

**Holy Scripture and the Meanings of the  
Eucharist in Late Medieval England, c.  
1370-1430**

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**Abstract: Holy Scripture and the Meanings of the Eucharist in Late  
Medieval England, c. 1370-1430**

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This thesis examines how, in late-medieval England, uses of Scripture and associated written discourses expanded to encompass the sacramental functions hitherto privileged to the bread and wine of the Mass. This process, reflecting the longstanding if implicit importance of scriptural symbolism to the medieval Eucharist, also bears witness to a major cultural shift in this period: the assignment to words of the same powers that had underpinned the function of visual, non-verbal symbols in medieval religion and society.

As Chapter Two demonstrates, this process was starkly exposed in John Wyclif's vision of an English religion centred upon the sacrament of the preached word of Scripture, rather than on the Mass. As Chapter Three shows, this was the vision that Wyclif's followers sought to realize, even if they may have achieved their aims only within a limited band of followers. However, Wyclif's vision was powerful precisely because its relevance was not confined to Wycliffites. Chapter Four charts how the same substitution was taking place through the dissemination in English of 'Scripture', which, in its broadest sense, encompassed meditations upon depictions of Christ crucified as well as preaching. The greatest danger of Wycliffite thought to the late-medieval Church rested in its potential to increase lay awareness of this process.

This threat was reflected in the restrictions placed by the English Church upon lay use of religious writings in the early fifteenth century. Nonetheless, as Chapter Five shows through a reading of one of Wyclif's sternest critics, Thomas Netter, the eucharistic function of 'Scripture' had not disappeared but had to be occluded. This occlusion represents the most significant shift in the eucharistic function of 'Scripture' in the fifteenth century, allowing its use to develop further without threatening the Mass. This thesis concludes that the unacknowledged yet increasingly central role of 'Scripture' helps to explain why, at the Reformation, a scripturally-based religion seemed so quickly to supplant one to which images had been fundamental.

*Dedicated to my parents*

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## Abbreviations

- CMBH** *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, ed. by David Wilkins, 4 vols. (London: R. Gosling et al., 1737).
- DFC** Thomas Netter of Walden, *Doctrinale antiquitatum fidei ecclesiae catholicae*, ed. by B. Blanciotti, 3 vols. (Venice: 1757-9; repr. on CD-Rom in Thomas Netter of Walden: Carmelite, Diplomat and Theologian (c. 1372-1430), ed. by Johan Bergström-Allen and Richard Copsy [Faversham, Kent: St. Albert's Press / Rome: Edizioni Carmelitane, 2009]).
- DLA** Database of Latin Dictionaries (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010) <<http://www.brepols.net>>.
- DR** *Douay-Rheims Bible*, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century revision (*The Holy Bible: Translated from the Latin Vulgate* [Baltimore, Ma.: John Murphy Company, 1914]).
- EWS** *English Wycliffite Sermons*, 5 vols., ed. by Anne Hudson and Pamela Gradon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983-1996).
- FZ** *Fasciculi zizaniorum Johannis Wyclif cum tritico*, ed. by W.W. Shirley, Rolls Series, 5 (London: Longman, 1858).
- GO** *Bibliorum sacrorum glossa ordinaria*, 6 vols. (Venice: 1603).
- KJV** *King James Bible, Authorized Version*, 1769 revision.
- LS** John Wyclif, *Iohannis Wyclif: sermones*, ed. by Johann Loserth, 4 vols., Wyclif Society (London: Trübner & Co., 1887-1890).
- MED** *Middle English Dictionary* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2001) <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>>.
- OED** *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) <<http://www.oed.com>>.
- PL** Migne, Jean-Jacques ed., *Patrologia Latina: The Full Text Database* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: ProQuest LLC, 1996-2011) <<http://pld.chadwyck.co.uk/>>.
- ST** Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, ed. and trans. by Thomas Gilby et. al., Blackfriars Edition, 61 vols. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964-1981; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

## Notes

Unless otherwise stated: references to chapters, pages and footnotes, where given on their own, are to this thesis. Biblical quotations, when not from medieval sources, along with Psalm numbers, chapter- and verse-divisions, are drawn from the Clementine Vulgate Bible (*Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam Clementinam: Nova editio*, ed. by Alberto Colunga and Laurentio Turrado, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. [Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1977]). English translations of the Vulgate (or adaptations when the medieval Vulgate source differs from the Clementine version), are drawn from the *Douay-Rheims Bible* (Challoner and nineteenth-century revision), except where, for the sake of clarity, I have translated Vulgate passages myself or have drawn from other translations. Non-biblical Latin translations are my own. In manuscript transcriptions, abbreviations are silently expanded and punctuation added according to sense. When citing medieval texts from modern editions, indications of expansions and similar manuscript marks have been silently omitted. Biographical dates for English historical figures are drawn from the respective entries in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Footnote references are generally placed at the end of sentences, except when they are placed within them for the sake of clarity.

## **1. Introduction: Holy Scripture and the Meanings of the Medieval Eucharist**

‘*Bread*: the body of Christ, or the word of God, or God Himself for whom each day we crave’ – *Glossa Ordinaria*, on ‘Give us this day our daily bread’ [Mt. 6.11]’<sup>1</sup>

What did it mean to receive Christ’s body in the Middle Ages? One answer to this question may immediately occur to the modern reader: the physical eating of his flesh and blood, hidden beneath the appearance of the consecrated bread and wine of the medieval Mass. In the words of a foundational medieval statement of eucharistic orthodoxy, after the mass-priest’s repetition of Christ’s own words at the Last Supper, *hoc est enim corpus meum* (‘this is my body’):

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ [...] are in truth handled and broken by the hands of the priests and ground by the teeth of the faithful.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, the point of departure of this thesis is that throughout the medieval period the reception of Christ’s body and blood meant much more than this. It was not confined to the consumption of the consecrated bread and wine of the Mass, but was also available in a range of other symbolic forms of communion, from viewing the host and listening to sermons through to meditations upon images of Christ crucified. Ultimately derived from scriptural tropes and their exegesis by the Church Fathers, these symbols formed a system which, it has been argued, was the sole means by which the bulk of the laity regularly

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<sup>1</sup> *Bibliorum sacrorum glossa ordinaria*, 6 vols. (Venice: 1603-1611), V, Col. 131: ‘Panis, corpus Christi est, vel verbum Dei, vel ipse Deus quo quotidie egemus’. Hereafter referred to as *GO*. This is the *KJV* rendering of Mt. 6. 11.

<sup>2</sup> See Lanfranc, *de corpore et sanguine Domini* (PL 150, 410D-411A): ‘corpus et sanguinem Domini nostri Jesu Christi [...] in veritate manibus sacerdotum tractari, frangi et fidelium dentibus atteri’, quoting ‘Ego Berengarius’, the recantation of the medieval heretic Berengar of Tours (d. 1088) who had denied the physical presence of Christ’s body in the Mass.

received the body of Christ.<sup>3</sup> Crucially, as we shall see, this system also constituted the full medieval definition of ‘Scripture’.<sup>4</sup> The uses of this expanded semiotic system, which encompassed all that was meant by the medieval Eucharist, existed in constant tension with the fleshly presence in the bread and wine that seemed to be at its core.

Through parsing the tropes of this system, this Introduction charts its centrality to late-medieval religion and introduces the principal contention of the thesis: that the increasing diffusion of eucharistic symbolism among the laity through English religious writing, between 1370 and 1430, should be seen as a new stage in the development of the medieval Eucharist. The dissemination of this system in words (both orally and in writing) challenged the centrality of the bread and wine by exposing to the laity not only the longstanding importance of scripturally-rooted symbols to Christ’s eucharistic presence but also the extent to which ‘Scripture’ was thereby appropriating and extending the sacramental functions privileged to the bread and wine. This exposes a cultural shift of wider significance to our understanding of the period: late-medieval authors and their audiences were assigning to words the powers hitherto privileged to the non-verbal symbolism of medieval culture.

These tensions are most clearly expressed through the figure of ‘bread’, the trope upon which this expanded semiotic system centred. While Christ took, blessed and broke bread in his hands at the Last Supper, the most important source-text for the meaning of this figure is Ch. 6 of the Gospel of John, which recounts how Christ took five barley-loaves and two fish, gave thanks, and with them miraculously fed five thousand people.<sup>5</sup> The fraught significance of this miracle to medieval religion lies in its interpretation by Christ himself when, the next day, he addressed those whom he had fed:

I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger: and  
he that believeth in me shall never thirst [...] I am the living bread

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<sup>3</sup> See the work of Gary Macy and Caroline Walker Bynum on the lay use of substitutes for reception of the consecrated bread and wine, discussed below in this chapter, pp. 12-14.

<sup>4</sup> See below, pp. 10-12.

<sup>5</sup> Jn. 6.1-15.

which came down from heaven [...] and the bread that I will give, is my flesh, for the life of the world [...] Amen, amen, I say unto you: Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day [...] For my flesh is truly food and my blood is truly drink. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him [...] It is the spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I have spoken to you, are spirit and life.<sup>6</sup>

For later-medieval exegetes, within Christ's words lay his express command to consume in the Mass the very same flesh and blood that had been given for mankind's eternal salvation on the cross. This was the whole Christ [*totum Christum*], as Thomas Aquinas puts it, 'bones, nerves and the other things' into which, according to the doctrine of transubstantiation, the substance of the bread and wine were physically transformed at the moment of consecration, although hidden by the bread and wine's lingering outward appearances [*accidentia*].<sup>7</sup> This was the belief, underpinning the late-medieval cult of devotion to Christ's presence in the Mass, which by the later fourteenth century had come to be the only acceptable official explanation of the Eucharist.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, such a physical

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<sup>6</sup> Jn. 6.35, 51, 52, 54-57, 64: 'ego sum panis vitae: qui venit ad me, non esuriet, et qui credit in me, non sitiet unquam [...] Ego sum panis vivus, qui de caelo descendi [...] panis quem ego dabo, caro mea est pro mundi vita [...] Amen, amen, dico vobis: Nisi manducaveritis carnem Filii hominis, et biberitis eius sanguinem, non habebitis vitam in vobis. Qui manducat meam carnem, et bibit meum sanguinem, habet vitam aeternam: et ego resuscitabo eum in novissimo die. Caro enim mea vere est cibus: et sanguis meus, vere est potus; qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem, in me manet, et ego in illo [...] Spiritus est qui vivificat: caro non prodest quidquam: verba quae ego locutus sum vobis, spiritus et vita sunt'. The translation of this passage is drawn from *Douay-Rheims*, except for that of Jn. 6.56, 'Caro enim mea vere est cibus: et sanguis meus, vere est potus' ('For my flesh [...] truly drink'), which is my own. In *Douay-Rheims*, this line is translated as 'For my flesh is meat indeed: and my blood is drink indeed'. *Douay-Rheims* is hereafter referred to as *DR*.

<sup>7</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* IIIa, q. 76, a. 1: 'Ad secundum dicendum quod ex vi sacramenti sub hoc sacramento continetur, quantum ad species panis, non solum caro, sed totum corpus Christi, id est ossa et nervi et alia hujusmodi [...] Et ideo, cum dominus dixit, *Joan. VI, caro mea vere est cibus*, caro ponitur ibi pro toto corpore' [To the second [objection] it must be replied that by the power of the sacrament there is contained beneath the species of the bread not only flesh, but the whole body of Christ, that is bones and nerves and the other things of this kind [...] Therefore, when the Lord says, in Jn. 6, 'my flesh is truly food', 'flesh' there is used for the whole body]. *Summa Theologiae* is hereafter referred to as *ST*, with citations identified by their respective Part, Question and Article.

<sup>8</sup> See for example, Alan of Lille, *Regulae Alani de sacra theologia* (PL 210.678B-678C), qtd. in Ian Christopher Levy, *John Wyclif: Scriptural Logic, Real Presence, and the Parameters of Orthodoxy* (Marquette: Marquette University Press, 2003), p. 167: 'Transsubstantiatio est, quando nec materia, nec substantialis forma remanet, ut in mutatione, secundum quam panis transsubstantiatur in corpus Christi' [Transubstantiation is

eating is hardly the message of St. Augustine's tractates on Jn. 6. On the contrary, Augustine condemns the idea that Christ spoke of a physical gift, as when meat 'on a carcass is torn to pieces'.<sup>9</sup> Rather, Christ intended to show that his body must be spiritually eaten through faith (a *manducatio spiritualis*), as if he had said: 'Why prepare your teeth and stomach? Believe and you have eaten'.<sup>10</sup> A major meaning of Jn. 6 for Augustine is that those who eat through faith grasp that 'flesh' is not a literal entity but the signified object of the bread and wine, when these are understood to be *sacramenta*: that is, in Augustine's broadest definition, 'signs of sacred things'.<sup>11</sup> Thus, 'the sacrament is one thing, the power of the sacrament [*virtus sacramenti*] another'.<sup>12</sup> This grasping of the *virtus sacramenti* is the means whereby Christ fulfils his promise to dwell in his worshippers, and his worshippers in him.<sup>13</sup>

Augustine's reading of Jn. 6 thus crystallizes the broad paradox in medieval eucharistic belief: the importance of symbolism and subjective perception to the eating of Christ's body and blood.<sup>14</sup> Most problematically, the Church Father was cited by heretics

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when neither matter nor substantial form remains, as in the change by which the bread is transubstantiated into the body of Christ]. As Levy comments in *Parameters of Orthodoxy*, p. 15, by the late fourteenth century acceptable definitions of Christ's presence in the Mass 'had shrunk considerably' compared to even a century before.

<sup>9</sup> Augustine, 'In Joannis Evangelium', 25 (*PL* 35.1617): 'carnem quippe sic intellexerunt, quomodo in cadavere dilaniatur, aut in macello venditur'.

<sup>10</sup> Augustine, 'In Joannis Evangelium', 25 (*PL* 35.1602): 'Ut quid paras dentes et ventrem? crede, et manducasti'.

<sup>11</sup> For Augustine's broadest definition of the term *sacramentum*, see for example, Augustine, *Epistolarum classes quatuor*, ep. 138.7 (*PL* 33.527): 'Nimis autem longum est, convenienter disputare de varietate signorum, quae cum ad res divinas pertinent, Sacramenta appellantur' [It would take a very long time suitably to discuss the variety of signs which, since they relate to divine things, are called sacraments]. On *sacramentum* more narrowly understood as a visible sacred rite 'in which interpretation formed an integral part of enactment', see Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 257-259. See p. 7, fn. 23, below, for Augustine's definition of scriptural figures as *sacramenta*.

<sup>12</sup> Augustine, 'In Joannis Evangelium', 25 (*PL* 35.1611): 'aliud est Sacramentum, aliud virtus Sacramenti'.

<sup>13</sup> Augustine, 'In Joannis Evangelium', 25 (*PL* 35.1610): 'Qui ergo credit in me [...] it in me; et qui it in me, habet me'.

<sup>14</sup> See Heinz Robert Schlette, *Die Lehre von der geistlichen Kommunion bei Bonaventura, Albert dem Grossen und Thomas von Aquin* (Munich: Max Hübner, 1959), pp. 5-12, on the centrality of such tensions to the message of Jn. 6 and its interpretation by St. Augustine. As he comments, p. 7: 'Die Quellen, auf die die früh- und hochscholastische Lehre von der *manducatio spiritualis* immer wieder zurückgreift, sind vor allem das 6. Kapitel des Johannesevangeliums und die Eucharistielehre Augustins in seinem Johanneskommentar' [The sources upon which early- and high-scholastic teaching on spiritual eating repeatedly draws are above all Ch. 6 of John's Gospel and Augustine's eucharistic teaching in his commentary on John].

such as Berengar (d. 1088) and John Wyclif (d. 1384) in support of the principal eucharistic heresy of the Middle Ages, namely the assertion that the body remained in heaven but was present to the worshipper in the bread and wine of the Mass, when these were understood to be sacred signs [*in sacramento*].<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless such spiritual eating was far from being distinct from or opposed to the prevailing belief in a physical reception of Christ's flesh, generally termed sacramental eating [*manducatio sacramentalis*].<sup>16</sup> On the one hand, heretics insisted that Christ's physical body was truly and objectively present through a symbolic transformation of the bread and wine. On the other, even the staunchest proponents of transubstantiation, such as Aquinas, also asserted that physical eating held no efficacy unless worshippers ate Christ's flesh spiritually; they needed to recognize that eating the flesh was not the end of the Eucharist but was, itself, a *sacramentum* leading to the ultimate *res sacramenti* ('object of the sacrament'), the worshippers' dwelling in the body of Christ, which was defined as their union in the Church.<sup>17</sup> The integrity of these Augustinian ideas to the orthodox understanding of the Eucharist highlights a recurrent issue in this thesis: that the Real Presence itself was 'quintessentially symbolic'<sup>18</sup> and could not exist without signs.

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<sup>15</sup> On Wyclif's profession of a symbolic yet true presence of Christ's body in the bread and wine of the Mass, see Ch. 2, pp. 54-57. On the heretic Berengar's similar profession, see, for example, Teresa Whalen, *The Authentic Doctrine of the Eucharist* (Kansas, Mo.: Sheed & Ward, 1993), p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Theologians have traced the emphasis in medieval theology upon a physical eating back to St. Ambrose. See Gary Macy, *The Theologies of the Eucharist: A Study of the Salvific Function of the Sacrament according to the Theologians c.1080-c.1220* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 5, 24.

<sup>17</sup> See Gary Macy, *Treasures from the Storeroom: Medieval Religion and the Eucharist* (Collegeville, Mn.: The Liturgical Press, 1999), p. 44. See also Macy, *Theologies of the Eucharist*, on the eleventh-century introduction into scholastic thought of the 'patristic terminology of *sacramentum/res*' by the heretic Berengar (pp. 39, 53), its development by theologians such as Lanfranc (pp. 46-7) and Alger of Liège (pp. 50-51), and the standardization of the distinction between *sacramentum* and *res-et-sacramentum* by Peter Lombard in the twelfth century (pp. 53, 122).

<sup>18</sup> Macy, *Treasures from the Storeroom*, p. 176.

### **1.1. A Eucharistic World: Christ in Word and Image**

As Augustine also stated in his sermons on Jn. 6, not only were the bread and wine upon the mass-altar *sacramenta* of Christ's body, but so also was the manna received by the faithful Israelites, long before Christ's Incarnation. While 'they differed as signs, in what they signified they were equal'.<sup>19</sup> The exegesis of Jn. 6 highlights the second major dimension to the role of symbolism in the reception of Christ's body and blood in medieval religion: namely that this could not be confined to the consecrated bread and wine of the Mass itself, but depended upon a range of scripturally-rooted signs in which Christ had made himself present.

Fundamentally, these were the words themselves of Holy Scripture. Augustine, along with other Church Fathers, emphasizes that Scripture, alongside the Eucharist, was also figured by the miraculous bread of Jn. 6 and was, therefore, a vital spiritual food offered to mankind through Christ's Incarnation.<sup>20</sup> Christ speaks of the effects of Scripture and of the words of consecration, at Jn. 6.64: 'the words that I have spoken to you, are spirit and life'.<sup>21</sup> For Augustine, Christ's words were also *sacramenta* ('signs of holy things').<sup>22</sup> In particular, his own reading of Jn. 6 emphasizes the importance of understanding Scripture, far more than the role of the bread and wine, to the reception of the body. Along with Christ's speech

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<sup>19</sup> Augustine, 'In Joannis Evangelium', 26 (*PL* 35.1612): 'Hunc panem significavit manna, hunc panem significavit altare Dei. Sacramenta illa fuerunt: in signis diversa sunt; in re quae significatur paria sunt'.

<sup>20</sup> *GO* V [on Jn. 6.9], col. 1118: 'Multiplicavit, quia de paucis illis tot scripturae emanauerunt' [He multiplied, since from those few things so many scriptures flowed out]. On the history of the *Glossa Ordinaria*, see for example Constance Bouchard, 'The Cistercians and the "Glossa Ordinaria"', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 86 (2000), 183-192.

<sup>21</sup> Jn. 6.64: 'verba quae ego locutus sum vobis, spiritus et vita sunt'.

<sup>22</sup> For more on Augustine's definition of scriptural figures as *sacramenta*, see W.A. Van Roo, *The Christian Sacrament* (Rome: Editrice Pontifica Università Gregoriana, 1992), p. 39. Augustine, 'In Joannis Evangelium', 24 (*PL* 35.1593): 'Interrogemus ipsa miracula, quid nobis loquantur de Christo: habent enim si intelligantur, linguam suam. Nam quia ipse Christus Verbum Dei est, etiam factum Verbi, verbum nobis est' [Let us ask the miracles themselves what they can tell us about Christ: for they also have a tongue, if they can be understood. For since Christ Himself is the Word of God, even the deed of the Word is a word to us]. On Augustine's broader use of *sacramentum* in his tractates on Jn. 6, see, for example, Augustine, 'In Joannis Evangelium', 25 (*PL* 35.1594): 'Apparebit ergo, cum ipsum sacramentum de quinque panibus coeperit nobis loqui, et quid significet indicare' [It will become evident, when the sacrament of the five loaves itself begins to talk to us, and indicate what it signifies].

and deeds, the bread and wine are themselves ‘words of Christ’; the logic of Christ’s body as their *sensus* is, fundamentally, that of scriptural interpretation.<sup>23</sup> Beyond this, Augustine’s exegesis highlights the basic necessity of grasping the meaning of Christ’s message in Jn. 6 (and thus the content of Scripture, more broadly) in order to come to the comprehension and faith needed to eat his body in the first place.<sup>24</sup>

Given a tradition of such exegesis, it is perhaps unsurprising that some medieval thinkers asked: did worshippers therefore fulfil Christ’s command to eat his flesh and blood (Jn. 6.63) through receiving the bread of Scripture itself?<sup>25</sup> This is the message of the reading of Jn. 6.53 in a commentary, attributed to St. Jerome, on Ps 147.14: ‘he fills thee with the fat of the grain’:

Although this may be understood of the eucharistic rite, [more] truly the body and blood of Christ is the speech of Scripture, divine instruction [...] When we hear the word of God [...] and the flesh and blood of Christ are poured into our ears, if we think of other things, into how much danger do we run!<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> On the importance to the Eucharist of a logic that was perceived by medieval theologians to be, at root, textual and above all scriptural, see in general Stock, *Implications of Literacy*, pp. 241-362. As he comments, p. 254: ‘in order to interpret the eucharist, or, for that matter, any sacrament, one left the realm of experience and entered that of the text’; moreover, p. 258, that Augustine’s ‘meaning for *sacramentum* was “inseparable from the spiritual interpretation of Scripture” itself’ (quoting P-Th. Camelot, “Sacramentum.” *Notes de théologie sacramentaire augustinienne*, *Revue thomiste*, 57 (1957), 429-30).

<sup>24</sup> As St. Paul says in Rm. 10.17: ‘Ergo fides ex auditu, auditus autem per verbum Christi’ [Faith then cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of Christ].

<sup>25</sup> Guillelmus De Militona [William of Middleton], *Guillelmi de Militona quaestiones de sacramentis*, ed. by G. Gál, 2 vols. (Florence: Quaracchi, 1961), II, Tract. IV, Pars XI, Questio LXV, p. 756, ll. 13-16: ‘6. Item, cum utraque manducatio, scilicet sacramentalis et spiritualis, fiat per fidem, *fides* autem est *ex auditu*, Rom 10, 17, videtur quod sacramentali manducationi et spirituali potius debet deservire *sensus auditus* quam *gustus* vel *visus*’.

<sup>26</sup> This is my translation of Ps. 147.14: ‘Et adipe frumenti satiat te’ [DR: ‘and filleth thee with the fat of corn’]. Jerome / Pseudo-Jerome, *Breviarium in Psalmos*, Ps. 147 (PL 26.1258D-1259A): ‘licet et in mysterio possit intelligi: tamen verius corpus Christi, et sanguis ejus, sermo Scripturarum est, doctrina divina est. Si quando audimus sermonem Dei [...] et caro Christi, et sanguis ejus in auribus nostris funditur, et nos aliud cogitamus, in quantum periculum incurrimus!’. Scholarly consensus is that the *Breviarium* is an interpolated expansion of Jerome’s likely authentic *commentarioli in psalmos*. The substantive alteration from Jerome to pseudo-Jerome in this passage lies, as indicated above in brackets, in the substitution of *verius* [more truly] for *vere* [truly]. For the full passage, see Jerome, *Sancti Hieronymi Presbyteri Commentarioli in Psalmos*, in *Anecdota Maredsolana* [...], ed. by G. Morin, 3 vols. (Maredsolis, 1893; Oxford: J. Parker, 1894-95), III.I, p. 301.24-302.5. See also Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., 7 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner, 1890-1892), III (1891), p. 495 on early Christian figures such as Eusebius and St. Basil, who considered Christ’s injunction to eat His body in Jn. 6 to refer to scriptural words.

By contrast (in a statement that, as scholars have argued, conflicts with the thrust of his homilies on Jn. 6), Augustine, in *De Trinitate*, warns against identifying Scripture, rather than the consecrated bread and wine, with Christ's body and blood:

we call neither [Paul's] tongue the body of Christ, nor the parchments, nor the ink, nor the expressive sounds produced by his tongue, nor the letters written on hides, but only what is taken from the fruits of the earth [i.e. the bread and wine] and consecrated by mystic prayer.<sup>27</sup>

Notwithstanding such tensions, these engagements collectively underscore the fundamental medieval perception that in receiving Scripture one received the same Christ present in the bread and wine to such a degree that it extended the scope of what was meant by the Eucharist itself. The developing eucharistic function of Scripture in medieval religion begins with monastic scriptural meditation [*lectio divina*] which flourished from the twelfth century onwards. As Anne Astell has importantly observed, in the writings of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, 'it is often impossible to distinguish [...] references to the scriptures from those to the Eucharist'.<sup>28</sup> St. Bernard writes upon the effects of scriptural meditation in the same eucharistic language as Augustine's commentaries upon Jn. 6: 'I am chewed when I am accused, I am swallowed when I am instructed [...] For if I eat and am not eaten, it will seem that he is in me, but I am not yet in him'.<sup>29</sup> Such indeterminacy, as Astell argues, suggests

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<sup>27</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Bk. 3, 4.10 (PL 42.873-874): 'nec linguam quippe ejus, nec membranas, nec atramentum, nec significantes sonos lingua editos, nec signa litterarum conscripta pelliculis, corpus Christi et sanguinem dicimus; sed illud tantum quod ex fructibus terrae acceptum et prece mystica consecratum'. See also the comment on this passage in Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. by Edmund Hill, ed. by John E. Rotelle (New York: New City Press, 1991), p. 133, fn. 8: 'this strange little excursus into eucharistic theology throws an interesting light on Augustine's ideas on the subject, and must modify to some extent the impression we get of them, say from his commentary on John 6'. See Ch. 2, p. 61, on the citation of this passage by Wyclif; and Ch. 3, p. 109 by one of his fifteenth-century followers. It was also used by scholastic theologians to show that Augustine asserted the uniqueness of the eucharistic rite compared to other signs of Christ. See Alger of Liège, *De sacramentis corporis et sanguinis dominici* (PL 180.761B-D).

<sup>28</sup> Ann Astell, *Eating Beauty: the Eucharist and the Spiritual Arts of the Middle Ages* (Ithaca / London: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 75.

<sup>29</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica Cantorum*, Sermo 71, in *Sancti Bernardi opera*, ed. by J. Leclercq et. al., 8 vols. (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957-1977), I-II (II, p. 217): 'Mandor cum arguor, glutior cum instituo [...] Nam si manduco et non manducor, videbitur in me ille esse, sed nondum in illo ego'. This text is quoted in Astell, *Eating Beauty*, p. 76.

that ‘the eucharistic beauty [...] must extend [...] to the plain letters of the scriptures’.<sup>30</sup> This also suggests how scriptural meditation and recitation served ritual functions in monastic communities which paralleled those of the Mass, in uniting its members both to Christ and to each other, thus creating an important example of ‘textual community’, as Brian Stock has termed it.<sup>31</sup> As we shall see, this eucharistic function remained central to arguments for the dissemination of Scripture among the medieval laity, most clearly through preaching, that gathered pace from the thirteenth century onwards.

Completing this extended notion of ‘Eucharist’, however, was a third group of signs which were much more culturally prominent: visual depictions of Christ on the cross. Accounts of meditation upon the latter effecting a consumption of Christ’s blood (physically and spiritually) are prevalent in medieval culture.<sup>32</sup> The central mystical explanation of this function was the belief, transmitted from Greek Christianity, that God had also made material images of Christ and of other holy figures vessels for their subjects’ presence, after the pattern of the Incarnation<sup>33</sup> (of all the senses, vision was considered in medieval thought

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<sup>30</sup> Astell, *Eating Beauty*, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Brian Stock, *Listening for the Text*, p. 100, defines the textual community as ‘a group in which there is both a script and a spoken enactment and in which social cohesion and meaning result from the interaction of the two’. In general, see Ch. 2, ‘Textual Communities’, in *Implications of Literacy*, pp. 88-151. As Stock also comments, p. 526, Bernard’s writings ‘became a set of quasi-sacramental bonds for the [...] most exemplary textual community [of the eleventh and twelfth centuries], the Cistercian Order’; and, p. 329, that Bernard ‘transformed the sort of symbolism evolved by orthodox commentators on the eucharist into a vehicle capable of bringing together the individual, the monastic community, and the sacramental process’.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, ‘The Vision of the Monk of Eynsham’, in *Eynsham Cartulary*, ed. by H.E. Salter, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907-8), II, pp. 285-371. This recounts how a twelfth-century Monk of Eynsham was found by his fellow monks ‘on Good Friday as if dead and motionless, his eye sockets and nose smeared with much blood’ [Cap. II, pp. 289/1-290/9: ‘Parasceue [...] uelud exanimem & sine motu alicuius membrorum reperiunt [...] ipsis luminum sedibus ac naso multo sanguine illitis’]. Reviving, he relates that, on the evening before (i.e. the night of the Last Supper), ‘I received in my hand, streaming [from the Cross], drops of blood of a number I cannot relate, with which I diligently smeared my eyes, ears and nostrils. Finally, I also swallowed a drop of the same blood’ [Cap. XI, pp. 298/10-299/14: ‘Suscepi autem manu aperta nescio quot defluentis guttulas, & exinde oculos, aures & nares michi diligenter liniui. Postremo [...] unam eiusdem sanguinis stillam [...] etiam deglutui’].

<sup>33</sup> See Clemena Antonova, *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon: Seeing the World with the Eyes of God* (Farnham / Burlington: Ashgate), 2010, pp. 63-102, on the spectrum of Eastern Orthodox ideas about images. Most relevant to Western medieval thought on images is the Eastern espousal of ‘a real, partial presence of the prototype in the image’ (p. 63), transmitted to the West in the writings of figures such as John of Damascus. On the significance of such ideas to the Eucharist in Eastern Orthodox theology, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of The Development of Doctrine*, 5 vols. (Chicago / London. University of

to give ‘the strongest possible access’ to the ‘object of devotion’).<sup>34</sup> As Eamon Duffy has commented, in late-medieval England ‘the saint was believed to be in a very direct relationship with his or her image’.<sup>35</sup> The widespread attribution of presence to religious images is reflected both in the terms in which iconoclasts attacked such images, as idols, and in those through which the orthodox defended them.<sup>36</sup>

Nonetheless, as with the eucharistic bread and wine, the efficacy of such images also overlapped with the content of Scripture. In medieval thought, the image of Christ’s body on the cross could also mysteriously express scriptural meaning, by means of what Vincent Gillespie has termed a *lectio domini* (‘reading of the Lord’); Christ’s wounds were evoked as the text’s vowels and consonants, his flesh as its parchment.<sup>37</sup> This was much more than a metaphor: the Benedictine John Whiterig (d. 1371) places the cross among the scriptures given by Christ, ‘exceedingly dark and laden with innumerable sacraments’, which were figured by the miraculous loaves in Jn. 6.<sup>38</sup> As we shall see, the belief that this *lectio domini* could convey the *sensus* of Scripture, even to the unlettered, underpins calls by theologians such as Odo of Cheriton in the thirteenth century to encourage devotion to images among

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Chicaco Press, 1971-1989), III (1977), p. 94: ‘Was eucharistic presence to be extended to a general principle about sacramental mediation of divine power through material objects, or was it an exclusive principle that precluded any such extension to other means of grace, such as images?’.

<sup>34</sup> Margaret Miles, *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), pp. 96-97, quoted in Astell, *Eating Beauty*, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> See Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c.1400-1580*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New Haven, Conn. / London: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 186.

<sup>36</sup> See the discussion of the fifteenth-century Carmelite Thomas Netter’s defence of images as vessels of divine presence in Ch. 5, p. 185.

<sup>37</sup> On *lectio domini* and its ancient origins, see Vincent Gillespie, ‘Lukyng in haly bukes: Lectio in some Late Medieval Spiritual Miscellanies’, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 106 (1984), 1-27 (pp. 10-11). See Spencer, *English Preaching*, pp. 139-141, on the argument of the thirteenth-century Odo of Cheriton for the equivalence of such meditations to scriptural study. As Augustine states in *De Doctrina Christiana*, II, 41.52 (*PL* 34.64): ‘signo crucis omnis actio christiana describitur’ [in the sign of the cross, every Christian act is written].

<sup>38</sup> See John Whiterig, Monk of Farne, *Meditacio ad Crucifixum*, in the ‘Meditations of the Monk of Farne’, ed. by D. Farmer, *Studia Anselmiana*, 41 (1957), 141-245, pp. 158-215 (Chs. 40-41, pp. 182-3). To those who doubt the significance of the image of Christ crucified, he states: ‘non in solo pane uiuit homo sed in omni uerbo quod procedit de ore Dei, cuius itaque uerba spiritus et uita sunt, obscura nimium et multiplicibus grauida sacramentis [...] ad instar panum quibus saciauit Dominus quinque milia hominum, remeaneat adhuc [...] non minus pregnans sit uox operis quam sermonis’ [Man does not live by bread alone but by every word which comes from the mouth of God, whose words therefore are spirit and life, exceedingly dark and laden with innumerable sacraments [...] like the breads with which the Lord fed five thousand men [...] the voice of the deed is no less pregnant than that of speech].

the laity.<sup>39</sup> Equally importantly (and akin to monastic *lectio divina*), reading the *sensus* of this text was not clearly distinguishable from consuming the body and blood itself. Receiving ‘His dripping blood in my mouth’ through meditations on the image of Christ crucified, Peter Damian (d. 1072) attained revelations of an incommunicable richness (akin to the experience of Julian of Norwich in the fourteenth century).<sup>40</sup> For Rupert of Deutz (d. 1129), the savour recalled a text fundamental to scriptural *lectio* and late-medieval eucharistic devotion alike: ‘O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet’ (Ps. 33.9).<sup>41</sup>

Such ideas therefore indicate how images (together with the words of Bible and the bread and wine itself) extended the medieval conception of ‘Scripture’ as much as they did that of the ‘Eucharist’, a definition whose sacramental scope and pluralism (highlighted by the medieval idea of *sacrae scripturae* or ‘Holy Scriptures’) far exceeded the later- and post-medieval restrictions of this term to the meanings directly derived from a canon of written biblical texts.<sup>42</sup> Equally, they indicate the fundamental conflation of the ‘scriptural’ and

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<sup>39</sup> See again Spencer, *English Preaching*, pp. 139-141, charting Odo’s equation of meditation upon the crucifixion with Scripture, mentioned above, fn. 37. For more on this see below, p. 25.

<sup>40</sup> Peter Damian, *Opuscula Varia*, Op. 19, Cap. 5 (PL 145.432A-B): ‘Saepe cernebam praesentissimo mentis intuiti Christum [...] in cruce pendentem, avidusque suscipiebam stillantem supposito ore cruorem. Porro si nitar apicibus tradere quidquid mihi contemplari dabatur [...] ante dies elabitur quam rei series digeratur’ [I often discerned, by the most direct mental apprehension, Christ hanging from the cross, and greedy, I accepted the dripping blood into my mouth below. Further, if I should try to relate what was given me to contemplate, to its summits [...] the day would finish before it was unfolded]. See also the discussion of this passage in Bernard McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism: Vol. II of The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (London: SCM, 1995), pp. 141-142, p. 480, fn.112. Vincent Gillespie comments in ‘Lukyng in Haly Bokes’, p. 10, that: ‘Julian of Norwich’s reflection on images of her showings is in fact a variant of *lectio divina*, exercised on the imagery of her visions which become, in effect, a “text”’.

<sup>41</sup> Rupert of Deutz, *De gloria et honore filii hominis super Mattheum*, Bk. 12, ed. by R. Haacke, CCCM 29 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979), pp. 369–70: ‘crucem quidem super altare loco suo restitui. Gustus autem quidam ineffabilis, gustus suavitatis eius in ore animae [...] superfuit, qui [...] memorem adhuc facit me uersiculi huius: Gustate et uidete quam suavis est Dominus [Ps. 33:9]’, qtd. in Rachel Fulton, ‘“Taste and See That the Lord is Sweet” (Ps. 33:9): The Flavor of God in the Monastic West’, *The Journal of Religion*, 86 (2006), 169-204 (p. 174). On the vocabulary common to meditation upon images, upon Scripture and to eucharistic devotion, see below, p. 24, fn. 86.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, the discussion of Thomas Aquinas’s conception of *sacrae scripturae* (‘Holy Scriptures’) in Thomas Gilby, ‘The *Summa* and the Bible’, in *ST*, Vol. I, Appendix 11, pp. 133-139. As Gilby comments, p. 137, the Scriptures represent ‘a wider, richer [...] more affectively-toned manifold than a compendium of doctrines in a creed’; p. 138: ‘the holy books [...] are a sign, *sacramentum*, not the thing, *res*’. On the use of the bread and wine themselves as ‘Scripture’, see, Astell, *Eating Beauty*, p. 67, on the thirteenth-century Benedictine nun Gertrude of Helfta: ‘Whereas Bernard [of Clairvaux] eats the sacred scriptures as if they were the Eucharist, Gertrude reads the Eucharist as if it were a text’.

‘eucharistic’ functions of these symbols, in their users’ perceptions. In this thesis, I shall refer to this broader conception as ‘Scripture’, to distinguish it from Scripture, more narrowly defined as the words of the Bible.

### **Eucharistic Substitutes**

The general importance of this complex of symbols to the medieval Eucharist is highlighted by a phenomenon which, according to Gary Macy, developed at the same time as the Cult of the Mass and was new to the West: their conspicuous use as substitutes for the consecrated bread and wine.<sup>43</sup> By the mid- thirteenth century, historical sources recount a wealth of symbolic substitutes, with some, as Caroline Walker Bynum has described, prominently used by religious women when denied sacramental reception. Thus the nun Ida of Louvain (d. 1300) ‘supposedly tasted the Word as flesh on her tongue whenever she recited “Verbum caro factum est”’ (‘the Word was made flesh’, Jn. 1.14).<sup>44</sup> Among other well-documented instances was the grass or earth which knights and soldiers throughout the Middle Ages, when lacking the consecrated elements before battle, consumed ‘por *Corpus Domini*’.<sup>45</sup>

Crucially, these substitutes largely constituted the same body of symbols which the Church came to term *sacramentalia*: signs which, as Miri Rubin has shown, served to stress

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<sup>43</sup> See Macy, *Theologies of the Eucharist*, pp. 93-95 (‘Substitutes for the Reception of the Eucharist’), pp. 100-103. See also Macy, *Treasures from the Storeroom*, p. 37 and in general, Ch. 8, ‘The Eucharist and Popular Religiosity’, pp. 172-195 (esp. pp. 175-176, pp. 179-186). Macy argues, in *Theologies of the Eucharist*, p. 78, that what were probably the first descriptions of such ‘spiritual communion’ without sacramental reception emerge in sentence-collections, dating from the early twelfth century, associated with the cathedral school of Laon.

<sup>44</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, pp. 67, 116. For other examples of women receiving (and offering) substitutes for the bread and wine, see also *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, pp. 116-18, 123-124, 127-142. In his treatment of substitutes, Macy, *Treasures from the Storeroom*, pp. 181 and 194, fn. 45, refers readers to such accounts in Bynum’s book.

<sup>45</sup> See Walter Sylvester, ‘The Communion, with Three Blades of Grace, of the Knights-Errant’, *Dublin Review* 121 (1897), 80-98 (p. 83), quoting the twelfth- to thirteenth-century *Raoul de Cambrai: Chanson de Geste*, ed. by P. Meyer and A. Longnon (Paris: Firmin Didot et Co., 1882), p. 286, l. 8442; See also J.D.M. Ford, “‘To Bite the Dust’ and Symbolical Lay Communion”, *PMLA*, 20 (1906), 197-230; esp. pp. 197-201, 204-222.

(‘by design’, she has argued) the uniqueness of that presence – body and blood and soul – and the priest’s role in bringing it about, through transubstantiation (discussed above). This symbolism ranged from the Feast of Corpus Christi, and the practice of elevating the consecrated host to the laity, to the devotions to the suffering, human Christ who was portrayed with increasing realism in the period’s literature and art.<sup>46</sup> As Suzannah Biernoff has commented: ‘pictorial representation of the crucified Christ found its most common expression in altarpieces, visually framing and dramatizing the reincarnation of the body and blood of Christ during the mass’.<sup>47</sup> The role of such symbols in reinforcing the cult of devotion to Christ’s presence in the bread and wine (even if they could be the occasion of miraculous occurrences of eating) supports the view that they were largely used as substitutes because, at best, the recipient shrank from the ‘enormity of undeserving reception of Christ’s body’ (a major reason, it would seem, for declining reception of the consecrated bread and wine in this period)<sup>48</sup> or, at worst, because they formed the basis for transgressive acts.<sup>49</sup>

Nonetheless, as Macy’s work has explored (in line with the sacramental associations of scriptural word and image that we have already outlined), many orthodox theologians, especially in the earlier scholastic period, asserted that the such substitutes directly allowed the laity a ‘spiritual eating’ [*manducatio spiritualis*] of the *res sacramenti*, the salvific

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<sup>46</sup> On transubstantiation, see above, p. 3. See Ch. 5, p. 177, fn. 658, for the definition of *sacramentalia* by the fifteenth-century Carmelite Thomas Netter as ornaments instituted to honour the substance of the Christian religion vested in Christ’s teaching and sacraments. On the medieval eucharistic cult, see in general Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), and on ‘design’, esp. Ch. 1, ‘Designing the Eucharist: new ideas and procedures in the mass from c. 1000’, pp. 13-82.

<sup>47</sup> Suzannah Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 143.

<sup>48</sup> See Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, pp. 148.

<sup>49</sup> Preachers condemned the equation of such substitutes with the consecrated bread and wine. See Ford, ‘To Bite the Dust’, pp. 217-218, quoting the German preacher Berthold von Regensburg (d. 1272) who upbraids those about to be executed who say: “‘Alas! That I may receive our Lord, give me a crumb in my mouth, or a bit of earth, if you have nothing else’”, and he thinks that he thereby receives God’s body’.

element of the eucharistic rite, without the physical eating of the bread and wine.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the most-used form was the same symbol which most served to emphasize Christ's physical presence in the consecrated elements, the sight of the elevated host.<sup>51</sup> As Margaret Miles has commented, the medieval laity considered vision 'a fully satisfactory manner of communicating, so that people frequently left the church after the elevation'.<sup>52</sup> Such ideas therefore support Bynum's suggestion that spiritual eating became the principal mode of eucharistic reception for the laity, with its implication that the growth of these practices effectively compensated for declining reception of the consecrated elements.<sup>53</sup>

Indeed, it is precisely the idea of the medieval eucharistic presence as open and polysemous, rather than confined to the Mass, that emerges from a range of its major witnesses; as Rubin comments of the *Queste del seint greil*, the grail 'is never quite pinned down to one meaning being at once chalice, lamb, ciborium, and the Supper's tray'.<sup>54</sup> This is not to discount the unique importance vested in the literal reception of the flesh in the Mass, nor the beliefs that underpinned it, such as the similarly literal resurrection of one's own body.<sup>55</sup> Neither is it clear that orthodox proponents of spiritual eating (especially through sight of the host) understood it to be possible without that physical presence, however infrequently it was received; the efficacies of image and word were, as we have seen, a result of the Incarnation, the same flesh made present in the Mass. However, even the need to eat the bread and wine in order to physically (that is, *sacramentaliter* or 'sacramentally') eat Christ's flesh was not unquestionable. The theologian William of Middleton (d. 1261)

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<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Macy, *Treasures from the Storeroom*, p. 182; *Theologies of the Eucharist*, pp. 95, 101.

<sup>51</sup> Macy, *Treasures from the Storeroom*, p. 175; Macy, *Theologies of the Eucharist*, p. 93.

<sup>52</sup> Miles, *Image as Insight*, pp. 96-97, quoted in Astell, *Eating Beauty*, p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> See Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Violent Imagery in Late Medieval Piety', *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute*, 30 (2002), 3-36 (p. 5).

<sup>54</sup> Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, p. 140.

<sup>55</sup> See in general Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Material Continuity, Personal Survival and the Resurrection of the Body: A Scholastic Discussion in its Medieval and Modern Contexts', in *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (Zone Books: New York, 1992), pp. 239-297. As she argues, p. 254, such was the certainty of medieval thinkers that the body was 'necessary to personhood [...] they sometimes argued that resurrection was "natural"'.

asked if this eating could take place through sight, hearing, or ‘chewing and tasting’.<sup>56</sup> While refuting the first two options, Middleton’s argument focusses not on the mechanics of eating, as a modern reader might expect, but on the latter’s greater symbolic suitability to feeding upon and assimilation into Christ at the heart of the Mass.<sup>57</sup>

The work of scholars such as Rubin, Macy and Bynum therefore establishes the fundamental point of departure for this thesis, concerning the eucharistic function of the wealth of representations of Christ, in words and physical images, that developed between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. This symbolism offered the laity forms of communion that directly competed with the core functions of the Mass. It was used not merely to illustrate but to effect the communion with Jesus Christ that was at the centre of the Cult of the Mass.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, its uses could also duplicate the function of causing the worshipper to dwell in the body of Christ, understood as the Christian community; as John Bossy has argued, the Feast of Corpus Christi itself, the great late-medieval celebration of Christ’s physical presence, transferred ‘the socially integrative powers of the host away from the Mass’.<sup>59</sup> Yet as a consequence, this symbolism also largely generated and supported the sacramental functions of the medieval Eucharist, even as these were privileged to the consecrated bread and wine. Especially pertinent is Macy’s theory that this role was effectively hidden by the perceived primacy of the Mass, due to what the anthropologist Catherine Bell ‘describes as a “negotiation” between its ordained and nonordained

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<sup>56</sup> De Militona, *Quaestiones*, II, Tract. IV, Pars XI, Quaestio LXV, 755/11-12, ‘Quaeritur de actu manducandi sacramentaliter, scilicet utrum debet fieri videndo vel masticando et gustando’. Alexander of Hales, *Summa Theologica*, IV, p. 9, LI, memb. 5 and 6, asks the same question, qtd. in Edouard Dumoutet, *Le Désir de voir l’hostie et les origines de la dévotion au Saint Sacrement* (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne: 1926), p. 19.

<sup>57</sup> De Militona, *Quaestiones*, II, Tract. IV, Pars XI, Questio LXV, 756/30-32: ‘usus alimenti magis deservit unioni membrorum in corpore [...] qui exerceri habet per gustum, quam usus auditus vel visus’ [the experience of feeding is more fitting to the union of the members in the body, which is enforced through taste, than the experience of hearing or vision].

<sup>58</sup> See Macy, *Treasures from the Storeroom*, p. 181.

<sup>59</sup> John Bossy, ‘The Mass as a Social Institution 1200-1700’, *Past and Present*, 100 (1983), 29-61 (p. 59).

participants'.<sup>60</sup> That is, the laity were able to use such symbols because they acquiesced in the Church's claim that the priest was uniquely able to make Christ present; this settlement thereby permitted 'ritual specialists [...] in both the clerical and lay worlds' to continue to 'provide access to the divine without challenging the authority of the other'; the understanding of the 'two realms [...] as metaphysically different' (so strongly enforced by the doctrine of transubstantiation and the 'design' of the Eucharist) was the cement of this acquiescence.<sup>61</sup> It is the deconstruction of such a settlement, exposing the importance of such symbolism to the medieval Eucharist and thus threatening the institution of the Mass, that we shall see in the controversies of the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

### **1.2. The Preached Word: A Late Medieval Sacrament?**

Essential to this process of deconstruction, as this thesis will show, is the increasingly visible and direct role played in lay religion by 'Scripture', through its diffusion in words, and the tensions this engendered with the function of the bread and wine. This determines one particular focus of this thesis, upon the office of the preaching of Scripture to the laity, adopted in the early thirteenth century as 'a major instrument of the Church's ministry',<sup>62</sup> and whose function developed alongside, and as an integral part of, the cult of the Mass.

From the outset of the period, the increasing evocations of Scripture as 'bread' highlighted the aspiration, authorized by the Church, that the preached word would effect much more than merely basic instruction. As a thirteenth-century edict promulgated by Pope Innocent III proclaimed: 'just as the body is fed with material food so the soul is fed with

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<sup>60</sup> See Macy, *Treasures from the Storeroom*, p. 182, referring to Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 197-223. Miri Rubin's conception of the 'design' of the Eucharist is discussed above, p. 13, fn. 46.

<sup>61</sup> Macy, *Treasures from the Storeroom*, pp. 182-3.

<sup>62</sup> R. Rouse and M. Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus Florum of Thomas of Ireland* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1979), pp. 43-44 on the Church's adoption of preaching and see p. 62 on the frequent use of the trope of 'bread' by late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century preachers.

spiritual food [...] *man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God* [Mt. 4.4].<sup>63</sup> Indeed, enshrined in Canon Law was the same assertion of the potent relation of scriptural and eucharistic breads that we have encountered in patristic and monastic writings. As a key *Decretum*, attributed to Augustine, asks its audience:

brothers and sisters [*Interrogo uos, fratres uel sorores*], tell me what seems to you to be greater, the body or the word of Christ? [...] you should say, that the word of God is not less than the body of Christ [...] he who neglectfully hears the word of God is no less guilty than he who through negligence allows the body of Christ to fall to the earth.<sup>64</sup>

As preaching burgeoned in the thirteenth century, so did what may be taken as answers in the period's preaching manuals to the *Decretum*'s question, which in different ways rank the dissemination of the preached word above that of the body of Christ, and above other ecclesiastical rites. The Dominican preacher Humbert of Romans (d. 1277) was not the first to assert that: 'Christ in this world celebrated only one Mass, at the Last Supper [...] he administered few sacraments and rarely [...] however, we do read that he filled his entire life with preaching'.<sup>65</sup> Even more strikingly, the thirteenth-century canonist Guido de Baysio

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<sup>63</sup> 'Concilium Lateranense IV - 1215' in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. by Norman Tanner, 2 vols. (London/Georgetown: Sheed & Ward and Georgetown University Press, 1990), I, pp. 230-271 (p. 239): '10. *De praedicatoribus instituendis* [...] sicut corpus materiali sic anima spirituali cibo nutritur, eo quod *non in solo panem vivit homo, sed in omni verbo quod procedit de ore Dei*'. My translation of M. 4.4. For the dates of Innocent III, see Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New Haven, Conn. / London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 402.

<sup>64</sup> 'Decretum Gratiani', C. 1 q. 1 c. 94, in *Corpus Iuris Canonici: Editio Lipsiensis secunda post Ludovici Richteri curas* [...] *instruxit Aemilius Friedberg*, ed. by Ludovic Richter, 2 vols. (Leipzig, Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1879-1881), I, col. 391: 'Item Augustinus. [lib. L. homiliarum, homil. 26.] 'Interrogo uos, fratres uel sorores, dicite mihi, quid uobis plus esse uidetur, corpus Christi an uerbum Christi? [...] hoc dicere debetis, quod non sit minus uerbum Dei quam corpus Christi [...] non minus reus erit qui uerbum Dei negligenter audierit, quam ille, qui corpus Christi sua negligentia in terram cadere permiserit'. Although this text was attributed in Canon Law to St. Augustine, see E. Jane Dempsey Douglass, *Justification in Late Medieval Preaching: A Study of John Geiler of Keisersberg* (Leiden: Brill, 1966), p. 86-7, on its occurrence in Caesarius of Arles (d. 542), with the idea being found as early as the Greek Church Father Origen (d. 254). The ideas in the canon-law text closely resemble those in writings attributed to St. Jerome (d. 420), discussed above, p. 7.

<sup>65</sup> Humbert of Romans, *Liber de eruditione praedicatorum*, Pt. 4, Ch. XXI, p. 433: 'Christus existens in hoc mundo non celebravit nisi unam missam, scilicet in die Coenae [...] sacramenta pauca et raro ministravit [...] praedicationi vero [...] legitur impendisse totam vitam suam'. See also Odo of Cheriton, *Sermones in Epistolas* (1224), 'Domenica I Post Natale: Quanto tempore', Lincoln Cathedral, MS 11, fol. 21v, qtd. in A.C. Friend, 'The Life and Unprinted Works of Master Odo of Cheriton' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1936), p. 73: 'De Christo legitur quod semel in cena corpus consecratur, set frequenter predicauit. Nunc autem,

(*Archidiaconus*) understood the *Decretum* to mean that the preached word is greater than the body of Christ ‘in the power of what it effects’ for those receiving it; it is ‘not less but actually more important for salvation, nor is it less but more of a sin [to neglect it]’.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, we shall see that these are, if little-studied, not isolated but oft-expressed perceptions which are suggestive, as Jane Dempsey Douglass has argued, of a ‘tradition favoring the sermon over the Mass’.<sup>67</sup> And this is itself integral to broader thirteenth-century speculation, importantly outlined by Jean Leclercq, concerning the status that preaching should occupy among the Church’s seven appointed sacraments or *septem sacramenta*.<sup>68</sup> In later chapters, we shall see the largely unconsidered importance of these ideas, rooted in monastic spirituality, to the growth of English preaching in their articulation by a range of later medieval preachers, from John Wyclif and Franciscan friars to impeccably orthodox English bishops.<sup>69</sup>

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econtra, singulis diebus missa celebratur, set raro predicatur’ [we read of Christ that he consecrated his body in the Last Supper once, but he preached frequently. Now, on the contrary, the Mass is celebrated every day, but rarely preached].

<sup>66</sup> Guido de Baysio [Archidiaconus], *Gvidonis a Baisso archidiaconi Bononiensis Iuris Vtriusque Peritissimi, Rosarium [...] commentaria* (Venice: 1601), fol. 121rb: ‘praedicatio [...] sumentibus est maior efficiendi potestate’; fol. 121rb: ‘non est nobis minus, imo magis ad salutem, quam corpus christi, nec minor est culpa sed maior’. See Ch. 4, p. 128, on the very similar idea, possibly derived from de Baysio’s *Rosarium*, expressed in a late fourteenth-century orthodox sermon in Oxford, Balliol College MS 149.

<sup>67</sup> Dempsey Douglass, *Justification in Late Medieval Preaching*, p. 90.

<sup>68</sup> See Jean Leclercq, ‘Le magistère du prédicateur au XIIIe siècle’, *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge*, 21 (1946), 105-47, which surveys a range of assertions of the sacramental importance of preaching, and its relation to the Church’s ‘Seven Sacraments’ [*septem sacramenta*], found in thirteenth-century scholastic notebooks. The ‘Seven Sacraments’ were Baptism, Confirmation, Ordination [of priests], Marriage, Confession, the Eucharist and Extreme Unction [the anointing of the sick].

<sup>69</sup> Astell, *Eating Beauty*, p. 139, comments on the ‘inner logic connecting a mobile, mendicant preaching with an Augustinian monasticism’. Particularly suggestive of the influence of monastic *lectio divina* on the new preaching in the thirteenth century, is that, as Leclercq comments in ‘Le magistère’, p. 107: ‘Le caractère distinctif de cette prédication est d’être le commentaire de passages, souvent très courts, de l’Écriture Sainte. Ce que l’art oratoire nouveau doit à la tradition est d’être encore en premier lieu une *lectio*’ [The distinctive character of this preaching is that of being commentary on passages, which are often very short, of Holy Scripture. What the new rhetorical art owes to tradition is being, in the first instance, a *lectio*]. Dempsey Douglass, *Justification in Late Medieval Preaching*, p. 87, points out that the pseudo-Augustinian *Decretum* is cited by a range of late-medieval preachers, including Johann Geiler, Johann Surgant, Gabriel Biel, Bernardino of Siena, Silvester de Priorio, and John Wyclif. See Ch. 4 of this thesis, pp. 116-137 on the prevalence of ideas echoing those of the *Decretum* in late fourteenth century English preaching literature.

What did preachers mean by these assertions? The major reason that figures such as de Baysio gave for privileging preaching over the reception of Christ's body appears, at first sight, uncontroversial: namely, that the preached word was uniquely able spiritually to transform its recipients and cure their mortal sins.<sup>70</sup> By this logic, preaching must come first insofar as without such purification, as theologians had always insisted, the worshipper could not efficaciously or safely receive the body.<sup>71</sup> However, even as de Baysio and others claim that preaching is greater than the body of Christ, this is only so 'unto us' [*quo ad nos*], that is in the subjective experience of its listeners (indeed, 'unto us' may also be read as a tacit interdiction against sharing such insights with the congregation themselves).<sup>72</sup>

Such proponents of the primacy of Scripture are thus careful not to challenge the greater *dignitas* of Christ's presence in the consecrated bread and wine.<sup>73</sup> Indeed they appear to reinforce it, as does for example Robert Grosseteste (d. 1253), a major influence on English theology, for whom preaching achieved transformations of the individual excelling those of alchemy and every other human science.<sup>74</sup> As his sermon on Jn. 10.11, 'I am the

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<sup>70</sup> de Baysio, *Rosarium*, fol. 121ra: 'non enim minus prodest praedicatio, quam corpus Christi, arguitur de consecratione di. I quando autem quia per predicationem dimittuntur mortalia, & ita etiam uidetur plus' [preaching does not benefit less than the body of Christ, as is proven by *De consecratione*, Distich. I', since through preaching mortal sins are dissolved, and thus it [preaching] would even seem to be greater]. See also John Wyclif's paraphrase of this passage from the *Rosarium* in his *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, discussed in Ch. 2 of this thesis, p. 46, fn. 151; and see Ch. 3, p. 96, on a similar idea, likely derived from the *Rosarium*, in an anonymous late fourteenth-century English sermon.

<sup>71</sup> See Humbert of Romans, *Liber de eruditione praedicatorum*, Pt. IV, Ch. XXI, p. 432: 'Alii sunt qui ex quadam devotione frequentant sacra, missarum mysteria celebrant: sed licet hoc sacramentum perutile sit toti Ecclesiae, tamen multis propter indignitatem eorum vertitur in magnum periculum [...] sed haec non prosunt adultis sine vera cognitione et bona voluntate; quae duo confert praedicatio [...] ideo praeferenda est praedicatio illis exercitiis' [There are others who, out of a particular devotion, often repeat sacred things, celebrate the mysteries of the Mass, but although this sacrament is most useful to the whole Church, it becomes a great danger for many due to their baseness [...] but these [baptism, extreme unction, and other sacraments] do not benefit adults without true understanding and good will, which two things preaching confers [...] in this respect preaching is to be preferred to those exercises].

<sup>72</sup> de Baysio, *Rosarium*, ad C. 1, Q. 1, fo. 121ra: 'non fiat hic comparacio nisi quo ad nos'. See Dempsey-Douglass, *Justification in Late-Medieval Preaching*, pp. 87-88, fn. 10, on the citation of this passage (with minor variants) by Bernardino of Siena.

<sup>73</sup> de Baysio, *Rosarium*, ad C. 1, Q. 1, fo. 121ra: 'licet praedicatio sit corpore christi minor dignitate'.

<sup>74</sup> Robert Grosseteste, *Dicta*, *Dictum 2*, in *The Electronic Grosseteste*, ed. by James. R. Ginther (Toronto: 1999-2004) <<http://www.grosseteste.com/dicta.htm>> [accessed 20/09/2011]: 'Et omnes mutaciones quas facit natura, vel alicuius sciencie artifex, [...] a peiori in melius, faciet theologus opere predicacionis inproporcionaliter nobilius et expetibilius [...] Commutabit quoque plumbeos pondere peccatorum et sordibus

good shepherd' [*Ego sum pastor bonus*] makes clear, by leading his flock upwards through ascending pastures of instruction in the precepts of Scripture, as well as teaching through *exempla* from nature and by his own personal behaviour (that is, 'preaching' in the basic sense of teaching),<sup>75</sup> the priest brings them to the eating of Christ's flesh in the bread and wine; thus fortified, they ultimately 'pass through the appearance [*species*]' of things to:

the solidity of divine vision [...] the amplest of fields, since it is  
the majesty of God, which is boundless / on the altar [*in mensa*].<sup>76</sup>

Nonetheless, Grosseteste's sermon also shows why claims for the primacy of Scripture do challenge the privileged status of the Mass, in his striking argument that the preacher thereby transmits, through the force of his words, 'the word of Christ or rather the word that is Christ' [*verbum Christi sive verbum Christum*].<sup>77</sup> Contrary to St. Augustine's warning that

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terrestribus impuros in auri mundiciam et splendorem' [And all the mutations from a worse to a better state which nature makes, or the master of any science whatsoever, the theologian, by the act of preaching makes in an incalculably more noble and desirable way [...] he will transform those made leaden by the weight of sins and impure with earthly baseness into the purity and splendour of gold]. Unless otherwise stated, the text of the *Dicta* cited is that of the *Electronic Grosseteste*. This is based upon Edwin J. Westermann's unpublished revision of his doctoral thesis, 'An edition, with introduction and notes, of Dicta I-L of Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, 1235-1253' (unpublished doctoral thesis: University of Colorado, 1942), further edited by Joseph Goering. The edition is based upon Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 798.

<sup>75</sup> Grosseteste, *Dicta*, 101: 'Filius Dei volens ostendere ad quid in carnem venerit, et ad quid nos prelatos plebi sue prefecerit, ait: "Ego sum pastor bonus." Ad hoc enim venit in carnem ut nos oves pascue eius pasceret herbis seminalibus doctrine scripture sacre; ut nos pasceret floribus specierum creature; ut nos pasceret exemplorum fruge' [the Son of God, wishing to show why he came in the flesh, and why he placed us prelates in charge of his people, said, 'I am the good shepherd'. For this reason he came into flesh so that he might feed us, the sheep of his pasture, with the seed-bearing grass of the doctrine of Holy Scripture; so that he might feed us with the flowers of all manner of creatures; so that he might feed us by the fruit of examples]. I draw the English translations of *in carnem*, *herbis seminalibus* and *specierum creature* from the rendering of this *Dictum* in *Robert Grosseteste: The Complete Dicta in English*, ed. and trans. by Gordon Jackson, 13 vols. (Lincoln: Asgill Press, 2003-2006), IX, pp. 21-26 (p. 21).

