a contemporary theology, even at its most idiosyncratic, being distorted by the imperative of opposing Lollardy, and he provides insight into the sensitivities of the contemporary establishment's theological 'policing'. Pecock's contemporaries condemned him – both formally in his trial and privately in writings such as the *Liber Veritatum*– for a particular set of opinions, and comparing these to the content of his extant work is a revealing insight into where the areas of sensitivity were for the late-medieval English church. In places his radicalism seems to have been exaggerated, while in others it seems to have been ignored, and this suggests that certain areas were in practice the subject of far greater vigilance and more vigorous policing than others in the mid-fifteenth century. Significantly, both the areas where his contemporaries chose to attack Pecock's orthodoxy and the areas where he chose to engage with his (alleged) Lollard opponents continue to be heavily dominated by the threads of hermeneutics, ecclesiology, and virtue discussed in previous chapters.

Naturally there is a question mark over how reliable trial records may be as a map to beliefs: Hudson cautions against using them as 'negative evidence' to argue from the absence of any record of a view that it was not held, as absences might simply reflect the questions that an inquisitor failed to ask.[25] In this instance the case is a little more nuanced, however, since trial records are not being used as a guide to the beliefs of the accused, since we have much of Pecock's own writing for that purpose, but a guide to the priorities and expectations of his accusers, whose inquisition and condemnation seems to have been almost entirely focused around issues and attitudes associated with Lollardy, rather than other aspects of the writings that were far more radical. It is this very disparity between the beliefs of the accused and their portrayal by the authorities that is significant.

In Pecock's case, as well, it is possible to compare the official list of condemned propositions with the comments of individual (but well-informed) contemporaries such as John Bury, an Oxford-trained Augustinian who wrote against Pecock's work and the several-times Chancellor of Oxford, Thomas Gascoigne, frequently reinforcing the evidence of trial records for sensitivity in these particular areas. Edward's letter to

[25] Anne Hudson, 'The Examination of Lollards', *BIHR*, 46:114 (November 1973), pp. 145–159, at p. 152

Pope Sixtus IV asserting Pecock's continued threat identifies 'pecockism' as a separate (if connected) threat to Lollardy, suggesting that he was not simplistically being taken for a Lollard.[26] Yet contemporary criticism, both in trial records and histories, seems to centre not on his radical displacing of the traditional authority of scripture, of the supernatural element in Christian life, or on his profoundly pragmatic approach to reform, but on his relative demotion of the authority of tradition and the church.

As regards his contemporaries' charges: Pecock was condemned on a general charge of exalting 'natural reason' before scripture and the church, and specifically for denying the need to believe in certain articles: the descent into hell, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, and the Communion of Saints (these all being articles of the Creed, to which Gascoigne notes that he denied apostolic authorship and aimed to replace it with '*novum cymbolum magnum et longum*' of his own composition).[27] He was further obliged to recant the positive teachings: that the universal church can err, that the authority of a council is not absolute, and that it is lawful for anyone to interpret scripture in the literal sense, and that no other sense is necessary for salvation.[28] Gascoigne's more private account notes primarily his elevation of reason, specifically his own reason, over doctors: '*non ponderat de dictis sanctorum doctorum sed de suis propriis glosis*'; '*homo crederet racioni naturali potius quam auctoritati*'; '*proposuit legem naturae supra scripturam, et supra sacramenta*'.[29] Gascoigne also notes Pecock's writing on '*tales profundas materias in Anglicis*', but the charge of discounting the authority of the doctors in favour of reason is the one he returns to most often.[30] Bury's counter-tract *Gladius Salomonis* alone places Pecock's denial of a fundamentally authoritative role of scripture centre-stage.[31]

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[26] Green, *Bishop Reginald Pecock*, p. 67.

[27] Green, *Bishop Reginald Pecock*, p. 59; *Loci e Libro Veritatum,* pp. 104, 213. The charge is unconfirmed, but in character.

[28] Green, *Bishop Reginald Pecock*, p. 59.

[29] 'He did not give weight to the sayings of doctors but to his own glosses'; 'man should judge by natural reason more than by authority'; 'he placed the law of nature above scripture and above sacraments': *Loci e Libro Veritatum*, pp. 15, 211.

[30] 'such profound matters in English' – *Loci e Libro Veritatum*, p. 213. For further references to Pecock's reliance on his own reason and not on the authority of doctors, see pp. 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 210, 208.

[31] 'Extracts from the *Gladius Salomonis* of John Bury', in Pecock's *Repressor*, ed. Babington, pp. 572-608.

Examining Pecock's corpus reveals a certain amount of truth to these claims. Significantly, however, the inherent and implied theological framework of Pecock's endeavours is in places actually significantly more radical than this list would suggest, even if there is little explicit evidence for certain other of these allegations (notably denial of the Holy Spirit and the church) within his extant writings. Likewise many heterodox teachings of his are missing from these charges, suggesting that certain issues in particular were seized upon and others missed or ignored in drawing up these charges. The issue of authority is again the central one in these charges, and here Pecock's position was indeed theologically highly novel, especially regarding the inter-relationships of reason, scripture, and the church or tradition, even as it was in other respects quite conservative, emphasising the interpretative authority of the clergy and submission to the institutional church. This analysis will proceed by following Pecock's work on these subjects, with particular reference both to their internal tensions, which again seem linked to the polemic agenda of discrediting Lollardy driving much of his work, and to the tensions between his actual known writing and the articles for which he was condemned, which are often revealing of the extent to which sensitivity about Lollard ideas remained a powerful force in contemporary church politics.

Authority in Pecock: Man's Wit and Holy Writ

While the essential tension in previous writings on authority has emerged between the church as the channel of revelation and authoritative interpreter of it, and the scripture as read by a rightly-disposed individual, in Pecock the main locus of tension is between revelation and reason (associated with the ideas of Aristotelian logic, especially the syllogism) as sources of authority. Tradition, patristic and otherwise, is viewed as devoid of any special revelation or authority. Scripture, it will be demonstrated, appears authoritative in theory and yet is devalued in practice,

emphasised as an authority source when Pecock discusses authority, especially in contrast to the authority of tradition or the Fathers, but downplayed when in conflict with reason and in practice almost wholly subordinated to reason and drawn on only erratically in Pecock's theology.

Significantly, Pecock's condemnation appealed not to his subordination of revelation to reason, but to his alleged comments about the literal sense of scripture being the only necessary sense for salvation. This is not a statement made explicitly in his extant works, though he certainly emphasises the importance of the literal sense, insisting in the *Folewer* that 'þe groundis, forsoþe, of þilk parti of dyvynte which is feiþ, ben þe textis and processis of sum parti of hooli scripture in her litteral vndirstondyng'.[32] Indeed, 'allegorik or tropologik expownyng of scripture … maken no proof of eny trouthe and therefore the grounden no trouthe'.[33] In this, of course, Pecock is in theory simply re-iterating Augustine on the different senses of scripture, and he elsewhere condemns error in this regard: 'as is forto vndirstonde scripture in propirte and in pleynnyst sownyng of his wordis whanne it ought be vndirstonde figuratively, and agenward forto vndirstonde holy scripture figuratively whanne it oughte be vndirstonde as it pleynly sowneth [as it plainly displays]'.[34] These latter statements are no more than what Netter had said, drawing on the Fathers: that the literal sense is foundational to the other four and the proper basis of theological debate, but must not be slavishly clung to when the passage is clearly not intended to be taken literally. That Pecock was apparently condemned for such statements suggests either a certain hyper-sensitivity about areas where Lollardy laid a particular emphasis, like the importance of the literal sense, or an attempt to force Pecock's troublesome theology into a Lollard 'box'.

Pecock's hermeneutic approach is slightly more unusual: the New Testament he divides into three genres, rather than Augustine's four senses: history, doctrine (meaning moral teaching) and example, and insists that 'the firste seid sort longith not

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[32] *Folewer to the Donet*, p. 66.

[33] *Reule*, p. 457.

[34] *Reule*, p. 33.

to bidde or forbade eny vertu or eny vice'.[35] Historical accounts and doctrinal instructions are both areas treated as the domain of the literal sense, so that this division places it as the dominant 'genre' of bible interpretation. Doctrine is clearly his main area of interest, and senses beyond the literal are restricted to 'examples' illustrating what is taught in doctrine and history, rather than being acknowledged as constituting the basis of any doctrine or command. Thus instead of the literal sense being, as in Augustine's model, the first step of four senses (which can all be present in parallel in a passage), it becomes the primary content, with the figurative senses purely illustrative (and confined to certain genres), providing further explanations of the literal sense that are not strictly necessary. Here there is a strong echo of Lollard emphases on the literal sense, although not, again, actually all that different from what patristically-orientated 'orthodox' figures such as Netter and Gascoigne would say. The difference is more in emphasis and tone: Pecock emphasises the literal sense and opposes it (as will be seen below) to the authority of the contemporary church. In this he may well have sounded very like a Lollard to contemporaries, not because of his actual doctrine of scripture, but because of how he deployed it: he was lollard in 'mood' and priorities rather than actually Lollard in theology.

This Lollard-like concern for literal and historical senses in scripture is matched by Pecock's rhetoric about interpretative priorities. He condemns the poor exegetical practice of the contemporary church and asserts (citing Hilary) the importance of authorial intention and context.[36] Such emphases recall the particular interest of Wyclif, and Lollard writers in the right relationship of scriptural senses and the need for contextual exegesis, suggesting that Pecock could again have appeared Lollard in the area of scriptural interpretation and the literal sense; yet while Pecock's near-complete denial of traditional mystical interpretations is striking, it is hardly as heterodox as his expressed subordination of scripture to reason, an article noticeably lacking from his condemnation.

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[35] *Repressor*, pp. 292-93.

[36] *Repressor*, pp. 4-72.

Likewise, Pecock's comments on hermeneutics can again appear quite lollard: Pecock is clear that 'scripture ful oft expowneth hirself', and that such contextualising is a better interpretive tool than resort to allegorical and mystical senses.[37] In this he is reminiscent of the emphasis on context spanning Wyclif and Netter, expressed in the exegetical emphasis of Lollard sermons and largely absent from the more 'modern style' of collections such as Bodley 649, with their emphasis on a short fragment interpreted spiritually. Reason and the literal/historical sense are all that is needed to interpret scripture, he says, and asserts that even holy doctors such as Augustine worked with only these tools.[38] In this sense, his theology of scripture is profoundly 'open', with no esoteric tradition of understanding hidden meanings to reach the true sense of scripture restricted to the initiated. The guide to understanding scripture appears to be partially internal to itself, that of its own sense understood by reason, albeit dependent on a well educated reason and external knowledge of historical context, and in this his hermeneutics again appear quite 'open', requiring little special knowledge or caste membership, if with a more rationalist emphasis than his Lollard counterparts.

Pecock still insists on the need for educated professionals to guide interpretation, as will be discussed below, rather than laying all interpretation open to lay judgement. Laymen relying on their own wit and knowledge to interpret scripture would result, he picturesquely suggests, in a riot of contesting opinions like a dog-fight in a market.[39] Such, he suggests, has already been the fate of Bohemia.[40] The laity would be vulnerable to an eruption of 'dyuerse opinions' precisely because they lack the general education both to reason objectively by syllogism and to understand the historical context. The importance of the clergy in interpreting scripture thus remains, in theory, paramount, but it is ultimately based on educational qualifications and not

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[37] *Book of Faith*, p. 281. See below for Pecock's denial of the need for an extraneous church tradition to interpret scripture.

[38] *Folewer*, p. 66. Here is a clear denial of Netter's idea of a hidden interpretive tradition, since Pecock asserts that Augustine had only the same interpretative resources as a modern exegete.

[39] *Repressor*, pp. 85-86.

[40] i.e. as the result of allowing Hussite approaches (seen as identical to Wycliffite/Lollard approaches) free rein.

special insight as a caste or access to an essential interpretative tradition of extra-scriptural material. It is therefore much more 'open' than in any of the orthodox sources discussed so far.

In his actual use of scripture, Pecock puts some of these theories into practice, but in a fashion that does not fit neatly into existing categories. At times he shows a careful concern for the details of the literal sense; primarily in an apologetic rather than a systematic theological context, engaging with and critiquing Lollard biblical exegesis so as to critique and discredit their own appeals to literal readings of scripture. In so doing Pecock does indeed deploy sophisticated contextual analysis with (for the time) surprising historical awareness to critique alleged attacks on the church's practice – for example, defending against the attack on the use of images, he analyses across many pages in the *Donet* the commands regarding images in the Old Testament, using this to contextualise the second commandment as being a prohibition of idols, not all religious images.[41] God commanded, he points out, the making of images in certain contexts, such as the cherubim above the Ark. Idolatry, he insists, was a problem at the time when surrounded by cultures that were genuinely idolatrous, but for modern Christians it is not a danger, since no-one now truly believes wood and stone to be divine.[42] Commands against idolatry thus have a different meaning and application for the contemporary Christian from that which they possessed in their original setting.[43] This analysis combines wider biblical context with historical context to counter literal readings of particular commands. Likewise, in a remarkable example of historical and cultural sensitivity, he eschews traditional efforts to derive the sacraments from the Ten Commandments by their mystical sense, insisting that if the Jews had not perceived such a sense then it probably was not objectively present.[44] There is a similarly complex critique of Lollard proof-texts in the *Repressor*, which includes discussions of the date of writing of the relevant texts and

[41] *Donet*, pp. 121-29.

[42] *Donet*, p. 126.

[43] *Donet*, p. 129. Cf .Gayk, *Image, Text, and Religious Reform* for debates over images and idolatry. Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, pp. 101-192.

[44] *Donet*, p. 118.

what they may therefore be assumed to mean.[45] Engaging with interpretations of 1 Corinthians 14:38 that 'if any man unknoweth, he shall be unknowun' a phrase Pecock says is both the basis for his opponents' use of the self-referential 'knowun men' and for their critique of others for not knowing scripture, Pecock points out (via an analysis of Roman imperial regnal dates) that this verse pre-dates much of the New Testament, and so cannot refer to the Bible as Lollards have it, but must instead refer to the moral law, which can be known without the Bible. Interestingly this analysis ignores the immediate textual context (speaking of the authority of Paul's writings) in favour of the historical context; in this respect the interpretive lens it employs for scripture is still external rather than internal, and Pecock seems to be ignoring his own admonitions about the importance of internal context, perhaps under the apologetic pressure of seeking to discredit his opponents. Likewise with regard to 2 Corinthians 4:3, another text he presents as a proof-text for his opponents, Pecock insists that the 'gospel' in this context cannot be a written document, and must therefore refer to the law of kind. The same argument is used to maintain that Revelation 22:18 refers not to the adding of glosses to the biblical text, as his opponents cited it to claim, but to those who mistreat the content of revelation: glosses, he suggests, do not alter the content and so are not the subject of such a verse.[46] Linked to this, Pecock counter-attacks by taking Paul's critiques of over-reliance on the old Law in Romans and applying them to Lollard biblicism in the present, presenting both as over reverence for a material book of parchment and vellum instead of the inner book of the soul, for the physical means instead of the moral ends.[47] Pecock here engages with Lollard criteria of authority – close attention to the words of scripture in their literal-historical sense – but uses them in conjunction with wider historical context to attack Lollard

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45 *Repressor*, pp. 53-64.

46 It is noteworthy that Pecock's low view of the authority of tradition does not here prevent him from opposing Lollard attacks on this its traditional repository. As in other places, he appears more concerned to consistently rebuff Lollardy than to be consistent to his own theological schema.

47 *Repressor*, pp. 69, 25. Compare Wyclif's celestial and material scripture (see Chapter 3 above); the transcendent and infallible book that for Wyclif is the true meaning of scripture is for Pecock the inward work of reason and conscience.

interpretations of those texts. In this his practice reflects the frequent emphasis on the wider supremacy of reason over the bare text of scripture that permeates his work.

The Rule of Reason in Pecock's theology

For as much as Pecock emphasised the importance of scripture for revelation in matters of faith, the key shaping authority in his theological enterprise is reason, a concept that for him has a range of meanings but is especially associated with Aristotelian logic and the syllogism. At times in his writings the role claimed for reason was shockingly radical, going beyond not only most contemporaries but almost all prior Christian thought. Yet while his condemnation, and indeed contemporary commentators such as Gascoigne and Bury, emphasised his exaltation of his own reason over the authority of the doctors, it is the relationship between scripture and reason where he is at his most controversial and novel. Pecock's writings on reason show him clashing with both Lollard and 'orthodox' values.

For Pecock reason was the foundation for Christian life and theology: the rule of reason and the rule of faith, Pecock says in the *Donet*, are the same; for reason is 'a power with whiche … mowe be knowe unbodily þingis'.[48] This is in contrast with the language of the Digby poems or of Love's *Mirror*, especially with regard to the sacrament, which emphasises faith (in that context meaning trust in the teaching of the church) as the faculty empowering the believer to see things specifically hidden from physical (bodily) sight and natural reason, so that not only are the two opposed, but to them it is faith that allows the believer to see the unseen. Pecock reverses this, making reason the key to perceiving the 'unbodily'. To Pecock 'it is never worthi to be clepid a faith or a bileeue, what ever it be, which is not groundable and provable by … evydencis in resoun'; reason and evidence are not the opponents but the prerequisites for faith; more evidence means better faith, not worse.[49] When it is acting correctly

[48] *Donet*, pp. 15, 12.
[49] *Book of Faith*, pp. 129, 140.

reason is the highest possible authority: Pecock invokes the old example of angelic authority to argue that a syllogism, as the ultimate tool of reason, should be believed before an angel or the church.[50] Reason can be the solution to the church's and the realm's problems (and here Pecock may well have had that spiralling decline in military success and political cohesion in mind): Pecock wants to see tighter certification of degrees and more honour for academics, and he wants the people to learn logic in their 'modiris langage' – an interesting counterpoint to the Lollard emphasis on translation of scripture, and one which expresses his priorities. Reason and not scripture is the key foundational authority source with which the people need to be familiar.[51] In the *Reule* he argues that the heathen could be converted by rational arguments (implying that the key problem was intellectual, not volitional or moral), uses reason to prove the Bible's credibility, and criticises 'singular' (unique/individual) belief and practice, arguing that one should not believe anyone without evidence.[52] Pecock's depiction of natural reason is thus as the grounds of faith, not as an inadequate alternative. The contrast with Love, for one, could not be more stark.

Pecock's exalted reason is also, at times explicitly, opposed to the authority of scripture. Early in the *Reule*, Pecock states that he has set out to demonstrate certain truths by reason, not scripture, because 'it is swete and delectable to vs forto feele how far and how hiȝe and nyȝe oure natural resoun may bi his owne strengþe and power stiȝe and ascend...'.[53] Such a claim not only adopts the charged language of Eucharistic devotion ('swete and delectable' – compare Love's use of 'swete' for Christ's flesh) and applies it to the exalting of natural reason, presenting an almost divine status for the faculty of reason, but sees extending the realm of reason at the expense of that of faith/revelation/scripture as inherently good; an absolute clash with the Gregorian

[50] *Book of Faith*, p. 175. Compare Love's statement that the church should be believed above an Angel, *Mirror*, p. 237, and the accompanying discussion above, in note 277.

[51] *Repressor*, pp. 90, 9.

[52] *Reule*, pp. 421-43. Pecock's criticism of 'singular' belief and practice from his Lollard opponents sits in a certain tension with his own 'singular' teaching, and even his own awareness of being a controversial and isolated figure, evident in his occasional apologetic asides. While Pecock calls his opponents to subordinate their individual reason to the corporate reason of the church, he seems himself unwilling to subordinate his own individual reason to the corporate reason of tradition.

[53] *Reule*, p. 70. The use of 'feel' in a context of intellectual exercise is particularly noticeable, and suggests that the resonance with the language of eucharistic experience discussed below might be deliberate.

diction that where there is more reason there is less faith, but also with the Lollard appeal to the Bible as the centre of Christian life and worship. Pecock clashes with both sides of prior debates: he speaks here, as elsewhere, of 'natural' reason, language essentially identical to the 'kyndly reson' condemned by Love and the *ratio naturalis* condemned by Gascoigne. All seem to be speaking of the same faculty, intellectual reason separate from revelation, but their views of it are radically opposed; for Love, it is dangerous and opposed to the voice of God, for Pecock it appears in the language of devotion and is spoken of as being the voice of God.[54]

Not only is reason subjectively preferable to scripture, being 'sweet' and 'pleasing', but it is also objectively more fundamental to the Christian life: in the *Repressor* he claims that since no truth of moral law is fully taught by scripture alone, 'doom of natural resoun ... and not Holi Scripture is the ground of alle the seid governauncis deedis vertues, and trouthis', and as this reason enabled the heathen philosophers to attain to moral enlightenment, so scripture is inessential for moral living.[55] This reads like a deliberate assault on the emphasis in Lollard polemic on the need to 'ground' all arguments and theology in scripture.

In fact, Pecock presents scripture as deficient in essential teaching on moral living: 'Hast thou eny more teching in Holi Scripture upon matrimonie than a few lynes ... spekyn not save tweyne points of matrimonie?'. This is in contrast, he points out proudly, to his own systematic and rational exposition in the *Reule*, so that scripture alone is shown to be inadequate as a basis for the moral life.[56] Since scripture does not teach all that is needed for moral living it cannot be said to 'ground' it. Contrastingly, *doom of reason* is 'þe largist book of autorite þat euer god made' and does teach what is required.[57] Thus moral truths are 'more vereli writen on the book of

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[54] See below. Robert W. Mulligan, *'Ratio Superior* and *Ratio Inferior*: the Historical Background', *The New Scholasticism*, 1:29 (Jan 1955), pp. 1-32, explores the history of different models of reason, with distinction between 'higher' reason shaped by revelation and a 'lower' reason perceiving earthly things. Pecock appears to ignore this distinction and speak of a single united reason that is independent from revelation, but works with it in perceiving matters of faith and morals. See also Stephen E. Lahey, 'Reginald Pecock on the Authority of Reason, Scripture, and Tradition' in *JEH*, 56: 2 (2005), pp. 235-260.

[55] *Repressor*, pp. 10-14; quotation from p. 13.

[56] *Repressor*, p. 15.

[57] *Folewer*, pp. 9-10.

mannis soule than in the outward book of parchemyn or of velym' (an almost unique example of interpolation, 'Bible-speak', taking his image here from Romans 2). This inner book, in a hierarchy reminiscent of Wyclif's different levels of scripture, takes precedence over the outer, so much so that 'if eny semyng discorde be bitwixe the wordis writen in the outward book of Holi Scripture and the doom of resoun the words so writen withoutforth ou3ten be expowned and ... brou3t forto accord with the doom of resoun', not vice versa.[58] Scripture is dethroned from its position as (theoretically) the ultimate earthly authority: reason 'trumps' it, and scripture must be 'grounded' in reason and made to conform to it, not vice versa.

Pecock's specific writings on scripture make this explicit: even early in his literary career, in about 1443, he wrote in the *Reule of Chrysten Religioun* that scripture was only for the truths 'into whos knowing men mowe not come bi laboure of natural resonyng'.[59] Reason is fundamental, scripture fills in the gaps. Scripture, he argued, can be divided into three parts: those matters that go beyond what could be known by reason, needing exposition only to 'make accordaunce' with 'oþere part*ie*s of holi writt', matters of history (also outside the sphere of reason but which could not be 'a3ens resoun', or other parts of scripture), and matters attainable by reason, which were therefore to be 'drawen into accordaunce of natural resou*n*'.[60] This third kind was there to supply deficiencies in natural reason due to the Fall, but consequently both scripture and those doctors who glossed it needed to be checked against reason. Thus, as Pecock states his case, reason is the primary, foundational authority, essential to knowing how to live morally, and the standard to which scripture and the church's teachings must 'accord'. However, where something cannot be known by reason it may be shown by scripture: 'the 'doom of feith' serves as a last-ditch verificative force in

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[58] *Repressor*, p. 25. Interestingly, this passage was more often associated with conscience as the 'inner book' – see discussion in Chapter 5, pp. 244-246; Pecock's application of the verse to reason is symptomatic of his tendency to identify moral and intellectual insight as a single 'reason', and to identify conscience with knowledge of the good, in Aristotelian fashion, rather than the disposition of the will. See Lahey, 'Reginald Pecock on the Authority of Reason', p. 238.

[59] *Book of Faith*, p. 9.

[60] *Reule*, pp. 461-4.

cases where the 'doom of resoun' is incapable'.[61] Reason should always, however, be the first resort, and in the case of conflict, it is to reason that scripture must conform.

Surprisingly, Pecock's relative weighting of 'reason' and 'holi writt' is not purely theoretical; rather, it is consistently seen in practice in the way he authenticates his arguments. When he sees himself as discoursing on 'matters of faith', Pecock can indeed employ scriptural references, but in a fashion very different from that of many contemporaries. Whereas in *EWS*, Netter, or even Gascoigne (see below Chapter 5) argument is interwoven with or built upon biblical citations and flavoured with biblical language, in Pecock, biblical texts are separate from the flow of the argument, and pile up in unexplicated abundance at the end of a passage.[62] This is perhaps most evident in the *Reule*, which at one point features at a rough count 107 references in the space of eleven pages.[63] Whether from deliberate choice or time constraints, not one is expanded, but merely used as a 'footnote' to back up Pecock's discourse. Such references are generally introduced by a phrase such as 'as is writun', 'as may be takun', 'as is open', 'as may be had'.[64] A similar usage is apparent when, having elaborated an argument by reason, Pecock appends a phrase such as 'wherto Scripture ful weel also expresseley and appropirly accordiþ' followed by a string of references, in this instance untranslated Latin quotes.[65] Again scripture comes after the main argument, rather than opening and framing it in the fashion seen in Gascoigne, or in much contemporary preaching. In the latter phrase indeed its subordination is made obvious: scripture 'accords' with the conclusions reached by other means, providing confirmation rather than foundation. Equally intriguing here is Pecock's neglect to translate or gloss his citations – it implies either that he expected his audience to be

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61 Lahey, 'Reginald Pecock on the authority of scripture, reason, and tradition', p. 252

62 For a direct comparison with Netter see Bose, 'Vernacular Philosophy', in *New Medieval Literatures*, 7 (2005), pp. 73-97. See chapters 1 and 3, above, for discussion of *EWS* and Netter.

63 *Reule*, pp. 204-215. (This analysis draws in places upon an essay written as part of the Cambridge M.Phil. in medieval history in 2010.)