<sup>76</sup> Grosseteste, *Dicta*, 101: 'ut pascant eciam visionem divinitatis per speciem promittendo [...] Hoc autem lacte roboratus grex, & in tribus praescriptis agris pastus tandem perveniet ad pascuam soliditatis divinae visionis Haec pascua est ager amplissimus, quia majestas Divinitatis in mensa est'. I draw the variant reading of 'immensa' as 'in mensa' from the transcription of this sermon in 'Eiusdem monitio et persuasio pastorum super S. Johan 10. 11. Ego sum pastor bonus', in *Fasciculus rerum expetendarum et fugiendarum: prout ab Orthuino Gratio [...] redditur*, ed. by E. Brown, 2 vols. (London: 1690), II, pp. 260-263 (p. 261). On the meaning of *mensa* as 'altar', see, for example Augustine, *Sermonum classes quatuor*, Cl. 1, Sermo 272 (*PL* 38.1247): 'Si ergo vos estis corpus Christi et membra, mysterium vestrum in mensa Dominica positum est.' [If you are of the body of Christ and its members, your mystery is placed on the Lord's table].

<sup>77</sup> Grosseteste, *Dicta*, 101: 'verbum Christi, sive verbum Christum, debet predicare'. In translating 'verbum Christum' as 'the word that is Christ', I am following Servus Gieben, 'Robert Grosseteste on Preaching, with the Edition of the sermon *Ex rerum initiatarum* on Redemption', *Collectanea Franciscana*, 37 (1967), 100-141 (p. 109).

the spoken or written word was ‘not the word that is Christ but the word of Christ’ [*non Verbum Christum sed verbum Christi*],<sup>78</sup> Grosseteste’s use of such vocabulary emphasizes (as John Wyclif would later read it), that preaching has its awesome power because it also transmits to the worshipper a vital element of the Person of Jesus Christ Himself.<sup>79</sup> While the idea of Christ’s ‘real, partial’ presence in Scripture was intellectually well-established, the liturgical context of Grosseteste’s sermon highlights its problematic import for the popular Mass: it privileges to preaching something of the ‘whole Christ’ [*totum Christum*] which, the laity were taught, lay in the bread and wine.<sup>80</sup> Equally, Grosseteste’s sermon stresses how the priest as preacher of the *verbum Christum* and as the ‘mouth of God’ [*os Dei*], rather than as eucharistic celebrant, distributes Christ to his congregation.<sup>81</sup> Scriptural words, as much as the bread and wine, are the means by which they enter Christ and Christ them, and are the ‘outer forms’ promising access to the divine vision.

Precisely the encroachment implied by such claims becomes clear as some people in the thirteenth century began to express direct preferences for receiving the preached word of Scripture over the other established, privileged sacramental signs of lay religion. As an oft-repeated medieval tale of two pious kings suggests, spreading devotion to ‘the word that is Christ’ was capable of competing with, rather than complementing, the viewing of the consecrated host, at least in elite lay milieux; in a common version of the tale, England’s

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<sup>78</sup> See Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, ‘In Psalmum CXVII enarratio’, Sermo XXII.1 (*PL* 37.1567): ‘quid est hoc verbum [...] nisi verbum intelligamus quod factum est ad Prophetas, vel quod praedicatum est per Apostolos? Non verbum Christum, sed verbum Christi, de quo scriptum est, Fides ex auditu, auditus autem per verbum Christi (Rom. X, 17)’ [what is this word [...] unless we understand the word which came to the Prophets, or was preached through the Apostles? Not Christ the Word, but the Word of Christ, of which it is written: ‘Faith cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of Christ’]. Grosseteste, *Dicta*, 101 (fol. 82rv): ‘Cogitacio enim et voluntas loquentis in verbo et per verbum ipsius loquentis [...] per aures intrat in auditorum intelligenciam [...] et ita quodammodo ipse loquens per medium verbum intrat in audientes [...]’ [For the thought and will of the speaker, in and through the speaker’s own word [...] enters through the ears into the understanding of the listeners [...] and thus in a certain way through the word as medium the speaker himself enters into his listeners].

<sup>79</sup> See Ch. 2 of this thesis, p. 75.

<sup>80</sup> I borrow the term ‘real, partial presence’ from Antonova, *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon*, p. 63.

<sup>81</sup> Grosseteste, *Dicta*, 101 (fol. 82rv): ‘ipsi enim pastores os Dei Patris sunt [...] Sed os Patris quid loquetur nisi verbum Patris, hoc est Christum, qui est Dei verbum?’ [The same pastors are the mouth of God [...] But what should the mouth of God speak except the Word of the Father, that is Christ, who is the Word of God?].

Henry III, representing flamboyant devotion to Christ in the consecrated host, can only reply to Louis XI of France, who valued above all listening to sermons, with a witty assertion of the primacy of sight over hearing: he would prefer to see his friend more frequently than to hear talk about him.<sup>82</sup> More tangibly, this encroachment extended to discussion of some of the sacraments themselves (if not explicitly the Mass). The Dominican Humbert of Romans implies that the contact with Christ in Scripture renders Confession unnecessary, with an argument we shall see used by Wyclif in the case of the Mass itself: although Confession benefits individuals, the preached word simultaneously reaches the many.<sup>83</sup>

The spread of this awareness of ‘Christ as his word’, therefore, was already fostering a host of challenges to the Church’s sacramental system which would come to a head in the late fourteenth century, most visibly (as we shall consider in Chapter Two) in an apparent

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<sup>82</sup> William Rishanger, *Willelmi Rishanger, quondam monachi s. Albani, et quorundam anonymorum, chronica et annales, regnantibus Henrico tertio et Edwardo primo*, ed. by H.T. Riley, Rolls Series, 28.2 (London: Longman, 1865), pp. 74-75: ‘Singulis namque diebus tres Missas [...] audire solebat [...] ac cum sacerdos corpus Dominicum elevaret, manum sacerdotis tenere, et illam osculari solebat. Contingit autem aliquando Sanctum Lodowicum, Francorum Regem [...] dicere [...] quod non semper Missis, sed frequentius Sermonibus, audiendis esse vacandum. Cui faceta urbanitate respondens, ait, se malle amicum suum saepius videre quam de eo loquentem [...] audire’ [Every day [Henry III] would hear three Masses, and when the priest lifted the Body of the Lord, he would hold the hand of the priest, and kiss it. However, it came to pass one day that St. Louis, King of France, said [that] he should not always devote himself to hearing Masses, but more frequently to sermons. To which [Henry] replied with witty urbanity, that he would prefer to see his friend more frequently than hear talk about him]. See also John Bromyard, *Summa praedicatorum omni eruditione refertissima [...] familiae theologo praestantissimo*, 2 vols. (Venice: 1586), I, p. 243b, and *Le Speculum Laicorum: Edition d’une collection d’exempla, composée en Angleterre à la fin du XIIIe siècle*, ed. by J.T. Welter (Paris: Librairie des Archives Nationales, 1914), p. 10. Nonetheless, the version in the *Speculum* proceeds to make clear that both were ‘pillars of Mother Church’ [p. 10: *multum autem erat pia et fide plena inter tantas matris ecclesie columpnas*]. See also the retelling of this tale by the fourteenth-century preacher Thomas Brinton, discussed in Ch. 4 of this thesis, p. 121.

<sup>83</sup> Humbert, *Liber de eruditione praedicatorum*, Pt. 4, Ch. XXI, p. 432: ‘Alii sunt qui libenter vacant confessionibus audiendis: sed praedicatio in hoc praecellit, quia per confessionum audientiam simul et semel non subvenitur nisi uni; praedicatio autem simul & semel proficit multis’ [There are others who willingly give themselves over to hearing confessions, but preaching excels this, since only one person at a time is helped by hearing confession: preaching, however, benefits many at a time]. On Wyclif’s similar argument with respect to preaching and the Eucharist, see Ch. 2, p. 46. The Franciscan Thomas Docking (d. c. 1270), a pupil of Grosseteste, makes similar (if more guarded) assertions about the function of preaching and the sacrament of Baptism. Leclercq, ‘Le magistère’, p. 109, describes preaching, in Docking’s view, as ‘destinée à compléter chez les fidèles l’oeuvre du baptême’. See also p. 110, quoting Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 3181, fol. 169v (c. 1260): ‘Quoad potestatem efficiendi simpliciter excellentior est baptismus [...] Quantum vero ad potestatem administrandi, excellentius est praedicare quam baptizare’ [concerning the power of what it effects, baptism is openly more excellent [...] however in terms of the ability required to perform [the office of preaching], preaching excels baptism]. This, in fact, seems somewhat more conservative than the statements made by figures such as de Baysio for the power of preaching relative to the Eucharist, discussed above, p. 18.

abandonment of the Mass by many Wycliffites for a religion based around Scripture. Given the disbelief so evidenced by Wycliffites in Christ's real presence in the bread, wine and other visual symbols, one may see why intellectual historians often associate the spread of literacy in the Middle Ages (that such ideas accompanied) with a broad decline in perceptions of the power of symbolism. The efficacies of medieval words and these visible symbols, it has been argued, were intrinsically different; the latter could really embody, the former only represented its subjects, or at best could offer by way of replacement a 'ghostly [...] presence, or a state of mind',<sup>84</sup> by this account, the rise of a literate mentality, with its distinction between sign and signified, emptied visual symbols of their power by causing people to see them in the same way as mere words.<sup>85</sup>

However, the problem with such accounts of literacy is that they ignore the more important reason why such non-verbal symbolism could be abandoned in this manner, to which the thirteenth-century ranking of Scripture above the Mass attests: clearly, in the perception of the proponents of preaching, the sacramental powers of Scripture were *expanding*, because scriptural words could largely (if not entirely) perform the functions attributed to the consecrated bread and wine. Moreover, as we have seen, the power of such logic is that it foregrounds the degree to which the psychological and emotional presence of Christ, vested in the bread and wine and other visible objects, had always derived from a body of symbolism ultimately rooted in the content of Holy Scripture; this is reflected in the very tropes of medieval eucharistic devotion, which are not only scriptural but whose earliest uses occur in monastic *lectio divina* – 'taste and see that the Lord is sweet', 'he fills

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<sup>84</sup> See Heather Phillips, 'John Wyclif's *De Eucharistia* in its Medieval Setting' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, 1980), pp. 286-287, on the idea that Christ's presence in the Eucharist through an understanding of the bread and wine as signs, rather than a physical transformation, could be only a 'ghostly' presence. Phillips's ideas are discussed further in Ch. 2, of this thesis, pp. 53, 57.

<sup>85</sup> As Stock comments in *Implications of Literacy*, pp. 90-91, the uses of literacy by heretics, and the quest by medieval religious reformers for 'a textual basis for relics, the cults of saints, and liturgical practice', meant that 'physical symbolism [...] was debased, and along with it all verbalistic, formalistic or purely ceremonial traditions. A new sort of symbolism took their place, one which, as Augustine so aptly put it, distinguished between the *sacramentum* and the *res sacramenti*'.

thee with the fat of the grain’, ‘Christ, the Book of Life’.<sup>86</sup> Precisely because Scripture already performed these functions, one may argue, the desire to clarify the relationship between preaching and the Church’s ‘seven sacraments’ was destined to be what Jean Leclercq terms a *problème ecclésiologique*.<sup>87</sup> One may also see the same logic and challenges to the traditions of the Church in the broader expanding conception of the ‘force of language’ [*virtus sermonis*] in this period, as thinkers and writers increasingly privileged to words those powers of ‘essential access’ – to divinity, to the past, to other human selves – which had underpinned the importance of non-verbal symbols in English religion.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> See G.R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England: A Neglected Chapter in the History of English Letters & Of The English People*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), p. 526, which argues that ‘preachers [...] were the pioneers of the Great Return to Human Nature in literature’, and an important influence on the realistic depiction of human nature in medieval drama. The text ‘O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet’, while associated with the medieval Mass, was, as Benedicta Ward has observed, ‘applied more often to the reading of the scriptures than the Eucharist before the twelfth century’. See ‘Introduction’, in *The Prayers and Meditations of St. Anselm*, ed. by Benedicta Ward (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), pp. 27-86 (pp. 44). Similarly, Caroline Walker Bynum comments in *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, p. 94, that ‘the locus classicus of metaphors of tasting and devouring was Bernard of Clairvaux’s commentary on the Song of Songs’. We have seen St. Jerome use the scriptural trope of feeding with the ‘fat of the grain’ (found in Ps. 147.14 and Ps. 80.17) in his equation of Scripture with the flesh of Christ (see above, p. 7). The same trope forms part of the Offices of the Feast of Corpus Christi, the major medieval cultural celebration of Christ’s physical presence in the Mass. See C. Lambot, ‘L’Office de la fête-Dieu. Aperçus nouveaux sur ses origines’, *Revue Bénédictine*, 54 (1942), 61-123 (p. 96).

<sup>87</sup> Leclercq, ‘Le magistère’, p. 108, comments on the ‘organisme très hiérarchisé de la chrétienté médiévale, où les fonctions étaient si nettement définies’ [the very hierarchically-ordered organism of medieval Christianity, in which functions were so clearly defined].

<sup>88</sup> Uses of the terms *vis* and *virtus sermonis* in the period are themselves strongly suggestive of this process. In the thirteenth century, it was increasingly used to denote the power of words to transmit their authors’ intended meaning (see, for example, William J. Courtenay, ‘Force of Words and Figures of Speech: The Crisis over *Virtus sermonis* in the Fourteenth century’, in *Ockham and Ockhamism: Studies in the Dissemination and Impact of his Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 209-228). But *virtus sermonis* also denoted the ‘force’ by which Christ’s words of consecration made him present in the bread and wine (through a physical transformation, according to the doctrine of transubstantiation). As a fifteenth-century lyric puts it, ‘Heretikes wonder [...] How God is put in the Holy Host [...] It is non other certesly / But *virtus verbi Domini*’ (‘What is this Why?’, in *The Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse*, ed. by Celia and Kenneth Sisam (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 478-9, ll. 26-27, 7-8). It is precisely the part ascription of the eucharistic presence to the *virtus* of Christ’s preached words that we have seen in Grosseteste and shall see taken to an extreme by Wyclif (see Ch. 2 of this thesis). This term ‘essential access’ is drawn from Kantik Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and the Interpretation of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 185. For more on the late-medieval ecclesiological crisis fomented by such understandings of language, see Ch. 5 of this thesis, p. 161.

### Christ Crucified: A Late Medieval ‘Scripture’

Underpinning these developments, above all, was the process by which the words of Scripture were directly appropriating the eucharistic functions of the bread and wine (and of its existing non-verbal substitutes) through their diffusion among the laity. This effectively constituted, as we shall see, a new stage in the medieval Eucharist. Nonetheless, throughout the later Middle Ages, the most tangible sign of this expansion was less clearly the diffusion of Scripture, narrowly defined, than that of the flourishing culture of literary representations of Christ crucified. This expansion and its tensions with the Mass are already evident in the writings that appeared from the thirteenth century onwards, calling for the laity being educated in the ‘reading’ of (nominally physical) images of Christ. As the fabulist Odo of Cheriton writes:

Like a sheet on which is written an ‘abc’, the instruction of little ones [*doctrina paruulorum*] cast upon a post with four nails, so the flesh or hide of Christ was stretched upon the cross [...] this ‘abc’ is rubricated with the vermilion of his own blood so that it might open up Holy Scripture, that it might illustrate the hearts of all sinners with dark-red illuminated letters, of which the five wounds are like five vowels, sounding on their own for our sakes to the Father. The remaining circumstances [of Christ’s crucifixion] are the con-sonants.<sup>89</sup>

Odo’s evocation of Christ’s wounds as letters, of his body as parchment, remain central metaphors for a range of literary depictions of Christ that appear in the fourteenth century, such as those in the Charter of Christ tradition (considered in Chapter Four).<sup>90</sup> However, while such imagery purposefully invites parallels with Christ’s body in the Mass, Odo’s text

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<sup>89</sup> Odo of Cheriton, *Sermones dominicales*, Cambridge University Library, MS Peterhouse College 109, fol. 163v, qtd. in Spencer, *English Preaching*, p. 417, note to p. 140, fn. 23: “Sicut enim carta in qua scribitur abecedarium, doctrina paruulorum, quatuor clavis affligitur in poste, sic caro Christi uel pellis extensa est in cruce [...] Hoc abecedarium est uermiculo proprii sanguinis rubricatum ut sacram scripturam aperiret, ut corda omnium peccatorum illustraret purpureis litteris illuminatum, cuius v. uulnera quasi quinque uocales pro nobis ad patrem per se sonant. Cetera circumstantes sunt consonantes”. Please note that I have taken from Spencer’s own translation of this passage (p. 140) the translation of *uermiculus* as ‘vermilion’, and of *consonantes* as ‘con-sonants’. I have independently consulted this manuscript but for ease of reference draw citations from Spencer’s transcription.

<sup>90</sup> See Ch. 4, pp. 143-150.

makes explicit the more important reason why the authors of these writings promoted the ‘reading’ of Christ crucified amongst the laity: namely, that the ‘Scripture’ of the image could perform the functions claimed for Scripture, more narrowly defined; indeed, they arguably aspired to contribute to the Church-sponsored dissemination of Scripture through preaching, from the thirteenth century onwards, that we have just considered. As Helen Spencer’s work has shown, the core of Odo’s argument is that the ‘letters’ and ‘consonants’ of Christ’s body make accessible to the laity the *sensus* of the books bequeathed by Christ, not merely those of ‘conscience’ and ‘suffering’ but also of the *liber sciencie* of the learned (the Bible), and thereby the entire gamut of scholarly knowledge.<sup>91</sup> This is why, Odo says, Christ on the Cross is called the ‘book of life’.<sup>92</sup>

Moreover, these claims for the ‘scriptural’ role of the image of Christ crucified extended to the same sacramental powers that underpinned the desire to rank the preaching of Scripture (narrowly defined) above the reception of the bread and wine: Odo asserts, in an even more striking parallel, that the Cross of Christ thereby presents to its beholders, learned and unlearned, ‘the Son of God as abbreviated Word’ [*Dei filius uerbum abreuiatum*].<sup>93</sup> Although echoing the mystical belief that the depiction of Christ crucified could act as a

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<sup>91</sup> MS Peterhouse 109, fol. 163v, qtd. in Spencer, *English Preaching*, pp. 417-418, fn. 25: ‘In hoc libro didicerunt apostoli gramaticam recte scribendi sine barbarismo erroris [...] Dialecticam qua sapientes huius mundi confutauerunt. Reticam et leges quibus Romanum imperium adquisierunt [...] Musicam [...] Geometriam [...] Astronomiam qua celestia inquisierunt [...]’ [In this book [of Christ Crucified], the apostles learned the art of writing correctly without barbarism of error [...] the logic whereby they silenced the wise of this world, the rhetoric and laws whereby they gained the Roman Empire [...] music [...] geometry [...] astronomy whereby they examined heavenly matters’. I have drawn from Spencer’s translation (p. 141) the glossing of *gramaticam* as ‘art’: Odo of Cheriton, MS Peterhouse 109, fol. 162v-163v, qtd. in Spencer, *English Preaching*, p. 417, fn. 21: ‘Dominus quadruplicem librum nobis exposuit legendum: sciencie, consciencie, miserie [...] Liber quartus est Dei filius uerbum abreuiatum qui tam paruis quam magnis ut legere possint exponitur’ [The Lord opened up a fourfold book for us to read: of knowledge, of conscience, of suffering [...] the fourth book is the son of God as abbreviated word, set forth for the humble as much as for the great, so that they might read it]. See Spencer, *English Preaching*, pp. 139-141, including p. 139 on the *liber sciencie* as the Bible and p. 141 on her observation that Odo evokes Christ’s crucifixion as ‘an epitome of both Testaments [...] If the Bible contains all essential Christian knowledge, it follows that the Bible and crucifixion must both contain [...] the entire education syllabus formed by the Seven Liberal Arts [...] meditation on the passion is synonymous with reading and hearing God’s word in scripture (certainly an adequate substitute for it)’.

<sup>92</sup> MS Peterhouse 109, fol. 163v, qtd. in Spencer, *English Preaching*, p. 418, fn. 25: ‘Et sicut Christus passus dicitur liber uite’.

<sup>93</sup> MS Peterhouse 109, fol. 163v, quoted above, fn. 91.

vehicle for his presence through vision, Odo thereby emphasizes that one receives Christ's true (if partial or 'abbreviated') presence by reading its 'Scripture', just as for Grosseteste, the listener to the preached word received the 'word that is Christ' [*verbum Christum*]. As such, it anticipates the apparent perception of evangelists like Wyclif that much of the 'presence' vested in such images derived from a content that was at root scriptural; this is the clearest reason why, as we shall see, they use tropes from this tradition as metaphors for Christ's presence in Scripture (comparing parchment to Christ's crucified flesh, for example), even while excluding the image itself from their definition of Scripture.<sup>94</sup>

In the burgeoning literary evocations of this expanded 'Scripture' in the fourteenth century, moreover, one may see a distinctive experiment in disseminating Christ directly through words (whether heard or read), rather than physical images, whose sacramental aims anticipate the most radical claims of Wyclif and his followers for scriptural dissemination, and whose own challenge to the bread and wine is hidden only by the association of its imagery with the Mass itself. When authors such as the Benedictine John Whiterig aim to make their readers 'partakers of Christ's blood', this is less clearly by teaching them to efficaciously receive the bread and wine in the Mass, or teaching them to read Christ's body carved on a rood, than by directly evoking the body within the text itself.<sup>95</sup> By constructing 'themselves as equivalents of Christ's humanity', as Nicholas Watson has put it, this is also the *sacramentum* that a range of fourteenth-century vernacular meditations sought to make

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<sup>94</sup> See Ch. 2, pp. 48, 51.

<sup>95</sup> See, for example Whiterig, *Meditacio ad Crucifixum*, Cap. 21, p. 172: 'peto, Ihesu bone, per uirtutes omnipotentissimas indiuidue Trinitate, per carnem quam de intacta assumpsisti Virgine [...] ut quicumque deuote hanc tibi curauerit persoluere meditationem [...] particeps fiat Domine illius sanguinis' [I desire, good Jesus, through the powers of the indivisible Trinity, through the flesh which you assumed of the untouched Virgin [...] that whoever shall devoutly undertake to discharge this meditation to you [...] may become a partaker of that blood]. The observation that devotional texts claim to enact Christ's body through their writings has been made, with reference to late-medieval vernacular religious literature, in Nicholas Watson, 'Conceptions of the Word: The Mother Tongue and the Incarnation of God', in *New Medieval Literatures*, Vol. 1, ed. by Rita Copeland (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 85-124. However, more work remains to be done on the older tradition to which such writings belong, as witnessed by Whiterig's *Meditacio*.

accessible to a (theoretically) far broader lay audience.<sup>96</sup> Equally foreshadowing the challenge of late fourteenth-century Wycliffite scripturalism, as Emily Steiner's work on the Charters has highlighted, is how such writings thereby aspired to use Christ's body, evoked in words, to create what Stock has termed a 'textual community'; like monastic uses of Scripture, they aimed to achieve the other core function of the Mass, as a 'sacrament of unity', knitting their audience into the mystical body of Christ, although on a far greater and thus more challenging scale than in monasticism.<sup>97</sup>

The challenge of these uses of 'Scripture' to the Mass is also underscored by the sacerdotal status claimed by those who disseminated it, such as Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), a lay-religious woman attached to the Dominican order. As she wrote, one Easter, to a male Dominican, on drinking Christ's blood at 'the altar [*mensa*] of the undefiled lamb':

This is a gouged altar, full of veins from which blood springs [...] amongst these runs a channel which gushes blood and water [...] to the eye which rests upon this channel is shown the secret of his heart [...] let us run with readiness to this altar! And when he has drunk well, he spews it over the heads of his brothers [...]<sup>98</sup>

Ann Astell has, with some justice, seen in such passages proof that for Catherine, 'receiving the Eucharist is taking the very Word of God and his Truth into her mouth, that she might preach the Good News to others, uniting them in the one truth and one Bread'.<sup>99</sup> It is vital that Catherine's description of ingesting and transmitting Christ does recall reception of the bread and wine of the Mass, and thus the belief that in 'receiving the Eucharist, one partakes

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<sup>96</sup> Watson, 'Conceptions of the Word', p. 110-11, and in general pp. 101-122, discussing several such vernacular texts (see also Ch. 4 of this thesis, p. 113). Yet while highlighting the striking claims of such writings, such as to bring 'immediate access to God', and their eucharistic associations, Watson roots them within a tradition 'largely distinct' from that of Wycliffism (problematically, as we shall further see in Ch. 4).

<sup>97</sup> On Brian Stock's conception of the 'textual community' and discussion of its relevance to monasticism, see above, p. 9, fn. 31. Steiner's work on the Charters of Christ is discussed in Ch. 4 of this thesis, pp. 148-151.

<sup>98</sup> Catherine of Siena, 'VI. A frate Bartolomeo Dominici', in *Epistolario di Santa Caterina di Siena*, ed. by Eugenio Dupre Theseider (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano, 1940), pp. 30-33 (pp. 30/12 – 32/2): 'alla mensa dell'agnello immacolato [...] Questa è una mensa forata, piena di vene che germinano sangue [...] tra gli altri v'è uno canale che gitta sangue e acqua [...] l'occhio che si riposa in su questo canale, gli à manifestato el segreto del cuore [...] corriamo con sollecitudine a questa mensa! [...] E quando egli à bene beiuato, egli el gitta sopra el capo de' fratelli suoi'.

<sup>99</sup> Astell, *Eating Beauty*, p. 167.

in Christ's own soul'.<sup>100</sup> Nonetheless, such eucharistic language both obscures and conveys more radical claims, which would otherwise be potentially heretical for the non-ordained, especially a woman. Firstly, Catherine authorizes the one who thus spews forth not only as a preacher of Christ's Word but also as a distributor of Christ himself. Moreover, the *mensa* from which Catherine drinks Christ's blood is, in fact, far less clearly the Mass-altar than the image of Christ's wounded body on the cross. Associated as they are with *lectio*, the tropes of ingestion and vomiting themselves suggest that it is 'Scripture', rather than the bread and wine, which is also practically, for Catherine, the source of Christ. Her dissemination of Christ is thus at root a translation of 'Scripture' from the visual medium of the Cross into spoken words, a process which, in all but appearance, both competes with and effectively bypasses the activities of the Mass Priest.<sup>101</sup>

### **1.3. The Shifting Limits of Scripture, 1370-1430**

The writings just considered highlight the increasingly central role played by 'Scripture' in the function of the medieval Eucharist by the late fourteenth century, albeit hidden by the cult of devotion to Christ's unique physical presence in the Mass. A great deal of scholarship considered in this thesis on the period's burgeoning religious literature already bears witness to the sacramental functions of 'Scripture'.<sup>102</sup> The significant intervention of this thesis lies in exposing the degree to which the evolving eucharistic function of 'Scripture', as we have just outlined it, motivated this writing. The genres of

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<sup>100</sup> Astell, *Eating Beauty*, p. 148. See above, p. 3, on the idea of the presence of the 'whole Christ' [*totum Christum*] beneath the appearance of the consecrated bread and wine.

<sup>101</sup> See Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 'In Psalmum CXLIV', Sec. 8 (*PL* 37.1874) 'Memoriam abundantiae suavitatis tuae eructabunt [...] Manducas, cum discis; eructas, cum doces; manducas, cum audis; eructas, cum praedicas' [They shall belch forth the memory of your abundant sweetness [...] you eat when you learn; you belch forth when you teach; you eat when you hear; you belch forth when you preach].

<sup>102</sup> This scholarship includes, as we shall see, that of Anne Hudson, Mishtooni Bose and Kantik Ghosh on Wyclif, Wycliffite culture and its orthodox opponents, Maarten Hoenen and Alastair Minnis on late-medieval scriptural hermeneutics, Vincent Gillespie on uses of *lectio domini*, Helen Spencer and Siegfried Wenzel on the English preaching tradition, Nicholas Watson on vernacular meditations upon Christ and on censorship, and the work of Emily Steiner on the Charters of Christ.

which Middle English writing largely consists (from evangelical preaching through to literary devotions to Christ crucified) are precisely those which, as we have seen, were already integral to the definition of ‘Scripture’ and whose uses were already displacing the role of older, non-verbal symbolism in medieval religion. In particular, this thesis shows how their increased diffusion amongst the laity, in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, tangibly expanded the eucharistic function of ‘Scripture’ to a critical point, creating direct challenges to the Mass which contributed to the Church’s restriction of lay uses of ‘Scripture’ over the same period. It therefore focusses on the chief forum in which these tensions were expressed: the writings of the English polymath, theologian and heretic John Wyclif (1328-1384), their interpretation by his followers and rebuttal by his orthodox opponents.

In Chapter Two, I will examine Wyclif’s assertion, made as early as the 1370s, that Holy Scripture was in no way constituted by its physical signs, but was rather a transcendent entity equivalent to Christ, the Book of Life.<sup>103</sup> Wyclif saw this equivalence at the heart of what he called the *limites Scripturae*, a phrase significantly lacking clear precedents before Wyclif himself, which he used to denote the boundaries of Scripture’s authority and power as established by God. The apparent novelty of the idea of *limites Scripturae* fits with the contention of hostile contemporaries (and some important twentieth-century critics) that Wyclif’s transcendent Scripture was itself the novel product of an extreme Platonism, as was his seeming rejection of a range of the *limites*, from the metaphysical to the ecclesiological – which other late-medieval thinkers held that God had appointed to govern the universe.<sup>104</sup>

However, as this chapter shows, Wyclif’s identification of Scripture with Christ and the terms in which he describes it – as the Book of Life, as a quasi-Incarnation, indeed as an

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<sup>103</sup> Wyclif makes this assertion in his major work on scriptural hermeneutics, *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae* (‘On the Truth of Holy Scripture’), whose composition may date to the late 1370s, and similar ideas may be found in earlier works such as *De Benedicta Incarnacione*, although the dating of Wyclif’s work and thus of his ideas, as Anne Hudson has shown, is inherently problematic. See Ch. 2, p. 37, fn. 112.

<sup>104</sup> On Wyclif’s *limites Scripturae* and other medieval understandings of *limites*, see Ch. 2, p. 38.

icon – points to the origin of his ideas and goals in the medieval tradition of preaching that we have outlined; the hostility of Wyclif’s opponents, while professedly rooted in philosophy, arguably reflects their alarm at the perceived dangers that his idiosyncratic development of such ideas posed to the Church. This threat becomes clear, at the start of the 1380s, when Wyclif’s writings on the Eucharist expressed the opinion that would cement his status as a heretic: that Christ’s body was solely yet truly present in the consecrated bread and wine through a symbolic transformation, which left their physical substance unchanged. Wyclif’s opponents primarily attacked this argument, refuting as it did the doctrine of transubstantiation, as an affront to faith in Christ’s physical presence in the Eucharist. Indeed, the core problem with Wyclif’s argument is that, even while defending the unique signifying power of the eucharistic sign to make Christ present, he is unable to distinguish that power from the qualities he ascribes to scriptural figures more broadly. Nonetheless, this is less important for signalling Wyclif’s collapsing belief in Christ’s unique presence in the bread and wine than the most significant development in his understanding of the sacramental power of Scripture: namely, that in Scripture, as Christ, lies the source of the powers that the Church vested in its visible rites. The consequences of this idea for the Church are most vividly imagined in Wyclif’s late Latin sermons, which use the miracle of the loaves and fish (Jn. 6) to prophesy an England in which the Mass dwindles to little more than a memorial rite, or may be done away with as an institution altogether, since preaching appropriates its core functions: of causing Christ to dwell in the worshipper, and the worshipper to be in Christ, in heaven and in the Church on earth.

As Chapter Three shows, the late fourteenth-century *English Wycliffite Sermons* seek to turn Wyclif’s little-charted vision for the role of preaching into reality.<sup>105</sup> Broadly adapting Wyclif’s Latin sermons for a lay audience, these also cast the preached word as a substitute for the Mass by appropriating a range of tropes with an overwhelmingly

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<sup>105</sup> On dating, see Ch. 3, p. 84, fn. 283.

eucharistic resonance: above all Christ's command to eat His flesh and blood in Jn. 6. The direct influence of Wyclif's theology of preaching on his followers provides a credible rationale for what scholars such as Margaret Aston have suspected to be the *de facto* function of preaching as the sole rite of the Wycliffite movement, a function that is also suggested by the prevalence of similar arguments throughout the Wycliffite literature of the period.<sup>106</sup> Yet, as the impassioned defence of the Mass in the Wycliffite tract *De oblatione iugis sacrificii* suggests, this substitution may also have been a major source of the disunities in the Wycliffite movement to which scholarly attention has increasingly turned, challenging the impression of a monolithic identity projected in its writings. As texts such as *De oblatione* suggest, a fundamental challenge was that such a rejection of the Eucharist validated the charges of heresy made against Wycliffism by its orthodox opponents.

Nonetheless, as Chapter Four explores, the Wycliffite idea of preaching as sacrament is most significant for illuminating tensions already central to the broader late-medieval religious culture. This may be seen in the prevalence in the period of statements privileging the hearing of the preached word of Scripture over attendance at the Mass. While often considered by scholars as markers of Wycliffite affiliation,<sup>107</sup> not only do such assertions have a long orthodox history, as we have shown, but some of the most provocative examples, identifying Christ's presence primarily with Scripture, also occur in texts that clearly cannot be considered Wycliffite. This suggests that the tensions often considered most distinctive of Wycliffism are in fact integral to a far broader conception of preaching in the period. Specifically, many texts labeled 'Wycliffite' plausibly belong to a vernacular preaching tradition, related but not equivalent to Wycliffism, rooted in the existing medieval theologies of preaching we have discussed. Whilst also promoting the conception of preaching as a sacrament, adherents to this wider reformist movement (in contrast to

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<sup>106</sup> See Ch. 3, p. 103.

<sup>107</sup> Among these, for example, are the opinions of Gloria Cigman and Shannon Gayk, discussed in Ch. 4, pp. 116, 129.

Wycliffites) stopped short of pushing its ideas so far as to undermine the Church's existing sacramental system; the supposed 'Wycliffism' of this movement is a retrospective illusion and reflects Wycliffism's success at highlighting the dangers to the Church always latent in this tradition. However, this chapter concludes that the dialogue with Wycliffite ideas about the sacramental power of Scripture is most extensive in the very writings whose authors most aimed to limit lay appetites for Scripture, by offering an alternative literature of devotions to Christ crucified. Texts such as the devotional miscellany *Pore Caitif* do not straightforwardly disagree with the Wycliffite identification of Christ with Scripture, as at first glance they seem to. On the contrary, by foregrounding the role of Christ's crucified body as 'Scripture' in the broadest medieval sense (that Wycliffites had sought to restrict to biblical words), writings like *Pore Caitif* justify their use as alternatives because, they insist, the 'Scripture' of Christ's body, disseminated in its meditations, is better able to mediate the whole Christ to its readers.

The uncovering of this dialogue between Wycliffite and non-Wycliffite writers about 'Scripture' between c. 1380-1410 highlights a major contention of this thesis: that what appear to be Wycliffism's most distinctive ideas about Scripture in fact illustrate the developing uses of 'Scripture' in its widest sense, from evangelical preaching to devotions to Christ crucified, in late-medieval England. Particularly, they indicate that the diffusion of this 'Scripture' in words was, on a much broader scale than Wycliffism, appropriating the functions of the Mass and its established system of symbols. While, as we have argued, the medieval Eucharist was already largely constituted by 'Scripture' of a visual kind, Wycliffism's great threat to the belief in Christ's physical presence in the Mass, and to the Church's sacramental system more broadly, lay in its power to develop and deepen an already-growing consciousness among the laity of this broader appropriation.

The perceived seriousness of such a threat may help to explain a corresponding discouragement of sophisticated religious symbolism amongst the laity in the early fifteenth

century, as witnessed in Archbishop Arundel's *Constitutions*.<sup>108</sup> Nonetheless, as the concluding fifth chapter of this thesis considers, the continuing centrality of this 'Scripture' to English religion is suggested by the writings of one of Wyclif's fiercest critics, the *Doctrinale antiquitatum fidei catholicae ecclesiae* of the Carmelite Thomas Netter (d. 1430). In Netter's defence of the Church's sacraments, he refutes Wyclif's conception of Scripture *ad absurdum*: this conforms to Netter's apparent support for restricting the uses of Scripture among the laity to the most elementary level. Nonetheless, Netter then mirrors that same scriptural conception, with great precision, in his argument that images (especially of Christ) are necessary to popular religion since they are signs which connect the worshipper to the divine, above all during the Mass. Thus, one may see that Netter agrees with Wyclif, and with the other authors considered in this thesis, about the indispensability of 'Scripture' to popular religion. However, what makes this evidence of the ongoing importance of 'Scripture' so significant is that it so is both so thoroughly obscured in the *Doctrinale* itself, and missing from influential historical accounts of fifteenth-century religion.<sup>109</sup> This occlusion reflects, arguably, the most important change in the function of 'Scripture' between the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, reflecting the Church's ultimate solution, promoted by the *Doctrinale*, to the problems raised by Wycliffism. This involved the repression of sophisticated awareness of the function and intellectual tradition of 'Scripture', thereby allowing that function to continue without challenging the Mass. The success of this solution may be measured, not least, in the relative dearth of historical accounts of the eucharistic function of 'Scripture' in medieval culture, which has permitted the intervention of this thesis. Crucially, this repression allowed the function of 'Scripture' to continue displacing that of the older symbols of the Eucharist, as manifested in the period's blossoming Christocentric culture. As this thesis concludes, it is the occluded yet

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<sup>108</sup> Arundel's *Constitutions* of 1407-09 are discussed in Ch. 5 of this thesis, p. 176, fn. 652.

<sup>109</sup> See, for example, the positions of Eamon Duffy, David Aers and Nicholas Watson, discussed in Ch. 5, p. 199.

increasingly central role of 'Scripture' which also helps to explain why the same tensions which had racked the later fourteenth century re-emerged with such virulence, but as if newborn, in the Reformation of the sixteenth, and indeed why a religion based on Scripture came to supplant one of images with such apparent rapidity.

## **2. John Wyclif and the Shifting Limits of Scripture**

‘For [preaching] is better for the faithful than the pretense of Antichrist [...] that he has the power to create or alter the sacraments of the Church’ – Wyclif, Sermon on Mt. 10.5: ‘Jesus sent these twelve’.<sup>110</sup>

‘I praise God who has freed me from that scandalous and ridiculous error concerning the essence [*quidditas*] of this sacrament’ – Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*.<sup>111</sup>

### **The Shock of The Old: Wyclif Opens The Book of Life**

This chapter charts the major shift in the function of Scripture in late-medieval religion as imagined by the late fourteenth-century English theologian John Wyclif. Wyclif’s ideas thereby witness his development of a cardinal feature of later medieval thought charted in the Introduction – an expanding awareness of the mediatory powers that belonged to words, spoken and written – whose broader implications for the religion of Wyclif’s period will occupy this thesis.

As we shall see, one recurrent group of scripturally-rooted tropes in Wyclif’s writings particularly expresses this shift; by Wyclif’s own account they are the source of his defining insight as a scriptural exegete. As Wyclif relates in his major work on scriptural hermeneutics, possibly composed in the late 1370s, *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae* (On the Truth of Holy Scripture):

When I used to speak as a child, I was anxiously embroiled with trying to understand and defend those Scriptures according to their literal meaning [*de virtute sermonis*], since it was patent that they were not authenticated by their animal skins. At length the

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<sup>110</sup> John Wyclif, *Iohannis Wyclif: sermones*, ed. by Johann Loserth, 4 vols., Wyclif Society (London: Trübner & Co., 1887-1890), II, Sermon LVII, p. 420, ll. 16-22: ‘Et istud est melius fideli quam ficcio Antichristi [...] quod habet potestatem condendi et variandi ecclesiastica sacramenta’. This edition of Wyclif’s Latin Sermons is hereafter referred to as *LS*. References are to volume, sermon, page and line number.

<sup>111</sup> John Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, in *De Eucharistia tractatus maior: accedit tractatus de Eucharistia et Poenitentia sive de Confessione*, ed. by Johann Loserth, Wyclif Society (London: Trübner & Co., 1892), pp. 1-326 (Ch. VII, p. 199, ll. 6-8): ‘laudo Deum qui me liberavit ab isto scandaloso et derisibili errore de quidditate huius sacramenti’. Hereafter referred to as *De Eucharistia*. See also the citation of this text in Margaret Aston, *Faith and Fire: Popular and Unpopular Religion, 1350-1600* (London / Rio Grande, Ohio: Hambledon Press, 1993), p. 27.

Lord in his grace uncovered to me the sense of understanding the aforesaid equivocation of ‘Scripture’.<sup>112</sup>

Wyclif’s revelation, resolving at a stroke this youthful struggle, was that ‘Scripture’, far from being the words written in physical manuscripts, signified a transcendent and eternal entity, identical to Christ Himself, which was mediated to human understanding through a series of descending levels [*gradus*]. In Wyclif’s simplest articulation of this hierarchical Scripture which is Christ, it has a middle stage comprising ‘the truths inscribed in the Book of Life’;<sup>113</sup> its lowest level are these truths imprinted in ‘the Book of the natural man, that is his soul’. While allowing that manuscripts may be termed ‘Scripture’ when taken as a composite with ‘the truth imposed on them by God’, Wyclif had thereby come to understand that they are not Holy Scripture *per se* in any but a most equivocal [*equivoce*] sense.<sup>114</sup>

Wyclif himself will assert throughout his writings that such an understanding accorded with the Limits of Scripture [*limites Scripturae*]: a term, very possibly devised by Wyclif

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<sup>112</sup> John Wyclif, *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, ed. by Rudolf Buddenseig, 3 vols. (Wyclif Society. London: Trübner & Co., 1905-1907), Vol. I, p. 114, ll. 1-6: ‘quando loquebar ut parvulus, fui anxie intricatus ad intelligendum ac defendendum istas scripturas de virtute sermonis, cum manifestum sit, quod non verificantur de pellibus bestiarum, et demum dominus ex gracia sua aperuit michi sensum ad intelligendum equivocacionem predictam scripture’. This edition of *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae* is hereafter referred to as *De Veritate*. As regards dating, W.R. Thomson, *The Latin Writings of John Wyclif: An Annotated Catalog* (Toronto: PIMS, 1983), pp. 55-56, places its likely date of composition between late 1377 and the end of 1378. On the problems of dating Wyclif’s work in general, however, see Anne Hudson, ‘Cross-Referencing in Wyclif’s Latin Works’, in *Studies in the Transmission of Wyclif’s Writings*, Variorum Collected Studies Series (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), item IV. As she comments, p. 215, extensive evidence of revision of Wyclif’s work, by himself or his followers, means that ‘dating any of Wyclif’s texts is even more hazardous than has hitherto been apprehended’. Relatedly, for the problem this poses in using Wyclif’s writings to establish a chronology to his ideas, see in general Hudson, ‘The Development of Wyclif’s *Summae theologie*’, in *Studies in the Transmission of Wyclif’s Writings*, item V, esp. p. 68, quoted below in this chapter, p. 65, fn. 220.

<sup>113</sup> John Wyclif, *Triologus: cum supplemento Trialogi*, ed. by G. Lechler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869), Bk. 3, Ch. 31, p. 238: ‘Secundo modo signat veritates in ipso libro vitae inscriptas’.

<sup>114</sup> Wyclif, *De Veritate* I, 108/11-12: ‘scriptura [...] inscribitur libro hominis naturalis ut anima’. Wyclif, *Triologus*, III, 31.239: ‘Et tertio modo famosius quo ad vulgus signat aggregatum ex codicibus legis Dei et ex veritate quam Deus ipsis imponit: sed hoc nudum scriptum materiale non didici vocare scripturam sacram, quia illi codices non sunt sacri, nisi illis assit sententia sacra’ [And in the third fashion, more famously, by which [Scripture] signifies to the common man the composite of the codices of God’s Law and the truth which God imposes upon them: but I have not learnt to call this bare physical writing Holy Scripture, since those codices are not holy unless sacred meaning is present in them]. *De Veritate* I, 114/12-14: ‘unde codex dicitur liber secundum equivocacionem analogam ad librum vite’ [whence the codex is called a ‘book’ on account of its equivocal analogy to the Book of Life]. See also Ian Christopher Levy, *John Wyclif: Scriptural Logic, Real Presence, and the Parameters of Orthodoxy* (Marquette: Marquette University Press, 2003), pp. 83-87 on Wyclif’s hierarchical conception of Scripture.

himself, by which he denoted the meanings and potentialities divinely vested in Scripture, as revealed to him through reading Scripture itself and confirmed in its exegesis by the Church Fathers;<sup>115</sup> also a central feature of Scripture's power for Wyclif, as we shall see, was to reveal the broader array of *limites*, from the cosmic to the ecclesiological, by which medieval thinkers understood that God had ordered the universe.<sup>116</sup> Certainly, at first glance the component ideas of Wyclif's revelation appear not merely orthodox but indispensable to Christian belief. The seeming drama of his discernment beyond Scripture's apparent literal sense of its true, higher meaning conforms to classic Christian hermeneutic epiphanies such as that of St. Augustine, and to the fundamental aspiration of monastic biblical reading [*lectio divina*];<sup>117</sup> the notion of Scripture itself as a hierarchy reflects a prevalent medieval understanding of Creation as the least real level of an ineffable divine reality. Least questionable of all is the equivalence, in a certain way [*quodammodo*], of Scripture with Christ Himself: among the mysteries of a universe created through the Word.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> See, for example, Wyclif, *Opus Evangelicum*, I, Pt. 1, Ch. XXVI, p. 130, ll. 35-36: 'Necessarium ergo est viatoribus quod loquendo de peccatis teneant se in limitibus scripturarum' [it is necessary for wayfarers, in speaking of sins, to hold themselves within the limits of Scripture]. See also, for example, Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, V, 124/14-16; Wyclif, *LS II*, IV, 27/7-8; *LS II*, XII, 154/7-8; *LS IV*, XVII, 140/37. I have not encountered other uses of the term or close variants [*limites Scripturarum*, *verbi Dei* etc] dateable to before those of Wyclif himself. However, the term is employed by a fifteenth-century opponent of Wyclif and Wycliffism, the Carmelite Thomas Netter (see Ch. 5, p. 163 of this thesis). It later repeatedly re-occurs in sixteenth-century religious controversy. See, for example: Michel Servetus (d. 1553), *De Trinitatis erroribus libri septem* (Hagenau: 1531), fol. 81v, qtd. in Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, VII (1892), p. 713: 'Figmenta sunt imaginaria quae scripturae limites transgrediuntur' [Those things which exceed the bounds of Scripture are figments of the imagination].

<sup>116</sup> See, for example, Wyclif's own discussion of the 'limites nature' in *De Eucharistia*, VIII, 243/9-10. Its use to express the limits of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, for example of friars, is caught in the Middle English *limitour* and *limitacioun*; see Geoffrey Chaucer, 'Wife of Bath's Tale', in *The Riverside Chaucer: Third Edition*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, l. 866 (p. 116); l. 877 (p. 117).

<sup>117</sup> See Augustine, *Confessiones*, III.9, as qtd. in Wyclif, *De Veritate* I, 118/5-9: "'institui", inquit, "animum intendere in scripturas sanctas et videre, quales essent, et ecce, vidi rem non appertam superbis neque mundatam puris, sed incesso humilem successu excelsam et velatam misteriiis.'" [I decided, he says, to direct my thoughts to the Holy Scriptures and see what they might be and, behold, I saw a thing not open to the proud nor made pure to children, but at its entrance humble, within of great height and veiled with mysteries']. Please note that I am reading *puris* as *pueris*, in line with the manuscript variant noted by Loserth in the notes on *De Veritate* I, 118, and Augustine, *Confessiones*, III.9 (*PL* 32.686). St. Jerome, *Commentariorum in epistolam ad Galatas tres*, Bk. 1 (*PL* 26, 322B): 'Nec putemus in verbis Scripturarum esse Evangelium, sed in sensu: non in superficie, sed in medulla' [Nor should we think the Gospel to be in the words of the Scriptures, but in the sense; not in the exterior, but in the marrow].

<sup>118</sup> See Ch. 1, p. 8.

By contrast, commentators from the earliest stages of Wyclif's career onwards have tended to portray his transcendent Scripture, identical to Christ, the Book of Life as a radical departure from such *limites*. As the Oxford Carmelite John Kenningham (d. 1399) conceded in the first known extant reaction to this idea, probably from the early 1370s:

When he calls the truth of speech [in Scripture] 'Christ', who is the power of God and the Word of the Father [...] who would argue against that understanding, which raises no difficulty or cause for doubt? No heretic ever denied such a truth of Scripture.<sup>119</sup>

However, Kenningham complained, one should say that all scriptural statements are literally true because 'authenticated by Christ', rather than that they are 'true of Christ' Himself.<sup>120</sup> Nor did he recognize Scripture itself as 'eternal truths' but rather what had been written down 'by subsequent human "authors"'.<sup>121</sup> For the same reason, gesturing towards authorities such as Augustine, Kenningham argued that no Scripture should be considered more ancient than its human author, let alone eternal.<sup>122</sup>

Kenningham, furthermore, was only among the first of Wyclif's critics to focus on the centrality to his hermeneutics of key metaphysical ideas. By Wyclif's own account, scriptural study had revealed that the essence of all created things, as with Scripture itself, lay in transcendent ideas, timelessly existing in the mind of God; this truth was in turn supremely necessary to grasp the orthodox meaning of all scriptural language, such as its use

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<sup>119</sup> John Kenningham, 'Secunda determinatio Magistri Fratris Johannis Kynnyngham contra Wyclif de ampliacione temporis', in *Fasciculi zizaniorum Johannis Wyclif cum tritico*, ed. by W.W. Shirley (London: Longman, 1858), pp. 43-72 (p. 53): 'Veritatem autem sermonis vocat Christum, qui est Dei virtus et Verbum Patris [...] quis argueret contra istum sensum, qui nullam dubitationem vel difficultatem includit? Nullus haereticus talem veritatem Scripturae negavit'. *Fasciculi zizaniorum* is hereafter referred to as *FZ*. See J.A. Robson, *Wyclif and the Schools: The Relation of the 'Summa de ente' to Scholastic Debates at Oxford in the Later Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 163.

<sup>120</sup> Kenningham, 'Secunda determinatio' (*FZ*, p. 53) 'potius diceretur quod omnia illa sunt vera a virtute sermonis, quia verificantur a Christo, sed non sunt vera de Christo'.

<sup>121</sup> Levy, *Parameters of Orthodoxy*, p. 95, and generally see pp. 95-96, on the debate with Kenningham.

<sup>122</sup> Kenningham, 'Secunda determinatio' (*FZ*, p. 43): 'Nullam scriptum alicujus auctoris est [...] prius, vel antiquius eodem auctore' [no writing of a particular author is prior or more ancient than that same author]; (*FZ*, p. 44): 'sic arguitur. Eadem est antiquitas Scripturae sacrae et talium apocryphorum, scilicet aeternitas; sed causa quare ista scripta sint apocrypha est nimia antiquitas eorum, sicut patet per B. Augustinum' [He argues thus: the antiquity (that is, the eternity) of Holy Scripture and such apocrypha is the same. But the reason why those writings are apocryphal is their exceeding antiquity, just as St. Augustine makes clear].

of the verb ‘to be’.<sup>123</sup> Yet Kenningham sardonically professed to be unable even to find in Scripture this metaphysical ‘nest in the heavens’; ‘the high mountains’ which Wyclif had scaled are not ‘passable to me’.<sup>124</sup> On the contrary, Scripture’s use of ‘to be’ only makes sense if the existence of a thing is fundamentally different from the act of thinking about it, and if things do not exist in an eternal present but are concrete and particular.<sup>125</sup> Otherwise, a host of nonsenses, repellent to the faithful, would ensue:<sup>126</sup> long after the events themselves, ‘Paul will persecute the Church [...] Mary Magdalene will prostitute herself’;<sup>127</sup> indeed, Christ still hangs on the cross, sin is eternal; repentance, forgiveness and other Christian fundamentals are meaningless.<sup>128</sup>

Kenningham’s attack thereby illustrates a prevailing and significant assumption about Wyclif’s ‘emanation of the Supreme Being “transposed into writing”’:<sup>129</sup> that far from being the source, it was itself a novel by-product (along with the rest of his theological ideas) of an equally new and extreme form of Platonism, a narrative elaborated by Wyclif’s own late-medieval opponents and endorsed in some major scholarly accounts, such as those of

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<sup>123</sup> John Kenningham, ‘Acta magistri fratris Johannis Kenyngham Carmelitae contra ideas magistri Johannis Wyclif’, in *FZ*, pp. 14-42 (p. 14): ‘Tertius nidus et altissimus, ut dicit, est metaphysicus, quo cognoscimus aeternitatem Dei ex ejus immensitate coassistere omni tempori praeterito vel futuro, et per consequens omnia quae fuerunt vel erunt esse Deo praesentia’ [The third and highest nest, as he says, is metaphysical, by which we know the eternity of God, in his vastness, to be co-present in all time, past or future, and thus all things which had been or shall be for God the present]. As Levy comments, *Parameters of Orthodoxy*, p. 46: ‘Wyclif was convinced of the inexorable connection between realist metaphysics and theological orthodoxy’.

<sup>124</sup> Kenningham, ‘Acta’ (*FZ*, pp. 14-15): ‘Verumtamen, ut mihi videtur, Magister meus nidificat in excelsis [...] tertium vero nidum non quaero dirumpere, sed potius invenire [...]’.

<sup>125</sup> John Kenningham, ‘Ingressus fratris Iohannis Kynyngham Carmelitae contra Wiclyff’, in *FZ*, pp. 4-13 (p. 11): ‘iste terminus praesens dicitur equivoce [...] in ratione cognoscendi, et in ratione essendi’ [this present tense is uttered in an equivocal way [...] in terms of understanding and in terms of being].

<sup>126</sup> Kenningham, ‘Secunda determinatio’ (*FZ*, p. 64): ‘Scio quod si talia diceretur in conspectu ecclesiae, sic dicenti imputaretur error vel sophisma’ [I know that if such things were spoken in the gaze of the Church, to speak thus would be imputed error or sophism].

<sup>127</sup> Kenningham, ‘Secunda determinatio’ (*FZ*, p. 57): ‘Paulus prosequetur ecclesiam Dei [...] Magdalena prostituet se libidini’.

<sup>128</sup> Kenningham, ‘Secunda determinatio’ (*FZ*, p. 63): ‘Christus nunc pendet in cruce’; *FZ*, p. 61: ‘Nam quilibet adultus habens usum rationis tenetur ex lege divina non peccare mortaliter, et diligentiam adhibere quantum potest ne peccet, sed hoc in nullius est potestate postquam semel peccaverit, cum non magis possit non peccare quam non peccasse’ [For any adult having the use of reason is obliged by divine law not to sin mortally, and be diligent so far as he can not to sin, but this in nobody’s power when he has sinned once, since he is no more able not to sin than [he was] not to have sinned before].

<sup>129</sup> Robson, *Wyclif and the Schools*, p. 146.

Gordon Leff and J.H. Robson.<sup>130</sup> Undoubtedly, such attacks do accurately convey the fundamental estrangement of aspects of Wyclif's thought from its own period, narrowly, from the prevailing understanding of the physical as the 'real' espoused by nominalists such as Kenningham, who had been condemned by Wyclif as 'doctors of signs' [*doctores signorum*], blind to the realities which lay beyond;<sup>131</sup> broadly, as would become acutely clear during Wyclif's career, from a religious system predicated upon an ultimate particularity: the Incarnation of the Word in human flesh and blood, as believed to be physically eaten in the medieval Mass.

Nonetheless, broadly concurring with scholars from Maurice Keen to Ian Levy, we shall see that the very tropes used by Wyclif to describe his transcendent Scripture call such a genealogy into question. Rather, they show Wyclif to be invoking the expanded definition of Scripture outlined in the Introduction, already well developed in late-medieval thought and itself inflecting much older traditions.<sup>132</sup> The very idea of Scripture as a mental entity as distinct from the dead manuscripts, and as a hierarchy rooted in transcendent universals, is articulated by Robert Grosseteste (d. 1253), a seminal and pervasive authority in Wyclif's

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<sup>130</sup> See Gordon Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages: The Relation of Heterodoxy to Dissent, c. 1250-c. 1450*, 2 vols. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967), II, p. 515, who argues that Wyclif's understanding of Scripture confirmed 'beyond doubt the radical divergence' between his metaphysical 'conception and those of any other known scholastic'; Robson makes a similar argument in 'Wyclif and Ultrarealism', in *Wyclif and the Schools*, pp. 141-170. For a variant of this argument, which looks instead to the influence of Wyclif's interest in optics, see Phillips, 'Wyclif's *De Eucharistia* in its Medieval Setting', discussed below, p. 57, fn. 189. See also Ch. 5 of this thesis, pp. 156 and 167, on the similar attacks upon Wyclif by Kenningham's fellow Carmelite, Thomas Netter.

<sup>131</sup> See Robson, *Wyclif and the Schools*, p. 150, on Wyclif's objection to nominalist philosophers such as William of Ockham. On Wyclif's condemnation of '*doctores signorum*' see, for example, Wyclif, *Tractatus de Benedicta Incarnacione*, ed. by Edward Harris, Wyclif Society (London: Trübner & Co., 1886), Ch. X, p. 170, l. 26, and also p. 248. See Wyclif, *Tractatus De Universalibus*, ed. by Ivan J. Mueller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), Cap. X, p. 224, ll. 374-376: 'Et sic, quando fui minor involuebam ignoranter universalia sicut forte faciunt multi hodie, qui particulariter universalia detestantur' [And thus, when I was younger, in my ignorance I cloaked the truth about universals. So too, perhaps, many do today who particularly abhor universals]. I have drawn the translation of this passage from John Wyclif, *On Universals (Tractatus de universalibus)*, trans. by Anthony Kenny (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), Ch. 10, p. 99, ll. 374-377. This passage is also discussed in S.H. Thomson, 'The Philosophical Basis of Wyclif's Theology', *The Journal of Religion*, 11 (1931), 86-116 (p. 89).

<sup>132</sup> M.J.F.M. Hoenen, 'Theology and Metaphysics: The Debate between John Wyclif and John Kenningham on the Principles of Reading the Scriptures', in *John Wyclif: logica, politica, teologia*, ed. by Mariateresa Fumagalli, Beonio Brocchieri and Stefano Simonetta (Florence: Sismel, 2003), pp. 23-55 (p. 52), comments that: 'Wyclif defended opinions which were not new, but already had a long tradition'.

writings.<sup>133</sup> Wyclif also echoes Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), from whom he would strikingly diverge with respect to the Eucharist, but who had similarly emphasized divine intention over readerly reception as the determinant of scriptural meaning, and who also believed, as Maarten Hoenen has shown, in the ‘real presence’ of things in the mind of God.<sup>134</sup> Such assertions thus precede Wyclif’s own revelation that ‘Scripture’ was the merest echo in human language of an ‘unlimited Book / Book of books’ [*liber liberrimus*].<sup>135</sup>

Moreover, as scholars have also increasingly discerned, underpinning professedly philosophical attacks such as Kenningham’s were dawning anxieties about how, if it leaked beyond the *scholae*, such an expanded understanding of Scripture would alter its popular function, generating a host of challenges to the Church’s authority and traditions.<sup>136</sup> A core challenge, as Kantik Ghosh has charted, lies in the problematic extent to which the grasping

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<sup>133</sup> Grosseteste, *Dicta*, 19: ‘Excellencior enim est scriptura in mente viva quam in pelle mortua [...] Liber itaque iste mens est humana inscripta scripture sacre manente sciencia, in quo libro quasi inscripte dictiones singule sunt species specierum menti impressae’ [Scripture is more excellent in the living mind than on dead parchment [...] therefore that book is the human mind, inscribed with the abiding knowledge of Holy Scripture; in which book the individual inscribed statements are the images of images stamped on the mind]. I have drawn the translation of *species specierum* as ‘images of images’ from the rendering of this *Dictum* in *The Complete Dicta in English*, ed. and trans. Jackson, II, pp. 26-31 (p. 29). On the parallels between the thought of Grosseteste and Wyclif on universals, see Robson, *Wyclif and the Schools*, p. 148; Levy, *Parameters of Orthodoxy*, pp. 51-59.

<sup>134</sup> Aquinas, *ST Ia*, 1.10: ‘Quia vero sensus litteralis est quem auctor intendit, auctor autem sacrae Scripturae Deus est qui omnia simul suo intellectu comprehendit’ [Since the literal sense is that which the author intended, the author of Holy Scripture is God who comprehends all things at the same time in his intellect]. See the discussion of this passage and of Aquinas’s ‘intentionalism’ in Alastair Minnis, ‘“Authorial Intention” and “Literal Sense” in the Exegetical Theories of Richard Fitzralph and John Wyclif: An Essay in the Medieval History of Biblical Hermeneutics’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature*, 75 (1975), 1-31 (p. 21). On Aquinas’s understanding of Christ’s physical presence in the Mass, see Ch. 1, p. 3. Hoenen, ‘Theology and Metaphysics’, pp. 36-39.

<sup>135</sup> *De Veritate* I, 111/9-10.

<sup>136</sup> Hoenen, ‘Theology and Metaphysics’, p. 41, comments that ‘Kenningham thus set the tone for a critique on Wyclif that was not purely philosophical, but included the concern for a possible audience of non-specialists’. And Minnis, ‘Authorial Intention’, p. 17, comments on the ‘striking difference in sphere of reference between the high-level academic discussion of the theory of exegesis [...] and the practical exegesis found in more popular devotional works and sermons’. Similar complaints about the uncensored leakage of ideas into vernacular religion recur within attacks upon Wycliffism. See ‘Constitutiones Thomae Arundel’, in *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, ed. by David Wilkins, 4 vols. (London: R. Gosling, F. Gyles et al., 1737), III, pp. 314-319 (p. 315): ‘Sed et ipsae, proh dolor! personae [...] ante seminare praesumunt, quam ipsum semen a palea discreto examine separatur’ [But the same people, alas [...] presume to sow before the seed itself may be separated from the chaff through wise examination]. *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae* is hereafter referred to as *CMBH*. Another threat, echoed in Kenningham’s rejection of Wyclif’s idea of the eternity of Scripture, lies in the challenge that such conceptions were increasingly perceived to represent to the authority of the Church’s accumulated traditions. The ecclesiological crisis engendered by such awarenesses is discussed in Ch. 5, p. 161.

of scriptural meaning for Wyclif shifts from *ratio* (reason), to ‘a non- or supra-rational apprehension of divine meaning, perhaps as a result of direct inspiration from the Holy Ghost’.<sup>137</sup> With this direct access to divine intention, not only does the traditional role of Scripture’s figurative and literal senses in mediating that meaning collapse (as, Alastair Minnis argues, was theoretically the case for Aquinas), but so also does the Church’s interpretative role.<sup>138</sup> Exactly this challenge echoes in Kenningham’s complaint that Wyclif would reduce the learned from *doctores* [i.e. learned expounders] to mere reciters, rendering glosses superfluous.<sup>139</sup> Further, the perception of Wyclif’s intention to do precisely this is caught in Kenningham’s satirisation of him as a cloud- and mountain-dweller. A label rooted in the communion of the prophet Moses with God on Sinai, the Holy Mountain (Ex. 19), it presciently highlights what we shall see is the core of Wyclif’s self-identity, as a latter-day prophet and law-giver.<sup>140</sup> This is an authority which would underpin his mission, as an evangelist, fundamentally (if not entirely) to dissolve the *limites* separating clerical-monastic and lay scriptural literacy in medieval society.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> See Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 8.

<sup>138</sup> See Wyclif, *De Veritate* I, 119/16-17: ‘litera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria, moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia’ [the literal sense teaches historical facts, allegory what you should believe, the moral what you should do, anagogy your fate]. Alastair Minnis comments in ‘Authorial Intention’, p. 26, fn. 87, that ‘this traditional mnemonic verse is attributed to Augustine of Dacia, O.P. (died 1282), a Thomist’; also, p. 21, that Aquinas in the *Summa Theologiae* ‘demonstrates just how subversive “intentionalism” could be for allegorical exegesis’; indeed, p. 17, that ‘allegory has been made redundant. Not that anyone wished to reject it outright’.

<sup>139</sup> *FZ*, p. 28: ‘non essemus doctores sed recitatores, et superfluerunt omnes glossae praeter illas quae sufficient ad praedicandum’.

<sup>140</sup> In medieval thought it was the prophet who was permitted to use tenses improperly, as Kenningham accuses Wyclif of doing. See, for example, Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, ‘In psalmum CIII’, Sermo II.7 (*PL* 37.1354): ‘praevidente Spiritu quae ventura sunt, quasi jam facta sint [...] animadvertimus saepe Prophetas praeterito tempore verborum dicere quae futura sunt’ [the Spirit foresees things to come as though they had already happened [...] we often notice that the prophets use verbs in the past tense to speak about the future].

<sup>141</sup> See the fifteenth-century Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 649, f. 126r–v, qtd. in Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, p. 85, fn. 6, ‘Et in figura quod nullus laicus ascenderet montem [...] cunctus populus / expectabat ad radicem montis [...] Limites quas non excedes sunt duodecim articuli fidei.’ [And to signify that no layman should climb the holy mountain [...] the people awaited [Moses] at its base [...] The *limites* which you may not exceed are the twelve articles of faith]. *Latin Sermon Collections* is hereafter referred to as *LSC*. The text draws upon Ex. 19.12, in which God instructs Moses to warn the Israelites not to enter the boundaries [*finis*] of Mount Sinai, upon which God was dwelling. The anti-Wycliffite argument of the Carmelite Thomas Netter will also invoke the idea of *limites*; see Ch. 5 of this thesis, p. 163. See also below, p. 76, fn. 257, on recent scholarly discussion of the contradictions in Wyclif’s thought concerning the accessibility of scriptural meaning to the laity.

In particular, the contribution of this chapter to Wyclif scholarship will be to demonstrate how Wyclif's prophecy about Scripture, and his identification of the latter with Christ, is rooted in the expanding later-medieval perceptions of the sacramental importance of the preached Word that we outlined in the Introduction, and its encroachment upon the function of the Church's appointed sacraments, above all the Eucharist. It is Wyclif's distinctive development of these ideas and their innate tensions which, we shall see, underpins his challenge to the medieval Mass and the religious system predicated upon it, as this was articulated from *De Veritate Sacrae Scripture* itself, and his heretical ideas on the Eucharist he publicly promulgated at the start of the 1380s, to the sermons which Wyclif compiled in the last years of his life, in exile from Oxford in Lutterworth.<sup>142</sup>

At the heart of Wyclif's development of this claim, through his use of the key tropes of this tradition ('The Book of Life', 'Christ as Scripture'), is one key medieval linguistic concept: equivocation [*equivocatio*], or the ability of a word to possess more than one signification. As we have seen and as scholars have recently emphasized, awareness of equivocation [*noticia equivocacionis*] was key to Wyclif's access to Scripture's transcendent, holistic meaning;<sup>143</sup> so much so that for Wyclif it was the 'broad girdle' of Scripture's hermeneutic principles.<sup>144</sup> Yet equally important, while hitherto unobserved, is how Wyclif's own writings (and those of his followers) also use equivocation, in imitation of Christ and the prophets, to unfold to the worthy (and hide from the unworthy) his prophetic message about Scripture, by exposing tensions integral to the late-medieval

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<sup>142</sup> On the date of *De Veritate*, see above, p. 37, fn. 112. The dating of *De Eucharistia* is discussed below, p. 54, fn. 179; that of *Trialogus*, p. 65, fn. 221; and of Wyclif's late Latin sermons, p. 71, fn. 238. See again above, p. 37, fn. 112, on the problems highlighted by Hudson in dating Wyclif's work and therefore in using it to place Wyclif's ideas in a chronological order of development.

<sup>143</sup> See Alexander Brungs and Frédéric Goubier, 'On Biblical Logicism: Wyclif, *Virtus Sermonis* and Equivocation', *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales*, 76 (2009), 199-244 (esp. pp. 215-219).

<sup>144</sup> *De Veritate* I, 174/7-10: 'quasi cingulum latum amplectens hec omnia est noticia equivocacionis terminorum scripture'.

meanings of such terms.<sup>145</sup> This is a use which I believe largely creates the ambiguity that modern readers discern throughout his prose, and that his contemporaries condemned as a heretic's twisting of terms from their orthodox sense.<sup>146</sup> While this is not the place to discuss the fascinating, ill-defined issue of rhetoric in Wyclif's discourse,<sup>147</sup> Wyclif does also use such ambiguity, arguably, to limit the immediate accessibility of his vision for the role of preaching in English religion for pragmatic reasons; not least, I would suggest, because of its destructive consequences for the existing sacramental system, as we shall see them most expressed in his late sermons.

### **2.1. Preaching the Word that is Christ**

Nonetheless, Wyclif already raises his central claim for Scripture in the final section of *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, in support of his argument for its diffusion among the laity through the office of preaching.<sup>148</sup> Key here is his citation of a text which, as we have seen, was at the heart of medieval claims for preaching, the Canon Law edict *Interrogo Vos, fratres uel sorores*: 'I ask you, brother and sisters:

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<sup>145</sup> *De Veritate* I, 50/24-51/1: 'sic enim Christus subtilissime equivocavit cum indignis' [Thus Christ most subtly equivocated with the unworthy]. Note that in *De doctrina Christiana*, St. Augustine in fact discourages Christian teachers from veiling their message in direct imitation of prophets; another sign that Wyclif considered himself no ordinary exegete. See *De doctrina Christiana* IV, 8.22 (PL 34.98).

<sup>146</sup> See, for example, Gloria Cigman, 'Luceat Lux Vestra: The Lollard Preacher as Truth and Light', *The Review of English Studies*, 40 (1989), 479-496 (pp. 492-3): 'It is impossible [...] to read Wyclif's Latin without quickly discerning a flamboyance of style that is curiously at odds with the case that he purports to make for unadorned and direct expression'. The stereotype of Wycliffites as twisters of language was clearly widespread. See *Constitutiones Thomae Arundel*, in *CMBH*, III, p. 315: 'sicque verificatur illa figura Apocal. "Sedens in equo nigro stateram gestat in manu": per quam intelliguntur haeretici, qui primo ad instar staterae aequa et justa proponunt [...] sed postea apparet equus niger, intentio videlicet in qua resident maledicta' [Such is confirmed by that expression from Apocalypse [Ap. 6.5], 'sitting on a black horse he holds a balance in his hand'; by which are understood heretics, who firstly, like a balance, propose just and balanced things [...] but afterwards appears the black horse, that is their intent, in which cursed things reside]. See Thomas Netter's appraisal, discussed in Ch. 5, p. 158; also Spencer, *English Preaching*, p. 104, for that of the late fourteenth-century English chronicler Henry Knighton, and p. 402, fn. 102, an unknown Benedictine preacher.

<sup>147</sup> As Brungs and Goubier comment in 'On Biblical Logicism', p. 205: 'Wyclif repeatedly tells his readers that Scripture has its own logic and its own grammar, but there is no mention of rhetoric'. The foundational medieval treatment of the relation between rhetoric and scriptural exegesis is Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, Bk. IV.

<sup>148</sup> *De Veritate* II, Ch. XXI (pp. 155-180).

what seems to you to be greater, the body or the word of Christ? [...] you should say, that the word of God is not less than the body of Christ [...] the one who neglectfully hears the word of God is no less guilty than the one who through negligence allows the body of Christ to fall to the earth.<sup>149</sup>

A text attributed to Augustine himself, as Wyclif emphasizes, this potent equivalence of Eucharist and preached word was of unimpeachable authority. From the thirteenth century onwards, it was cited and responded to by an expanding range of orthodox preachers, including the authors of standard preaching manuals of the period and besides (as we shall consider in later chapters) by many of Wyclif's contemporaries, Wycliffite and non-Wycliffite.<sup>150</sup> It is exactly this background that initially obscures the controversial element in Wyclif's next statement:

it is clear that preaching the Word of God is a more solemn act than confecting the sacrament [of the Altar], since only one person can receive the word of God as the body of Christ. It is therefore much more valuable for the people to receive the word of God, than for a single person to receive the body of Christ [...] for which reason the Archdeacon assigns the cause of the eminence of the word of God over the reception of Christ's body to this: that preaching annuls mortal sins more effectively than the Eucharist<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> *De Veritate* II, 155/13-24: 'interrogo vos, fratres vel sorores, dicite michi, quid vobis plus videtur esse, corpus Cristi an verbum Cristi? [...] hoc dicere debetis, quod non sit minus verbum dei quam corpus Cristi [...] quia non minus reus est, qui verbum dei negligenter audiverit, quam ille, qui corpus Cristi sua negligencia in terram cadere permiserit'. See Ch. 1, pp. 17-21 on the importance of this Canon Law text to the medieval preaching-tradition.

<sup>150</sup> 'Audire', in John Bromyard, *Summa praedicatorum omni eruditione refertissima [...] familiae theologo praestantissimo*, 2 vols. (Venice: 1586), I, Cap. XXII, p. 85: 'quia non minus reus est, qui praedicationem negligenter audit, quam qui corpus Christi in terram cadere permittit. i. q. i. canone interrogo' [since the person who neglectfully hears preaching is not less guilty than the person who allows the body of Christ to fall to the earth. [Causa 1], Quaestio 1, in Canon Law, *Interrogo vos*]. See Ch. 4 of this thesis, pp. 121, 136 on the use of *Interrogo vos* and related tropes by non-Wycliffite figures as diverse as Thomas Brinton, late fourteenth-century Bishop of Rochester, and the anonymous author of *Dives and Pauper*.

<sup>151</sup> *De Veritate* II, 156/3-7; 156/12-14: 'patet secundo, quod predicacio verbi dei est actus solemnior quam confectio sacramenti, cum tantum sit unum recipere verbum dei sicut corpus Cristi. igitur multo plus est, populum recipere verbum dei, quam unicum personam recipere corpus Cristi [...] unde Archidiaconus assignat causam supereminencie verbi dei super acceptione corporis Cristi in hoc, quod predicacio delet mortalia efficacius quam eucaristia'.

As Wyclif has indeed made clear, his conclusion can be found in the thirteenth-century Canon Law gloss of Guido de Baysio (*Archidiaconus*).<sup>152</sup> However, the contentious element in Wyclif's argument lies less in its apparent conclusion – that it is more important for many people to hear Scripture than for one to receive the host – than in its premise: that more people receive Christ in Scripture than in the Eucharist. His statement thereby serves to imply a fundamental equivalence, while minimising the distinction, between the Eucharist and Scripture as vessels for Christ.

This statement thereby foregrounds the sacramental claim for Scripture implicit in Wyclif's longstanding identification of the latter with the Person of Christ, and particularly exposed, Ian Levy's work has shown, as that identification is asserted in *De Veritate*. It is firstly emphasized in Wyclif's reading of the scriptural text that he most clearly ties to his original epiphany about the transcendent nature of Scripture, from Jn. 10.35-36:

*non potest solvi Scriptura, quem Pater sanctificavit et misit in mundum*<sup>153</sup>

Medieval interpretations of this passage (including the earlier version of the English Wycliffite Bible) had generally understood it to mean: 'the Scripture, which the Father sanctified and sent into the world, may not be undone', ignoring the non-agreement between the feminine *Scriptura* and *quem*, the masculine relative pronoun.<sup>154</sup> In *De Veritate*, however, Wyclif argues that this was no chance result of scribal error but the deliberate

<sup>152</sup> On de Baysio's *Rosarium*, see Ch. 1, p. 18.

<sup>153</sup> Jn. 10.35-36, qtd. in *De Veritate* I, 109/9-11.

<sup>154</sup> The Early Version of the Wycliffite Bible renders 'Scriptura, quem Pater sanctificavit' as 'the scripture, which the fadir halwide'; the Later Version renders it as 'scripture [...] thilke that [he whom] the fadir hath halewid'. However, since the early-modern period, translators have interpreted *quem Pater sanctificavit* as not referring to *Scriptura* at all, but as the object of a separate clause; thus *DR* renders Jn. 10.35-36: '[...] the scripture [*Scriptura*] cannot be broken; Do you say of him [*quem*] whom the Father hath sanctified [...]?' For the text of the Early and Later Versions of the Wycliffite Bible, see *The Holy Bible [...] Made From the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and His Followers*, ed. by Josiah Forshall and Frederic Madden (Oxford, Oxford University Press), 4 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1850), IV, p. 267, Cols. A and B respectively. This edition is hereafter referred to as *Wycliffite Bible*. See also Mary Dove, *The First English Bible: The Text and Context of The Wycliffite Versions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 182, on the interpretation of Jn. 10.35-36 by Wyclif and the *Wycliffite Bible*. Since *DR* follows other early-modern interpretations of Jn. 10.35-36, the translation in the body of the text above is my own.

equivocation of the Holy Spirit, which ordained *quem* ‘in the correct codices’ to make clear, as Ian Levy puts it, that ‘Scripture is a “who” [...] Scripture is Christ’.<sup>155</sup>

As Levy has shown, this equation of Christ’s personhood with Scripture is also emphasized by Wyclif’s definition of the latter as a hierarchy linking the divine Word with earthly manuscripts; as a result ‘the composition and subsequent plight of Scripture is remarkably close to that of Christ the Incarnate Word’.<sup>156</sup> On one level, this assertion appeals to the affectivity vested in late-medieval devotion to Christ’s suffering humanity. For Wyclif, Levy comments:

The Word assumed perishable flesh, liable to injury and death at the hands of the sinners, and so too the Word is united to cured calfskin, liable to scribal error and the yet worse blasphemous senses imposed upon it by impious sophists. Yet as Christ could not suffer in his impassible divinity, so the Word, the Book of Life, cannot be altered in its eternal truth.<sup>157</sup> Those who deface Scripture can do no damage to the truth preserved in the devout catholic soul where Christ, the substance of Scripture, dwells<sup>158</sup>

Thereby, he notes, Wyclif also makes a theologically significant assertion about Scripture: that it was ‘the product of a hypostatic union, namely the Divine Word and the

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<sup>155</sup> Levy, *Parameters of Orthodoxy*, pp. 87-8, which discusses Wyclif’s reading of Jn. 10.35-36 in *De Veritate* and other writings. See *De Veritate* I, 109/24-110/4: ‘ut doceamur in hoc dicto intelligere illum librum et non opera hominum ordinavit spiritus sanctus in correctis codicibus hoc relativum “quem” et non “quam”’ [so that we may be taught by this utterance to understand ‘that Book’ and not the works of men, the Holy Spirit ordained in the correct codices the relative pronoun *quem* and not *quam*]; *De Benedicta Incarnacione*, Ch. 5, p. 73, ll. 24-29: ‘Unde Spiritus Sanctus [...] subdit in genere masculine – ‘*quem* Pater sanctificavit’ – innuendo nobis relacionem faciendam ad Filium. Mos enim est scripture et Augustini per adiectivos masculinos personas concipere’ [Whence the Holy Ghost supplied in the masculine ‘*whom* the Father sanctified’ to show us the reference that must be made to the Son. For it is the custom of Scripture and of Augustine to denote people through masculine adjectives].

<sup>156</sup> Levy, *Parameters of Orthodoxy*, p. 88.

<sup>157</sup> See *De Veritate* I, 111/12-16: ‘non solum est tale signum, scilicet scriptura [...] nam sic esset omnis scriptura sacra viciabilis a sutore, autorizabilis a scriba, ymmo a cane solubilis et corrigibilis a scurra’ [Scripture certainly is not only a sign [...] for thus all Holy Scripture would be subject to damage by a leather-worker, authorization by a scribe, indeed to destruction by a dog and correction by a clown]. My translation of ‘viciabilis a sutore’ follows that of John Wyclif, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, trans. by Ian Christopher Levy (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), p. 99.

<sup>158</sup> Levy, *Parameters of Orthodoxy*, p. 88.

parchment'.<sup>159</sup> In this way, Scripture resembles the union of divinity and humanity which was central to the understanding of the historical Jesus Christ as the Incarnation of God.

Indeed, Wyclif's conception of Christ's presence in Scripture, with its Incarnational and eucharistic associations, underpins his evocation of the hermeneutic process itself. Not least, Wyclif repeatedly describes how the literal senses were ordained 'to beget' [*ordinavit ad gignendum*] others, in order that they 'become pregnant' with [*gravidatus*] and 'give birth to' [*parturit*] scriptural meaning. He thereby casts the apprehension of Scripture's overwhelmingly rich, multiple senses in terms linked in medieval culture with the pregnancy of the Virgin Mary.<sup>160</sup> Beyond this, Wyclif's intuitive experience of scriptural meaning as Christ's presence most clearly explains what Ghosh describes as the 'unsignalled and unacknowledged change in the premises' of Wyclif's hermeneutic discussion, between cognitive grasping of the sign and a non-cognitive *sapientia*; the strongest parallel in Wyclif's own writings, as we shall later see, lies in his explanation of how worshippers in the Mass become oblivious to the physical existence of the bread and wine as they come to apprehend the presence of Christ in the latter.<sup>161</sup> Indeed, to argue that penetration beyond human words yields access to a Scripture that is Christ, the Book of Life, logically accords

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<sup>159</sup> Levy, *Parameters of Orthodoxy*, p. 88.

<sup>160</sup> *De Veritate* I, 73/12-14: 'et sic sensus literalis [...] est primus sensus verus, quem spiritus sanctus ordinavit ad gignendum alios'. *De Veritate* I, 27/22: 'ecce, quot misteria parturit festum Cristi et verbum' [Behold, how many mysteries Christ's feast [his secret attendance at the Feast of Tabernacles, see Jn. 7.] and word gives birth to]. *De Veritate* I, 104/2: 'verbum dei est gravidatum'. For a parallel, see, for example, Augustine, *Sermones X ex cod. Cassinen. recens editi*, 'Sermo 4. De Natali Domini' (PL 46.982): 'Portavit eum Mater in utero, portemus in corde; gravidata est Virgo incarnatione Christi, gravidentur pectora nostra fide Christi; peperit Salvatorem, pariamus laudem' [His mother carried him in the womb, may we carry him in our hearts; the Virgin was heavy with the incarnation of Christ, may our breasts grow heavy with the faith of Christ; she gave birth to the saviour, may we give birth to praise]. See also *Analecta Hymnica*, ed. by Clemens Blume and Guido Dreves, 55 vols. (Leipzig: O.R. Reiland, 1886-1922), XXII (1889), p. 141, 'Ave, virgo desponsata, / Impregnata, gravidata' [Hail, Virgin betrothed, made pregnant, made heavy].

<sup>161</sup> On Wyclif's conception of the Eucharist, see below, p 58, fn. 192, and also Wyclif *De Eucharistia*, VI, 144/11-16, where he compares the process of apprehending Christ in the Mass to the grasping of the meaning of Scripture. However, the strongest parallel to Wyclif's scriptural hermeneutics in medieval culture is arguably the means by which, according to medieval thinkers, the beholder of an icon becomes oblivious to its outward form as its subject becomes present to them. See Ch. 5, p. 185, for the Carmelite Thomas Netter's description of this process. On the parallels between scriptural hermeneutics and the viewing of visual objects, more broadly, see Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), p. 2.

to scriptural interpretation what Augustine saw as the key result of eating his body and drinking his blood in the Mass: ‘to dwell in Christ and to have Him dwelling in us’ [*in Christo manere et illum manentem in se habere*].<sup>162</sup>

The great reason that such claims are far less clearly challenges to the Mass than might appear to be the case is that they are hard to differentiate from the quasi-eucharistic powers already attributed to the reception of Scripture in medieval thought, as we charted in the Introduction; fundamentally as developed in monastic *lectio divina*, described by its practitioners in terms indistinguishable from those used to describe the Eucharist.<sup>163</sup> Most immediately, Wyclif’s theology of preaching betrays a major debt to the claims made for the preached word by later medieval figures such as Robert Grosseteste. Grosseteste had already defined preaching as the transmission of the ‘word of Christ or Christ the word’ [*verbum Christi sive verbum Christum*], strikingly diverging from St. Augustine’s assertion that the spoken word was *verbum Christi* but not *verbum Christum*.<sup>164</sup> Grosseteste, who strongly contrasted the scriptural word that is Christ with ‘the words of men, or works of the diabolic Father’, also anticipates Wyclif’s insistence that Christ could only be preached through the ‘ancient’ form of homiletic preaching (that is, effectively through preaching a *lectio* of a scriptural text) and his condemnation, as sacrilegious ‘tragedies and comedies’, of the ornamented and sometimes completely non-scriptural preaching prevalent in late-medieval culture.<sup>165</sup> Moreover, Grosseteste precedes Wyclif’s emphasis that through an assimilation

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<sup>162</sup> See Ch. 1, p. 4. Augustine’s definition is also cited in Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, I, 17/23-25.

<sup>163</sup> See Ch. 1, p. 8.

<sup>164</sup> See Ch. 1, p. 20 on this assertion by Grosseteste in *Dicta*, 101, and on Augustine’s comment (*Enarrationes in Psalmos*, ‘In Psalmum CXVII enarratio’, Sermo XXII.1, *PL* 37.1567) that ‘the word which came to the Prophets [...] was not Christ the Word but the Word of Christ [*non verbum Christum, sed verbum Christi*]’.

<sup>165</sup> Grosseteste, *Dicta*, 101: ‘Absit ut os Dei Patris loquatur opera hominum, aut opera patris diaboli’ [God forbid that the mouth of God the Father should speak the works of men, or of the diabolic father]. Leclercq, ‘Le magistère’, p. 107, comments on the homiletic style promoted in the thirteenth century as ‘commentaire de passages, souvent très courts, de l’Écriture Sainte [...] une *lectio*’ [commentary on passages of Holy Scripture, often very short [...] a *lectio*], also discussed in Ch. 1 of this thesis, p. 18, fn. 69. On the ‘ancient’ homiletic versus ‘modern’ styles of preaching, see in general Spencer, *English Preaching*, pp. 228-268. As she comments, p. 229, the new method ‘consisted in essence of the division and subdivision of a short biblical text [...] some preachers gave offence by their neglect even to begin with a biblical text’. See Wyclif, *LS* I, XVI,

of the scriptural word, the Christian ‘in a certain way’ [*quoddammodo*] becomes Christ Himself, in a fashion more marvellous than alchemy; again, a claim which stands out in the context of popular religion, where such language was more strongly associated with the eucharistic encounter.<sup>166</sup>

Yet equally significant for Wyclif’s claims for Scripture are the parallels it invites in medieval culture with depictions of Christ crucified, these being ‘Scripture’ in its broadest medieval sense, as we have considered.<sup>167</sup> It is from the later medieval Charter of Christ tradition, discussed in the Introduction, that the tropes of ‘Scripture’ and of ‘the Book of Life’ so central to Wyclif’s thought most immediately derive many of the resonances discerned by Levy: most clearly the association of his crucified flesh with the parchment [*pellis*] of a document, together with its affective charge.<sup>168</sup> Not least, Wyclif’s Scripture fundamentally resembles evocations of Christ as Book such as that of the twelfth-century fabulist Odo of Cheriton, in claiming to present Christ’s Word in a direct way that circumvents clerical learning and mediation.<sup>169</sup> Further, as with Odo, Wyclif’s evocation of Scripture as a vessel for the person and intention of Christ most clearly appeals to an

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108/8-12: ‘Quoad quiditatem autem huius verbi patet quod ipsum est personaliter verbum Dei, et ideo apostolus elegit predicare in populo dominum Jesum Christum, non tragedias sive comedias’ [As for the essence of this word, however, it is clear that it is personally the Word of God, and thus the Apostle Paul chose to preach to the people the Lord Jesus Christ, not tragedies or comedies]. This text is also discussed below, p. 75.

<sup>166</sup> *De Veritate* II, 184/16-17: ‘oportet enim, cristianum esse per assimilationem quodammodo ipsum Cristum’. On Grosseteste’s comparison of preaching to alchemy in *Dictum 2* and his understanding of the worshipper’s assimilation of Christ through the reception of Scripture in *Dictum 101*, see Ch. 1, pp. 19 and 21 respectively. Indicative of the importance of Grosseteste’s theology of preaching to Wyclif, *Dictum 2* is cited in its entirety in Wyclif, *Opus evangelicum*, ed. by Johann Loserth, 2 vols. (Wyclif Society. London: Trübner & Co., 1895), I, Pt. 1, Ch. 13, 41/22 – Ch. 15, 48/18. A passage from the same *Dictum* is also paraphrased in *LS I*, XVI, 110/21-24 (as also observed in Gradon and Hudson, *EWS V*, p. 128, fn. 92), which is discussed below, p. 75. See Ch. 3, p. 91, for the citation of Grosseteste’s *Dictum 2* by Wyclif’s followers. See the description of the worshipper’s transformation into Christ, in a eucharistic context, by the preacher John Felton, quoted in Ch. 3, p. 94, fn. 330.

<sup>167</sup> See Ch. 1, p. 11.

<sup>168</sup> For more on the fourteenth-century Charter of Christ tradition, see Ch. 4, pp. 143-150.

<sup>169</sup> See Spencer, *English Preaching*, pp. 139-142 on Odo of Cheriton’s claims, and Ch. 1 of this thesis, p. 26.

underlying power that was privileged to the religious image, a parallel emphasized by Wyclif's resort to the language of the visual to describe Scripture.<sup>170</sup>

However, Wyclif's use of such visual analogies also signals the challenge to the prevailing symbolic system posed by his conception of Scripture. While he endorses the ancient introduction of images as 'books of the laity', the fundamental assumption of Wyclif's evangelicalism and that of his followers is that this visual culture can no longer be considered 'Scripture'.<sup>171</sup> And although Wyclif argued that images might be considered acceptable if understood to signify a distant God [*in adoracione vicaria*], this rejection clearly extended to the understanding, defended by Wyclif's orthodox opponents, of the medieval depictions of the Godhead as vessels of presence.<sup>172</sup> On the contrary, Wyclif argued, such beliefs represented one of the greatest causes of idolatry in late-medieval

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<sup>170</sup> See Ch. 1, p. 9 on the understanding of images as vessels for Christ's presence. As discussed above, fn. 161, Wyclif's scriptural hermeneutics most strongly recall those of the icon, as medieval thinkers understood the latter. See also Beryl Smalley, 'The Bible and Eternity: John Wyclif's Dilemma', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 27 (1964), 73-89 (p. 81), on Wyclif's comparison of 'the Scriptures *inter alia* to a mirror of eternal truths', a simile for which she is unable to find other sources; and Phillips, 'Wyclif's De Eucharistia in its Medieval Setting', p. 352, who also comments on the frequency of Wyclif's use of the mirror analogy in his writings, although she also observes its use with regard to the Bible in the fourteenth-century *Cloud of Unknowing*.

<sup>171</sup> Wyclif, *Tractatus de divinis mandatis*, in *Tractatus de mandatis divinis accedit tractatus de statu innocencie*, ed. by J. Loserth and F.D. Matthew, Wyclif Society (London: C.K. Paul & Co., 1922), pp. 1-474 (Ch. XV, 155/6-8): 'licet introducte sunt ymagine in ecclesiam post firmitatem fidei primitive, ut sint libri laicis' [granted that images were introduced into the Church after the foundation of the early faith, so that they may be books of the laity]. For an example of Wycliffite opposition to the idea of images as Scripture, see Ch. 4 of this thesis, p. 146, fn. 540.

<sup>172</sup> See, for example, Wyclif, *De Mandatis Divinis*, Ch. XV, 156/21-25: 'Sic enim laici depingunt infideliter trinitatem, ac si Deus pater foret grandevus paterfamilias, habens in genibus Deum filium suum crucifixum et Deum Spiritum Sanctum columbam utrique descendentem' [Thus the laity unfaithfully paint the Trinity, as though God the Father were an exceedingly aged head of family, having on his knees God his crucified Son, and God the Holy Spirit as a dove descending between them]. See Ch. 5 of this thesis, pp. 131-138, on the Carmelite Thomas Netter's defence of the Trinity from the very similar attack of his Wycliffite followers.

religion.<sup>173</sup> As Heather Phillips therefore asserted, the physical image for Wyclif no longer represented a means of symbolic ‘participation’.<sup>174</sup>

Nonetheless, as we have already seen in our treatment of hermeneutics in the thought of Wyclif and other late-medieval writers, this is not obviously because, as Phillips has claimed, Wyclif witnesses a straightforward ‘decline of the symbol as a valid form of expression’.<sup>175</sup> On the contrary, his striking use of the visual as a metaphor for Scripture indicates that he shares in the broader later medieval perception, charted in the Introduction, of the expanding sacramental power and status of Scripture relative to these visual signs.<sup>176</sup> As Wyclif’s gloss on the Canon Law text *Interrogo vos* further implied, this shift was not limited to para-liturgical signs or *sacramentalia*, but extended to the actuality around which this system formally revolved: the sacrament of Christ’s uniquely real and physical presence in the consecrated bread and wine of the Mass. We shall see that the challenge this posed is clearest in Wyclif’s understanding of the Eucharist itself, as unfolded in the series of his eucharistic writings which emerged from the start of the 1380s.

## **2.2. Holy Scripture and the Mass**

Central to this phase of my argument is Wyclif’s understanding of how the eucharistic presence comes about when the celebrating Mass priest repeats the words that Christ had uttered at the Last Supper: ‘this is my body’ [*hoc est enim corpus meum*]. As we considered in the Introduction, underpinning the late fourteenth-century understanding of the function of these words and the entire cult of devotion to Christ’s physical presence in the Mass was

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<sup>173</sup> *De Veritate* I, 116/3-6: ‘ideo fidelis et theologus precipue laboraret, ut sibi foret sacra per rectum intellectum et affectum et non ydolum infidelitatis, sicut sunt ymagine nobis sacre, que sunt prophane ydolatrias’ [thus the faithful person and the theologian should especially strive so that [Scripture] is holy to them through right understanding and disposition and not an idol of faithlessness; just as sacred images are to us, which are profane to idolaters].

<sup>174</sup> Phillips, ‘Wyclif’s *De Eucharistia*’, p. 9, sees the ability to participate in symbols, ‘the distinguishing feature of the archaic consciousness [which she sees as disappearing in Wyclif’s time]’ as ‘characterized by the awareness of an extra-sensory link between the percipient and the representations’. On the tradition of thought about symbols that Phillips is invoking here, see Ch. 1, p. 23.

<sup>175</sup> Phillips, ‘Wyclif’s *De Eucharistia*’, p. xv.

<sup>176</sup> See Ch. 1, p. 21 and above, fn. 52, p. 170.

the doctrine of transubstantiation, nominally endorsed in 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council, which by Wyclif's time had come to be the only acceptable explanation; according to its proponents, the words of consecration caused the physical substance [*substantia*] of the bread and wine (their 'breadness' and 'wineness') to be transubstantiated [*transsubstantiantur*] into Christ's body and blood, while leaving their appearance and other qualities [*accidentia*] unchanged.<sup>177</sup>

While Wyclif had allegedly wavered in his earlier career between versions of transubstantiation involving some form of physical change, without leaving traces of controversy, his eucharistic writings from the start of the 1380s signal a decisive departure from the late-medieval consensus.<sup>178</sup> As he states in the *De Eucharistia*, 'although I at one time laboured to describe transubstantiation in accordance with the sense of the early Church, it now seems that they are opposed, with the later Church in error'.<sup>179</sup> The nature of his departure is well expressed in the opening of *De Eucharistia minor confessio* of 1381, a concise restatement of the ideas for which he would eventually be declared a heretic – in this sense, undoubtedly, the defining point of his hermeneutic career:

I have often confessed, and still confess, that the same body of Christ, numerically, which was assumed of the Virgin, which

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<sup>177</sup> See Ch. 1, p. 3, and Levy's observation in *Parameters of Orthodoxy*, p. 15, that by the late fourteenth century acceptable definitions of Christ's presence in the Mass 'had shrunk considerably' compared to even a century before.

<sup>178</sup> That Wyclif wavered in his eucharistic opinions is suggested by his opponent William Woodford (d. in or after 1397). See Woodford, *De sacramento altaris*, London, British Library, MS Royal 7.B.III, f. 45r, qtd. in Robson, *Wyclif and the Schools*, pp. 192-3, fn. 2: 'sicut homo instabilis in suis Sententiis multotiens iste Magister mutavit sententiam suam de subiecto sacramentalium accidentium. Patet hec, nam primo, quando legit Sententias Oxonie, asseruit quod subiectum illorum fuit corpus mathematicum; post [...] dixit quod subiectum illorum non fuit panis sed corpus mixtum; post [...] tenuit publice respondens in scholis theologie, quod habuerunt subjectum, sed nescivit quod fuit subiectum illorum. Postquam fuit Doctor, tenuit quod panis quem sacerdos benedicit manet post benedictionem' [Like a man inconstant in his opinions, this master changed his mind many times on the subject of sacramental accidents. This is clear, for when he first read the Sentences at Oxford, he asserted that their subject was a 'mathematical body'. After [...] he said their subject was not bread but a 'mixed body'. After that [...] responding in the Schools of Theology, he openly held that they had a subject, but he did not know what their subject was. After he was a doctor, he held that the bread which the priest blessed remained as bread after the blessing].

<sup>179</sup> Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, II, 52/18-21: 'licet quondam laboraverim ad describendum transsubstantionem concorditer ad sensum prioris ecclesie, tamen modo videtur michi quod contrariantur posteriori ecclesia oberrante'. Thomson, *Latin Writings of Wyclif*, p. 67, dates *De Eucharistia* to the middle or end of 1380.

suffered on the cross, which lay dead in the tomb for the sacred three day period, which rose on the third, which after forty days ascended into heaven, and which sits for ever on the right side of God the Father: I say that the very same body and substance [*idem corpus, et eadem substantia*] is truly and really [*est vere et realiter*] the sacramental bread or consecrated host, which the faithful discern in the hands of the priest.<sup>180</sup>

This passage paraphrases the fourth-century Nicene Creed, which asserts the truth of Christ's historically incarnated, suffering and resurrected flesh. A text embedded in key medieval confessions of eucharistic orthodoxy and in the liturgy, its citation thereby pleads Wyclif's own belief in the true presence of that flesh in the Mass.<sup>181</sup> Nonetheless, Wyclif's core claim that 'this body is truly bread' [*est vere et realiter panis*] embodies an explosive equivocation, reasserting the first of two propositions singled out for condemnation by the Chancellor of Oxford, William Barton, in 1381: 'that after consecration the substance of the material bread and wine [...] really [*realiter*] remain'.<sup>182</sup> Indeed, as Wyclif makes clear, the physical, substantial presence of the bread excludes that of Christ's physical body, at least as the Church conceived of it: 'I do not dare to say that the body of Christ is essentially,

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<sup>180</sup> John Wyclif, 'Confessio Magistri John Wycliff', in *FZ*, pp. 115-132 (p.115): 'Saepe confessus sum, et adhuc confiteor, quod idem corpus Christi in numero quod fuit assumptum de Virgine, quod passus est in cruce, quod pro sancto triduo jacuit mortuum in sepulcro, quod tertia die resurrexit, quod post quadraginta dies ascendit in coelum, et quod sedet perpetuo ad dextram Dei Patris: ipsum, inquam, idem corpus, et eadem substantia est vere et realiter panis sacramentalis vel hostia consecrate, quam fideles sentiunt in manibus sacerdotis'.

<sup>181</sup> See 'Ordinarium Missae' (Sarum) in *The Ancient Liturgy of the Church of England: According to the Uses of Sarum, Bangor, York & Hereford And the Modern Roman Liturgy*, ed. by William Maskell, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: William Pickering, 1846), pp. 2-77 (pp. 50-52): 'Credo in unum Deum [...] Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria virgine: et homo factus est. Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato: passus et sepultus est. Et resurrexit teria die secundum scripturas. Et ascendit in coelum: sedet ad dexteram Patris'. An archetypal use in medieval eucharistic debates is in the confession of the heretic Berengar. See *PL* 150, 411B-C: 'Ego Berengarius corde credo et ore confiteor, panem et vinum [...] post consecrationem esse verum Christi corpus, quod natum est de Virgine et quod pro salute mundi oblatum in cruce pependit, et quod sedet ad dexteram Patris'. One may see a very similar mode of appeal, using liturgically significant texts, in *De Eucharistia*; as Heather Phillips observes in 'Wyclif's *De Eucharistia*', p. 272, its first chapter 'is constructed around the Corpus Christi sequence, *Lauda Sion*', a eucharistic hymn, attributed to Thomas Aquinas, central to the later medieval eucharistic cult.

<sup>182</sup> William Barton, 'Sententia Willelmi Cancelarii Oxoniensis contra J Wyclyff residentem in Cathedra', in *FZ*, pp. 110-113 (p. 110): 'Primo, in sacramento altaris substantiam panis materialis et vini [...] post consecrationem realiter remanere'.

substantially, physically or identically that bread'.<sup>183</sup> To assert otherwise, he believed by the 1380s, was to succumb to the grand deception that Satan had wrought upon the medieval Church through promoting the doctrine of transubstantiation.<sup>184</sup>

Nonetheless, Wyclif re-iterates, when Christ said 'this is my body', he was not lying; if we cannot believe this, then we cannot believe anything that Scripture says about Christ.<sup>185</sup> What Wyclif by his own account had come to realize, unlike his opponents, was that the physical body was present through a symbolic transformation of the bread and wine; if it was not thereby present in the same dimensional, substantial way [*ratio*] as in heaven, the bread was nonetheless the body 'rightly, miraculously, truly, and really, spiritually, virtually, and sacramentally' [*bene, miraculose, vere, et realiter, spiritualiter, virtualiter, et sacramentaliter*].<sup>186</sup> In this way, Wyclif states, the consecrated bread and wine are at once both 'truth and figure': a hallmark medieval definition of the Eucharist, marking them out as uniquely efficacious signs, 'infinitely more outstanding' than other sacraments and symbols which, as we have considered, orthodox medieval thought associated with Christ's purely

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<sup>183</sup> Wyclif, 'Confessio' (*FZ*, p. 115): 'Non tamen audeo dicere quod corpus Christi sit essentialiter, substantialiter, corporaliter, vel identice ille panis'.

<sup>184</sup> See Wyclif, *De apostasia*, XV, 204/28-37: 'Sunt autem duo extrema in quibus dyabolus seducit ecclesiam; unum est, ut credatur sacramentum illud ydemptice esse corpus Christi [...] cum vidit populum ex naturali ingenio satis cognoscere illum panem non esse corpus Christi, subtiliavit in signis [...] quod illud sacramentum sit accidens sine subiecto' [There are two extreme views into which the devil seduces the Church: the first, that it should be believed that the sacrament is identical to the body of Christ [...] when he saw that the people, through their natural wits, sufficiently understood that the bread is not the body of Christ, he argued sophistically with signs that the sacrament was an accident without subject].

<sup>185</sup> Wyclif, *De apostasia*, XVI, 230/25-28: 'Nam nichil debemus secundum fidem ewangelii de Christo credere, si non assereruit panem quem cepit in manibus ac fregit esse corpus suum'.

<sup>186</sup> Wyclif, 'Confessio' (*FZ*, p. 117): 'Nullo autem istorum modorum trium est corpus Christi in sacramento sed in coelo, quia tunc foret corpus Christi septipedale in hostia' [in none of those three modes [substantial, physical and dimensional] is Christ's body in the sacrament but rather in heaven, since the seven-foot body would then be in the host]. Wyclif, 'Confessio' (*FZ*, p. 122): 'ille panis est bene, miraculose, vere, et realiter, spiritualiter, virtualiter, et sacramentaliter corpus Christi'. As Patrick Hornbeck comments in *What is a Lollard?: Dissent and Belief in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 74, Wyclif 'dedicated much of the *Confessio* to an analysis of the ways in which Christ is and is not present in the sacrament'. See the same, pp. 73-76, for further discussion of this subject.

spiritual presence: ‘the signs of the body of Christ in the Old Testament, or images under the new law’.<sup>187</sup>

For his contemporaries, Wyclif’s argument that the Real Presence of Christ in the Mass could be described as a figurative presence constituted his clearest affront to medieval religion. This is reflected in its singling out by Chancellor Barton as being even ‘more accursed to the ear’ than the theory of the remanence of the bread and wine. It would mean, he states, that:

in that venerable sacrament, the body and blood of Christ are not present in essence or substance [*essentialiter nec substantialiter*], or even physically [*corporaliter*], but figuratively or tropically [*figurative sed tropice*], such that Christ is not there truly in his own physical person.<sup>188</sup>

Barton’s statement certainly suggests that he rejected Wyclif’s figurative understanding of the eucharistic presence because it was an outrageous impossibility: a presence which was not substantial was not real, and no different from any other symbolism. Modern commentators, consistent with their accounts of Wyclif’s scripturalism, have similarly interpreted it as an abandonment of a Real Presence, albeit couched in the language of orthodoxy, and as a by-product of his (undoubtedly strong) metaphysical objections to the annihilation of the bread and wine, or his belief in the fixed nature of space and time.<sup>189</sup> As

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<sup>187</sup> Wyclif, ‘Confessio’ (*FZ*, p. 119): ‘Hoc tamen signum infinitum est praestantius quam signa corporis Christi in lege veteri, vel imagines in lege nova, cum sit simul veritas et figura’. Wyclif, ‘Confessio’ (*FZ*, p. 116): ‘Ideo Christus est specialiori modo in isto sacramento quam in aliis, cum sit simul veritas et figura in isto: non est autem sic in aliis sacramentis’ [Thus Christ is in this sacrament in a more particular way than in others, since he is at once truth and figure in this one; he is not however [present] in this way in other sacraments]. See also, for example, Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, V, 121/15-16.

<sup>188</sup> Barton, ‘contra J Wyclyff’ (*FZ*, p. 110): ‘Secundo, quod execrabilius est auditu, in illo venerabili sacramento non esse corpus Christi et sanguinem, essentialiter nec substantialiter, nec etiam corporaliter, sed figurative seu tropice; sic quod Christus non sit ibi veraciter in sua propria persona corporali’.

<sup>189</sup> For more on this appraisal of Wyclif by figures such as Gottfried Lechler, the nineteenth-century editor of many of Wyclif’s works, see Hornbeck, *What is a Lollard?*, p. 71. On Wyclif’s own metaphysical objections, see, for example, Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, V, 117/30-118/3: ‘Numquid ascribendum est miraculo Christi magnifico quod sine causa destruit creatas substantias, dampnificat suam universitatem’ [Can it be ascribed to the magnificent miracle of Christ that without cause he destroys created substances and condemns his universe [...]?]. In a variant, Heather Phillips, ‘Wyclif’s *De Eucharistia*’, p. 245, argues that for Wyclif ‘it was precisely because the essence of matter was the indestructible atom that for Wyclif transubstantiation was in the end impossible’, arguing that he believed that the ‘magnitude of the universe (of space and time) could not be

Heather Phillips argues, since the remanence of the bread allows ‘no room for him’, transubstantiation can consequently be ‘really nothing more than a kind of ghostly “spiritual” presence, or a state of mind’.<sup>190</sup> Wyclif’s sense of the spatial distance between Christ’s body in heaven and in the Mass is why, Phillips has argued, Wyclif repeatedly describes the Eucharist as a ‘mirror’ [*speculum*], since ‘the rays of the sun are shed upon the earth from a distance’.<sup>191</sup> Indeed we shall see there is much to be said for Phillips’s view.

Nonetheless, such explanations fail satisfactorily to account for Wyclif’s own pervasive, repeated insistence to the contrary: one which importantly suggests that Wyclif himself not merely desired but also felt the *quidditas* of the Eucharist – Christ in body, blood and soul – to be present through signification. Not only is the eucharistic sign inseparably and mysteriously married [*concomitantur*] to its signified object,<sup>192</sup> but the consecration also puts the bread’s physical existence [*principalitatem*] to sleep in the worshipper’s consciousness [*sopitur*] to such an extent that it does not ‘remain but is converted into the body of Christ’.<sup>193</sup> This complete yet symbolic transformation of the bread and wine into Christ’s body and blood, Wyclif insists, was what a range of authorities, from the Church

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increased or decreased [...] the smallest possible division being [...] the atom of space and the instant of time’. See also ‘Wyclif’s *De Eucharistia*’, p. 356, on the relation of Wyclif’s thought to that of Oxford contemporaries such as the mathematician Richard Swineshead, the ‘Mertonian Calculator’. For more on the significance of optics to Wyclif’s thought, see also Heather Phillips, ‘John Wyclif and the Optics of the Eucharist’, in *From Ockham to Wyclif*, ed. by Anne Hudson and Michael Wilks (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), pp. 233-244.

<sup>190</sup> Phillips, ‘Wyclif’s *De Eucharistia*’, p. 313, pp. 286-287.

<sup>191</sup> Phillips, ‘Wyclif’s *De Eucharistia*’, p. 345.

<sup>192</sup> Wyclif, ‘Confessio’ (*FZ*, p. 119): ‘alius est modus essendi signum corporis Christi, et alius modus essendi vere et realiter virtute verborum Domini corpus Christi. Conceditur tamen quod isti duo modi inseparabiliter comitantur’ [the mode of being the sign of the body of Christ is one thing, and another the mode of truly and really being the body of the Christ by the power of the Lord’s words. I concede however that those two modes are inseparably bound together].

<sup>193</sup> See, for example, Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, IV, 100/15-19: ‘sic conversio illa non destruit naturam panis nec mutat naturam corporis, inducendo in materiam aliam quidditatem, sed facit presenciam corporis Christi et tollit principalitatem panis, ut in corpore Christi colligatur tota intencio adorantis’ [Thereby, the conversion does not destroy the nature of the bread nor change the nature of the body, inducing another quiddity in matter, but makes the presence of the body of Christ and draws away the physical existence of the bread, in order that the entire thought of the worshipper may be focussed on the body of Christ]; Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, V, 130/25-27, discussing Anselm and other patristic exegetes, ‘nitebantur quod quidditas substancie signantis sopiatur quoad consideracionem hominis, et tota devota intencio colligatur in Christum’ [they asserted that the essence of the signifying substance is put to sleep in the awareness of the person, and all pious thought is focussed upon Christ].

Fathers to the medieval decretals, really intended when they discussed eucharistic conversion, and even when they described this in the terms of transubstantiation itself.<sup>194</sup> Wyclif's belief in this actuality equally explains why he refers to the Eucharist as a mirror [*speculum*]. The host, like a mirror's surface, ceases 'to be', in the experience of the faithful onlooker, as they focus on the image that it is reflecting, an emphasis found throughout Wyclif's use of optical analogies.<sup>195</sup>

Moreover, equally central to Wyclif's insistence upon Christ's true yet symbolic presence in the bread and wine was the role played, in his perception, by Holy Scripture. In a manner akin to his metaphysical revelations, by Wyclif's own account his conception of the Eucharist did not emerge from his reading of the *liber naturae* but of the *liber Scripturae*, principally of the four New Testament versions of the Last Supper.<sup>196</sup> Since all these accounts 'record how Christ calls the bread and wine his body and blood', they teach that the bread is not annihilated.<sup>197</sup> Yet equally important are the minor differences between the

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<sup>194</sup> See, for example, Wyclif, *De apostasia*, V, 62/20-23: 'Ideo sepe dixi tanquam probabile, quod ipsi intellexerant accidentia per se esse in actu consideracionis fidelium, dum panis et vini quidditas quoad consideracionem huiusmodi sit sopita' [I have often said that it was probable that the same people [Grosseteste, Hugh of St. Victor, Peter Lombard and others] understood 'accidents' *per se* to refer to the act of the consideration of the faithful, for as long as the substance of the bread and wine, in terms of their consideration in this manner, is put to sleep]; *De Eucharistia*, I, 24/19-26. 'Hic dicitur quod multa dicta decretorum oportet sane intelligere ad sensum debent facere [...] sepe in locucionibus istius materie figuratum intelligitur per figuram [...] sic dicit theologus quod panis est corpus Christi et vinum eius sanguis' [Here it is said that one should understand many statements in the decrees sensibly so that they make sense [...] often in the statements of this material the figured thing is understood as the figure [...] thus the theologian says that the bread is the body of Christ and the wine his blood].

<sup>195</sup> See, for example, *De Eucharistia*, V, 137/2-6: 'Intencio ergo sanctorum est quod in presencia corporis Christi consideracio nature hostie suspenditur et tota intencio sequendi Christum in moribus attendatur, cum natura docet nos consideracionem luminis astrorum diffugere in solis presencia' [The meaning of the saints therefore is that contemplation of the host's nature is suspended and all one's purpose should be directed to emulating the behaviour of Christ; since nature teaches us that awareness of the light of the stars scatters in the presence of the sun]. The *locus classicus* of the mirror metaphor is 1 Cor. 13.12: 'Videmus nunc per speculum in enigmate: tunc autem facie ad faciem' [We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face]. For an example of Wyclif's use of 'speculum' in this Pauline sense, see *De Eucharistia*, I, 13.4-6.

<sup>196</sup> As Maurice Keen comments in 'Wyclif, The Bible, and Transubstantiation', in *Wyclif in His Times*, ed. by Anthony Kenny (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 1-16 (pp. 12-13): 'what settled his conviction of the bread was not realist metaphysics, at least not directly, but what he called the logic of Holy Scripture'; moreover (p. 13): 'what finally convinced him that it [contemporary eucharistic doctrine] was wrong were his scriptural studies of the year 1373-9'.

<sup>197</sup> Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, IV, 86/2-5: 'omnes quatuor evangeliste Mattheus, Marcus, Lucas et Paulus commemorant quomodo Christus dixit panem et vinum esse corpus suum et sanguinem'.

versions of the words of institution in Scripture (and indeed their difference from the version used in the Church's rite).<sup>198</sup> Christ the subtle philosopher of universals [*subtilis et realis philosophus*] thereby indicates that their efficacy is not bound to the recitation of a particular form, but that one should pay attention to the appointed meaning [*sentencia*] with which they become pregnant [*gravidata*].<sup>199</sup> The very terminology, drawn from Wyclif's scriptural hermeneutics, thus suggests how in Wyclif's perception the uniquely powerful eucharistic sign is efficacious because it is a scriptural sign, and an integral part of the logic of Scripture, that is also Christ, the Book of Life.

As in earlier attacks on Wyclif's thought, it was arguably the credibility (rather than impossibility) of such a symbolic account of the Real Presence, and the threat that this posed to the Church's control over the Mass, which drove Wyclif's condemnation. Justifying such assertions, as discussed in the Introduction, was the degree to which the efficacy of the late-medieval Mass had already rested upon a scripturally-rooted symbolism.<sup>200</sup> Many of these threats were not only developed by Wyclif's followers, as we shall see, but were arguably intended by Wyclif in his eucharistic writings, couched in finely-wrought equivocations. While the consecration should be spoken aloud, God may nonetheless 'allow the faithful the power to confect the Eucharist by means of a pious intention, *sotto voce*'.<sup>201</sup> Indeed, if the

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<sup>198</sup> Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, IV, 90/24-28: 'videtur quod non sit aliqua forma verborum ad confecionem eukaristie requisita: nam usus ecclesie nostre variat ab omnibus illis quatuor, sicut et omnes illi variant ad invicem' [it seems that there is not any particular form of words which is necessary for the confection of the Eucharist: for the use of our Church varies from all those four [forms in the Gospel], just as they all vary from one another].

<sup>199</sup> Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, IV, 96/20-25: 'ista variacio fuit magis conveniens [...] ut iste subtilis et realis philosophus ostendat se habere curam parvam de signis sed principaliter attendere ad sentenciam designatam [...] ut lex sua in varietate verborum que sunt nobis exercicia sit gravidata multiformi sentencia'.

<sup>200</sup> See Ch. 1, p. 15.

<sup>201</sup> *De Eucharistia*, IV, 101/20-24: 'Sed redeundo conceditur quod Deus ex omnipotencia sua posset concedere fideli potenciam conficiendi eukaristiam pia mente, subducta voce. Sed de hoc non queritur, ymmo quid Deus ordinavit in lege scripture sue debere fieri'. For a possible enactment of Wyclif's ideas about mental consecration in *De Eucharistia* by one of his followers, see the 'silent' Mass reportedly celebrated at many locales in the South West of England by a suspected heretic, William Ramsbury, as recounted in 'Processus contra Willielmum Remmesbury', Reg. Waltham, fol. 222v, qtd. in Anne Hudson, 'A Lollard Mass', p. 418: 'Et fecit signa crucis super hostiam et calicem, nichil dicendo set labia mouendo ac si diceret [...] Et Prefacione publice lecta, nichil dixit set signa fecit vsque ad Leuacionem nichil dicento, et sic leuauit panem et calicem

consecration is in essence mental, what need for the Mass priest at all? Although Christ has ‘left the power’ of making Christ’s body ‘to his priests’, it is often unclear in Wyclif’s writings whether by ‘priest’ he primarily meant the celebrant or the worshippers.<sup>202</sup>

Nonetheless, we shall see that Wyclif’s eucharistic theology did contain a fundamental threat to belief in that Presence, which he had not intended at least in 1380 or 1381, and which is rooted above all in its relationship to the logic of Holy Scripture. This threat may be seen in a query which, judging from Wyclif’s own eucharistic writings, was repeatedly put to him by opponents: in what way exactly is Christ’s presence in the Mass distinctive from his presence in other religious symbols, particularly in those of Scripture?<sup>203</sup> Wyclif’s immediate reply is that Scripture says this is so, as do authorities such as St. Augustine: ‘neither do we call the tongue [of St. Paul] the body and blood of Christ, nor the parchment and ink, nor the signifying signs given out by his tongue’, but only the consecrated bread and wine.<sup>204</sup> However, this is a question that Wyclif’s eucharistic writings themselves bring acutely to the fore as they seek to relate his symbolic eucharistic theology more systematically to Scripture’s use of figurative language. This may be seen in the fourth

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[...] nichil dixit vsque ad Pater Noster; quo dicto, nichil dixit vsque ad Agnus Dei; et dicto Agnus Dei, siluit vsque ad fraccionem panis’ [And he made the signs of the cross over the host and chalice, saying nothing but moving his lips as if he were speaking [...] once the Preface had been read in public, he said nothing but made signs, staying silent up until the elevation and in this manner he elevated the bread and the chalice [...] he said nothing until the Pater Noster: when this had been said, he said nothing until the Agnus Dei; and when the Agnus Dei had been said, he fell silent until the breaking of the bread].

<sup>202</sup> Wyclif, ‘Confessio’ (FZ, p. 116): ‘cum auctor qui mentiri non potest dixit, *Hoc est corpus meum*, et reliquit suis sacerdotibus virtutem similiter faciendi’. We shall see exactly this question raised in the *Lollard Sermons*, a stridently evangelical late fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century sermon-collection by a writer apparently influenced by Wyclif’s thought. See Ch. 4 of this thesis, p. 131.

<sup>203</sup> See, for example, Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, I, 15/18-26: ‘ymmo videtur quod sicut laycus videndo quamlibet creaturam videt in fide deitatem que est plus quam corpus Christi, sic videndo quamlibet creaturam fideliter sufficienter accipit corpus Christi’ [indeed it seems that just as a layman in seeing any created thing whatsoever sees the deity through faith which is more than the body of Christ, thus seeing whatever creature faithfully he sufficiently accepts the body of Christ]. See also Wyclif, *De apostasia*, VI, 71/1-5.

<sup>204</sup> Wyclif, *De apostasia*, VI, 71/13-23: ‘Apostolus Paulus potuit signando predicare dominum Jesum Christum et aliter per linguam, aliter per sacramentum corporis et sanguinis eius: nec linguam quippe ejus, nec membranas et atramentum, nec signantes sonos lingua editos [...] corpus Christi et sanguinem dicimus, sed illud tantum quod ex fructibus terrae acceptum et prece mystica consecratum’ [The Apostle Paul could preach the Lord Jesus Christ both by his tongue and by the sacrament of Christ’s body and blood [...] but only that which is taken from the fruits of the earth and consecrated by mystic prayer], quoting Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Bk. 3, 4.10.

chapter of *De Eucharistia* itself, on the power [*efficacia*] of ‘this is my body’, in which Wyclif firstly asserts the relation of the latter words to Christ’s statement that John ‘himself is Elijah’ [*ipse est Elias*]<sup>205</sup> (Mt. 11.14), and then to Christ’s explanation of the Parable of the Sowers (Mt. 13.37-40):

He that soweth the good seed, is the Son of man. And the field, is the world. And the good seed are the children of the kingdom. And the cockle, are the children of the wicked one. And the enemy that sowed them, is the devil. But the harvest is the end of the world. And the reapers are the angels.<sup>206</sup>

Wyclif’s first point here is that both statements are akin to Christ’s eucharistic words in being examples of Scripture’s use of figurative language.<sup>207</sup> The distinction, Wyclif proceeds to assert, lies in their belonging to different branches of Scripture’s *modi loquendi*: the ‘modes of speech’ into which later medieval scriptural exegetes classified its figures:

since one [the explanation of the parable] is tropological or moral [*tropologicus vel moralis*], and the other is allegorical or sacramental [*allegoricus vel sacramentalis*]: for it has the efficacy of making the body and blood of Christ to be in reality [*esse de facto*] under the sacramental species, which all other figures lacked, whether of the old law or the new.<sup>208</sup>

Certainly, Wyclif thereby distinguishes the signifying power of the words of institution from the moral signification of Christ’s parables [*modus tropologicus vel moralis*].<sup>209</sup> Yet, this statement opens another conundrum. Its train of argument implies, on the one hand, that the

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<sup>205</sup> My translation.

<sup>206</sup> Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, IV, 83/14-24: ‘Quantum ad verba sacramentalia, videtur quod Christus in illis loquitur figurative vel tropice [...] Sic enim dicit Christus quod Johannes est Helias Math. XI, 14. Sic enim dicit Math. XIII, 37-40: *Qui seminat bonum semen est filius hominis; ager autem est mundus: bonum vero semen sunt filii regni, zizania autem sunt filii nequam: inimicus autem qui seminavit ea est diabolus, messis vero est consummatio seculi, messorum autem angeli sunt*’.

<sup>207</sup> See *De Eucharistia*, IV, 83/24-29.

<sup>208</sup> *De Eucharistia*, IV, 84/1-6: ‘Differencia tamen est in modis loquendi, cum unus sit tropologicus vel moralis et alius allegoricus vel sacramentalis; habet enim efficaciam faciendi corpus Christi et sanguinem esse de facto sub sacramentalibus speciebus, a quo defecerunt alie figure tam nove legis quam veteris’.

<sup>209</sup> Nicholas of Lyra defines the *modus moralis vel tropologicus* as signifying those ‘things which are to be done by us’, thus corresponding to the traditional *sensus moralis*. See Nicholas of Lyra, ‘In nomine sanctae Trinitatis [...] de commendatione sacrae Scripturae in generali’ (*PL* 113.28D): ‘si autem referantur ad significandum ea quae per nos sunt agenda, sic est sensus moralis vel tropologicus [...] Unde versus [...] *Moralis quid agas*’. On the four senses of Scripture, see also above, p. 43, fn. 138.

eucharistic sign has its unique signifying power, lacking in all other figures, because it is in what Wyclif describes as an ‘allegorical or sacramental’ mode [*modus allegoricus vel sacramentalis*].<sup>210</sup> On the other, the term *allegoricus*, far from exclusively defining the words of institution, designates for him and other medieval thinkers a much vaster class of scriptural figures: those historical events used to signify ‘what must be believed about those things to come in the Church’.<sup>211</sup> And while the designation *sacramentalis* might be taken to refer to the Church’s ‘seven sacraments’ [*septem sacramenta*], especially given the eucharistic context, Wyclif makes it clear here that it is interchangeable with *allegoricus*, and he is thinking of scriptural signs as *sacramenta*, in the broader Augustinian definition of that term.<sup>212</sup>

Wyclif’s argument therefore strongly invites an equivocal interpretation which casts doubt upon, even undermining, what it formally asserts: the absolute distinction of the sacramental power of the eucharistic words, ‘this is my body, this is my blood’, from the efficacy of other scriptural figures. This impression is not diluted as the fourth chapter of *De Eucharistia* turns to a group of allegorical signs which were particular proof-texts in medieval debates about the mode of Christ’s bodily presence: the Old Testament events taken to prophesy the sacrament of Christ’s body, such as the lamb slaughtered at Passover, the ‘flowing of the water from the rock’ (Ex. 12), and the manna eaten by the Israelites in the desert.<sup>213</sup> Again, Wyclif formally endorses the position expressed by other medieval theologians (including his own opponents) that these were mere shadows of the physical

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<sup>210</sup> See the contrasting judgement of this passage of David Aers, *Sanctifying Signs: Making Christian Tradition in late Medieval England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), pp. 58-61. Aers comments, p. 58, that the language in this passage may not have helped Wyclif’s opponents to understand what he sees as Wyclif’s ‘continual attempts to show the distinctiveness of sacramental figuration’.

<sup>211</sup> *De Veritate* I, 65/16-17: ‘allegorice, quando per historiam scripture, factam ad literam, signatur credendum in ecclesia successurum’.

<sup>212</sup> Aers argues in *Sanctifying Signs*, p. 60, that Wyclif decides ‘to treat *allegoricus* and *sacramentalis* as synonymous’, in part because Scripture ‘delivers to our apprehension divine and spiritual realities organized in events and figurative language by God’.