64 *Reule* p. 204. There is no obvious significance to the differing phrases used; it is not clear, for instance, that 'may be takun' indicates any more tenuous a derivation than does 'as is open'; the former is used for deducing the existence of more than 12 legions of angels from Mathew 26 , which explicitly states '*an putas quia non possum rogare Patrem meum et exhibebit mihi modo plus quam duodecim legiones angelorum*', while the seemingly more confident 'as is writun' is used for 'deriving' the fall of the evil angels from John 8, with its vague reference to ' *vos ex patre diabolo estis*'. It seems then that these introductory phrases are used fairly interchangeably.

65 As in the *Reule*, pp. 117, 128 or 140, for example, or the *Folewer*, p. 19. Example quoted from the *Reule*, p. 128.

familiar with scripture and with Latin, or that he aimed these references at a part of his audience that was, perhaps having an eye here to potential clerical critics more than lay readers, or that he believed the mere presence of a citation would authenticate his work as scriptural irrespective of all the audience's ability to understand it. This talismanic sense of scripture, as an object conferring authority by its mere presence, rather than by grasping its sense or meaning, is in many ways the very opposite of the Lollard insistence on an open, accessible scripture preached and explained to all.[66]

An informative comparison here is the complete absence even of any biblical 'footnotes' from some of Pecock's work – for example his discussion of the clergy in the *Reule*, or of the dual procession; both controversial topics where one might have expected him to seek the support of scripture, especially if he was concerned to authenticate his work in the eyes of potential critics.[67] Even more surprisingly, his account of the creation of the world makes no appeal to revelation, being solely assertion supported by reason – something that Bury, at least, picked him up on in the *Gladius Salomonis*.[68] Much of what he says here could in fact have been backed up by the sort of battery of references he appends to other sections, yet none is present. It seems unlikely that he is avoiding scripture as a matter of principle in these cases – he is clearly happy to turn to it for support elsewhere.[69] Rather one is reminded of his repeated delay in mustering the defence of the Four Tables (his system of ordering moral law) from scripture. This is promised many times, but always as something on its way: thus for example in the *Donet* 'y haue bigunne to make a special book bi him silf, clepid "þe witnessing of þe iiij tables"'.[70] By the end of his career this work was apparently available, but it he seldom refers to it.[71] While Pecock often cross-references his own works in the same way he does the Bible (suggestive perhaps of the systematic and definitive nature of the opus he aspired to create) this Biblical defence

[66] An explicit attack on talismanic scripture made in Cigman's edition of Lollard sermons is discussed above, p. 39.

[67] *Reule*, pp. 320-30, 78.

[68] *Reule*, p. 100; *Gladius Salomonis*, in *Repressor*, Vol. II, p. 595.

[69] See for example his recourse to Galatians to back up his discussion of 'works of flesh': *Reule*, p. 137.

[70] *Donet*, p.84.

[71] *Book of Faith*, p.109.

of his work is one of the least often cited. When he does cite it, it is purely as a defence against claims that the tables are un-biblical, not as a foundation for his arguments as, for example, the tables themselves are cited.[72] This low profile suggests that undergirding his writings with scripture was less of a priority for Pecock than was making them an internally coherent philosophical system. Hence his neglect to provide scriptural references for many parts of his writing where they would have been possible. One should also note that the idea of producing a separate book to show that one's ideas are scriptural in fact takes even further that separation of argument and authority implicit in Pecock's use of Bible references as 'footnotes', and that contrasts so strongly with many of Pecock's contemporaries, both orthodox and Lollard.

Pecock's tendency to sideline scriptural revelation in favour of rational and pragmatic justifications is even more obviously radical in regards to moral and ethical codes. Here he not only denigrates the utility of traditionally reverenced formulations such as the Ten Commandments, but also bases his moral criteria not on the commands of God per se, but on what is 'rational'.[73] Thus he chooses to demonstrate the 'insufficiency' of Moses' tables by a preceding train of definitions and conclusions describing what constitutes a 'moral vertuouse dede', and concludes with a cross-reference to the latter part of the *Donet,* without any discussion of the authority of divine command or the commentary of the rest of scripture.[74] Indeed the *Donet* and the *Folewer* arguably go further yet in claiming that the criterion of a good deed is explicitly its relation to reason, rather than to God or to charity: 'þe doom of resoun', Pecock pronounces in the *Folewer*, is 'unlackabli requyrid and so neccessary to moral vertues'.[75] Thus in the *Donet*, for example, he asserts 'what grounde haue we to condempne wicchecraft saue þis: þat þilk craft puttiþ vertu in wordis and

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[72] *Donet*, p. 84; *Book of Faith*, p. 109.

[73] The importance of the Ten Commandments to Lollard writing may be behind his choice of this particular target, see Somerset, *Feeling Like Saints*, especially pp. 36-57. Pecock in the *Donet* seems to aim at them when he decries 'newe doctouis and her now folewers, [that] cleeven to moyses tablis so ouer tendirly, and as for al hool and sufficient commaundementis of God displain hem so bisily'. *Donet*, p. 20.

[74] *Donet*, Chapter 2.

[75] *Folewer*, p. 115.

countenauncis and dedis more þan bi resoun can þerynne be founde?'[76] Right or wrong is thus defined neither deontologically/preceptively (breaking or keeping God's law) nor relationally (bringing the soul nearer or further from God) but rationally, without direct recourse to God at all, a radical re-drawing of moral criteria.[77] Green compared Pecock briefly to Anselm, as an example of an earlier attempt at reaching those outside the church by rendering faith rationally credible, and Ferguson remarked that in fact Pecock had reversed Anselm's dictum of *credo ut intellegere*.[78] But passages such as those cited above suggest that the difference was more fundamental; Pecock is not seeking to render Christianity intellectually credible so much as to construct a moral and ethical system 'grounded' first and foremost on reason, not divine revelation of any kind, even scripture.

At least one of his contemporary opponents recognised this epistemological radicalism in Pecock and was horrified by it: John Bury's *Gladius Salomonis* aims to attack '*totius … sui mali radicem, ubi rationis humanae titulos in morum directione Scripturis Sanctis praefert*'.[79] Bury amasses an impressive array of authorities, pagan as well as Christian, from the ancient world to denounce setting reason over revelation.[80] Reason is flawed, post-fall, and cannot be relied upon, and there is anyway no part of God's law that cannot be grounded in scripture.[81] Unlike the tendency of Netter and others to present heretics as deriving their doctrines from earlier heretics and as nothing new, but a continuation of the same old threat, Bury is

[76] *Donet*, p. 206. Interestingly Pecock does not seem to overtly follow the common track of lumping together heresy, black magic, and superstition seen in, for example, Jean Gerson's writings: here superstition and witchcraft are perhaps implicitly joined as both placing undue weight on words, but Pecock makes no attempt to join Lollardy to this condemnation (Brian Patrick McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the last medieval Reformation* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), p. 53). The condemnation of such practices in Cigman, *Lollard Sermons* (at p. 112) is ostensibly similar but crucially different; there, the preacher condemns: 'wicches and telisteris [fortune tellers], and alle þat bileueþ in charmes and writtes maad wiþ wordes vngroundid in Scripture' – it is the lack of grounding in scripture, rather than in reason, that is the objection. Reason has again replaced scripture in Pecock as the voice of God that must be obeyed for morality.

[77] See for comparison Psalm 51; 1 John 3:4; Jer. 2:13. Bernard of Clairvaux would be one example of the relational emphasis in moral teaching; see for example Matthew Dyle, *Bernard of Clairvaux and the Schools* (Spoleto, Fondazione centro Italiano di studi sull' alto medioevo, 2005), p. 43.

[78] Green, *Bishop Reginald Pecock*, p. 116; Ferguson,'Reginald Pecock and the Rennaissance Sense of History', p. 149.

[79] 'the evil basis of all [his thought], where he prefers the claims of human reason to sacred scripture in the moral direction .' See *Repressor*, Vol. 2, p. 572.

[80] Ibid., p. 590.

[81] Ibid., pp. 580, 591.

frank that Pecock's claims for reason are new and unprecedentedly radical: '*quis haereticorum ab exordio tanto furore excanduit adversus spiritum veritatis?*'[82] Displacing divine revelation in the Bible with natural philosophy based in reason is too dramatic a paradigm shift to be accommodated in any of the customary old models of heresiology; it is Pecock's own shocking invention. Interestingly, Bury's recognition of this is not reflected in the official trial-records, nor in Gascoigne, who may not have been as familiar with Pecock's actual works as Bury. These sources fix immediately upon his relative demotion of the authority of Fathers and of the church, without mentioning his discarding of the whole concept of divine command ethics.

The Church and the individual

In relation to the church and tradition again a tension is visible. Pecock emphasises the authority of the clerical caste and the institutional church vis-à-vis the layman when debating with Lollards; yet he undermines the normal basis for such claims: he dismisses claims of a supernatural access to revelation for the clerical caste and disparages contemporary reverence for the authority of the tradition and especially the Fathers, presenting his new work as superior to the old. This conjunction is, as will be demonstrated, particularly problematic at points, verging on self-contradictory in its arguments, suggesting that it is an imposition of Pecock's anti-Lollard agenda and not integral to his theology.

Pecock is colourfully dismissive of claims of clerkly infallibility: he remarks that if the clergy claimed that they could not err when gathered into a general council 'thei ben lauȝed to scorn of the lay persons', an implicit denial of any special supernatural authority to councils, and in sharp contrast to the conciliarism of many English theologians.[83] Not only is clerical authority fallible, but it is derivative: 'alle oþire seid

[82] 'What heretic since the beginning has blazed with such fury against the spirit of truth?': ibid., p. 604.

[83] *Book of Faith*, p. 111. Compare the discussion below (Chapter 5) on Gascoigne's conciliarism; see especially Russell, *Conciliarism and Heresy in Fifteenth-centuryEngland*.

bookis fecchen her autorite fro oon of þese two now seid bookis, þe bible and doom of resoun' – a formula that seems to completely exclude the church and tradition as independent sources of spiritual authority.[84]

Pecock develops this understanding of spiritual authority consistently across his books, and across the different avenues of ecclesiastical authority. He is explicit that patristics are not the infallible guide Netter and others suggested: even holy men can, contra Gregory, err, he says, and are to be constantly tested.[85] The writings of doctors, he says, 'ben ful profitable … if þei be take into vse bi a good discrecioun'.[86] The doctors of old worked out the understanding of scripture by reason, rather than by some special spiritual insight, even Augustine.[87] They were only, he says, 'serchers aftir trouthe', and could go wrong.[88] Countering a citation of Jerome he responds 'but what here of, thou3 he so seide? Certis his tunge was not the key of heuen or of erthe, neither had power to mak eny thing to be trewe or fals or other wise to be than he coulde fynde before it to be trewe or false in doom of resoun or Holi Scripture'.[89] Pecock claims to have written a book 'of doctouris' against 'ouer much cleuyng to doctouris writyngis'.[90] In contrast to both Wyclif and Netter, antiquity is not to be equated with authority: the early church could err, and the modern church is constantly examining and improving its faith; so that modern thinkers are if anything more likely to be correct.[91] Pecock's particular agenda in these arguments is perhaps revealed when he makes the son in the *Book of Faith* say 'I dare not argue further a3ens 3oure doctrine bi eny doctouris writing': Pecock's project of building a theology 'grounded on reason' requires that he not be bound by the whole apparatus of inherited authorities.[92] In this may be a deliberate push-back against those opponents who had clashed with him since his early and provocative sermons on preaching, and who appealed to patristic

[84] *Folewer to the Donet*, p. 10.
[85] *Book of Faith*, p. 146.
[86] *Folewer to the Donet*, p. 11.
[87] *Folewer to the Donet*, p. 66.
[88] *Reule*, p. 465.
[89] *Repressor*, p. 335.
[90] *Folewer to the Donet*, p. 68.
[91] *Book of Faith*, p. 132. Contrast Netter, above, p. 135.
[92] *Book of Faith*, p. 152.

and ancient testimonies as their guiding authorities; Pecock instead aims to construct a theological system that denies the authority of their chosen sources just as it circumvents that of Lollard biblicism.[93] Hence, perhaps, his particular focus in this case on patristic writers and singling out of Jerome and Augustine, two key authors in particular for that school of orthodox renewal identified by R. M. Ball and exemplified by Netter and Gascoigne: Pecock may be driven by an apologetic agenda here quite as much as in his attacks on biblical authority.

There is a glimpse here of the extent to which anti-Lollard forces could also be in dialogue and conflict with each other – Netter, Pecock, Love, and Gascoigne were all ostensibly opponents of Lollardy, but Pecock spends as much effort pushing back against the patristic devotion characteristic of Netter and Gascoigne as against Lollard emphases on scripture. While an agenda of discrediting Lollardy and a methodology of building an understanding of authority and virtue that excluded such attacks on the contemporary establishment were shared, that methodology could manifest in forms radically diverse and even in fundamental conflict with one another, even as they all sought to be orthodox and anti-Lollard.

When it comes to the precise spiritual authority of the church as a corporate entity, either in the hierarchy of the institutional church or in the more nebulous understanding of authority vested in a universal tradition, a coherent theology is hard to distil from Pecock, perhaps because of a need to navigate the conflicting apologetic imperatives of condemning Lollard rebellion whilst refusing to be bound by inherited authority. At one point he insists that one is bound to obey the apostolic church, and he says early in the *Book of Faith* that the institutional Church inherits the apostolic office.[94] However, in a lengthy passage, Pecock attacks two conventional arguments for the superiority of the church over scripture: that the church has interpretive or dispensing authority over scripture, and that the church has an oral tradition which is the justification for scripture and therefore of higher authority.[95] Pecock argues that

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[93] See Ball, 'The Opponents of Bishop Pecock', for discussion of Pecock's opponents in this regard and their common reverence for patristic authority.

[94] *Book of Faith*, pp. 173, 274, 182.

[95] *Book of Faith*, pp. 235-91.

the time gap is too long for the church to have preserved an oral tradition, and that the tendency of oral traditions to become corrupt would undermine its reliability – an interesting argument, not least in that it assumes only natural process to be at work, not any supernatural guarantee of the church's faith.[96] On the other point he argues that the power of expounding scripture is not authority over it, suggesting that the Pope can dispense with apostolic commands but not Christ's, that the church lacks the authority to alter scripture since it is not the apostolic church, and that the clergy may make new observances but not new truths, like a householder making house-rules for children.[97] Moreover, he says, 'scripture ful oft expowneth hirself' (again recalling Gascoigne and Wyclif's interest in the importance of interpreting scripture on its own terms), without needing external traditions to do so, so that scripture is not in fact dependent upon the church or any of its traditions to interpret it.[98]

Thus Pecock's church has neither special interpretative authority over scripture nor reliable alternative sources of authority vis-à-vis scripture. Yet, somewhat contradictorily, he does suggest, as mentioned, that Popes can dispense with apostolic commands, suggesting a measure of practical authority over scripture, and he holds that one is bound to obey the church even if one disagrees with its interpretation of scripture, since it is more likely to be right in its interpretation than any one individual is. This confused model of relations between Scriptural and church authority is unique, partly in its demystifying naturalism with regard to the church, but also in the fine and dubiously tenable line it seems to be treading between a denial of the supernatural authority of the institutional church on the one hand, and allowing it the authority to declare the truth, and so to contradict all Pecock's reasoning, on the other. Given Pecock's apparent lack of regard for historic pronouncements of doctrine by the church elsewhere, it is possible that this struggle to

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96 *Book of Faith*, p. 250. Compare the discussion in Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority*, pp. 1-53, which surveys different perspectives on what the promise that Peter 's faith would not 'fail' meant for understanding divine involvement in the preservation of the church's teaching.

97 *Book of Faith*, pp. 274, 278, 279, 291. One could compare Netter's view of the church as having reached a point where the canon is closed, leaving it with interpretative authority (that is, considered as a corporate entity, Netter is reticent in locating this authority with any specific entity in the church) but not determinative. See above, chapter 3.

98 *Book of Faith*, p. 281.

find a formula that still concedes authority to the church's decrees may be an indication of contemporary sensitivity on the subject, especially in the face of Lollard denials of the church's supernatural authority; Pecock trying to signal his own divergence from Lollard radicalism. It is equally possible that he is simply seeking to construct an ecclesiology in which the church is still accountable to his reasoning but not to Lollard biblicism, a sort of two-way apologetic against his conversation partners from both groups. Either way, the end result is that Pecock's depiction of the church's directly spiritual, supernatural authority is highly limited, and ontologically lower than scripture or reason as an authority source.

The sort of authority Pecock does assign to the church is remarkable in two ways: it is founded on reason, not revelation, and is professional, not priestly. Clergy are not presented – even in discussion of the sacraments – as being a distinct caste possessed of particular access to or stewardship of divine grace, nor hidden traditions of divine revelation. Their role is not to stand between God and man, but to teach and lead with scholarly knowledge and reason. Early in the *Repressor*, Pecock had insisted that learned clerks are needed to teach the Bible, lest everyone follow their own opinion, as discussed above, a concern based on laymen's inadequate mental and educational equipment, not different spiritual endowment.[99] The *Book of Faith* gives one of the problems of Lollardy as being 'setting not bi forto folowe the determynaciouns and the holdingis of the chirche' – a statement that seems evocative of the reactionary stream of mid-century theological thought, except that he again goes on to explain that this is because clerks 'passen her wittis,' not because they possess a special institutional 'grace', holiness, or tradition.[100] Their authority is intellectual, not moral or spiritual. Pecock seems to want to insist on the need for deference to the church's teaching, but without abandoning his emphasis on reason over revelation.

The extent of clerical authority vis-á-vis the laity is thus not always clear. Later in the same text Pecock reiterates the arguments that clerks should be followed

[99] *Repressor*, p. 85. See Landemann, 'The Doom of Reason', pp. 90-123. Landemann notes the difficulty Pecock gets into in trying to present a system that allows for lay engagement whilst keeping it under ultimate clerical authority.

[100] *Book of Faith*, pp. 114, 119.

because they are more learned, and makes the significant argument that the (institutional) church will be forgiven any errors since she tries her best to get her doctrine right, so that following the church's teaching is a safe bet.[101] The clergy are fallible, he admits, but so is any individual, so it makes sense to follow them as the safer route. This argument is again curious at several levels: it seems to be an endeavour to assert ecclesiastical authority without recourse to claiming supernatural aid, but assumes that everyone will agree that the church is trying to get doctrine right, which is surely optimistic given Lollard critiques.[102] The argument would in fact work better, given its starting axioms, as an argument for individual conscience: if right intent guarantees forgiveness, one cannot be sure of the church's intent, but one can of one's own, so following one's own judgement should appear safest; but this is not the course Pecock takes. Instead, significantly, he develops an argument whose outcome is to rebuke and restrict lay theologising when independent of clerical guidance. Ultimately he goes so far as to say that recent 'brenned [burned] men' died in sin even if their beliefs were true, because they were being disobedient to the law of God by disobeying the church hierarchy.[103] Such hierarchy is apparently only a clerical-lay distinction, since Pecock is conscious that elsewhere he is going 'a3ens þe doom of wise men and of seintis in her writingis'; while he insists he is willing to submit to his ordinaries, he is himself willing to critique and contradict the Fathers and Doctors.[104] The tension between Pecock's desire to silence his opponents' rebellion against church authority without himself being bound is never quite resolved.

Not only are there internal problems, but this argument for clerical authority runs up against his own claims in the *Reule* when arguing that it is safe to teach the Trinity to laymen: there are other articles they are far more prone to go astray on, he suggests, such as the sacraments, and they go astray because they were led astray by

[101] *Book of Faith*, pp. 205-18.

[102] A point, as Landemann notes, that Pecock acknowledged earlier in the *Book of Faith*, that laity 'complain that clergy 'ben not iugis indifferent' – *Book of Faith*, p. 112, discussed in Landemann, 'Doom of resoun', p. 115.

[103] *Book of Faith*, pp. 192-194, discussed Landemann, 'Doom of resoun', p. 115.

[104] Reule, p. 467.

erring clerks, 'Wiccliffe and hise disciplis'.[105] Here, he claims that following clerks unquestioningly has been the problem, not failure to follow them nor unconstrained lay theology, and he does not offer any solution to the problem of the laity trustfully following errant clerks except the general assurance of forgiveness for right intent.[106] Pecock also suggests that should an individual reason further with right intent from an article of faith they will not be sinning even if they are erring, so it is clear that his belief in the justifying power of right intent does indeed extend to individuals as well as the church.[107] Yet the 'brenned men', even if not erring, sinned, because they were not in submission to the hierarchy. Right intent for layman seems ultimately to be restricted to obedience and submission to the church, not, however, (unlike previous examples) because it has special insight or access to truth, but because of due order. Pecock's conception of reason as the ultimate authority forces him to acknowledge that the intelligent layman might have better access to truth than some clergy, and that truths known by reason should in theory have more authority than the church or an angel, yet he also insists that laity, however certain of the truth they may be, must in practice subordinate their judgement to the clergy.[108]

Pecock's theology here is not consistent, and it is again possible that it is being shaped by the differing polemical demands of his project, at one point wishing to confront Lollardy, at another to defend his own teaching of theology. The fact that so many of these tensions appear in the same areas as they do in Netter – the relationship of ecclesiastical authority, individual conscience, and one's understanding of scripture – may be significant. It seems as if the need to oppose Lollardy was a particularly heavy invisible hand over attempts to formulate theology in these areas. It may also be significant that it is Pecock's engagement with Lollard critics – for example over the 'brenned men' – seems in particular to push him into some of the

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[105] Ibid., p. 96.

[106] Pecock does, Landemann points out, at one point encourage laymen to present their 'evydencis' against the church in what he appears to imagine as a debate format, but it is unclear how such a debate could sit with the suggestions that laity must submit to clerical judgement and instruction. See Landemann, 'Doom of reason', p. 114.

[107] *Reule*, p. 96.

[108] *Book of Faith*, p. 175. Pecock repeatedly defends the rationality and intelligence of the educated laity, for example Reule, pp. 20. 93.93.

strongest claims for clerical authority, even to the point of distorting his earlier statements about the authority and availability of reason. As with, in their different ways, Netter, Bodley 649, and Love, Pecock emphasises church authority vis-á-vis the layman to a degree that does not fit perfectly with the tenor of his work. Combating Lollardy's essential critique of the established church seems to be provoking a reactionary response of asserting its authority over any potential critic.

Campbell suggests that Pecock's desire in asserting the clergy's intellectual authority is to 'control his own experiment' and stop the laity going too far.[109] There is certainly a contextual distinction: when Pecock praises and emphasises the laity's power to understand difficult and complex theology it is always in the context of defending his decision to teach it to them (versus his critics in the establishment); when he emphasises their need for intellectual subordination to the clergy due to the latter's superior understanding and education, it is always to refute lay critiques of the clergy.[110] But it is also notable that the latter occur in a context of refuting characteristically lollard complaints, not simply providing against all risks of independent theologising. His assertions of the need for clerical leadership come in the *Repressor* and the *Book of Faith* in a context of explicit polemical engagement with Lollardy, not a general pre-emptive warning about exceeding clerical control. It appears that Pecock's developing arguments are here being torn between the conflicting needs to combat heterodoxy through asserting traditional authority structures, whilst still asserting his own radical new approach to the faith in independence from those structures.

In his understanding of authority sources, then, Pecock was clearly radical (in the sense of making a change to the roots of theology), placing reason in theory over and above both the church and scripture in a way that clashes with reactionary and reforming orthodox sources as well as with Wycliffite practice. What is essential to note in this context is that his radical demotion of scripture appears to have attracted

[109] *The Call to Read*, pp. 254-58.

[110] Compare *Reule*, pp. 20, 85-99 with *Book of Faith,* p. 119.

almost no official opprobrium: it makes no appearance in the charges against him nor even in Gascoigne's complaints; the only reference to his views on scripture being the charge about the primacy of literal understandings. Yet given the reverence traditionally accorded to scripture's authority, to reduce it to an occasional supporting role and explicitly seek to minimise its use seems far more radical than suggesting that the literal sense was the only one necessary for salvation.[111] Yet it is his literalism and his challenge to the authority of doctors and the church that appears to have been made the basis for a case against him, in spite of his efforts to assert ecclesiastical authority. The available evidence fits a model of the continued sensitivity of the contemporary church in these areas: biblical literalism and denial of traditions of ecclesiastical authority were perceived as Lollard traits, and so treated with suspicion, whereas undermining scriptural authority was ignored not because it was theoretically orthodox, but because it was not directly associated with Lollardy, and so, perhaps, did not make it either into the minds or into the questions of those who drew up charges against Pecock.

Pecock and the Christian Life

When one proceeds to examine Pecock's discussion of the means and aims, rather than foundations, of the Christian life one finds similar patterns. Pecock's views on many areas are disconcertingly maverick and expressed in controversial language, yet there is no evidence that these provocations were picked up upon in his trial or by his opponents.

With regard to the sacraments, Pecock appears to be essentially memorialist, to a degree in fact far outstripping most Lollard tendencies. When he writes on the subject in the *Donet* he makes mention only of baptism and the Eucharist and has no discussion of priestly powers or the need for priestly presence.[112] The Eucharist he

[111] See Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority*, pp. 2-5, for a summary of views of Scriptural primacy.

[112] *The Donet*, pp. 34-88. Significantly, these are the two sacraments later recognised by reformed churches as having biblical precedent.

describes as an expression of charity, repentance, and remembrance whose purpose is to recall Christ's life and passion.[113] It is, he says, a 'remembrauncyng tokene, or signe of witnesse' which requires right intent – but no mention is made of the necessity of a rightly ordained officiant, nor of any supernatural process at work. Again, he relates later that forgiveness in the sacraments requires repentance, but mentions no other necessity or requirement for efficacy.[114] The *Repressor*, seeking to defend church practice, asserts that men need 'seable rememoratijf signes' as well as 'heerable' (i.e. preaching and teaching), and that the new Corpus Christi celebrations have simply replaced older processions around the cross as a new form of ritual.[115] Discussing what makes a good image, he uses baptism and the Eucharist as examples, implying that they are images and not objectively efficacious. The *Reule* is more explicit: the Eucharist 'is ordeyned and sette there as a signe, tokene, or sacrament, and as a signe, token, or sacrament we schulden vse it there, that is to seie for that it schulde signifie to vs and bringe into oure mynde thin holy lijf and passioun'.[116] 'Sacramenting is a remembraunce making' Pecock insists, and churches should not overspend on it at the expense of more virtuous works such as feeding the poor.[117] Other signs and rituals include the structure of the church, its decoration, 'lowting, bowing, kneling, falling adoun, ligging, [et al.]'.[118] Pecock further argues that sacraments cannot be used before the age of discretion because the user must be able to understand and remember God.[119] This is a dramatically de-mystifying approach, one that essentially avoids any supernatural element in its theology but instead locates the action of a sacrament in the understanding and meditations of the recipient. The contrast with Love's writing, where understanding must instead explicitly be surrendered and where the

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[113] Ibid., p. 35.