<sup>213</sup> *De Eucharistia*, IV, 87/29-88/9 ‘Tres, inquam, inter multas erant figure huius sacramenti in veteri testamento; prima erat agnus pascalis [...] Secunda figura huius sacramenti fuit fluxus aque de lapide [...] Tercia figura erat manna (de quo Exod. XVI)’.

actuality of Christ's presence in the Mass.<sup>214</sup> While they were 'greatly distant' from Christ's body, Christ is by contrast present in the Mass through the eucharistic sign both 'in place and in time'.<sup>215</sup> Nonetheless, it also becomes clear that prophecy and presence are hardly the binary opposites emphasized by other later-medieval exegetes. Rather, they relate in terms of what Wyclif calls degrees [*gradus*] of efficacy.<sup>216</sup> Even those who ate the manna in faith, although 'greatly distant from the opening of the doors', were 'incorporated into the Church'.<sup>217</sup> As Wyclif quotes St. Paul: 'all drank the same spiritual drink', for 'they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ'.<sup>218</sup> While such ideas are hardly heretical, they thereby indicate that Wyclif's own interest is more in the similarity than the differences between Christ's presence in the Eucharist and the function of its prophetic signs, thus muddying the temporal and spatial distinctions that he overtly asserts.

### **2.3. The Matter of the Sacraments**

In the rest of this chapter, we shall chart how Wyclif's reluctance or inability to distinguish the logic of the eucharistic sign from that of Holy Scripture is central to the

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<sup>214</sup> See Aquinas, *ST IIIa*, 75.1: 'Sacrificia enim Veteris Legis illud verum sacrificium passionis Christi continebant solum in figura: secundum illud *Heb. x*, *Umbram habens lex futurorum bonorum, non ipsum rerum imaginem*. Ed ideo oportuit ut aliquid plus haberet sacrificium novae legis a Christo institutum [...] contineret ipsum passum, non solum in significatione vel figura, sed etiam in rei veritate' [For the sacrifices of the Old Law contained that true sacrifice of Christ's passion, according to Heb. 10: 'the law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things'. And so it was proper for the sacrifice of the New Law instituted by Christ to have something more [...] that it should contain Himself spread out [on the cross], not only in signification, but in the truth of the thing]. On the attack of Duns Scotus on heretics who considered such figures to be comparable to 'this is my body', see Levy, *Parameters of Orthodoxy*, p. 194. See also Ch. 5, pp. 164-165, 167 of this thesis on the Carmelite Thomas Netter's argument, in response to Wyclif, that Old Testament prophecies relate to Christ's Incarnation only as shadows do to the objects that cast them.

<sup>215</sup> Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, IV, 87/5-8: 'ubi alia sacramenta multum distant a re sacramenti tam loco quam res sacramenti tempore, hoc sacramentum habet rem suam tam loco quam tempore concomitantem'.

<sup>216</sup> Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, V, 121/22-24: 'et sic cum in signis sint gradus multiplices, patet quod nos tempore legis gratie habemus signa efficaciora quam habebant patres veteris testamenti' [and since there are multiple degrees of signs, it is clear that we in the time of the law of grace have more efficacious signs than than did the fathers of the Old Testament]. 'Confessio' (*FZ*, p. 122): 'Sed oportet eos cognoscere gradus in signis, et [...] credere virtutem verborum Christi' [But they should recognize the grades in signs, and believe the power of the words of Christ].

<sup>217</sup> *De Eucharistia*, IV, 88/22-25: 'Quamvis autem multi comedentes manna fideliter erant incorporati ecclesie, tamen illo sacramento non meruerunt presencialiter sed valde distanter apercionem ianue'.

<sup>218</sup> Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, IV, 88/5-7: 'Omnes, inquit, spiritualem potum eundum biberunt, bibebant autem de spiritali consequente eos petra; petra autem erat Christus', quoting 1. Cor. 10.4.

further articulation of his ideas about the meaning of the sacraments: largely-uncharted evolutions which nonetheless echo in the claims of his opponents, and the judgement of Maurice Keen and Jeremy Catto, that Wyclif's sacramental ideas were likely in flux to the end of his life.<sup>219</sup> While, as Anne Hudson's work on the problems of dating Wyclif's writings has shown, 'extreme caution should be exercised in dating, [...] or seeing a chronological sequence in, the development of Wyclif's ideas',<sup>220</sup> we shall see these shifts particularly expressed in writings, probably composed after works such as *De Eucharistia* and when Wyclif had been forced into retirement in Lutterworth, that are more focussed upon the sacramental system as a whole, and with imparting his ideas more directly to a broader audience.

This shift may be seen, not least, in Wyclif's introduction to the sacraments in Book Four of his *Trialogus*, a work which may have been completed in or after 1382, and which presents instruction on a wide range of religious issues, possibly for an educated lay as well as clerical reader, through a three-way dialogue between Truth [*Alithia*], Wisdom [*Phronesis*] and Falsehood [*Pseustis*].<sup>221</sup> In its opening chapter, 'on signs and sacraments'

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<sup>219</sup> Maurice Keen argues in 'Wyclif, The Bible, and Transubstantiation', p. 15, that: 'Wyclif's own views on the Eucharist were [...] incomplete and still developing when he died'. See also J.I. Catto, 'Wyclif and the Cult of the Eucharist', in *The Bible in the Medieval World: Essays in Memory of Beryl Smalley*, ed. by Katherine Walsh and Diana Wood (London: Blackwell, 1985), pp. 269-286 (p. 271): 'there is no reason to suppose that the position stated in his *Confessio* was any more satisfactory [than older positions], and Woodford claimed that he had changed his mind again by 1383 or 1384'. See Woodford, *De sacramento altaris*, MS Royal 7.B.III, f. 45r, qtd. in Robson, *Wyclif and the Schools*, pp. 192-3, fn. 2: 'Iam tarde, postquam recessit de universitate [...] timore ut credo ductus, dixit quod in sacramento est corpus Christis sub forma panis, sed asserit se non explicasse an illa forma sit substantia panis vel accidens sine subiecto' [Recently, after he had left the University [...] out of fear, I believe, he said that the body of Christ is in the sacrament under the form of bread, but asserts that he did not explain whether that form was the substance of bread or an accident without subject].

<sup>220</sup> Hudson, 'The Development of Wyclif's *Summa Theologiae*', p. 68. The issue of apparent revision to Wyclif's works, and the problems this creates for establishing a chronology to his work and ideas, is also discussed above, p. 37, fn. 112.

<sup>221</sup> See *Trialogus*, 'Prologus', p. 38, 'Cum locutio ad personam multis plus complacet quam locutio generalis, et mens multorum [...] ex tali locutione acuitur, videri posset multis utilis quidam *Trialogus*' [Since speech directed to a character pleases many people more than general speech, and the mind of many [...] is sharpened through such speech, a certain *Trialogue* may be considered useful to many]. The nineteenth-century editor of *Trialogus*, Lechler, argues from apparent references to the Earthquake Council convened to condemn Wyclif's ideas in May 1382 that it cannot have been completed before that year (*Trialogus*, pp. 3-4). Thomson, *Latin Writings of Wyclif*, p. 79, dates it to late 1382 or early 1383, although Margaret Aston (*Faith and Fire*, p. 28,

[*de signis et sacramentis*], Truth opens with the broadest possible Augustinian understanding of *signum* as encompassing all Creation, since ‘just as smoke naturally signifies fire’, so ‘every created thing is a sign of the creator’, the source of its being.<sup>222</sup> Truth, however, then goes on to argue that these signs are therefore also *sacramenta*. While the idea of a created thing as a ‘sacrament’, broadly speaking, is again unremarkably Augustinian, the first twist in Truth’s argument is that, being such, it is also the visible form of an invisible grace’ [*visibilis forma invisibilis gratiae*] and a ‘sign of a sacred thing’ [*sacrae rei signum*]: terms which in medieval theology (as with *sacramentum* itself) primarily denoted hallmark attributes of the core ‘seven sacraments’ [*septem sacramenta*] of the Church.<sup>223</sup> The appropriation of these ecclesiastically resonant terms to ‘sacraments’, generally speaking, thereby leads Truth to a first provocative question: in what way are ‘the seven sacraments particularly distinct’ from such signs?’<sup>224</sup> Furthermore, she ventures:

According to the description I have given, the preaching of the apostolic word should seem to be a sacrament, in that it is a sign of the holiness of its audience. And thus it [preaching] is expressly enjoined by the faith of Scripture as though it were the exercise of a further sacrament [*sicut exercitium alterius sacramenti*], since, in the last chapter of St. John’s Gospel, the feeding of Christ’s sheep is most tenderly enjoined [...] Why therefore is that grazing on the word not a sacrament? [...] indeed in Scripture there are thousands of such perceptible signs [*sensibilia signa*], which have as much the character [*ratio*] of a sacrament as those commonly called ‘the seven’. Similarly the

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fn. 5) has subsequently argued from the place of these references towards the end of the book, and other internal evidence, that ‘Wycliffe was already at work on and had completed a large part of *Triialogus* before May 1382’. See again Hudson’s warning about the fundamental problems with attributing precise dates to the composition of Wyclif’s writings, discussed above, p. 37, fn. 112.

<sup>222</sup> *Triialogus*, IV, 1/244: ‘Nam omnis creatura est signum creatoris, sicut fumus naturaliter ignem significat’.

<sup>223</sup> *Triialogus*, IV, 1/244: ‘Et si diffinitive sacramentum sit sacrae rei signum, videtur quod omne signabile sit etiam sacramentum [...] Quod si sacramentum sit invisibilis gratiae visibilis forma [...] videtur quod quaelibet creatura sensibilis sit etiam sacramentum’. See Stock, *Implications of Literacy*, pp. 258-259: ‘sacramentum was made [by Augustine] to fit one of Augustine’s main theological tenets, namely that objects in the created world are (*signa*) representing realities (*res*) which are obscure, hidden, and often divinely inspired’. Augustine’s definition of *sacramentum* is also discussed in Ch. 1 of this thesis, p. 4, fn. 11; p. 7, fn. 23. See Hugh of St. Victor, *Summa sententiarum*, Bk. IV, Ch. 1, in *PL* 176, 117A: ‘Augustinus: Sacramentum est sacrae rei signum. Idem: Sacramentum est invisibilis gratiae visibilis forma, ut in sacramento baptismatis figuratur ablutio interior per illam exterioriorem et visibilem.’. See also Rosier-Catach, *Parole Efficace*, p. 497.

<sup>224</sup> *Triialogus*, IV, 1/244-5: ‘Quomodo ergo sunt solum *septem sacramenta* distincta specificae?’.

sacrament of the Eucharist, of greater honour among the other sacraments, may be divided into two kinds [*species*], that is into the sacrament of bread and that of wine.<sup>225</sup>

Here (expressed somewhat offhandedly as though self-evident), is the substantive contention to which Truth's preamble has led: that the preached word should be considered as a sacrament in the same breath as the 'seven sacraments' which formed the core rituals of the Church. This is an assertion which echoes while exceeding, at least in explicitness, the quasi-sacramental claims for Scripture that we have charted in a range of later medieval writings, from those of Robert Grosseteste through to Wyclif's own *De Veritate*.<sup>226</sup> This claim is further reinforced by Truth's assertion that the body of scriptural signs are 'perceptible' or 'tangible' [*sensibilia*], yet another quality that was generally held to distinguish the appointed rituals of the Church, being visible events, from verbally-mediated signs.<sup>227</sup>

However, Truth also makes clear that to become conscious of preached words as sacraments, in this ecclesiastical context, involves more than vastly expanding the number of the original 'seven'. The real sting in her discussion of the meaning of 'sacrament' is, purposefully, to develop the uncertainty we have already seen suggested in *De Veritate* and in *De Eucharistia*: in what way the sacramental character [*ratio*] of the Church's rites are

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<sup>225</sup> *Triialogus*, IV, 1, 245: 'Similiter praedicatio verbi apostolici videtur esse sacramentum secundum descriptionem praedictam, eo quod est signum sanctitatis auditorii; et ita signanter in fide scripturae inungitur sicut exercitium alterius sacramenti, cum, Johannis ultimo, sub obtentu triplicis amoris Christi pastus ovium suarum tenerrime est injunctus; quare ergo non est ista verbalis pastio sacramentum? [...] Mille autem sunt talia sensibilia signa in scriptura, quae habent tantam rationem sacramenti sicut habent communiter ista septem. Similiter sacramentum eucharistiae, quod est majoris honoris inter cetera sacramenta, videtur dividi in duas species, scilicet in sacramentum panis et sacramentum vini.'

<sup>226</sup> See Ch. 1, pp. 17-24, on the tradition of medieval thought about the relationship between preaching and the sacraments.

<sup>227</sup> See Aquinas, *ST IIIa*, 60.4: 'cum res sacrae quae per sacramenta significantur, sint quaedam spiritualia et intelligibilia bona [...] consequens est ut per aliquas res sensibiles significatio sacramenti impleatur' [since the sacred things which are signified through sacraments are particular spiritual and intelligible benefits [...] the signification of a sacrament must be fulfilled through perceptible things]. See also the discussion of this topic in Rosier-Catach, *Parole Efficace*, pp. 44-54. As Wyclif himself states in *Tractatus de ecclesia*, ed. by Johann Loserth, Wyclif Society (London: Trübner & Co., 1886), Ch. 19, pp. 458-459: 'debemus credere quod omnia sacramenta sensibilia rite ministrata habent efficaciam salutarem' [we must believe that all perceptible sacraments duly ministered have salvific efficacy].

distinct from those of scriptural words, in particular the Eucharist itself which as she states may itself be broken down into scriptural tropes of ‘bread’ and ‘wine’.<sup>228</sup> Equally significant is the reply of her respondent, Wisdom [*Phronesis*]. Far from dialectically resolving this quandary, as one might expect from a didactic Platonic conversation, he widens it, by stating that: ‘I have not come across scraps of parchment on which it is written that the term ‘sacrament’ should be exclusively confined [*limitari univoce*] to these seven’.<sup>229</sup> Indeed, it is with a protest that he has despaired of speaking unambiguously [*desperans de univocatione*], leaving the issue in play, that Wisdom now proceeds to the purported main topic of the chapter, the seven sacraments, commonly understood [*istorum septem sacramentorum vulgarium*].<sup>230</sup>

In particular, the central reason why Wisdom has raised this issue emerges as he turns first of all to the sacrament of the Eucharist, being ‘more venerable than the others’ and having ‘greatest basis in Scripture’ itself; and about which Truth wishes that all equivocations should be cleared away and its essence [*quidditas*] laid bare.<sup>231</sup> Discussing the vital issue of ‘how the consecrated bread is the Lord’s body’, Wisdom invokes, as analogies to the words of institution, several of the same figurative statements that Wyclif had already used in *De Eucharistia* (‘John is Elijah’, ‘the rock was Christ’).<sup>232</sup> He then looks further

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<sup>228</sup> Wyclif’s conception of the bread and wine as distinct sacramental species, echoing an existing medieval argument that the body and blood are not present together under both, may have had a secondary purpose in arguing against the withholding of the chalice from the laity in the later medieval Mass. For precedents, see Rosier-Catach, *Parole Efficace*, on the opinions of the theologians Richard Fishacre (p. 238), Stephen Langton and Simon de Tournai (p. 385).

<sup>229</sup> *Dialogus*, IV, 1, 245-6: ‘Nec didici pictatias ex quibus adjectis hoc nomen sacramentum limitari debet univoce ad haec septem’.

<sup>230</sup> *Dialogus*, IV, 1, 246: ‘Ideo desperans de univocatione detego narrative ordinem istorum septem sacramentorum vulgarium’.

<sup>231</sup> *Dialogus*, IV, 1, 247: ‘Dic, rogo frater Phronesis, de eucharistia, quae est penultimum sacramentum, tum quia est magis venerabile inter cetera, tum secundo quia videtur habere foundationem maximam in scriptura [...] Et primo, ne laboremus in aequivocis, specificare debemus quidditatem hujus sacramenti venerabilis’.

<sup>232</sup> *Dialogus*, IV, 7, 266: ‘Cap VII. *Quo modo panis consecratur corpus sit Domini* [...] Et novisti quod triplex est praedicatio, scilicet formalis essentialis et habitualis [...] Nam secundum tertiam dici tibi, quomodo Christus dixit de Baptista, quod sit Helias, Matth. xi., apostolus dicit de Christo 2 Cor. x, moralisando gesta legis veteris, “petra, inquit, erat Christus” [Ch. 7. *In what way the consecrated bread is the body of the Lord* [...] you have learned that predication has three forms, that is, formal, essential and habitual [...] I have told

afield to an illuminating parallel with Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream, in Gn. 41, in which the latter had seen seven fat cows and seven full heads of grain:

The faith of Scripture asserts that the seven head of grain and the seven fat cows are seven years of fertility, and as Augustine notes, Scripture does not say that they signify those years [non dicit quod *signant* illos annos], but that they are the years themselves [sed quod *sunt* ipsi anni] And you may often find such a manner of speech in Scripture.<sup>233</sup>

As the editor's italics highlight, Wisdom locates within this scriptural trope's use of 'to be' [*esse*] more than the notion of mere signification: invoking for authority Augustine's discussion of this and other uses of *esse* in Scripture (without giving exact references), it suggests that just as bread becomes body through signification, so the seven heads, in Joseph's understanding, similarly become the seven years.<sup>234</sup> On a first reading, this interpretation of the 'seven heads' powerfully supports Wyclif's purported defence of his eucharistic theology, by generating a range of resonant analogies with the eucharistic sign: just as Christ's body in the Mass is truly present while being less real than the physical actuality of that body in heaven, according to Wyclif, so the presence of the 'seven years' *in signo*, while real, also anticipates an unactualized future reality. Further, the seven heads of

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you that it is in the third manner, in which Christ says of the Baptist that he is Elijah (Mt. 11), that the Apostle in 2. Cor. 10 [sic. actually 1. Cor. 10] says of Christ, in moralizing upon the deeds of the Old Law, 'the rock, he said, was Christ'.

<sup>233</sup> *Trialogus*, IV, 7, 266-267: 'Et Genes. xli. fides scripturae asserit, quod septem spicae et septem boves crassae sunt septem anni fertilitatis; et ut Augustinus notat, scriptura non dicit quod *signant* illos annos, sed quod *sunt* ipsi anni. Et talem locutionem spissim in scriptura poteris reperire'.

<sup>234</sup> The responses of Wyclif's own opponents suggest the passages of Augustine which Wyclif may have particularly had in mind. The most obvious is Augustine's 'Quaestiones in Leviticum', among several Augustinian texts which, the Franciscan John Tyssyngton infers, Wycliffites used to defend a figurative reading of 'this is my body' (John Tyssyngton, 'Confessio Magistri Johannis Tyssyngton de ordine Minorum', in *FZ*, pp. 133-180 [pp. 149-150]), and which is also cited by Thomas Netter in his well-founded disagreement with Wyclif on Augustine's understanding of 'to be'. This text discusses Gn. 41 and several other scriptural texts in language which, with some effort, may be read as agreeing with Wyclif's interpretation (the passage is quoted by Netter, see Ch. 5, p. 169, fn. 630). But see also two other texts mentioned by Tyssyngton: Augustine, 'In Joannis Evangelium', 63 (also quoted by Netter, see Ch. 5, p. 168) and Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, Bk. XVIII, Ch. XLVIII: 'Quoniam omnia significantia videntur quodammodo earum rerum, quas significant, sustinere personas: sicut dictum est ab Apostolo, Petra erat Christus (I Cor. X, 4); quoniam petra illa, de qua hoc dictum est, significabat utique Christum' [Since all signifying things seem in a certain way to sustain the characters of the things which they signify, it was therefore said by the Apostle, 'the rock was Christ', since the rock about which this was said certainly signified Christ] (The Latin text is drawn from *PL* 41, 610. The first clause only is cited by Tyssyngton).

grain are not created things but products of what Wyclif called ‘imaginary vision’: pure signs, without physical substance.<sup>235</sup> Thus they exemplify the state which Wyclif has previously argued that the consecrated bread must achieve through a true yet symbolic mode of transformation (a ‘trans-figuration’, as it were), so that the worshipper’s mental focus can move beyond it to rest upon the body itself.

Yet the great paradox of this analogy lies in what it presupposes about the signifying function of the seven heads of grain themselves, and thus about the body of scriptural figures, as *sacramenta*, which Wyclif claims use *est* in a similar manner. As the Carmelite Thomas Netter would rightly complain, it implies that such figures also thereby ‘encompass the being’ [*implicant esse*] of their signified objects.<sup>236</sup> Even as Wyclif formally defends the eucharistic sign, his analogy implies that its essential defining properties belong to scriptural figures themselves: not only do they ‘effect what they signify’ [*efficant quod significant*], a general efficacy attached by medieval theologians to the sacraments of the Christian era, but are they not also the very thing which Wyclif had previously reserved to the eucharistic sign alone, being at once ‘truth and figure’ [*simul veritas et figura*]?<sup>237</sup>

Wyclif thereby exposes what I believe is the central crux of his eucharistic theology and indeed his entire sacramental thought, and which seemingly invites exactly the accusation fended off throughout his eucharistic writings: that there is no real distinction for him between the way that Christ is present in the Eucharist and in Scripture. Nonetheless, as we shall chart in the last section of this chapter, its great significance is not that it highlights the straightforward weakening in Wyclif’s conception of the eucharistic presence, as was suggested by his late-medieval opponents, or because it indicates his declining faith in the power of symbols.

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<sup>235</sup> See Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, VII, 208/1-2: ‘homo videt ymaginarie illa, que non habent existenciam, ut montem auream’ [through imagination a man sees things which which do not exist, like a golden mountain] and *De Eucharistia*, VII, pp. 206-208, for his broader discussion of imaginative vision.

<sup>236</sup> See Ch. 5 of this thesis, pp. 163, 171.

<sup>237</sup> See above in this chapter, p. 56.

On the contrary, Wyclif's very elevation of preaching to the level of sacrament in the consciousness of his readers, in an ecclesiastical sense, and his description of 'sacrament' as applying equivocally to the Church's *septem sacramenta* themselves, gestures towards his explanation of this overlap and the most important claim of his hermeneutic thought: namely, a further radical extension of the sacramental powers that belonged to the unique essence [*quidditas*] of Holy Scripture itself. This is borne out by Wyclif's treatment of preaching in the final texts that we shall consider in this chapter, belonging to the extensive sermon cycle which by his own profession were produced or reworked, when Wyclif felt his end to be near, in Lutterworth, likely between 1381 and 1384.<sup>238</sup> However, this articulation is not only a reflection of the sermons' lateness in his intellectual career. Resigned to his abandonment by England's 'Caesars',<sup>239</sup> in them Wyclif seems least willing to speak in equivocations about his fundamental beliefs, and most desirous of expressing them as plainly, systematically and to as many people as possible, above all the 'simple laity'.<sup>240</sup> Indeed, more than in any other writing we have considered, Wyclif ties the delivery of this message to his appointed destiny as a prophet: like John the Baptist and Christ himself, he

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<sup>238</sup> On Wyclif's late Latin sermons, in general, see Anne Hudson, 'Wyclif's Latin sermons: Questions of Form, Date and Audience', in *Studies in the Transmission of Wyclif's Writings*, item VI. As Hudson comments, these comprised over 180 sermons 'arranged in three cycles on, respectively, the dominical gospels, the Sanctorale [...] gospels, and on the dominical epistles'; they were apparently composed 'between his [Wyclif's] departure from Oxford in the autumn of 1381 and his death on 31 December 1384' (p. 224). The dominical sermons, considered in this chapter, were likely written between the winter and early spring of 1381/1382 (p. 237). On dating, see also Thomson, *Latin Writings of Wyclif*, p. 97, and Loserth, *LS I*, pp. xxv-xxiv.

<sup>239</sup> See, for example, *LS I*, LVII, 375/32-34: 'Unde videtur multis probabile quod ceca devocio cesarum et principum terre, quin potius eorum yprocrisis, plus nocet ecclesie quam tyrannorum crudelitas' [whence it appears probable to many that the blind allegiance of the caesars and princes of the earth harms the Church more than the cruelty of tyrants].

<sup>240</sup> See Wyclif, *Praefatio*, *LS I*, IV, 'Cum Deus undiquaque plenus abhorret vacuum et abominatur in creatura sua rationali ocio [...] ideo ut sententia Dei sit planior et servus suus inutilis excusabilior, videtur quod in illo ocio quo a scolasticis ociamur et in particulari edificacioni ecclesie in fine dierum nostrorum sollicitamur, sint sermones rudes ad populum colligendi [...] Nam ea intencione ego cum quocunque catholico plane loquor' [Since God, full in every way, abhors a vacuum and leisure is detested in his rational creature [...] so that God's meaning should be more intelligible and his useless servant more excusable, it seems that in that leisure in which I am free from academic affairs, and [since] I am preoccupied, in my final days, with the specific building up of the Church, rudimentary sermons for the people should be amassed [...] with that intention I am speaking clearly to any orthodox person whosoever]. See Hudson, 'Wyclif's Latin Sermons', p. 230 on the evidence suggesting that the cycle 'was planned and executed by Wyclif as a whole' and that 'it was intended as it stands to be read as a whole'. See Ch. 3 of this thesis, pp. 84-86, p. 98 on the significance of the scope, aim and content of these Latin sermons to the *English Wycliffite Sermons*.

wishes to ‘speak the edifying truth to the people until he dies’ and like Abraham, faithfully to serve God. He sees himself as a prophet who poignantly perceived through faith ‘the promised land at a distance [...] without taking possession’.<sup>241</sup>

#### **2.4. The Breaking of the Bread: Preaching as Eucharist**<sup>242</sup>

As with Wyclif’s other writings on Scripture, he develops his vision of preaching through his parsing of key biblical tropes. Central among these is that of the bread by which Christ miraculously fed the five thousand in Jn. 6, expounded in a sermon nominally for the Sunday before Advent: a miracle whose meanings, as we have considered, are fundamental to medieval thought about the relationship of Scripture and the Eucharist.<sup>243</sup> Wyclif’s reading of Christ’s miracle as figuring his distribution of the bread of Scripture entirely follows the exegesis established in commentaries such as the *Glossa*: the boy with the loaves is Christ, the Messiah prophesied by Isaiah;<sup>244</sup> its multiplication, the transformation of the religion of the Old Testament into the evangelical religion of the New.<sup>245</sup> Similarly established are both the question that Wyclif comes to pose (whether the old Mosaic texts are to be observed in the era of the New) and his immediate answer, that while their laws

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<sup>241</sup> *LS I, III, 20/14-17*: ‘patet secundum exemplar Baptiste et Christi quod usque ad mortem debet quilibet propheta dicere populo edificatoriam veritatem’; *LS IV, LXII, 486/32-36*: ‘sicut Abraham vidit procul terram promissionis ex spe promissionis [...] sine pede possessionis’.

<sup>242</sup> The trope ‘Preaching as Eucharist’ has been used, in a general sense, by Charles Wood, ‘Preaching as Eucharist’ (unpublished master’s thesis, Mount Angel Seminary, Or., 2000).

<sup>243</sup> *LS I, LVII, 372/21-22*: ‘Cum sublevasset oculos Jesus et vidisset quia multitudo magna venit ad eum, dixit ad Philippum. Joh. VI, 5’ [When Jesus therefore had lifted up his eyes, and seen that a very great multitude cometh to him, he said to Philip]. On the significance of Jn. 6 to medieval eucharistic thought, see Ch. 1, pp. 3-10.

<sup>244</sup> *LS I, LVII, 373/26-29*: ‘Verumtamen est unus puer qui natus est nobis (de quo Isaie IX, 6), habens quinque panes ordeacos et duos pisces per quos totam multitudinem humani generis potest reficere’ [Nevertheless there is a child born to us (of which Is. 10.6 speaks) having five barley loaves and two fishes].

<sup>245</sup> *LS I, LVII, 373/37-374/2*: ‘Sed Jesus accepit panes et pisces ac agendo Deo gratias distribuit sic discumbentibus, quia quinque libros Mosaycos tamquam panes et sensus mysticum duplicis testamenti tamquam edulium’ [And Jesus took the loaves and fishes and when he had given thanks, he distributed to them that had sat down, since the five books of Moses are, as it were, the bread and the mystical sense of the two testaments its nourishment].

have ceased to have authority, ‘the mystical sense of the books of Moses is to be consumed in perpetuity’.<sup>246</sup>

Nonetheless, the radical nature of Wyclif’s interpretation of Jn. 6 lies in how he expounds the future transformation of late-medieval English religion itself as the *sensus mysticus* of this text. The pre-Christian barley-ceremonies of Old Testament Israel become a symbol of English religion’s current fallen state from an original evangelical purity: ‘Alas, there are traditions which have been so long and bitterly scattered about by Antichrist that the law of Moses was more tolerable to the Jews than the law of Christ is today [...] There is no part of the Gospel which has not become bitter through sinister glossing’.<sup>247</sup> Christ’s transformation of the barley-loaves prophesies the sifting of these tares through teaching and preaching, to bring about the restoration of a religion based upon the unadulterated word of Christ. While ‘English grain has more superfluous spines and chaff than that of other nations, it is more useful for making bread [...] the theology of our people, which by agreeing with the [Roman] Curia is nearer to the barley ceremonies [of Israel], will, when purged through subtlety and exposition, be a more uniform, intelligible and fruitful pasture for them’.<sup>248</sup>

Moreover, Wyclif predicts, this restoration will involve several further radical transformations in English religion. Not least, the Church will sift out the elect from the damned, as implied in Wyclif’s interpretation of the five thousand whom Christ ordered to

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<sup>246</sup> *LS I, LVII, 374/13-18*: ‘Circa hoc evangelium primo dubitatur utrum illi panes ordeacei sint hodie a fidelibus comedendi, et videtur quod non, quia iam legalia cessaverunt. Sed certum videtur ex fide quod sensus mysticus librorum Moysi sit in perpetuum comedendus. Asperitas autem ordeacea cessantibus ceremoniis hodie est lenita’.

<sup>247</sup> *LS I, LVII, 374/18-29*: ‘Sed heu per Antichristum sunt tradiciones tam aspere et longe disperse quod lex Moysi fuit Judeis tolerabilior quam hodie est lex Christi [...] Non enim est aliqua pars evangelii quin ex glossa sinistra sit ut evangelium palliata et sic spice longiores atque asperiores communi ordeo germinarunt’.

<sup>248</sup> *LS I, LVII, 374/30-37*: ‘Et notandum est quod frumentum Anglie plus habet spinosis superfluis ac paleis [...] quam habet frumentum alterius gentis; sed utilius est pro faccione panis [...] theologia nostre gentis sit concordando curie propinquior ceremoniis ordeaceis sed ratione subtilitatis et explanacionis cum fuerit purgata sit planior ac pastui populi [...] clarior atque fertilior’.

sit and feed as ‘all those in whom predestination flourished’.<sup>249</sup> His greatest revelation, however, is reserved for the conclusion of the sermon, in which Wyclif articulates the restored sacramental function that will be performed by the word of Scripture itself, newly purified, when broken and distributed to the people through preaching:

such an office exceeds the celebration and every other mystery of a sacrament [*istud officium excedit celebracionem et omne aliud misterium sacramenti*]. But alas nowadays, through the disciples of Antichrist called prelates, this office has been restricted and brought to ruin.<sup>250</sup>

The emphasis here upon the absolute superiority of preaching to the sacraments of the Church, including the sacrament of the altar, exceeds the comparisons we have encountered both in earlier medieval speculation, and in Wyclif’s own writings.<sup>251</sup> In particular, Wyclif’s justification for this claim is expressed in his sermon on a Gospel-text central to medieval thought about preaching, Christ’s parable of ‘the sower [who] went out to sow his seed’ (Lk. 8.5).<sup>252</sup> Wyclif argues that through this parable, Christ intended to impart that when one preaches ‘the Lord Jesus Christ’, these words are in their essential nature [*quidditas*] ‘the Lord Jesus Christ Himself’ [*ipsum Dominum Jesum Christum*]; they are the Word of God

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<sup>249</sup> *LS I, LVII, 373/34-36*: ‘*Discubuerunt ergo viri numero quasi quinque millia, quia omnes illi in quibus virebat predestinatio*’ [*The men therefore sat down, in number about five thousand, since they were all those in whom predestination flourished*]. See Netter, *DFC I.324C-D*: ‘Vero ergo et dolorose fregit hanc unitatem Ecclesiae noster Wicleffus quando tam saepe hortabatur fideles, ut se a caeteris Christianis indilate secernerent, & quod utique deterius est, a Praelatis Ecclesiae separarent, ne cum eis communicarent in Sacramentis, aut Sacramentalibus Christi signis’ [Truly and sorrowfully, therefore, our Wyclif breaks this unity of the Church when he so frequently encourages the faithful to separate themselves from other Christians, and what is certainly more wicked, from the Church’s prelates, lest they should communicate with them in the sacraments of the Church, or in the sacramental signs of Christ]. See also the discussion of this passage in Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Clarendon: Oxford, 1988), p. 169.

<sup>250</sup> *LS I, LVII, 377/15-22*: ‘*istud officium excedit celebracionem et omne aliud misterium sacramenti. Sed heu hodie per Antichristi discipulos qui vocantur prelati ecclesie artatur et confunditur istud officium*’.

<sup>251</sup> The thought of important precursors to Wyclif’s thought, such as Robert Grosseteste and Thomas Docking, is discussed in the introduction to this thesis.

<sup>252</sup> *LS I, XVI, 107/22*: ‘*Exiit qui seminat seminare semen suum, Luce VIII, 5*’. For another medieval use of the trope of the preached word as seed, see, for example, Humbert of Romans, *Liber de eruditione praedicatorum*, Pt. VI, Chs. 25-28, pp. 438-445.

personally [*personaliter*] and substantially [*substancialiter*].<sup>253</sup> While we have already seen Wyclif's writings, increasingly, argue the identity of Scripture with Christ, this and similar passages in the sermons stand out for the explicit way in which they claim terms such as 'substance' and 'personhood' for scriptural meaning. These were actualities which in late-medieval religion were central to belief in Christ's physical presence in the bread and wine of the Mass, but which Wyclif's writings on the Eucharist had consistently denied were physically contained within those symbols.<sup>254</sup> Wyclif's specific intention to appropriate these actualities from the Mass altogether, however, becomes clear as he comes to juxtapose the effects of the latter with that of preaching:

the confection of the Eucharist causes only the bread to be [*non facit nisi panem esse*] the body of Christ in a sacramental manner, but proclaiming the Gospel makes something more worthy, since it causes the human soul to be, in a certain way, Christ Himself [...] thus the Bishop of Lincoln [Grosseteste] beautifully declares that 'the work of preaching the Gospel exceeds every alchemical work [...]'.<sup>255</sup>

Certainly, the first part of this statement is readable as enforcing the orthodox belief that Wyclif has insisted upon throughout his eucharistic writings, that the consecrated bread of the Mass is uniquely the sacrament of Christ's body; the latter part can be read as arguing the assimilation of Christ through scriptural meditation. Yet taken as a whole, the statement reveals the heart of Wyclif's prophetic message, which exposes why preaching must have

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<sup>253</sup> *LS I*, XVI, 108/10-13: 'et ideo apostolus elegit predicare in populo dominum Jesum Christum, non tragedias sive comedias, [...] sed ipsum dominum Jesum Christum'; I, XVI, 108/9-10: 'Quoad quiditatem autem huius verbi patet quod ipsum est personaliter verbum Dei'; I, XVI, 108.14-15: 'Quamvis autem hoc semen sit substancialiter verbum Dei'. See 1. Cor. 1.23.

<sup>254</sup> See Wyclif, 'Confessio' (*FZ*, p. 115): 'Non tamen audeo dicere quod corpus Christi sit essentialiter, substancialiter, corporaliter, vel identice ille panis' [I do not however dare to say that the body of Christ is essentially, substantially, physically or identically that bread], also discussed above, p. 56. See also *LS I*, XXVI, 174/4-5: 'Nam solus Christus per se et essentialiter est scriptura'.

<sup>255</sup> *LS I*, XVI, 110/16-22: 'eucaristie confectio non facit nisi panem esse sacramentaliter corpus Christi, evangelizacio vero facit naturam digniorem, quia animam humanam esse quoddammodo ipsum Christum [...] et ideo Lincolnensis pulchre declarat quod *opus evangelizandi excedit omne opus alchymicum*'. I have not located the exact wording in Grosseteste's writings as ascribed to him by Wyclif. However, Gradon and Hudson (*EWS V*, p. 128) see it referring to the comparison of preaching to alchemy in Grosseteste's *Dictum 2* (qtd. in Ch. 1 of this thesis, p. 19, fn. 74). This text, as they also comment, is cited in Wyclif's *Opus evangelicum* (see Ch. 2 of this thesis, p. 51, fn. 166).

the pre-eminent function in a reformed English religion, as foreshadowed in the writings of figures such as Grosseteste: namely that in the reception of the scriptural word lay the source of the existential, eucharistic encounter with Christ Himself which had been wrongly associated in medieval thought with the consecrated bread and wine of the Mass.<sup>256</sup> His unravelling of this illusion afflicting medieval religion also, therefore, completes and makes sense of the sweep of Wyclif's own hermeneutic journey, as has been charted in this chapter, from his initial identification of Scripture with Christ, and the essentially eucharistic nature of his hermeneutics, to his conception of the Eucharist as scriptural sign, and the general paradox of his quest to seek out analogies for the Eucharist in Scripture.<sup>257</sup>

The fundamental break with the Church's sacramental system thus implied by Wyclif is borne out in a final shift in his attitude to the Mass itself, as may be seen in his sermon on Mk. 16.1-7, which recounts how Mary Magdalene and Salome found the tomb of the Lord empty on Easter Sunday. Being the Sarum lection for Easter Day, this text is intimately associated with the Resurrection, the Christian event which gave the reception of his flesh in the medieval Eucharist so much of its awesome existential import, besides Easter being the

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<sup>256</sup> It is not only Wyclif's citation of Grosseteste's comparison to alchemy which recalls Grosseteste's theology of preaching, but also the emphasis upon Jesus Christ's presence *personaliter* and *substantialiter* in the preached word (see above, fn. 253), which echoes Grosseteste's striking conception of the preached word as *verbum Christum* ('the word that is Christ'), discussed in Ch. 1, p. 20.

<sup>257</sup> We have already discussed (above, pp. 43, 49) the resemblance of the shift between *ratio* and *sapientia* in Wyclif's hermeneutics, as described by Ghosh, and the existing medieval likening of the grasping of scriptural meaning to the apprehension of the subject of an icon. Yet in practice, one may see the eucharistic transformation as illustrative more of the violent shift between *modus* and *sensus* in Wyclif's scriptural hermeneutics than the other way around. In particular, to see Wyclif's eucharistic theology as descriptive of his conception of Scripture explains the related tension between Wyclif's understanding of the role of erudition in the apprehension of Scripture's truths, and his desire for its dissemination among the laity. As Brungs and Goubier have recently argued, such is Wyclif's stress, in *De Veritate*, upon the centrality of logic and other demanding disciplines to 'the attainment of any proper insight' into Scripture that Wyclif must have had in mind not the laity but 'the learned and, particularly [...] theologians' (Brungs and Goubier, 'On Biblical Logicism, p. 240). Nonetheless, while one sees a similar reluctance in Wyclif's eucharistic teaching to discuss scholastic metaphysics with the laity (see Wyclif, *De apostasia*, XVII, 253/34-41), it is also abundantly clear that such an understanding (although, for Wyclif, this itself constitutes a form of eucharistic vision) is not necessary for the faithful's apprehension of the body. Similarly, one can argue that Wyclif believes scriptural meaning to be accessible to the laity because, as in the Mass, this succeeds a necessary but elementary grasping of the sign.

one time in the year when the laity were obliged to receive the consecrated host.<sup>258</sup> The significance of Easter to the medieval cult of Christ's eucharistic presence only underscores the dissonance of Wyclif's argument as to how the preacher should expound the following line: '*he is risen, he is not here*' [Mk. 16.6]:

it is necessary for those accepting the Eucharist [...] to understand that Christ is once again in heaven according to his substance [*substanciam*], and is not here except sacramentally or in sign.<sup>259</sup>

While Wyclif's eucharistic writings had always denied Christ's eucharistic presence *substantialiter*, what is striking here is the emphasis upon the weakness of this symbolic presence. The mirror metaphor does indeed stress distance between the Mass and the heavenly body: 'here we see only a glass in a dark manner and eat Christ through prayer in figure [*precise in figura*]', although 'if we are faithful travellers [...] we shall eat his substance in a perpetual feast'.<sup>260</sup> However, Wyclif suggests a more fundamental manner in which Christ is absent, in his further analogy that worshippers should receive Christ's body in the consecrated host as though it were hidden in the tomb [*monumentum*].<sup>261</sup> This is important for its cultural associations not with Christ's Resurrection but the immediately preceding period when, in medieval understanding, Christ's soul was understood to be

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<sup>258</sup> See Wyclif's comment in *LS I*, XXIV, 165/33-35: 'et patet quam venenosa foret statuicio talis heretica quod omnis utriusque sexus semel in anno ad Pascha scilicet hoc sacramentum accipiat, cum ad annos discrecionis advenerit, sub pena nimis horribili' [and it is clear how poisonous such a heretical edict is: that everyone who has arrived at the age of discretion, of either sex, should accept this sacrament once a year, certainly at Easter, under threat of a most awful penalty]. See also Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, pp. 70, 215 on the significance of Easter to preaching on the Eucharist.

<sup>259</sup> *LS I*, XXIV, 164/21-27: 'Vel tercio aptari potest populo illud huius evangelii: *Surrexit; non est hic*. Necesse quidem est sic accipientibus eukaristiam quod in fide catholica instruantur et per consequens cognoscant quod Christus est sursum in patria quod secundum suam substanciam, et non est hic taliter sed sacramentaliter vel in signo'.

<sup>260</sup> *LS I*, XXIV, 164/30-35: 'nam hic solum videmus per speculum in enigmate et Christum precise comedimus in figura, sed si fuerimus viantes fideliter [...] comedemus eum per hominem interiorem secundum sui substanciam pastu perpetuo'.

<sup>261</sup> *LS I*, XXIV, 164/17-19: 'Omnes enim qui isto die sacramentaliter recipiunt corpus Christ *veniunt ad ipsum* ut *monumentum*, quia corpus Christi in ipso ut monumento absconditur'.

absent from the body as it lay in the tomb, undertaking the Harrowing of Hell.<sup>262</sup> Thus, it powerfully reinforces what Wyclif had implied in his assertion of Christ's presence in the preached Word in his sermon on the parable of the sower, as well as according with the criticism of contemporaries: that, in whatever way the body of Christ was uniquely present to Wyclif in the Mass (as he insisted to be the case throughout his writings), he no longer associated it with the presence of Christ Himself.<sup>263</sup>

Thus, Wyclif imagines the Mass as a rite of commemoration or anticipation, but not of presence. Considered as a late eucharistic position departing from his ideas in *De Eucharistia*, it would provide a rationale for some unexplained eucharistic practices and ideas attributed to his followers.<sup>264</sup> Moreover, Wyclif throws even the necessity of this function into question, as he comes to suggest that not merely the rituals surrounding the Mass but by implication the Mass itself, as an institution, might be done away with:

Since the Gospel [*lex Dei*] has been straightforward from its first institution, even if the satraps have made it the cause of great difficulty, it is enough that the faithful devoutly recall Christ,

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<sup>262</sup> Mk. 15.46: 'ioseph [...] deponens eum [...] posuit eum in monumento, quod erat excisum de petra, et advolvit lapidem ad ostium monumenti' [Joseph [...] taking him down [...] laid him in a sepulchre which was hewed out of a rock. And he rolled a stone to the door of the sepulchre].

<sup>263</sup> That Wyclif equated the humanity of Christ (and of mortals) with the soul, rather than its union with the body, is suggested more than once in his writings. See, for example: *LS* I, XXXIX, 262/4-6: 'Sic enim dicunt multi philosophi quod anima cum qualibet parte quantitativa corporis humani sit eadem persona que totus homo' [Thus many philosophers say that the soul, in any quantitative part of the human body whatsoever, is the same person as the whole man]. Thomas Netter also repudiates this identification, in the case of Christ, in his *Doctrinale*. See *DFC* I.207B-C: 'Christus in humanitate sua contient tantum duas naturas, corporis scilicet & anime; nec est alterum eorum, nisi per synechdochen' [Christ in his humanity contains only two natures, physical and spiritual: nor is he one or the other of them, unless by the figure of synecdoche [where one term is used to denote the whole]]. See also Levy, *Parameters of Orthodoxy*, p. 290, discussing a similar statement in Wyclif, 'Confessio' (*FZ*, p. 224).

<sup>264</sup> There is a striking resemblance between Wyclif's emphases in this Easter sermon and the accusation of Thomas Netter (*DFC* II.341A) that: 'nostri Wiclevistae moderni, qui, cum levatur hostia benedicta, in coelum tollunt aspectum, dicentes palam se ibi corpus adorare ubi est, non ubi non est' [our modern Wycliffites, who, when the sanctified bread is raised, lift their gaze to heaven, openly saying that they adore the body where it is, not where it is not]. Netter's passage is also discussed in Hudson, *PR*, p. 150. See also the statement attributed to the Cistercian Monk Henry Crumpe (fl. c. 1376-1401) in *FZ*, p. 354: 'quod corpus Christi in altaris sacramento est solum speculum ad corpus Christi in coelo' [the body of Christ in the altar of the sacrament is only a mirror onto the body of Christ in heaven]. Crumpe's statement is cited by Phillips, 'Wyclif's De Eucharistia', p. 350, in support of her argument that Wyclif similarly likens the eucharistic bread to a mirror to emphasize the distance of its signified object, Christ's body (discussed above, p. 58). For more on Wycliffite eucharistic theology, see Ch. 3 of this thesis, pp. 96-99 and also Patrick Hornbeck's discussion of different Wycliffite understandings of the Eucharist in *What is a Lollard?*, pp. 76-84.

granted that they never saw a Church or the sacraments now instituted. If the Church might more quickly and easily achieve this end through preaching the Gospel with all these rites taken away, who would doubt that those sacraments and their observances had been introduced without reason?<sup>265</sup>

This provides the possible grounds of the even starker accusation of Wyclif's opponents, within his own lifetime, that his figurative doctrines of the Eucharist had led 'the people of this kingdom in many places to abstain in large numbers from the Eucharist at Easter'.<sup>266</sup>

Yet as the above passage again suggests, the mystery of the medieval Mass had unravelled for Wyclif into what was little more than a memorial rite, which might be done away with altogether, exactly because he saw in it a poor substitute, or metaphor, for what literally and uniquely belonged to a restored scripturalism. Nor, for Wyclif, would this restitution result in a purely spiritual religion lacking perceptible sacraments, or what John Bossy has termed the late-medieval 'rise of an asocial mysticism'.<sup>267</sup> On the contrary, Wyclif's vision rests ultimately upon his conviction that the preached Word was destined to resume the function that, in the words of Aquinas, had made the Eucharist 'the sacrament of the unity of the Church':<sup>268</sup> as the perceptible [*sensibilis*] sign which 'permits those who use

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<sup>265</sup> *LS I*, XXIV, 165/22-30: 'Ideo cum lex Dei ex prima institucione sit facilis, licet nunc sit nimis difficultata per satrapas, satis est fidelibus Christum [...] devote recolere, licet nunquam viderint basilicam vel sacramenta nunc instituta receperunt. Quod si brevius et levius per evangelizacionem attingeret ecclesia istum finem subductis hiis omnibus ritibus, quis dubitat quin illa sacramenta et eorum observancia sint irrationabiliter introducta?'

<sup>266</sup> John Tyssyngton, 'Confessio Magistri Johannis Tyssyngton de ordine Minorum', *FZ*, pp. 133-180 (p. 178): 'in multis locis hujus regni populus abstinet ab eucharistia in paschate, in multitudine magna, credens ex hac doctrina quod non est nisi panis sanctificatus'. This is also discussed in Hudson, *PR*, p. 150, which remarks that this accusation was made in 1381. See Ch. 3 of this thesis, pp. 98-110 on other evidence suggesting the abandonment of the Mass by Wycliffites.

<sup>267</sup> See Netter, *DFC III.931C*: 'Si autem per sola invisibilia volunt de Dei invisibilibus instrui Wiclevistae, necesse est seorsum in hac carne percipere disciplinam, & per hoc alienari a sensibus'; *DFC III.932A*: 'videtur quam difficile sit ipsam Deitatis imaginem [...] statim attingere, quam vix possunt per multorum annorum studia attingere peracuti theologi' [If however the Wycliffites want to be instructed in the spiritual things of God solely through spiritual things, in this flesh it is necessary to learn a method, and through this to be estranged from the senses [...] it is seen how difficult it is to attain the same image of the Godhead, so that highly acute theologians can hardly achieve it after many years of study]. John Bossy, 'The Mass as a Social Institution, 1200-1700', *Past and Present* (100), 29-61 (p. 84).

<sup>268</sup> Aquinas, *ST IIIa*, 73.2: 'Ex quo patet quod Eucharistia sit sacramentum ecclesiasticae unitatis'; *ST IIIa*, 73.3: 'Dictum est autem quod res sacramenti est unitas corporis mystici, sine qua non potest esse salus: nulli enim patet aditus salutis extra ecclesiam' [It has been said, however, that the matter of the sacrament is the unity of

it to recognize themselves as members of a single community, through the convention that they have adopted'.<sup>269</sup> As we saw Wyclif argue in *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, the scriptural word should be privileged over the Eucharist because of its social scope: where 'only one person receives the word of God as the body of Christ', the word is heard by the many.<sup>270</sup> Through preaching, Wyclif states in one of his late sermons, 'from their divided sheepfolds, the gentiles will become one complete, orthodox flock'.<sup>271</sup>

Thus, the sermons articulate the fullest meaning of Wyclif's original revelation about Scripture as Christ, the Book of Life: a society constituted and united by the sacrament of the preached word. As we shall see in following chapters, the power of this prophecy lies exactly in the fact that it is not primarily a private vision, or the result of idiosyncratic metaphysical ideas, but expressive of far wider shifts in perceptions of the function and power of Scripture in late-medieval English religion. In Chapter Two, we shall consider the centrality of Wyclif's ideas to the development and internal tensions within the early vernacular Wycliffite culture in the decades following his death.

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the mystical body, without which there cannot be salvation, for there is clearly no access to salvation outside the Church].

<sup>269</sup> Rosier-Catach, *Parole Efficace*, pp. 120-21: 'le signe [...] qui permet à ceux qui l'utilisent de se reconnaître comme membres d'une même communauté, en raison de la convention qu'ils ont adoptée'.

<sup>270</sup> See above, p. 46, fn.151.

<sup>271</sup> *LS I*, XXVI, 177/28-31: 'alias oves habeat ut gentiles que vocem Christi audiunt per eius evangelizantes et ex illis parcialibus ovilibus fiet unum completum ovile catholicum'.

### **3. A Wycliffite Sacrament: Preaching the Bread of Life in the English Wycliffite Sermons and Other Wycliffite Texts**

‘And for hardnesse of þes wordis many of disciplis wenten abac, and wenten no  
lengere wiþ hym’ (Jn. 6.67)<sup>272</sup>

This chapter considers how the late fourteenth-century *English Wycliffite Sermons* use Christ’s Bread of Life Speech (Jn. 6) to articulate a sacramental and indeed eucharistic role for the Wycliffite preacher, which displaces the function of the Mass. This assertion, echoed in a range of Wycliffite writings, reveals both the influence of the key late developments in John Wyclif’s sacramental thought, as we have just charted them, and the likely logic underpinning what scholars have inferred to be the *de facto* role of preaching as the central sacrament in Wycliffism.<sup>273</sup> Nonetheless, the uses of Jn. 6 by Wycliffite authors also suggest that this function itself represented a principal source of doctrinal disagreement within the early Wycliffite movement, challenging both its inner cohesion and its claims to embody the authentic interpretation of Scripture.

Of course, the assertion that Christ was available through different breads, Scripture and Eucharist, was already one of the most pervasive ideas in late-medieval thought. As we have seen, authoritative commentaries such as the *Glossa Ordinaria* interpret ‘Give us our daily bread’, the fourth line of the Pater Noster, as ‘bread, that is, the body of Christ, or the word of God, or God Himself for whom each day we crave’.<sup>274</sup> This potent equivalence is articulated in medieval Canon Law, attributed to no less authority than Augustine: ‘what

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<sup>272</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the edition of this text cited throughout this chapter is *English Wycliffite Sermons*, 5 vols., ed. by Anne Hudson and Pamela Gradon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983-1996), hereafter referred to as *EWS*. References to the text are to volume, sermon and line number. The apparatus and commentary of Hudson and Gradon are referred to by volume and page number. Jn. 6.67: ‘Ex hoc multi discipulorum eius abierunt retro: et iam non cum illo ambulabant’. This translation is taken from the *EWS* sermon for the Sabbath in the fifth week of Lent, on Jn. 6.54-72 (*EWS* III, 176, 162/105-106. On the lection, see also *EWS* V, p. 432.

<sup>273</sup> See below, p. 103, fn. 364, on the arguments of Margaret Aston.

<sup>274</sup> See Ch. 1, p. 1.

seems to you to be greater, the body or the word of Christ? [...] you should say, that the word of God is not less than the body of Christ'. Equally it underpins the conciliar decree issued during the pontificate of the great Wycliffite bugbear, Pope Innocent III (1198-1216), that the Word of God be distributed to the laity since: '*man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*'. [Mt 4.4]<sup>275</sup>

Moreover, it is clear that in late fourteenth-century England such assertions underpinned strident complaints about the gross and unjust shortage of the bread of Scripture, which extended far beyond Wyclif and his immediate followers. This may be seen in the meditation on gluttony and starvation in Passus XIII of William Langland's *Piers Plowman* (B-text). The protagonist Will has roamed for years 'in manere of a mendynaunt', literally begging for his daily bread (B-text, Passus XIII, ll. 2-3).<sup>276</sup> He falls asleep, and dreams that Conscience invites him to a banquet. On a High Table, Scripture himself serves Conscience, Clergie and an unknown 'maister' with a rich fare of scriptural 'metes':

Of Austyn, of Ambrose, of alle the foure Evaungelistes: *Edentes et bibentes que apud eos sunt* [eating and drinking such things as they have]<sup>277</sup> (B-text, XIII, ll.38-39).

The 'maister', however, has no appetite for this flesh, although it is derived from the Bible itself, but chooses to sup on an even fancier meal: 'mete of moore cost, mortrews and potages' (B-text, XIII.40-41). At a side-table the protagonist Will and Patience (or 'Suffering') feed on a diet of scraps: the 'sour loof' of '*Agite penitenciam*' (B-text, XIII.48), the drink of '*Dia perserverans*' (B-text, XIII.49), and 'a mees of oother mete, of *Miserere mei, Deus / Et quorum tecta sunt peccata*' (B-text, XIII.53). Nonetheless, it seems, the humble of the earth still eat more of Christ than this gourmandiser.

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<sup>275</sup> See Ch. 1, p. 17. My translation of Mt. 4.4.

<sup>276</sup> References to the B-Text of *Piers Plowman* are to William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman: A Critical Edition of The B-Text Based on Trinity College Cambridge MS B.15.17*, ed. by A.V.C. Schmidt (London: J.M. Dent, 1995). As J.F. Goodridge translates 'forth gan I walke / in manere of a mendynaunt', 'I roamed the earth begging my bread like a pauper'. See William Langland, *Piers the Ploughman*, trans. by J.F. Goodridge (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), Book XIII, p. 151.

<sup>277</sup> Lk. 10.7.

Langland's feast, rather like Wyclif's reading of Jn. 6 considered in the last chapter, casts the religion of late-medieval England as a mockery of the banquet promised by Christ, to which 'many are called, but few are chosen' (Mt. 22.14). The foods eaten by the few on the High Table, both spiritual and mouth-wateringly carnal ('Wombe cloutes and wilde brawen and egges [with grece yfryed]') (B-text, XIII.63) are ones for which the many, such as Will and Patience, were starving. While the immediate target of Langland's vitriol is the gormandizing 'maister', the same tropes ultimately attach criticism to Clergie himself; medieval authorities emphasize the duty of the ordained priesthood whom he personifies to vomit forth to the people what they drink from the founts of Scripture.<sup>278</sup>

The similarities between Langland's treatment and Wycliffism do not end with the bread of Scripture, moreover, but extend to the Eucharist itself. In Passus XXI of the revised C-text, likely completed well after the 1381 condemnation of Wyclif's eucharistic beliefs and his notorious association with the Peasants' Revolt, Conscience invites Christians to dine on Christ at a Mass in which:

Grace thorw godes word gaf Peres plouhman power,  
Myhte to make hit and men for to eten hit (C-text, XXI, ll. 384-386)<sup>279</sup>

This historical context should alert one to Langland's boldness in asserting that a ploughman, as an unordained layman, could confect the Eucharist, and especially in implying that he is 'the type of priesthood'.<sup>280</sup> This is among many signs of his at best

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<sup>278</sup> Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 'In Psalmum CXLIV enarratio', Sec. 9 (PL 37.1874-75): 'Manducas, cum discis; eructas, cum doces; manducas, cum audis, eructas cum praedicas [...] si vultis eructare gratiam, bibite gratiam' [You eat when you learn, you belch forth when you teach; you eat when you listen, you belch forth when you preach. If you wish to belch forth grace, drink grace].

<sup>279</sup> References to the C-Text of *Piers Plowman* are to William Langland, *Piers Plowman by William Langland: An Edition of the C-text*, ed. by Derek Pearsall (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978). As Pearsall comments, p. 9: 'the C-text was probably complete by 1387'. See also Hudson, *PR*, p. 403, on the C-text's interesting omission of an unambiguously orthodox eucharistic statement found in the B-text: 'Goddess body myghte nocht be of breed withouten clergie' (B-text, XII, 87).

<sup>280</sup> Stephen Barney, *The Penn Commentary on Piers Plowman: Volume 5, C Passus 20-22; B Passus 18-20* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 164.

equivocal support for the sacramental system espoused by the Church.<sup>281</sup> Yet, Langland's differences from Wyclif, from the sheer sensuality of Will's vision of Piers in the Mass, 'peynted al blody' (B-text, XIX.6), to his refusal to equate the late-medieval Church with Antichrist, are as pronounced as the similarities. This points to the topic to which we shall return in the next chapter: the complexity of the 'affiliations', as Kantik Ghosh terms them, between Wycliffite and non-Wycliffite thought on sacramental signs; an area, explored by scholars such as David Aers, which warns against reading almost any trope used before the fifteenth century as a marker of Wycliffism.<sup>282</sup>

Nonetheless, of all Middle English writing, the late fourteenth-century *EWS* remains the work that most extensively betrays the direct influence of Wyclif's thought.<sup>283</sup> As Anne Hudson comments: 'no contemporary reader of these sermons could progress very far without coming across ideas that bear the unmistakable mark of Lollardy'.<sup>284</sup> These range from Wyclif's heretical eucharistic theology itself to his definition of Scripture as a transcendent entity.<sup>285</sup> It will be significant to the argument of this chapter that much of this content clearly derives from the authors' familiarity with the sermons most likely written or revised by Wyclif shortly before his death, as well as with works such as *De Eucharistia*.

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<sup>281</sup> See David Aers, *Sanctifying Signs: Making Christian Tradition in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), esp. Ch. 2, 'The Sacrament of the Altar in *Piers Plowman*' pp. 29-52. This is the most detailed study to date of Langland's sacramental theology and its parallels with that of Wyclif and Wycliffites.

<sup>282</sup> See Kantik Ghosh, 'Wycliffite "Affiliations": Some Intellectual-Historical Perspectives', in *The Wycliffite Controversies*, ed. by Mishtooni Bose and J. Patrick Hornbeck II (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

<sup>283</sup> On dating, see Gradon and Hudson, *EWS IV*, pp. 10-20. They comment, p. 19, that the 'most likely time of origin for the whole seems to be the late 1380s or 1390s [...] Further than the last fifteen years of the fourteenth century it seems harder to refine the dating'.

<sup>284</sup> Gradon and Hudson, *EWS IV*, p. 2.

<sup>285</sup> On the parallels in *EWS* with Wyclif's conception of Scripture, see *EWS IV*, pp. 71-72; and with the eucharistic theology articulated in works such as Wyclif's *De Eucharistia*, see *EWS IV*, pp. 50-56, as well as Hornbeck, *What is a Lollard?*, pp. 76-78 on what he sees as variations in eucharistic theology among *EWS* authors, despite agreement that the physical bread and wine remain after consecration. As already pointed out, however, this chapter of my thesis contends that the most important influences on the sacramental theology in *EWS* are the developments in Wyclif's thought concerning the relation of the Eucharist to preaching, as discussed in Ch. 2 of this thesis.

Often, the relation ‘between the English sermons and Wyclif’s Latin sermons is complex’.<sup>286</sup> The *EWS* sermons are clearly much shorter than Wyclif’s exemplars, citations generally not being precise renderings of direct sources but consisting ‘of parallels *to the ideas*’,<sup>287</sup> and including content not traceable to Wyclif’s sermons, if to his wider oeuvre.<sup>288</sup> Yet this itself argues the determination of Wyclif’s followers to adapt his message to a lay audience, in a manner akin to many other acts of translation from Latin to English in the period.<sup>289</sup>

Furthermore, it is the most generic feature of *EWS* – its purpose as a tool for preaching the word of Scripture – which embodies its most distinctively Wycliffite qualities. This is evident even from the physical qualities of the manuscripts. As Hudson has charted, their very scale, along with the general professionalism of their production, sets *EWS* apart from any other Middle English sermon collection, eclipsing even relatively extensive cycles such as Mirk’s *Festial* and the Northern Homily Cycle.<sup>290</sup> The cycle is also unique in the comprehensiveness with which it provides sermons for the lections covering the liturgical year, as laid down in the Sarum Missal.<sup>291</sup> Moreover, unlike other preaching manuals from the period, which provided repertoires of material ‘on which a preacher could draw at random [...] each sermon is indissolubly tied [...] to the occasion on which the biblical passage would have been read’.<sup>292</sup> Undoubtedly, such lavish provision clearly offered extensive cover and scope for dissemination of Wycliffite doctrine, one possible reason why these loathers of saint-worship should have provided sermons for Saints’ Days.<sup>293</sup> Yet more

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<sup>286</sup> Spencer, *English Preaching*, p. 257.

<sup>287</sup> *EWS* IV, p. 2.

<sup>288</sup> See *EWS* III, pp. xcix-cxlvii in general on the complex relationship with the Latin sermons, and pp. cxxxvii-cxlvii on the parallels with Wyclif’s other works.

<sup>289</sup> See Vincent Gillespie, ‘Vernacular Theology’, in *Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature: Middle English*, ed. by Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 401-420 (p.402): ‘acts of translation into medieval vernaculars [...] invariably involve complex editorial acts of selection, reordering, lexical choice, and responsiveness to the needs and abilities of a real or imagined audience’.

<sup>290</sup> See *EWS* I, p. 45, p. 189.

<sup>291</sup> See *EWS* I, pp. 8, 45.

<sup>292</sup> *EWS* I, p. 8.

<sup>293</sup> As Graddon and Hudson comment in *EWS* IV, p. 35, uses of the sermons outside the context of the liturgy may ‘explain a major idiosyncrasy of the cycle, namely the inclusion of such an extensive Commune

importantly, as we shall see, *EWS* thereby embodies Wyclif's ambition that Scripture, systematically preached, should become the core of popular religion. Equally significant is the fact that *EWS* is the most extensive late-medieval English witness to the homiletic method of preaching Scripture:<sup>294</sup> each *EWS* sermon systematically expounds 'a complete, or virtually complete, translation of the biblical lection whose opening words in Latin stand at its head', with rubrication distinguishing Scripture's *ipsissima verba* from commentary, while completely eschewing the 'modern' form, which worked through an often-elaborate *divisio* of a source-text, not even necessarily scriptural.<sup>295</sup> These methods ground the cycle's claims to a form of exposition which we have seen to be intimately linked in Wyclif's thought with his understanding of the sacramental power of the scriptural word.<sup>296</sup>

### **A Heretic Bread**<sup>297</sup>

It is through the parsing of the central trope of 'bread' itself, however, that *EWS* articulates a distinctively Wycliffite conception of Scripture. Aspects of this conception may be seen in *EWS* 40's reading of Mt 4.11, on Christ's temptation in the wilderness, for the first Sunday in Lent:

þis tempter seyde þus to Crist, '3if þow be Godis sone, sey þat þese stonys ben maad louys' [...] But here answered Criste to þe feend by auctorite of hooly writ and seyde: 'Hit is wryten þerynne þat not oonly in bred lyueþ man, but in eche word þat comeþ of Godis mowþ', þat is his vertew to speke to men in þer sowle, and þis passeþ erþly breed.<sup>298</sup>

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Sanctorum set. The eccentricity derives from Lollard view of saints [...] with their disparagement of almost all save those revealed by scripture'. See also *EWS* IV, pp. 66-68.

<sup>294</sup> See Wenzel, *LSC*, p. 358, although he also challenges this view, arguing that other late-medieval sermon collections, 'written in a form suited to actual preaching', may be better witnesses to practical use of the homiletic method than *EWS*, with its 'phrase by phrase' exposition of the lection. As Hudson also suggests (*EWS* IV, p. 35 and discussed further below, p. 103), the brevity of *EWS* sermons may mean that they were intended to act as spurs to 'audience discussion'.

<sup>295</sup> The 'modern' and 'ancient' styles of preaching are discussed in Ch. 2 of this thesis, p. 50, fn. 165. See *EWS* I, pp. 134-135, on the *EWS* sermons' systematic use of the entire lection; I, p. 159 on their attention to distinguishing Scripture's *ipsissima verba*; and IV, p. 35, on their rejection of 'modern' form.

<sup>296</sup> See Ch. 2, p. 164 on the link between Wyclif's theology of preaching and the homiletic tradition.

<sup>297</sup> See the discussion of Wyclif's 'panis hereticus' in Netter, *DFC* III.265D, qtd. in Ch. 5 of this thesis, p. 189.

<sup>298</sup> *EWS* I, 40/24-39.

While Pope Innocent III himself used the contrast between earthly and spiritual bread of Mt. 4.11 to authorize preaching to the laity, *EWS* 40, like Wyclif, reads this trope in a way that immediately challenges the religious establishment of Innocent's successors. Not least, the word speaks 'to men in þeir soule': a direct form of mediation that bypasses and is set at odds with the Church as interpreter.<sup>299</sup> Equally confrontational is the way in which 'Crist chargede more Godis word þan any worschype or mete',<sup>300</sup> thus contrasting Scripture with a carnal 'worschype' which implies, as elsewhere in *EWS*, an idolatrous ceremonialism.<sup>301</sup> While such challenges to the Church had broader currency than Wycliffism, as *Piers Plowman* shows, *EWS* 40 clearly exceeds the bounds of such dissent by associating the devil, as had Wyclif, with the late-medieval Church. Christ's answers become a model for all true Christians encountering the representatives of this resurgent Antichrist:

we may not be temptyd of yuel spyrit, but 3if we han lore to ouercomen hym [...] þus d[e]lyuerede Crist þis world of þis feend and hise felowes, þat þey anoyzedon lasse his cherche aftyr by a þowsande 3eer.<sup>302</sup>

The sermon therefore illustrates how *EWS* identifies the spiritual bread, offered through Christ's words, with Wycliffite doctrine and in irreconcilable opposition to the 'sourdough' offered by Pope Innocent's successors. It thus exemplifies a Wycliffite lexis that, as Gloria Cigman has argued, is built upon such binary oppositions.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> *EWS* I, 40/31-33: 'And here we wyten þat owre philarghes [*MED*: 'A lazy scholar, foolish philosopher'] ben more folys þan is þe feend, for þe fend wot wel þat God may liztly make stonys louys, but owre philosophris seyn as foolis þat þis þing may no weye be'. On Wyclif's discussion of the devil and medieval sophistry in *De Veritate*, see Kantik Ghosh, 'Logic and Lollardy', *Medium Aevum*, 76 (2007), 251-267, p. 252: 'Lucifer is identified as the first corrupt logician in that he asked the first questio'.

<sup>300</sup> *EWS* I, 40/75-76.

<sup>301</sup> For example, see *EWS* I, 22/70-72: 'Þus Moyses, myldeste man of alle, killide manye þowsande of his folc, for þei worschpoden a calf as þei schulde worschipe God'.

<sup>302</sup> *EWS* I, 40/118-128.

<sup>303</sup> See Gloria Cigman, 'Lucaat Lux Vestra: The Lollard Preacher as Truth and Light', *The Review of English Studies*, 40 (1989), 479-496, p. 483: 'a conspicuous feature of the Lollard sermon-writer's discourse is the multiple use of polarity [...] confrontation is persistently expressed through the pairing of certain concepts [...] the few and the many, the true and the false, and images of light and darkness. Such polarities, which are a characteristic feature of biblical language, take on distinctive nuances in Lollard polemic'.

Above all, the distinctive claim that Wycliffism makes for the bread of Scripture is unfolded in its reading of the figure of ‘bread’ in Jn. 6: the miracle of Christ’s feeding of the five thousand on the shores of Lake Galilee and his subsequent ‘Bread of Life’ speech. We have seen that this scriptural passage grounds the recurrent tension in Christian belief, so integral to Wyclif’s own thought, between the breads of Scripture and Eucharist offered by Christ’s Incarnation. Reflective of its many-sided significance, the Sarum calendar affords *EWS* no fewer than six lections for Jn. 6, broadly delivered in the order of the biblical narrative, with the final lection falling on the Feast of Corpus Christi.<sup>304</sup> Thus *EWS* inherits a major opportunity for systematically parsing this important trope, especially if, as Hudson has argued, the compilers of *EWS* may have intended for the sermons to be delivered ‘sequentially and continuously’.<sup>305</sup>

Two near-identical lections cover the opening passage of Jn. 6, up to verse 14, which recounts how Christ miraculously multiplied five loaves and two fish to feed the multitude that he encountered near the Sea of Galilee. As the sermon for the twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity (*EWS* 25) renders this passage:

*whan Iesus hadde cast up his eyzen, and saw þat myche folc was come to hym to here Godis word, he seyde to Philip wherof þei schulde bughge breed for to fede þis folc, for he wiste þat þei hungredon [...] Philip seyde to Crist þat loues of two hundred pens ne suffysid not to hem, so þat echone myzte taken a lytulwhat of breed. But anopur disciple, Andrew, Petrys broþur, seyde þer was a child þere, þat hadde fyue barly louys and þerto two fyschis; but what wolde þis be among þus myche folc?. And Iesu baad hise apostles to make þe men sytte down to þe mete [...] And þe men weren sette, as hit were fyue þowsynde. And Iesu took þanne þes louys and, whanne he hadde þankyng God, he delud hem to þe syttyng men, and also of þe fyschis as myche as þei wolden. And whan þei weren fyllude, Crist seyde to his disciples, ‘Gedre ze þe relief þat lefte, þat hit perische not’. And þei gadredon and fulden twelue cophynus of relief of fyue barly louys, þat weron lefte of þis folc þat eton. And þese men, whanne þei hadden seen þe*

<sup>304</sup> See *EWS* V, p. 414 for a list of the *EWS* sermons on Jn. 6.

<sup>305</sup> *EWS* IV, p. 34.

*sygne of þis myracle, seyden among hemself þat þis is a verrey  
profete þat is to comen into þis world, as prophetis byfore hadde  
teeld.*<sup>306</sup>

Following Wyclif and the patristic exegesis found in texts such as the *Glossa*, the bread and fish before the miracle symbolize the Old Testament religion prior to Christ's coming: the barley loaves are the 'fyue bookys of Moyses, þat beþ boþe streyte and scharpe'; the fish are 'two bookys of wysdam and of prophetis'.<sup>307</sup> The boy with the 'mete' is Christ Himself, 'þe child born to us, þat Ysay spekiþ of' – a reading used by Wyclif himself, although hardly unique to him.<sup>308</sup> Christ's breaking and multiplication of the loaves figure the 'goostly foode' – for *EWS* 25, clearly Scripture itself – by which he has sated mankind's hunger: 'by þis fode men þanken God, and seyn þat Crist is þat greete prophete þat is to comen into þis world and fullen hit of heuynly lore'.<sup>309</sup>

Nonetheless, one sees here how carefully, as in other Wycliffite literature, *EWS* chooses and expounds its orthodox sources so that an England yearning for an evangelical missionary preaching emerges as the *sensus mysticus* of the biblical text.<sup>310</sup> This is the case with the poignant, alternative reading of the bread and fish in *EWS* 43, the other sermon on this lection, for the Fourth Sunday in Lent; the five loaves are 'hard lyf, þat men mote lyue byfore þei konnen Cristus lore. And two fysches ben þenkyng of God and heuene'.<sup>311</sup> Again, the idea of suffering as a substitute bread strongly echoes the diet of substitutes eaten by Patience and Will at the banquet of Conscience in *Piers Plowman*. Yet *EWS*'s reading of Jn.

<sup>306</sup> *EWS* I, 25/5-23.

<sup>307</sup> *EWS* I, 25/49-51.

<sup>308</sup> *EWS* I, 25/48-50. For Wyclif's reading, see *LS* I, LVII, 373/26-29, cited and discussed in Ch. 2, p. 72. For similar glosses in orthodox texts of Jn. 6:9: 'Est puer unus [...]'], see *A Repertorium of Middle English Prose Sermons*, ed. by Veronica O'Mara and Suzanne Paul, 4 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), II, p. 124 on British Library, MS Harley 2243 (sermon 23), and p. 1563 on Lambeth Palace, MS 392 (sermon 16).

<sup>309</sup> *GO* V, 1118: 'Multiplicauit, quia de paucis illis tot scripturae emanauerunt' [He multiplied, since from those few things so many Scriptures flowed out]; Augustine, *Sermones de Scripturis*, Sermo 130.1 (*PL* 38.725): 'Lex vetus hordeum est ad euangelicum triticum' [The Old Law is as barley to the Gospel wheat].

<sup>310</sup> As Hudson comments on the Wycliffite *Glossed Gospels*, in *PR*, p. 257: 'Every bit of them is quotation from an earlier source; every source is impeccably orthodox. But [...] orthodox writers can be excerpted in such a way that their message becomes less evidently acceptable, and they seem to support a more radical position than they had originally envisaged'.

<sup>311</sup> *EWS* I, 43/34-35.

6 does not merely cast its intended listeners, the people of England, as the Israelites living on foods that are insufficient to meet their hunger; it also portrays the Wycliffite preachers of Scripture, in line with the vision of Wyclif's own Latin sermons, as the suppliers of the miraculous bread which will sate them.

Above all, *EWS* 25 unfolds its claims through its understanding that the multiplication of the loaves figures the miraculous nature of preaching itself, indeed of preaching as the greatest miracle that Christ ever performed:

þis myracle of multipliyeng of Godis lawe by so fewe prechowres  
among so fele folc was more myracle þan bodily wondyris.<sup>312</sup>

This patristically-rooted sentiment, cited in Wyclif's writings, firstly has a practical use in establishing the authority of the Wycliffite to preach in the manner of Christ.<sup>313</sup> As Acts 2.22 says, Christ himself was commended to the Men of Israel through his miracles, and his Apostolic followers likewise.<sup>314</sup> *EWS* 25 thus answers a question clearly being asked by many in the period of those preaching without the Church's leave, as ventriloquised by the author of the so-called *Lollard Sermons*: 'whi þanne / conferme þei noȝt her words with bodily miracles, as þei diden in þat tyme'.<sup>315</sup> Yet most important to *EWS* is the underlying

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<sup>312</sup> *EWS* I, 25/77-79. See also *EWS* I, 43/50-53: 'For of oþre myracles of Cris þis myracle is oon of þe most, þat so fewe disciplis of hise filliden þe world in so short tyme wiþ þe same gospel of Crist; and he it was þat dide þis myracle'.

<sup>313</sup> See Wyclif, *Tractatus De Officio Pastoralis*, ed. by G.V. Lechler (Leipzig: 1863), Pars Secunda, Cap. 2, p. 33: 'Augustinus recolit, quod fuit maius Christi miraculum predicacio tanto mundo gentilium et conuertendo ad fidem Christi in tempore tam modico [...] quam alia miracula, que Christus post incarnationem fecerat' [Augustine recalls that preaching to so large a world of gentiles and converting [them] to the faith of Christ in such a short time [...] was a greater miracle of Christ than the others which he performed after his Incarnation].

<sup>314</sup> Acts 2.22: 'Iesum Nazarenum, virum approbatum a Deo in vobis, virtutibus, et prodigiis, et signis, quae fecit Deus per illum in medio vestri' [Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him, in the midst of you].

<sup>315</sup> *Lollard Sermons*, ed. by Gloria Cigman, EETS 294 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), Sermon 3, 34/116-18. For an example of the complaints echoed by this text, see Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 649, fol. 19v, qtd. in Wenzel, *LSC*, p. 374: 'Sed nuda verba sine operibus non sunt credenda [...] Vbi sunt mortui quos suscitaverunt? Vbi sunt leprosi quos mundauerunt?' [But bare words without works are not to be believed [...] Where are the dead whom they have raised? Where are the lepers whom they have cleansed?]. I refer to the *Lollard Sermons* as 'so-called' since the Wycliffite affiliation of these stridently evangelical writings, credibly written in the last years of the fourteenth century, has been hotly contested. Their editor, Cigman, points to the suggestion of some major scholars, from G.R. Owst to E.W. Talbert, that the sermons may be Wycliffite, despite the lack of obvious views for which Wycliffites were condemned (see Ch. 4 of this

reason that a range of authorities considered preaching the greatest of miracles: namely the salvific effect that it has upon its listeners. As an *EWS* sermon on Mt. 10.5-8 therefore emphasizes, echoing Gregory the Great, it is the role of preachers sent by Christ, spiritually speaking, to ‘*reyse up deede men [...] hele leprows men [...] casten owzt feendus*’.<sup>316</sup> Particularly telling is the use in a sermon, on Jn. 15.12-16, of Robert Grosseteste’s second *Dictum* to define preaching, conversion and its fruits as a triple miracle:

þese þre ben greete myracles among alle þo þat Crist dyde [...] and þus seiþ Robard Grostest þat þis craft passeþ alkemye, for it makeþ sowles hoole, þat ben bettore þan sonne or mone.<sup>317</sup>

We have seen that Grosseteste’s evocation of preaching as the queen of the human arts, superior to alchemy due to the transformation it effects in the listener, is central to Wyclif’s own conception of preaching as the prime sacrament, in a way that renders superfluous the seven sacraments of the Church.<sup>318</sup> Its inclusion in this text, therefore, underscores *EWS*’s own aim to articulate the essence of Wyclif’s sacramental conception of preaching to its vernacular audience, both preachers and listeners, using the cultural associations of the ‘bread’ of Jn. 6.

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thesis, p. 129). Other scholars, however, have rejected that label, pointing to their articulation of views on topics such as predestination that appear incompatible with Wycliffism (Ch. 4, p. 132). See also Ch. 4, p. 116, on the broader problems of classifying late-medieval evangelical writings which these sermons highlight, and pp. 118-137 for a detailed discussion of their affiliation with what I believe is a non-Wycliffite preaching tradition.

<sup>316</sup> *EWS* II, 83/49-61. Mt. 10.5-8: ‘Hos duodecim misit Iesus: praeciens eis, dicens [...] Infirmos curate, mortuos suscite, leprosos mundate, daemones eiicite [...]’ [These twelve Jesus sent: commanding them, saying [...] Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils]. See Gregory the Great, *Gregorii Magni: dialogi, libri IV*, ed. by U. Morica (Rome: Tipographia del Senato, 1924), III.XVII, p. 182: ‘nimirum constat, quia maius est miraculum praedicationis verbo adque orationis solacio peccatorem convertere, quam carne mortuum resuscitare’ [it is utterly evident that it is a greater miracle of preaching to convert the sinner with the word and the solace of prayer, than to physically revive the dead].

<sup>317</sup> *EWS* II, 56/88-93.

<sup>318</sup> This passage echoes one comparing alchemy and preaching from Grosseteste’s *Dictum* 2, which, as Gradon and Hudson observe (*EWS* V, p. 128), is also referred to in Wyclif, *LS* I, XVI, 110/21-4 and cited in Wyclif, *Opus Evangelicum*, I, Pt. 1, Ch. XIV, 43/10-35. See also Ch. 1 of this thesis, p. 19, fn. 74, on Grosseteste’s discussion of preaching in this *Dictum* and Ch. 2, p. 51, fn. 166, on its significance to Wyclif.

Returning to *EWS* 25 and the miracle of the loaves, this is clear not least in its reading of the text ‘*Iesu baad hise apostles to make þe men sytte down to þe mete*’ (Jn. 6.10).<sup>319</sup> The five thousand that ‘þis child makip [...] to sytte down in mekenesse’ upon the hay represent:

alle þo in whiche Godes grace was grene, for alle þese mute  
meken hem and be fedde wiþ Godis word, for ellys may noo man  
come to heuene blysse.<sup>320</sup>

One of the sacraments to which *EWS*’s conception of preaching bears likeness, as a necessary part of salvation, is baptism; a comparison found not only in Wyclif, for whom preaching makes ‘spiritual heirs of the Father’, but also in the thought of important precursors such as Thomas Doking (d. 1270), a pupil of Grosseteste.<sup>321</sup> Moreover, *EWS*’s vision is no ‘fair feeld ful of folk’ comprising all of humanity who make up the mixed Church, but a *visio* of and for the Church of the Predestinate, who are saved because in them ‘Godes grace was grene’.<sup>322</sup> The boldness of this linking of election to the efficacy of preaching, and its challenge to baptism as the means by which one becomes a member of the body of Christ, may be measured by its absence in the interpretation of this same passage by the preacher of Cigman’s so-called *Lollard Sermons*.<sup>323</sup>

However, *EWS*’s most fundamental claims for Scripture as sacrament lie in its use of Jn. 6 to evoke Wyclif’s distinctive identification of Scripture with Christ Himself. This may

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<sup>319</sup> Jn. 6.10: ‘Dixit ergo Jesus: Facite homines discumbere [...] Discumberunt ergo viri, numero quasi quinque millia’ [The men therefore sat down, in number about five thousand].

<sup>320</sup> *EWS* I, 25/56-59.

<sup>321</sup> Wyclif, *De Officio Pastoralis*, II, Ch. 2, p. 33: ‘Christus facit sibi heredes patrie scilicet quod est maius miraculum hic in terris’ [Christ makes for himself heirs of the Father which is certainly the greater miracle here on earth]. See Ch. 1, p. 22, fn. 83, on Thomas Doking’s comparisons between preaching and baptism, discussed in Leclercq, ‘Le magistère du prédicateur’, p. 109.

<sup>322</sup> Langland, *Piers Plowman* (B-text, Passus I, l. 17). *EWS* is here following the reading of Wyclif, *LS* I, LVII, 373/34-36, cited and discussed in Ch. 2, p. 74. See Hudson, *PR*, pp. 314-316, on Wyclif’s view of the church as the *congregatio predestinatorum*.

<sup>323</sup> *Lollard Sermons*, 14, 182/244-248, comments that the five thousand fed by Christ ‘may wel bitoken þat oonly þo þat perfitly gouernen her fyue wittis in kepng of þe Ten Comaundementis [...] ben able to be fed and fulfillid wiþ þe goostly mete of Goddis wordis’. The author thereby shies away from issues of election, opting to stress the importance of behaviour for salvation. See Patrick J. Hornbeck II, ‘Lollard Sermons? Soteriology and Late-Medieval Dissent’, *Notes and Queries*, 53 (2006), 26-30, who comments on the stark differences between the salvation theology of the *Lollard Sermons* and that of Wyclif. This issue is discussed in Ch. 4 of this thesis, p. 132.

be seen in its interpretation, in the lection for the third Thursday sermon for Lent (Jn. 6.27-35), of Christ's own exegesis of the miracle of the loaves, given the following day:

Ion seiþ hou Crist bad þat we *shulden wrche not mete þat perischip, but þat mete þat lastiþ unto þe lif wiþouten ende, þe which mete mannus Sone shal zyue unto cristen men*<sup>324</sup> [...] *for Goddis bred is þat ilke þat comeþ doun from heuene, and zyueþ lif to þe world*<sup>325</sup> [...] *And þe Iewis seyden to Crist 'Sire, euere zif us þis bred!'* *And Iesu seyde to hem 'Y am bred of life. He þat comeþ to me shal not hunger, and he þat trowiþ in me shal neuer be apirst* [...]<sup>326</sup>

As with other medieval exegesis of this passage, *EWS* 162 uses Christ's statement that he is the 'bread of life' in Jn. 6 to signal that He Himself is the miracle's literal meaning: the bread that must be eaten. Such is indicated in *EWS* 162's rendition of Augustine's classic notion of Christ as a spiritual food: 'as Austyn telliþ [...] þis bred þat is Crist, etyn gostly of man [...] may not be þus partid ne turnyd into anoþer kynde [...] but he turnyþ man into hym'.<sup>327</sup> Furthermore, the 'sacramental' medium by which this eating of Christ comes about, *EWS* suggests, is meditation upon Scripture. The sermon begins by stating that Christ thereby 'tauzte þe soule its foode', an ambiguous statement which nonetheless suggests that through his preached words, Christ fed himself to the souls of his listeners. This reading is confirmed by another *EWS* sermon, on Jn. 17.1-11, which states that 'wordis of þe gospel ben bred of life to mennus soulis'.<sup>328</sup> Moreover, the equation of the transforming reception of Christ, the Bread of Life with Scripture is one that we have seen anticipated throughout *EWS*, from its comparison of preaching to alchemy to the constant linkage of Scripture with the trope of 'bread' itself.

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<sup>324</sup> *EWS* III, 162/6-8.

<sup>325</sup> *EWS* III, 162/37-38.

<sup>326</sup> *EWS* III, 162/52-54.

<sup>327</sup> *EWS* III, 162/59-64. See, for example, Augustine, *Confessiones*, VII.10.16 (*PL* 32.742): 'Cibus sum grandium; cresce, et manducabis me. Nec tu me in te mutabis, sicut cibum carnis tuae; sed tu mutaberis in me' [I am the food of the fully grown: grow, and you shall eat me. Nor shall you change me into you, like the food of your flesh, but you shall be changed into me]. See also *EWS* V, p. 323.

<sup>328</sup> *EWS* III, 196/2. See *GO* V, 1128: 'AVG. Omnes docibiles Dei veniunt ad filium, quoniam audierunt & didicerunt a patre per filium' [Augustine. All those teachable by God come to the son, since through the son they have heard and learnt from the father].

The extent of *EWS*'s claim for the bread of Scripture, however, most depends upon the cultural associations of the language of consumption of and assimilation to Christ with the bread of the Eucharist. Echoing patristic authorities cited in the *Glossa*, *EWS* denies that in this section of Jn. 6 Christ was talking about the Mass: 'Crist spekȝ not ȝit of þe sacrid oost'.<sup>329</sup> This learned tradition recognizes, indeed, that Christ's Bread of Life speech refers, at different stages, to his presence in different forms of 'bread'. Yet simply by virtue of expressing such ideas in the vernacular, *EWS* has crossed a Rubicon from the realm of academic discourse to that of popular religion, in which the overwhelming association of these tropes was with Christ's presence in the Mass.<sup>330</sup> As Nicholas of Lyra glosses 'give us this day our daily bread' (Mt. 6.11), 'all sacred things are ordered to the sacrament of the Eucharist, which we ask for when we say: *Bread*'.<sup>331</sup> *EWS* 162 is itself aware of this context because it uses the opportunity briefly to attack the doctrine of transubstantiation: 'fle we to clepe þis bred accident without suget'.<sup>332</sup> Yet far more to its purpose, as we shall see, is what the eucharistic context implies about *EWS*'s entire association of preaching with the transformation, multiplication and consumption of the bread of the Word: namely that the Wycliffite preacher makes present and distributes Christ, in a way that powerfully overlaps

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<sup>329</sup> *EWS* III, 162/38-39. See *GO* V, 1125: '*ego sum panis vita*. \* CHRYSOS. Neque hoc de corpore eius dictum est, de illo enim [catena] in fine dicit. *Panis quem ego dabo caro mea est*. Sed interim de diuinitate loquitur [...] [Nor is His body spoken of, for of that he speaks at the end: *The bread which I shall give is my flesh* [Jn. 6.52]. But in the meantime he speaks of divinity].

<sup>330</sup> For a eucharistic interpretation of Augustine's understanding of the assimilation of the worshipper by Christ (see above, fn. 327), see John Felton, '*Qui manducat hunc panem*. Sermo primus in die Pasche', in Cambridge University, Corpus Christi College, MS Parker 360, repr. in *Parker Library on the Web*, 1.3 Release (Cambridge: Corpus Christi College; Stanford: Stanford University, 2011) <<http://parkerweb.stanford.edu/>> [accessed 20/09/11], fols. 70r-73r (70v-71r): '*sed hic digne comedens conuertitur in naturam cibi comesti [...]* Unde in persona cristi dicit Augustinus manducas me non mutabis me in te sed tu mutaberis in me' [but here he who eats worthily is converted into the nature of the food that has been eaten [...] whence, concerning the person of Christ, Augustine says, 'you eat me, you will not change me into you but you shall be changed into me']. This sermon is also translated in Siegfried Wenzel, *Preaching in the Age of Chaucer: Selected Sermons in Translation* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), pp. 133-143.

<sup>331</sup> Nicholas of Lyra, *GO* V, 130: '*omnia autem sacra ordinantur ad sacramentum eucharistiae, quod petimus [...] cum dicimus. Panem.*'

<sup>332</sup> *EWS* III, 162/46-49.

with those powers granted to the priest's consecration bringing about the presence of his body and blood in the Mass.

### **3.1. 'Unless you eat my flesh': The Body or the Word of Christ?**

Of course, one may ask in what way even *EWS*'s claim to truly distribute Christ Himself in his word is distinctively Wycliffite, given that both this notion and its tensions with the Eucharist are well established in later medieval culture. A striking parallel to the Wycliffite exploitation of these resonances that we have encountered is that of the Italian Dominican Catherine of Siena (1347-1380). Like the Wycliffites, she was a non-ordained figure who uses the association of preaching and Eucharist to authorize herself and others as preacher and indeed distributor of Christ's body and blood. Yet the reason why Catherine was permitted to do this arguably lay in her adherence to what Gary Macy sees as the settlement reached between ordained and non-ordained participants in the Mass.<sup>333</sup> The centre of Catherine's devotional life was the reception of Christ physically present in the host, as brought about by the priest in the Mass; eating Christ there – body, blood and soul – was what authorized her to spew him out in words to her audience.<sup>334</sup>

It is this settlement that *EWS*'s articulation of preaching as a sacrament, like the thought of Wyclif himself, unravels. This becomes clear in *EWS*'s treatment of the final lines of Jn. 6 (Jn. 6.54-72), the summit of Christ's interpretation of the miracle of the bread, in the Saturday Sermon for the fifth week of Lent:

*Sopely, sopely, Y seye to zou, but zif zee etyn þe fleyss of mannus Sone, and drynke his blood, zee shulen not haue lif dwelling in zou. He þat etip my fleyss and drynkiþ my blood, he hap lif wiþouten ende [...] My fleyss is ueryly mete, and my blood is ueryly drynk. He þat etip my fleyss and drynkiþ my blood, he dwellip in me and Y in hym. [...] he þat etip me he shal lyue for me. þis is þe bred þat cam doun fro heuene. Not as zoure fadris*

<sup>333</sup> On the theories of Gary Macy, see Ch. 1, pp. 12-16.

<sup>334</sup> Catherine of Siena is discussed in Ch. 1, p. 28.

*eetyn angelis mete and weren deed, he þat etip þis bred shal lyue wipouten ende [...] It is spirit þat ȝyueþ lif, fleyssh helpiþ no þing heere. þe wordis þat Y haue spokun to ȝou ben spirit and lif.*<sup>335</sup>

The overwhelming significance to late-medieval religion of Christ's speech is as a prophecy of Christ's unique gift of his physical body and blood to the recipients of the consecrated bread and wine of the Mass: it is no coincidence that from these lines was drawn the Gospel reading of the Mass for the feast of Corpus Christi (besides much of the material for its other offices), the great cultural celebration of this fleshly presence.<sup>336</sup> This emphasis is acknowledged in Wyclif's own statement (at the start of the Latin sermon upon which, we shall see, *EWS* 176 seemingly draws), that this passage 'alludes to the foundation [*fundacio*] and meaning [*sensus*] of the sacrament'.<sup>337</sup>

Unsurprisingly, therefore, scholars have focussed on the significance of *EWS* 176 as one of the cycle's major pronouncements on the doctrine of the Eucharist.<sup>338</sup> Undoubtedly, one may read many statements in *EWS* 176 as discussing this doctrine. Not least, the sermon attacks any association of 'flesh' and 'blood' with a physical eating:

no man þat haþ witt dredip þat Crist spekiþ not heere of bodily eting and drinkyng of his fleysch and his blood.<sup>339</sup>

<sup>335</sup> *EWS* III, 176/4-21. Jn. 6.54-59, 64: 'Amen, amen dico vobis: nisi manducaveritis carnem Filii hominis, et biberitis eius sanguinem, non habebitis vitam in vobis. Qui manducat meam carnem, et bibit meum sanguinem, habet vitam aeternam [...] Caro enim mea vere est cibus: et sanguis meus, vere est potus; qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem, in me manet, et ego in illo [...] et qui manducat me, et ipse vivet propter me. Hic est panis qui de caelo descendit. Non sicut manducaverunt patres vestri manna, et mortui sunt. Qui manducat hunc panem, vivet in aeternum. [...] Spiritus est qui vivificat: caro non prodest quidquam: verba quae ego locutus sum vobis, spiritus et vita sunt'. This section of Jn. 6 is also discussed in Ch. 1, p. 3.

<sup>336</sup> See 'In Festo Corporis Christi', in *Missale ad usum insignis et praeclarae Ecclesiae Sarum: pars prima, temporale* (Burntisland: Pitsligo / London, C. J. Stewart, 1861), cols. 455-460 (col. 458): 'Secundum Johannem. In illo tempore, dixit Jesus discipulis suis et turbis Judaeorum; [Jn. 6.56-69] Caro mea vere est cibus, et sanguis meus vere est potus [...] Qui manducat hunc panem, vivet in aeternum' [In that time, Christ said to his disciples and the crowds of the Jews: [as quoted above] *My fleyssh is ueryly mete, and my blood is ueryly drynk* [...] *he þat etip þis bred shal lyue wipouten ende*]. On the Offices of Corpus Christi, see, in general, C. Lambot, 'L'Office de la fête-Dieu. Aperçus nouveaux sur ses origines', *Revue Bénédictine*, 54 (1942), 61-123. The feast of Corpus Christi is the occasion of *EWS* III, 206.

<sup>337</sup> *LS* II, LXI, 453/3-4.

<sup>338</sup> See, for example, Patrick Hornbeck's work on *EWS* as a witness to differences in eucharistic theology among Wycliffites, discussed below, p. 98.

<sup>339</sup> *EWS* III, 176/24-25.

Rather, it argues, Christ was referring to a necessary but spiritual eating of his body: ‘ech man þat schal be sauýd shal be fed of Crist þus, but þis may not be vndirstonden of fleýssly fode of Cristis body’.<sup>340</sup> Later in the sermon, the author paraphrases Wyclif’s classic formulation, found in *De Eucharistia*, concerning the way in which Christ is uniquely present in the Mass. The substance of the consecrated host is unchanged (‘þe bred of þe sacrid oost is uery bred in his kynde’), while truly becoming Christ’s body through its power as a sacramental sign: ‘it is Goddis body in figure, and so it is þe same body þat is Goddis body in his kynde’.<sup>341</sup>

I believe, however, that the undoubted importance of Jn. 6.52-59 to medieval controversy over the Mass has deflected attention away from its primary significance to this sermon. As it also states, the spiritual eating and drinking of which Christ talks ‘is nouzt but to fede þe soule with bileue þat man mut haue of þe fleýss and blod of Crist’.<sup>342</sup> Thus it emphasizes the role of faith over reception of the bread and wine. This emphasis is further expanded upon in an equivocal statement at the sermon’s heart. When people consider Christ’s edict in Jn. 6 to eat his flesh and drink his blood, it argues:

heere ben many men marrid of þe sacrament of þe auter, and referren alle þes wordis to þis holy sacrament. But neþeles men witen wel þat þes wordis weren spokun of Crist longe bífóre þat þis sacrament was maad of Crist or ony man. For þe sacrament was maad first upon Shier-þursday, and longe bífóre þat tyme weren þes wordis spokun of Crist. Neþeles, many of þes wordis may be wel vndurstonen of þis sacrid oost, who þat knowiþ hem soundely.<sup>343</sup>

This statement argues something even more radical than denying that Christ’s talk in Jn. 6 concerned the eating of his flesh and blood in the Mass through transubstantiation of the bread and wine, as opposed to through faith. By arguing that this interpretation was wrong

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<sup>340</sup> *EWS III*, 176/32-34.

<sup>341</sup> *EWS III*, 176/70-72. On Wyclif’s eucharistic theology, see Ch. 2, pp. 179-187.

<sup>342</sup> *EWS III*, 176/45-46.

<sup>343</sup> *EWS III*, 176/59-66.

since the words were spoken ‘longe bifore’ the institution of the Mass, *EWS* 176 denies that Christ was in any way prophesying that eating in the Mass; it thus runs counter to the prevailing medieval understanding of Jn. 6.<sup>344</sup> This sundering of the flesh and blood of Jn. 6 from the context of the Mass is also suggested by *EWS* 176’s repetition of terms such as ‘referred’ and ‘vnderstonden’, implying that human custom rather than divine intention was behind the link. Thus, while *EWS* 176 allows that the passage can have relevance to the Mass, if ‘soundely’ understood, and does not explicitly deny that there is something unique about Christ’s presence in the bread and wine (as orthodox thinkers and Wyclif alike asserted), its effect is to imply that the latter is merely one symbolic vehicle, at best, of a completely independent process centred upon faith.

One effect of *EWS* 176’s argument, therefore, is to imply that what one believes about the Mass is a ‘thing indifferent’, provided that one does not believe in transubstantiation. This suggests that the author may have been seeking to bridge divisions over the Eucharist among both potential and existing followers of Wyclif; as Patrick Hornbeck has argued, the authors of the *EWS* sermons themselves express ‘a variety of opinions about the sacrament’, ranging from a spiritual real presence to absent memorialism.<sup>345</sup> This sermon adds to other evidence (which we later consider) of doctrinal disagreements among Wycliffites about the sacraments, which challenge the image of a coherent Wycliffite identity that *EWS* appears anxious to present.<sup>346</sup> Nonetheless, I believe that *EWS* 176’s own reading of Jn. 6 does not itself reflect what Hornbeck has seen as a failure by Wyclif’s later followers to grasp his complex eucharistic theology,<sup>347</sup> but rather a deliberate and insightful articulation of the crucial late shifts in Wyclif’s sacramental thinking, expressed in his late Latin sermons,

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<sup>344</sup> See also the gloss of these lines in *Repertorium of Middle English Prose Sermons*, IV, p. 725: ‘Many people think that Christ’s words here refer to the sacrament of the altar but these words were spoken long before the Last Supper. Nevertheless, some of them can be understood to refer to the sacrament’.

<sup>345</sup> Hornbeck, *What is a Lollard?*, pp. 77-8.

<sup>346</sup> For a summary of scholarly arguments for and against the idea of Wycliffism as an identity definable by a coherent body of beliefs, see Hornbeck, *What is a Lollard?*, pp. viii-xi.

<sup>347</sup> See Hornbeck, *What is a Lollard?*, p. 76.

which we analysed in the previous chapter. These were ideas with which the *EWS* 176 author was appealing to a movement which may have been split, possibly, by its members' adherences to different stages of Wyclif's own developing thought. Not least, the passage we have just discussed strongly echoes an equivocation at the heart of one of Wyclif's own late sermons, on Jn. 6.54, which I suggest was an exemplar for *EWS* 176. Having said at its outset that 'unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood' was the foundation [*fundacio*] and meaning [*sensus*] of the Mass, only somewhat later in his sermon does Wyclif reveal that Christ's words possess another 'perfectly Catholic' meaning, which he believed 'the Gospel words more to intend: that Christ's natural flesh and blood are truly the soul's food and drink when they are objects of contemplation and pleasure, by which the faithful soul is fed and watered'.<sup>348</sup>

Most importantly, *EWS* 176 is aiming to express what we have argued was the central development in Wyclif's sacramental thought, clearest in his late sermons, about the source of that communion with Christ in Scripture itself. As it states, one cannot 'eat gostly Cristis body [...] but 3if þis mete be defied [digested], and Crist licne men to hym', a transforming consumption which we have seen linked in previous *EWS* sermons to meditation upon Scripture. This shift, however, is most explicit in *EWS* 176's reading of Jn. 6.63: '*þe wordis þat Y haue spokun to 3ou ben spirit and lif*':

þes wordis in her oune kynde ben siche as weren his opere wordis, but  
witt of þes wordis heere is spiritual and mannus lif.<sup>349</sup>

*EWS* 176 here follows the general interpretation of Jn. 6.63 in writings such as Wyclif's *De Eucharistia* insofar as the latter, as David Aers has observed, glosses the 'spirit' of which

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<sup>348</sup> *LS* II, LXI, 455/10-21: 'Pro quo primo notandum est quod prima verba possunt habere duplicem sensum satis catholicum, primo intelligendo de sacramento panis et vini [...] sed secundum alium sensum quem credo evangelicum magis intendere, quod caro Christi et sanguis suus in natura sua sunt vere potus et cibus anime, cum sint obiectum in cuius consideratione et delectacione anima fidelis pascitur et potatur'. See Ch. 2 of this thesis, p. 79, on Wyclif's suggestion in other late sermons that the Mass might be done away with as a religious rite.

<sup>349</sup> *EWS* III, 176/30-32.

Christ speaks in this passage ‘as the spiritual sense of Christ’s words’.<sup>350</sup> Yet in *EWS* 176, which has divorced the miracle of the bread from the context of the Last Supper, the emphasis falls squarely upon Christ’s words in Jn. 6 themselves (‘wordis in her oune kynde’) as the site of that spiritual sense; thereby, its author argues that the reception of Christ’s preaching in Jn. 6, and in Scripture more broadly, rather than of the bread and wine, becomes the test of faith that leads to the eating of his flesh and blood, or to damnation: ‘3if þou seye þat no man may vndirstonde Cristis wordis, but 3if God 3yue hym witt, as no man may ellis be sauyd, þou seist sob’.<sup>351</sup>

### **3.2. Preaching: A Wycliffite Eucharist?**

*EWS* 176’s reading of Jn. 6 also therefore articulates the core challenge to the established religion of the period posed by Wyclif’s own theology of preaching: the effective substitution of the preached word for the sacraments including the Mass. Such a substitution has, hitherto, been recognized in the recorded statements of heretics of the later fifteenth and early sixteenth century, such as that of John Whitehorne, who stated that: ‘crist saying to his dissiples [...] this ys my body etc. mente nat of brede that he brak ther but of goddes word [...] whoo so euer Resceive devoutly goddis Word he Resceyvith the verrey body of criste’.<sup>352</sup> Yet, the past two chapters have illustrated how such ideas, far from being

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<sup>350</sup> Aers, *Sanctifying Signs*, p. 55. The passage in question is Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, I, 17/10-14: ‘ideo dicit Christus apostolis [...] quod sensus carnalis istius non proderit, sed *spiritus est*, hoc est spiritualis sensus, *qui vivificat*’ [Therefore Christ says to the apostles [...] that its carnal meaning will profit nothing, but *it is the spirit*, that is the spiritual sense, *which quickeneth*].

<sup>351</sup> *EWS* III, 176/94-96.

<sup>352</sup> London, Lambeth Palace Library, Reg. Morton, I, fol. 194, qtd. in Claude Jenkins, ‘Cardinal Morton’s Register’, in *Tudor Studies: Presented to Albert Frederick Pollard By Board of Studies in History London University, being the work of twelve of his colleagues and pupils*, ed. by R.W. Seton-Watson (London: Longmans & Green, 1924), pp. 26-74 (p. 48). This is one of a cluster of such statements equating the eucharistic eating with Scripture recorded between the late-fifteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries. For similar comments by Thomas Beele of Henley (end 15 c.) and the sixteenth-century Protestant John Frith, see Andrew Hope, ‘Lollardy: The Stone the Builders Rejected?’, in *Protestantism and the National Church in Sixteenth Century England*, ed. by Peter Lake and Maria Dowling (London / New York / Sidney: Croom Helm, 1987), pp. 1-35 (pp. 20 and 23 respectively). For comments in the sixteenth century by John Pykas and the Reformer William Tyndale, see Hudson, *PR*, p. 472.

merely distant echoes (at best) of Wyclif's views, were on the contrary both discernible in Wyclif's mature sacramental theology and present in that of the Wycliffite movement at its earliest stages.<sup>353</sup>

And as we shall consider in the last section of this chapter, the power of *EWS* 176's argument is precisely that it does not reflect an isolated opinion, but a dynamic central to the development of Wycliffite culture. Most starkly, *EWS* 176 serves to expose (as was arguably its purpose) that this substitution was the central aim of the preaching promulgated throughout the *EWS* cycle itself, whatever its authors' views of the Eucharist, in fulfilment of Wyclif's vision of a religion united by the sacrament of the word. This may be seen in the consistency with which *EWS* sermons appropriate to preaching a range of tropes, besides those of Jn. 6 itself, whose primary association in popular late-medieval religion was with the Mass. This for example is the case with the use by a sermon, for the Common of a Saint, of a text deriving from Ps. 33.9: 'taaste ȝe, and vndyrstonde, how þat þe Lord is swete, and oþre worldly þingus ben bytture'.<sup>354</sup>

by mannus speche may we wyte who taastuþ of Godus swetnesse;  
for þat man haþ delyȝt to speke of God and his lawe, and oþre  
men ben in feuerus, and taste not of Godus word, but it semet  
byttur to hem, for þer taast is turned amys [...] and deedly signe  
of suche seke men is þat hem wantuþ appetiȝt of Godus word, þat  
schulde be þer foode and lyȝt.<sup>355</sup>

In linking this trope with Scripture, the sermon is reviving its older monastic association with reception of Christ through scriptural meditation. Yet, equally crucial is the noticeable absence, here and throughout *EWS*, of the associations it popularly held with Christ's

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<sup>353</sup> As Hudson comments generally in *PR*, p. 386, 'the extreme views found in the registers [of the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries] are not peculiar to late cases'.

<sup>354</sup> *EWS* II, 79/18-20. Ps. 33.9: 'Gustate, et videte quoniam suavis est Dominus' [O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet]. This text, and its associations both to monastic *lectio* and the medieval Eucharist, is discussed in Ch. 1, p. 11. To find such texts so exclusively linked to the preached word in this and other sermons for the Common and Proper of Saints is also significant if one accepts Hornbeck's argument that the authors of this sermon set espoused a true presence in the bread and wine, unlike those who composed the Sunday Gospels, Epistles and Ferial Sermons (*What is a Lollard?*, pp. 78-9). In other words, despite differences in eucharistic opinion, their writings nonetheless suggest the same perception of Christ's primary presence in Scripture.

<sup>355</sup> *EWS* II, 79/56-63.

presence in the Mass itself.<sup>356</sup> Such an absence justifies the accusation that the Mass was a dead rite for Wycliffites, as made in the telling complaint of the Carthusian Nicholas Love that the Wycliffite holds stories of eucharistic miracles to be ‘maggetales & feyned illusions’: ‘bycause þat he tastep not þe swetnes of þis precious sacrament nor felep þe gracious wirching þerof in himself’.<sup>357</sup> Yet, as *EWS*’s reading of texts such as Jn. 6 and of Ps. 33 also suggests, in line with Wyclif’s late Latin sermons, this was because their eucharistic Christ is not the suffering human at the centre of mainstream eucharistic devotion, but the master of the parable who speaks in the words of Scripture.

An even more powerful sign of this substitution lies in *EWS*’s use of the Middle English term *oonhed* (‘unity’).<sup>358</sup> Among the different possible modes of union between human and divine in medieval understanding, most important in the context of lay religion was the ‘unity of the Church’ effected by the reception of the bread in the Mass.<sup>359</sup> As St. Paul describes the symbolism of this reception: ‘For we, being many, are one bread’ (1. Cor. 10-17). And yet *EWS* does not invoke *oonhed* or its variants with reference to the Mass, but almost exclusively with Scripture, and centrally with the unity of Christ and his flock achieved through the mediatory power of preaching: ‘alle Cristus disciples traueyledon to brynge to one men of þe chirche, so þat þer schulde ben on herde and o flocc’;<sup>360</sup> similarly, ‘hit is al on, to loue God and to louen his word’.<sup>361</sup> It is precisely the perceived ability of preaching to take over this function which also underpins *EWS*’s central aspiration: that preaching would imminently transform English society, as Wyclif had prophesied, by

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<sup>356</sup> See Ch. 1, p. 11, fn, 41, for the comments of Benedicta Ward and Caroline Walker Bynum on the resonances of this language in later-medieval eucharistic devotion.

<sup>357</sup> Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ: A Full Critical Edition*, ed. by Michael G. Sargent (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2005), p. 152. On Love’s comment, see also Aers, *Sanctifying Signs*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>358</sup> See the variants on ‘oonhed’ listed in Wolfgang Riehle, *Studien zur englischen Mystik des Mittelalters unter besonderer Berücksichtigung ihrer Metaphorik* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1977), p. 129: ‘oonhed, oonnes, union, unicion, unite, onyng, unithing, onen [...]’.

<sup>359</sup> See Aquinas, *ST IIIa*, 73.2, quoted in Ch. 2, p. 79.

<sup>360</sup> *EWS II*, 58/6-7.

<sup>361</sup> *EWS I*, 53/29-30.

knitting together the predestinate who belonged to the body of Christ. Both the social and eternal aspects of this unity are caught in the statement of one *EWS* sermon that through the sowing of the Word, Holy Church would grow and rise from ‘þe eurþe to þe hyznesse of heuene’.<sup>362</sup> Clearly, such ideas persisted long after Wycliffism had been reduced to a movement on the very margins of English society. As the heretic Richard Hylling told officials of the bishop of Salisbury, as late as 1491: ‘wiþin x yere space ther shal be one folde and one sheppard, meaning herby that all heretikis and Lollardis, the which haue received grace, shall preche openly and no man shall dare say agayn them’.<sup>363</sup>

### **3.3. A Sign of Disunity**

Moreover, even if the vision of the *EWS* sermons of an English religion centered upon the preached Word remained largely an aspiration, it does expose (and may have helped to establish) the rationale underpinning its likely function as the sole sacrament for most, if not all, Wycliffites in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries: a function which Margaret Aston has inferred from the scant evidence of regular Wycliffite Masses or other rites.<sup>364</sup> The composition of *EWS* itself bears witness not merely to the influence of Wyclif’s ideas but also to the likely practical importance of sermons, in early Wycliffite culture, as the central social bond between their listeners. A social function may be inferred in the very brevity of many of the *EWS* sermons which, Hudson has speculated, suggests they were intended not merely to be preached but also to act as spurs to ‘audience discussion’.<sup>365</sup> In such a way, as one sermon puts it, ‘by mannus speche may we wyte who taastuþ of Godus

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<sup>362</sup> *EWS* I, 38/67-68.

<sup>363</sup> Trowbridge, Wiltshire Record Office, Reg. Langton, II, fol. 38v, qtd. in Hudson, *PR*, p. 171.

<sup>364</sup> See Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London: The Hambleton Press, 1984), p. 66: ‘It seems most unlikely that there were ever many Lollards [...] who resorted to administering the Eucharist. We should certainly expect to learn more about it [...] if they had [...] their own belief in the sacramental value of the Word, makes it likely that such ceremony as they had centred upon preaching’. But see the same, pp. 65-66, on scattered accounts of heretical masses. See also Ch. 2 of this thesis, p. 60, fn. 110, on the ‘silent Mass’ of William Ramsbury.

<sup>365</sup> *EWS* IV, p. 35. See also Hudson, *PR*, pp. 184-6, 193-5.

swetnesse'.<sup>366</sup> Equally constitutive of this bond may have been the power of the doctrinal content of the sermons, being implacably opposed to the teachings of Antichrist that was the established Church, to make listening to the sermons in itself an act of Wycliffite membership. Added to this, the likely intended delivery of the sermons outside the liturgical context of Church services would underscore the importance of the preached word, *qua* sacrament, and its claim on the powers vested by the Church in its sacraments.<sup>367</sup>

Moreover, the likelihood of such a function being widespread is suggested not only by *EWS*'s very existence, a product of extensive collaboration and thus suggestive of a milieu, but also by similar discussions of Scripture and Eucharist in a range of other Wycliffite texts moving into the fifteenth century.<sup>368</sup> One example is the Wycliffite account, c. 1406, of the interrogation of the itinerant Wycliffite preacher William Thorpe by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Arundel. Critics such as David Aers have seen in Thorpe's argument principally an unqualified defence of the eucharistic ideas expressed in works such as Wyclif's *De Eucharistia*.<sup>369</sup> As Thorpe says: 'I beleue and teche oþer to beleue, þat þe worschiful sacrament of þe auter is verri Cristis fleisch and his blood in forme of breed and wyne'.<sup>370</sup> Yet a more ambiguous message emerges in the detail of Thorpe's argument, for example in his denial that, during a Sunday Mass in the church of St. Chad, Shrewsbury, he had preached from the pulpit that 'þe sacrament of the auter was material breed after þe

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<sup>366</sup> *EWS* II, 79/56-57.

<sup>367</sup> See *EWS* IV, pp. 35-36.

<sup>368</sup> Gradon and Hudson have concluded (*EWS* IV, pp. 28-37), that both the identity (p. 29) and the number (p. 37) of the authors of the *EWS* cycle are unascertainable: on the one hand, a single author is not ruled out; on the other multiple authorship of this large collection is credible (p. 33). Hornbeck (*What is a Lollard?*, p. 44) has similarly inferred multiple authorship from the varying eucharistic views that he sees within the sermons. In any case, also to be included within the collaborative effort and thus the Wycliffite milieu that produced them, are the upwards of 40 scribes who, in Hudson's view, would have been required for the scriptorium likely to have produced twenty-five of the extant *EWS* manuscripts and, by inference, many more which have been lost. See *EWS* I, pp. 193-196.

<sup>369</sup> See Aers, *Sanctifying Signs*, pp. 83-85, 89-92.

<sup>370</sup> 'The Testimony of William Thorpe', in *Two Wycliffite Texts: The Sermon of William Taylor 1406, The Testimony of William Thorpe 1407*, ed. by Anne Hudson, EETS 301 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 24-132 (p. 53, ll. 967-969).

consecracioun'.<sup>371</sup> As Thorpe protested to Arundel, he hadn't mentioned the sacrament at all. Rather, as the sacring-bell had signalled the elevation of the host, and caused the congregation to move away, he had told them:

Goode men, 3ou were better to stoonden here stille and to heere  
Goddis word! þe vertu and þe mede of þe moost holi sacrament of  
þe auter stondiþ myche moore in þe bileue þereof þat 3e owen to  
haue in 3oure soulis þan it doiþ in þe outward siȝt þerof. And  
þerfore 3ou were better to stonde still quyetefulli and to heeren  
Goddis worde, siþ þoruȝ heeringe þerof men come to veri  
bileue.<sup>372</sup>

The unequivocal truth in Thorpe's statement is that he is not discussing the sacrament, but its 'vertu' and 'mede', and, overtly, the latter's misassociation with the viewing of the host.<sup>373</sup> Nonetheless, chiming with Arundel's accusation, it is the fundamental belief that the host becomes Christ which is thrown into question by Thorpe's argument that its 'mede' resides principally in an internalized eating through faith.<sup>374</sup> This in turn underscores the significance of Thorpe's framing argument, following St. Paul, that the worshipper comes to faith through preaching.<sup>375</sup> Thus, one may see Thorpe permitting his Wycliffite readership to draw exactly the same conclusion implicit in *EWS* as well as expressed by later medieval heretical statements, that the preached word is not merely preparation for but itself the means of eating Christ's body and blood.<sup>376</sup>

However, does the very ambiguity of Thorpe and the *EWS* authors on this matter suggest that such a substitution may have emerged as the major source of disunity in the early Wycliffite movement, and of its vulnerability to establishment attack? This is one

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<sup>371</sup> 'Thorpe's Testimony', 52/931-932.

<sup>372</sup> 'Thorpe's Testimony', 52/939-945.

<sup>373</sup> Thorpe's critique of the value of seeing the sacrament is also discussed in Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, pp. 130-131.

<sup>374</sup> See Ch. 1, p. 4, on Augustine's use of the concept of *virtus sacramenti*; p. 5 on the medieval scholastic concept of the *res sacramenti*.

<sup>375</sup> See Rm. 10.17, quoted in Ch. 1, p. 7, fn. 24.

<sup>376</sup> See *Two Wycliffite Texts*, p. 117, note to l. 937 in 'Thorpe's Testimony', where Anne Hudson importantly points out the parallels between Thorpe's statement and that of the late fifteenth-century heretic John Whitehorne, discussed above, p. 100, fn. 352.

message of the strident Tract *De oblatione iugis sacrificii* ('On the offering of the continual / daily sacrifice'), probably written in 1413, some thirty years after Wyclif's death and perhaps two decades after the likely composition of *EWS*.<sup>377</sup> At a time when sustained persecution and the presumed loss of academic support from Oxford may be thought to have impaired the intellectual and social scope of Wycliffism, this text stands out for its passionate articulation of Wyclif's ideas, to the extent that 'as the editor points out, [it] does not seem to be interested in tailoring its often complex arguments' to its audience'.<sup>378</sup> In its author's view, living by the true logic of Scripture, as expounded in Wyclif's writings, separates those who belong to the body of Christ from the members of Antichrist, a shadowy 'aggregat persone of many riȝt wikkid' who 'supposeden not scripture as grounde of her logic'.<sup>379</sup> For the author, as with Wyclif, the suppression and corruption of this scriptural logic by Antichrist is manifest in the accreted traditions, glosses and theology of the later-medieval Church and the actions of its prelates, such as Archbishop Arundel.<sup>380</sup>

One focus of *De oblatione*, conforming to Wyclif's theological vision, is the defence of preaching from the restrictions that had been placed upon it by the early fifteenth century, spearheaded by Arundel, and of the identification of the preached Word with Christ central to Wyclif's theology: 'al wordis and truthis þat Crist spekiþ toward ben substancialli and groundli Iesu Crist þat is þe word of þe Fadur'.<sup>381</sup> Nonetheless, its principal and recurrent topic is the undying meaning of the Eucharist, as this had been defined in works such as Wyclif's *De Eucharistia*: that the sacrament of the altar is at the same time 'brede and

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<sup>377</sup> *The Tract De oblatione iugis sacrificii*, in *The Works of a Lollard Preacher: The Sermon Omnis plantacio, The Tract Fundamentum aliud nemo potest ponere and The Tract De oblatione iugis sacrificii*, ed. by Anne Hudson, EETS 317 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 157-256. See Hudson, *Works of a Lollard Preacher*, pp. xlix-l, on dating, and p. 303 on the derivation of the tract's title from 'the colophon at the end; there is no heading at the start'. This tract is hereafter referred to as *De oblatione*.

<sup>378</sup> Ghosh, 'Wycliffite Affiliations', p. 5; see also Hudson, *Works of a Lollard Preacher*, p. xlvi.

<sup>379</sup> *De oblatione*, 174/676, 158/63-64.

<sup>380</sup> See, for example, *De oblatione*, 167/395-406.

<sup>381</sup> *De oblatione*, 227/2770-2772. On *De oblatione*'s discussion of scriptural logic and of the 'lewed logic' of those in power in the Church, see Ghosh, 'Logic and Lollardy', pp. 258-260.

Goddis bodi’,<sup>382</sup> in other words, the body is truly yet symbolically present, in a manner which leaves the bread’s physical substance unchanged. Antichrist, as prophesied by Daniel, had most sought to destroy belief in this sacrament, starkly (as the constant references to the latter’s ‘determyncioun’ suggest), through Innocent III’s promulgation of the doctrine of transubstantiation, according to which ‘þis oost is neiþur brede ne wyne, ne Cristis bodi ne his blode, but accidentis wiþout subiect’.<sup>383</sup> Thus Satan had wrought a second Babel, whereby the Church was ‘diuided into diuerse and contrarious opunions about þe sacrid oost’.<sup>384</sup> By contrast, *De oblacione* strives to show how clearly Wyclif’s eucharistic theology is that of the Gospel witnesses. By saying, ‘this is my body’, God could not: ‘bi his endeles wisdom deuse a truer, a bettur and an esier logic to schew þerbi to þe world þe beleue of þe sacred oost’.<sup>385</sup> This same logic pervades the discourses of the Apostles and Church Fathers, and even the works of supposed latter-day supporters of transubstantiation, such as Thomas Aquinas.<sup>386</sup> Through observance of this logic (implicitly among Wycliffites), *De oblacione* insists, the Eucharist remains the most ‘besie and most ryue [active] sacrament þat I know usid in þe chirche’.<sup>387</sup>

Nonetheless, is the shadowy manifestation of Antichrist and his destruction of the Eucharist, against which *De oblacione* so vividly inveighs, one that its author locates entirely or even mostly outside the Wycliffite movement? Although the tract clearly attacks the doctrine of transubstantiation, its principal anxiety is rather to defend the idea that

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<sup>382</sup> *De oblacione*, 201/1718-1719.

<sup>383</sup> *De oblacione*, 205/1899-1897, 192/1380-1382. As Hudson comments in *Works of a Lollard Preacher*, p. 319, note to *De oblacione*, 194/1464: ‘The *determyncioun* is doubtless that of the 1215 Lateran Council which was generally taken to affirm transubstantiation’. On the doctrine of transubstantiation, see Ch. 1, p. 3. Hudson, *Works of a Lollard Preacher*, p. 302, also remarks that the *iuge sacrificium* is mentioned in Dan. 8.11 and 12.11. Dan. 12.11: ‘Et a tempore cum ablatum fuerit iuge sacrificium, et posita fuerit abominatio in desolationem, dies mille ducenti nonaginta’ [And from the time when the continual sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination unto desolation shall be set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred ninety days].

<sup>384</sup> *De oblacione*, 228/2805-2806.

<sup>385</sup> *De oblacione*, 215/2279-2281.

<sup>386</sup> *De oblacione*, 253/3774-3784. See also Wyclif’s argument that Aquinas was not responsible for the denial attributed to him of the remanence of the bread after consecration, in *De Eucharistia*, V, 137/7-138/8, 139/12-16.

<sup>387</sup> *De oblacione*, 194/1454-1455.

Christ's symbolic presence in the physical bread and wine constitutes a real presence. Such anxieties were justified, moreover, not only because Wyclif's opponents had accused him of destroying belief in the Eucharist, in fulfilment of Daniel's prophesy, but because, in the case of late-fourteenth and early fifteenth-century Wycliffism, such a charge was valid.<sup>388</sup> In particular, the detail of *De oblacione*'s argument suggests that it is appealing primarily to other Wycliffites not to reject the Eucharist as the sacrament of Christ's body and blood, and thus to justify the charge that Wycliffites are heretics. This may be seen above all in its readings of Jn. 6. Contrasting with the permissive ambiguity of *EWS*'s reading, *De oblacione* clearly affirms that in Jn. 6., Christ 'enformeþ his chirche in þe feiþ of þe sacred oost in itself and in þe thinngis þat it betokeneth'.<sup>389</sup> When Christ said 'Whoso etiþ my flesche', he was referring to the believers who 'maken oo bodi of þe wiche þe sacrid oost is a sacrament and truthe'.<sup>390</sup> Likewise, a range of other arguments may be read equally as applying to Wycliffite dismissal of the Church's visible rites as to transubstantiation: a sacrament is 'propurli a uisibile forme [...] of an vnuisible grace, and in antecristis sacrament is no uisibel forme or kinde',<sup>391</sup> the 'holi peple' of the persecuted early Apostolic Church (a model for Wycliffite identity) 'so riueli treeting þis blessid sacrament, hadden sum maner of speche and logic wherbi þei comuned in word and spak of þis sacrament, þe wiche logic was oon among hem alle'.<sup>392</sup>

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<sup>388</sup> As Hudson comments in *Works of a Lollard Preacher*, p. 303, Dan. 12.11 had been cited by John Tyssyngton in support of 'his allegation that, as a result of Wyclif's eucharistic teaching, many abstain from receiving the eucharist at Easter' (discussed in Ch. 2 of this thesis, p. 79). See also Ch. 1, pp. 55, 57 on the reaction to Wyclif's eucharistic theology of William Barton, Chancellor of Oxford.

<sup>389</sup> *De oblacione*, 208/2032-209/2033. See also, for example, *De oblacione*, 209/2036-2039. When Christ said, 'þe brede þat I schal zeue [...] he enformeth his chosyn what þe sacrament is in itself or in kinde, and what hit is bi vertu of his worde'.

<sup>390</sup> *De oblacione*, 209/2040, 2044-2045.

<sup>391</sup> *De oblacione*, 196/1545-1547.

<sup>392</sup> *De oblacione*, 220/2495-2498. For an example of Wycliffite identification with the members of the early Apostolic Church, see Hudson, *PR*, p. 222, on a letter of the Wycliffite Richard Wyche to other Wycliffites: 'the greetings to named associates echo in their biblical language the salutations of many Pauline epistles: the writer was placing himself in the apostolical tradition of persecution'.