[114] Ibid., p. 88.

[115] *Repressor*, pp. 203-09.

[116] *Reule*, p. 247. Bose, 'Opponents of John Wyclif', p. 449, notes that Kenningham and Dymmok also use the langauge of memorial and sign in talking of the sacraments, but they are careful to emphasise that this is only one thing that they are; Pecock makes no such caveat.

[117] *Reule*, p. 252. Here again Pecock's 'mood' and priorities resonate more with the Lollards, emphasising the practical welfare of people over the inanimate or the symbolic.

[118] *Reule*, p. 244.

[119] Ibid., p. 374.

supernatural transformation of the external elements by the medium of a proper priest is foregrounded, is striking, and clearly Pecock is outside the bounds of orthodoxy set by numerous pronouncements, not least the condemnation of Wycliffite views on the sacraments. Yet, again, there is no record of such teaching being used to secure his condemnation.

The same is true, incidentally, of smaller provocations – Pecock is often startlingly complacent about proclaiming the value of his own work, stating that his four tables are much more useful means of growth in virtue than the Ten Commandments, for example, or that this form of teaching 'nediþ not to be chaungid or amendid'.[120] While he was condemned for the statement that the literal sense of scripture was sufficient for salvation, the statement that his own four tables are sufficient teaching for salvation is surely more provocative, or at least more original.[121] Equally eye-catching are some of Pecock's passing statements that are *male sonantes* at best and outright heretical at worst, such as the claim that Christ is the saviour because he enables us to save ourselves, which is purely Pelagian, or that we should have charity for the devil because he can be saved.[122] Such remarks are far outside the mainstream of orthodox thought, but make no appearance in his condemnation, even as what appear to be more 'sensationalised' versions of his claims regarding scripture and the church do.

Somewhat less provocative are Pecock's views on other means of grace, such as preaching. Here Pecock is more cautious, calling on Christians to listen to learned clerks, not popular preachers and 'rattlers of texts', but acknowledging that there is a place for preaching in 'exortacioun … and remembrancing' of truths known, rather than teaching new truths.[123] He notes it as a priest's duty to teach and exhort, amongst other duties, and similarly presents preaching and teaching as duties of a prelate in the *Donet*.[124] *The Book of Faith* continues to make a distinction between

[120] *Reule*, p. 365; *Donet*, p. 81.

[121] *Donet*, p. 161.

[122] *Reule* p. 217; *Follewer to the Donet,* p. 197.

[123] *Repressor*, p. 88.

[124] *Reule*, p. 322, *Donet*, p. 72.

good and bad preaching, warning of 'sermouns in pulpit, which lay men trouen al to be substancial divinite'.[125] Pecock's own works, as has been mentioned, are presented as doing the office of preaching by at once exhorting and teaching.[126] Perhaps the earlier controversy sparked by his downplaying the importance of preaching had scared Pecock into more conventional views on this topic, though verbal preaching seems to be accepted but viewed with wariness, rather than celebrated as an important means of grace as it is in Gascoigne.

Conclusion: the character of Pecock's work

Pecock is in many key respects a unique figure, unprecedented and largely unimitated until recent years. His project in many ways aimed at a very different church from that envisioned by either the 'reforming' or 'reactionary' streams in orthodoxy. Pecock is not readily placeable upon the spectrum of contemporary thought, having aims and ethos all his own; in many ways he stands orthogonal to traditional oppositions between 'Lollard' and 'orthodox' categories. Firstly, Pecock is concerned with right ethical understanding, more than devotion, with the head more than the heart. While he does, as Campbell points out, draw upon meditative resources as an aid to making the decision one knows to be correct, such resources are minor and a means to the end of a virtuous life, not to mystical experience, contemplative union, or any sort of affective stirring.[127] Indeed, Pecock rebukes the 'lay partie' for judging with

[125] *Book of Faith*, p. 138.

[126] It may be significant that Pecock's style even at points evokes that of English sermons, notably with his heavy reliance on memorable participles for key points: 'knowing, louyng, good werkis aftir hem worching and grace into these iii now seid thingis helping and forthering' – *Reule*, p. 1.

[127] Campbell, *Call to Read*, p. 144. See also Alan F. Westphall, 'Reconstructing the Mixed Life in Reginald Pecock's *Reule of Crysten Religioun'* in Gillespie and Ghosh*, After Arundel,* pp. 267-284. Westphall argues that Pecock is aiming here to present a new vision of Christian living around the idea of the 'mixed life', He notes however that 'characteristic of Pecock's inherently practical teaching is that contemplation is accorded no special status; it is willed, accessible, not dependent on miracle or inspiration, but a rational discipline that can be learned through study of Pecock's Seven Matters of Religious Knowledge. We are as far removed as can be from any ideal of contemplative elitism and withdrawal, as contemplation is perceived as being of little inherent virtue per se unless co-operating with the active life to issue forth in charitable, meritorious deeds' – in contrast, he notes, to prior writers such as Hilton or the Cloud author, who emphasised union with God as the highest aim (p. 275). Pecock's priority is practical virtue, contemplation a borrowed stepping-stone to that goal.

their affections, presenting this as womanly and childlike.[128] There is little of the 'affective turn' in his work, and his aim is to re-form the judgement, not the emotional life – in contrast to the priorities shown by Love, for example. The church he seeks is one characterised by universal awareness of the issues of ethical theology, a church of thinkers labouring for virtue, not of sinners seeking God. In this sense he is perhaps more reminiscent of Aristotle than Augustine.[129]

Secondly, Pecock is consistently de-mystifying. In an unusually personal passage in the *Book of Faith*, he differentiates Christianity from the 'Saracens' who do not allow their faith to be questioned, and insists that the self-examination of Christianity is the best guarantee of its verity; he prays that the church should not be infected with the Saracen refusal of rational investigation and evidence 'but suffer thou ordeyne and do, that the lawe and the feith, which thi chirche at eny tyme kepith, be received and admitted to falle undir this examinacioun, whether it be the same verri feith which thou and thi apostlis tau3ten or no, and that it be received into examinacioun, whether it have sufficient evydencis for it to be verry feith'.[130] Pecock's vision of the church is certainly not as an infallible body preserving a special deposit of spiritual revelation (contra, for example, Netter), but as a teaching community engaged in constant self-examination. The test of its teaching is to be two-fold: its correspondence to reason and to the historic teachings of Christ and the Apostles.

While this *ad fontem* focus might recall the Lollard emphasis on scripture and the reformist orthodox interest in patristics, it must be emphasised this church is professional to the point of being professorial, rather than prophetic or priestly: rather than being concerned with making an impassioned challenge to the immorality of his day or the corruptions and compromises of the establishment, as the prophetic tradition demands, Pecock is disconcertingly pragmatic in his defence of contemporary practice. He insists that the fraternal orders, imperfect and compromised though they may be, still do more good than harm in the end, and that their members would have done more harm if they had not joined them; that even sinful monks still do less harm

[128] Bose, 'Reversing the Life of Christ', p. 70.

[129] Compare Campbell, *Call to Read*, pp. 11, 246.

[130] *Book of Faith*, p. 132.

than soldiers fighting in France; that wealthy monastic palaces are good because they keep lords out of sinful settings and encourage them to give more; or that the Franciscan habit of counting money with a stick instead of touching it at least reduces their temptation with wealth, even if it violates the spirit of the command.[131] Such casuistic justifications are alien to the reforming zeal of a Wyclif or a Gascoigne, but indicate Pecock's concern not with a pure divine vocation that the church must live up to but with optimising the practical daily ethical impact of her institutions.[132]

Likewise, when it comes to the Christian life more broadly Pecock is pragmatic and anthropocentric. His explanations of salvation have little to say on the life and death of Christ, the mediation of the saints, penance, the sacraments, or any other divinely orientated activity. Instead he emphasises self-examination, meditation, reflection on the benefits to be gained, and a life of active charity towards one's neighbours: human activity, orientated towards improving this life, not preparing for the life to come.[133] 'Pecock's God is a pragmatist: he values healthy, broadly educated servants … he isn't looking for the singular acts of devotion often found in saints' lives.'[134] The Christian life is not relational, passionate, or supernatural, but one of rational good-neighbourliness. In this framework of a rational, de-mystified, anthropocentric piety concerned for utilitarian practicalities rather than purity, heavenly expectation, or mystical experience Pecock is perhaps at his farthest remove from the leaders of contemporary theology, Lollard, reforming, or reactionary.[135]

Pecock's corpus is thus exceptional in its time, resonating at times with more reforming ideas and at times with more reactionary, but ultimately remaining idiosyncratic to the extreme in the emphasis on reason as the ultimate authority.

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131 *Repressor*, pp. 505-58; Green, *Bishop Reginald Pecock*, p. 163.

132 Rosenwein's concept of a community's 'mood' may again be hepful here: the mood of devout contemporaries, Lollard or 'orthodox' was towards reforming zeal, concern to get details right, and an emphasis on passionate devotion and supernatural experience, whether mediated through sacraments or scripture. Pecock's almost utilitarian pragmatism is a totally different 'mood' from that shared by both sides of the Lollard debates.

133 See, for example, *Donet*, p. 97.

134 Winstead, *John Capgrave's Fifteenth Century*, p. 83.

135 It should be noted that in this Pecock may have in fact been closer to the concerns of many lay contemporaries than his more idealistic opponents. His radicalism here is deviation more from the ideals of theology than the mainstream of quotidian concerns.

When it comes to discerning the impact of Lollardy, however, he is useful in two respects. The first is the discrepancy between the charges levelled against him, not just in the (admittedly always somewhat problematic) trial records but also by contemporaries such as Gascoigne and Bury, and the actual points of provocation in his writings, suggesting that the contemporary church had been rendered especially sensitive in areas to do with the Lollard challenge, specifically concerning the authority of the church and of the literal sense of scripture. The second is the extent to which his own theology has been influenced by reaction to Lollardy.

It has already been noted that in some areas Pecock's works can be hard to reconcile with each other, and his arguments appear confused and uncertain: for example over the apostolic authority of the church, or over the wisdom of submitting to the church's teaching based on her right intent. It may not be co-incidental that these are the areas at the centre of clashes between orthodoxy and Lollardy, where there would have been most pressure on Pecock to counter Lollard positions. His defensiveness and repeatedly expressed willingness to withdraw his opinions certainly suggest he felt this pressure.[136] It is possible therefore that some of the confusion in Pecock's work stems from the tension between the pull of his own emphasis on free reason and the imperative of trying to reject Lollard ideas and retain an orthodox stance on issues of authority, a tension Pecock ultimately failed to manage. This is occasionally manifest very visibly: for example in the *Donet*, defending clerical authority, he insists that 'þough þo grete clerkis in clerist and li3test maner vndirstonde not derk processis of þe bible in latyn, 3it þei ben in sum maner sweteli fed and edified bi redyng þerin'.[137] Since he is explicit in the *Reule* that prayer in an unknown language or even with 'harde or derke clausis' is bad prayer, and implicit all through his teaching is the importance of rational understanding and more especially the clergy's professional understanding of the Bible, this is an incongruous assertion, but it makes sense, given the Lollard emphasis on Bible translation and criticism of clerical ignorance, if Pecock is here abandoning the wider tenor of his teaching in

[136] *Reule*, p. 29; *Folewer*, pp. 29-34, 226; *Book of Faith*, pp. 116-122; *Donet*, p. 4.

[137] *Donet*, p. 7.

obedience to the imperative of defending the status quo against Lollardy.[138] To rebut Lollard criticism of ignorant clerics and a Latin scripture, he must assert that understanding is not essential to profit from bible reading, even though he has earlier asserted that it is essential even to profiting from the sacraments.[139]

Indeed, it has been argued that Pecock's fundamental endeavour was shaped by the need to discredit Lollardy, specifically by attacking the Lollard dependence upon scripture.[140] Certainly, he claims a desire to show the sufficiency of reason against an over-dependence on scripture, in many cases, and starts the *Repressor* by identifying dependence on scripture as the root of the errors of the 'Bible Men', devoting much of the rest of the book to disproving them.[141] By re-positioning syllogistic logic on the part of the educated in the place of vernacular scripture read by the rightly-disposed he could undercut the entire Lollard polemical system and replace it with reliance upon the intellectual authority of an educated clergy. Again, this is a similar apologetic strategy to Love and Netter, undercutting the Lollard claim to an authoritative voice of prophetic critique based on personal understanding of scripture, but with a very different alternative system of authority taking the place of the Lollard model.

In some ways, in spite of the gap of time, there are surprising similarities between the ambitions of Pecock and Nicholas Love.[142] Both Love and Pecock are clearly shaped by reaction to Lollardy, each seeking to combat it, though in very different ways. Both wrote in the vernacular, endowing it with new theological depth in the process. For both of them, issues of church authority, reason, and scripture clearly arise as key combat zones, leading to different perceptions of the nature of the church, the means of the virtuous life, and the means of grace. For Love, the sacraments are also a key area, while essentially ignored in Pecock, whereas Pecock shows concern for other areas such a translation and abuses of monastic and fraternal

[138] *Reule*, p. 399.

[139] See above, pp. 171-2.

[140] Campbell, *Call to Read*, p. 2.

[141] *Repressor*, pp. 4-7.

[142] See above, chapter 2.

discipline that Love, perhaps in obedience to the Constitutions' strictures, does not discuss. In general, however, they suggest awareness of similar battlegrounds, even across their very different generations, ecclesial contexts, and theology. Yet their fates were radically divergent. The crucial difference appears to have been their different attitudes to church, scripture, and laity: Love's laity are urged to meek submission to a supernatural church, and discouraged from engaging with the dangerous and misleading literal sense of scripture, Pecock's to thoughtful and critical attendance on an academic church that is the mere custodian of scripture and reason. In an age still sensitive about anything that savoured of Lollardy, it was this, rather than his more provocative statements, that led to his downfall. Pecock's fall was triggered less by his own genuine radicalism than by the extent to which he resembled his Lollard opponents. Even in the mid-fifteenth century, and in the writing and career of a very independent-minded bishop, Lollardy had cast a long shadow.

CHAPTER FIVE

Orthodoxy without Lollardy? Thomas Gascoigne's *Liber Veritatum* *(Dictionarium Theologicum)*

Introduction to Gascoigne and the *Liber Veritatum*

A very different perspective on the development of English religion across almost the same period and context as Pecock is provided by the figure of Thomas Gascoigne. Educated at Oriel, Oxford, and ordained priest in 1427, he went on to serve two periods as Chancellor of Oxford University and to be involved in preaching and scholarship as well as administration.[1] While he was unusually scrupulous about not holding multiple cures, and never occupied episcopal office, it has been suggested that he may in many of his preoccupations have been symptomatic of a wider group of churchmen in his era.[2] A vocal opponent of Reginald Pecock, and not without contacts in royal and episcopal circles, he nonetheless consistently presents himself as an outsider frustrated by the corruptions of his time.[3] Surviving material from the pen of Gascoigne is regrettably scarce, despite his long career as a schoolman and chancellor of Oxford, and the only significant theological work of his that survives is a single manuscript of his somewhat idiosyncratic creation, known as the *Dictionarium Theologicum* or the *Liber Veritatum*.[4]

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1 See for example R. M. Ball, *Thomas Gascoigne, Libraries and Scholarship* (Cambridge, CBS, 2006), pp. vi, 1-3.

2 See Ball, 'The Opponents of Bishop Reginald Pecock', p. 259.

3 See Bose, 'Prophecy, Complaint, and Pastoral Care, pp.149-162.

4 Extant in Oxford, Lincoln College, MSS Lat. 117, 118. A relatively brief *quaestio* on indulgences also survives, discussed by Winifred A. Pronger, 'Thomas Gascoigne', *EHR,* 53:212 (1938), pp. 606-20.

This substantial work survives in two volumes belonging, perhaps significantly, to Lincoln College Oxford, founded by another reforming bishop, Richard Fleming, to combat heresy (and explicitly Lollardy), and comprises alphabetically arranged theological terms with multiple entries of widely varying length and number elaborating upon each.[5] 'Conscience', to take an example drawn on here, has only three entries, covering a single page, whereas 'the exposition of scripture' has scores comprising over twenty thousand words. The exact genre is thus hard to place; the work is clearly evocative of the encyclopaedia or dictionary (Bose suggests viewing it as 'an alphabetical compendium of *distinctiones*'), except that the material included is eclectic and frequently very far from being either a definition or example of the term in question.[6] There are some resemblances to John Whethamstede's *Granarium*, though the *Liber Veritatum* is far more idiosyncratic and has a much more polemical tone.[7] The work is self-consciously concerned for posterity, presenting itself as a sealed testimony of present evils on the pattern of Isaiah 8, and frequently seems to present the church of its own time to a hypothetical future reader.[8] Its theology is not particularly systematic, and different entries can in fact exist in a certain degree of tension with each other (discussed below under 'conscience') without the author endeavouring to make overt reconciliation between them; often it takes the appearance more of a collection of perspectives or references than a single coherent theology.

This makes it hard to judge the intended purpose with any degree of confidence: it might be envisaged as a self-justificatory condemnation of the evils of the present age, except that it does nonetheless in places include

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5 Ghosh, 'University Learning', in Van Dussen and Soukup, *Religious Controversy in Europe,* pp. 289-308, p. 291.

6 Mishtooni Bose, 'After the Wycliffite Controversies: Religious Thought and Political Practice in Thomas Gascoigne's *Liber Veritatum*', *Cultural and Social History*, 6:2 (2009), pp. 171-89, at p. 174.

7 Alfred Hiatt, 'The Reference Work in the Fifteenth Century: John Whethamstede's *Granarium*', in Carol M. Meale and Derek Pearsall, eds, *Makers and Users of Medieval Books: Essays in honour of A. S. G. Edwards* (Cambridge,: Brewer, 2014), pp. 13-25.

8 This may be part of the author's self-positioning as a Jeremiah prophetically critiquing the contemporary church from without; see Bose, 'Prophecy, Complaint, and Pastoral Care', pp.149-162.

detailed discussion of long-standing theological questions. The work is laid out as if to be a reference work on theological questions, yet the content of its references is in some cases vast, unstructured, and frequently anecdotal rather than theological. It could, perhaps most plausibly, be a resource of preaching material on given topics, which might explain the mingled profusion of patristic references with anecdotes often repeated many times across different sections and a highly polemic and didactic tone, though some of the sections do seem overly long for inclusion in a regular sermon, and of course it must be emphasised that no purpose is ever made explicit in the work. Its main uniting feature is its interest in reform of abuses and corruptions in the church. Unlike the texts previously examined, the *Liber* is shaped not by anti-Lollard polemic, but by hostility to the perceived failings of the contemporary church, a hostility that can itself often look and sound distinctly lollard.

Its intended audience is not clear: 'it is difficult to establish precisely how widely he intended it to be disseminated,' as Bose points out. Gascoigne wanted a copy made at Syon after his death, but showed no desire to publish his work more widely, suggesting that it might not have been intended for general consumption or as a wider resource, and the surviving manuscript lacks any sign of having been prepared for a wider, commercial readership.[9] The choice of Latin as a medium, the choice of Syon as a locus of preservation, and the absence of any explanatory or introductory apparatus to the text all suggest that the text was not aimed at a general lay audience; and it could indeed have been intended specifically for a narrow circle familiar with its purpose and intent and requiring no introduction to it. While there are indications that part of the work was later used in English as an 'authoritative denunciation of impropriations' by a writer in the next century, this is 'the only [known] time when the *Liber de Veritatibus* had any direct political influence'.[10] At the time, and in its original form, there is no indication of

[9] Bose, 'After the Wycliffite Controversies', p. 172.

[10] Pronger, 'Thomas Gascoigne', p. 609.

contemporary familiarity with the work, and it is possible that this might go a little way to explaining the freedom with which Gascoigne was able to express ideas that could sound heterodox.

Perhaps as a result of these complexities, Gascoigne's theology has until recently been somewhat neglected; his original (vast) manuscript received a nineteenth century edition by James Thorold Rogers, which selects and transcribes certain passages 'of interest' but is very far from being a comprehensive scholarly edition.[11] Gascoigne has, perhaps in consequence, been mined largely for information on contemporary affairs (Pecock's career, for example), but his own theological position has been little studied, many readers apparently accepting Rogers' assertion that 'there is little to interest any reader in the merely theological part of [Gascoigne's] work'.[12] Rogers' own priority is indeed revealed in his selection of 'passages … illustrating the condition of church and state', rather than the nature of Gascoigne's theology. Yet it is increasingly clear that Gascoigne's work is a fertile source of insight into theological and pastoral concerns in the mid-fifteenth century, and a fascinating example of an ostensibly 'orthodox' figure wrestling with the need to critique the church he served and to find authority sources that enabled him to hold it accountable on an objectively binding basis, in the process often expressing priorities and concerns shared with the heterodox reform movement.

Recent scholarship has begun to shine a new light on his potential in this regard. While R. M. Ball's work on his use of authorities, for example, has noted that his theological formulations are dominated by quotations from others' works, especially the Fathers, it is also clear that he is far from being a

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[11] James E. Thorold Rogers*, Loci e Libro Veritatum: Passages selected from Gascoigne's theological dictionary illustrating the condition of church and state, 1403-1458* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1881). All references below, unless otherwise stated, will be to this edition, henceforth abbreviated to '*Liber*'. Where the original manuscript (Oxford: Lincoln College, MSS Lat. 117, 118) is being cited, it will be referenced under the form 'MS Lincoln 117' (no citations from MS 118 have been used). For the purposes of this chapter, the orthography has been modernised and punctuation added to the original, and insertions and deletions to the MS have been incorporated. All translations are my own.

[12] *Liber,* p. vii.

mere copyist; 'the fact of the material being second-hand is not nearly so important as the fact that the selection of it is plainly deliberate. His position is that of a critic' .[13] Mishtooni Bose has examined his use of rhetoric and self-positioning within traditions of prophetic complaint and pastoral exhortation, in particular his tendency to construct his voice as that of an outsider, not a member of the establishment.[14] Meanwhile both Bose and Ian Levy have noted the extent to which Gascoigne shares in some of the wider concerns about authority, scripture, hermeneutics, and reform that dominated much fifteenth-century discourse.[15]

This has led to the growing awareness that Gascoigne is a hard figure to categorise neatly. While he has perhaps been most famous as an enforcer of orthodoxy, notably for his possible role in the condemnation of Pecock, his own writings display reforming concerns more reminiscent of the texts so far discussed as 'reforming orthodox', yet are in some respects very different in their priorities from those reforming orthodox texts of the late 14th and early 15th centuries examined above in chapter one, hinting at an evolution in this stream of orthodox identity over the intervening years; away from certain controversies such as that over church wealth and towards a greater emphasis on issues such as preaching and right handling of scripture.[16] More significantly, his attitude to scripture and authority is at points more reminiscent of Wyclif and the heterodox reforming stream, although in certain key places and especially in regard to the significant field of ecclesiology he appears to remain within the criteria of orthodoxy identified in the

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[13] Winnifred A. Pronger, 'Thomas Gascoigne II', *EHR* 54: 213 (January 1939), pp. 20-37, at p. 33, Ball, *Thomas Gascoigne, Libraries and Scholarship* pp. 1-8;..

[14] Bose, 'Prophecy, Complaint, and Pastoral Care' and 'After the Wycliffite Controversies'; also Bose, 'Opponents of John Wyclif', pp. 407-455.

[15] Bose, 'Reversing the life of Christ', in Johnson and Westphal, *The Pseudo-Bonaventuran Lives of Christ*, pp. 55, 61; Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority.*

[16] Pink ('Holy Scripture', pp. 32, 131-34) argues for the existence of a 'long orthodox tradition' emphasising preaching as the primary locus of divine activity on earth and of human connection with the divine, pre-dating Wycliffism but perhaps helping to give birth to it, and suffering collateral damage from its suppression. Gascoigne's interest in these themes in spite of his 'orthodoxy' would correlate with this observation and suggest the continued existence of such ideas in mid-fifteenth century 'orthodoxy'.

introduction. His self-perception is, as Bose argues 'aggressively orthodox', especially with regards to heresy, as seen in his hostility to Reginald Pecock, yet he 'can sound startlingly like a Wycliffite'.[17]

This raises several questions, notably how familiar Gascoigne really was with either Wyclif or his later followers. The question has been much discussed in regards to Pecock, and Gascoigne shows even fewer signs of familiarity with Lollardy or Lollard texts.[18] He has some familiarity with the records of the councils of Pisa, Constance, and Basel, citing their acts at places; this would suggest familiarity with, at the least, the depiction of Wycliffite and Hussite thought that the latter two councils condemned.[19] Likewise, he makes reference to Wycliffite positions such as scepticism about saints' miracles, and claims that Wyclif's conclusions were condemned by the arguments of master 'Willelmus Wordforth', presumably William Woodford.[20] He makes a reference to the Hussites being inspired by Wyclif, and likewise praises Netter's work, though it is not certain how familiar he was with its contents.[21] Compared to issues of contemporary corruption, or the views of Reginald Pecock, however, neither Wyclif nor his followers attract much attention, and it is not clear whether Gascoigne had any personal knowledge of them, or indeed whether he was particularly interested in them. Hence, perhaps, why he seems oblivious to the 'tonal similarities' between his own and Lollard rhetoric.[22] Certainly the resonances between his position and much Lollard argument seem to be unconscious. More intriguing, maybe, is the question of why Gascoigne's Lollard-sounding emphases emerged and why they never elicited the opposition Pecock faced, questions which will be addressed below.

17 Bose, 'Opponents of John Wyclif', pp. 407-55, at p. 452.

18 See above on Pecock, Chapter 4, p. 170.

19 *Liber,* pp. 52, 186.

20 *Liber,* p. 143.

21 *Liber,* pp. 9, 2. It is possible that he derives his knowledge of Woodford from Netter, who praises Woodford's work against Wyclif; if so that would suggest that he had read at least part of the *Doctrinale*, rather than simply knowing it by reputation. Given the detail with which Netter reports Wyclif's views, familiarity with Netter's work would suggest at least some basic knowledge of Wyclif's views, if not automatically those of contemporary Lollardy.