Moreover, *De oblacione* also rebukes the identifications of the Eucharist with Scripture which we have seen credibly underpinned the abandonment of the Mass by sections of the Wycliffite movement. This may be seen in the author's quotation of a key statement from Augustine's *De Trinitate*. While St. Paul might preach the Lord Jesus Christ, Augustine says:

oþurwise bi tunge, oþurwise bi epistle, oþurwise bi þe sacrament of his bodi and his blode [...] we seien þe bodi of Crist and þe blode to be neiþur þe tung of Poule, neiþur parchemyn, neiþur þe betokenyng sounnes made wiþ þe tung of Poule, neiþur signes of lettris wreten in þe skynnes. But þat þing onli, þe wiche is itake of þe frutis of þe erþe and ihalowid bi mystic praiour.<sup>393</sup>

Wyclif himself had cited this passage in *De apostasia* to rebut the charge that Christ would be equally present in Holy Scripture as in the bread and wine of the Mass, if the latter were a symbolic presence.<sup>394</sup> Yet it is exactly the identification of Christ's eucharistic presence with his scriptural presence, also discernible in Wyclif's late sermons and underpinning the effective substitution of preaching for the Mass in Wycliffite culture, against which *De oblacione* thereby appears to warn. This is also the message of its reading of another key text in Wyclif's theology, Jn. 10.35-36 ('þe Scripture which the Father hath hallowed'). While this Scripture, *De oblacione* argues, following Wyclif, 'is Crist, God and man, þe boke of liif, [just] as þe cros, in wich Poule alone wold haue his glorie, is Iesu Crist', nonetheless 'þe reuelacion in boþe þes clausis limiten to þis witt'.<sup>395</sup> In other words, Scripture 'is' Christ only in the transcendent and symbolic manner that the cross is Christ and is certainly not to be considered physically present in the Bible: 'Poule was noon idolatrer, hauing þe glorie þat he spekiþ of in þe material gebat þat Crist died on'.<sup>396</sup> The same desire to distinguish the flesh of Christ from Scripture would also explain why *De*

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<sup>393</sup> *De oblacione*, 250/3664-3670, translating Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Bk. 3, 4.10. See Ch. 1, p. 8 for the original passage.

<sup>394</sup> See Wyclif, *De apostasia*, VI, 70/1-25, qtd. in Ch. 2, p. 61, fn. 204.

<sup>395</sup> *De oblacione*, 236/3104-3107.

<sup>396</sup> *De oblacione*, 236/3115-3116.

*oblacione* almost exclusively uses the trope of ‘Cristis breþe’, breathed forth upon the people by the preacher, to describe the sacramental function of preaching itself, in preference to that of bread.<sup>397</sup> While drawing upon the medieval understanding of the preacher as the *Os Dei* (mouth of God) elaborated by figures such as Grosseteste, by casting the word as spirit, recalling the Holy Ghost’s coming upon the Apostles at Pentecost, it hinders its identification with Christ as flesh and blood, and with the Mass.<sup>398</sup>

However, the stance of *De oblacione* itself raises further a major issue, related to the definition of Wycliffite identity: can one call its author a Wycliffite? While this is undoubtedly how the author saw himself, he articulates a version of Wyclif’s sacramental theology which falls short of the conclusions about the sacramental importance of Scripture, relative to the Mass, which we have seen both in Wyclif’s own late Latin sermons and the writings of other Wycliffite followers. More practically, the picture of Wycliffite sacramentality centred upon Scripture that has emerged in this chapter must lead one to ask if *De oblacione*’s evocation of the Eucharist as a ‘ryue’ (living) rite was by 1413 (if not always) wishful thinking, if taken to describe Wycliffite culture: how many of his contemporaries identifying themselves as Wycliffite would have recognized the actuality of the religion that he describes? However, the very rapidity with which Wycliffites appear to have enacted Wyclif’s vision of a religion built around the sacrament of Scripture, even before Wyclif’s death, itself raises a further, much broader issue of classification: are the tensions between the functions of Scripture and of the Mass, which *De oblacione* seeks to

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<sup>397</sup> See *De oblacione*, 179/864-181/952.

<sup>398</sup> See Ch. 1, p. 21 on Robert Grosseteste’s use of the trope of *Os dei* to describe the preacher. On the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, see Act. 2.2-4: ‘et factus est repente de caelo sonus, tanquam advenientis spiritus vehementis [...] et repleti sunt omnes Spiritu Sancto, et coeperunt loqui variis linguis [and there was suddenly a sound from heaven, as though of the coming of a violent breath [of wind]; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in differing tongues]. My translation, with *spiritus* translated as ‘breath’ (rather than *DR*: ‘mighty wind’), as per *de Oblacione*’s evocation of preaching as the ‘breþe’ of Christ.

counter, themselves original to Wycliffism?<sup>399</sup> Or rather, as we shall consider in the next chapter, are they not reflective of far broader, existing currents in English religion, which challenge a conventional understanding of the boundaries between Wycliffism and orthodoxy?

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<sup>399</sup> Besides the existence of texts such as *EWS*, dated to the late fourteenth century (see above, p. 84, fn. 283), see Ch. 2, p. 79, fn. 276, on the accusation of John Tyssyngton, made within Wyclif's own lifetime, that the latter's eucharistic doctrines had caused worshippers to forsake the Easter Mass.

#### **4. Fellow Travellers: Wycliffism and the Shifting Limits of Scripture in England, c. 1375-1410**

This chapter considers how the Wycliffite understanding of the preached word of Scripture, along with its destructive implications for the role of the Mass, intimately relate to the wider development of vernacular religious culture between the rise of the Wycliffite movement in the 1370s and the decade of Archbishop Arundel's 1407-09 *Constitutions*. It has long been clear that in the fourteenth century a range of Middle English writings, besides those of Wyclif and his followers, were claiming for themselves powers with striking eucharistic resonances. Such claims may be seen in a Meditation upon Christ's crucified body, possibly written as early as the first half of the century:

þanne was þi bodi lijk to heuene: for as heuene is ful of sterris, so is þi bodi ful of woundis. But, lord, þi woundis ben betere þan sterris: for sterris schinen not but bi nyȝtis, & þi woundis ben ful of vertu nyȝt & day [...] And ȝit, lord swete Ihesu, þi bodi is lijk a nett: for as a nett is ful of holis, so is þi bodi ful of woundis [...] þi body is lijk a dufhous: for as a dufhouse is ful of dowue holis, so is þi bodi ful of woundis.<sup>400</sup>

This barrage of images immediately recalls the flaying of the physical flesh of Christ, and thus the medieval cult of devotion to that flesh, centred upon its presence in the consecrated bread and wine of the Mass. Nonetheless, the lasting impact of this passage lies in the dissociative effect of its rapid shifting of similes (between 'nett', 'dufhous' and 'heuene ful

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<sup>400</sup> Richard Rolle, attr., 'Richard Rolle's *Meditatio de Passioni Domini*' in *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole And His Followers*, ed. by Carl Horstmann, 2 vols. (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1895-1896), I, pp. 83-103 (p. 96). Attributing the text to Rolle, who died in 1349, would therefore place the composition of the text in the first half of the fourteenth century. This attribution, however, although long-standing, is hardly proven. See esp. Hope Emily Allen, *Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle Hermit of Hampole And Materials for his Biography* (New York: D.C. Heath / London: Oxford University Press), pp. 278-285. As her survey shows, p. 278, its basis is a scribal attribution in the sole extant known manuscript, Cambridge University Library, MS Ll. i. 8, which dates from the late fourteenth century. However, the 'scribe is untrustworthy, for in the early part of this manuscript he ascribes the *Speculum Vitae* to Rolle, and there gives the date of Rolle's death as 1384'. See also *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English: 1050-1500*, ed. by Albert E. Hartung, 9 vols. (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967-), Vol. IX, XXIII.4 (pp. 3056-3057).

of sterris’). Akin to Augustine’s exegesis of Jn. 6, discussed in the Introduction, it invites the reader to see the body not only as object [*res*] but as *sacramentum*, or ‘sign of a holy thing’, and subsequently to grasp its signified reality, Jesus Christ.<sup>401</sup> As such, it anticipates a wealth of texts appearing in the later fourteenth century, from the *Revelations* of Julian of Norwich to the *Prickyng of Love*, which seek not merely to describe Christ’s body (in the host or the cross) but, it has been argued, to evoke the body itself through the ‘force’ of language and even to ‘construct themselves as equivalents of Christ’s humanity’, effecting Christ’s Incarnation in the vernacular.<sup>402</sup>

Such claims, above all that a text could make Christ present through the ‘force of language’ (its *vis* or *virtus sermonis*, in the broader medieval sense of those terms) should interest readers of the preceding chapters of this thesis.<sup>403</sup> We have seen that a similar assertion for vernacular words underpinned the broad Wycliffite challenge to the Church’s sacramental system, centrally their association of Christ’s presence with the reception of the preached words of Scripture. Scholars have increasingly begun to explore the significance of such parallels. Emily Steiner, for example, has even ventured that texts belonging to the late-medieval ‘Charter of Christ’ tradition embody the ‘effective performance of the Word that Lollards refused to limit to the institutional priesthood’.<sup>404</sup>

But can such assertions be justified? For example, Nicholas Watson has argued that the impulses behind fourteenth-century devotional texts are ‘largely distinct’ from those underpinning Wycliffism; in the former, Christ’s ‘manifestation in the flesh’ is not ‘the mere preliminary to his textualization in Scripture’.<sup>405</sup> The Wycliffite identification of Christ with

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<sup>401</sup> See Ch. 1, p. 4 on Augustine. See the similar use of body-imagery described by Watson, ‘Conceptions of the Word’, p. 109, in the fourteenth-century *Prickyng of Love*.

<sup>402</sup> Watson, ‘Conceptions of the Word’, p. 110, and pp. 101-122 discussing late fourteenth-century texts including Julian’s *Revelations*, *The Prickyng of Love* and *Pore Caitif* (see below in this chapter, pp. 138-150). As he argues, p. 111, behind the ‘pastoral assumptions’ of such texts is the ‘sacramental image of the host’.

<sup>403</sup> See also Ch. 1, p. 24, fn. 88 on medieval notions of the *virtus* (power) of the word of God which created Christ’s body in the Mass and its relationship to *virtus sermonis* (the force or intended meaning of speech).

<sup>404</sup> Steiner, *Documentary Culture*, p. 225.

<sup>405</sup> Watson, ‘Conceptions of the Word’, p. 101, p. 99.

Scripture does appear fundamentally estranged from the prevailing later-medieval idea of Jesus Christ as an immanent, fleshly presence which these devotional texts also clearly celebrate;<sup>406</sup> it is also not hard to imagine the repulsion of Wycliffites to a textually-evoked flesh in which ‘you really are supposed to be pretending you are drowning in Christ’s blood’.<sup>407</sup> In line with the functions of the culture that grew up around the medieval Mass as charted by Miri Rubin, and unlike in Wycliffite thought, such simulacra of Christ’s body therefore seemingly presuppose and reinforce, rather than undermine, the uniqueness of the fleshly presence that was brought about by the mass-priest.<sup>408</sup>

Nonetheless, this chapter contends that the long-held intuition of a profound link between these areas of Wycliffite and orthodox culture is correct.<sup>409</sup> What primarily unites them, as we considered in the Introduction, is that they are forms of ‘Scripture’, in the broadest medieval understanding of that term: that is, extending from the words derived directly from written biblical texts (whether read or heard) to the sacred meaning encoded in visual depictions, above all of Christ’s crucifixion (the epitome of Scripture, according to St. Augustine).<sup>410</sup> As we also considered in the previous chapters, the emphasis of Wyclif and Wycliffites upon Christ’s primary presence in the words of Scripture, in its narrower sense, itself reflects tensions already integral to this broader use of ‘Scripture’.

The particular contribution of this chapter is to systematically expose how Wycliffism’s most distinctive claims for the sacramental power of Scripture, leading to its substitution for the Mass, are also central to the development of this broader tradition, from around 1375 to 1410; and thus to highlight the unremarked breadth of the ‘horizon of

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<sup>406</sup> As discussed, Wyclif’s own late-medieval opponents accused him, with some justice, of defining Christ’s humanity as more properly his soul [*anima*] than its union with his body. See above, p. 78, fn. 263.

<sup>407</sup> Watson, ‘Conceptions of the Word’, p. 106.

<sup>408</sup> See Ch. 1, p. 12.

<sup>409</sup> As Spencer comments in *English Preaching*, p. 14, ‘it is often felt to be no accident that the later fourteenth century gave rise to both Wyclif and the English mystics’. As Watson himself comments in ‘Censorship and Cultural Change: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel’s Constitutions of 1409’, *Speculum*, 70 (1995), 822-864 (p. 826), ‘Lollardy began life as a powerful expression of reformist tendencies inside the Church’.

<sup>410</sup> See Ch. 1, p. 10.

expectations' of orthodox writings and their audiences prior to the fifteenth-century persecution of Wycliffism.<sup>411</sup> This centrality becomes apparent in non-Wycliffite texts' use of the same key tropes that were important to Wycliffite authors. In the following section, we shall consider the uses of such tropes in the writings of non-Wycliffite evangelical preachers from Thomas Brinton, Bishop of Rochester until 1389, through to those belonging to what Anne Hudson has defined as the "grey area" that exists between clear orthodoxy and outright Lollardy'.<sup>412</sup> In the last section of this chapter, we shall move to consider the centrality of these tensions to images of Christ, in their capacity as 'Scripture', the area of late-medieval culture that is most seemingly estranged from Wycliffism but about which Wycliffism may have the most to tell us.

#### **4.1. Christ's Body and the Word of God: A Late Medieval Conundrum**

The tensions described above are arguably clearest, if largely uncharted, in the narrower medieval tradition of scriptural preaching which Wycliffism acknowledged: that is, the expounding of a text derived from the Bible. Such tensions can be seen in a range of potent comparisons of Scripture and Eucharist found in late fourteenth- and early fifteenth century preaching-literature which, like those discussed in previous chapters, may be considered responses to the question attributed to St. Augustine himself in a text of medieval Canon Law:

I ask you [*interrogo vos*] what seems to you the greater, the body or the word of Christ? [...] you should say that the word of God is not less than the body of Christ [...] he who negligently listens to

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<sup>411</sup> The term 'horizon of expectations', rooted in the reception-theory of the critic Hans Robert Jauss, is used in the context of late-medieval English religion by Gillespie, 'Lukyng in Haly Bokes', p. 1.

<sup>412</sup> This term is used by Hudson in *PR*, p. 23. For more on the relevance of Hudson's conception of the 'grey area' to the classification of late-medieval religious literature, see Jill C. Havens, 'Shading the Grey Area: Determining Heresy in Middle English Texts', in *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale: Essays in Honour of Anne Hudson*, ed. by Helen Barr and Ann. M. Hutchison. Turnhout: Brepols, 2005, pp. 337-352.

the word of God is no less guilty than he who through negligence allows the body of Christ to fall to the earth.<sup>413</sup>

Not least, scholarly attitudes towards such texts highlight the problems with prevailing classifications of Wycliffite and orthodox thought. These have been well expressed by Siegfried Wenzel in his survey of late-medieval sermon manuscripts in England, from which we shall be directly drawing several examples. Discussing what may be taken as one vernacular sermon's answer to the *Decretum's* question – that 'it is more needful and spedful the pepul to haue prechyng and techyng than it ys to haue mass or matyns' – Wenzel comments that such a privileging of preaching over the Mass 'may strike us as reflecting a Lollard milieu'.<sup>414</sup> Not only do similar assertions about preaching prominently appear, alongside figurative doctrines of the Eucharist, in recorded statements of Wycliffites' core beliefs, but we have seen both Wyclif and a range of his followers' vernacular writings using them to justify the *de facto* substitution of the one for the other.<sup>415</sup> Such uses, I believe, have led to the unvoiced but widespread assumption to which Wenzel gestures, that the comparison is itself Wycliffite.<sup>416</sup> This has in turn promoted the understanding that a range of other writings containing similar comparisons and sharing other features (being mostly in the vernacular, all stridently evangelical, with little to say about the Church's sacraments

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<sup>413</sup> 'Decretum Gratiani', C. 1 q. 1 c. 94 (*Corpus Iuris Canonici* I, 391). The Latin text is quoted in Ch. 1, p. 17, and also discussed in Ch. 2, p. 46. See also Ch. 1, p. 17, fn. 64 on the spurious attribution to Augustine.

<sup>414</sup> Wenzel, *LSC*, p. 335.

<sup>415</sup> Compare Wenzel, *LSC*, p. 335 with 'Conclusiones Willelmi Sautry haeretici', *FZ*, pp. 408-410 (p. 409): 'III. Item interrogatus dico, quod quilibet diaconus et presbyter magis tenentur praedicare verbum Dei, quam dicere matutinas et horas canonicas, secundum primam ordinationem ecclesiae' [III. Similarly, in response I say that any deacon and priest is more obliged to preach the Word of God, than to say Matins and the Canonical Hours, according to the original regulation of the Church]; 'Processus contra Willielmum Remmesbury', Salisbury Diocesan Registry, Reg. Waltham, fol. 222r, qtd. in Anne Hudson, 'A Lollard Mass', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 23 (1972), 407-19 (p. 417): 'Item quod maius meritorium esset sacerdotibus transire per patriam cum biblia sub brachio et predicare populo quam dicere matutinas vel celebrare missas vel alia diuina officia exercere' [besides, that it was more meritorious for priests to travel through their locality, with a bible under their arm and to preach to the people than to say matins or celebrate masses or exercise other divine offices]. On the importance of these ideas to Wyclif's thought, see Ch. 2 of this thesis, esp. pp. 75-80; and to Wycliffite writings, Ch. 3, pp. 98-105.

<sup>416</sup> See, for example, Christina von Nolcken, 'An Unremarked Group of Wycliffite Sermons in Latin', *Modern Philology*, 83 (1986), 233-249. She argues, p. 246, that it may have been a sermon asserting that 'the first loaf is that of the Word of God' which led to the Wycliffite William Taylor's citation for heresy.

and most of them clearly borrowing material from Wycliffite texts) are thus members of an extended, even diffuse Wycliffite family.<sup>417</sup>

However, such a genealogy should immediately strike us as problematic. We have seen the preference for preaching over the Mass expressed in a range of authorities from the thirteenth century, from Humbert of Romans to Robert Grosseteste.<sup>418</sup> Such a background, as Wenzel acknowledges, makes it unsurprising that his survey should have found a Latin sermon in an impeccably orthodox collection to declare that preaching is ‘as important as, if not more important, than celebrating the Mass’.<sup>419</sup> Equally striking is the frequency with which citations of the *Decretum* and related ideas occur throughout the period’s preaching literature. They are found in major preaching tools such as John Bromyard’s *Summa Praedicatorum*.<sup>420</sup> They are also cited by a range of clearly non-Wycliffite preachers, from Thomas Brinton (d. 1389), Bishop of Rochester, to the preacher John Felton (d. 1434), whose sermons enjoyed great popularity well after Arundel’s *Constitutions*.<sup>421</sup> This prevalence might therefore call to mind Helen Spencer’s view (in a later fifteenth-century context), that the trope was a ‘well-used cliché’.<sup>422</sup> However, in the late fourteenth century, we shall see that a range of seemingly provocative uses of the *Decretum* occur in texts whose authors clearly do not perceive themselves as Wycliffite.

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<sup>417</sup> See, for example, Shannon Gayk, ‘“As Plouzmen han preued’: The Alliterative Work of a Set of Lollard Sermons’, *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 20 (2006), 43-65, who talks, p. 45, of a ‘moderate version of Lollardy’. See also von Nolcken, ‘Wycliffite Sermons in Latin’, p. 235: ‘We are becoming aware of a different Lollard voice, one less strident than that of many of the tracts [...] sometimes it is so restrained that we have to rely on incidental comments or external evidence to confirm for us that it is Lollard’; the similar opinion of Gloria Cigman is discussed below, p. 129. On the idea of ‘family resemblance’, an idea originally developed by Wittgenstein, and its application to the problem of classifying medieval texts as Wycliffite and non-Wycliffite, see Patrick Hornbeck, *What is a Lollard?*, pp. 11-14.

<sup>418</sup> Ch. 1, pp. 17-21.

<sup>419</sup> Wenzel, *LSC*, p. 335.

<sup>420</sup> See ‘Audire’ in Bromyard, *Summa Praedicatorum*, qtd. in Ch. 2, p. 46, fn. 150.

<sup>421</sup> Felton’s use is cited below on p. 136, fn. 498. On Brinton, see below, p. 121.

<sup>422</sup> Spencer, *English Preaching*, p. 184, who is referring to Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Greaves 54, fol. 47r: ‘Non minus peccat qui uerbum dei remuit audire quam se ipsum corpus domini in pedibus suis conculcare / that ys to say no lasse synnethe he that wol not her the word of god than dothe he that defowlyth Godys body withe hy fete’. I have consulted this manuscript independently.

An important benchmark in this respect is Thomas Brinton, Bishop of Rochester from 1373 to 1389, whose extant Latin sermons bear witness to the thought of an influential late-medieval English preacher. Brinton was no Wycliffite, being among the vanguard of senior Churchmen who attacked Wyclif's ideas from the 1370s onwards, culminating in repeated condemnations of Wyclif's eucharistic theology in the 1380s.<sup>423</sup> As David Aers emphasizes, Brinton was a staunch defender of the eucharistic cult that Wyclif opposed; in terms recalling Aquinas, Brinton explains that in the Eucharist, sacrament of sacraments [*sacramentum sacramentorum*], Christ's true flesh and blood are physically eaten by the recipient, hidden beneath the appearance of bread and wine;<sup>424</sup> the benefits of merely seeing the Mass include not only the wiping away of sins but the preservation of sight, protection from sudden death, and the halting of ageing for the duration of the Mass.<sup>425</sup> Moreover, Brinton's conception of preaching appears to be largely antithetical to that of Wyclif. Not only is it peppered with the tales [*fabula*] condemned by Wyclif and his followers, but Brinton is also much more conservative as to what should be preached before the people.<sup>426</sup> Far from promoting an extensive knowledge of the Bible, preaching should focus on the fundamentals of belief: 'to believe the essence of three persons in one deity [...] the son of

<sup>423</sup> References to Brinton's sermons are to *The Sermons of Thomas Brinton, Bishop of Rochester (1373-1389)*, 2 vols., ed. by Mary Aquinas Devlin (London: Royal Historical Society, 1954). Future references to Brinton's sermons are to Devlin's edition, hereafter referred to as *BR*, the sermon number given by Devlin. For Brinton's attacks on Wyclif, see *BR* I, pp. xxviii-xxx, and *BR* 17, 85, 100, 101, 105, 107, 108.

<sup>424</sup> See Aers, *Sanctifying Signs*, pp. 4-5, on Brinton's Eucharistic theology and its parallels with Aquinas. *BR* 67, II, p. 305: 'eucharistia, sacramentum sacramentorum' [the eucharist, sacrament of sacraments]; *BR* 37, I, p. 162: 'in quo sacramento aliud est quod cernimus et aliud quod credimus. Quod cernimus est species panis in hostia et species vini in calice. Quod credimus est veritas corporis et sanguinis Christi' [in which sacrament we discern one thing and believe another. We discern the appearance of bread in the host and that of wine in the cup; what we believe is the truth of the body and blood of Christ];

<sup>425</sup> See Aers, *Sanctifying Signs*, p. 72 and p. 205, fn. 13, discussing such benefits; *BR* 69, II, p. 320: 'missam deuote audientibus hec priuilegia sunt concessa: [...] lumen oculorum non amittitur [...] mors subita non contingit [...] quam diu missam audiunt non senescunt'. *BR* 67, II, p. 305: 'eucharistia [...] digne recepta a malo liberat, in bono confirmat, venialia delet, mortalia cauet' [the eucharist [...] worthily received, frees [the recipient] from evil, confirms them in good, wipes out venial sins, defends against mortal sins]. Brinton is repeating an assertion found in texts such as *ST*, III, q. 79, a.4 s.c: 'Innocentius III dicit, quod hoc sacramentum veniale delet et cauet mortalia'.

<sup>426</sup> On the condemnation of the use of 'fables and lesynges' in preaching by Wyclif and his followers, see Ch. 2, p. 50; Ch. 3, p. 131. On the theory that Brinton's re-telling of the fable of the 'belling of the cat' (See *BR* 69, II, p. 317) may have inspired Langland's version, see G.R. Owst, 'The "Angel" and the "Goliardeys" of Langland's Prologue', *Modern Language Review*, 20 (1925), 270-79 (p. 276).

God to be man [...] that He suffered, died on the cross and after descended in soul into hell.<sup>427</sup> These are among the reasons why, in Brinton's view, the great exemplar for the preacher is Christ crucified. Granted that 'every day he taught in the temple, when hanging on the cross he gave forth seven words to our edification'.<sup>428</sup> The preacher should similarly be *tardus ad loquendum*: 'once a word is uttered, it is irrevocable'.<sup>429</sup>

Nonetheless, Brinton and Wyclif both clearly belong to the same broad tradition of those who saw preaching as the means of instructing and feeding the laity with a vital spiritual food (if unsurprisingly since this had been normative to the uses of preaching as promoted by the Church since the early thirteenth century).<sup>430</sup> It is a necessity, he tells his audience, that priests 'ordained to feed the household of God must frequently exhibit the word of life to the souls committed to them, since they know Mt. 4: *man does not live by bread alone* [...]'.<sup>431</sup> However, the hitherto unremarked closeness of Brinton's conception of preaching to that of Wyclif is highlighted by what was clearly a favourite assertion, used in several sermons addressed specifically to clergy about the function of preaching, including for the 1376 Good Friday parliament:

Among the works which human industry dares to undertake, I consider preaching to be the most awesome and valuable [*terribile et premiosum*]. Indeed, what is more terrible than to

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<sup>427</sup> BR 66, II, p. 301: 'credere essenciam trium personarum in vna deitate omnium creatricem [...] credere filium Dei esse Deum [...] quod paciebatur et moriebatur in cruce et post descendit in anima ad infernum'.

<sup>428</sup> BR 66, II, p. 301: 'exemplum Christi [...] licet cotidie erat docens in templo durante vita, pendens tamen in cruce ad nostram edificacionem tamen protulit septem verba'.

<sup>429</sup> BR 66, II, p. 301: '*tardus ad loquendum* [...] quia *semel emissum manet irreuocabile verbum* [...] duplex examinacio debet fieri antequam lingua festinet ad prolacionem verbi' [It follows that one should be slow to speak [...] since *once a word is uttered it is irrevocable* [...] there ought to be a double examination before the tongue hastens to utter a word]. See Jm. 1.19.

<sup>430</sup> On the Church's promotion of preaching in the thirteenth century, see Ch. 1, p. 16. One of the major differences between Wyclif and Brinton, as Devlin comments, is that the latter's sermons mark him out as 'a reformer endeavouring to purify the Church from within' (BR I, p. xxi). See Mishtooni Bose, 'The Opponents of John Wyclif', in *A Companion to John Wyclif: Late Medieval Theologian*, ed. by I.C. Levy (Leiden, Brill: 2006), pp. 407-455 (pp. 451-452). She comments, p. 452, on 'how frustrating and possibly pre-emptive the emergence of Wyclif and his supporters must have been to a bishop of such a distinctively reforming sensibility'.

<sup>431</sup> BR 66, II, p. 299: 'prelati et curati in ecclesia constituti vt spiritualiter pascant familiam Dei animabus sibi commissis habent necesse frequenter ostendere verbum vite, scientes scripturam *Matthei 4, Non in solo pane uiuit*'.

truthfully pronounce the word of God, whose humble bearer Jeremiah, sanctified in the womb, refused to become? See *Jer. 10* and the decretal 8.q. 1. I venture that to accomplish this thing worthily is a more divine than human work [...]<sup>432</sup>

Far from Brinton's having merely recycled a cliché here, one can find in the writings of the period very few assertions of the superlative power of the preached word that are so stark, besides those in the writings of Wyclif himself. This signals how the overlap in their inherited conception of preaching extends to the perceptions of its sacramental power. Not least, in the text of Canon Law that Brinton cites, Gregory the Great tells his audience (and thus Brinton his), that preachers emulate the only begotten of the Father, born into the world to expound his secrets, indeed, that true preachers, like the prophet Jeremiah, are predestined by God to take on this awesome burden.<sup>433</sup> In other sermons, Brinton, following Gregory the Great, describes preaching as a miracle that spiritually raises and gives sight to the blind.<sup>434</sup> As a divine activity, preaching the word brings grace upon the preacher, whether or not the

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<sup>432</sup> *BR* 59, II, pp. 268-269: 'Inter opera que audit humana industria acceptare magis terribile et premiosum reputo predicare. Quid verum magis terribile quam verbum Dei veraciter pronunciare, cuius banilus Ieremias in vtero sacntificatus fieri recusavit? *Ierieme 10*, et ponitur in decretis 8.q.1. *In Scriptis* [...] Audeo dicere quod hoc digne perficere est opus diuinum pocius quam humanum'. The first two lines of the passage are quoted at *BR* 69, p. 315, whose occasion 'was probably a convocation of the clergy on 18 May 1376, during the sessions of the Good Parliament' (Devlin, *Brinton*, p. 315). A near identical passage to that in *BR* 59 occurs at the start of *BR* 72, p. 330, 'preached to a congregation of clergy on Septuagesima Sunday 1376' (Devlin, *Brinton*, p. 330); Note that I am reading 'banilus' in Devlin's edition as 'baiulus'. This is the term found in printed editions of the Canon Law text which Brinton is paraphrasing, besides making more contextual sense. See 'Liber extra', X 1.9.10 (*Corpus Iuris Canonici*, II, 107): 'quam ille, cuius [ante] fieri baiulus recusabat'. See Lewis and Short, 'bajulus, i. m. [...] a porter, carrier [...] II. [...] B A letter-carrier'; Du Cange, *Glossarium*, in *DLA*: 'BANILUS. Officialis minor'.

<sup>433</sup> 'Decretum Gratiani', C. 1 q. 1 c. 9 (*Corpus Iuris Canonici* I, 592-3): 'lib. VI. epist. 5. Cyriaco Episcopo. 'In scriptis uestris [...] Et sicut scriptum est: 'Nec quisquam sumit sibi honorem, sed qui uocatur a Domino tamquam Aaron [...] si is, qui uale, omnipotentis Dei oues pascere rennuit, ostendit se pastorem summum minime amare [...] Quod ex duorum prophetarum opere docemur, quorum unus predicationis offitium uitare conatus est, et alter appetiit. Nam mittenti se Domino Ieremias respondit, dicens, "A, a, a, Domine Deus, nescio loqui, quia puer ego sum' [To Cyriacus the Bishop. In your letter [...] Thus, it is written, 'Neither doth any man take the honour to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was' [Heb. 5.4] [...] if one, who is capable [of preaching], refuses to feed the sheep of almighty God, he shows that he does not love the head shepherd [...] We are taught by the deeds of two prophets, one of whom tried to avoid, the other who desired, the office of preaching [...] For, throwing himself down, Jeremiah replied to the Lord, saying, 'Ah, ah, ah, Lord God, I cannot speak, for I am a child' [Jer 1.4].

<sup>434</sup> *BR* 66, II, p. 302: 'Nam si habentes filium cecum, claudum et surdum, leprosum vel mortuum, multum gaudenter audiunt quomodo possit sanari vel a more suscitari, multo gaudencius est audiendum verbum Dei' [For if they most joyfully hear how their blind, limp and deaf, leprous or even dead son can be cured or even roused from death, much more joyfully is the word of God to be heard].

listener is predestined to receive it; again, this is a striking emphasis upon the importance of predestination, much closer to Wyclif's position than the opinions expressed in some texts of supposed Wycliffite affiliation.<sup>435</sup> Brinton thereby also ascribes to preaching many of the powers that he has associated with the Eucharist; this potent valency informs his telling of another old tale, echoing the pseudo-Augustinian *Decretum*, of the debate between two devout thirteenth-century Kings over whether one should listen more to masses or to sermons. 'Both are greatly to be commended', Brinton concludes'.<sup>436</sup> Nonetheless, despite such agreement between Wyclif and Brinton, in no way do the latter's writings and career suggest that he is a Wycliffite.

Nor, indeed, is the *Decretum* a reliable marker of the Wycliffite affiliation of other, more clearly heterodox texts. Such is the case with the sermon-fragment whose response Wenzel mooted as possibly suggesting a 'Lollard milieu', which is contained in Arras, Bibliothèque de la Ville, MS 184, a mostly Latin collection of texts from the early fifteenth century.<sup>437</sup> Undoubtedly, as Wenzel has shown, the smoke of Wycliffite suspicion hangs upon this manuscript which was likely intended to aid 'a preacher or curate': several folios have been excised 'after the medieval foliation had been entered', some 'at points where the

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<sup>435</sup> BR 66, II, p. 299: 'Quando verbum Dei publice predicatur aut quilibet predestinatus ad vitam eternam verbum sequitur quod audit aut si nullis audire voluerit, ipse predicator sine fructu non erit' [When the word of God is openly preached, whether any person predestined to eternal life follows what he hears or whether nobody wishes to hear, the same preacher will not go without reward]. See also Ch. 3, p. 92.

<sup>436</sup> BR 69, II, pp. 319-20, 'opera sanctimonie [...] consistunt in audicione missarum et sermonum et in deuotis processionibus. De primo patet exemplum de rege Anglie Henrico tercio et Lodowico rege Francie [...] rex Anglie in audiendo missam summe erat deuotus et rex Francie in sermonibus audiendis. Cum igitur rex Anglie quodam die esse cum rege Francie commesturus et tardus venisset ad mensam propter multarum audicionem missarum, rex Francie dixit ei: "Domine rex, non habes modum in audicione missarum". Cui ille, "Nec tu in audicione sermonum" Uterque plurimum commendandus' [acts of sanctity consist of the hearing of masses and sermons and in devout processions. The first is made clear by the example of King Henry III of England and of Louis King of France [...] The King of England was exceedingly devout in hearing the Mass and the King of France in hearing sermons. When one day, therefore, the King of England was to dine with the King of France and had come late to table on account of hearing many Masses, the King of France said to him: 'My Lord King, you show no moderation in hearing Masses'. To whom [the King of England] replied, 'nor you in hearing sermons'. Both are greatly to be commended]. Of the three versions of this tale discussed in Ch. 1, p. 22, fn. 82, Brinton's most closely resembles that contained in the thirteenth-century *Speculum Laicorum*.

<sup>437</sup> Wenzel, *LSC*, p. 182. I have independently consulted Arras 184 from photographs kindly provided by the Bibliothèque de la Ville, Arras. All quotations of the manuscript are from my transcription.

preacher apparently indulged in criticizing the clergy’;<sup>438</sup> moreover, it contains versions of two vernacular tracts, on the ‘Pater Noster’ and ‘Creed’, which are with justice considered by ‘modern scholars [...] of Wycliffite origin’.<sup>439</sup> For example, as the ‘Pater Noster’ included in Arras 184 reads ‘give us our daily bread’: ‘We axeþ þe sacrament to hauye mynde of oure lord & after we axeþ goddis word to fede weþþ oure soule’.<sup>440</sup> While doctrinally vague, the scribe (selective here and elsewhere), has opted to include a statement whose juxtaposition of an emphasis upon the Eucharist as memorial, with one upon Scripture as spiritual food, strongly permits the substitution of one for the other that we have seen to be prevalent in period’s Wycliffite writings.

Particularly striking are the notions of preaching in the sermon answering the question of the *Decretum*, which takes as its lection a strident biblical text: ‘My enemies have beset my soul [...]’ [Ps. 16.9].<sup>441</sup> Not least, it asserts that the preacher brings about, in quasi-Incarnational terms, a birth of Christ in the soule of the worshipper: they are messengers who should command men to make ‘al þyng clene & fayr where hys lord schal come in [...] crist beyng kyng of kyngus lord of lordus aproposyng to dwel in a manes saule gostliche’.<sup>442</sup> Equally important is that these ideas are not confined to an academic audience but are expressed in the vernacular. This great importance of this decision is that it thereby makes such theories of preaching accessible to the laity and specifically to those lay figures looking to justify the assumption of the office of preaching without ordination. Such challenges to

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<sup>438</sup> Wenzel, *LSC*, p. 186.

<sup>439</sup> Wenzel, *LSC*, p. 186. See fols. 9vb-10rb for the ‘Pater Noster’, fols. 10rb-10vb. for the ‘Creed’. For a complete summary of the contents of Arras 184, see Siegfried Wenzel, *Macaronic Sermons: Bilingualism and Preaching in Late-Medieval England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), pp. 203-211. These texts largely correspond to versions prevailingly attributed to Wycliffites which are published in *Select English Works of John Wyclif*, ed. by Thomas Arnold, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869-1871), III, pp. 93-97, and pp. 114-16 respectively. The Arras 184 Pater Noster is substantially the same as the *SEWW* text while omitting the latter’s coda. Instead it ends at ‘&þan schul we haue euerlastyngre fredom’ (fol. 10rb), which corresponds to *SEWW*, p. 96. See fn. 447 below on greater differences in the Arras 184 creed.

<sup>440</sup> Arras 184, fol. 10ra.

<sup>441</sup> Arras 184, fols. 41ra-vb, 43ra-45ra. See Wenzel, *LSC*, p. 668. Ps. 16.9: ‘Inimici mei animam meam circumdederunt’ [my translation].

<sup>442</sup> Arras 184, fol. 41rb.

the Church may, with some justice, be seen to colour the sermon's later statement of preference for preaching over the Mass:

it is more nedful & spedful þe pepul to haue prechyng & techyng þan it ys to haue mass or matyns & þt is most nedful schuld raþer be done. þerfor prestis ben more bounden to preche or to say masse or matyns & þis I preue by þis skyl for masse & matyns done away bot uenial synnis bot þe word of god dos away & clanse a mon of dedly synne & also of uenial, for it makyth hym be sory & gos to schrift & do satisfaccioun.<sup>443</sup>

Nonetheless, we have encountered the immediate point of Arras 184's comparison (that preaching is unique in its power to heal mortal sins) not merely in Wyclif's writings, but in the thirteenth-century Canon Law gloss of Guido de Baysio (*Archidiaconus*).<sup>444</sup> Moreover, its argument is different in emphasis, but not clearly in essence, from Brinton's opinions on the importance of preaching; equally, as in Brinton's tale of the two kings, the author compares the benefits of sermons less clearly with those of eucharistic reception itself than with watching and listening to the Mass.<sup>445</sup> Yet arguing much more against the author's Wycliffite affiliation is the way that this section of the sermon ends with a prayer not only for the first and third estates ('þe kyng & qwene, dukis, erlus, barons & al þe lordus & þe

<sup>443</sup> Arras 184, fol. 41vb.

<sup>444</sup> The explicit statement that the Eucharist, in contrast to preaching, cures only venial sins, is attributed to Guido de Baysio's *Rosarium* by fifteenth-century preachers such as Johann Geiler of Keiserberg and Bernardino of Siena. See Johannes Geiler von Kaysersberg, *Sermones de oratione dominica* (Argentorati [Strasbourg]: 1509), IX Q-R, qtd. in Dempsey Douglass, *Justification in Late Medieval Preaching*, p. 88, fn. 1; also Bernardino of Siena, 'Sermo X. Dominica prima in Quadragesima', in *S. Bernardini Senensis ordinis fratrum minorum opera omnia*, 9 vols. (Florence: Quaracchi, 1950-1965), III (1961), pp. 159-196 (Art. III, Cap. II, p. 189). This statement is not present in the relevant passage in the fifteenth- to seventeenth-century printed editions of the *Rosarium* which I have consulted, even if is arguably inferrable from it, and from the Canon Law tract *De consecratione* which it cites (See, for example, *Rosarium decretorum* (Venice: 1481; repr. online Düsseldorf: Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, 2011) <<http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:hbz:061:1-32398>> [accessed 20/09/11], [fol. 124r]. On the *Rosarium*, see also Ch. 1, p. 17-19. Such ideas also differ subtly from those of Aquinas, for example, who states that the Eucharist is capable of cleansing mortal sin only when the recipient is unconscious of being in such a state. See Aquinas, *ST* IIIa, 79.3: 'secundum se [...] hoc sacramentum habet virtutem ad remittendum quaecumque peccata ex passione Christi [...] Quicumque autem habet conscientiam peccati mortalis habet in se impedimentum percipiendi effectum huius sacramenti [...] Potest tamen hoc sacramentum operari remissionem peccati [...] perceptum ab eo qui est in peccato mortali, cujus conscientiam [...] non habet' [intrinsically [...] this sacrament has the power of remitting any sins whatsoever, through the passion of Christ [...] He who is aware of [being in a state of] mortal sin, however, has within himself an impediment to securing the effect of this sacrament. However, this sacrament can achieve the remission of sin [...] if received by a person in a state of mortal sin of which he is unaware].

<sup>445</sup> See above, pp. 118-121.

comyns of þe reume’) but also for ‘þe pope, cardinals, erchbyschoppus, bischoppus [...] of holy church’, and for the dead in purgatory. Wycliffites are not known for praying, especially for the latter two groups.<sup>446</sup> The author thus appears keen, even anxious, to align his conception of preaching on the side of the established Church (as with his transcription of the Wycliffite Creed, which notably omits the references to Antichrist).<sup>447</sup> While one may question the author’s motivation, it would be noteworthy that the page echoing the *Decretum* survived excision (unlike others in the manuscript) if it contained any idea that was *prima facie* Wycliffite.<sup>448</sup> Such evidence supports, rather than contradicts, Wenzel’s own intuition that the compiler of Arras 184 was likely to be a Franciscan sharing with Wycliffites a ‘critique of the contemporary clergy and concern for reform’.<sup>449</sup>

Much more challenging to the automatic labelling of such ideas as Wycliffite, however, are the uses of the pseudo-Augustinian *Decretum* in the last manuscript, surveyed by Wenzel, that we shall consider in this section. This is Oxford, Balliol College MS 149, a Latin sermon collection dated to the later fourteenth century, with vernacular insertions in several sermons.<sup>450</sup> Perhaps the most direct link one can draw to Wyclif is that a number of features in its texts indicate that its immediate audience was ‘clerical, even academic’ and therefore credibly Oxonian.<sup>451</sup> Nonetheless, the sermons’ orthodoxy may be gauged by answers to doctrinal issues, such as the Eucharist, that Wycliffism had already rendered contentious before the likely date of compilation.<sup>452</sup> This makes all the remarkable the uses

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<sup>446</sup> Arras 184, fol. 41vb.

<sup>447</sup> See Arras 184, fol. 10vb: ‘ffor the schul not bu[ste] of heyne of her prelacy. And so þe church haþ þre status by processe of tym’. Compare this with *SEWW* III, p. 116: ‘ffor þey schul nat boste of heyne in here prelacy. But þey mot leve aftyr Crist 3yf þey schul be savyd; ffor þus techis oure beleve, however Antecrist werke. And so þis Chirche has þre status be processe of tyme’.

<sup>448</sup> On excisions in Arras 184, see above, p. 122.

<sup>449</sup> Wenzel, *LSC*, p. 188.

<sup>450</sup> As Wenzel comments, *LSC* p. 121, the booklet containing these sermons is written in fourteenth-century Anglicana and Secretary hands. Please note that all quotations of Balliol 149 are from my own transcription.

<sup>451</sup> Wenzel, *LSC*, p. 124.

<sup>452</sup> Wenzel, *LSC*, p. 124.

of the *Decretum* in two of its sermons, recalling certain core aspects of Wyclif's own sacramental thinking more closely than any other text considered in this chapter.

The first instance is found in a sermon for Advent, whose lection, Lk. 3.2, recounts the moment when 'the Word of God came to John [the Baptist in the desert]' [*factum est verbum domini super Iohannem*].<sup>453</sup> It is, however, through the lens of Jn. 1.1, 'In the beginning was the Word' that the meaning of Lk. 3.2 is explored, as the sermon sets out to discuss, with a lay audience seemingly in mind, why John the Evangelist was right to denote Christ as a 'Word':

It is known that [...] *Anglice: mannys worde fyrst is in herte thought. After hit is to speche brought & þen hit is in ded wrought.* Thus the Son of God was first thought in the heart [of God] since He was that Word before the world existed [...] afterwards He was brought to speech [through the prophets] [...] this was fulfilled when the word of God was made flesh in the virgin [...] But so that the laity might understand, note that the Son of Man is likened to a word on account of three aspects of the word [...] For while the word of man passes to the outside world, it remains inside [...] *Anglice : mannes worde at onis passyþ fer & duelliþ styllle, hit sweth forth þo hert wille* [...] Similarly, at the same time as he was residing in heaven, the Son of God descended to earth and assumed human nature [...] he was in heaven, adored by angels and on earth, hanging on a gibbet, wounded and in pain<sup>454</sup>

The idea of human language as an analogy for the revelation of Christ the Word to mankind, through prophets and finally in the flesh, is certainly prevalent in medieval exegesis, and

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<sup>453</sup> Balliol 149, fol. 14v. My translation of Lk. 3.2.

<sup>454</sup> Balliol 149, fol. 14v: 'scitur quod [...] *Anglice mannys worde fyrst is in hert thought. After hit is to speche brought & þen hit is in ded wrought . Sic filius dei primo erat in corde cogitatus quia antequam mundus fieret fuit illud uerbum [...] postea fuit ad loquelam perductum quando [...] postea fuit opere completum, quando sic uerbum dei fuit in uirgine caro factum*'; fol. 15r: 'Sed ad intelligancium laycorum notandum quod filius dei comparatur uerbo propter 3 condiciones uerbi [...] Nam uerbum hominis dum transit foras manet interius [...] *anglice mannes worde at onis passyþ fer & duelliþ styllle, hit sweth forth þo hert wille* [...] Eodem modo filius dei pro salute humane anime, eodem tempore quo erat manens in celo descendit ad terram & assumpsit naturam humanam [...] fit in celo adoratus ab angelis & in terra pendens in patibulo ulneratus & dolens'. I draw the translation of *fuit opere completum* as 'was fulfilled' from Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, in *Baedale opera historica*, trans. by J.E. King, 2 vols. (London: Heinemann / New York: G.P. Putnam, 1930), II, Bk. 4, Ch. 3, p. 23.

well illustrates the meaning of Advent.<sup>455</sup> Nonetheless, as the sermon's very choice of vernacular catch-phrases suggests, and somewhat contradicting the occasion, its primary interest is not with the Incarnation at all. This becomes clear as the sermon proceeds to consider God's great humility in making His Son 'obedient to the human word':

when the priest in the Mass speaks the words of consecration, the true Son of God is at once there, in the form of bread and wine. And here is shown God's great humility towards the human word, if God is likened to the word and [made] obedient to it. Rightly, therefore, is his word to be heard and preached with great reverence. And thus the *Decretum* says that the person who hears the word of God negligently does not sin less than the person who treads the body of Christ underfoot [...]<sup>456</sup>

The train of thought – arguing from the power of the words of consecration that one should respect the preached word of God – is in itself entirely reasonable: they are both examples of the different forms of power [*virtus*] that Christ manifests through human words. However, this foregrounds an aspect of the sermon which strongly recalls Wyclif, namely that its real interest lies in using Christ's Incarnation as a metaphor to explore the nature of Christ's presence in Scripture, the reverse of the message one might expect for an Advent sermon. The significance of this interest becomes explicit in the author's use of the *Decretum* in a later sermon in the collection, nominally on Lk. 11.12.<sup>457</sup> Having invoked a central text for

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<sup>455</sup> See for example Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* I, 13.12 (*PL* 34.24): 'sicuti cum loquimur, ut [...] in audientis animum per aures carneas illabatur, fit sonus verbum quod corde gestamus, et locutio vocatur; nec tamen in eundem sonum cogitatio nostra convertitur, sed apud se manens integra [...] ita Verbum Dei non commutatum, caro tamen factum est, ut habitaret in nobis' [just as when we speak, the word which we carry in our heart becomes a sound, called speech, so that [...] it may flow through the ears of the flesh into the mind of the listener; not that our thought is converted into the same sound, however, but remains untouched where it resides [...] so the Word of God, unchanged, was nonetheless made flesh, so that it might dwell in us]. See also a similar comparison in *De oblatione*, p. 224, ll. 2025-2640.

<sup>456</sup> Balliol 149, 15v: 'unde figuram quod dei filius comparatus uerbo ipse filius dei factus est in obediens uerbo humano. quod quando sacerdos in missa dicit uerba consecrationis statim est ibi uere filius dei in forma panis & uini. Et hic est magna humilitas dei ostensa uerbo humano si ergo deus sic comparatur uerbo & est in obediens uerbo merito cum magna reuerencia est eius uerbum predicandum & audiendum. Et ideo dicit Decretalis quod non minus peccat quod qui uerbum dei negligenter audit quam qui corpus Christi in sacramento pedibus conculcat'.

<sup>457</sup> Balliol 149, fols. 55r-v, 44r-v, 57r-59r, with renvoi. See Wenzel, *LSC*, p. 594.

medieval preaching, Mt. 4.4: ‘Man does not live by bread alone’, the author inveighs against those who wickedly ignore the preached word, before proclaiming that:

this is a great sin, as canon law says (c. 1, q. 1, *interrogo uos*) [...] Were not the heavens made by the word of the Lord, is all their power not from the spirit of his mouth [*spiritu oris eius omnis virtus eorum*]? Is the Lord’s body not made on the altar, by the ministry of the priest, beneath the appearance of bread and wine? Greater, therefore, appears [*videtur*] the word of the Lord than the body of the Lord. Thus it is a sin negligently to acknowledge the body of the Lord and as great or greater a sin negligently to hear the word of the Lord, to which the winds of the sea and all created things submitted.<sup>458</sup>

As with many of Wyclif’s own pronouncements, the contentious element of this statement does not lie in its components. Its first part adapts a stock defence of the doctrine of transubstantiation (that the *virtus* of word of God makes Christ’s body present on the altar in the same physical way as it created the world) and its conclusion is logically impeccable: that this *virtus* must be greater than the body that it causes to exist.<sup>459</sup> The same would be true for the second part, if it were on its own and referring only to the preached word; the idea that the word seems greater than the body, and that it is a greater sin to ignore the former than the latter, only restates the thirteenth-century canonist de Baysio’s reading of *Interrogo vos* (cited by a range of preachers besides Wyclif); like de Baysio, the use of

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<sup>458</sup> Balliol 149, fol. 57r-57v: ‘et hoc est ualde grande peccatum animi. dicit canon primum questio 1 interrogo [...] Nonne verbo domini celi firmati sunt, spiritu oris eius omnis virtus eorum. Nonne et ipsum corpus dominicum ministerio sacerdotis in altari factum est sub specie panis per verbum domini. maius ergo videtur verbum domini quam corpus domini sic ergo peccatum est negligenter sentire corpus domini & tam grande vel maius est negligenter audire verbum domini cui uenti maris et singula creata obtemperant’.

<sup>459</sup> See, for example, Peter Abelard, *Sic et non*, Ch. CXVII (PL 178.1523A): ‘Sacramentum, quod accipis, Christi sermone conficitur. De totius mundi elementis legisti *quia ipse dixit, et facta sunt*. Sermo Christi (Psal. XXXII, 9), qui potuit ex nihilo facere quod non erat, non potest ea quae sunt in id mutare quod non erat?’ [The sacrament which you accept is confectioned by the word of Christ. Regarding the created elements that make up all the world, you have read *that he spoke and they were made*. Can the word of Christ, which was able to make out of nothing things which were not [i.e. had not before existed], not change those things which are into what they were not?] The broader context to the treatment of preaching in this passage of the Balliol 149 Sermon is Ps. 32.3-9: ‘Cantate ei canticum novum [...] Quia rectum est verbum Domini [...] Verbo Domini caeli firmati sunt; Et spiritu oris eius omnis virtus eorum [...] Quoniam ipse dixit, et facta sunt; Ipse mandavit et creata sunt’ [Sing to him a new canticle [...] For the word of the Lord is right [...] By the word of the Lord the heavens were established; and all the power of them by the spirit of his mouth [...] For he spoke and they were made: he commanded and they were created].’

*videtur* ('appears') suggests that this is a subjective perception.<sup>460</sup> The problem derives from the author's combination of the statements; taken together, they purposefully argue that the *virtus* of the preached word, not of the formula of consecration, is most akin to the awesome *virtus* by which God made the universe, and this is why the word is greater than the body. Quite simply, like Wyclif (and recalling the assertions of Grosseteste from the thirteenth century), the author does not appear to perceive the *virtus* and presence of Jesus Christ primarily in the bread and wine, but in the reception of the preached word. As we have seen Wyclif express this perception in one of his late sermons, where 'confecting the Eucharist causes only the bread to be the body of Christ [...] proclaiming the Gospel [...] causes the human soul to be, in a certain way, Christ Himself'.<sup>461</sup> It is only the orthodox framing of the Balliol 149 sermon, therefore, that would prevent one from concluding that its author is using the Canon Law text to argue precisely this point, together with all of the implications for medieval religion that we have seen unfolded in Wyclif's writings.

#### **4.2. The Demise of an Evangelical Tradition**

As even the limited number of late-medieval texts which we have just considered strongly suggests, the assertions made for preaching through the Decretum *Interrogo vos* are much less credibly markers of Wycliffite affiliation, than of tensions and ideas fundamental to a far more widely-held conception of preaching. Moreover, re-evaluating these statements in turn casts a new light onto the affiliations of the texts containing them, as we shall see, and onto the important information they convey about the broader composition, function and development of the vernacular preaching culture in the period, including the reason that such ideas appear Wycliffite.

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<sup>460</sup> See Ch. 1, pp. 18-19; Ch. 2, p. 47, Ch. 4, p. 123.

<sup>461</sup> See Wyclif, *LS I*, XVI, 110/16-22, cited in Ch. 2, p. 75, fn. 255.

Not least, the same vernacular preaching texts that have been labelled ‘grey’ because of their problematic resemblance to Wycliffite writings bear witness to a central and largely neglected strand of this culture. To this end, I turn to a collection whose Wycliffite affiliation has been more disputed more than any other: the so-called *Lollard Sermons*, a group of seventeen stridently evangelical vernacular writings, of uncertain dating but possibly written in the last years of the fourteenth century.<sup>462</sup> Their editor, Gloria Cigman, is keenly aware of the difficulties of so labelling these sermons, in that for her they do not clearly articulate ‘any of the views that brought Wyclif into such disfavour and led to his followers being condemned at first as heretical and eventually as seditious’. This is a problem which has led to the rejection of that label by others.<sup>463</sup> Nonetheless, Cigman can draw support from the intuition of several major historians, from E.W. Talbert to Margaret Aston who ‘regards the texts [...] as self-evidently Lollard’.<sup>464</sup> Most important for Cigman’s classification, however, is their witness to distinctively ‘Lollard attitudes to preaching’, an assertion of some importance since it is also made by other scholars when arguing the Wycliffite affiliation of these and other texts.<sup>465</sup>

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<sup>462</sup> See p. 90, fn. 315, above. The three known manuscripts containing the sermons have been dated to the first decades of the fifteenth century. See Jeremy Griffiths, ‘The Manuscripts’, in the Introduction to *Lollard Sermons* on London, British Library, Additional MS 41321 (p. xii) and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C. 751 (p. xxv). On the dating of Manchester, John Rylands, MS Eng 412, see N.R. Ker and A. J. Piper, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969-2001), III (1983), p. 425. However, Gloria Cigman, ‘Luceat Lux Vestra’, p. 482, argues that they may have been composed ‘before and during [...] Archbishop Courtenay’s enquiries into and condemnation of the views of the Oxford Wycliffites’, i.e. no later than 1382. I would concur with a pre fifteenth-century dating since the author’s complex stance (discussed in this chapter, pp. 130-133), influenced by Wyclif’s conception of Scripture whilst not clearly identifying itself with Wycliffism, or with implacable opposition to the Church, appears more viable at a date before the ideas it supports had come to be associated more exclusively with Wycliffite heresy.

<sup>463</sup> Cigman, ‘Lollard Preacher’, p. 481. See, for example, John Frankis, Review of *Lollard Sermons*, *Review of English Studies*, 42 (1991), 437-38, A.S.G. Edwards, Review of *Lollard Sermons*, *Speculum*, 67 (1992), 124-26; both cited in Gayk, “‘As Plouzmen han preued’”, p. 45, fn. 8.

<sup>464</sup> Cigman, ‘Lollard Preacher’, p. 481 and fns. 10, 11 and 13, refers to G.R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, pp. 147 fn. 1, 284 fn. 2; E.W. Talbert, ‘A Fifteenth Century Lollard Sermon Cycle’, *University of Texas Studies in English*, 19 (1939), 5-30; and Margaret Aston, ‘Lollardy and Seditious 1381-1431’, *Past and Present*, 17 (1960), 1-44 (repr. in Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, pp. 1-47).

<sup>465</sup> Cigman, ‘Lollard Preacher’, p. 480. See also, for example, Gayk, “‘As Plouzmen han preued’”, p. 45: ‘Although some scholars have questioned the affiliation of the sermons with Lollardy, the collection employs a Lollard vocabulary, shares the Lollard commitment to such issues as the importance of ‘trewe’ preaching and lay access to the Scriptures, and draws directly on other Lollard texts’. See also above, p. 117.

In fact, I will agree with Cigman and others that the author's conception of preaching is the most convincing sign of a direct and substantial Wycliffite influence. Not least, the sermons are permeated by the complex of hermeneutic ideas that Wyclif's thought and the writings of his followers had distinctively bound together: that Scripture is a single 'loof',<sup>466</sup> 'true in euer parte' since '3if Goddis word be fals, God must need be fals þat seip it'.<sup>467</sup> Such ideas in turn suggest that Wycliffism may have inspired its most tenaciously argued opinions concerning preached Scripture, such as its promotion of the homiletic rather than the 'modern' form of preaching,<sup>468</sup> or its condemnation as spiritual murderers of those seeking to limit knowledge of the Gospel to 'prestus and clerkis'.<sup>469</sup> However, the greatest sign of Wycliffite influence lies in their evocation of preaching itself as the performance, in all but name, of a sacrament. No fewer than two sermons are devoted to Jn. 6, and as in texts such as the *English Wycliffite Sermons*, they foreground preaching as the *sensus mysticus* of the miracle of the loaves. To preach is to disseminate an infinitely rich and sufficient food that will feed the many, recalling the consecrated bread of the Mass: 'alle þat eten of þis breed effectuelly, of Holy Scripture shullen be fulfillid, for al þing þat is necessarie to þe gouernaunce of her soulis þei mowen taste and fynde þerinne'.<sup>470</sup> Thus the author exhorts preachers to pray to Christ that: 'he wole vouchesafe also to multiplie so litel kunnyng þat [it] may be sufficient to fede wiþ gostly Goddis peple'.<sup>471</sup>

Most strongly resembling Wycliffite texts such as *EWS* (and in contrast with the sermon fragment from Arras 184, discussed above), is how the author uses these associations explicitly to claim powers for preachers that challenge the authority of the

<sup>466</sup> *Lollard Sermons* 14b, 186/100.

<sup>467</sup> *Lollard Sermons* 16, 197/87; 2, 21/335-336.

<sup>468</sup> On the distinction between these forms, see Ch. 2, p. 50.

<sup>469</sup> *Lollard Sermons* 2, 21/323-326.

<sup>470</sup> *Lollard Sermons* 15, 187/118-120. The author here echoes Jerome, *Breviarium in Psalmis* (PL 26.1259A: 'Pinguissimus sermo divinus est. Omnes habet in se delicias' [The divine word is most rich. It contains within it all delights]). The eucharistic significance of this trope is reflected in the fact that, in Jerome's original text, it directly follows the Church Father's identification of scriptural reception with Christ's order to eat his flesh and drink his blood (Jn. 6.54). This text has been discussed in Ch. 1, p. 7.

<sup>471</sup> *Lollard Sermons* 14, 181/225-229.

Church. Just as the performance of miracles authorized Christ's own message, so the dissemination of the Word (being a miracle due to its salvific effects)<sup>472</sup> does the same for whoever preaches it, without the leave of the Church: 'bodili miracles ben not necessarie [...] þe word of God truely preched dop alle þese miracles gostly'.<sup>473</sup> Moreover, those who deny traces of Wycliffite thought in the *Lollard Sermons* have missed, I believe, the well-wrought equivocations through which the author flirts with Wycliffism's most fundamental threats to the Church's sacramental system.<sup>474</sup> Those authorized to set forth the bread of Scripture 'been alle prestis and alle þo þat han taken vpon hem þe office of presthood', the author claims, not merely removing the power to create priests from the Church, but also potentially endorsing a priesthood of all believers.<sup>475</sup> Most distinctive of all is the strength with which it claims for preaching the core sacramental functions of the Mass, as is seen in its reading of the *Decretum* text itself: ('I aske to 3ou .. what semiþ to 3ou to be more, þe body of Crist, or þe worde of Crist?'). The reason why the word is 'euen [equal] with þe body of Christ' is because it is 'þe second persone in þe godhed'; i.e. the word is Christ Himself, 'þe worde [...] made fleische' of which John's Gospel speaks.<sup>476</sup> This statement permits both the understanding that Christ is most present in the preached word and consequently also the understanding, found elsewhere in the sermons, of the Mass as mere commemoration of Christ's historically distant crucifixion.<sup>477</sup> Such challenges therefore highlight the threat in the author's prophecy that preaching will effect a latter-day transformation by which priesthood shall be 'chaunged more bri3tere and perfitere'.<sup>478</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> See Ch. 3, p. 90.

<sup>473</sup> *Lollard Sermons* 3, 34/116-117; *Lollard Sermons* 3, 35/161-168. On the use of this argument by the *English Wycliffite Sermons*, see Ch. 3, p. 90.

<sup>474</sup> See Cigman, 'Lollard Preacher', p. 481, cited above, p. 129.

<sup>475</sup> *Lollard Sermons* 15, 185/59-60.

<sup>476</sup> *Lollard Sermons* 16, 197/107-198/116.

<sup>477</sup> *Lollard Sermons* 10, 113/279-282: 'þe chartre of þis breþerhede is þe blessed bodi þat hyngre on a cros [...] seelid wiþe the precyous sacrament of þe auter in perpetuel mynde þerof'. For more on the fourteenth-century Charter of Christ tradition to which this statement gestures, see below, pp. 144-150.

<sup>478</sup> *Lollard Sermons* 2, 22/384-385; 22/397-399. See Hb. 7.12: 'translato enim sacerdotio, necesse est ut et legis translatio fiat' [For the priesthood being translated, it is necessary that a translation also be made of the law].

Yet militating against the Wycliffite label for the *Lollard Sermons* are broad divergences from the Wycliffite sermons. The author also appears to warn against the same confluences of scriptural word and sacramental rite, priesthood and laity that he elsewhere seems to endorse. In the case of the Eucharist, which he describes as the highest of the sacramental breads, ‘its dispensers ‘ben prestis oonly [...] whensouere þat a prest, in Este’r’ne Day or in oþer tyme, ministriþ þis blessid sacrament to hem þat receyen it worþily’.<sup>479</sup> While we have seen similar anxieties about the sacraments in a clearly Wycliffite text, *De oblacione*, in the *Lollard Sermons* these accompany a fundamentally different attitude to the Church.<sup>480</sup> The author, for example, says that preachers should encourage worshippers to attend Church sermons on Sundays.<sup>481</sup> Most distinctive, as Patrick Hornbeck has observed, is his theology of salvation: the Church is not a transcendent body of the elect, but a mixed entity comprising those who may yet be saved or damned; preaching aims not to address the predestined but to exhort its audience ‘to perform good deeds as they seek eternal life’.<sup>482</sup> Fundamentally (akin to the sermon-fragment in Arras 184), the author in no way identifies the established Church with Antichrist. This is a persistent feature of the Wycliffite writings we have encountered.<sup>483</sup>

Without dismissing the conundrum of identity posed by the *Lollard Sermons*, I do not believe that this combination of views on preaching clearly deriving from Wycliffism, and of non-Wycliffite views in other key areas, thereby justifies a re-definition of Wycliffism so diffuse that the term ceases to have meaning (even if, as we saw in Chapter Three, the monolithic identity articulated by a range of Wycliffite texts is largely an aspirational vision,

<sup>479</sup> *Lollard Sermons* 15, 193/377-384.

<sup>480</sup> *Lollard Sermons* 15, 193/356-347.

<sup>481</sup> *Lollard Sermons* 14, 181/206-209: ‘And for þis cause also þe comoun peple drawn on Sondayes and oþer holy days into a comoun chirche for to here þe worde of God, which is comounly fer fet fro her propr dwelling placis’.

<sup>482</sup> Hornbeck, ‘*Lollard Sermons? Soteriology and Late-Medieval Dissent*’, pp. 28-29. This issue is also discussed in Ch. 3 of this thesis, p. 92.

<sup>483</sup> The explicit association of the Church with Antichrist is exactly what is missing from the *Lollard Sermons*’ use of the binary opposites (‘few’ versus ‘many’, ‘true’ versus ‘false’) which Cigman argues is a marker of its Wycliffism. See Cigman, ‘*Lucaet Lux Vestra*’, p. 483, and also Ch. 3 of this thesis, p. 87.

even a fallacy). Rather, I would suggest that the very points of overlap between Wycliffism and ‘grey-area’ texts such as the *Lollard Sermons* – from the emphasis upon a homiletic form of preaching in the vernacular, ultimately derived from monasticism (as opposed to the modern form), to the insistence upon the ‘word as Christ’ and the quasi-sacerdotal authority that it thereby lends the preacher – are definitive of a broader late-medieval evangelical reform movement whose difference was one of degree, in not seeking to develop its ideas so far as to rip the existing institutional Church apart.<sup>484</sup> This is not to deny the catalyzing influence of Wyclif on the thought of such stridently evangelical authors and possibly on the authors of every text considered in this chapter. Yet the clearest reason the *Lollard Sermons* can draw so extensively on Wycliffite ideas about the preached word, while rejecting others, is because their author sees Wycliffism’s own roots in this tradition (whose pre-existence may also help to explain why, as we have remarked, Wycliffite ideas appeared well formed at such an early date).<sup>485</sup> It is this tradition, rather than to Wycliffism, to which the author most clearly alludes when he ventriloquizes a question obviously on the minds of contemporaries: ‘wharto preche 3e þanne so fast and bigynnin a newe manere þat haþ not be vused a long tyme but of þe hooli freres?’<sup>486</sup>

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<sup>484</sup> As Helen Spencer comments in *English Preaching* on Wycliffite criticism of the Church and espousal of causes such as the teaching of theology to the laity, p. 14, ‘Lollard championship of all these causes must be seen as an exaggeration, contentiously expressed, of current thought, which it consequently discredited’. See also above, p. 114, fn. 409 and below, p. 134, fn. 487.

<sup>485</sup> For orthodox examples of non-ordained preachers who authorized themselves using idea of the Word as Christ, see the discussion of the Dominican tertiary Catherine of Siena in Ch. 1, p. 28; Ch. 3, p. 95.

<sup>486</sup> *Lollard Sermons* 4, 51/239-240. The importance of Wycliffite authors as conduits for older, orthodox ideas may be seen, for example, in the sermons of the onetime Wycliffite Philip Repingdon (c. 1345-1424), who recanted Wyclif’s doctrines in 1382 and went on to be Bishop of Lincoln. There is extensive quotation from Grosseteste’s *Dictum* 101 in Repingdon’s sermon on the same biblical text (Jn. 10.11: ‘I am the good shepherd’), in his *Sermones dominicales*, compiled in the following decade, including Grosseteste’s idea of the ‘word as Christ’ [*verbum Christum*]. See Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 54, fols. 163vb-171ra (esp. fol. 164va). See also Wenzel, *LSC* pp. 51, 584. Moreover, the apparent orthodoxy of these ideas, and of Grosseteste’s conception of preaching in general, is not contradicted by the retention of these excerpts from Grosseteste in a redaction of Repingdon’s cycle without obvious heterodox or affiliations, aimed at preachers, whose manuscripts date from the fifteenth century. See, for example, ‘Ego Sum Pastor Bonus’, in Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS Latin 367, fols. 241ra-243ra (fol. 241va). See Wenzel, *LSC* pp. 199-206, for more on this redacted cycle and its manuscripts.

However, the *Lollard Sermons* also indicate the reason why this preaching tradition retrospectively appears Wycliffite, because its use among the laity also posed the same core threats to the Church as Wycliffism itself. As with the *English Wycliffite Sermons*, the central danger of the *Lollard Sermons* lies less clearly in their use of intensive preaching as a cover for disseminating heretical doctrine, than in their assertions of the sacramental power of the preached word, particularly its identity with Christ. We have seen that the *Lollard Sermons* themselves warn against what may have been the chief cause of orthodox anxieties about such ideas, namely that they could foster among the laity, more broadly, the same perception of the preached word of Scripture as a substitute for the Mass that we have seen within the Wycliffite movement. I shall return to the core reason why such anxieties were justified later, but I believe that Wycliffism taking to an extreme and thus successfully highlighting the dangers integral to this tradition helped convince churchmen that it had no place in popular religious instruction. The particular narrowing of the period's 'geographies of orthodoxy' resulting from this decision, therefore, is the retrospective cause of its 'Wycliffism'.<sup>487</sup>

It is also the subsequent marginalization of this evangelical tradition that one may primarily see in writings such as *Dives and Pauper*, an early fifteenth-century vernacular treatise on the Ten Commandments. Probably written in the first decade of the fifteenth century, when Arundel's *Constitutions* had greatly restricted the definitions of what constituted orthodox lay teaching, its likely Franciscan author seems keen to parade such an orthodoxy on contentious issues.<sup>488</sup> Its genre, a commentary on the decalogue, formally

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<sup>487</sup> I draw the term 'geographies of orthodoxy' from the research project *Geographies of Orthodoxy: Mapping Pseudo-Bonaventuran Lives of Christ 1350-1550* (Belfast: Queen's University, 2007-2010) <<http://www.qub.ac.uk/geographies-of-orthodoxy/>> [accessed 20/09/2011]. This narrowing therefore forms part of what Watson in 'Censorship and Cultural Change', p. 826, terms: 'the reactionary shifts within the definition of orthodoxy' in this period which as much as 'its own growing extremism' determined Wycliffism's 'status as a heresy'. See also above, p. 114, fn. 409 and p. 132, fn. 484.

<sup>488</sup> *Dives and Pauper*, ed. by Priscilla Heath Barnum, 2 vols. in 3, EETS 275, 280, 323 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976-2004). This edition is hereafter referred to as *Dives*. On the likely composition of the work in the first decade of the fifteenth century, see *Dives* II, pp. xviii-xx. Barnum comments, however, on p.

eschews the broader, more systematic teaching of Scripture that was becoming associated with heresy.<sup>489</sup> Similar professions of orthodoxy may be seen in its use of the first commandment commentary to provide a lengthy defence of the importance of images in popular religion,<sup>490</sup> or in its description of the Eucharist as the ‘heyest sacrifyce [...] Crist, Godys son of heuene vnder forme of bred and of wyn’.<sup>491</sup>

Nonetheless, *Dives* repeatedly exposes the author’s disagreement with the increasingly narrow limits of acceptable popular religious literacy in the period. It exhorts its readers, for example, to listen to ‘Goddis word & prechyng and techyng & redyng of Goddis word and of Gods law’ in a way which signals the insufficiency of *Dives*’s own catechesis to perform this function.<sup>492</sup> This disagreement is clearest in its treatment of the fifth commandment, ‘þu schalt nout slen’.<sup>493</sup> A series of increasingly strident railings against forms of manslaughter visited against the populace, such as the theft of the people’s means of subsistence,<sup>494</sup> rises to the charge that ‘men of holy chirche slen men & women gostlyche be withdrawyng & lettynge of Goddis word & of good techyng’.<sup>495</sup> In support of this, the author pours forth a welter of tropes which will be familiar from the late fourteenth-century preaching literature surveyed in this thesis: ‘Man and woman lyuyth nout only in bodyly bred but mychil more he lyuyth in euery word þat comyth of Godis mout’ [Mt. 4.4]; ‘þu schalt ben as myn mout [Jm. 15.19] [...] & þan is þe prechour as Godis mouth & spekyth with Godis mouth [...]’.<sup>496</sup>

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xx: ‘Whether *Dives*’s protests against restrictions predated or followed – or both – the Arundel Constitutions is uncertain’. On the prevailing attribution to a Franciscan author, see *Dives* II, pp. xx-xxii.

<sup>489</sup> Nicholas Watson comments in ‘Censorship and Cultural Change’, p. 844, that the restriction of lay instruction ‘to catechesis [...] directly anticipates the solution imposed by Arundel, with its narrow definition of the truths considered “necessary” for the illiterate to know’.

<sup>490</sup> See *Dives* I.1, pp. 81-109.

<sup>491</sup> *Dives* I.1, 87/35-37, as Barnum points out in *Dives* II, p. xlvii.

<sup>492</sup> *Dives* I.2, 311/141-2.

<sup>493</sup> *Dives* I.2, 1/4-5.

<sup>494</sup> *Dives* I.2, 14/12-14: ‘þerfor God seip þat swyche maner folc, tyrantis, extorcioners & false men, deouryn this peple as þe mete of bred: deourant plebem meam sictu escam panis [Ps 13: 4]’.

<sup>495</sup> *Dives* I.2, 21/15-17.

<sup>496</sup> *Dives* I.2, 21/19-22/30.

This culminates with the Canon Law text, attributed to Augustine, with which we began our treatment of preaching:

As seith Sent Austyn, Godis word owith to be worchepyd as mychil as Cristis body [...] & þer þe glose schewith þat it is more profitable to heryn Godis word in prechyng þan to heryn ony messe, for þe prechyng folc is steryd to contricioun & to forsakyn synne & þe fend & to louyn God & goodnesse & ben enlumynyd to known her God, & virtue from vice [...] Be þe messe ben þei nout so, but 3if þey comyn to messe in synne þei gon away in synne [...] for whan þe peple dispysith Godis word & loþith Godis word, whych is her gostly foode, þat peple is but ded & ny3h þe 3atis of helle.<sup>497</sup>

Just as with the other authorities cited by the *Dives* author, the use of the *Decretum* is no marker of Wycliffism but rather appeals to and seeks to defend an established tradition of thought about preaching, whose orthodoxy may not have been seriously questionable until the late fourteenth century.<sup>498</sup> The word, potently equivalent to the Mass, is uniquely able to cure the sins of men; preaching is necessary for salvation. These are the functions and qualities of the preached word which were being crushed by the new restrictions upon preaching. This is, above all, also the message of another text likely written by the *Dives* author, Warminster, Longleat House MS 4: a vernacular sermon cycle, whose size and coverage, commitment to the homiletic style, constant emphasis upon the centrality of preaching and strident condemnation of those who would restrict it, taken together, recall the sermons of Wyclif and his followers more strongly than any other sermons we have

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<sup>497</sup> *Dives* I.2, 23.50-71.

<sup>498</sup> See Felton, 'Dominica prima quadragesime sermo. Ductus est ihesus in desertum. mt. 4' [Sermon for the First Sunday of Lent: 'Jesus was led into the desert'], MS Parker 360, fols. 43v-46r (43v): 'sicut corpus indiget cibo corporali, sine quo corporaliter moreretur, sic anima indiget cibo spirituali sine quo spiritualiter moreretur, de quibus in euangelio hodierno non in solo pane uiuit homo sed in omni uerbo quod de ore dei; Os enim dei predicator est uerbi dei; Jer. 15. Si separaueris pretiosum a uili quasi os meum eris. Et ideo sicut quis uellet audire christum sua uerba dicentem, sic debet audire predicatorem, immo sicut uellet custodire corpus christi, sic debet uerba eius conseruare. ut patet prima quaestio prima interrogatio' [Just as the body hungers for physical food, without which it would die physically, so the soul hungers for spiritual food, without which it would die spiritually; concerning which today's gospel says, 'man does not live by bread alone but by every word which [proceeds] from the mouth of God'. For the preacher of God's word is the mouth of God. Jer. 15 says: 'if thou wilt separate the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth'. Therefore, just as someone wishes to hear Christ speaking his words, so he should hear the preacher; indeed, just as he wishes to protect the body of Christ, so he should preserve his words, as [Causa] 1, Quest. 1 *Interrogo Vos* makes clear].

considered: yet which, by contrast, was apparently composed for the private meditation of an elite lay-patron.<sup>499</sup> This irony only underscores the narrowed horizons of orthodox lay instruction reflected in *Dives*. Yet while this is a restriction about which *Dives* itself does little more than complain, its treatment of the Canon Law text, cited above, again highlights the reasons why the utterance of such ideas in the vernacular was being rendered suspicious: it is telling that the author should describe the preached word as the ‘gostly foode’ without mentioning the Mass at all, implying the centrality of Scripture to the sacramental world of its author.

### **4.3. The Depth and Breadth of the Word**

Nonetheless, as we consider in this chapter’s final section, the causes of the restriction of this evangelical tradition most clearly lie in the prevalence of the same tensions in a much broader section of religious culture. Furthermore, the extent of this overlap is most visible in the very texts which are most explicitly opposed to Wycliffism, but which belong to the tradition of ‘Scripture’, in its broadest medieval sense.<sup>500</sup> To illustrate this parallel I turn to a

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<sup>499</sup> See in general Anne Hudson and Helen Spencer, ‘Old Author, New Work: the Sermons of MS Longleat 4’, *Medium aevum*, 53 (1984), 220-238; esp. p. 220 on internal references indicating their author to be that of *Dives and Pauper*, and on the cycle’s inclusion ‘of a complete Sunday gospel collection, together with sermons for certain Christmas festivals’; pp. 224-5 on the author’s use, fundamentally, of the ‘ancient’ homiletic mode; p. 227 on ‘a lay patron [...] of substance’ as the likely single audience; p. 230 on the argument that preachers should be able to hear confession; pp. 230-231 on his castigation of the Church and on the imperative of priests to preach; p. 232 on his preference for preaching over the Mass; and pp. 232-3 on his frequent ‘flagrant disregard of Arundel’s legislation’, not least for criticising the clergy in front of the laity.

<sup>500</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the edition of *Pore Caitif* cited in this chapter is ‘The Pore Caitif: Edited from MS Harley 2336 with Introduction and Notes’, ed. by M.T. Brady (unpublished doctoral thesis: Fordham University, 1954). The text of this edition is referred to in the body of the text and in notes as *PC*. As there is no scholarly published edition of *Pore Caitif*, I have also given the folio references cited by Brady for the manuscript upon which her edition is based, London, British Library, MS Harley 2336. For a dating to the late fourteenth century, see *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English: 1050-1500*, IX, XXIII.87, pp. 3135-3136. However, Priscilla Heath Barnum has pointed to cases of what she sees as borrowing by *Pore Caitif* from *Dives and Pauper*, which was likely written in the first decade of the fifteenth century, singling out parallels in their discussions of swearing in the second commandment. See *Dives II*, pp. lxxxii-lxxxiii, and p. 102, note to *Dives I*, 227/1, pointing out the similarity between *Dives I*, 227/4-6, 228/12-12 and *Pore Caitif*, 39/18-19 (fol. 26r), 39/25-40/2 (fol. 26v), 40/4-5 (fol. 26v), 40/9-10 (fol. 26v) [note that Barnum quotes *PC* from MS Bodley 938, fols. 126v-127r. The references I have given are to Brady’s edition, and to MS Harley 2336]. However, while there are strong similarities, and while *PC* by its own admission is a work which borrows from others, I

composition which seeks to literally epitomize this tradition, the late fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century miscellany *Pore Caitif*. Surviving in part or in whole in nearly sixty extant manuscripts,<sup>501</sup> *PC* presents the reader with a vernacular ‘ladder’ of fourteen tracts, rising from treatments of basic religious knowledge like the Creed, through the Ten Commandments, to devotional pieces dealing with intimate spiritual union with Christ.<sup>502</sup> In this way, it aims to ‘teche symple men & wymmen of good will . þe riȝt weie to heuene / If þei wolen bisie hem to haue it in mynde [...] without multiplicacioun of manye bookis’.<sup>503</sup>

Like the ‘grey-area’ evangelical writings just considered, *PC* also betrays contact with Wycliffite writings sufficient to have led some readers to question its affiliation. As the pioneering studies of Mary Brady have shown, six of the tracts, located mostly on its lower rungs, including its prologues to the Ten Commandments and the Pater Noster, betray a major debt to key late-fourteenth-century Wycliffite works such as the *Glossed Gospels*, both for content, basic exegetical method and arguably for key tropes, such as ‘Pore Caitif’ itself.<sup>504</sup> In addition, many surviving whole or partial fifteenth-century copies of *PC* have been interpolated with ideas important to Wycliffism; one might thus understand why Reformation antiquarians and *PC*’s first nineteenth-century evangelical editors attributed the text to Wyclif himself.<sup>505</sup> In fact, Brady’s work has convincingly refuted the case for

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believe there is insufficient evidence to disprove other causes of the similarity, such as the borrowing of both works from an unknown third source.

<sup>501</sup> See Karine Moreau Guibert, ‘Le Pore Caitif: Edition critique et diplomatique d’après le manuscrit de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris, Anglais 41, avec introduction, notes et glossaire’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Poitiers, 1999), p. 17, who identifies fifty-seven manuscripts.

<sup>502</sup> *PC*, p. 2 (fol. 1v). On the number, order and contents of the *Pore Caitif* tracts, see in general M.T. Brady, ‘The Pore Caitif: An Introductory Study’, *Traditio*, 10 (1954), 529-48.

<sup>503</sup> *PC* 1/3-6 (fol. 1r). See also Gillespie, ‘Lukyng in Haly Bokes’, pp. 12-13, on this passage, discussing the aspiration of *Pore Caitif* and other vernacular texts such as *Book to a Mother* to provide a ‘self-sufficient compendium’ of spiritual instruction; and Brady, ‘The Pore Caitif: An Introductory Study’, p. 529.

<sup>504</sup> See M.T. Brady, ‘Lollard Sources of the “Pore Caitif”’, *Traditio*, 44 (1988), 389-418, for a detailed comparison of passages from *Pore Caitif* with those in Wycliffite writings such as the *Glossed Gospels* and Wycliffite Bible. On the similarity of the pseudonym ‘Pore Caitif’ to the ‘caitif’ repeatedly used in the *Glossed Gospels* to denote their authors, see also M.T. Brady, ‘The Pore Caitif: An Introductory Study’, p. 546.

<sup>505</sup> On such interpolations, see M.T. Brady, ‘Lollard Interpolations and Omissions in Manuscripts of The Pore Caitif’, in *De cella in seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1989), pp. 183-203, esp. pp. 184-185. *Pore Caitif* was ascribed

considering *PC* as in any way Wycliffite. Not only is there an absence of specific Wycliffite doctrine, but Wycliffite writings are only one among an overwhelmingly orthodox array of sources, from St. Augustine and Bede to Innocent III, marshalled by its creator through the processes of *compilatio* and *ordinatio*; indeed, the greatest influence on its last ten tracts are the writings of the English contemplative Richard Rolle (c. 1305/10-49).<sup>506</sup> Most important is the message sent by the dominant *ordo* of the *PC*, likely influenced by Rolle, which embodies what Vincent Gillespie calls ‘an extremely popular pattern which began with texts related to the standard teaching syllabus and progressed to more advanced spiritual instruction’.<sup>507</sup> To all appearances, Wycliffite texts serve merely as a useful source for basic religious instruction, subsumed within a pattern of orthodox contemplative advancement. This leads Brady to conclude that if *PC* ‘is a Lollard tract, it is a unique one, without, apparently, a trace of Lollardy’.<sup>508</sup>

Nonetheless, we shall see that such a reading fails to acknowledge *PC*’s much more extensive engagement with a range of movements in English religious culture, including the strident evangelicalism exemplified by Wycliffites. Not least, as Watson has observed, behind *PC*’s claim to be an all-inclusive aid to achieving salvation is the concern that “multiplicacion” of books leads to the shattering of the unity of Christian truth’,<sup>509</sup> a threat

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to Wyclif by the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformer John Bale. See John Bale, *Index Britanniae scriptorum: quos ex variis biliothecis [...] John Bale’s Index of British and Other Writers*, ed. by R.L. Poole (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), p. 272, n. 9. A similar ascription was made by the editors of *PC*’s nineteenth-century first printed edition, *The Pore Caitiff*, in *Writings of the Reverend and Learned John Wicklif, D.D.* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1831), pp. 49-122.

<sup>506</sup> On *ordinatio* and *compilatio*, see Brady, ‘Lollard Sources of the “Pore Caitif”’, p. 390, referring to Malcolm Parkes, ‘The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book’, in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, ed. by J.J.G Alexander and M.T. Gibson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 115-141 (pp. 128, 132). On the importance of Rolle to last ten tracts of *PC*, see M.T. Brady, ‘Rolle and the Pattern of Tracts in “The Pore Caitif”’, *Traditio*, 39 (1983), 457-65. On some of the orthodox authors cited in *Pore Caitif*, see Brady, ‘The Pore Caitif: An Introductory Study’, p. 538.

<sup>507</sup> Again, on Rolle’s influence on the scheme of *PC*, see Brady, ‘Rolle and the Pattern of Tracts’. Vincent Gillespie, ‘Vernacular Books of Religion’, in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain: 1375-1475*, ed. by Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 317-344 (p. 330).

<sup>508</sup> Brady, ‘The Pore Caitif: An Introductory Study’, p. 548.

<sup>509</sup> Watson, ‘Conceptions of the Word’, p. 108.

applicable both to Wycliffism and to the burgeoning of orthodox devotional writing. As though aiming to compete with such writings, *PC* is notable for the sheer number, uniformity and high quality of production of its extant copies.<sup>510</sup> Even more relevant to *PC*'s goal, I believe, is the argument recently advanced by Jeremy Catto, that the dissemination of late fourteenth-century texts such as the *Scale of Perfection* embodied establishment attempts (possibly sponsored by Thomas Arundel several years before his more restrictive fifteenth-century *Constitutions*) to 'map for clergy and laity a religious journey of obviously powerful attraction and an alternative to that urged by the Lollard evangelists'.<sup>511</sup> In a manner closer to the sophistication of the *Scale* than to the more brazen anti-Wycliffite polemic of Nicholas Love's *Mirror*, we shall see that the viability of the alternative offered by *PC* rests upon demonstrating how its writings embody the central qualities that Wycliffism privileged to scriptural dissemination.

This claim is clearest in *PC*'s lower rungs which draw upon Wycliffite exegesis of Scripture itself, as shown in its commentary on the Ten Commandments ('Ten Heestis').<sup>512</sup> Among the emphases that the *PC* commentary has carried across from the Wycliffite sources is a detailed word-by-word exposition of the commandments and condemnation, in its treatment of the first commandment, of the 'greet mawmetire' of worshipping 'ony similitude eþir licnesse'.<sup>513</sup> While such emphases do not clearly distinguish *PC*'s treatment of the Commandments from a range of other orthodox catechetical texts,<sup>514</sup> the specific context of Wycliffism emerges in the 'charge [import] of the heestis' after the commentary itself, which expands upon Israel's obligations to the God that had led it out of Egypt:

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<sup>510</sup> Gillespie, 'Vernacular Books of Religion', p. 332.

<sup>511</sup> Jeremy Catto, 'Shaping the Mixed Life: Thomas Arundel's Reformation', in *Image, Text and Church: Essays for Margaret Aston*, ed. by Linda Clark et al. (Toronto: PIMS, 2009), pp. 94-108 (p. 102).

<sup>512</sup> *PC* pp. 24-91 (fols. 15v-62v).

<sup>513</sup> *PC* 31/3-4 (fol. 20v).

<sup>514</sup> Brady, *PC* p. xciii, comments on 'the numerous parallels' between *PC*'s commentary on the commandments and late-medieval texts such as *The Lay Folks' Catechism*, *The Book of Vices and Virtues* (discussed below, p. 142), *Speculum Christiani*, John Mirk's *Instructions for Parish Priests* and others.

god comaundiþ generali to his peple . þat ech man telle to hise  
sones : hou god ledde his peple out of egipt / & it shal be as a  
tokene in þin hond seiþ god : & as a þing of mynde bifore þin izen  
. & þe lawe of þe lord be euere in þi mouþ / And in an oþir place  
god seiþ [...] þou shalt telle hem to þi sones / And þou shalt  
þenke on hem sitting in þin house : & goinge in þe weie . &  
slepinge & risyng / & þou shalt bynde þo as a signe in þin hond :  
a þo shulen be moued betwix þin izen / and þou shalt write þo : in  
þe lyntels & doris of þin hous.<sup>515</sup>

While rooted in Exodus and Deuteronomy, the *PC* author has selected and compiled texts which are foregrounded in writings such as the *Prologue* of the Wycliffite Bible. In the latter, words of Scripture worn on the body by the Israelites come to symbolize a lifestyle sanctified and permeated by constant observance of Scripture, keeping it ‘a þing of mynde bifore þin izen [...] goinge in þe weie . & slepinge & risinge’. The writing on the door-lintels of the home emphasizes a religion with a domestic, rather than Church, focus.<sup>516</sup> Whether derived from a Wycliffite commentary or not, *PC* uses these texts to appeal, arguably, to the same audiences as those cultivated by Wycliffites, with a similar vision of an English Israel bound together by scriptural literacy. The observance of the commandments does not merely divide the saved from the damned (as *PC* illustrates by rendering the prophet Zachariah’s vision of God’s curse as a giant book ‘fleinge in þe eir’ to smite ‘þeeues housis / & [...] þat forsweren hem silf’), but also guarantees the future of the descendants of the community: ‘þou shalt teche hem to þi sones : & to þi cosyns [...] to alle cristen men’, promising God’s mercy ‘in to a þousynd’ generations’.<sup>517</sup>

Also underpinning this appeal is a similar articulation of the sacramental power of written Scripture itself. This becomes clear in *PC*’s commentary on the most fundamental Christian prayer, the Pater Noster. Its goal, the text proclaims, is to guide the reader towards

<sup>515</sup> *PC* 80/16-81/2 (fol. 55r). See Ex. 13.8-9; Dt. 6.6-9.

<sup>516</sup> See ‘Prologue [...] for alle the bokis of the Bible of the oolde testament’, in *Wycliffite Bible*, ed. Forshall and Madden, I, pp. 1-60 (p. 6): ‘God biddith hem haue hise wordis in her hertis and wittis, and haue tho for a signe in the hondis, and bytwyxe her y3en, and teche her sones to bithenke on the wordis of God euere, and that they write the wordis of God on the postis and 3atis of her hous’.

<sup>517</sup> *PC* 67/18-23 (fol. 45v), 26/12 (fol. 17r).

the transcendent *sensus* of its seven statements, one in which ‘is conteyned more witt : þan ony tunge of man can fulli tell here on erþe’.<sup>518</sup> The similarity becomes pronounced as the tract turns to the Pater Noster’s fifth ‘askinge’, for God to give us ‘oure echdaies breed’.<sup>519</sup> While one principal orthodox source for *PC*’s ‘Pater Noster’, the fourteenth-century *Book of Vices and Virtues*, reads our ‘echedaies bread’ as ‘þe bred and þe mete’ of ‘þe sacrament of þe auter’,<sup>520</sup> *PC* significantly opts at this stage for a reading from the Wycliffite *Glossed Gospels*:

Seynt austin seiþ. þat þis eche daies breed may be takun : for needful liiflood of oure bodi / and for þe sacrament of cristis blessid bodi. & for goostli mete of soule. þat is goddis word.<sup>521</sup>

*PC* thereby invokes the potent valency of the breads of Scripture and Eucharist which, as we have seen in this thesis, is central to the conception of Scripture in a range of contemporary evangelical discourses. As in writings such as *Dives*, this reading serves to authorize *PC*’s condemnation of the removal of the bread of Scripture from the people. If depriving a man of physical sustenance is a deadly sin, ‘hou moche more ben þei acursid . þat shulden feede soulis in point of perishing : with goostli food of goddis word / and siþ þis þat is very food of soulis’.<sup>522</sup> For this reason (again echoing another term rendered prominent by evangelical writings), the author prays for Christ to ordain ‘trewe techers in his peple to breke to hem þe bred of goddis word / [...] tellunge to hem þe veri truþe of god’.<sup>523</sup>

<sup>518</sup> *PC* 92/26-27 (fol. 63v). *PC* 102/15-17 (fol. 69v): ‘Here we asken of god. þe secunde zifte of þe hooli goost : þat is þe spirit of vndirstonding . in to oure hertis’.

<sup>519</sup> *PC* 105/23-24 (fol. 71v).

<sup>520</sup> *The Book of Vices and Virtues: A Fourteenth Century English Translation of the Somme Le Roi of Lorens D’Orléans*, ed. by W. Nelson Francis, EETS 217 (London: Humphrey Milford, 1942), p. 109, ll. 15-17. On its extensive use in *PC*’s ‘Pater Noster’, see Brady, ‘Lollard Sources of the Pore Caitif’, pp. 392-395.

<sup>521</sup> *PC* 105/23-106/3 (fols. 71v-72r). See Brady, ‘Lollard Sources of the Pore Caitif’, p. 398, who identifies the striking parallel of this section of *PC* to the Wycliffite Glossed Gospel *Short Matthew* and *Short Mark*, in British Library, MS Additional 41175, fol. 21rb: ‘Ech daies breed may be takun for nedeful liflod of oure bodi, & for þe sacrament of Cristis bodi, & for gostli mete þat is Goddis word’.

<sup>522</sup> *PC* 107/14-17 (fols. 72v-73r).

<sup>523</sup> *PC* 107/22-25 (fol. 73r). Brady, ‘Lollard Sources’, p. 399, remarks on the similarity between this section and a Wycliffite text in *SEWW*, III, p. 106: ‘praye we Jesus Crist byschope of oure soule, þat he ordeyne prechours in þe peple to warne hem of synne, and telle hem þe truþe of God’. See *PC* 108. See *EWS* IV, p. 29,

Nonetheless, the very different goal of *PC*'s argument from that of texts such as *Dives* lies its definition of 'daily bread' itself. By this term, *PC* reveals, it does not mean all of Scripture but rather the 'goostli mete þat is goddis heestis [...] it bihoueþ to þenke. & to worche hem ech dai'.<sup>524</sup> While this may be read as a genuine defence of the need for basic scriptural knowledge, this is also, in fact, the bread that *PC* has provided in the commentary on the Commandments and Pater Noster. Thus, *PC* asserts that its readers are not starving at all, contrary to the message of the evangelical complaints whose language it echoes. *PC*'s point is in fact one that we have also seen implied in the very different context of the warnings of Bishop Brinton against prolixity in preachers: that meditation upon a few appointed words of Scripture, rather than many, is sufficient to deliver the bread of Christ.<sup>525</sup> This function thus justifies *PC*'s claim to be able to match, through a circumscribed religious literacy, the more extensive scriptural knowledge demanded by Wycliffites.

### **The Scripture of Christ's Crucified Body**

However, only the most basic part of *PC*'s claim to offer a religious literacy equalling that of Wycliffite scripturalism rests in its instruction on biblical texts such as the Ten Commandments. This becomes clear as *PC*'s ladder ascends to a text belonging to the culture of devotions to the suffering Christ, considered at the start of this chapter, which some critics have perceived as being profoundly alien to Wycliffism: the 'chartre of oure heuenli eritage'.<sup>526</sup> Every man who wishes to claim his heavenly inheritance, the 'chartre'

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on the emphasis in Wycliffite literature 'on the importance of *trewe men*, *trewe prechoures* to the exclusion of individual peculiarity'.

<sup>524</sup> *PC* 106/3-5 (fol. 72r). The *PC* compiler may have immediately derived this trope from a Wycliffite text. Brady, 'Lollard Sources', p. 399, compares the passage to the *Wycliffite Glossed Gospel, Long Matthew*, in British Library, MS Additional 28026, fol. 29rb: 'Eche day breed is gostly breed þat is Goddis hestes whom hit byhoueþ to þenke and worche eche day'.

<sup>525</sup> See above, p. 119.

<sup>526</sup> *PC* 128/1 (fol. 86r). The 'chartre' is amongst the devotional texts considered by Watson (see above in this chapter, p. 113), which he sees as belonging to a tradition of thought 'largely distinct from that of the ideas that led to the Lollard movement' ('Conceptions of the Word', p. 101; and pp. 106-112 on the 'chartre', compared with texts such as *The Prickyng of Love*).

begins, must constantly think upon ‘þe chartre of heyene blis’.<sup>527</sup> As it shortly reveals, this charter and ‘bulle of [...] euerlasting pardoun’ is none other than ‘oure lord ihesu crist’. This is a text ‘writun with al þe myȝt & vertu of god’;<sup>528</sup> the parchment on which it is inscribed is Christ’s own ‘blessid bodi & swete skyn’.<sup>529</sup>

and was þer neuer skyn of sheep neþir of calf : so soore & hard  
streyned on þe tenture eþir harwe of ony parchemyn maker [...]  
neþir shal hens to domesdai: þat euere writer wroot vpon shepis  
skyn eþir on calues with so hard & hidouse pennes / so bittirli so  
sore & so deepe : as wrote þe cursed iewis [...] þat þei persiden  
hise hondis & feet . with hard nailis / þei opened his herte . with a  
sharp spere [...] þe woundis vpon þat blessid bodi. & swete skin  
of crist: were in stide of lettris.<sup>530</sup>

The tropes invoked by the ‘chartre’ most directly recall the vernacular English ‘Charter of Christ’ Tradition, a group of writings which emerged as early as the mid fourteenth century and which cast Christ’s body as a charter *cum* personal testament by which Christ bequeaths salvation to humanity (Christ’s body in the Mass being ‘the Indenture, or copy left with man’).<sup>531</sup> An equally prominent feature of this genre, echoing ‘late medieval cycle plays or didactic poems’,<sup>532</sup> is the role of Christ himself as these texts’ personal narrator, vividly relating to his audience how the charter was written on his body: ‘Opon my neese was made þe ynk / With Iews spyttyng on me to styng / þe pennes þat þe letter was with wryten / was

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<sup>527</sup> PC 128/2-8 (fol. 86r).

<sup>528</sup> PC 128/8-10, 128/7 (fol. 86r).

<sup>529</sup> PC 128/14-24 (fols. 86r-v).

<sup>530</sup> PC 128/14-129/6 (fols. 86r-v).

<sup>531</sup> *The Middle English Charters of Christ*, ed. by Mary Caroline Spalding (Bryn Mawr, Pa.: Bryn Mawr College, 1914), p. xliii. This dating of the origins of the vernacular Charter of Christ Tradition to the mid fourteenth-century is a long-standing scholarly assumption. See the dating of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawl. Poet 175 (containing the A-text of the Charter), in Falconer Madan et al., *A Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford* (7 vols. in 8. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895-1953; repr. Munich: Kraus-Thomson 1980), III (Madan, 1895), p. 321, Cat. No. 14667. This dating is also cited in *Charters of Christ*, ed. Spalding, pp. xxix-xxx and is followed by Steiner, *Documentary Culture*, pp. 50, 193-194.

<sup>532</sup> Steiner, *Documentary Culture*, p. 194.

of skourges þat I was with smyten / How many lettres þat-on bene / Rede & þou may wyten'.<sup>533</sup>

Nonetheless, while *PC*'s own 'chartre' describes the 'writing' of Christ's body in the same language and with the same affective associations as the Charters of Christ, it is distinct from this tradition in being less a charter *per se* (Christ does not speak in it) than a gloss on the intricate meanings and nature of Christ's body *qua* written text, akin in this sense to *PC*'s commentaries on scriptural texts, such as the Commandments, Creed and Pater Noster.<sup>534</sup> This is a meaning which the 'chartre', as Nicholas Watson has observed, shows to be fraught with difficulties which seemingly 'cry out for exploration'.<sup>535</sup> by emphasizing that it was the Jews who wrote on the body, the 'chartre' 'appears to demonize writing';<sup>536</sup> nonetheless, *PC* then argues that through this writing the very foundations of Christian religion are articulated: 'þe Sentence & vndirstonding writun withinne & withoute þis blessid charter ./ & bodi of ihesu crist : is oure bileue' [i.e. the Apostles' Creed].<sup>537</sup> Moreover, through grasping this 'sentence', the charter holds out the promise of access to a divine meaning 'closid and lokun' in the body's 'coffre': 'al þe tresour of witt . & wisdom of god'.<sup>538</sup>

The 'chartre' thus exposes its preoccupation with the beliefs, underpinning the composition of the Charters, in the divinely-appointed function of images of Christ crucified as 'Scripture' (in the broad sense of that term), whose meanings may be elicited through what Vincent Gillespie has termed a *lectio domini* ('reading of the Lord').<sup>539</sup> Equally

<sup>533</sup> See *Charters of Christ*, ed. Spalding, p. 26, quoting MS Rawl. Poet 175.

<sup>534</sup> Spalding, in *Charters of Christ*, p. 99, comments that the text is 'not a charter, in spite of its name, but a tract which discuss the Charter of Christ, its component parts, etc., and urges man to be mindful of it and to study it'.

<sup>535</sup> Watson, 'Conceptions of the Word', pp. 106-7.

<sup>536</sup> Watson, 'Conceptions of the Word', p. 106.

<sup>537</sup> *PC* 129/14-16 (fol. 87r). As Watson again comments, 'Conceptions of the Word', p. 107, 'the sentence and the understandyng [...] turns out to be the creed'.

<sup>538</sup> *PC* 129/17-18 (fol. 87r).

<sup>539</sup> See Ch. 1, pp. 10-11, 25-29 on the idea of Christ crucified as book in medieval culture and on that of *lectio domini*.

important to *PC*'s treatment, however, are the distinctive ways in which Wyclif and those influenced by him had developed these ideas; the tropes of the Book 'writuyn withinne & withoute', derived from Ez. 2.10, and of the 'sentence' of Scripture, are ones that radical evangelical authors had explicitly privileged to written Scripture, while denying to depictions of Christ on the cross.<sup>540</sup> The 'chartre's' intention to respond particularly to such claims becomes clear as it shifts to calling Christ 'Scripture' itself:

þis chartre mai no fier brenne . neþir watir drenche . neþir þeef  
 robbe : neþir ony creature distrie / ffor þis scripture þe fadir of  
 heuene . haþ halowid eþir maad stidfast: & sente it in to þe world  
 / þe which scripture mai not be vndo: as þe gospel witnessiþ / þis  
 scripture is oure lord ihesu crist : chartre & bulle of our eritage of  
 heuene.<sup>541</sup>

More than the biblically-rooted tropes themselves, it is their assembly which strongly recalls Wyclif's core claims for Scripture, as expressed in writings such as *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*. The parallels range from the identification of Scripture itself with Christ, and the paraphrase of Wyclif's principal biblical authority, Jn. 10.35 ('þe which scripture mai not be vndo: as þe gospel witnessiþ / þis scripture is oure lord ihesu crist'), to its emphasis upon this Scripture as a fundamentally transcendent and indestructible entity.<sup>542</sup> Whether the author had *De Veritate* directly in mind, Wyclif's understanding of Christ as a transcendent Scripture, along with the latter's crucial distinction from the mere words written down in

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<sup>540</sup> See von Nolcken, 'Wycliffite Sermons in Latin', p. 241 on the privileging of Scripture over the image by an unknown evangelical author, quoting Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud misc. 200, fol. 102v: 'Scriptura enim est sacra, & liber scriptus intus & foris, intus per sensus spirituales & foris per sensum litteralem, & non est in potestate pictoris pingere tot articulos sicut possumus scribere, nec pictura est eiusdem auctoritatis cum Scriptura Sacra' [For Scripture is holy, and the Book written inwardly and outwardly; inwardly through the spiritual senses and outwardly through the literal sense, and it is not in the power of the painter to paint so great a number of articles as we can write, nor is the picture of the same authority as Holy Scripture]. On Wyclif's own use of this trope from Ezechiel, see Wyclif, *LS* II, XLI, 297.13-16: 'Fundamentum autem ad stabiliendum fidem orthodoxam [...] nemo potest ponere nisi scripturam evangelicam que est dominus noster Jesus Christus. Ipse enim est liber scriptus intus et foris quem debemus studere, legere et omnino in moribus imitari' [One may not take any other foundation for establishing orthodox belief than the Gospel, which is our lord Jesus Christ. He himself is the Book written inwardly and outwardly whom we must study, read, and above all imitate in our behaviour].

<sup>541</sup> *PC* 13/10-16 (fol. 88r).

<sup>542</sup> See Ch. 2, pp. 37, 47.

physical manuscripts, is one to which Wyclif's own followers had given currency in vernacular literature, through their attempts to articulate these ideas to a lay audience.<sup>543</sup>

The parsing of these tropes by the 'chartre' appears to seal, at first reading, a triumphant repudiation of the Wycliffite identification of written Scripture with Christ, as a form of idolatry. As the text emphasizes, 'þis scripture' – Jesus Christ made flesh and blood, rather than any text – is the one that came down from heaven; likewise, it is the divine message encoded in Jesus Christ's birth, suffering and resurrection which determines what is 'our belieue' [our creed]; God's Commandments are the 'laces' which, by hanging from the Charter, literally depend upon it.<sup>544</sup> The anti-Wycliffite context of its argument is also suggested by the 'chartre's' evocation of the Jews as the authors of the text written on a parchment which was 'neþir of sheep neþir of calf'.<sup>545</sup> As the later anti-Wycliffite author Thomas Netter (the subject of the next chapter) glosses this trope, the Jews wrongly 'worshipped the obscure shadows of sheep and of calf [*umbras ovis & vituli*]', because they had yet to recognize him in the flesh.<sup>546</sup> Thus the Wycliffites are like the Old Testament Jews, in thrall to the Law, confusing Christ with signs which were only prophecies of Him. As such, the 'chartre' aims to turn back upon Wycliffism its own most bitter complaints

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<sup>543</sup> See, for example, 'XII. [On the Sufficiency of Holy Scripture]', in *SEWW*, III, pp. 186-187 (pp. 186-187): 'On the first manere Crist him silf is clepid in the gospel holy wryt, whanne he seiþ þat þe writunge may noȝt be fordon þat þe Fadir haþ halwid and sent into the world [...] On þridde maner holy wryt is clepid bookis þat ben writen and maad of enk and parchemyn [...] ȝif holy wryt on the þridde manere be brent or caste in the see, holy writ on the secunde manere may noȝt faile, as Crist seiþ'. Note that the tripartite 'Scripture' which the text describes most clearly derives from Wyclif's *Trialogus*; see Ch. 2 of this thesis, p. 37, fns. 113-114.

<sup>544</sup> *PC* 130/5-8: 'Þe laces of þis heuenli charter ; is þe biheest of god / and þat god mai not lie ; for he is souerein truþe / þe ffirst lace is his biheeste'. On the relation between 'hanging' and 'dependence', see Steiner, *Documentary Culture*, p. 163, discussing the evocation of the body as seal in *Piers Plowman*: 'The phrase, "*in hijs duobus mandatis tota lex pendet et prophet[e]*" [Mt. 20.40] puns on the verb "pendere", meaning both literally "to hang" and figuratively "to depend" [...] the Old Law depends upon [...] the New Law [...] Christ's body *hanging* from the cross authenticates the dictates of Moses's writ'. See again Watson, 'Conceptions of the Word', p. 107 (discussed above, p. 145, fn. 537), on the 'chartre's' association of the *sensus* of Christ's body with the Creed. Compare this with the apparent warning of the Wycliffite tract *De oblatione iugis sacrificii* to its audience against idolizing Scripture, discussed in Ch. 3, p. 109.

<sup>545</sup> *PC* 128/11-12 (fol. 86r).

<sup>546</sup> Netter, *DFC* III.937D-E: 'Colebant ergo Judaei coecas umbras ovis & vituli, panis propositionis, & cinerum: quae omnia longe sunt a corporis expresso characterē' [The Jews therefore worshipped the blind shadows of sheep and of calf, of the ceremonial bread, and of ashes: all which things are far off from the express character of the body]. See also Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 202.

against late-medieval religion, centred upon the eucharistic cult, as an idolatrous worship of signs.

At the same time, the argument of the ‘chartre’ usefully obscures the central irony of its assertion that ‘þis scripture is oure lord ihesu crist’.<sup>547</sup> The entire text assumes, as if unconsciously, that the image of Christ’s crucified body, when read as ‘Scripture’ can perform substantially the function that Wycliffites attributed to biblical words: to its ‘readers’, it offers a seamless, unacknowledged transport to the Scripture, which is Christ, and to the *sensus* hidden within. This is arguably the major point of the ‘chartre’: as the discussion of the Jews suggests, it is demonstrating to its audience that in the age of grace, God had appointed the ‘Scripture’ of the image to perform this sacramental function, rather than Scripture as defined by Wycliffites.<sup>548</sup> Nonetheless, there is an even greater irony to this argument. While the ‘chartre’ itself is most clearly referring to Christ’s physical depiction on the rood (‘þe shap of oure lord ihesu; hanginge for oure synne on þe cros’), we have seen that the tradition of fourteenth-century Passion meditations upon which it draws (from the meditation considered at the start of the chapter to the Charters of Christ themselves), seek to make Christ present through the imagery of their own texts, and thus conceive of Christ’s presence in ‘Scripture’ in a fashion even closer to that of Wycliffism. As Emily Steiner has commented, for example, ‘it is the documentary transportation of the sacred past’, through the vividness of Christ’s personal narration in writings of the Charter tradition, which ‘makes the charter at once foundational and accessible’.<sup>549</sup>

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<sup>547</sup> *PC* 130/24-25.

<sup>548</sup> *PC*’s argument builds upon the ancient belief that the image was divinely appointed as a vessel for Christ’s presence and message, following his Incarnation, as discussed in Ch. 1, p. 10. Wyclif’s fifteenth-century opponent, Thomas Netter, in an expanded version of the same argument, will also liken Wycliffites to the Jews, inferring that both venerate written Scripture instead of images because they have yet to recognize the Incarnation of Christ, and the divinely-appointed visual symbols associated with this event (see Ch. 5, pp. 167, 186). These medieval associations of writing with the age of the Law, and the image with that of Christ, suggests part of the answer to how, as Watson wonders, the ‘chartre’ can be ‘described, more than a century before Luther’s radical theorizing of law and gospel, as written by Jews’ (Watson, ‘Conceptions of the Word’, p. 107).

<sup>549</sup> Steiner, *Documentary Culture*, p. 227.

The *PC* compiler's claim of this same performative power for the texts of his miscellany is why, I will suggest, he chose to include the 'chartre' at a pivotal point in its *ordo*. The 'chartre' therefore serves to reveal to *PC*'s readers that its component texts are themselves 'Scriptures' whose words, just as Wycliffites had asserted for Scripture, permit their readers (or listeners) progressive stages of participation in Christ.<sup>550</sup> *PC*'s major point of difference with Wycliffism, therefore, does not lie in a dispute about the power of scriptural words, or about eucharistic doctrine, but rather concerns the breadth and relative status of the 'Scriptures' that constitute Christ's presence. Where Wycliffism confines this presence to the words taken directly from the Bible, *PC* suggests to its readers that such a presence is incomplete without the meditations upon Christ (constituting 'Scripture' in its broadest medieval sense) which form its highest rungs; indeed, as its *ordo* suggests, that scriptural instruction is a mere preparation to the communion that substantially rests in these 'Scriptures'. Thereby, the inclusion of the 'chartre' underscores the ultimate appeal of *PC* to the audiences targeted by Wycliffism: that its writings are more capable of making present the 'whole Christ' to them than the Scripture offered by Wycliffism. This claim, however, not merely slips profoundly into Wycliffism's own frames of reference, but invites (and even assumes) in its readers exactly the same awareness about the power of figurative language (spoken or heard), which, we argued in the previous chapter, underpinned Wycliffites' rejection of the Mass.

#### **4.4. Late-Medieval English as Eucharist?**

The existence of such a discourse between Wycliffite, heterodox and orthodox authors about 'Scripture', across a range of late-medieval religious writings, suggests a broad issue which I will end this chapter: that Wycliffism should be considered less as a cause than a sign of much broader tensions which the diffusion of this 'Scripture', through the words of

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<sup>550</sup> On the Augustinian idea of scriptural letters as *sacramenta*, see Ch. 1, pp. 4-7.

religious writings, was fomenting in the English religion of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. While to comprehensively chart this claim falls outside the scope of this thesis, I believe that it is already evident, and awaiting further exploration, in the vivid and psychologically realistic depictions of the human, suffering Christ which were so central not merely to the Charter tradition but the period's drama, devotions and sermons.<sup>551</sup>

In the Introduction, we considered evidence that representations of Christ, in physical images and in words, offered means of communion with Christ that not only competed with the functions privileged to the consecrated bread and wine in medieval culture, but largely constituted those functions from the thirteenth century onwards: as Gacy Macy has contended, such a function was effectively hidden by the laity's acquiescence in the belief, promulgated by the Church, that the presence in the consecrated bread and wine was unique.<sup>552</sup> However, were the proliferating uses of meditations upon Christ in words (rather than physical images) undermining this 'settlement' by clearly divorcing such acts of communion from the occasion of the Mass, and thus making that function evident? I believe that its dangers to the Mass chiefly spurred the fifteenth-century revisions to the 'Charters' that have been identified by Steiner. As she comments, not least, their reviser 'judged it safer to compare the Eucharist to the original charter than to an indentured copy'; the idea of the Eucharist as a 'copy' might lead one to question whether Christ's body was truly present within it.<sup>553</sup> But more important, I believe, is Steiner's observation that whereas in the fourteenth-century Charters, 'Christ's charter-voice seems to be perpetually present', in the revisions he is made to issue 'his charter at a historical moment on the cross'; and that this reflects concerns that the laity might understand such texts to make Christ present.<sup>554</sup>

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<sup>551</sup> On the subject of realism in medieval literature, for example, see Ch. 1, p. 24, fn. 86 on the ideas of G.R. Owst.

<sup>552</sup> Macy's theory is discussed in Ch. 1, p. 15.

<sup>553</sup> Steiner, *Documentary Culture*, p. 226.

<sup>554</sup> Spalding, *Charters of Christ*, p. xxxv dates the C-text to the early fifteenth century. See Steiner, *Documentary Culture*, p. 227, where she also comments: 'the charter, in other words, is not a timeless

However, we have seen that it is not, as Steiner argues, a mere ‘fiction’ of ‘authorial presence’, of uncertain appeal, that underpins the Charters’ challenge to the mediatory role of the Church,<sup>555</sup> but rather that they fostered awareness of the extent to which such representations could and did perform the functions privileged to the consecrated bread and wine. Indeed, the ‘chartre of hevene’ (with its focus upon the rood as *sacramentum* rather than literary depictions of Christ), and to a lesser degree *PC* (with its aim to limit the reading of books) may be read as attempts to rein in the sacramental claims that such fourteenth-century devotional writings were making for themselves.

Nonetheless, the greatest challenge that the spreading uses of these devotions posed to the Mass may have dwelt in the sheer breadth of their potential audience.<sup>556</sup> Central to the ambitions of Wyclif and Wycliffism, we have seen, was the theoretical attainment of the entire laity as an audience for Scripture. Belief in the possibility of this social reach, at the least, may be seen in Wyclif’s argument that Christ in the scriptural word (above all preached) was better than the bread and wine of the Mass since it simultaneously could reach many, and the ‘openness’ which the Prologue to the Wycliffite Bible ascribes to vernacular English.<sup>557</sup> Nonetheless, it was the diffusion of orthodox devotional writings that was starting to achieve what Wycliffism envisioned but never accomplished: a ‘textual community’ of such extent and self-conscious identity as to viably make reception of

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communiqué from Christ to a modern-day audience. It merely reports Christ’s speech. The audience should not think to draw directly upon an original document [...] the *Long Charter* revisers [...] attempted to mediate the effects of the charter by restoring temporal and textual boundaries’.

<sup>555</sup> Steiner, *Documentary Culture*, pp. 226-227, contends that the Charters’ ‘fiction of authorial presence [...] convinced some more “mainstream” readers that Christ’s charter was a talisman imbued with divine presence [...] eliminating need for human intermediaries or textual glosses’.

<sup>556</sup> Watson, ‘Censorship and Cultural Change’, p. 838, argues that for the first time in the later fourteenth century, vernacular authors were ‘presenting an ever wider array of theological concerns to an ever larger and less clearly defined group of readers’.

<sup>557</sup> Wyclif, *De Veritate* II, 156/3-7, privileges the preached word over the Mass, because the word is heard by the many at the same time. This is discussed in Ch. 2 of this chapter, p. 46. ‘Old Testament Prologue’, in *Wycliffite Bible*, ed. Forshall and Madden, I, p. 58: ‘thei that kunne wel the sentence of Holi Writ and English togidere and wolen trauaile, with Goddis grace, therabout, moun make the Bible as trewe and as opin, 3ea, and opinliere in English than it is in Latyn’.

‘Scripture’, rather than the bread and wine, the ‘sacrament of unity’.<sup>558</sup> The possibility of such a textual community is an essential assumption of writings such as the *Revelations* of Julian of Norwich, who claims that the mysterious meaning of her ‘lectio’ of Christ crucified is theoretically open to all her ‘evencristen’ (fellow Christians).<sup>559</sup>

This in turn raises further questions: was the very substitution of Scripture for the Mass as evidenced in Wycliffite culture illustrative of one taking place much more broadly, among increasingly large sections of the English laity, through the diffusion of this ‘Scripture’; and was Wycliffism’s greatest threat to English religion to raise yet further the consciousness of that function and of its implications? Precisely such an awareness is suggested by the comprehensiveness of the establishment restrictions placed upon vernacular religious literacy in the early fifteenth, as manifested in the legislation of Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>560</sup> However, the medieval religious traditions that we have just described, from the pithy preaching of Thomas Brinton to devotion to images of Christ crucified, do not end with the fourteenth century. Nor was this clearly because, as some scholars have argued, such forms ceased to have the sacramental function of their fourteenth-century ancestors.<sup>561</sup> In the next chapter, we shall see that the writings of one of Wyclif’s sternest opponents, Thomas Netter, suggest the very opposite.

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<sup>558</sup> On Brian Stock’s theory of the medieval ‘textual community’, see Ch. 1 of this thesis, p. 9.

<sup>559</sup> See Julian of Norwich, ‘A Book of Showings. The Short Text edited from MS BM Additional 37790’, in *A Book of Showings To The anchoress Julian of Norwich*, ed. by Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, 2 vols. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978), I, pp. 199-278 (Ch. VI, pp. 219, ll.3-6): ‘And therefore I praye 3owe alle for goddys sake [...] that 3e leve the behaldynge of the wreichid wor(m)e / synfulle creature, that it was schewyd vnto, and that 3e myghtlye, wyselye, lovandlye and mekelye be halde god, that of his curtais love and of his endles goodnes walde schewe generalye this visyonn in comforth of vs alle’. On Julian’s writing as a ‘variant of *lectio domini*’, see Gillespie, ‘Lukyng in Haly Bokes’, p. 10, and Ch. 1 of this thesis, p. 11.

<sup>560</sup> For the views of Nicholas Watson on this subject, see Ch. 5, p. 199 and fns. 725, 726.

<sup>561</sup> Such a loss of function is, again, the message of Watson’s writings on the development of ‘vernacular theology’ in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. See Ch. 5, p. 199, fn. 726.

## **5. Light after Shadows in Thomas Netter's *Doctrinale antiquitatum fidei catholicae ecclesiae***

‘For Crist and þis antecrist, whom seint Austen (*De civitate li. 20*) callip a renegat, ben so contarious þat it is vnpossible any man to close hem togedre, for þei stonden in contradictorie cornys of þe figure’ – anonymous Wycliffite author, *De oblatione iugis sacrificii*<sup>562</sup>

This chapter exposes the ongoing centrality of ‘Scripture’ to Christ’s eucharistic presence in fifteenth-century English religion, as revealed in the substantial agreement about its function between John Wyclif and the Carmelite Thomas Netter. By the terms of Netter’s own argument, at least, his *Doctrinale antiquitatum fidei ecclesiae catholicae* should be the last place to look for such agreement. In its dedication to Pope Martin V (1417-31), Netter admits to being temporarily dazzled as a youth by the heretic’s philosophy:

[...] in my early years [...] I was astounded beyond measure by his bold claims, and by the convincing quotations from authority, together with his passionate reasoning [...] At length, after some time, I transferred my attention to the sacred books and before long, I discovered that he was publicly falsifying the scriptures, twisting the scriptures into meanings that were contrary to all the holy commentators.<sup>563</sup>

His disenchantment, however, was to be lasting. There is evidence of Netter’s role in the Oxford committee set up in 1409 to compile a list of condemned assertions culled from Wyclif’s writings, while he may have been actively involved in prosecuting Wycliffite

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<sup>562</sup> The quotation is from the early fifteenth-century *The Tract De oblatione iugis sacrificii*, in *Works of a Lollard Preacher*, ed. Hudson, p. 167. The tract is discussed in Ch. 3 of this thesis, pp. 106-111.

<sup>563</sup> The translation of this passage is that of Richard Copley, ‘Thomas Netter of Walden: A Biography’, in *Thomas Netter of Walden*, pp. 23-111 (p. 29). The original is in Thomas Netter, *Doctrinale antiquitatum fidei ecclesiae catholicae*, 3 vols, ed. by B. Blanciotti (Venice: 1757-9), Vol. I, col. 1: ‘postquam in juvenilibus annis, localibus ejus ascultantes aures indulsi, stupebam ultra modum assertiones ejus praegrandes, & autoritatum loca taxata, cum vehementiis rationum [...] Tandem post tempora ad sacros libros me transtuli: & non diu, quin publicum eum Scripturarum invenirem falsarium, extorquere Scripturas ad sensus per omnes sacros Expositores adversum’. This edition of the *Doctrinale* is referred to in footnote references as *DFC*. All future references are to the volume, page or column number and letter in the Blanciotti edition. On the dates of Martin’s pontificate, see Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New Haven, Conn. / London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 467.

dissenters from as early as 1410.<sup>564</sup> His *Doctrinale*, begun around 1421 when he was Prior Provincial of the Carmelites in England, set out to wreak a similar intellectual destruction upon what, in Netter's view, had taken on a European dimension in the form of the Hussite movement.<sup>565</sup> Jeremy Catto describes it as 'a bibliographical exercise unparalleled anywhere in its time'; it is an enormous assimilation of *fontes* both Wycliffite, anti-Wycliffite and crucially from the corpus of the early Fathers upon which Wyclif himself drew, showing Netter to have been a 'spectacular collector of patristic texts'.<sup>566</sup> By his death in 1430 the *Doctrinale* remained a still-incomplete undertaking of six books, attempting to counter the entire range of Wyclif's thought, and re-affirm the life of the Church in all areas that he had threatened.<sup>567</sup>

The brunt of Netter's attack is furthermore aimed against Wyclif's central contention, one that had established his status as a heresiarch in his own lifetime: that the priest's words of consecration in the Mass – *hoc est corpus meum* – made Christ's body present in the bread and wine truly and really [*vere et realiter*], yet symbolically, leaving the body in heaven and the bread and wine physically unchanged.<sup>568</sup> Netter's treatment of the Eucharist in his book on the sacraments of the Church, which occupies the *Doctrinale's* central volume, is dedicated to re-affirming Christ's fleshly eucharistic presence, through transubstantiation, using the same ancient terms and authorities which he accuses Wyclif of corrupting. Before the consecration, the bread and wine are the *sacramentum tantum*

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<sup>564</sup> On Netter's involvement in the persecution of Wycliffites and the Oxford committee, see Hudson, *PR*, pp. 50-51 and also Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 174-175. On the 237 condemned propositions drawn from Wyclif's writings which were presented to Convocation in Oxford in 1411, see also below, p. 163, fn. 607.

<sup>565</sup> On the dating of the *Doctrinale*, see 'Chronology of Thomas Netter, O.Carm. and his *Doctrinale*', in *Thomas Netter of Walden*, pp. 387-389 (p. 388). Reflecting Netter's understanding of the influence of Wyclif on Hussitism, he calls the latter the 'Wycliffites of Prague' [*DFC* II.418A: 'CAPUT LXXXVI. De instantia Wiclevistarum Pragensem']; for more on Netter's understanding of this relationship, see Anne Hudson, 'Thomas Netter's *Doctrinale* and the Lollards', in *Thomas Netter of Walden*, pp. 179-197 (pp. 191-192).

<sup>566</sup> J.I. Catto, 'Conclusion: Scholars and Studies in Renaissance Oxford', in *The History of the University of Oxford: Volume II, Late Medieval Oxford*, ed. by J.I. Catto and Ralph Evans (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 769-783 (p. 771).

<sup>567</sup> See Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 174-175 for a summary of the contents of the *Doctrinale*.

<sup>568</sup> See Ch. 2 of this thesis, pp. 54-57.

(‘merely a sacrament’), which is not to say that they lack symbolic meaning; the Wycliffites ignore the fact that the bread signifies ‘the bread of Christ’s flesh’.<sup>569</sup> Yet after consecration only the accidents remain, concealing the body’s substance. The latter is so physically present that it is ‘eaten corporeally in the nature of meat’ and can sustain the devout without any other sustenance, as the tale of the Norfolk maid Joanna Methles (‘without food’) attests.<sup>570</sup> This is both *res* (‘thing’) and itself a *sacramentum* (or ‘sign of a sacred reality’), signifying in turn ‘the union of all believers under Christ the head’, in the Church.<sup>571</sup>

Wyclif and Netter could therefore at least agree as to the awesome power contained in Christ’s words of consecration. For both, they witnessed to God as the Supreme Craftsman, who had chosen to work through the ‘abject and feeble’ instruments of human language.<sup>572</sup> Yet while Netter confesses to a degree of youthful speculation on quite how these words transformed the bread and wine, for him the obvious analogies, by his own account, had never been the figurative language of Scripture but those pronouncements whereby God had miraculously performed other physical transformations: the healing of the lame and blind, when Christ said ‘heal’, the formation of Adam, when God said, ‘let us make a man’ and the

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<sup>569</sup> *DFC* II.236E: ‘retinens semper in ore suo saporem panis materialis, quem audivit Christum in manibus accepisse; sed ad panem carnis suae [...] nunquam attendens’ [always retaining in his mouth the taste of ordinary bread, which he heard Christ to have taken in his hands [...] but never attending to the bread of his flesh]; *DFC* II.144D: ‘Signum autem ejus extrinsecum, scilicet, visibilis forma panis & vini, non est sacramentum, nisi per analogiam ad istud’ [The outward sign [of the body and blood], that is the visible form of bread and wine, is not the sacrament, except by analogy to it]. See I.C. Levy, ‘Thomas Netter on the Eucharist’, in *Thomas Netter of Walden*, pp. 273-314 (pp. 285-287) on Netter’s understanding of the meanings of the bread, ‘before and after consecration’, and also Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 177, 201.