22 Bose, 'After the Wycliffite Controversies', p. 179.

Gascoigne's unselfconscious reformism proves an intriguing contrast to many of his peers, and spreads into other areas: he appears a definite conciliarist and committed to conventional submission to patristic authority, yet his criticisms of contemporary abuses, ecclesiastic and secular, are strikingly radical. Though holding reasonably high office, he seems to have perceived (and, perhaps, deliberately constructed) himself as an outsider, struggling against a tide of corruption and worldliness. In these apparently contradictory conjunctions lies much of the interest of his work, and an insight into the extent to which a not only variegated and idiosyncratic orthodoxy, but, crucially, an orthodoxy that overlapped with Wycliffism in areas of theology (and not simply in its reform agenda), was still possible decades after Arundel's Constitutions had been promulgated. He also provides a crucial picture of what contemporary English religion could look like when not consciously shaped by an anti-Lollard animus; and this comparison is informative with regard to considering the longer-term influence of Lollardy.

This chapter will therefore survey Gascoigne's theology, especially with regard to areas of contemporary controversy between orthodox and Wycliffite thought, frequently dominated by that conflict. As such, it will conduct an overview of Gascoigne's reform agenda, both what he critiqued and what he advocated, before looking more closely at his key pronouncements on the key areas of hermeneutics and the exposition of scripture, and concepts of reason and conscience. Since there is little on these latter two topics in the Rogers edition, at these points recourse will be made to the original manuscript. It will conclude with a discussion of Gascoigne's 'orthodoxy' and how it came about that his more disconcerting statements avoided the sort of opposition Pecock encountered.

Gascoigne's reform agenda: clerical appointments

Gascoigne's reform agenda can be broken down into a couple of inter-connected areas: his concern about appointments and failures of morality and education amongst clergy, his dissatisfaction with practices that were unhelpful or open to abuse, his cynicism about the church establishment's openness to corruption and the abuse of power, his passion for education and preaching, and his approach to spiritual authority, particularly the correct reading of scripture, but also its relation to reason and conscience. Much of this was theoretically fairly uncontroversial, but in Gascoigne it takes centre stage.

Gascoigne's frustration with the state of morals and living amongst contemporary clergy is a recurrent theme throughout his *Liber Veritatum*.[23] 'For now, the care of souls in England has perished through the appropriation of churches, through the non-residence of curates and prelates, by the promotion of the unworthy and the multiplication of benefices … by the reception of the worst of people to the degree of scholar and by the granting of degrees unworthily to ignorant and immoral persons in Oxford'.[24] This complaint is echoed on a regular basis.[25] Gascoigne blames the destruction (in his eyes) of Bohemia on similar causes: unworthy promotions, the appropriation of churches, and non-residency.[26] Conversely, he suggests Hungarian success over the Turks is linked to domestic reforms.[27] Bad

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[23] Compare Wycliffite frustrations at the corruption and abuses of the established church; see, for example, the opening sections of William Taylor's sermon in Hudson, *Two Wycliffite texts*.

[24] 'Jam enim in Anglia periit cura animarum per ecclesias appropriatas, et per non residenciam curatorum et prelatorum, et per indignorum promocionem et per pluralites beneficiorum ... et per pessimam collacionem gradus scholastici et concessionem graciarum indigniso et viciosis et insciis personis in Oxonia*'* – *Liber,* p. 3.

[25] See *Liber,* p. 5 complaints of appropriation, non-residency, and malicious prelates; p. 7 cures are being neglected due to unworthy promotions; p. 14 the abuses that result from non-residence; p. 20 appropriation and unworthy appointments are blamed for the Hussite troubles; p. 71 appropriations are contrasted with the lifestyle of St. Paul; p. 130 anecdotes of the licensing of unlearned, worldly, and under-age clerks; p. 39 lack of good curates is blamed for the loss of the French empire; p. 146 (complaints about a stupid, drunk, youthful, pluralist archdeacon; p. 174 the same archdeacon reappears; p. 166 complaints concerning unsuitable promotions, and the control of resources by secular men; p. 192 the evils of appropriation and unworthy promotions; p. 193 unworthy men are made prelates through money sent to Rome; p. 201 a fool with seven prebends doesn't understand the Trinity.

[26] *Liber,* p. 5.

[27] *Liber,* p. 9.

promotions include bishops and other officers who are sinful, youthful, or ignorant, often appointed through money and the influence of the Roman Curia: 'that young man George, son of Richard earl of Salisbury, was licensed by Rome to collect the money of the bishopric of Exeter, but not by God to collect the souls of that bishopric'.[28] A similar complaint is made about university admissions made, according to Gascoigne, for money and not for a good life and learning.[29] He takes care to critique some of the arguments with which such practices might be justified, arguing that the evils of non-residence are not compensated for by any corresponding good to the realm, and that monastic foundations are no substitute for resident incumbents, for example.[30] False incumbents are identified with the faithless people of Israel: 'rectors and preachers sat down to eat and drink, then got up to play and deceive themselves' – an interpolation of 1 Cor 10:7.[31] In the absence of internal church reform Gascoigne is willing to envisage parliamentary intervention against those who accept licenses to abandon their duties to religious foundations for non-resident posts – the sort of lay interference in church affairs that the Wycliffites sought and texts like Bodley 649 decried. In fact, in calling for reform, he even goes so far as to suggest that in the realm of appointments officials could defy worldly and royal authority: 'they are greatly meritorious who, against the commands of the king and against the letters of worldly persons confer office and bishoprics on such as God has commanded in the

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[28] Ibid. 'Ille enim juvenis Georgius, filius Ricardi comitis Sarum, fuit licensiatus Romae ad pecunias episcopatus Exoniensis colligendas, sed non ad animas illius episcopatus Deo colligendas' – p. 16. See also pp. 13, 16, and 52 for complaints about young bishops; pp. 36, 37 for more general episcopal misdemeanours.

[29] Ibid. p. 20. A growing self-consciousness about safeguarding admissions is apparent in the University's letters: Anstey, *Epistolae Academicae Oxon. (*pp. 64, 57, 127, 243. A wider consciousness about the importance of university life for wider society is also apparent in the later Middle Ages, see Ghosh, 'University learning', p. 306.

[30] *Liber,* p. 21. Compare Pecock's use of similar arguments to defend these practices, *Repressor*, pp. 430-558. Gascoigne does not make any explicit mention of Pecock as the originator of these arguments, so it is not clear whether his target is Pecock or pragmatic justifications of contemporary institutional practice that were circulating at the time.

[31] 'Sederunt rectores et praedicatores manducare et bibere, tunc surgunt ludere et seipsos decipere*'* – *Liber,* p. 74. Compare 1 Cor 10:7b '*sedit populus manducare et bibere et surrexerunt ludere*'.

books of scripture'.[32] Upright, resident, preaching ministers are the priority for him, more important than obedience to secular or ecclesiastical authorities.

Gascoigne's reform agenda: criticism of church abuses

Several common practices of the contemporary church draw Gascoigne's fire as being a cause of abuse, notably papal provisions, indulgences, absolutions, and dispensations. For Gascoigne, the church is afflicted by 'the abuse of the sacrament of penance and false faith, by which men believe themselves to have true forgiveness from guilt and eternal punishment by God through priestly absolution, although they do not have true penitence before God'.[33] Evil people 'say, if a priest absolves a man vocally, he is saved from his sins,' but conversely, if a priest is not present one can still do penance, following that which God commands 'by the light of the understanding or in sacred scripture'.[34] In other words, priestly absolution is not sufficient for forgiveness, nor is it necessary if a priest is not available: 'for the sentence of a priest is required for absolution, if it is possible [literally 'if the faculty/power

[32] 'Magni meriti sunt qui contra praecepta regum et contra mundanorum litteras conferunt officia et ecclesias talibus quibus Deus praecepit in libris scripturae officia conferri*'* – *Liber,* p. 25. Gascoigne suggests founders should stipulate that if their foundees *'*acceptaret aliquam licenciam contra voluntatem et statutum fundatoris, ipso facto sit privatus ab omni jure at aliquod bonum ... et eciam ordinetur per fundatorem vel per parliamentum regni, ut haeres seu successor fundatoris ipsum expellat*'* (if he 'should accept any license against the will and statutes of the founder, by that very thing he should be deprived of all rights and goods … and also it should be ordained by the founder or the parliament of the realm that the heirs or successor of the founder should expel him'), p. 167. Such suggestions were not entirely radical: it was already possible for clerics to be sued by lay patrons under secular law to enforce 'proper function', although such actions seem to have been rare and far less ambitious than Gascoigne proposes, as well as being concerned more with patronal rights than reform. See Benjamin Thompson, 'Locality and Eccleisastical Polity: The Late Medieval Church between duality and integration', in Benjamin Thompson and John Watts, eds, *Political Society in Later Medieval England – a festschrift for Christine Carpenter* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2016), pp. 117-45.

[33] 'abusus sacramenti poenitenciae et falsa fidei, qua homines credunt se habere veram veniam culpae et poenae aeternae a Deo, per absolucionem sacerdotis, quamvis coram Deo non habent veram poenitenciam'- *Liber,* p. 76.

[34] 'dicunt, si sacerdos absolvat vocaliter homnem, salvus est a peccatis'; 'lumine intellectus vel in sacre scriptura': *Liber,* pp. 78, 77. In this, Gascoigne was in concord with canon law, if not with some contemporary practices and assumptions. These two authorities, reason and scripture, again recur throughout his writing, and will be discussed below.

be present'], but works or actions are required more'.[35] This was in theory far from novel, being established doctrine found in canon law, and articulated in the previous century by reform orientated texts such as *Piers Plowman*, but the fact that Gascoigne's priority was to emphasise the *limits* on priestly power and sufficiency rather than the necessity of priestly confession is distinctly 'off message' compared to the emphasis in more 'reactionary' works such as Bodley 649, *Jacob's Well*, or even Thomas Netter.[36]

This suggests, significantly, that Gascoigne did not see combating Lollard-type hostility to ideas of priestly power as the priority, but rather the opposite: avoiding the danger of 'cheap grace' and false assurance. Failure to recognise the necessity for personal repentance and reformation is giving the people false assurance of forgiveness, and it is false absolvers that are compared to the scribes and Pharisees, not Lollards as in Netter or Bodley 649.[37] Gascoigne's polemical preoccupation is thus with abuses, not religious dissent. Nor is he simply worried about a failure to understand the need for penitence on the part of lay penitents; Gascoigne is specifically concerned about premature promises of forgiveness by priests themselves, who, he warns, do not remove sin by so doing, but rather put themselves into sin.[38] The priest needs to recognise who is worthy of absolution 'by reason and holy scripture', an interesting choice of authorities which will be discussed further below.[39] The emphasis is explicitly on the dangers of the contemporary established practice regarding the sacrament of confession, and, while Gascoigne never seeks its abolition, his willingness to echo Lollard complaints in this area is again evidence of very different concerns from those of his predecessors, and

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[35] 'sentencia enim sacerdotis in absolvendo requiritur, si assit facultas, set magis requiruntur opera seu actus' – *Liber,* p. 78.

[36] See above, Chapter 1 p. 75, Chapter 3 pp. 160-62. See Arthur Brandeis, ed., *Jacob's Well: An English treatise on the cleansing of man's conscience* (London: EETS, 1900), p. 173, an English work on moral improvement with an aggressively conventional theology.

[37] *Liber,* p. 79 – See above Chapter 1 for the polemical use of the Pharisee trope in other works.

[38] *Liber,* p. 83.

[39] '*per racionem et scripturam sacram*' – *Liber,* p. 85.

suggestive of a very different atmosphere from that in which they had sought to defend the sacrament.

A similar set of concerns are raised about indulgences, especially papal, giving false confidence in forgiveness.[40] Gascoigne articulates the argument that penance can be remitted, but not sins; and that human absolution can only be given in response to divine absolution.[41] The same argument is put forward concerning papal licenses and dispensations, again based on 2 Cor: 'for we cannot do anything against the truth, but for the truth'.[42] Gascoigne emphasises the limits on papal *potestas:* 'for the holy fathers knew that human license or dispensation does not make an action to be good or bad in itself'.[43] In essence, papal power can only recognise and declare what is already the case, either that forgiveness has occurred or that an action is good or bad; it cannot be the cause of divine forgiveness or make a bad action good.

Appropriation of parishes to endow monasteries or other posts is likewise consistently critiqued.[44] Gascoigne wants monks to labour with their hands on the model of St. Paul, and denies that their prayers can ever be as useful as the example and teaching of a resident curate.[45] One power he does want the papacy to exercise is in fact that of suppressing superfluous foundations and returning their resources to the parishes, citing the Old Testament transfer of the kingdom as an example.[46]

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[40] 'sextum flumen Babilonicae ... est falsa fides, quam aliqui habent in indulgenciis concessis a papa. vel ab homine, quam a Deo non habent' ('The sixth River of Babylon [here a figure for a problem with the contemporary church] is false faith, which some have in indulgences granted by the pope or by man, which they do not have from God') – *Liber*, p. 86. Note that this was a point of discussion at Basel; the Hussites recognised there could be 'true' indulgences, but argued that they were useless unless a man knew himself to be in a state of grace, and were dangerous when relied on by the impenitent: see Jacob, 'The Bohemians at the Council of Basel', in Seton-Watson, *Prague essay,* pp. 81-123, at p. 102.

[41] Paul '*nunquam absolvebat hominem a peccato, nisi prius habuit evidenciam quod Deus ipsum absolveret.*' ('would never absolve a man from sin, unless first he had evidence that God would absolve him') – *Liber,* p. 87.

[42] 'non enim possumus aliquid adversus veritatem, sed pro veritate' – *Liber,* p. 92.

[43] 'Sciebant enim sancti patres quod dispensacio seu licencacio humana non causavit actum in se esse bonum nec malum.' , *Liber,* p. 93, 94, 95.

[44] *Liber,* pp. 3, 5, 20, 53, 71.

[45] *Liber,* p. 71, 106, 111.

[46] *Liber,* pp. 147-149. 1 Kings 11:11-12 tells of God transferring the right to the kingdom of Israel from the line of Solomon to that of Jereboam due to Solomon's immorality; it was taken by Gascoigne as a

Gascoigne's criticism of the church authorities

As will be obvious from the above, Gascoigne's frustration with abuses and bad appointments leads him to a sceptical and hostile attitude towards the ecclesiastical establishment, and especially the Roman Curia. He tells many tales of corruption in the papal court, and he often makes a point of referring to the 'Roman' Pope.[47] He accuses popes of embezzling crusading finances and opposing reforms.[48] He resents the flow of money to Rome for appointments and hopes for a solution: 'in a general council God may give remedy, if it pleases him, or by appeal of king and realm from the Pope to a general council'; indeed, he believes such reforms have been ordered by Basel, but not put into effect in England.[49] Moreover he emphasises the human limitations of popes: both that they are themselves fallible individuals who can be pressured, bribed, or removed by corrupt Romans; and that their power is not as great as sometimes made out, since popes cannot go against 'pure reason and holy

precedent for taking away the goods of institutions that had become corrupt and morally compromised.

47 *Liber,* p. 33 – perhaps an example of the 'national' element in hostility to papal control: Gascoigne seems to want to emphasise the foreignness of the papal curia and its identification with the city of Rome (as opposed to its universal dimension). Given his hostility to the perceived corrupting influence of Rome on the papacy, this may also be a deliberate association of the papacy in its errors with the city whose greed and selfish influence he blames for those errors. Compare Adam Usk's negative attitude to the city: 'O Deus, in quantum Roma est dolenda' and complaints of venality and double-talk there (C. Given-Wilson, ed. and trans., *Chronicle of Adam Usk* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), p. 188).

48 *Liber,* p. 34.

49 'in concilio generali Deus, si sibi placeat, det remedium, vel per appellacionem regis et regni a papa ad concilium generale' – p. 52. Russell, *Conciliarism and Heresy in Fifteenth-Century England*, discusses in detail the conceptions and misconceptions of these councils in England. Gascoigne was interested in Basel, and wrote to a friend a summary of the bill for inclusion of the Greeks. He may have been familiar with the copy of the Council's Acta preserved in Durham College, Oxford, and his *quaestio* on indulgences indicates his consonance with the council's proposed reforms on this area – see Harvey, 'England, the Council of Florence', pp. 203-225, at pp. 212-215.

scripture'.[50] Popes can err, and conscience is a higher guide.[51] Popes have power to establish human law, but not to license abuses.[52] 'He believed in the papal office, but nearly all his extracts concerned limiting its power' rather than any attempt to defend it against Wycliffite attacks.[53] Gascoigne is clearly a conciliarist in sympathies, looking to councils to reform the papacy's abuses.[54] At no point does he contemplate doing away with the office, which he recognises as established and empowered by God, but the abuse of that power leads him to limit significantly the extent to which believers are bound by the Pope's decisions, and to subordinate papal authority clearly to the rational interpretation of scripture.[55]

In one sense this was not as radical as it might sound at first: to a large degree, Gascoigne's position fitted in the stream of English papal scepticism bound up with the tradition of Grosseteste's opposition to Innocent III and expressed in the Oxford petitions of 1408-14 drafted by Thomas Ullerston.[56] Unease about the abuses of papal power, in particular appropriations and

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[50] *Liber,* p. 7: 'Papa contra meram racionem et scripturam sacram licite facere vel licenciare non potest, quia ejus potestatas data sit in aedificacionem animarum et eorum quae Deo placent, et non ut secundum voluntatem suam faciat, et si verbo suo vel facto contraria faciat, vel ignorancia decipitur vel nimia importunitate vincitur' ('the pope cannot give permission or license contrary to pure reason and holy scripture, since his power is given [to him] for the building up of souls and of those who please God, and not to do according to his own will, and if by word or deed he does the contrary, or is deceived in ignorance or overwhelmed by excessive importunity' then he is not to be obeyed). See also p. 33.

[51] 'Nec est securus in consciencia coram Deo quisquis, cum quo papa dispensat, quia saepe papa in judicio fallit et allitur, ut patet in antiquitas...' ('Nor is anyone secure in conscience before God, although dispensed by the pope, since the pope often errs in judgement and is won over, as is clear in the histories...'), *Liber,* p. 69. He also cites Bernard: 'quid valet tibi papalis licencia, cujus conscienciam ligat divina sentencia' ('what help is a papal license to you, whose conscience is bound by the divine sentence?').

[52] *Liber,* pp. 94, 95.

[53] Harvey, *England, Rome, and the Papacy*, p. 230. Contrast Netter and Pecock, Chapters 3 and 4 above.

[54] *Liber,* p. 52, 186.

[55] *Liber,* p. 93: 'Magnam enim potesatem dedit Dominus vicario suo' ('For the Lord gave great power to his vicar').

[56] Harvey, *England, Rome and the Papacy*, pp. 215-18. See McEvoy, '*Robertus grossatesta lincolniensis*', in O'Carroll, *Robert Grosseteste and the Beginning of a British Theological Tradition*, pp. 25-67, for the development of a tradition of Grosseteste as an opponent of abuses who denounced the greed of the papal court and was excommunicated. This tradition was drawn on by many 'reforming orthodox' figures such as Ullerston and Richard Fleming, but generally emphasised the criticism of papal corruption, not the office. Compare the *Festial*'s ambiguous portrait of him, seeming to suspect him of heresy: see above ch 1.

dispensations, had a long English pedigree and had been articulated in more recent times – by Ullerston in particular – while exemptions, plurality, and reservations had all drawn the fire of the representatives of Basel in 1438.[57] The earlier English position at Pisa and Constance, supporting Sigismund and led by Robert Hallam of Salisbury, seems to have been influenced by this perspective, and even the (in most respects) relatively conventional Whethamstede has been identified as a 'confused conciliarist', interested in views of the church seeing the Pope more as first bishop than absolute monarch.[58] Gascoigne's criticisms of abuses were thus again nothing inherently new, and even his suggestion that bishops were, collectively, the 'rock' of Mt 16:18 on which the church was built, rather than Peter per se, was in keeping with the emphasis on episcopal responsibility associated with Grosseteste.[59] His insistence that believers should examine the Pope's words against scripture and reason comes in a context of church leaders responding to papal decrees, rather than being a license for radical lay empowerment. Nonetheless, it is striking that the text shows no concern about such sentiments, so resonant of Wyclif's and the Lollards' attempts to hold the papacy accountable to scripture, being taken as heretical or read as supporting heterodoxy. There is no sign of the nervousness apparent in preachers and even in more daring writers such as Pecock.[60] Gascoigne appears to have no apprehension about echoing Wycliffite rhetoric.

Reform priorities: Gascoigne's advocacy of education

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[57] *Liber,* p. 218.

[58] Gillespie, 'Chichele's Church', in Gillespie and Ghosh, *After Arundel*, pp. 7-39. Also see Margaret Harvey, 'The Pope and the General Council' in F. R. H. Du Boulay, Caroline M. Barron, and Christopher Harper-Bill, eds, *The Church in pre-Reformation Society, Essays in honour of F. R. H. Du Boulay* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1985), pp. 108-22, at pp. 110, 122, 115.

[59] Harvey, *England, Rome and the Papacy*, pp. 234, 215. Netter, amongst others, took almost the same position, although he emphasised the authority of the Papacy as 'fundamentum fundamentorum' – see above Chapter 3, p. 154.

[60] See Chapter 1, above, on preaching, Chapter 4 on Pecock.

The positive side of Gascoigne's reform agenda was centred around three main emphases: on education, preaching, and scripture. The concerns of other reformers, such as Gerson's for regular mass-taking, or about excessive splendour and wealth, are either muted or absent entirely.[61]

The decline of education, as Ball noted, was of particular concern to Gascoigne and his peers, and an area of wider controversy at the time: with particular consciousness about the corruption of the reputation (and the reality) of Oxford through heresy.[62] Concern to preserve the universities as a pure fountainhead of the church was expressed in the foundation of Lincoln College, Oxford, and more combatively in royal intervention to prevent an alleged follower of Pecock from graduating.[63] The University itself repeatedly expressed sensitivity about heresy in its letters, at the same time presenting the promotion of its graduates as the best way to expel and defend against heresy.[64] At the same time there was an unease about intellectualism, 'sophistry' and arid scholasticism shared both by Lollard rhetoric and by aggressively orthodox figures such as Thomas Netter.[65] Bose notes that 'the rhetoric of anti-scholasticism … appears as one of the embedded discourses of fifteenth-century orthodoxy', in uneasy tension with a desire for trained graduates who could lead reform and refute heresy.[66] Gascoigne, on the other hand, shows no unease about the intellectual enterprise and expresses no

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61 McGuire, *Jean Gerson*, pp. 36, 39. Gerson's lament for the Donation of Constantine seems to be without any echo in Gascoigne, whose concerns regarding property pertain to its equitable distribution and use to support teaching and good rectors, rather than venal pluralists. Gascoigne has no problem with wealth *per se*, simply with its abuse.

62 Ball, 'The Opponents of Bishop Reginald Pecock', p. 232, Ghosh, 'University Learning', in Van Dussen and Soukup, *Religious Controversy in Europe,* pp. 289-308.

63 Ghosh, 'University Learning', pp. 291, 306.

64 Anstey, *Epistolae Academicae Oxon*., pp. 35, 158-67, 194, 216, 281.

65 See for example Rita Copeland, 'Sophistic, Spectrality, Iconoclasm', in Jeremy Dimmick, James Simpson, and Nicolette Zeeman, eds., *Images, Idolatry, and Iconoclasm in Late Medieval England, Textuality and the Visual Image* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), pp. 112-130.

66 Bose, 'Opponents of John Wyclif', pp. 407-455, at p. 445. Compare Kantik Ghosh on the 'attitude of pronounced anti-intellectualism' in Lollardy, 'Wycliffite 'affiliations'', in Bose and Hornbeck, eds, *Wycliffite Controversies*, pp. 13-32.

concern about infiltration of the universities by heresy, save for Pecock, and certainly never for infiltration by Lollardy, but much for the awarding of degrees to intellectually and morally worthy individuals: his primary concern is again not heresy but abuse and corruption.[67] He casts aspersions upon the graduations of Pecock and Vincent Clement, not (at least ostensibly) because of their doctrine, but as being incomplete and academically improper.[68] He desires well educated priests who can preach and equip the flock, but does not appeal to the need to combat heresy in this regard. Heresy again does not seem to be an issue on his mental horizon compared to the need for internal reform.

Gascoigne's criticism is not solely limited to bad appointments in the universities; he also laments the decline of libraries and encourages kings and founders to take action against monasteries that are not 'exhibiting writings', which appears to mean making their libraries widely available to scholars.[69] In this it is likely Gascoigne was shaped by his own extensive use of multiple libraries, especially that of the Friars Minor at Oxford, whose collection of older manuscripts, in particular including autographs of Grosseteste, so delighted him.[70] Perhaps this is why he avoids any of the common criticism of the fraternal orders for hoarding books, keeping his criticism for the settled cenobitic foundations. He wants monasteries to be repositories of texts and centres of research and learning, and at one point he envisages secular incumbents as teaching their parishioners, not only in doctrine but also apparently in the basics of scholarly education.[71] Collegiate churches such as

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67 *Liber,* pp. 20, 29. Compare Ghosh, 'University Learning', p. 308, where he comments on the general phenomenon of 'an ever more vigilant orthodoxy that was almost obsessively involved in the process of defining and policing its boundaries and parameters' in fifteenth-century attitudes to university education. Gascoigne's concerns appear to have been differently weighted.

68 Green, *Bishop Reginald Pecock*p. 23.

69 Ball suggests in *Thomas Gascoigne, Libraries and Scholarship,* p. 16, that this arises from Gascoigne's efforts to gain access to patristic manuscripts,.

70 Ball, *Thomas Gascoigne, Libraries and Scholarship,* p. 5; compare his excitement at finding commentaries in Grosseteste's hand: MS Lincoln Lat. 117, p. 200.

71 *Liber,* p. 106: a rector's callings include 'exhibicio juvenum parochianorum ad studium literarum et scienciarum' ('the exposure of young men of the parish to the study of letters and the arts'). Again, this intriguing statement is unelaborated. Whether it indicates simply priests teaching young boys how to read, or some more radical scheme of training and preparing promising youths for ordination or simply as

Whittington College, with its substantial academic profile, are for him the ideal, as allowing such ministry most fully.[72] In this, interestingly, there is a substantial echo of some of Pecock's suggestions for monastic reform, which included less time on the cycle of prayer and praise and more time studying and copying books (especially his own books).[73] Pecock, a former master of Whittington, seems to have shared Gascoigne's concern for educational reform. Also like Pecock, Gascoigne shows no signs of the 'affective turn'; there is no suggestion that the learning of the laity needs to be restricted to a 'child's diet' of devotional materials such as Love proposed, or that they needed to 'stay at the foot of the mountain' as Bodley 649 advocated.[74] Instead he wants them exposed to '*studium literarum et scienciarum*', suggesting the same exporting of the intra-mural world into the daily experience of the laity that was a characteristic of Lollard discourses.[75]

Reform priorities: Advocacy of preaching

informed laity is not clear, although, given Gascoigne's repeated stress on the importance of good parish priests with proper training, some form of preparation for promising candidates seems most likely.

[72] *Liber,* pp. 4, 222. Compare Clive Burgess, and Martin Heale, eds, *The Late medieval English College and its Context* (Woodbridge: YMP, 2008). While Burgess identifies 'worship', primarily meaning liturgy, as the 'main purpose of the church militant' which 'the institutions of the church … existed to procure and increase' ('An Institution for All Seasons: The late medieval English college', pp. 3-27, at p. 9) , Gascoigne's concern is expressed solely for preaching and teaching, and collegiate churches are valued for their ability to provide just that.

[73] *Reule*, pp. 416-421.

[74] Mishtooni Bose, 'Reversing the life of Christ', in Johnson and Westphal, *The Pseudo-Bonaventuran lives of Christ*, pp. 55-74; Bose argues that, while there was in practice a common dependence upon rationality and a need for some category of the rational, a stream of 'orthodox' rhetoric exemplified by Love emphasised a 'child's diet' of simple and accessible matter instead of unsuitable high theology, and discouraged independent rationality. Pecock, clearly, took the opposite inclination, emphasising the importance of reason; while rejecting Pecock's faith in independent human reason, Gascoigne at no point seems to buy into the rhetoric of Love or Bodley 649 about the importance of restricting the lay religious diet. Compare Copeland, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent*, pp. 5-16; where she notes that associations with Lollard pedagogy cast suspicion upon elements of religious education as innocuous as the English primer.

[75] *Liber,* p. 106. See Ghosh, 'University Learning' for discussion of the exportation of intra-mural skills and debates by Lollard writings and its consequences. See also Fiona Somerset, 'Their Writings', in Hornbeck, Bose, and Somerset, *A Companion to Lollardy*, pp. 76-104.

Like the other pastorally minded churchmen with whom he has been associated, concern for plenty of good preaching runs through Gascoigne's work, and he includes a strongly personal prayer for mercy for not having preached enough.[76] A good rector is one who preaches the word of God, following the model of Peter, and he cites the acts of Pisa and Constance on who is obliged to preach.[77] He seeks to encourage those who have given up on preaching after seeing little fruit.[78] Those who prevent others preaching are a constant target.[79] Pecock's opposition to the necessity of episcopal preaching is of course often critiqued.[80] He is deeply hostile to the way he sees Arundel and others as having sought to hobble preaching, whom he notoriously accuses of having died from a condition of the throat because he sought to 'bind the word of God'.[81] 'Oh that bishops were as prone and conscientious about sending and exhibiting mature preachers and knowledgeable men as they have been to ordain that none shall preach without licence' is his complaint.[82] Using the language of 2 Timothy 4, he insists that 'oportune et importune … praedicandum est' ('there must be preaching "in season and out of season"'), and suggests that preaching should thus go on in spite of hostility, whether lay or ecclesiastical.[83] He tells with admiration the story of Thomas of Calva, who allegedly preached at Rome against abuses and was promptly burnt for heresy at the instigation of two cardinals, but went on to do great miracles against the Turks.[84] He fears the role of similar opposition today: a doctor who preaches to

[76] *Liber,* pp. 70, 179. Compare Ball, 'The Opponents of Bishop Pecock', pp. 231, 234. Contrast Netter, for whom preaching is simply 'blowing the trumpet' to assemble the people for the Mass: see Pink, 'Holy Scripture', p. 178.

[77] *Liber,* pp. 6, 54, 186.

[78] *Liber,* p. 190.

[79] *Liber,* p. 188.

[80] *Liber,* pp. 27, 35, 100, 214.

[81] *Liber, p*p. 61, 180.

[82] *Liber,* p. 61: 'utinam tam proni et assidui essent episcopi, ad mittendum et exhibendum maturos praedicatores et scientes, sicut fuerunt proni ad ordinandum quod nullus praedicaret sine licencia'.

[83] *Liber,* p. 60. That Gascoigne was not alone in feeling that there could be more preaching is indicated by Friar Brackley's letter to John Paston on his Whitsunday sermon, that Cambridge furnishes daily examples of those with 'cunning but no audacity' to preach (John Warrington, ed., *The Paston Letters* (London: Dent, 1956) p. 162 (the date is uncertain).

[84] *Liber,* pp. 171-2.

kings and lords to send back the clergy living in their courts will be met with anger and the invocation of papal licences.[85] Contemporaries, he insists, oppose true preaching with arguments of human origin.[86] He lists famous preachers of his knowing, in a sort of roll of honour, and notes with care the preaching of Jerome on this subject, and of Grosseteste at Oxford.[87] Conversely, he condemns in the strongest terms those who refrain from preaching, presenting them as not only lazy, but traitors who have fought against God.[88]

Beyond the general enthusiasm for preaching, however, Gascoigne advocates a specific type of preaching. He is critical of modern preaching where 'there is a greater labour around the form and mode of *divisio*, and around spoken harmonies of the text, than around declaring useful matters' – that is, where following the fashionable structure or the right employment of rhetorical techniques like assonance and wordplay have replaced content.[89] Gascoigne, like Wyclif, sought to defend 'ancient' form sermons against those 'listening out for the structure and not the ideas'.[90] In contrast, he says that

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85 *Liber,* p. 182.

86 'tales eciam quaerunt audire veritates, et doctores vera dicentes et praedicantes, et dicta eorum vera, et argumenta, falsis dictis et argumentis carnaliter commentis, quae caro et sanguis [Mt 16:17 is the source of this language] eis revelavit .. et quaerunt veritatem audire, ad perdendum et ad improbandum illam.' ('such also seek to hear truths, and doctors saying and speaking true things, and their true words and arguments, and they seek to hear truth so as to destroy and disprove them with false words and arguments and fleshly comments, which flesh and blood revealed to them'). In other words, some only seek to hear true teaching so as to 'disprove' them with human arguments.

87 *Liber,* pp. 189, 185. See Ball, 'The Opponents of Bishop Reginald Pecock' for the characteristics and careers of these preachers.

88 MS Lincoln Lat. 117, p. 467: 'de prelatis qui verbum domini non predicant dici potest quod adiutorium gladii illorum et populi illis subditi aversum est gladius enim spiritu est verbum dei nec eis auxiliatur deus in bello quia non bellant contra carnem mundum et vicia sed contra deum et contra virtutes' ('Of prelates who do not preach the word of God it is possible to say that he has 'turned back the edge of their swords' and 'subdued their people' [interpolating and adapting Vulgate Ps 88:44, modern Ps 89:43], for 'the sword of the spirit is the word of God' [Eph 6:17], nor will God help them in the battle because they did not battle against the world, the flesh, and vices [this phrase adapts the baptismal liturgy, itself possibly inspired by Eph 6:12] but against God and against virtues'). Here again there is a heavy dependence upon interpolated biblical texts and language, a characteristic of Gascoigne's writing that will be discussed below.

89 'labor major est circa formam et modum divisionum et concordancias vocales textuum quam circa declaracionem rerum utilium'; *Liber,* p. 24. See also Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, pp. 11-18, for discussion of the terminology of ancient and modern forms.

90 Spencer, *English preaching*, p. 241. 'Ancient' here denotes a style of sermon that structured itself around

patristic preachers taught pastoral applications from the gospel reading: 'likewise in their sermons they used to speak at one time on one matter and what that matter concerned; thoughts of mercy, and what mercy is, and what pertains to mercy, and how it stands with justice and the just punishment of sin.'[91] So Grosseteste preached, and so Gascoigne himself says he preached.[92] Modern preaching, Gascoigne alleges, was showy and not spiritually helpful: 'Knowledge which is thought subtle, and curious modes of speaking and preaching, is weak, because it bears little or no fruit' (instead of a mode in which '"the weak are girded with strength" i.e. by a plain mode of speaking used in your preaching, they are girded with spiritual fortitude'.[93] Helen Spencer argues that preaching by expounding the whole Gospel lection had become controversial and associated with Lollardy in the first half of the fifteenth century, only to be rehabilitated in the latter half of the century as it was rescued from Lollard associations.[94] Gascoigne seems to have been active in that transition, advocating expository preaching and associating it with the positive authority source of the Fathers instead of with Lollardy, of whose frequent use of the modern homiletic form he appears to be unaware.[95] In this, as in other areas, he occupied very similar theological and practical ground to Wyclif and the Lollards, not so much out of any sort of conscious support of them but because he shared many of their priorities and so came to react

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commentary on an entire pericope, rather than using a phrase from it (a 'theme') as a springboard to a more free-ranging discourse.

91 'Item solebant in sermone suo aliquando loqui de una materia et de illis quae materiam illam concernebant, puta, de misericordia, et quid est misericordia, et quae pertinet misericordiae, et quomodo stat cum iustitia et cum justa punicione peccati' – *Liber,* p. 24.

92 *Liber,* p. 44.

93 'sciencia quae putatur subtilis, et curiosus modus dicendi et praedicandi, infirmus est, quia parum vel nullum fructum parit'; '"et infirmi accincti sunt robore" i.e. plano modo dicendi utentes in praedicacione sua, accincti sunt fortitudine spirituali' – *Liber,* p. 185. The quotation here seems to be from 1 Samuel 2:4b, probably through the liturgy.

94 Spencer, *English preaching*, pp. 157-258; see also her 'English Vernacular Sunday Preaching', pp. 92, 117, where this theme is discussed in more depth. Compare Winstead, *John Capgrave's Fifteenth Century*, and the suggestion of Capgrave's controversial portrayal of Augustine and St. Katherine as intellectuals involved in Bible study and, in Augustine's case, preaching (pp. 33-44, 57, 76).

95 For discussion of Lollard hermeneutics, see for example Spencer, *English preaching*, pp. 190-195, see above chapter on preaching with regard to the *EWS*, Chapter 1, pp. 47-63.

against the reaction Lollard positions and practices had elicited from earlier generations of churchmen.

Authority and Hermeneutics: The Exposition of Scripture

Concern for a plain and pastorally accessible mode of preaching is matched by concern for the authority of scripture, the fathers, and the *antiqua fides*, all of which are assumed to form a harmonious whole. Ball has emphasised Gascoigne's interest in patristic authority, but the appeal to scripture is even more frequent: reason and scripture constrain papal actions, and the choice of incumbents; they guide the priestless penitent and tell the priest who can safely be absolved.[96] There is no recognition of a contingency of scriptural meanings, of Alain of Lille's 'waxen nose' of the authoritative text; rather, Gascoigne calls his peers to be accountable to the single indisputable voice of scripture through the Fathers.[97] Departing from the scriptures to follow human will and human reason is the error of Pecock and of all heretics, who take the words of scripture from their proper place and try to force a different sense upon them.[98] Scripture must be obeyed, not bent to one's purpose.[99] In one of the last entries in the book Gascoigne's unease with hunting is clear, and he characteristically turns instinctively to consider what biblical texts say on the subject: 'as far as I can recall to mind the hunter is never (that is, in holy scripture) referred to in a good sense'.[100] Significantly,

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96 *Liber,* pp. 7, 16, 19, 25, 77, 85, 97.

97 Compare Nicolette Zeeman, 'The Idol of the Text' in Dimmick, Simpson, and Zeeman, eds, *Images, Idolatry and Iconoclasm*, pp. 43-62, for the extent to which consciousness of interpretative malleability could 'haunt' textual awareness.

98 Liber, pp. 28, 117, 211. Compare 'Extracts from the *Gladius Salomonis* of John Bury' in Babington, ed., *Repressor* pp. 572-608.

99 *Liber,* p. 90.

100 'quantum possum in mea recolere memoria nunquam, sc. in scriptura sacra, venatorem in bonam partem legi' – *Liber,* , p. 224. Compare Langland's and Gower's unease with 'hunting parsons,' referenced in Spencer, 'English vernacular Sunday preaching', p. 56. Gascoigne's unease stands firmly in the tradition of reform-minded writers but characteristically he justifies this by the use of scripture.

perhaps, scripture is frequently presented as 'open' and accessible: 'they showed by manifest testimonies and reasons of holy Scripture'.[101] In Christ's preaching, in contrast to modern preachers, 'the truth is manifest in plain good words'.[102] Scripture is an open resource, to which first recourse must be made in any matter of doubt. In this 'hermeneutic of openness' Gascoigne is again reminiscent of Wyclif and the Lollard writings, as opposed to the more occluded models seen in Love or even in Netter, where navigating to the correct meaning of scripture is a complex matter.[103]

Such resemblance becomes more apparent on considering Gascoigne's handling of scripture, both in terms of theory and in practice. Given his claim that mis-handling scripture is the characteristic of the heretic, it is perhaps unsurprising that he devotes a long and discrete section of almost twenty thousand words to the right exposition of scripture, leaning very heavily upon Jerome's commentaries to do so.[104]

Unsurprisingly, Gascoigne emphasises above all the expositor's duty to follow the author's intention, and not to distort a passage to follow their own intention or will.[105] Significantly, the author in question seems to be primarily God, rather than the human author: Gascoigne is concerned for 'one who shall expound or preach holy scripture, who does not put water with wine [Isaiah 1:22 is the source of this phrase], that is falsehood with truth, nor anything

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[101] 'ostendunt racionibus et manifestis sacrae scripturae testimoniis' – *Liber,* p. 91.

[102] '... veritatem ... manifestaretur in planis verbis bonis' – *Liber,* p. 179.

[103] See above chapters 2 and 3 on Love and Netter for discussion of their theology of scripture; for Wycliffite perspectives, compare Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 1-9, and the Lollard faith in 'a monologic apprehension of the divine mind through a transparent "open" text'.

[104] Jerome is cited over a hundred times in this chapter, versus about 20 for Augustine and about 40 for Grosseteste (by my count).

[105] MS Lincoln Lat. 117, p. 442: 'Exposicio primo laborandum est ut intelligatur in verbis sacre scripture illud quod autor dicens illa verba intellexit et per illa verba signari intendebat' ('the chief labour in exposition is to understand in the words of holy scripture that which the author speaking those words understood and what [he] intended to convey by those words' [citing Jerome]); p. 472: 'sanctus beda habet predicta verba de exposicione littere sacre scripture secundum sensum seu intellectum et intentum autoris in libro suo primo super genesim' ('St Bede has the aforesaid words on exposition of the letter of holy scripture according to the sense or understanding and intention of the author in his first book on Genesis'). In this he follows Aquinas (and Wyclif); for the late medieval politics of the 'literal sense', see Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 12, 28.

which contradicts or clashes with the intention and signification of God, who is the author of holy scripture'.[106] Those who distort the intended meaning are thus, in an image Gascoigne frequently returns to, like the Scribes and Pharisees distorting the old law: 'your wine has been mixed with water, that is your exposition with falsehood, just as the scribes and Pharisees did to whom Christ said in Matthew 15: "you have emptied the word of God because of your traditions" – that is, because of your ordinances and additions contrary to the word of God and contrary to the indication and the intent of God himself who spoke these words which they falsely gloss and expound'.[107] Gascoigne returns frequently to the dangers of false glosses and interpretations by which men 'empty the law and word of God and follow the traditions and commands of men'.[108] In this, of course, there are loud echoes of Wyclif's concern that '*non est finis potencie sic glosantis*' and his desire for a 'de-glossed text'.[109]

The challenge for Gascoigne, as for others writing on the demands of responsible exposition, is to identify this divine authorial intention. For Gascoigne, as for Wyclif, the answer is sought in both moral and methodological tests.[110] Methodologically, the authorial intention sometimes seems to be identified with the strict historical sense: 'the sense or understanding of holy scripture according to the mind and intention of the author who spoke those words in history, i.e. the historical sense'.[111] In these passages, authorial intention seems to be that of the original human author, who 'principally' and 'originally' articulated its words and whose intended

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[106] 'Qui scripturam sacram exponeret vel predicaret, que non ponat aquam cum vino, id est falsitatem cum vero, nec aliquid quod repugnat seu contradicit intencioni et indicio dei, qui est auctor scripture sacre': ibid., p. 444.

[107] *'*vinum tuum mixtum est aqua, id est cum falsitatem exposicione vel admixtione, sicut illi scribe et pharesei fecerunt quibus dixit christus mt .iij. [these words are from Mt 15:6] "irritum fecistis mandatum dei propter tradiciones vostras", id est propter ordinaciones vostras et addiciones contrarias verbo dei, et contrias indicacioni et intencioni ipsius dei qui dixit illa verba que ipsi false glosabant et exponebant*'* – ibid., p. 444

[108] 'omittit legem et verba dei et sequitur tradiciones et mandata homini' – ibid., p. 463

[109] 'There is no limit to the potential of such glossing'; Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 1.

[110] See the first chapter of Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy,* pp. 24-66.

[111] 'Sensus seu intellectus scripture sacre secundum mentem et intentum autoris qui dixit illa verba historia [sic], i.e. sensus historicus' – MS Lincoln Lat 117, p. 470

meaning is to be followed without any tropological 'wandering' or 'digression' ('*evagandi'*, from *evagari,* a term Gascoigne repeats often in this context but without much elaboration as to his exact conception of its meaning; the word generally has connotations of going astray, spreading, or digressing beyond proper limits).[112] Gascoigne indeed often implies criticism of those whose expositions fail to follow the order of words of the text.[113] Elsewhere, however, he acknowledges that scripture can convey truth through non-literal language: 'God's words have this custom, that by tropology and metaphor the truth of history is displayed; thus St. Jerome on Hosea the prophet chapter 10, from which it is clear that in holy scripture is put a historical sense and authorial intention under metaphorical words and by similitude of speech'.[114] Gascoigne also acknowledges that the simple grammatical sense is sometimes misleading, and not the same as the authorial intention, especially where rhetorical language is being employed.[115] Indeed, he criticises Pecock, in a highly conventional piece of polemic, for seeing only the original authorial intention because of his insistence on judging by natural reason, even as he

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[112] Ibid., p. 471: 'historia stricta, i.e. sensus historicus seu sensus et intellectus et intentum autoris qui dixit, seu principaliter et originaliter dixit verba scripture sacre historia, enim non habet evagandi facultatem Tropologia, libera est'.

[113] Ibid., p. 472: 'aliqui exponunt textum aliquem scripture sacre cuius exposicionis contrarium monstrant sequencia verba illius textus quem exponunt' ('some expound some text of holy scripture whose expositions they set forth contrary to the sequence of words of that text which they expound').

[114] 'Hanc habet consuetudinem sermo domini, vt per tropologiam et metaforam historie exprimat veritatem – hec sanctus Jeronimus super osee prophetam capitulo xo. Ex quo patet quia [sic] in scriptura sacra ponitur aliquem sensus historicus et intellectus autoris, sub verbis metaforicis et per similitudinem dictis' – ibid., p. 471.

[115] Ibid., p. 462, 'ex quo patet quod licet sensus primarius huius textus quem intendit autor eius, scilicet deus, sit simplicitus verus, tunc sensus gramaticalis precedentis textus "in gladio morientur" etc est falsus' ('from which it is apparent that if the primary sense of this text which its author, that is God, intended, may be allowed to be absolutely true then the grammatical sense of the preceding text "they will die by the sword etc" is false'). Gascoigne may be responding here to the *virtus sermonis* debate of the previous century, an academic conflict, primarily at Paris, over where the true objective meaning of a passage was to be found: the strict grammatical meaning of words or the mental intentions on the part of the authors for their meaning. Like Netter and Wyclif, Gascoigne essentially positions himself here alongside Dobelin and the authors of the 1340 statement by the University of Paris that asserted the primacy of mental intentions, either on the part of human or divine authors, as the locus of objective meaning: see Courtenay, 'Force of Words and Figures of Speech'. Compare Wyclif's debate with Kenningham over the nature of *virtus sermonis*, where Wyclif identified it with divine intent and Kenningham with the strict grammatical sense; Gascoigne here seems to unconsciously position himself with Wyclif, rather than the more 'orthodox' Kenningham: see Ian Levy, ed. and trans., *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, p. 13.

criticises those who stray from the historical sense to follow their own interpretations.[116] He is thus caught in a double tension, between wishing to recognise the specific historical origin of human authors and the transcendent and timeless voice of the divine author, and between recognising the existence of figurative and metaphorical language in scripture and needing to maintain exegetical accountability to some clear, objective meaning of the text if it is to function as the determinative authority source he envisages, capable of rebuking church corruption.[117]

Gascoigne seeks to minimise this tension by a conventional subordination of other senses to the historical sense: the spiritual sense must follow it, and the tropological sense must be founded upon it.[118] Likewise, he argues that the historical sense cannot 'wander' (*evagor*), being fixed (and in that regard objective and not subject to subjective interpretation, without the 'waxen nose' so problematic for medieval authorities) and that there is no allegory in scriptural laws or rules for life, though historical passages can have a secondary typological meaning.[119] Keeping other forms of exposition subordinate to this controlling, fixed historical sense is necessary to avoid them 'wandering' into false, misleading, or harmful interpretation: 'Spiritual

[116] *Liber,* p. 99.

[117] See again Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority*, pp. 1-12 on the search for an objective authority source to resolve church divisions and disputes. Compare the complaint of the daughters of God in Pecock's *Reule*, pp. 32-33, who lament that the clergy tell tales and 'manye untrewe opynyouns feyned and forged bi enviosite' without 'ground of sufficient reason', which expresses a similar concern: see here Bose, 'Reginald Pecock's Vernacular Voice' in Somerset, Havens, and Pitard, eds, *Lollards and their Influence*, pp. 217-35, at p. 225.

[118] MS Lincoln Lat. 117, p. 461: ' verba propheticarum non habunt **inanime sonum** et **cassa solius tropologie nomina**, sed primo habeunt historie fundamenta et tunc spiritualis intelligencie culinem acciperunt, vt Christus vere sit natus de virgnie, vere lazarum ^mortuum [word inserted from margin] suscitavit, cum de ceteris operibus, licet secundum tropologiam de anima virginali vastatur firmo [sermo] diuinus cum quotidie peccato mortui de sepulcro scelerum suorum inbeantur exire' ('the words of prophecies do not have a sound inanimately and are [not] granted a tropological name alone but first had a historical foundation and then they received a spiritual sense, as that Christ was truly born of a virgin and truly raised Lazarus from death and similarly with [his] other works, even though it is permitted according to tropology [to say that] he grows from a virginal soul by the word of God and daily raises deathly sinners from their shameful tomb').

[119] MS Lincoln Lat. 117, p. 461: 'historia scruta est et evagandi non habet facultatem'; p. 462: 'In scripturis et preceptis que ad vitam pertinent, et sunt perspicua, non debemus querere allegoriam'; compare p. 470: 'exitus populi israel de egipto in mari rubro cum moysen ad literam impletus fuit, et tunc tipice hoc factum processit in eis, vere enim impletum fuit in christo'.

exposition should follow the historical order, i.e. the sense which the author intended, since many ignorant [people] excitably wander in error in the scriptures').[120] Crucially, it should be noted that the guide through the confusing vastness and conflicting interpretations of scripture is here internal to it, being a correct methodology, rather than the external guides of tradition and the Fathers emphasised primarily by Netter or Woodford. Scripture is thus potentially freed from interpretative dependence upon the church – a radical step, and one again more reminiscent of Wycliffite than orthodox hermeneutics.

A correct methodology also demands considering the context, not dividing up texts that should be together, and interpreting scripture by scripture.[121] 'The historical order is read (literally 'is woven' or 'is composed') from those things preceding and following' he says, citing Jerome.[122] Again there are echoes of Wyclif's 'oft-repeated stress in taking scripture in its integrity' and letting 'scripture dictate its own meanings'.[123] Gascoigne does not display any sign of being familiar with Wyclif's thought, such as his emphasis on equivocation as the means by which scripture may be always 'literally' true, but a similar concern for a consistent historical sense understood from the context resonates through his chapter on exposition.[124] Unlike Pecock, there is

[120] Ibid., p. 461: 'Spiritualis exposicio sequi debet ordinem historie, i.e. Sensus quem autor intendit, quod plerique ignorantes [^incerto] lymphatico in scripturis vagantur errore'.

[121] 'Aptus scripture sacre est in vno loco aperire quod prius sub enigmatibus dixerat' ('holy scripture is apt to open in one place what formerly it had said enigmatically' – citing Jerome): p. 469; 'quomodo ipse, exponendo textum aliquam scripture sacre, exposuit simul totum feriem veritatis contente in textu, et hoc fecit ne intellectum integrum textus in exponedo divideret' ('how [Jerome], when expounding any text of holy scripture, expounded at once all the weight of truth contained in the text, and this he did lest the integrated understanding, having been woven together, should be divided in exposition'). See also p. 443 and p. 444: 'Sanctus Jeronimus, libro ix. super ezechielem, testatur que ipse solebat alium exponendo capitulum biblie ea que pertinent ad eandem materiam simul ponere in sua exposicione, quamvis diversis ponantur capitulis et diuersis impleta fuerunt temporibus, et hoc fecit ne ordo leccionis diversus in partes audientis intelligenciam conturbaret'. Compare Wyclif's stress that the faithful approach scripture in its 'wholeness': see Levy, *John Wyclif: On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, p. 112; his followers' insistence that 'almoost noþing is seie in þo derknessis which þing is not founden seid ful pleynli in oþere places': 'Prologue to the Wycliffite Bible', in Dove, *The Earliest advocates of the English Bible*, pp. 3-85, at p. 70.

[122] 'Historie ordo ex presedentibus et consequentibus texitur [sic]': ibid., p. 472.

[123] Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 45, 48.

[124] Compare Hurley, ''*Scriptura Sola*', pp. 275-352, for an analysis of Wyclif's expositional and hermeneutic

no evidence of this emphasis on a literal-sense reading of self-interpreting scripture bringing Gascoigne into suspicion.

Beyond such a methodology, however, Gascoigne leans on the moral criteria for exegesis. Those who mistreat scripture are 'men of corrupt mind who have been deprived of the truth'.[125] False glossing arises from false appetites and a failure to submit to the divine will: 'they violate, unto whatever is in themselves [i.e. their own intentions and ideas] the pure and flowing law of God, mixed in pure truth, with vain and false glosses and their additions conformable to their own appetites but not to the divine mind and will'.[126] Moral understanding is thus the other guide to the right interpretation of figurative places: 'in the exposition or understanding of holy scripture we ought to spurn whatever resists healthy faith'.[127] In this Gascoigne again stands up to a certain point in a long tradition – 'it was basically taken for granted that divine truth was revealed to those who were spiritually disposed to receive it' – but for Gascoigne, this established principle takes on a particular application: he is concerned specifically with the distorting of scripture and the imposition of bad exegesis, not just general revelation of understanding of divine truth.[128] While Bonaventure had argued that one should therefore proceed more by the affect than the intellect, an approach one might have expected to appeal given the 'affective turn' discussed above, Gascoigne takes no such approach, continuing to be concerned with the right intellectual approach even as he recognises the need for a right spiritual and

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priorities and interest in literal and historical senses. For an example from one of his followers writing in a university context see Anne Hudson, 'A neglected Wycliffite Text', *JEH,* 29 (1978), 257-79, this reference p. 261, where the author insists that his interest is with the literal sense of scripture, although defining that (via Lyra) fairly broadly.

125 'homines mente corrupta' … 'privati sunt a veritate' – ibid., p. 469.

126 'legem dei, fluceram atque puram, et mera veritate submixam, in quodcunque in ipsis est, violant vanus et falsus glosis et addicionibus suis, conformibus suo appetitui sed non divine menti et voluntati' – ibid., p. 463.

127 'In exposici*on*e seu in intellectu sacre sc*ri*pture respui no*n [nos?]* debm*us* quiquid sane fidei resistit',' ibid., p. 442, citing Gregory.

128 Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority*, p. 7.

moral framework to found it.[129] In this, as in his wariness regarding figurative interpretations, he stands in the Victorine tradition in conjunction with Pecock, and Wyclif, and to a certain extent Netter, eschewing a determinative affectivity and seeking an objectively accountable hermeneutic method emphasising the foundational role of the literal and historical sense.[130]

Likewise, his criteria for a good exegete show a very specific emphasis on humility: they must be open to divine authority, and not, like Pecock, captivated by their own clever glosses.[131] Pecock's folly is exemplified by his refusal to accept authority unless he agreed with it, and by his refusal to acknowledge the spiritual senses of the text (an interpretative tradition bound up with patristic exegesis and authority): 'likewise it was written by that bishop Reginald that the sayings of the doctors are not to be believed, unless they may be proved by human reason, and that no sense is to be assigned to Holy Scripture save that sense which the author of that scripture first intended, and what that sense is should be judged, claimed the bishop, by the strength of human reason.'[132] The traditional polemic that unworthy exegetes missed out on spiritual revelation here takes on a very specific dimension: Pecock's pride blinds him to authority and to any sense except that open to

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[129] Ibid., , p. 8.

[130] For the evolution of the 'Victorine' school see van Liere, 'Biblical Exegesis Through the Twelfth Century', in Boynton and Reilly, eds, *The Practice of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, pp. 157-178. Compare Ghosh's assessment of Pecock's approach: 'Bishop Reginald Pecock and the idea of Lollardy', in Barr, and Hutchinson, *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale,* (pp. 251-266. This emphasis on the literal placed Gascoigne in contrast with near-contemporaries such as John Whethamstede, as well as predecessors such as Love, who attacked as dangerous and misleading Lollardy's close adherence to the literal sense – see Carlson, 'Whethamstede on Lollardy, pp. 21-41, at p. 27. See also the tract 'The Holi Prophete Dauid', which felt the need to address the critical use of the verse 'the letter kills but the Spirit brings life' to critique translation, printed and discussed in Dove, 'Introduction', in her *The Earliest Advocates of the English Bible,* p. lv, and 'Tract 2', pp. 103-105, confirming the existence of contemporary criticism of use of the literal sense.

[131] *Liber,* p. 101. Again there are parallels to the Lollard emphasis on humility as the key virtue for any exegete, especially as opposed to clever glossing asserting one's will on the text. See the Prologue to the Wycliffite Bible: Dove, ed., *The Earliest advocates of the English Bible,* pp. 3-5, 69.

[132] 'Item scribitur de eodem episcopo Reginaldo, quod dicta doctorum non sunt credenda, nisi illa probent naturali racione, et quod sensus sacrae scripturae nullus est allocandus, nisi sensus quem auctor illius scripturae primo intendebat, et quis est ille sensus, deberet judicari, ut dicet ille episcopus, ab homine pollente racione – *Liber,* p. 99.

natural or 'human' reason (see below) and so to a key part of scripture.[133] Conversely, he argues that all heresies originated with the imposition of gentile philosophy on to scriptural exegesis, and with a refusal to accept the authority of scripture and the interpretative tradition of the fathers.[134] Bad exegesis can thus result from missing out on what one should see (i.e. those senses beyond the original intention of the human author), by being closed to the authority sources which one should accept (the Fathers), or from falsely adding words or wandering in interpretations under the influence of an authority source one should not accept (gentile philosophy).[135] In each case, the problem is fundamentally volitional/moral rather than intellectual/methodological: 'men did not want to follow the authority of Holy Scripture'; 'they did not humbly restrain themselves within the boundaries of the holy Fathers'; the refusal to be bound by divine authority (mediated through scripture and the Fathers) and accept its determinations is the root of bad exegesis as it was the root of original sin in the garden.[136] Traditional understandings of exegesis thus take on a very specific focus relevant to contemporary issues of authorities and *Sprachlogik*.

Gascoigne's example here is, unsurprisingly, Jerome, whose translation of scripture had to grapple with these issues. Jerome's authority was, to his mind, established by the accolade of Mary to St. Bridget that amongst all doctors he was the one wise on earth about heaven ('inter omnes doctores sanctus Jeronimus invenit sapiam celestem in terris').[137] The element of personal trust in the integrity of the expositor or translator is clearly important: 'Paulus apostolus non dixit "scio que credo" vel "scio que credidi" sed dixit "scio cui credidi"' ('the apostle Paul did not say "I know what I

[133] Compare Netter's focus on Wyclif's pride; it seems that pinning allegations of this root sin on an opponent was considered an ideal rhetorical strategy.

[134] *Liber,* p. 28.

[135] Compare here Netter's insistence on demonstrating Wyclif's dependence upon pagan philosophy, and Wyclif's own complaints of importing pagan philosophical ideas; see Chapter 3, above.

[136] 'non volunt homines sequi sacrarum scripturarum auctoritatem'; 'non humiliter se retinent infra terminos sanctorum patrum' – pp. 28-29. Cf. the pervasive emphasis on 'limits' in Bodley 649.

[137] MS Lincoln Lat. 117, p. 470.

believe", or "I know what I have believed", but "I know whom I have believed" citing 2 Timothy).[138] In this he echoed Wyclif, who also saw the holiness of Jerome's life as validating his translation.[139] Yet there is also an intellectual component: Jerome also, he emphasises, was aware of the nuances between 'historical' and allegorical interpretations: 'For St. Jerome translated the holy scriptures from Hebrew speech into Latin in his commentaries, … the holy doctor expounded the letter of scripture in the historical sense or primary understanding which the author of scripture intended. Again, the same St. Jerome translated the Greek scriptures into Latin which the seventy translators before him had translated from the Hebrew into Greek, and that translation of theirs the same St. Jerome expounded allegorically or typologically in his commentary on scripture'.[140] Gascoigne's tension between an objectively binding historical sense and typological and allegorical truth can only be suitably resolved by a simultaneously intellectually responsible and morally trustworthy exegete. Once more there are resonances with the emphasis of early Lollard biblical translators that a humble and well-disposed reader could find truth that 'proud clerks' could miss.[141]

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[138] Ibid., p. 471.

[139] Mary Dove, 'Wyclif and the English Bible' in Levy, ed., *A Companion to John Wyclif,* pp. 365-406, at p. 373. Compare also the need of early bible translators to defend themselves against the allegation that they should not be translating scripture because they were not as holy as Jerome: they argued that he was still less holy than the apostles, and that the issue was therefore not absolute holiness but a right disposition – Dove, ed., *The Earliest Advocates of the English Bible*, p. xxiii.

[140] 'sanctus enim Jeronimus transtulit scripturam sacram de Hebreo sermone in latinum in suis commentarijs seu explanacionibus, quod idem est idem sanctus doctor exponit illam litteram scripture sacre historice in sensum seu intellectu primeno quem autor scripture intendebat. Item idem sanctus Jeronimus transtulit de greco in latinum scripturam sacram, quam septuaginta interpretes indei existentes prius ante eum transtulissent de Hebreico sermone in grecum sermonem, et illam suam translacionem exponit idem sanctus Jeronimus allegorice seu tipice in suis commentarijs super scripturam' – MS Lincoln Lat. 117, p. 471.

[141] See e.g. 'Prologue to the Wycliffite Bible' in Dove, ed., *Earliest Advocates of the English Bible,* pp. 3-85, at pp. 65, 69: 'he whos herte is ful of charite comprehendiþ wiþouten ony errour þe manyfold habundaunce and largeste techinge of Goddis scripturis' (albeit with 'grete trauele,' implying an acceptance of the need for intellectual effort) as opposed to the 'veyn iangling and chiding in wordis aȝenus proude clerkis of scole and veyn religiouse'.

Gascoigne's use of Scripture in Practice

Examining Gascoigne's handling of scripture in practice, one sees some of this in action. He takes care, for example, to expound the whole story of Paul's relationship with the Galatians when arguing for residency, taking into account both the historical context of the letter and the textual context of the wider New Testament.[142] Thus he notes the beneficial effects of Paul's residency, and the negative effects of his absence, drawing on the account of the letter itself, then noting his practice of appointing elders (Acts 14), after remaining in a town as long as possible (Acts 20); pointing out the difference between those who should remain resident, and Paul, who bore responsibility for all the churches (2 Corinthians 11) and so must visit each. Here is the insistence on scriptural interpretation by context, drawing together interlocking references as well as considering a wider analysis than a simple proof-text. Similarly, he will readily interpret scripture by scripture, as when he in passing glosses Psalm 88's reference to swords with Ephesians 6's comment that the sword of the spirit is the word of God, and thus applies the verse to bishops who neglect to preach.[143] As befits his concern for right handling of scripture, when he does use formal citations as an authority (as opposed to an interpretative gloss), they are usually meticulously referenced and quite lengthy, not brief fragments of a single verse.[144] Likewise, his emphasis on scripture is evident not only in the frequency of his citations but in the way in which his text is suffused with biblical phrases and images, often used not as any explicit citation but as a linguistic resource (and, perhaps, as a mark of authoritative style).[145] Thus, for example, his statement that there

[142] *Liber,* pp. 64-71.

[143] MS Lincoln Lat. 117, p. 467 – here, as elsewhere, such glosses are not made by an explicit citation, but simply by using the phrasing of the text that is drawn upon.

[144] *Liber,* pp. 58, 60.

[145] *Liber,* pp. 119, 132, 148, 157, 169, 177, 185, 188, 193. These examples of biblical language are not marked by Rogers, presumably because they are not explicit citations; the original MS itself often does not mark such citations, as noted above, perhaps since they are not being used as explicit 'authorities' but as a linguistic and conceptual resource.

must be preaching 'in season and out of season' uses the language of 2 Timothy 4:2, but modified for the context of what Gascoigne is saying; the Bible passage is not cited as an authority but the use of its language gives a veneer of associative authority to Gascoigne's assertion as well as subtly evoking its own message by association.[146] Such a 'bible-speak' is of course reminiscent of the interpolative style of many Lollard works.[147] In other ways, his style can sound reminiscent of Lollard writing, for example in his frequent use of the term 'prelates' for high ecclesiastics, and his willingness to break into impromptu prayers addressed to God to remedy some abuse he is describing, an use of the form of *prophetia comminationis* also present in Wyclif and expressed most vocally in Lollard preaching.[148]

In one regard Gascoigne's scriptural practice does seem to deviate from Lollard conventions, and that is his foregrounding of patristic and doctoral commentary. While an appeal to the Fathers was common in Wycliffite texts, it was usually as confirmation of a message 'grounded' in scriptural citations.[149] Gascoigne's text very seldom cites scripture without wrapping it in some form

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[146] *Liber,* p. 60: 'Oportune et importune, i.e. hiis qui volunt, et hiis qui audire non volunt, praedicandum est' ('In season and out of season, that is, to those who want to hear and those who do not, there should be preaching') ; compare the original verse: 'praedica verbum insta oportune inportune argue obsecra increpa in omni patientia et doctrina' ('preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching' - RSV). Gascoigne's application of the verse is certainly not alien to the sense of its original message, but rather than deriving it by an interpretative gloss of a formal citation, he simply uses the same form of words to articulate and support his message.

[147] It is also used by some 'orthodox' writers such as Jean Gerson, for example in his speech before the English delegation to Constance – see G. R. Dunstan, 'Proposito facta coram Anglicis: A Translation' in Du Boulay et al., *The Church in pre-Reformation Society,* pp. 68-78. Such a style was thus far from unique to Gascoigne, although his use of it so consistently throughout a document that does not appear to have been aimed at a public context may be more unusual.

[148] *Liber,* pp. 76, 128, 179, 185. See Hudson, 'A Lollard Sect Vocabulary?' reprinted in Anne Hudson, *Lollards and their Books* (Hambledon, 1985), pp. 165-80; and Bose, 'Prophecy, Complaint, and Pastoral Care pp. 149-162; See also Somerset, *Feeling Like Saints*, p. 282 and elsewhere.

[149] Hurley argues further, that Wyclif in theory affirms the place of tradition, but in practice subordinates it to his own views that are formed essentially from bare scripture and philosophy, Hurley, ''Scriptura sola'', pp. 275-352. Others maintain he regarded early commentators, especially Augustine, as authoritative (Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 24-66). Certainly Wyclif argued (Levy, John Wyclif: On the truth of Holy Scripture, p. 62) that 'children such as we' should not deny or repudiate the teaching of 'such a saint' without definite evidence, though he grounded this rather contingently, on Augustine's concordance with Scripture and reason, and on his sanctity, rather than special insight. The exact extent of the authority Wyclif saw the fathers as having is thus not clearly defined.

of commentary, most often patristic.[150] Thus, while Gascoigne does not attempt to advocate the sort of interpretative dependence upon tradition that Netter articulates, instead suggesting a relatively open and independent scripture, his work has a patristic and traditional 'feel' that, along with its conscious orthodoxy and use of Latin, makes it fit in 'mood' to the patristic orthodox reformers identified by Ball, even if its hermeneutic theology might be differently orientated.

Authority and the place of reason

Two other authorities constantly appear with scripture as an authority source: reason and conscience. 'Reason' appears to play an ambiguous role in Gascoigne's conception. He is famously credited in a marginal annotation with composing the rhyme he puts into the mouth of a contrite Pecock: 'Wyt hath wundur that reson kan not tel …. leve reson, beleve ye wonder; Beleve hath mastry and reson is under.'[151] This has made it easy to view him as purely an anti-rationalist. In attacking Pecock, he makes much of his dependence upon reason: he repeatedly mentions with disapprobation Pecock's denial of Gregory's maxim that faith is meritless where there is reason; cites him as teaching 'That man should believe by natural reason rather than by authority'; notes that Pecock's problem was that 'He didn't want to believe anything unless he could prove it by natural reason'; and comments that it is permissible to use reason to debate with those outside the faith, but not to make natural reason one's primary authority.[152]

On the other hand, reason often appears in his work as a positive authority: he cites St. Bernard that 'The pope cannot permit or licence

[150] See in particular Gascoigne's chapter on the exposition of scripture, MS Lincoln Lat. 117, pp. 461-74.

[151] *Liber,* p. 217.

[152] 'quod homo crederet racioni naturali potius quam auctoritati'; 'nichil vult credere quod non possit racionibus naturalibus probare': see *Liber,* pp. 39, 99, 104, 102.

[anything] against pure reason and holy scripture,' and insists that 'such a patron and such a selector, who selects anyone who would not be chosen according to the judgement of reason nor by Holy Scripture, despises God'.[153] He defines preaching as 'announcing to the people by evidences and by rational arguments that their acts are evil and contrary to the rule of God'.[154] Attacking corruption in church and state, he tells officials: 'You are bound by law of reason and law of divine scripture'.[155] The priest, he insists, should judge whom to absolve 'By reason and holy scripture'.[156] He defends his understanding of the limited nature of indulgences by insisting it is the interpretation 'which the holy fathers and very knowledgeable doctors openly showed by great and obvious arguments [*racionibus*] and by clear testimonies of Holy Scripture'.[157] Gascoigne is clearly not the simple anti-rationalist he has sometimes been presented as.

The key, in Gascoigne's conception, is clearly the context and standing of reason. When reason is cited along with '*sacra scriptura*' and in service to it, it is always viewed positively; it is 'natural reason' that is viewed as inadequate and suspect. Gascoigne wants a 'rational' interpretation of authority, namely scripture through the Fathers, and grounds his challenges to institutional corruption upon it: the 'rational' element here is probably about not evading the clear commands of scripture by glosses in the fashion of which he accuses Pecock and heretics.[158] By combining this form of 'reason' with scripture, Gascoigne seeks to specify the correct interpretation of authoritative scripture, rather than place another authority alongside it: it is part of his response to

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[153] 'Papa contra meram racionem et scripturam sacram licite facere vel licenciare non potest, talis patronus et talis eligens et qui eligi procurat aliquem, quem secundum racionis juidicium nec per sacram scripturam eligeret, despicit Deum': *Liber,* pp. 7, 19.

[154] 'annuncia [populo] per evidencias et per raciones quod actus eorum sunt mali et contra dei imperium' – *Liber,* p. 60.

[155] 'obligatus es jure racionis et jure divino scripto', *Liber,* p. 63.

[156] 'per racionem et scripturam sacram', *Liber,* p. 85.

[157] 'quas sancti patres et magnae scienciae doctores magnis et apertis ostendunt racionibus et manifestis sacrae scripturae testimoniis', *Liber,* p. 91.

[158] *Liber,* p. 142.

the 'quest for authority' (specifically, the authority to decide on the correct interpretation of scriptural authority) identified by Levy, and arises from his faith in the openness of scripture; if read rationally, i.e. 'sensibly', correctly, without 'wanderings' or 'evasions' but with humble openness to what it is seeking to say, it will clearly lead the reader to the 'right' answer.[159] Again there are resonances both with Wyclif's concern not to impose an alien logic on scripture, and his assertion of the accessibility of scripture to a rightly orientated reader.[160] Just as reason was essential to Wyclif once subsumed into the divine logic of scripture, so reason is essential to Gascoigne so long as it comes with, and in the service of, authority, through the scriptures and the Fathers.[161]

'Natural reason', in contrast, is reason opposed to authority: 'If there is someone who does not want to believe anything which he cannot prove by natural reason, that is the wisdom of this world, let him send away this wisdom and believe first by authority without reason, that at last he may be wise, truly attaining to the knowledge of those things which are above nature.'[162] Natural reason is the wisdom of this world that has yet to submit to authority. When it does so it can become true wisdom, reason in service to revelation and not in denial of it. Pecock's emphasis on reason apart from the authority of the great doctors is, to Gascoigne, the sort of natural reason condemned by the apostle.[163] It is characterised by refusing to accept revelation from authority, rather than starting from it in the manner of healthy reason.

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[159] See above on Gascoigne's hermeneutic of openness, and see the first chapter of Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority*, pp. 1-53, for the search for an authoritative voice to resolve disagreement.

[160] For Wycliffe's hermeneutic agenda see Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority*, Chapter 2, pp. 54-91, Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 44.

[161] Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 52.

[162] 'si quis est talis, qui nichil vult credere quod non possit racionibus naturalibus probare, quod est sapientem in hoc saeculo, dimittat hanc sapienciam et credat auctoritate primo sine racione, ut tandem sit sapiens, vere attingens ad scienciam eorum quae supra naturam sunt', *Liber,* p. 104, citing Grosseteste on 1 Cor 3.

[163] *Liber,* p. 101.

Authority and the place of 'Conscience'

The appeal to conscience is a more unusual element of Gascoigne's theological thought; and one that again places Gascoigne at variance with the emphasis on group and institutional authority vis-á-vis the individual seen in predecessors such as Netter, Love, and even Pecock.[164] Gascoigne does not emphasise an individual's call to submit to the judgement of the church, but an individual's duty to be willing to challenge and disobey the church when it acts wrongly. Here as elsewhere, of course, he seeks to be traditional, leaning, for example, on St. Bernard and on an unspecified '*antiquitas*' for his insistence that papal license or dispensation does not free the conscience of a Christian.[165] This is a particularly personal conception of a duty to resist papal authority, focusing on those receiving personal dispensations and their ultimate individual accountability before God, rather than, as elsewhere when papal power has been discussed, the relative power and responsibility of the bishop vis-à-vis the pope, a debate about authority within the institution, rather than between it and an individual.[166]

Conscience in medieval thought has commonly been perceived as having had 'common knowledge' as the central element, founded, in Aristotelian terms, in *ethos* not *pathos* or *logos*.[167] Scholastic discussion centred on its role in the moral faculties, with some debate between a 'Franciscan' position emphasising *consciencia* as an act of judgement, with *synderesis* (from the Greek συνειδησις, the New Testament term usually translated *consciencia*) as a disposition of the will towards the right, and a Dominican or Aquinan position emphasising the epistemic role of conscience, with *synderesis* as

[164] See above, Chapters 1-4.

[165] *Liber,* p. 69.

[166] Compare p. 16 on the inescapable responsibility of preaching; p. 33 for a bishop insisting on episcopal discipline of an erring and papally absolved vicar: note especially the bishop's alleged words '*Haec litera … enervat omnem potestatem concessam a Domino episcopis*'. In these extracts there is more of an echo of the 'Grossetestan theory of episcopal authority' put forward by Harvey, *England and the Papacy*, p. 215.

[167] Paul Strohm, *Conscience: A very short introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), pp. 10-15.

knowledge of good principles through the disposition of reason, and *consciencia* as the practical application of that reason.[168]

Gascoigne's formulations, however, do not primarily emerge from this scholastic model, but from biblical and patristic sources, again demonstrating his independent and creative use of older authorities. The brief chapter on conscience in the *Liber Veritatum* gives three perspectives on conscience, only one of which can easily be accommodated to these scholastic formulations.[169] The first envisages conscience as a witness at the Last Judgement (drawn from Jerome on Zechariah): 'In that day of judgement a man will be tortured by his conscience, by that conscience revealing what pertains to the man'.[170] The second envisages conscience as a common law binding one to an authoritative declaration (that is, something founded in the realm of *ethos*), and causing one to understand principles intuitively, which could perhaps be reconciled to the 'Dominican' position on conscience psychology.[171] The third, and most complex, drawn from Grosseteste and Augustine on Romans, emphasises that even inherently good actions become sinful if done by one who believes them to be bad; so that the individual's belief about a deed becomes the ultimate arbiter of its morality for him.[172] This is clearly the realm of *logos*, or perhaps *pathos*, rather than *ethos*. It is not clear how Gascoigne envisaged these three rather

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168 Sarah Wood, *Conscience and the Composition of 'Piers Plowman'* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), pp. 2-3.

169 MS Lincoln Lat. 117, p. 200 for the following discusssion.

170 'In die indicii torquebit hominem consciencia sua ,quem consciencie pandende secundum homini, ' – ibid., p. 200

171 'Est quoddam dictamen romanis, et obligat sub romane precepti divini sub cuius ~~norme²~~ {^romae] aprehendit illud quod roma dictat – hec januensis in suo catholicen litera, scilicet super verbo Consciencia. Et sequitur virtus illa anime que intelligit principia sine inquisicione dicitur {^intellectus}, et intellecto prout est in opatinis et non in speculatinis vocat 'synderisis'. Ibid., p. 200. (It is a former term of the Romans, and binds under the Roman divine law, by which those of Rome understood what Rome said – thus Januensis in his letter 'Catholicon', that is, upon the word 'Conscience'. And it follows that that soul is called virtuous who understands [these] principles without inquiry, and the intellect by which they are understood in shadow and not in examination is called 'synderesis'.'

172 'Omne quod non est ex fide peccatus est, <u>quod creditur firmiter esse;</u> [underlined in MS] Ad Romanos ix° capitulo. Bonum opus ex genere quod creditur firmiter esse peccatus si fiat, peccat qui facit' Ibid., p. 200. ''All that is not of faith is sin,' because it is firmly believed to be [so], 9th chapter to the Romans [Romans 14:23]. A work good of itself that is firmly believed to be sin, if it should be [done] he sins who does it.' Note the determinative role played by the individual's perception of the morality of an act, rather than an objective or communal accountability.

different perspectives reconciling, but then he does not seem to be trying to build a coherent systematic theology in the *Liber Veritatum*, and so reconciling his different models may not have been a priority. In practice, in any case, while he gives these three models in his chapter on conscience, when he uses the concept elsewhere he appeals only to one of them.

It is, significantly, the third model of conscience that seems to be behind Gascoigne's appeal to the idea elsewhere in his work: ecclesiastical officials are bound in conscience in spite of papal orders because they **believe** the action in question to be wrong. It therefore is sinful for them, and the papacy cannot change that or make a sin not be a sin, since that would elevate the papacy above the law of God. The biblical epistles of 1 Corinthians and Romans are often cited by Gascoigne, and it is likely that he is drawing here (via patristic commentary) on their discussions of conscience in 1 Corinthians 8-10 and Romans 14-15, which emphasise that church practice should not pressure individuals to go against their own conscience, meaning things that they consider, believe, or feel to be sinful.[173] Close adherence to this biblical/patristic conception of conscience would certainly fit in with that emphasis on scriptural authority discussed above.[174]

Gascoigne's emphasis is unusual: contemporary scholarship generally judged that following one's conscience could be sinful if that conscience were erroneous when it could have been better instructed.[175] Influenced by concerns over the Schism, scholars such as Jean Gerson took up the idea of probabilism, so that it was not sinful to hold a belief or position if one had probable cause

[173] See for example Romans 14:14: 'scio et confido in Domino Iesu quia nihil commune per ipsum nisi ei qui existimat quid commune esse illi commune est' ('I know and am confident in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean of itself, [but] if one considers it to be unclean [then] to him it is unclean'.) Here, as Gascoigne's third example draws out, the determinative factor in whether an act is morally right or wrong is the individual's subjective belief in its wrongness, rather than a single objective reality or the individual's relation to the community.

[174] There are interesting resonances here with *Piers Plowman* see Strohm, *Conscience*, p. 15, where Strohm ambitiously proposes *Piers* as the first instance of an independent individual conscience in medieval thought, Compare recent comments on Conscience as a legal witness and a figure struggling with 'meed' and institutional corruption, much like Gascoigne's concerns for the conscience of administrators resisting papal patronage – see Wood, *Conscience*, pp. 4, 26, 27, 166.

[175] Stone, 'The Care of Souls and Practical Ethics'pp. 517-535, at p. 529.

for it, and 'a sentence or an opinion was called probable if it was held true by 'the wise or the many".[176] A similar concern with the pragmatic demands of government upon the conscience seems to have been widespread in Gascoigne's day, with Jeremy Catto commenting on the guilt of the professional administrator class at the actions to which they felt driven by the necessities of government, noting that nonetheless fifteenth-century administrators disciplined those of their number who 'put the demands of their private conscience before the discipline of unity' with their class and their government.[177] In contrast, Gascoigne seems to emphasise, both in theory and practice, fidelity to what an individual 'knows' to be right or wrong, especially as opposed to what is being demanded of him by an ecclesiastical and governing establishment.[178]

Whatever the origins of Gascoigne's desire for conscience as a check upon obedience to wrong orders, it is noteworthy that once more this position is reminiscent of the Wycliffite insistence that individuals should judge merit for themselves, 'in their own conscience', rather than relying on others.[179] It seems unlikely that Gascoigne was deliberately echoing the prologue to the Wycliffite Bible when it warned that one should accept man's laws only in so far as they 'accorden wiþ hooli writ and good conscience, and no ferþer,' but the sentiment is identical to his own.[180]

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[176] Ibid., p. 531. See also Rudolf Schüssler, 'Jean Gerson, moral certainty', pp. 445-462.

[177] Catto, 'The Burden and Conscience of Government in the Fifteenth Century' pp. 89, 98.

[178] There is a vivid contrast here with Pecock's efforts to argue for lay submission to clerical judgement discussed above: he urges laity to trust the church's right intentions and not to follow their own judgement of right and wrong. See above, chapter 4.

[179] See Strohm, *Conscience*, p. 16. For examples of Wycliffite struggles with conscience see Christopher G. Bradley 'Trials of Conscience and the Story of Conscience', in *Exemplaria*, 24 (2012), 28-45. He notes the importance of inward intent to Wyche (p. 37), and of fidelity to his 'inner man [possibly a reference to Romans 7:22, '*condelector enim legi Dei secundum interiorem hominem*' ['for I delight in the law of God according to my inner man']. For comparison, see also Fudge, *The Trial of Jan Hus*, pp. 266-8; and Sebastián Provvidente, 'Hus's Trial in Constance: Disputatio aut Inquisitio', in František Šmahel and Ota Pavlíček, eds, *A Companion to Jan Hus* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 254-88 for an account of Hus's appeal to conscience and his insistence that he could not pronounce what he believed to be a lie without imperilling his soul.

[180] 'Prologue to the Wycliffite Bible', in Dove, ed., *The Earliest Advocates of the English Bible*, pp. 3-85, at p. 70.

Gascoigne's orthodoxy

For all the resonances that emerge between Gascoigne' scriptural priorities and Lollardy's he differs in many other respects. There is little or no criticism of the fraternal orders; indeed, Gascoigne repeatedly mentions the use he had of the library of the Oxford Franciscans. Given his emphasis on preaching and practical pastoral involvement, the friars might have elicited far more approval from him than the more distant monasteries; Gascoigne clearly sympathises more with the '*via apostolica*', and never had the clashes with the friars that turned Wyclif so thoroughly against them. Likewise, Gascoigne is not absolutely hostile to monasticism, as his support for the Bridgetines demonstrates, and his enthusiasm for the new saint likewise makes clear that he had no issue with the cult of the saints per se.[181] For all of his criticism of papal abuses of indulgences, he insists on the validity of the papal indulgences attached to the cult of Bridget without hesitation or caveats. Indeed, in a classic orthodox polemic, seen in Bodley 649 as well, he emphasises the fact that sects cannot do miracles, and contrasts them with established saints.[182] Gascoigne further seems to assume the validity of images as representatives of divine authority and channels of divine power when he tells the story of a young Catalan who tried to wrest the sword from an image of St. Paul and 'by God working in the image' ('Deo tunc operante in ymagine') killed himself upon it.[183]

Gascoigne is, of course, a loud exponent of the authority of the Fathers and doctors, and a collector of patristic commentary. While he does not make the same hermeneutic appeal to them as Netter, and while an appeal to the

[181] *Liber,* pp. 122-123.

[182] *Liber,* pp. 102, 141, 142, 152, 169, 218 – compare the arguments from Bodley 649 discussed above under homiletics, Chapter 1, pp. 63-74, see also Chapter 3, p. 162.

[183] *Liber,* p. 206.

Fathers especially could also be part of Wycliffite rhetoric, Gascoigne's reverence is more pronounced. His disgust with Pecock is primarily articulated concerning the latter's elevation of independent human judgement over the writings of doctors and Fathers; Gascoigne instead insists that the great doctors were closer to the fount of wisdom in Christ and more fully endowed with the Holy Spirit, an established argument articulated by Aquinas and perhaps inspired by his reading of Netter.[184] In this he is, as Ball has argued, symptomatic of that cohort of churchmen whose assertive orthodoxy was characterised by their patristic, pastoral, and educational emphases.[185]

More telling, perhaps, is his unease with translation: 'it is truly difficult therefore to transfer Holy Scripture from a perfect tongue into another, less perfect tongue according to the grammatical sense', although he seems to suggest that it might be possible according to a loose interpretation.[186] This seems to be a perspective reminiscent of Ullerston's in the Oxford translation debate, allowing for the possibility but questioning the practicality of an English translation.[187] It is certainly a different perspective from the authors of the prologue to the Wycliffite Bible, who see no issue with the use of English, although they articulate a similar concern for translation 'aftir þe sentense and not oneli aftir þe wordis, so pat þe sentence be as open or openere in English as in Latyn, and go not fer fro þe lettre'.[188] Gascoigne, in contrast, repeatedly emphasises critically Pecock's use of English, and that he 'wrote on such profound matters in English' and replaced the Apostles' Creed with 'a new, huge long creed composed in English words.'[189] It is, of course, possible in the context of this passage that Gascoigne is simply echoing the text of the

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184 *Liber,* p. 49.

185 Ball, 'The Opponents of Bishop Reginald Pecock', pp. 234-248.

186 MS Lincoln Lat. 117, p. 462: 'verum difficile est, ergo, transferre scripturam sacram de lingua perfecta in linguam aliam imperfectam secundum sensum gramaticalem'.

187 See Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 86-92.

188 'Prologue to the Wycliffite Bible', in Dove, ed., *Earliest Advocates of the English Bible*, pp. 3-85, at p. 81.

189 'scripsit tales profundas materias in Anglicis'; 'novum cimbolum magnum et longum in Anglicis verbis composuit' – pp. 26, 213-214.

official condemnation, so the words may not be his, but in any case they are clearly condemnations of which he approved.

Gascoigne's desire for the instruction of the laity likewise does not seem to have extended to any enthusiasm for translation, even if he allowed it in theory. There is no evidence of any desire to provide lay scriptures or encourage lay study outside of priestly involvement. While his criticisms of the church establishment are extensive, and his arguments for an open scripture and individual conscience can sound strikingly lollard, he never endeavours to involve the laity in his desire for reform, nor to make religious authority available to them in the form of an English bible. The call to follow scripture, reason, and conscience against a corrupt establishment is, it seems, addressed only to churchmen, and this may have been significant for Gascoigne's survival.

For all his criticism of the established church, therefore, Gascoigne's essential ecclesiology remains orthodox; committed to the role of the institutional church as custodian of revelation. For all his reforming zeal, Gascoigne never seems to have seen himself as outside the bounds of the contemporary church, nor to have been seen as such by his contemporaries: he remained self-consciously orthodox.

Views on Heresy

Gascoigne's own statements on heresy are in fact revealing: he sees it as a minor threat (at least, aside from Pecock) to which Arundel and others over-reacted: Arundel, he says, bound the tongues of all preachers 'propter paucos haereticos'.[190] Revealingly, he seems to reject the principle of *male sonans*, of silencing expressions that might 'sound bad' or give cause to misunderstanding, insisting that 'we ought rather to permit scandal, i.e. the

[190] *Liber,* p. 36.

occasion for evil to arise, than to relinquish the truth of life, doctrine, or righteousness'.[191] Access to truth is thus more important than the risk of heretical misconstructions, in an implicit reversal of the Arundel regime's priorities. In Gascoigne's eyes, immorality and corruption are by far the bigger problem: for the one page on *Heresia* in the *Liber Veritatum* there are 180 pages on *Luxuria*, *Fornicacio*, and *Castitatis*.[192]

Likewise, Gascoigne criticises the fact that 'those who knew the grace of God, and wanted to build Zion (that is, the church) not in blood and sin, were expelled from office and from the churches'.[193] There is resonance here with the constant Lollard complaint that those who were zealous for the law of God and the reform of the church were persecuted by those who should have most supported them.[194] Gascoigne seems almost to be endorsing, if not necessarily the specific Lollard claim to be true believers, at least the complaint that the institutional church was prone to persecuting where it should have praised.

Gascoigne is indeed conventionally ready to condemn heretics, though it is not clear if he has any contemporary heresy in mind: in his eyes their defining sin is rebellion against the authority of scripture (he does not mention the church) which suggests he may not have been deeply familiar with the Lollards.[195] Indeed, his stress on their tendency to drag words out of context

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[191] 'Quia pocius debemus scandalum permittare, i.e occasionem mali oriri, quam veritatem vitae, doctrinae, seu justiciae, relinquare' – p. 60; the pronouncement is originally from Peter the Chanter (see Lindsay Bryan, ''Vae Mundo a Scandalus' – The sin of scandal in medieval England' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Department of History, University of Toronto, 1998), p. ii). Gascoigne's gloss here suggests that he is thinking of the traditional understanding of scandal as a cause of sin (such as heresy) rather than what Bryan argues was the emerging tendency to understand it more as a loss of reputation or standing. After Arundel the advancement of the old *male sonans* principle had become something of a binding restriction on religious discourses: see Larsen, *The School of Heretics*, p. 266. It is conceivable that Gascoigne has in mind instead the idea associated with Hugh of St. Cher that public rebuke should be avoided when it would injure the church (Moule, *Corporate Jurisdiction*; in which case his aim was presumably against Arundel's restriction in the Constitutions of any criticism of the clergy in the presence of the laity, an extension of this idea that ran counter to both Gascoigne's and Lollardy's reform emphases. Either way, Gascoigne is dissenting from the restrictions of certain strands of contemporary orthodox policing.

[192] Pronger, 'Thomas Gascoigne II', pp. 20-37, at p. 30.

[193] 'dejiciuntur ab ecclesiis et officiis, qui sciunt Dei graciam, et volunt aedificare Syon, i.e. ecclesiam non in sanguinibus et in peccatis' – p. 48.

[194] See above under homiletics, Chapter 1 p. 48.

[195] *Liber,* p. 117 – 'Omnes enim haereticorum et gentilium quaesiones eaedem sunt, quia non scripturarum auctoritatem sed humanae rationis sensum sequuntur.'

and bend them to their will recalls again Wyclif's comments on heretics mangling scripture by taking only what they want; it is possible he may be drawing here on Netter's efforts to turn Wyclif's rhetoric against him by similar allegations, but it does not appear that he had first hand acquaintance.[196] As discussed above, the primary danger to the church is seen as corruption within, not heresy without.[197]

The influence of contemporary politics

Gascoigne's willingness to make provocative criticisms of the contemporary establishment receives additional light in the frequent incursion of politics into his ostensibly theological writings, which also offer potential insights into the changing political and social context at the end of this period. The loss of France repeatedly shows up in his writings, usually blamed on Somerset, though it is also blamed on the lack of good curates, and there are more general suggestions that England's well being is retarded by corruption amongst her churchmen and university scholars (specifically Pecock).[198] The sense of needing to account for changing national fortunes by examining national faithfulness noted in chapter 1 on homiletics was clearly present in Gascoigne's theological reflections, perhaps contributing to the passion with which he seeks reform: such a great humiliation is evidence of great moral and spiritual failing.

Likewise there is a deep concern with the tensions in contemporary society, albeit one expressed only obliquely – Gascoigne argues against appropriations by stressing that good rectors reduce community conflict, for example.[199] He blames the divisions on sin, both lay and ecclesiastic: '[in] the

[196] Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 45.

[197] *Liber,* p. 99.

[198] *Liber,* pp. 139, 158, 205, 219. See also p. 44 on Pecock and p. 139 on good curates.

[199] *Liber,* p. 108.

realm of England there was division due to the multitude of sins, both the sins of the head and [of his] subjects and the alienation of temporalities'.[200] Interestingly, Gascoigne clearly critiques the decision to give an unsuitable (in his eyes) candidate a bishopric so as to prevent conflict; suggesting that the contemporary imperative of concord was strong, and in his eyes being allowed, like the fear of heresy, to have too much influence on the church's decisions.[201] Perhaps this reflects in part the increasing role of the church in 'social regulation', and the consequent increasing crown interest in appointments: pragmatic secular motives of preventing tension were becoming more important than character or theology in making key decisions.[202]

Perhaps the greatest and most revealing issue, though, seems to have been popular revolt, which he reports several times, particularly the deaths of Chichester and Salisbury in Cade's revolt.[203] Gascoigne's views on the causes of unrest are disconcerting in their implications. Rather than blaming sedition on heresy after the mode of Bodley 649, or his contemporary John Whethamstede; he blames it on the king's demands, the bishops' non-residence, and Pecock's preaching.[204] Indeed when it comes to popular revolt, sedition, and the government, Gascoigne's comments can appear almost subversive: he notes the death by lynch mob of two bishops and Henry's confessor and explains: 'he had not emended defects around the king, nor left the king because of the lack of emending defects'. He proceeds to comment on the fact that previous kings had

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200 ' Regnum Angliae ... multiplicibus peccatis fuit divisum, tum propter peccata capitum et subditorum, tum propter alienacionem temporalium bonorum' – p. 220. This probably refers to the misuse of financial resources in church and state, either by ecclesiastical appropriations or by excessive royal generosity in donations and foundations, alongside sin on the part of both rulers – potentially either secular or lay – and people.

201 *Liber,* p. 224.

202 Benjamin Thompson and Jacques Verger, 'Church and State, Clerks and Graduates in Government and Political Life in England and France', in Christopher David Fletcher, Jean-Philippe Genêt, and John Watts, eds, *Government and Political Life in England and France c. 1300-1500* (Cambridge: CUP, 2015), pp. 201-208. Compare for example the accounts of growing violence and instability throughout Warrington, ed., *The Paston Letters,* pp. 7, 16.

203 *Liber,* p. 40, 41, 42, 43, 175

204 *Liber,* pp. 188-190. For Whethamstede see Carlson, 'Whethamstede on Lollardy', p. 27. For other contemporary allegations of sedition see Marx, ed., *An English Chronicle, 1377-1461*, (p. 42.

confessors who were mature doctors of theology, but that Henry VI filled offices with bishops who had left their cures: implicitly blaming the revolt not on the faults of the labourers in question but of the government and the crown.[205] Long-standing tensions between bishops and theologians and the desire for good jobs for graduates from the universities might have fed into this statement, but it still lays the blame for the revolt at the feet of the king and the church. Elsewhere he repeats claims that the revolt was triggered by: non-residence, sin, failures of hospitality, a lack of justice and a failure to correct sin (presumably on the part of churchmen), a lack of lordly justice, pluralities and appropriations, and the poverty and injustice that had resulted from the greed of the circle around the king.[206] His rebukes of contemporary lords for failing to hear and give justice to their '*subditi*' are perhaps more conventional, falling in a long tradition of biblical polemic against the injustices of secular nobles, but his repeated explicit criticism of those around the king, and implicit criticism of the king himself for taking bishops away from their cures, is certainly a far cry from the enthusiastic support other orthodox sources had given Henry V.[207] Whether this is a product of changing theological tides or of the changing fortunes of the monarchy is debatable, of course, and Gascoigne's account of St. Albans makes it clear his sympathies are Yorkist; but the conjunction of criticism of the king and court with his willingness to advocate resistance to tyranny against the poor and to the laws of the realm against false appointments makes for a more provocative picture of Gascoigne's thought, politically as well as theologically, than one might expect.[208] It may in fact suggest that his willingness to clash with established emphases in the

[205] 'defectus circa regem non emendavit nec a rege propter defectum emendacionis recessit,' *Liber,* p. 39. Compare Helen Barr's assessment that: 'Wycliffite texts are much less vitriolic in their views of the commons and far less condemnatory of labourers than is the norm' and tend to highlight abuses of the establishment – 'Wycliffite representations of the third estate', in Somerset, Pitard, and Havens, *Lollards and their Influence,* pp. 198, 203.

[206] *Liber,* p. 43.

[207] *Liber,* p. 218: 'Consimiliter domini austeri et rigidi, et qui dedignantur audire pauperum causas, sunt causa quare non agnoscunt mala et injurias [et] subditorum' – he goes on to apply the denunciations of Isaiah 1 to these lords in conventional fashion.

[208] *Liber,* pp. 62, 25.

theological department sprang not from disinterest with the concerns of the post-Arundel establishment, but from a genuine willingness to defy them.

If such rhetoric is in any way representative of reforming orthodoxy in this period it is perhaps unsurprising that, as Gascoigne claims, those around the king were hostile to preachers and tried to keep them away from the king or control what they preached.[209] In fact, he notes that contemporaries blamed unrest on popular preaching, and used this to try and suppress preachers and restrict their access to the king.[210] Presumably there was concern at the effect such efforts to blame insurrection on the corruption of the government might have on an impressionable monarch.

Popular insurrection, like national defeat, was becoming a powerful potential polemical weapon and a source of unease.[211] There appears an interesting trend whereby the efforts to associate Lollardy with dissent and so discredit it had branched out into attempts by disputants within the religious and national establishment to blame sedition on each other. Levy has commented on the extent to which heretication could become a weapon to break a theological deadlock in the fourteenth century; it is possible that the accusation of encouraging unrest, employed so fruitfully against the Lollards, was seeing here a similar evolution to be employed in political as well as ecclesiastical conflict.[212]

Conclusion

Gascoigne's work is a fertile source of insight on many areas, but its interest for this study hinges on its relationship to the ideas and positions associated with Lollardy. Gascoigne's tendency to sound Wycliffite whilst self-

[209] *Liber,* pp.188, 190, see also Thorold Rogers' comments on p. xlvi.

[210] *Liber,* p. 188.

[211] Compare how both Wycliffites and friars sought to blame each other for the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 – Wendy Scase, 'A Wycliffite Libel and the Naming of Heretics' in Somerset and Havens, *Lollards and their Influence*, pp. 19-36, at p. 22.

[212] Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority*, p. 2.

identifying as militantly orthodox is one of his most striking attributes. It must be reconciled with the lack of evidence for any particular familiarity with, or concern about, Wycliffite ideas or Lollard heresy.

Common ground between Lollardy and orthodoxy was in itself nothing new; Levy writes on the Hussite conflict that 'virtually everyone involved …. had very similar goals' and stood in a shared interpretative tradition, and Bose has similarly commented on the extent to which English religious conflict was a series of debates over ownership of pre-established traditions, with orthodox reform and heterodox reform sharing common roots.[213] The common ground she identifies between Wycliffite and reforming orthodox 'castigatory voices' is clearly relevant to Gascoigne, and in this regard his reforming rhetoric was not exceptional.[214] While Bose emphasises Gascoigne's epitomising of the 'tonal similarities' between 'reformist and dissenting views' on matters of practical reform and the castigation of abuses, however, this chapter has sought to demonstrate that surprising congruences between orthodox and reforming perspectives also continued to exist at the theoretical level of the theology of scripture, reason, and conscience.[215] Gascoigne does not entirely fit into any of Swanson's categories of reform.[216] He is closest to the 'disciplinary' Catholic reform movement in his concern for practical reform, but continues to advocate changes in attitudes to authority that are daringly radical, not merely disciplinary, strikingly 'bottom-up' in their ecclesiology, and supported by theologies of scriptural meaning and individual accountability that are at least as consonant with Lollard voices as orthodox (he also, of course, remains far removed from a humanist perspective or style).[217] While an interest in

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213 Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority*, p. 150; Bose, 'Reversing the Life of Christ', p. 55.

214 Bose, 'Reversing the Life of Christ', p. 61.

215 Bose, 'After the Wycliffite Controversies', pp. 179-180.

216 Ibid., p. 313.

217 It should also be noted that, while he is 'practical' in the sense of being concerned with reform of practices, in comparison to other reform initiatives such as Love's push to reform the Benedictines under Henry V, which seems to have concerned itself primarily with very specific details of clothing, money, and administration, Gascoigne was more idealistic and theoretical: see Sargent, 'Nicholas Love as an Ecclesiastical Reformer', p. 52.

'practical reform' by training preachers and improving educational standards was indeed a broad preoccupation, attributable to voices from Lollardy to Pecock to Whethamstede, Gascoigne's reforming agenda is also theologically convergent with heterodox reform, especially in his positions on hermeneutics and the relationship of the individual's conscience to the institutional church.[218]

This distinctive convergence with Wycliffite theology sits, crucially, alongside an apparent lack of familiarity or interest in Lollardy or Wyclif's legacy. Gascoigne is unique amongst the sources surveyed here in appearing unconcerned with combating it, and also in being willing to speak in the same language and occupy many similar key theological positions. It is possible that these two characteristics are causally related.

It has been noted in previous chapters how the polemical imperative of challenging Lollard heresy has shaped and distorted the theological projects of Pecock, Netter, and Love. Gascoigne shows no such imperative: his polemic agenda is shaped by a need to critique and call to account a corrupt institutional church. Hence he adopted the ideas of individual conscience and the openness of authoritative scripture normally associated with Lollardy. He too seeks a way to challenge an institution that is not listening, and turns to the bible and to ideas of conscience, empowering for the individual vis-á-vis the authoritative institution.

In terms of the overarching question of the impact of Lollardy, then, Gascoigne constitutes an example of the theologies and agendas that could emerge from a traditionally minded, conscientious, somewhat idealist scholar when not overshadowed by the legacy of Lollard debates. He may also constitute a reminder of the importance of polemic purpose more generally in shaping theology. The ease with which a consciously traditional writer, for whom orthodoxy was a key part of his identity, could take up such otherwise

[218] For Whethamstede's interest in reform see for example D. R. Howlett, 'Studies in the Works of John Whethamstede' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1975), p. 5.

suspect positions points to the importance of a theologian's contemporary agenda in shaping a writer's theology, at least in this period of English religion. Finally it must be noted that there are some elements highlighted throughout this study that remain present even here. Gascoigne does not share in the interest in excluding Lollard practice, attitudes, and authority sources that has been a consistent pattern of their opponents. But he does share in the interest in areas of proper scripture reading, the church, and the individual conscience, even if he often takes the opposite side. The recurrence of these questions, central to the debate with Lollardy, suggests that those controversies had raised a lasting interest in these areas of English religion even amongst those, like Gascoigne, who were not directly responding to Lollardy.

CONCLUSION

Responses to Lollardy and the shaping of English religion

Responses to Lollardy: diversity and unity

It has been the contention of this thesis that opposition to Lollardy, while diverse in many ways, retained also an essential unity in its attitude to questions of authority, hermeneutics, and the accountability of the church. This unity has been borne out by the consistency with which the writers here surveyed, diverse in their contexts, genres, and backgrounds, have nonetheless struck essentially the same note on the key question of whether the church should be accountable to external criticism.

The genuine diversity of responses to Lollardy must not, of course, be understated. Writers such as Love, Netter, and Pecock shared a concern with combating the ideas around Wyclif's legacy, but their own approaches to doing so were distinct, shaped by their varied contexts and backgrounds, and seated amongst agendas besides the counter-heretical. For this reason the theologies they developed to pursue these aims were themselves far from uniform, and sometimes actively conflicting. Pecock's attempts to displace biblical authority with reason and to mount a pragmatic defence of contemporary practice appealing to the advisability of obedience and trust were most visibly in conflict with other opponents of Lollardy, issuing in his own condemnation, but conflict can be seen even between Love and Netter, for example in their respective depictions of the literal sense as dangerous and misleading or as an essential part of hermeneutics.[1] Just as orthodoxy reacted to Lollardy, so different positions within orthodoxy reacted to one another in turn, Netter avoiding the scholasticism that had characterised Woodford, Pecock attacking the patristic reverence associated with Netter, and Gascoigne attacking the restrictive measures

[1] See above, Chapter 2 pp. 100-102, Chapter 3 p. 141.

associated with Arundel.[2] The theology of the time was indeed fissiparous and mutable, in dialogue with itself as well as Lollardy.

But this must be balanced with the genuine unity of Lollardy's opponents, no less real for being less immediately discernible. It is a unity rooted in their shared agenda; contrary to the position associated with Eamon Duffy and others, the need to respond to Lollard ideas and rhetoric is a significant factor across all the texts surveyed (with the significant exception of Gascoigne). While it is particularly overt in texts such as Bodley 649 or Netter's *Doctrinale*, even in other works such as Mirk's *Festial*, Love's *Mirror*, and Pecock's corpus there is strong evidence of concern to combat and exclude Lollard critiques of contemporary practice and teaching.[3] Given the evidence for the influential role of many of these texts – for example in the extensive manuscript survival of texts such as the *Festial* and *Mirror*, or the presence of Netter's work at the highest circles of the church – this surely confirms the lasting significance of concerns about Lollardy in English religion well into the fifteenth century.[4]

The one text that does not appear significantly shaped by concern to respond to heresy, namely Gascoigne's *Liber*, is most revealing as the exception to the rule. Absent any visible concern about avoiding or combating Lollardy, Gascoigne occupies very similar, often identical, ground, both rhetorically and theologically, hinting at the extent to which wariness about Lollardy might have led to such discourses being suppressed or diverted in earlier writers.[5] His concern for practical reform is supported by a theology emphasising individual conscience and the church's accountability to objectively accessible teaching, enshrined in the scriptures and the Fathers, suggesting that these theological underpinnings of Lollard critiques were either surviving or, perhaps more likely, re-emerging by the end of this period. It also suggests that they were rooted in the theological requirements of confronting the contemporary church. Gascoigne appears Lollard in this area, although orthodox in

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2 Chapters 3 pp. 128-9, 4 pp. 189-92, 5 pp. 249-50.

3 Chapter 1 pp. 63-76, Chapter 2 p. 93, Chapter 3 pp. 160-163 et al.

4 Chapter 1 pp. 45, Chapter 2 p. 88, Chapter 3 p. 121.

5 Chapter 5, p. 254-6.

other aspects, for the same reason that Pecock appears orthodox here, although more *sui generis* in other areas: the essential link between theologies of authority, church accountability, and the individual conscience. Gascoigne's agenda, unconcerned about defending against Lollard critics, is shaped by his own criticism of the church and its need for reform, and this similarity of platform correlates to his theological similarities to Lollardy. He envisages the potential need for an independent reforming agenda, that has to be independent of a currently corrupt church, and justifies it by envisaging independent exegesis and conscience, just as Lollards did. Pecock, for all his enthusiasm for reform, subordinates reform to the wisdom of a scholarly church hierarchy, and denies the possibility of such independent access to the authority of the exegesis of scripture.

This underlying continuity of interest in attacking or defending the contemporary church across all the texts surveyed is, in turn, responsible for their interest in these particular issues of authority. How to read the bible, how to resolve uncertainties in interpretation, and how far the institutional church could be held accountable to criticism from individuals and outsiders, are the questions that almost every text addresses. It is the best area of consistency in predicting a text's affiliation: the texts with an anti-Lollard agenda concur in two respects. The first is in limiting the authority either of an individual or of the laity more generally vis-á-vis the institutional church, and in particular by identifying criticism by an individual with moral failings of pride and presumption. For Bodley 649 this is associated with emphasising distinctions between lay and clerical roles and access to revelation, and painting theological knowledge as dangerous for laity, for the Digby poems by a call to trust the church regardless of the evidence of senses or reason, for Love (and to a degree for the *Festial*) by construction of a humility ethic that emphasises silence and a refusal by virtuous individuals to correct or teach others, for Netter by a sustained assault on the morality of individual exegesis being set against the church's tradition, and even for Pecock by emphasising 'natural hierarchy' and the need to submit one's conscience to the church to have 'right intent'.[6] Hence why Pecock and Netter, two

[6] Chapters 1 pp. 67-72, Chapter 2 p. 106, Chapter 3 p. 164, Chapter 4 p. 194.

radically different authors in most respects, can come to the same curious and somewhat problematic position that one should submit to the Pope as if he were infallible even though he isn't; both are driven to this conclusion by the common need to deny Lollardy the right to critique the church.[7]

Secondly, these texts all to some degree seek to 'problematise' the idea of a clear 'voice' to scripture and hence its reading by an individual, without guidance from other authorities; the institutional church in receipt of apostolic grace in Love, the Digby corpus, and Bodley 649, the tradition and wider church in Netter, scholastic training in Pecock.[8] All these external authorities are, of course, essentially either identified with or controlled by the institutional church, rather than accessible to an individual critic. In contrast the Lollard stream exemplified by *EWS*, for example, tends to emphasise that (after right intent and humility, which all sides in theory regard as indispensable) the essential key to understanding scripture is scripture: a better understanding of the scriptural context and logic.[9] While other, external guides, especially Augustine and Jerome, are employed as auxiliaries, to support statements made from the biblical text, the essential criterion of authority is to 'show plainly' from scripture. Thus fundamental authority is potentially accessible to any reader, any exegete can potentially speak the divine voice, and so have authority to hold a corrupt church accountable to the divine law and calling. Exegesis is ultimately independent of the church, and so access to divine authority is independent as well; and thus a reform agenda, authorised by such reading, can be independent of a corrupt and unreliable church.

This hermeneutic dichotomy is therefore inextricably tied into these texts' respective positions on individuals and the church: if scripture can internally self-interpret, then anyone can potentially read it and find in it the voice of God, and on

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7 Chapter 3, p. 155.

8 Chapters 1 pp. 70-71, Chapter 2 p. 97, Chapter 3 p. 143, Chapter 4 p. 178.

9 Pecock is a partial exception here, caught between an emphasis on the need for scholarly training to read scripture safely and a rejection of any external mystic tradition as authoritative; so that he recognises a largely internal guide to reading scripture – context and the literal sense – but still seeks to reject individual lay readings as lacking essential rational equipment and to assert that scholarly training is needed to reliably understand it.

that authority challenge the institution of the church.[10] If external guides are required to find its true meaning, and especially if these guides are authorities restricted to the institutional church, as is argued for interpretative tradition, special revelation, or scholarly training, then by breaking with the church such a critic has inherently cut themselves off from any chance of finding the right meaning of scripture.[11] Thus they cannot speak with the authority of scripture, and so they lack the authority to critique the institutional church, making their challenge presumptuous and sinful. Exegesis cannot be independent of the church. Reform can occur, and indeed should occur, but it must ultimately be internal and top-down, not external and 'grassroots', only the church has access to the authority to direct it.[12] The institution of the church is not accountable to its critics, who must ultimately trust it and submit – something which Lollards, who saw the church as suffering from institutional corruption, not merely corrupt individuals, would not do. Hence, perhaps, why Gascoigne is the exception here: his emphasis on finding the authoritative voice within the text correlates to his desire to call individuals to defy a corrupt church, independent of its compromised authorities. He recognises that the one authority source with the power to justify that is the divine command in scripture, to which the personal conscience must be accountable. Hence the reappearance in his text of so much that is reminiscent of earlier Lollard critiques of the ecclesiastical establishment, alongside so much that is similar to Lollard understanding of hermeneutics and exegesis.

For all the diversity and mutability of responses to Lollardy, then, there were clear and important common threads across those who opposed Lollardy, even with very different genres of text, authorial background, and theological and social

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[10] In places, as discussed in chapter 1 with regard to *EWS*, this 'anyone' has a communal element, being caught up with the idea of a church that is a community of right-minded Christians, who derive authority from the agreement of others of their kind, so that it is not as strictly individualist as Netter, for example, depicts it. Nonetheless, it is still envisaged that correction can come from any one individual who can '*telle moare pleynly'* the meaning of scripture: the community reinforces, but does not provide the authority for, the reader's conclusions. See p. 39.

[11] Netter in particular also argues that in breaking with the authoritative tradition the critic has demonstrated moral failings of pride that in turn render his exegesis unreliable – see chapter 3, p. 156.

[12] Significantly, perhaps, this seems to have been the ultimate outcome of the ecclesiastical reform movement advanced at Constance and Basel: the papacy essentially assumed responsibility for reform, and attempts at more 'grassroots' reform by councils like Basel were discarded. See Margaret Harvey, 'England, the Council of Florence', pp. 203-225.

contexts. If orthodoxy was in a sense being constantly re-born in each new author's re-imagining of it vis-á-vis Lollardy in a new setting, it was nonetheless a reincarnation, not a new creation. It retained in each author common elements rooted in its polemical need to discredit criticism and restrict spiritual authority outside of the church, considered as an established entity inseparable from, if not actually identified with, the institutional church.[13] Likewise, it seems that many of the criticisms of the established church that were publicised by Wyclif, and much of the biblicist, literalist, and individualist ethos that went with them and provided justification for them, continued to be re-born in writers such as Gascoigne with no obvious connection to Wyclif or his followers.[14] As the wider society continued to develop in education, religious engagement, and intellectual confidence, it was perhaps inevitable that debates over how accountable the church as a body was to be to outsiders would continue to flare up, and therefore that such positions with all their supporting superstructure of theology, would recur. The Gascoigne example acts as a reminder, however, than even within this study's definition of orthodoxy there could be figures whose writings had more in common with Lollardy, both in mood and priorities and in key areas of theology, than they did with other 'orthodox' counterparts. In this respect the truest predictor of hermeneutic theology was not affiliation but attitude to the church: it was those who wanted it accountable to voices outside its power structures who took a strong view of the authority and independence of a personal reading of scripture.

Responses to Lollardy: change across time

Given the consistency and significance of these anti-Lollard voices, the question ensues as to what their influence was on English religion over the course of this period. Early attempts to engage with Lollardy appear to have sought to contain it in

[13] See, in particular, Netter's ecclesiology, Chapter 3 pp. 158-9.
[14] Chapter 5, pp. 254-6.

academia and engage with it scholastically – as did Woodford and others with Wyclif himself – whilst discouraging laity from engaging with these debates. Thus the *Festial* avoids engaging with Lollardy directly, and even Bodley 649, with its more educated mixed audience, largely attacks any attempt by laity to inquire too much into understanding their faith.[15] Already by the early fifteenth-century, however, Love's Mirror was presenting arguments against Lollardy in the treatise on the sacraments aimed at the laity, including appeal to complex theology like the dual natures, even while still suppressing other discussions. Later Netter and Pecock would attack it directly and in considerable theological depth, seeking to provide sophisticated apologetics against it, rather than simply forbidding it.[16] The emphasis appears to slowly shift from suppression to inoculation, bringing with it an interest in apologetics and systematic theologies that was very different to the early context of these debates. While it would be easy to exaggerate the extent to which openness to lay engagement had increased, it is noteworthy how often anti-Lollard literature eventually came to engage Lollardy on its own ground of popular polemical theology.

At one level this engagement represented another stage in a consistent strategy: the construction of exclusive alternatives to Lollardy, both practical and theological. This has been shown most obviously as a strategy in texts such as the *Festial* and the *Mirror*, with the marking out of alternative approaches to devotion inherently exclusive of Lollardy.[17] Alongside devotional innovation, several of these texts exemplify a recasting of concepts of virtue, specifically an emphasis on humility. Where a 14th century pastoral manual such as the *speculum christiani* could claim that keeping silent when you should speak the truth was a sin, 15th-century works such as Mirk, Bodley 649, and Love all present virtue as standing in humble silence, even when you could speak, and Netter frequently brings polemics against pride to

[15] Chapter 1, p. 69.

[16] Chapter 2, pp. 113-4.

[17] Chapter 1, p. 83, Chapter 2 pp. 103-110.

bear on individual theologising.[18] Traditional areas of Christian pastoral instruction, such as meditative devotion or teaching on virtues, were thus creatively re-imagined to exclude Lollard priorities.

The systematic nature of Netter's and Pecock's theological works points to something similar emerging: an attempt to build systems of theology with no place for a Lollard foothold, that could act as a preventative inoculation or a redemptive substitute – hence their insistence on opposing Wycliffite ideas at every turn, even when it distorts their work.[19] Just as it has been argued, then, that liturgical practice and devotional reading could be made alternative spaces to showcase and establish alternative practical models to Lollardy, so it seems as if the creation of alternate systematic theologies shaped by the need to exclude Lollard ideas was catalysed by these debates.[20] It is possible that the increased didacticism and interest in teaching schemes of knowledge noted by some in vernacular poetry, for example, around the middle century might also reflect this influence.[21]

The other side of this is the tendency to appropriate and borrow ideas, methods, and rhetoric from one another. It has been noted how orthodox texts seem to adopt the Lollard identification of opponents with 'Pharisees' and biblical oppressors, so as to apply biblical stories and categories against them. Likewise the adoption of careful citational practice by Love and Netter, and the appeal to scripture and the Fathers by Netter and to scripture and reason by Pecock all evoke the methodology of their opponents. The deployment of Lollard language, starting with the Digby poems and continuing with the appropriation of terms such as 'open' and 'reasonable' by writers starting with Love and going on to Netter and Pecock, may indicate a similar legacy; appropriating these terms used to justify a particular interpretation of scripture in Lollard polemic and applying them to their own source of justification in order to denote interpretations they felt to be in accordance with church teaching, the

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[18] 'contra hoc preceptum peccant qui tacent veritatem, ubi opportet veritatem dici' – cited in Gillespie, 'Literary Form of the Middle English Pastoral Manual', p. 260. For the humility ethic in these works see Chapter 1, p. 72, Chapter 2 p. 105, Chapter 3 p. 156.

[19] Chapter 3, p. 157, Chapter 4 p. 194.

[20] For the idea of liturgical richness as a response and alternative to Lollardy, see Gillespie, 'Chichele's Church'.

[21] Woolf, *English Religious Lyric*, pp. 218-238, 257.

consensus of tradition, or a particular logical framework.[22] Both tendencies, the creation of new alternative spaces and the borrowing of language and methodology from opponents, were catalysts of creativity, perhaps helping to explain the diversity of fifteenth-century English religion.[23]

Another area in which there is evidence for changing influence over time is in the 'weapons' used to assert a moral high ground or break a deadlock. The earliest stages of the debate frequently express a concern for right poverty and solidarity with the poor 'communes' as an attempt to assert a moral high ground.[24] Lollard writers in particular presented themselves as aligned with the humble common people, whereas their opponents aligned themselves with the 'spiritually poor' of the religious orders. By the later three texts of this study such concerns appear entirely absent, and there is little visible interest in fighting over the moral high ground of 'true poverty', although traditional Lollard critiques of the principle of separate religious order continue to be addressed by Netter and Pecock.

Likewise, Levy and others have noted the use of allegations of heresy in the period leading up to and including the Lollard and Hussite debates as a way to discredit opponents. By Gascoigne's time, however, his work bears testimony to the frequency with which charges of subversion were employed to discredit opponents. While texts as far as the period of Netter's writing go to great lengths to try and identify Lollards with the oppressive establishment of the gospel narratives, even when they were hunted and largely powerless, Gascoigne seldom deploys such rhetoric and instead goes to great lengths to blame revolt and sedition on his opponents, even when they were victims of its violence.[25] While the utility of accusations of sedition was hardly novel, the completeness of this reversal is noticeable, and suggests that the

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[22] Chapter 2, pp. 98-9, Chapter 3 p. 156. See below on the interpretive problems driving this trend.

[23] Compare van Engen, 'Multiple Options', pp. 266, 286.

[24] Chapter 1, p. 48, Chapter 2 p. 105

[25] See Chapter 5, p. 252. Gascoigne does on occasion identify false exegetes with the Pharisees, but makes no attempt to use this rhetoric against those abusing power – a striking contrast to Netter, the more so given that both texts are Latinate and appear aimed largely at a clerical readership.

success of this rhetoric against Lollardy following the Oldcastle revolt in particular might well have tempted contemporaries to deploy it more widely in other debates.

Conversely, the influence of the context can be seen in many other aspects of these texts; especially as regards the two largest factors: the changing fortunes of the nation in France and the evolution of the state of the church in relation to the Schism. The former is evident in the tendency to blame the other side for national disaster and defeat, seen used by both sides in homiletic material during the early decades of the century, largely missing during the 20s and 30s when English fortunes in that war appeared higher, and re-emerging in Gascoigne with the loss of France.[26] One might speculate, indeed, that the dangerous atmosphere of national anger and disunity following on from the loss of Normandy (1449-50) and Gascony (1453) might have contributed to the severity with which Pecock was treated, and to the emphasis on preserving unity and avoiding conflict of which Gascoigne complains.[27] Indeed Gascoigne's own deep consciousness of the failings of the church and the need to reform may not have been unconnected, although the connections he makes are between reform and success against the Turks – in this regard the advance of Ottoman power and the failure of the Varna crusade in 1443 might have been more significant.[28] National and para-national fortunes could can thus be glimpsed creating a pressure for changes and solutions in the ecclesiastical and theological realm, pressure that could intensify theological clashes and raise their stakes.

The influence of the Schism and ensuing conflicts is less apparent, but can perhaps been seen in the uncertainties surrounding proper locating of authority in the church – none of these authors appeals to papal authority or the guarantee to Peter in the course of calling for obedience to an authoritative and reliable church.[29] Hence the struggle undergone by writers such as Netter and Pecock, who present developed

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[26] Chapter 1 p. 64, 5 p. 254

[27] Chapter 5 p. 252.

[28] Chapter 5, p. 214 – NB also *Liber*, pp. 8-9, 171-172 for Gascoigne's association of reform and victory against the Turks.

[29] Netter and Pecock, as mentioned, do instruct individuals to act as if Popes and Councils are infallible, but neither argues that they actually are, and both allow for them to be corrected, if erring, by arguments from the Fathers or from reason, though neither makes clear who would have the authority to mount such corrections. See Chapter 3 p. 154, Chapter 4 p. 192.

ecclesiologies, to identify where in the church ultimate determinative authority in the event of disagreement lies. They maintain, along with the other orthodox texts in this study, a very high view of the corporate authority of the church as a body, without presenting any solution as to how interpretive conflict within that church is to be resolved, beyond a general suggestion that following either reason or the tradition would lead to clarity if 'done rightly'.[30] While this might be purely a function of their respective models of authority – natural and scholarly for Pecock, corporate and traditional for Netter – it may also point to an uneasy awareness of the potentially compromised position of papal authority post-schism, and the general strength of conciliarism in England at this time.[31] The absence of such explicit conciliarism in these discussions is perhaps more surprising, and may point to the escalating collapse of Basel's credibility from the 1430s onwards.[32] With the reputations of both Papacy and Councils shifting so dramatically, a reliable locus of institutional authority was risky to identify, and this probably contributed to the opacity and uncertainty of attempts at specifying the nature and boundaries of church authority.

In part this may have driven the apparent adoption of the concept of reasonableness and reasonable interpretation from Lollardy by (in particular) Love and Netter; the language of 'reasonable imagination' and supposition in Love and of the need for the tradition being 'rite intellectam' in Netter seem both to address a common problem, shared with Lollard concerns for the 'open', 'plain', or 'reasonable' sense of scripture.[33] All these writers recognise that many interpretations (or suppositions) could in theory be advanced from the texts they are engaging with, and wish to limit the set of possible readings to the category of those that are 'reasonable', meaning in theory those that are sensible, sustainable, or plausible: in practice a category that is defined by interpretations being in accordance with their own wider framework of theology. In a sense this is the outworking of the emphasis on the

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30 Chapter 3 p. 163, Chapter 4 pp. 192-5.

31 Harvey, *England and the Papacy*, p. 215; Harvey, 'England, the Council of Florence'.

32 See also here Decaluwe and Christianson, 'Historical Survey', in Decaluwe, Izbicki, and Christianson, *Companion to the Council of Basel*, pp. 8-31.

33 Chapters 1 p. 54, 2 p. 99, 3 p. 156. Netter's emphasis on the moral and methodological failings of Wyclif, pp. 130-31, may feed into this: he is an example of scriptural and patristic theology 'done badly' because of moral fault.

multiple possible meanings in scripture, discussed above, as a common plank of orthodox polemic. However, even where another source (such as tradition in Netter) has been advanced as the guide through the multivalent senses of scripture there is still the problem of how to interpret that guide. Without conceding to any specific contemporary individual or body the authority to resolve any given question of interpretation, which these writers, as noted, all refuse to do, there will always be at some level the potential for multiple interpretations of a text or speculations from it. Hence Netter falls back on the language of the Fathers needing to be 'rite intellectam', while Love uses the same concept of reasonableness to distinguish what he judges acceptable forms of imagining from all possible speculation from the text.[34] It has been argued above that Gascoigne seems to use the concept of reason similarly when he pairs it with scripture: constantly appealing to 'reason and scripture' to denote scripture read 'reasonably' while opposing them to natural reason, apart from revelation.[35] This grappling with the idea of reason as the means to identify right interpretations has also been noted in Wyclif's work.[36]

Part of that intense interest in issues of hermeneutics and the literal sense of scripture noted above was therefore this desire to define a reliable and objective way to navigate the possible ways a passage could be read and so find the right interpretation. Solutions ranged from learning the 'logic' of scripture to following the interpretive consensus, but none of these could completely and tightly define the right reading in every possible case, excluding every possible error, hence the need for all writers to resort at some point to the subjective criterion of reasonable reading. It is perhaps inevitable in the absence of an available contemporary authority to continuously define right interpretation of a text (be it scripture or tradition) that at some level appeal should end up being made to a 'right understanding' to exclude

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[34] In Love the concern may be more that of unconstrained or irresponsible imagination from the text (which in his case may well include other texts beside scripture, since he blurs the boundaries of authoritative textuality as discussed above, Chapter 2, pp. 99-101); but the problem is the same, the need to limit all potential responses to the text beyond what is possible by simply specifying a methodology, leading to an appeal to a subjective orientation in the interpreter.

[35] Chapter 5, pp. 241-2.

[36] Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 47-52.

certain interpretations as unsustainable that cannot be completely logically and objectively demonstrated as false. Unwilling to identify any such contemporary authority in this period, orthodox writers all end up wrestling in turn with the interpretation of those ecclesiastical authorities they present as guides through the multiple possible interpretations of scripture. To do so they end up borrowing the slightly nebulous concept of reasonable interpretation deployed by Wyclif and Lollard writers to resolve the problem of multiple interpretations of scripture.

Thus a developing theme throughout the period as writers struggled to find authorities and interpretations that could bind opponents with very different theological assumptions, in a context where ecclesiastical bodies lacked the prestige to sustain credibly ultimate authority, was a need eventually to lean upon subjective moral (or at least internal) criteria for an exegete: right disposition either spiritual, moral or rational.[37] In this sense the search for a fully objective and reliable method of discerning textual authority that could bind all parties was, unsurprisingly, unfruitful.[38]

Responses to Lollardy: broader conclusions

With regard to the models identified at the start, a complex organic model of multiple divergences with both borrowing and reaction is usually the most apposite when considering the debates around Lollardy. Orthodoxy was not a static monolith, and nor did it react against Lollardy in only one way. Orthodox responses ranged from those utterly opposed, such as Love, with his deliberate blurring of textual boundaries, appeal to unquestioning faith and submission, and assertion of sacramental and priestly power, to the careful textual analysis of Netter or the vernacular treatises of

[37] Pecock initially appears to be an exception: he explicitly rejects the link between holiness and right interpretation (see Chapter 4, pp. 188-92), and instead believes reason is so objectively binding that his books will convert Lollards and pagans (*Reule,* p. 421)). But in fact Pecock also has to appeal to a concept of 'right reading' for his own books: they must be read 'sadly' [seriously] and interpreted in context and as intended (*Donet,* p. 4, *Book of Faith*, p. 116). Opponents criticise his books, he says, because they are 'yuel disposed' (*Folewer*, p. 176). 'Y drede hasti iugementis' he says, and appeals for his books to be read rightly (*Book of Faith*, p. 118). Pecock, too, has ultimately to appeal to a right disposition in the reader.

[38] Levy, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority*, makes a similar argument, pp. 222-235.

Pecock, in many ways methodologically closer to and borrowing from the same streams as Lollardy even as they sought to combat it. In Gascoigne appears an even more nuanced example, one who in many ways spans the gap between theological positions often considered characteristic of orthodox and Lollard affiliations, critiquing the established church from scripture and calling for disobedience to its corrupt institutions whilst revering saints, accepting indulgences, and remaining a respected senior churchman. Distinctions between orthodoxy and Lollardy remain tenuous at the edges of these categories, and responses to Lollardy were far from uniform. In the case of Pecock, indeed, the conflict between different anti-Lollard positions was far more significant that the conflict between them and Lollardy.

While it is important to recognise this complexity, however, there are some clear conclusions that can be drawn from this study. The first is the extent to which polemical imperatives could leave theologies shaped more by an apologetic agenda than internal consistency. This is most evident with Netter and Pecock; the fact that they were attempting to articulate systematic theological systems made the contradictions into which they were driven whilst trying to contact all manifestations of Lollard thought particularly visible.[39]

In this respect one could argue that the divergence model of opposing separation was actually usually the dominant one in any particular theological area, with Lollard views on scripture or the church, for example, driving opponents to support an opposing view. This may account for some of the more unusual or extreme views encountered here, such as Love's association of the literal sense of scripture with sinful error, Bodley 649's suggestion that it is dangerous to know more than the creed, or Pecock's attempts to displace scripture with reason as an authority.[40] In each case there is a high-profile piece of Lollard theology against which they are reacting, and the reaction has driven their theology to strongly opposing positions unusual in contemporary writing and probably outside the 'mainstream' of contemporary religion.[41]

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[39] Chapters 3 pp. 161-2, 4 pp. 193-5.

[40] Chapter 1 p. 72, 2 p. 101, 4 p. 187.

[41] Compare Van Dussen and Soukup, *Religious Controversy in Europe*, p. 6, and their comments on the 'controversial

The second, therefore, is how seldom mutual borrowing seems to have actually constituted an effective middle ground. Netter's approach to sources, Pecock's use of English, scripture, and reason, and even Love and the Digby author's employment of Lollard terminology and language, all appear as polemical manouvers. They were designed to reclaim, subvert, or deny their opponents' linguistic and theological ground, rather than engage with them.[42] Thus borrowing between streams was not necessarily a strategy that brought them closer or opened up dialogue, but that sought to pre-empt or deny key parts of an opposing discourse. Often the most creative syntheses came from this sort of 'hostile borrowing', as in Pecock's attempt to defend contemporary practice using reason in English, or Netter's endeavour to build a comprehensive rebuttal of Wyclif using sources used by Lollards, but the creativity emerged from conflict not compromise.

In the end, then, theological controversy was a diversely creative force. Within that resulting diversity, however, two different understandings of the nature of the church and of hermeneutic authority and scriptural interpretation consistently determined the construction of conflicting arguments, and were policed with sometimes excessive rigour, as Pecock's condemnation indicates.[43] This is the final, and perhaps most significant conclusion. Responses to Lollardy were indeed varied, but nonetheless consistently characterised by a very particular position on these issues, one constructed around a rejection of independent, external criticism of the church, be it by laity or individual theologians. This rejection was articulated and justified in various ways. Some questioned the clarity of scripture to any individual apart from the church. Some denied the openness of scripture to lay interpretation. Some constructed a moral framework that condemned such external criticism as inherently morally compromised. But whatever form it took, it was this debate over the existence of independent access to authority, that was key. It fostered that preoccupation with the right identification of authorities, the accountability of the church to external criticism, and therefore with who could command and direct reform

potential of orthodox revivalist movements', which seem to be confirmed here in the case of Lollardy.

42 Chapters 1 pp. 70-72, 78-80, 83-5, Chapter 2 pp. 104-110, Chapter 3 pp. 132-4, Chapter 4 p. 196.

43 Chapter 4, p. 202.

that formed the common thread through the otherwise multiform variety of early fifteenth-century English religion.

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