<sup>570</sup> *DFC* II.376D-E: ‘In parte namque aquilonari Angliae, dicta *Norfolchia* [...] jam tarde superstes erat devota quaedam in Christo puella, dicta vulgariter *Joanne Methles*, idest, *sine cibo*, quia numquam cibum gustasse vel potum per tempus annorum quindecim experta est: sed solo sacramento dominici corporis diebus dominicis cum devotissime mentis gaudio vescebatur’ [In the northern part of Norfolk [...] there was living even recently a certain maid who was devoted to Christ, commonly called *Joanna Methles*, that is, ‘without food’ [M.E. *meteles*], since it was proven that she had never tasted food or drink for fifteen years, but fed only on the sacrament of the Lord’s body on Sundays]. See also Levy, ‘Netter on the Eucharist’, p. 294.

<sup>571</sup> Levy, ‘Netter on the Eucharist’, pp. 274, 278-279, discussing Netter’s use of scholastic terminology such as *sacramentum tantum* and *res et sacramentum*. See also Ch. 1 of this thesis, p. 5, on this terminology and p. 4, fn. 11 on St. Augustine’s definition of *sacramentum*.

<sup>572</sup> Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, IV, 89/7-11: ‘et creditur quod placet verbo Dei operari per verba vocalia [...] Summus enim artifex operatur per valde abiecta et debilia instrumenta’.

creation of the Universe itself when He said, ‘let this be’.<sup>573</sup> As Netter quotes St. Ambrose’s use of Ps. 33.9 to illustrate the eucharistic transformation: ‘He spoke and they were made: he commanded and they were created’.<sup>574</sup>

Thus, the positions of Netter and Wyclif on the words of institution appear to signal the same intractable, profound differences in their respective understandings of language, rooted in different metaphysical conceptions, which we have seen suggested in the debates between Wyclif and earlier opponents; perhaps unsurprisingly, these also often characterize scholarly portrayals of the divides between Wycliffites and their orthodox opponents in the early fifteenth century.<sup>575</sup> This same impression is reinforced throughout the *Doctrinale*. If Wyclif had briefly seduced Netter through his astounding metaphysics, Netter devoted the first book, ‘on Christ, Head of the Church, in his disparate natures’, to unpicking the metaphysical errors which he saw underpinning the gamut of Wyclif’s ideas, from the eucharistic presence through to his equation of Christ’s humanity with his soul, rather than its union with the body.<sup>576</sup> In line with earlier opponents such as his fellow Carmelite John Kenningham, Netter ascribes these errors to the baneful influence of the ideas of pagan philosophers such as Anaxagoras and Plotinus, ideas which had subsequently infected Wyclif’s understanding of Scripture itself.<sup>577</sup>

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<sup>573</sup> *DFC* II.194B-C: ‘sicut leprosum Christus efficienter curavit in verbo, dicens, *mundare*: & omnia hujus mundi opera Deus uno verbo communi & imperativo creavit, dicens: *Fiat hoc* : &, *faciamus hominem*’ [just as Christ effectually cured the leper in a word, saying, *heal*; and God created all the works of the world with a general and imperative word, saying: *Let this be*, & *let us make a man*].

<sup>574</sup> *DFC* II.299A: ‘AMBROSIUS “ [...] *Ipse dixit, & facta sunt: ipse mandavit, & creata sunt* [...]’”. See also Ch. 4 of this thesis, p. 127, fn. 459, on another late-medieval use Ps. 32.9 in respect to the Eucharist.

<sup>575</sup> See below, p. 199, for example, on the stance of fifteenth-century orthodoxy portrayed in the work of figures such as David Aers, Nicholas Watson and Eamon Duffy.

<sup>576</sup> *DFC* I.iii: ‘LIBER PRIMUS [...] de Capite Ecclesiae Jesu Christo in Naturis suis disparibus’. *DFC* I.iv: ‘Cap. 39. Quod Christus in humanitate sua continet tantum duas naturas, corporis scilicet & animae; nec est alterum eorum, nisi per synecdochen’ [That Christ in his humanity contains only two natures, physical and spiritual: nor is he one or the other of them, unless by the figure of synecdoche (where one term is used to denote the whole)].

<sup>577</sup> See Levy, ‘Netter on the Eucharist’, p. 274. *DFC* I.iii, ‘Quod Wicleffus, inficiens logicam Scripturae Sacrae, concedit quamlibet creaturam, vel quidlibet, esse Deum’ [That Wyclif, infecting the logic of Holy Scripture, grants that any created thing, howsoever and whatsoever, is God].

## The Power of Language

Nonetheless, such appearances are, as with earlier rebuttals of Wyclif, misleading: we shall see that the *Doctrinale* reveals, as Kantik Ghosh has shown, the great extent to which Netter shares ‘in the hermeneutic world of his opponent’.<sup>578</sup> As the *Doctrinale*’s opening dedication itself stated, Netter’s disillusionment with Wyclif began not with metaphysics but with the reading of Scripture and its patristic exegesis [*sacros libros*]. The detail of Netter’s argument rests upon claiming access, as with Wyclif, to a meaning innate to the words of these *libri* and aligned with the intention of their authors [*intentio auctoris*], albeit one which Wyclif had outraged; this indeed constitutes Netter’s most basic grounds for refuting Wyclif’s argument that Christ’s own words at the Last Supper [*hoc est enim corpus meum*] brought about a figurative yet real presence.<sup>579</sup>

with the faithful, he [Wyclif] says that this venerable sacrament is the body of Christ; indeed, so that he may deceive the more lavishly, he adds *really*, he adds *truly*. But approach the heart of the matter, and when all but finished he will say: *in so far as in figure*, in case it may be asked in what way *really*, if only *figuratively*: or if *virtually*, in what way *truly*?<sup>580</sup>

Wyclif’s very need to qualify ‘really’ and ‘truly’ with ‘figuratively’ therefore betrays the problem with his argument. It ignores how *hoc est corpus meum*, and the body of terminology hanging upon it, already make sense when taken literally and thus signal physical presence, in line with principles laid down by St. Augustine himself.<sup>581</sup> This appeal to ordinary meaning thereby supports Netter’s argument that Wyclif, by adding to the words

<sup>578</sup> Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 174.

<sup>579</sup> Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 177, 201-203.

<sup>580</sup> *DFC* II.508C: ‘Cum fidelibus dicit, hoc venerabile sacramentum esse corpus Christi; immo, ut abundantius fallat, addit *realiter*, addit *vere* : sed tange montem, & fumigans dicit *tantumlibet in figura*. Quod si quaeratur quomodo *realiter*, si solum *figuraliter*; vel *si virtualiter*, quomodo *vere*?’.

<sup>581</sup> *DFC* II.506B-C: ‘in lib. III. *de doctrina christiana*. “Servabitur (inquiens) in locutionibus figurativis regula hujusmodi [...] Si autem hoc jam proprie sonat, nulla putetur figurativa locutio” [...] Miror igitur, quod ista scripsit, & nec vidit, quod Augustinus ibi dicit’ [‘A rule of this kind (he says) is to be observed with figurative expressions [...] if it already sounds correct, no figurative speech should be supposed’ [...] I am therefore amazed that he [Wyclif] wrote this [in *De blasphemia*] and yet did not see what Augustine says there], quoting Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* III, 15.23.

of Christ, has ‘taken away the substance’ of the Eucharist (Christ’s physical body), in the same way as adding ‘painted’ to ‘man’ reduces the latter from physical reality to figure.<sup>582</sup> The only way that he can carry off this confounding of the real and figurative with the laity is slowly to introduce his terms and ‘gradually [to] cover his heresy’.<sup>583</sup>

This approach, moreover, underpins the pragmatic goal of the *Doctrinale*’s argument: to show that Wyclif’s interpretation of the words of institution runs contrary to ‘all the modes of speech of the Fathers’ [*omnes Patrum loquendi modos*], thus isolating Wyclif from his patristic authorities.<sup>584</sup> St. Ambrose ‘with one most happy word aroused Wyclif’s choler’ by stating that, ‘it is not bread, which enters the stomach’.<sup>585</sup> Augustine himself, Wyclif’s principal authority, wrote: ‘we also are fed by the cross of the Lord, since we eat the body itself’; ‘He does not say *we eat the figure of the body*’, Netter comments, ‘but *the body itself*’.<sup>586</sup> According to Netter, Augustine had also stated that the body ‘is created’ [*creatur corpus Christi*] by the priest’s blessing in the Mass.<sup>587</sup> Thus Wyclif’s violation of a determinate authorial meaning is why he, rather than his opponents, is the ‘glosser’, as

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<sup>582</sup> *DFC* II.237E: ‘Addis vocabulum, & subtrahis essentiam; sicut dicens *homo*, dicis essentiam : addens autem *pictus* ad hominem, subtraxisti essentiam, diminuisti naturam’ [You add a designation, and take away the substance; just as in saying *man*, you declare his substance, but by adding *painted* to a man, you have taken away his substance, diminished his nature]. See also *DFC* II.144E.

<sup>583</sup> *DFC* II.508C: ‘in forma loquendi indistincte pronuntiat figurata cum propriis, ut cautius decipiat simplices: fidelem simulans, & caute tegens haeticum’ [in his manner of speech he indistinctly utters figured things along with real things, that he may the more carefully deceive the simple: pretending to be faithful, and carefully covering his heresy].

<sup>584</sup> *DFC* II.509E ‘Criminor ergo Wicleffum, quod contra omnes Patrum loquendi modos, ausus est dicere figuram veram rem, & figuralem modum planissime veritatem’ [I therefore accuse Wyclif, who contrary to all the modes of speech of the Fathers, has dared to call the figure the true thing, and the figurative mode most plainly the truth].

<sup>585</sup> *DFC* II.485E: ‘At certe Ambrosius Sanctus Pater uno felicissimo verbo suo suscitavit choleram Wicleffi, cum diceret in libro *de Sacramentis* de sancta Eucharistia, quod *non sit panis, qui in ventrem vadit*’.

<sup>586</sup> *DFC* II.355E: ‘“Cibus (inquit) talibus pascebantur Judaei, quando crucifixerunt Dominum : quia pascebantur tamquam de poena Domini. Nam & nos de cruce Domini pascimur, quia corpus ipsius manducamus.” Haec ille. Non dicit *corporis figuram manducamus*, sed *corpus ipsius*’.

<sup>587</sup> *DFC* II.191E-192A: ‘AUGUSTINUS. [...] In his verbis *creatur corpus Christi*. Deinde in verbis Christi Domini dicentis: *accipite, & bibite ex eo omnes &c*, usque *ad facietis*, sanguis Christi Dei nostri efficitur.’” The editors (*DFC* II.192A sidenote) attribute this passage to the theologian Paschasius Radbertus.

emphasized in the *Doctrinale* manuscripts' use of rubrication of its authorities' *ipsissima verba* (recalling writings such as the *English Wycliffite Sermons*).<sup>588</sup>

At the same time, Netter's arguments are more than opportunistic appropriations of Wyclif's sources and hermeneutic principles: they also suggest his investment in the same prevalent late-medieval speculations about the force of signifying language [*vis sermonis*] which ground Wyclif's own most controversial ideas.<sup>589</sup> As we have just seen, for Netter this not least encompasses the ability of language to convey the intention of its author. This assumption underpins his constant, almost automatic recourse to the *modi loquendi* ('modes of speaking') of scriptural and patristic writings, that is, to the styles or registers used by their authors to convey their intended meaning.<sup>590</sup> Yet, while Netter's argument is pragmatically occupied with the discernment of the authorial intent of the Church Fathers, in the case of Scripture he will also gesture (like Wyclif or Thomas Aquinas) to the equation of a text's meaning with the transcendent sense ultimately intended by its divine *auctor*.<sup>591</sup> The 'wretched Wyclif' and 'wretched Wycliffites [...] do not fight for the sentence of divine Scripture [*sententia divinae Scripturae*]', he complains, 'but for their own, which they wish that of Holy Scripture to be.'<sup>592</sup> Moreover, for Netter the definition of *vis sermonis* clearly extends beyond the ability of words to merely transmit meaning. Echoing Wyclif and a range of late-medieval thinkers, Netter says that preached words possess a 'power [*vis*] of

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<sup>588</sup> See Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 179-180 on Wyclif as corrupt 'glosser', and p. 173 on *Doctrinale* manuscripts' distinction of Netter's words from those of his authorities, and his willingness to fight 'the enemy on its own ground'; see Ch. 3, p. 86, on Hudson's discussion of rubrication in *EWS*. *DFC* II.237B: 'purgabimus Evangelium a sordibus, quas injecit?' [Shall we purge the Gospel of the filth, which he hurls into it?].

<sup>589</sup> On *vis sermonis*, see Ch. 1, p. 24 and in general Ch. 4 on the prevalence of Wyclif's ideas about the sacramental power of Scripture in late fourteenth-century religious literary culture.

<sup>590</sup> On the importance of *modi loquendi* to later medieval scriptural exegesis and its tensions with the four-fold *sensus* into which scriptural meaning was traditionally categorized, see, in general, Alastair Minnis, 'Quadruplex sensus, multiplex modus: Scriptural Sense and Mode in Medieval Scholastic Exegesis', in *Interpretation and Allegory: Antiquity to the Modern Period (Proceedings of the 1995 Jerusalem conference on Philosophical Commentary)*, ed. by Jon Whitman (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 229-54.

<sup>591</sup> See Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 11, on the relationship between Wyclif's conception of the literal sense and those of 'major scholastic predecessors', such as Aquinas.

<sup>592</sup> *DFC* II.236E: 'O miser Wicleff! & miseri Wiclevistae! qui sic non pro sententia divinae Scripturae, sed pro sua dimicant, ut eam velint esse Scripturae sanctae sententiam'.

reaching another mind in a miraculous fashion’, ‘a concealed energy’, as he cites St. Jerome, ‘all the more strongly expressed when transferred from its authors into the ears of the disciple’. This is analogous, if distinctly subordinate, to the transformative power [*vis*] that God has attached to the words of the Church’s sacraments themselves.<sup>593</sup>

Netter’s closeness to Wyclif in this respect, when compared to some fellow anti-Wycliffites, may also be gauged in his claim to be a disciple of Augustine. As we shall see, the saint is Netter’s most cited patristic authority, and not only because he is also Wyclif’s. Netter’s conception of scriptural logic, including that of the ‘pivotal role played by intentionality in Christian discourse’, is also like Wyclif’s explicitly *logica Augustini*,<sup>594</sup> indeed, the entire credibility of Netter’s argument rests upon proving this. Moreover, as Mishtooni Bose has commented, Netter appeals to Augustine ‘as if Netter, Wyclif and the saint were contemporary disputants’,<sup>595</sup> Augustine seems as genuinely present through his words to Netter as he was to Wyclif, and to other late-medieval Augustinians. An instructive contrast is the attitude to Augustine of John Kenningham, whose anti-Wycliffite writings suggest little such investment in Augustinian hermeneutics and which had indeed accused the saint of reading Scripture ‘with the eyes of Plato’.<sup>596</sup>

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<sup>593</sup> DFC II.194A: ‘vim habeant accedendi mentem alienam mirabili modo [...] sicut Hieronymus in primo *Prologo* attestatur, cum dicit: *Habet enim nescio quid latentis energiae viva vox, & in aures discipuli de auctoris transfusa, fortius sonat*’, quoting Jerome, *Epistolae*, LIII, ‘Ad Paulinum. De studio Scripturarum’ (*PL* 22.541). DFC II.194A-B: ‘Superest enim virtus quaedam praerogative altioris, quam [...] verbis & vocibus quibusdam numero paucis [...] Deus intitulat: & haec sunt verba sacramentis affixae [...] ut uno & eodem simplici ordinato processu efficiant quod testantur’ [There remains however a certain power [*virtus*] of higher precedent which God accords to certain words and expressions, few in number [...] and these words are fastened to the sacraments [...] so that with one and the same simple ordained rite they may effect that to which they witness].

<sup>594</sup> Mishtooni Bose, ‘Netter as Critic and Practitioner of Rhetoric: the *Doctrinale* as Disputation’, in *Thomas Netter of Walden*, pp. 233-248 (p. 237), discussing Augustine’s emphasis upon intentionality in his *Contra Cresconium*; Brungs and Goubier, ‘On Biblical Logicism’, p. 204, comment that Wyclif ‘repeatedly refers to his project as an attempt to uncover the *logica Scripturae* or *logica Augustini*, which is to be the «metrum et mensura» of all logic’.

<sup>595</sup> Mishtooni Bose, ‘Netter as Critic and Practitioner of Rhetoric’, p. 235.

<sup>596</sup> M.J.F.M. Hoenen, ‘Theology and Metaphysics’, pp. 43-44. Hoenen refers to Kenningham’s ‘*Secunda determinatio magistri Johannis Kynyngham contra Wyclif de ampliacione temporis*’, in *FZ*, pp. 43-72 (p.82): ‘Verumtamen ob reverentiam tam sancti doctoris non nego eum ad sensum quem habuit, sed dico quod tam ipse quam alii doctores sancti imitati sunt frequenter antiquos philosophos in modo loquendi’ [Nevertheless, out of reverence for so holy a doctor I do not deny the meaning that he intended, but I say that he, as much as

Particularly, Netter's professed commitment to such conceptions of the power of sacred writing may be gauged, as Ghosh has argued, in the way that they align him with Wyclif in what Heiko Oberman contends is the central split of late-medieval ecclesiological thought into two Traditions; this pitted Scripture as the Church's prime authority ('Tradition I') against that of the extra-scriptural body of teaching and customs handed down through history ('Tradition II').<sup>597</sup> While Netter argues strongly for the importance of extra-scriptural Tradition and derides Wyclif (unfairly) for his reliance upon scriptural authority, one nonetheless sees, as Ghosh notes, Netter's 'uneasy' endorsement of Tradition I.<sup>598</sup> Netter insists not only that his argument is grounded in Holy Scripture, but that Holy Scripture's authority 'greatly stands out from and exceeds that of all the Doctors, and even of the entire Church';<sup>599</sup> he chides his contemporaries who judge 'the Fathers of greater authority and weight' than Scripture, as though his own parents and teachers had exceeded Christ for being the first to teach him what to believe about Christ.<sup>600</sup> Thus, both Netter and Wyclif 'postulate the possibility of an *essential* access to the past'.<sup>601</sup> Netter's great point of difference with Wyclif lies in his insistence that there has been no catastrophic divergence between the Church's inherited tradition and the meaning of its ancient authorities, outside

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other holy doctors, frequently imitated the ancient [pagan] philosophers in his manner of speech]. Kenningham's debate with Wyclif is also discussed in Ch. 2 of this thesis, pp. 39-42.

<sup>597</sup> See Heiko Oberman, 'Holy Writ and Holy Church', *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late-Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 361-93, and Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 188-90. Oberman contends that these Traditions had been 'held together without conscious effort' until the fourteenth century (p. 371), when an increasing awareness of the divergence between the Church's current doctrines and the meaning of Scripture as intended by its authors, notable in Wyclif's thought, had pulled them apart; theologians then 'either had to call for a doctrinal reformation' (adhering to Tradition I), 'or to abandon the claim to a biblical warrant for a particular doctrine' (Tradition II) (p. 374).

<sup>598</sup> Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 181-2, 189.

<sup>599</sup> *DFC* I.350C: 'Longe ergo distat autoritas Scripturarum, & eminenti authoritati cunctorum Doctorum, etiam totius Ecclesiae'.

<sup>600</sup> *DFC* I.349A-B: 'Nec tamen laudo hoc supercilium, quod quidam attollunt [...] decretum Patrum in Ecclesia, majoris esse autoritatis, culminis, & ponderis, quam sit autoritas Scripturarum [...] Et si sic, dicat conformiter parentes nostros carnales, aut paedagogos, esse altiores & eminentiores Christo, quia eorum autoritate ab infantia didicimus quid de Christo sit credendum, quid sperandum' [Nor however do I praise this arrogance, that certain people exalt the decree of the Church Fathers as being of greater authority, loftiness and weight than the authority of Scripture [...] If this were the case, one may similarly say that our worldly parents and teachers are higher and more distinguished than Christ, since from infancy by their authority we learned what is to be believed and hoped of Christ]. On this passage, see also Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 191.

<sup>601</sup> Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 185.

the minds of Wyclif and his followers.<sup>602</sup> While individual perceptions may be corrupt, the Church's interpretation of Scripture is underpinned by its broad consensus with the unified body of Patristic authority.<sup>603</sup>

### **5.1. The Shadows of Scripture**

It is the apparent depth of Netter's investment in these late-medieval ideas about the power of words (scriptural and non-scriptural) that underscores the problems raised, as we shall see, by his refutation of a core aspect of Wyclif's eucharistic teaching: Wyclif's appeal for authority to a series of other scriptural figures in which he discerned a mode of signification similar to that of *hoc est corpus meum*. Key among these, as we considered in Chapter Two, were the comparisons in *De Eucharistia* of the words of institution to the prophecies of the Eucharist in the Old Testament; and in *Triologus*, to Joseph's interpretation of the seven grains of corn and seven cows of Pharaoh's dream (Gen. 41).<sup>604</sup> In *De apostasia*, he had also compared Christ's presence in the bread and wine and the Holy Spirit's theophanic descent upon Jesus in the form of a dove;<sup>605</sup> while in Wyclif's strident *De blasphemia*, he had invoked the Old Testament conception of God's wrath: 'It is clear to logicians that God is truly and really angered, just as his body is truly and effectually, not figuratively, eaten'.<sup>606</sup>

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<sup>602</sup> As Ghosh comments in *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 185: 'Wyclif's point was that the present had fallen off and had to be taken back to the past; Netter's was that the past, in its essentials, survived in ecclesiastical traditions of the present'.

<sup>603</sup> Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 183; *DFC* I.359A: 'quomodo si testimonium alicujus Patris inducti, etiam sit perversum? [...] Scripturas investigandas per plurimorum Doctorum concordantes sententias' [how [is this so] if the testimony of a particular Father introduced [into the argument] is also perverse? [...] the Scriptures should be investigated through the harmonious pronouncements of the highest number of Doctors].

<sup>604</sup> On Wyclif's discussion of prophetic figures in *De Eucharistia*, see Ch. 2, p. 63. Wyclif, *Triologus*, Ch. 7, pp. 266-267: 'Genes. xli. fides scripturae asserit, quod septem spicae et septem boves crassae sunt septem anni fertilitatis' [In Gen. 41, the faith of Scripture asserts that the seven head of grain and the seven fat cows are seven years of fertility], discussed in Ch. 2, p. 69.

<sup>605</sup> See Wyclif, *De apostasia*, XVI, 232/27-233/11.

<sup>606</sup> Wyclif, *De blasphemia*, ed. by Michael H. Dziewicki, Wyclif Society (London: Trübner & Co., 1893), Ch. 16, p. 252: 'Constat [...] logicis quod deus vere et realiter irascitur, sicut corpus suum vere et effectualiter manducatur, non tropice'.

Echoing existing orthodox condemnations, Netter repeatedly rounds upon these comparisons as the acme of Wyclif's perverse misreading of scriptural figure.<sup>607</sup> Practically, they also threaten Netter's entire argument by embedding Wyclif's reading of the words of institution deep within the logic of Scripture itself, the professed source of Netter's own authority. To prove the contrary, therefore, the *Doctrinale* devotes its lengthiest consideration of scriptural logic *per se* to refuting such readings, in three consecutive chapters of its book on the Eucharist (Vol. II, ch. 84-86).<sup>608</sup> Here, Netter will repetitively argue that such scriptural figures possess no analogy with the eucharistic words of consecration, since figures 'cannot be co-extensive with the truth of the thing [they signify]'; 'what is only figuratively, is not truly and really such'; figures, indeed, 'do not encompass the being' [*non implicat esse*] of their signified objects'.<sup>609</sup> While restating the position of earlier opponents, Netter's aim is distinctive in seeking to show that this separation accords with the 'limits of Scripture' or of 'God's Word' [*limites Scripturae / verbi Dei*]: this was a trope, possibly invented by Wyclif himself, by which we have seen him denote the powers

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<sup>607</sup> See, for example *DFC* I.214C-D: '*Hoc facite in meam commemorationem. Numquam reperies in Scripturis (si non fallor) figuras locutionum esse factas. Habes septem spicas septem annos: nusquam dicitur, quod sic factae sunt. Habes petram Christum; nusquam habes, quod facta est Christus. Habes Baptistam Eliam: non habes usquam, quo Christus fecit eum Eliam: quia figura dictionis est, non essentiae*' [*this do in remembrance of me* [KJV translation]. If I am not mistaken, you will never find in Scripture that figures of speech are enacted. You have the seven heads of grain as seven years: nowhere is it said that they [the seven heads of grain] were thus *made* [the seven years]. You have the Baptist as Elijah. You never find that Christ *made* him Elijah, since it is a figure of speech, not one [denoting identity] of substance]. Wyclif's comparisons of the consecrated bread and wine with scriptural figures were included among the 237 heretical passages from his writings which were presented to Convocation at Oxford in 1411. See Anne Hudson, 'Notes of an Early Fifteenth-Century Research Assistant, and the Emergence of the 267 Articles against Wyclif', in *Studies in the Transmission of Wyclif's Writings*, item XIII, p. 685, and 'Universitatis Oxoniensis litera archiepiscopo Cantuar. et episcopis provinciae illius, cum haeresibus et erroribus Joh. Wycliff missae', in *CMBH*, ed. Wilkins, III, pp. 339-349 (p. 342). See also the similar complaints of the Franciscan John Tyssyngton about the analogies drawn between the words of consecration and other scriptural figures in 'Confessio Tyssyngton', *FZ*, pp. 149-151, discussed above, p. 69, fn. 234.

<sup>608</sup> *DFC* II.502C-518A.

<sup>609</sup> *DFC* II.502C: 'Caput LXXXIV. Quod figura non debet cum rei veritate coextendi [...]'; *DFC* II.508B: 'GAPUT [sic] LXXXV. Quod solum figuraliter tale, non est vere & realiter tale'; *DFC* II.511B-C: 'omnis translate & figurate locutio implicat non ita esse, nec vere esse' (and see also below, p. 171, fn. 638). On Kenningham's similar opposition to Wyclif's understanding of figure, see Ch. 2, p. 40.

and meanings integral to Scripture, as recognized by its patristic commentators.<sup>610</sup> Its use by Netter thus signals his own intention to prove his point within Wyclif's frame of reference.

For Netter, however, the best illustration of how scriptural sign relates to its signified objects is that of a shadow [*umbra*] and the object [*res*] which casts it, an analogy which we shall see has much to say about the *Doctrinale*'s broad argument. Netter promises to show that the Church Fathers employ this 'mode of separating the object from its shadows, the Truth from its figures' [*modum istum separandi res ab umbris, a Veritate figuras*], fundamentally in the case of those scriptural prophecies which figured Christ's Incarnation (invoked, we have seen, in Wyclif's *De Eucharistia*).<sup>611</sup> As Augustine stated, Moses in the Old Testament renamed Auses, whom he had chosen to lead the Israelites, as *Jesus Nave*, so 'that the people of God would enter the promised land not under Moses but under Jesus'.<sup>612</sup> However, as Netter also cites Augustine:

just as he [*Jesus Nave*] was not the true Jesus, neither was that promised land real, but figurative: that manna, not truly food from heaven, but figured: that rock, not truly Christ, but figured: and so with all (such) things.<sup>613</sup>

Netter's first argument here is one with which Wyclif could not disagree: that the events of the Old Testament are signs prefiguring Christ's coming, the central event in human history. Such signs are firstly called shadows because, as he cites St. Augustine: 'all those things, which were figured in those shadows, are fulfilled in Him'.<sup>614</sup> Yet more importantly for

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<sup>610</sup> See Ch. 2, p. 38. Within this section of the *Doctrinale*, Netter mentions *limites* at *DFC* II.515C: "Vidētis jam more Ecclesiae Ambrosium temperasse sermonem: & juxta litem verbi Dei, volentis dicere, quod Spiritus sanctus descendit columba' [You see that Ambrose has already tempered his speech to the custom of the Church, and in agreement with the Limits of the Word, of preferring to say that the Holy Spirit descended as a dove]; and at *DFC* II.504A, referring to the 'seven heads of grain': 'nullus concedit fidelis [...] nisi intra limites Scripturae' [no faithful person concedes [the second statement] unless within the limits of Scripture].

<sup>611</sup> *DFC* II.512B-C: 'Videte, si modum istum separandi res ab umbris, a veritate figuras, non sequebantur Patres Ecclesiae'.

<sup>612</sup> *DFC* II.512C: 'Moyses, vocavit eum [*Auses*], & mutavit ei nomen, & appellavit eum *Jesum*: ut non per Moysen, sed per Jesum [...] populus Dei ad terram promissionis intraret'.

<sup>613</sup> *DFC* II.512D: 'Sicut ergo ille non verus Jesus; nec illa terra promissionis vera, sed figurata; ita manna, non cibus vere coelestis, sed figuratus: illa petra, non vere Christus, sed figurate: & sic omnia.' Haec ille.'

<sup>614</sup> *DFC* II.509A: 'AUGUSTINUS: "[...] in illo impleantur omnia, quae in illis umbris figurata sunt. Haec ille.", quoting Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram*, Bk. 12, 7.17 (*PL* 34.659). Augustine is glossing St. Paul,

Netter's argument, Augustine compares them to shadows because 'the fullness of the Divinity is said to dwell in Christ'.<sup>615</sup> Netter's point, therefore, is that such figures ('the rock', 'Jesus Nave'), being mere shadows cast back into history by Christ's Incarnation, do not possess or convey anything of his being. 'A body cannot be its shadow', Netter states, echoing an apparent commonplace expressed by Chaucer's Parson: 'a shadwe hath the liknesse of the thyng' but 'is nat the same thyng of which it is shadwe'.<sup>616</sup>

In turn, the insubstantiality of such shadowy signs determines their fate after the Coming itself. In Christ 'all figures of the Old Law are concluded by shrinking away' [*terminantur reductive*], just as shadows are 'dependently concluded in the body' [*dependenter terminantur in corpore*].<sup>617</sup> While terms such as *reductive* and *terminantur* have a ring of scholastic authority to them, Netter's use of *reducere* here particularly suggests the biblical-exegetic use of shrinking shadows, reversed [*reductus*] through the intervention of God, to symbolize the advancing epochs of spiritual history culminating in the coming of Christ, 'the sun of Justice';<sup>618</sup> *dependenter*, which can also mean 'in a dependent manner', more literally evokes *de-pendere*, meaning to hang down (archetypally, from a cross).<sup>619</sup> Through these associations, Netter suggests that Christ's incarnated body in

Col. 2.9: 'quia in ipso inhabitat omnis plenitudo divinitatis corporaliter' [For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporeally].

<sup>615</sup> DFC II.509A: 'Plenitudo (inquit) divinitatis in Christo dicta est corporaliter habitare'.

<sup>616</sup> DFC II.509B: 'corpus [...] nec esse potest umbra'. Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Parson's Tale', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, I. 211 (p. 292).

<sup>617</sup> DFC II.509A-B: 'in Christo terminantur reductive omnes veteris legis figurae, sicut umbrae dependenter terminantur in corpore'.

<sup>618</sup> See 4 Rgm. (Kgs.) 20. 11: 'Invocavit itaque Isaias propheta Dominum, et reduxit umbram per lineas, quibus iam descenderat in horologio Achaz, retrorsum decem gradibus' [And Isaias the prophet called upon the Lord, and he brought the shadow ten degrees backwards by the lines, by which it had already gone down in the dial of Achaz]. See also *GO* II, 973: 'Rabbanus. Quidam decem gradus linearum ad mysterium Christi transferunt, & vmbras figurarum in descensionem Christi interpretantur, per quos iterum sol iustitiae Christus post resurrectionem ascendit' [Rabbanus. Certain people have transferred the ten lines to the mystery of Christ, and interpret them as the shadows of the figures in the descent of Christ, through which Christ the Sun of Justice ascended again after the Resurrection].

<sup>619</sup> On *dependenter*, see *Dictionary of Medieval Latin From British Sources*, ed. by R.E. Latham and D.R. Howlett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975-), Fasc. III (D-E, 1986), p. 616: 'dependenter, dependently; b (gram. or log.) [...] nec obest propositionem esse ypotheticam, cum hoc quod secunda pars ~er significat ad aliam [...] [nor does it matter if the proposition is hypothetical, since the second part signifies the other in a dependent manner], quoting Wyclif, *Tractatus De Logica*, ed. by M.H. Dziewicki, 3 vols., Wyclif Society

its visible immediacy (akin to an object that absorbs its shadow in direct sunlight) not merely fulfils but renders its prophetic signs redundant, in a divine adjustment to the laws of semiotics.

Netter's conception of scriptural sign as mere shadow powerfully supports his broad defence of the physical presence of Christ's body in the Eucharist through transubstantiation, a context that he brings home with a quotation from St. Ambrose:

more potent indeed is light than shadows, truth than figure, the body of the Author, than manna from heaven.<sup>620</sup>

This text highlights the underlying liturgical affectivity which lends the analogy of *res et umbra* much of its power, since it forms part (along with others juxtaposing shadows and light) of the atmospheric Night Offices for the Feast of Corpus Christi.<sup>621</sup> As in the liturgical setting, its deployment in Netter's argument suggests that, just as Christ's historic Incarnation extinguished the signs of the Old Testament, so the physical presence of the same flesh in the Mass, effected through the consecration, fulfils and supersedes the symbolism of the unconsecrated bread and wine.<sup>622</sup>

Moreover, Netter's assertion that such signs are shadows, which cannot truly make the body present, is bolstered by his most incisive critique in this section of the *Doctrinale*: of the analogy drawn by Wyclif with the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove and by extension, Netter asserts, with the broader range of God's recorded appearances to man,

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(London: Trübner & Co., 1893-1899), II, Ch. 2, p.24, ll. 11-13; *OED*: 'dependently [...] In a dependent manner'. On the meaning of *dependere* related to hanging, see, for example, Augustine, 'In Joannis Evangelium', 37 (*PL* 35.1674), 'postea in cruce pendens, ut omnia praedicta complerentur, ait, *Sitio*' [afterwards hanging from the cross, so that all the foresaid things might be fulfilled, he said, *I thirst*]. See also Du Cange, *Glossarium*, in *DLD*: 'Rem suspensam demittere, suspensum hominem solvere. Acta SS. Junii tom. 4. pag. 928 [...] Rursum occurrit in Vita S. Jacobi Eremitae [...] [to take down something that has been hung up, to take down a hanged man].

<sup>620</sup> *DFC* II.515A: 'potior etenim lux quam umbra, veritas quam figura, corpus Authoris, quam manna de coelo', quoting Ambrose, *De Mysteriis*.

<sup>621</sup> This passage of Ambrose forms part of Thomas Aquinas's Offices for the Feast of Corpus Christi. See C. Lambot, 'L'Office de la fête-Dieu', p. 98.

<sup>622</sup> *DFC* II.509B: 'Quantum ergo corpus distat ab umbra, nec esse potest umbra; tantum Christi corpus ubilibet a figurali pane secernitur, qui inter veteris legis figuras de corpore Christi est una' [As far therefore as a body is different from its shadow, nor is able to be its shadow, is the body of Christ separate from figurative bread, which is just one among the figures of Christ's body in the Old Law].

besides the Incarnation. If the body could be made truly present in figure, in the same manner as theophanies presented their subject, Wyclif might as well say that when Abraham encountered God in the guise of three men (Gn. 18), ‘not only was the Son made human, but the Father and Holy Spirit were truly and really men with the Son’.<sup>623</sup> Conversely, why should one deny that that any New Testament event ‘was not literal but figurative’, ‘Gabriel’s annunciation to the Virgin [...] Christ’s preaching, the healing of the blind, Christ’s Passion, Ascension and even appearance on Judgement Day’?<sup>624</sup> This critique underpins Netter’s broad diagnosis of the misplaced faith that Wyclif places in signs, echoing that of earlier opponents: like the Old Testament Jews, Wyclif had yet to recognize Christ’s miraculous physical immediacy in the Mass, and the changed role of signification between the Old and the New Eras.<sup>625</sup> And the great truth in such observations, as we have seen, is that Wyclif’s figurative theology does constantly undermine the distinctions it professes to maintain between the supposedly unique presence of Christ in the Eucharist and in the figures of scripture; a contradiction dramatically manifested in the seeming

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<sup>623</sup> *DFC* II.515E-516A: ‘Quam impia ergo logica Wicleffi, quando dicit [...] *si iste panis est corpus Christi in figura, ergo vere & realiter* [...] Et dicat tunc consequenter: ergo non solus filius fuit humanatus, sed Pater Spiritus sanctus fuerunt vere & realiter homines cum filio, quando figurabantur in tribus viris descendentibus per viam’. See also *DFC* II.429A-B: ‘Deus fuit transubstantiatus in rubum : Deus filius in virum apud Abraham : Deus Spiritus sanctus in columbam’ [God was transubstantiated into a bush: God the Son into a man in front of Abraham: God the Holy Spirit into a dove].

<sup>624</sup> *DFC* II.506D-507A: ‘quis item prohibeat alium dicere ea lege loquendi Gabrielem nuncium de coelis ad Virginem, tropicum fuisse, non historicum: *Verbum caro factum est*, figura, non natura: Christi praedicationem, coeci illuminationem, Christi passionem, ascensionem, adventum quoque ad iudicium, omnia figurate dici, & nihil secundum historiam substantialiter esse verum?’.

<sup>625</sup> See *DFC* II.252D: ‘Berengariani omnes, Waldenses, & Wiclevistae non noverunt Christum panem vivum in fractione panis, sed rudem panem & putribilem [...] quorum oculi semper clauduntur per Satanam, necdum eos Christus aperuit’ [No Berengarians, Waldensians and Wycliffites have known Christ the living bread in the breaking of the bread, but coarse and rotting bread [...] their eyes have always been closed by Satan, nor has Christ yet opened them]. Ian Levy, ‘Netter on the Eucharist’, p. 280 comments that for Netter, ‘Wyclif has relapsed into the multiple sacrifices of ancient Judaism’ by splitting ‘the sign and its significate in the same manner in which the paschal lamb is separated from its ultimate significate - Christ’. On similar orthodox portrayals of Wyclif’s conception of Scripture, see the late fourteenth-century ‘chartre of hevене’ discussed in Ch. 4, p. 147. See also the comments of Hoenen, ‘Theology and Physics’, pp. 49-50, on the medieval concept of *differentia temporum* (‘distinction of time’): ‘there was a crucial difference between believing that the Incarnation was or will be. Confusing the difference of time would mean departing from orthodoxy’; and p. 47, on Kenningham’s attack on Wyclif in his ‘Secunda determinatio’ (*FZ*, p. 56): ‘If the verb <<being>> were to lose its fixed reference point to the actual here and now [...]. The death of Christ would still be future and Peter was still to deny Christ. Thus Wyclif fell into the trap of the Platonic Great Ages (*magnus annus*), in which everything would be repeated again’. Kenningham’s attack has also been discussed in Ch. 2, p. 40.

abandonment of the Mass for a religion based upon Scripture, as espoused in Wyclif's late sermons and enacted by his followers.<sup>626</sup>

Nonetheless, the problems in Netter's own counter-argument emerge in its detail as he comes to refute Wyclif's reading of key patristic authorities, especially Augustine. This is evident in the debate over Augustine's understanding of Joseph's statement, in Gn. 41.25, that the 'seven grains of corn and seven fat cows' dreamt by Pharaoh 'are seven years of fertility'.<sup>627</sup> As Netter quotes Wyclif's argument from *Trialogus* (discussed in Chapter Two):

As Augustine notes, Scripture does not say that they signify [*significant*] those years, but that they are the years themselves [*quod sunt ipsi anni*], and you can often find such speech in Scripture. Thus one may say that the sacramental bread, specifically in that manner, is the body of Christ.<sup>628</sup>

However, Netter argues, what Augustine meant [*intendebat*] is clear in his homily on Jn. 13, which uses several of the scriptural allegories invoked by Wyclif (such as 'the rock was Christ', 'the good seed are the children of the kingdom'), to illuminate Christ's words at the Last Supper: 'now is the Son of man glorified' (Jn. 13.31). While, in the passage cited by Netter, Augustine stresses that Scripture 'did not say *now is the glorification of the Son of man signified* but *now is the Son of man glorified*', 'the rock was Christ' (1. Cor. 10.4) and so on, his main point is that Scripture 'labels signifying things as though they were the things which were signified'; this in no way suggests that for Augustine the use of *est* in such statements signals more than a figure of speech.<sup>629</sup> Netter then turns to the Augustinian

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<sup>626</sup> See Ch. 2, p. 79; Ch. 3, pp. 98-110.

<sup>627</sup> See *Trialogus*, IV, 7, 266-267: 'Et Genes. xli. fides scripturae asserit, quod septem spicae et septem boves crassae sunt septem anni fertilitatis'. This is a paraphrase of Gn. 41.26. See also the discussion of Netter's treatment of Augustine in this section, in Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 198-200, illustrating the complexity and difficulty of Netter's 'textual methodology' and 'hermeneutic values'.

<sup>628</sup> *DFC* II.503A: 'IV. *Trial.* cap. vii. Genesis XLI. "ut Augustinus notat, Scriptura non dicit, quod significant illos septem annos, sed quod sunt ipsi anni, & talem locutionem spissim in Scriptura poteris reperire. -- sequitur post -- Sic autem dici potest, quod panis ille Sacramentalis est ad illum modum specialiter corpus Christi" Haec Wicleffus.' See *Trialogus*, 4.7. 266-267. See Ch. 2 of this thesis, p. 69.

<sup>629</sup> *DFC* II.503A-B: "'Quod enim Augustinus intendit, est exponere textum illum . XIII. *Nunc clarificans est filius hominis. Super Joan.* hom. LXIII. AUGUSTINUS. Sic autem non est dictum: *nunc significata est clarificatio filii hominis*; sed dictum est: *nunc clarificatus est filius hominis*; quemadmodum non est dictum:

text, on Leviticus, which Wyclif may well have had most in mind in his *Trialogus*. Here, citing the figure of the ‘seven heads of grain’ itself, Augustine states that St. Paul in 1. Cor. 10.4 had spoken as though the rock *were* Christ, ‘certainly not in terms of substance, but of signification’. But while one might read this as agreeing with Wyclif’s interpretation, as Netter’s quotation highlights Augustine usefully gives the appearance of a sacred injunction to the understanding that the sign and its signified object are entirely separate, by comparing them with Lev. 17.11: ‘the soul of all flesh is its blood’. The Father concludes: ‘to think that the soul of man [...] is blood [...] is greatly to be forbidden’.<sup>630</sup>

Such carefully-selected passages of Augustine undoubtedly contradict the tenor of their reading by Wyclif. Yet they do not clearly prove Netter’s main point: namely, that by comparing these figures to the eucharistic formula Wyclif misrepresents Augustine, for whom scriptural figures merely denoted, rather than made present, their signified objects.<sup>631</sup> It is also revealing how Netter chooses to tackle one important quality of the ‘seven heads of grain’ that may have prompted Wyclif to use it: being dreamed objects without physical substance, they are pure signs that can be overwhelmed by the presence of ‘seven years’; in Wyclif’s perception, this therefore possessed a strong resemblance to the way that the symbolic presence of Christ’s body ‘put to sleep’ the substance of the consecrated bread and

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*Petra significabat Christum; sed, petra erat Christus [...]* Sicut ergo solet loqui Scriptura, res significantes, tamquam illas, quae significantur, appellans: [...]”, quoting Augustine, ‘In Joannis Evangelium’, 63. But see Ghosh’s interpretation of this passage, in *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 199, as ‘problematic’.

<sup>630</sup> DFC II.503C-E: ‘Tractans nempe textum illum Levit. *Anima omnis carnis, sanguis ejus est in lib. Quaestio. super Levitic. cap. XLIX. AUGUSTINUS [...]* sicut scriptum est: Septem spicae septem anni sunt, & multa hujusmodi. Hinc est quod dictum est, *Petra autem erat Christus*. Non enim dixit: *significat Christum*: sed tamquam hoc esset, quod utique per substantiam non erat, sed per significationem. Sic & sanguis, quoniam propter vitalem quamdam corpulentiam animam significat, *anima* dictus est [...] Tantum ne anima hominis [...] sanguis putetur, valde cavendum est [...]”, quoting Augustine, ‘Quaestiones in Leviticum’, 57.3 [it was written, ‘the seven heads of grain are the seven years’, and many other things of this kind. Hence it was said, ‘the rock was Christ’; it did not say, ‘the rock signified Christ’, but as though it were Christ, although certainly this was not in terms of substance, but signification]. My translation of Lev. 17.11. By discussing Augustine’s homilies on Jn. 13 and Leviticus, Netter is echoing the Franciscan John Tyssyngton, who had mentioned both these texts among several that he claimed were cited by Wycliffites in support of a figurative understanding of the eucharistic presence. See Ch. 2 of this thesis, p. 69, fn. 234.

<sup>631</sup> See Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 199, who argues that only ‘with some struggle’ does Netter interpret his Augustinian excerpts as proving the dissimilarity of these scriptural figures to Christ’s Eucharistic presence.

wine (in the perception of the worshipper): Rather than going into detail, Netter contends that ‘nothing can more truly signify another thing than it can itself’; thus the ‘seven heads of grain’, since they didn’t even exist, could certainly not become the ‘seven years’.<sup>632</sup> He caps this off with a jab at Wyclif’s sanity: ‘and who, sound in the head, would say that dreamed heads of grain are true and real heads of grain?’<sup>633</sup>

### **God is Angered**

However, the core issue that Netter wishes to avoid looms large in the final such refutation we shall consider, of Wyclif’s analogy between the eucharistic presence and the wrath of God. As Netter cites Ch. 16 of Wyclif’s *De blasphemia*:

It is evident to logicians (he says) that God is truly and really angered, just as his body is truly and really eaten, not figuratively, granted that the manner of speech expressing this sense is figurative.<sup>634</sup>

Netter himself acknowledges the importance of this text for invoking the ‘modes of speaking of God in Holy Scripture’ [*modos loquendi de Deo in Scriptura Sacra*], and thus medieval debate on whether mortals could conceive of or describe God in words.<sup>635</sup> If ‘God is angered’ can express anything of the divine through its figurative language, it provides an important precedent for Wyclif’s argument of Christ’s bodily presence in symbol. Yet in this case, above all, Netter accuses Wyclif of ignoring the rules and contexts limiting scriptural uses of such figures. St. Augustine himself had bound these ‘together as if in a little bundle’ in one section of his *De Trinitate*, a work foundational to medieval thought on the

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<sup>632</sup> See Ch. 2, p. 69. *DFC* II.504D: ‘nihil potest verius significare aliud [...] quam se. Non ergo poterant illae septem spicae esse vere & realiter septem anni, si non essent vere & realiter septem spicae’ [nothing can more truly signify another thing, than it can itself. Those ‘seven heads of grain’ could not therefore truly and really be the seven years, if they were not really and truly seven grains].

<sup>633</sup> *DFC* II.504E: ‘Et quis sanus capite dicit spicas somnias esse veras spicas, & reales spicas?’.

<sup>634</sup> *DFC* II.508D “‘Constat (inquit) logicis, quod Deus vere & realiter irascitur, sicut corpus ejus vere & realiter manducatur, non tropice: licet locutio, qua sensus talis exprimitur, sit tropica [...]’”. See Wyclif, *De blasphemia*, Ch. 16, p. 252, ll. 3-6.

<sup>635</sup> See Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 37.

representation of the divine in human language. Within the passage excerpted by Netter, Augustine identifies only three valid modes of speaking about God:

[Holy Scripture] has used words taken from physical things, as when it says: *protect me under the shadow of thy wings*. And it has taken many things from the spiritual creation, to signify that which is not so, but must be so expressed, such as *I am a jealous God*, and *it repenteth me that I have made man* [...] But Holy Scripture rarely uses those things which are properly said of God, such as what was said to Moses: *I am that I am* and *I am hath sent me unto you*.<sup>636</sup>

With characteristic care, Netter has chosen his passage so that condemnation of Wyclif's statement emerges as if from Augustine's own mouth. Firstly, Wyclif's 'God is angered', through imputing human emotion to the deity, clearly resembles 'I am a jealous God', rather than the singular name of God, 'I am that I am'. Augustine thereby shows that Wyclif's example falls into the *modus loquendi* of using spiritual things to signify 'what is not so [*quod non ita esset*] but must be so expressed'. As a result, it highlights the fallacy in Wyclif's claim that God is truly, albeit figuratively, angered; indeed, it places Wyclif among those heretics whom Augustine describes as 'shut off from the truth' since they suppose 'of God what can be found neither in Himself, nor in any creature'.<sup>637</sup>

From *De Trinitate*, Netter can infer Augustine's canonical assertion of an absolute limit to the power of scriptural language: its 'figurative speech encompasses [*implicat*] neither being [*esse*], nor true being [*vere esse*]'.<sup>638</sup> As the central Augustinian trope of *vere*

<sup>636</sup> DFC II.510E-511A: 'Unde Augustinus, quasi in unum fasciculum constringens modos loquendi de Deo in Scriptura sacra, sic habet lib. I. *De Trinit.* cap. II. "Verbis (inquiens) ex rebus corporalibus sumptis usa est, cum de Deo loqueretur: velut cum ait : *sub umbraculo alarum tuarum protege me*. Et de spirituali creatura multa transtulit, quibus significaret illud, quod non ita esset, sed quod ita dici opus esset; sicut est, *Ego sum Deus zelans* : & *Poenitet me hominem fecisse* [...] Quae vero proprie de Deo dicuntur, raro ponit Scriptura divina; sicut illud, quod dictum est ad Moysen, *Ego sum, qui sum*: & *Qui est, misit me ad vos*' [Note: Netter is in fact quoting from *De Trinitate* Bk. I, Ch. I, Sec. 2]. The translation of *Ego sum, qui sum*: & *Qui est, misit me ad vos* is taken from *KJV*, with capitalization of the English adjusted to Netter's Latin.

<sup>637</sup> DFC II.511A: "'[...] Unde perniciosus & inanius evanescent, qui illo tertio genere erroris a veritate secluduntur; hoc suspicando de Deo, quod neque in ipso, neque in nulla creatura inveniri potest [...]'"

<sup>638</sup> DFC II.511B-C: 'Ex hoc ergo regulari principio Augustini, omnis translate & figurate locutio implicat non ita esse, nec vere esse'. See *Medieval Latin From British Sources*, I (A-L), p. 1260: 'implicare [...] 1. to entwine, enfold or enwrap (one thing with another) [...] 2. (fig.) to entwine (in embrace) quo se nullus explicet /

*esse* particularly implies, figurative language cannot convey, as Wyclif would like it to, the *vere esse* of Christ's body in the Mass.<sup>639</sup> Moreover, Augustine's 'principle' puts paid to Wyclif's conception, long troublesome to his opponents, of *esse* as 'one singular signifier embodying the same transcendent truth in all its parts'; as Netter implies by tackling Wyclif's various examples in isolation, *esse* is merely a part of human speech, used in distinct ways throughout Scripture according to a text's particular *modus loquendi*.<sup>640</sup>

Yet in denying that figurative language can communicate something of God's nature, Netter has won his point through contradicting not merely Wyclif but prevalent medieval framings of the topic; whilst Netter's choice of *exempla* echoes writings such as the *Summa Theologiae* of Aquinas, his interpretation contradicts them. Although Aquinas concurs that 'He is' is the most proper name of God, and acknowledges contrasting opinions on the topic, he nonetheless argues that qualities such as 'good' or 'wise' may also be 'predicated of God substantially', even if they 'fall short of representing him'.<sup>641</sup> Of course, the particular dynamics of Netter's dispute with Wyclif – battling for the Truth in the ordinary meanings of Scripture and the early Church Fathers – might excuse sidestepping later-medieval philosophy. However, the gravest problem with Netter's argument lies with his main

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implica amplexu P. BLOIS *Carm.* I. 5. 74'; Lewis and Short, 'implico [...] II [...] to entangle, implicate, involve, envelope, engage'.

<sup>639</sup> See Scott MacDonald, 'The Divine Nature', in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. by Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 71-90 (p. 83): 'we should expect that expressions such as "being" (*esse*), "true being" (*vere esse*) [...] will take us deeper into Augustine's mature understanding of God's nature than any of the others'. For Wyclif's use of *vere* in relation to Christ's eucharistic presence, see Ch. 2, p. 56.

<sup>640</sup> See Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 255, fn. 17. For a detailed treatment of Wyclif's 'scriptural holism', see Brungs and Goubier, 'On Biblical Logicism', pp. 238-243. See Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 255, fn. 17.

<sup>641</sup> Aquinas, *ST* Ia., 13.11: 'hoc nomen, *QUI EST* [...] est maxime proprium nomen Dei. Primo quidem propter sui significationem. Non enim significat formam aliquam, sed ipsum esse' [this name HE IS [...] is the most proper name for God. Firstly, indeed, on account of its signification. It does not signify any form but being itself]. *ST* Ia, 13.2: 'quidem nomina [...] praedicantur de Deo substantialiter, sed deficient a representatione ipsius'. As Aquinas also acknowledges, Maimonides (1135-1204), for example, held that one could use language only to describe what God was not. *ST* Ia, 13.2: 'cum dicimus Deum esse viventem, significamus quod Deus non hoc modo est sicut res inanimatae [...] et hoc posuit Rabbi Moyses' [When we say that God is alive, we signify that God is not like inanimate things [...] This is what Rabbi Moses proposed].

authority, St. Augustine. This becomes clear by considering the sentence in Augustine's *De Trinitate* which precedes the passage from which Netter had quoted:

So that the human mind may be purged from falsehoods of this kind, Holy Scripture, accommodating itself to little ones, has not shunned words of any kind by which our understanding, as if nourished, might rise by degrees to divine and sublime things.<sup>642</sup>

Netter has had to omit this sentence since it shows how the very same potencies he denies to scriptural language are integral to the thought of Augustine himself, who 'set much of the tone for the next thousand years of Christian realism'.<sup>643</sup> Indeed, conflicting with his own argument, Netter seems unwilling wholly to contradict the Father on this topic; in the same sentence stating that no figurative speech 'encompasses being', Netter concedes that neither are statements such as *ego sum deus zelans* ('I am a jealous God') 'wholly untrue'.

Netter's struggle to leave unopened a Pandora's box is most evident in the way that he ends his argument. Needing to gloss what Augustine meant by the use of scriptural language 'to signify that which is not so [about God], but must be so expressed', Netter turns to Augustine's *Quaestiones super Evangelium*, which had discussed Christ's own use of fictions, such as the parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15). Augustine's point is that since this story, as a parable, is not aiming to tell a literal truth, it is 'not a lie, but a certain figure of the Truth'.<sup>644</sup> The *modus loquendi* used here by Augustine, Netter argues, is the one to

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<sup>642</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Bk. 1, 1.2: 'Ut ergo ab huiusmodi falsitatibus humanus animus purgaretur, sancta scriptura parvulis congruens nullius generis rerum verba vitavit ex quibus quasi gradatim ad divina atque sublimia noster intellectus velut nutritus assurgeret.'

<sup>643</sup> Levy, *Parameters of Orthodoxy*, p. 50. On Netter's uses of Augustine and of rhetoric, see, in general, Bose, 'Netter as Critic and Practitioner of Rhetoric', esp. pp. 245-247 on Netter's use of Augustine's *Contra Cresconium* to attack Wycliffite doctrine. As she comments, p. 245: 'Netter had realised that the best kind of contextualisation for his purposes was a necessarily selective kind'.

<sup>644</sup> DFC II.511C: 'Cum autem fictio refertur ad aliquam significationem, non est mendacium, sed aliqua figura veritatis'. See also DFC II.511D-E, quoting Augustine, *Quaestionum Evangeliorum libri II*, Bk. 2 [*secundum Lucam*], Q. 51: 'secundum usitatum intellectum non subsistit veritas in talibus dictis. Non enim [...] ita dicuntur tamquam fuerit quisquam homo, qui haec in filiis suis duobus aut passit sit [...] est & illud etiam ejusdem Domini, qui in Fici arbore quaesivit fructum [...] quis enim hominum nesciret, sine [...] tempore, poma illum arborem non habere? [According to regular understanding, the truth does not stand in such statements. For these were not spoken as though there had been such a man, who had borne such things with his sons [...]. It is also the same with the Lord himself, who sought fruit from the fig tree [...] what man would not know that the tree would not have fruit, out of season?]. On this topic Wyclif had, unusually, disagreed with Augustine who

which ‘God is angered’ also belongs: that is, a ‘certain middle way hanging between truth and fallacy’. As Netter boldly paraphrases this principle:

The Holy Doctor would say [*diceret*]: ‘that it is neither truly nor really, nor however falsely nor lyingly [*nec vere nec realiter, nec tamen mendose sed false*], but is figured through a middle mode [*sed medio modo figurate*], which falls short of full truth, yet flies above falsity.<sup>645</sup>

What greater sign of familiarity with Augustine’s intended meaning could there be than Netter’s confident paraphrase? Wyclif, by contrast, seeking truth where none exists, ignores this rule since he does not know the *modus loquendi Scripturae & Doctorum* (mode of speech of Scripture and the Doctors).<sup>646</sup> Yet, Netter’s glaringly selective reading of his authorities only implicates him in the very same tendencies (so widespread in the Middle Ages) of confusing and conflating biblical modes of speech. This is especially the case with Netter’s definition of the ‘middle mode’ [*medium modum*] itself: a term denoting, in medieval thought, the very area of foundational Christian religion that he has denied: the grey middle-ground afforded by signs between the absence and presence of the divine. As St. Paul says (1 Cor. 13.12): ‘We see now [on earth] through a glass in a dark manner’.<sup>647</sup>

Indeed, Netter’s denial of this ‘middle mode’ underscores the crucial shortcoming of his own refutation of Wyclif’s scriptural hermeneutics. Far from providing an intellectually adequate answer, it raises its own host of equally serious problems: if, for example, God was not truly present in the theophanies recorded in the Old Testament (as Netter’s argument comes close to suggesting) in what way were they ‘theophanies’ (that is, ‘appearances of

had asserted that Christ’s parables were fictions. Wyclif, by contrast, argued that they must have been historically true *ad litteram*, since Scripture cannot lie. While Netter does not refer to this disagreement directly, it chimes with his polemical point. See Wyclif, *De Veritate* I, IV, pp. 73-5 and also Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 32-35.

<sup>645</sup> *DFC* II, 512A.

<sup>646</sup> *DFC* II.511E ‘sed medium quoddam pendens inter veritatem & mendacium’. II.511E ‘Hunc modum loquendi Scripturae & Doctorum nescit Wicleffus’.

<sup>647</sup> *ST* IaIIae, 67.3: ‘Fides autem medio modo se habet: excedit enim opinionem [...] deficit vero a scientia in eo quod non habet visionem’ [faith has a middle position, exceeding opinion [...] but falling short of knowledge in that it does not have vision]. 1. Cor 13.12: ‘nunc per speculum in *aenigmitate* : tunc autem facie ad *faciem*’.

God')?<sup>648</sup> Most importantly, if scriptural signs are mere shadows of their signified objects, and if Wyclif's understanding of scriptural sign in the age of Christ is entirely a misapplication of obsolete Old Testament hermeneutics, then what sacramental function does this leave to Scripture? Netter's answer appears to pit him against the history of Christian conceptions of the power of scriptural words, and indeed against his own.

## **5.2. Signs of the Times**

What should one make of this disparity between Netter's argument and its apparent premises? It may have served to fulfil one highly practical function, to provide clergy with ready answers to Wycliffite doctrines, backed up by convincing excerpts from major patristic authorities such as St. Augustine.<sup>649</sup> Yet, as Mishtooni Bose comments, at the start of his book on the sacraments, Netter offered 'his own investigative method as a model for the hermeneutic practices of his reader', while his dedication to Pope Martin V in Book One promised 'full bibliographical references to his sources, so that a reader might be able to verify his use of them'.<sup>650</sup> By contrast, it is clear that the *Doctrinale* hardly achieves this historical veracity or the philosophical certitudes of a *Summa Theologiae*, which it superficially recalls in outline and scope. Rather, as we have seen, in order to gain the appearance of victory, the *Doctrinale*'s argument is willing to descend into a bloody fight over authoritative texts, even at the cost of effectively parodying its sources.<sup>651</sup>

Broadly, Netter's very reduction of Scripture to a mere shadow [*umbra*], and his willingness to rewrite the Church Fathers, bear witness to the gravity of the threats that Wycliffite ideas about Scripture continued to pose to late-medieval religion in the fifteenth century. Particularly, it reflects Netter's proposed solution to these threats which also, I

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<sup>648</sup> *OED*: 'theophany, n. [...] θεός god + φαίνεiv to show'.

<sup>649</sup> Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, p. 331, comments that the *Doctrinale* 'combined counter-arguments with edifying miracle tales and with simple parodies which ridiculed Lollard beliefs'.

<sup>650</sup> Bose, 'Netter as Critic and Practitioner of Rhetoric', p. 233.

<sup>651</sup> Again, this is the point of 'Netter as Critic and Practitioner of Rhetoric', discussed above, p. 173, fn. 643.

believe, largely motivated the writing of the *Doctrinale*: an alteration in the way that ‘Scripture’, in this term’s widest medieval sense, was used and perceived by the laity in popular religion. Most visibly, the *Doctrinale* accords with the restrictions on popular instruction in Scripture demanded by Archbishop Arundel’s *Constitutions* (and, in this sense, with the form of cultural engineering which, in Nicholas Watson’s view, was central to the Church’s response to Wycliffism).<sup>652</sup> This may particularly be seen in the *Doctrinale*’s own discussion of the role of preaching. In its treatment of the subject in Book One, Netter invokes many of the same scripturally-rooted tropes which we have seen underpin the medieval theology of preaching central to Wycliffism: Christ himself commanded his disciples to ‘go forth and preach the Gospel to every created being’;<sup>653</sup> Netter, following St. Augustine, praises John the Evangelist who ‘belched forth [*ructavit*] the logic [of the Church], which he had drunk in secret, to all peoples’, unlike Wyclif with his esoteric philosophical ideas.<sup>654</sup> However, such language primarily conceals what is in practice a highly circumscribed vision of the role of preaching among the laity. Preoccupied with attacking Wycliffite claims to possess the authority to preach without the leave of the

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<sup>652</sup> ‘Constitutiones domini Thomae Arundel’, *CMBH*, ed. Wilkins, III, p. 315: ‘Sacerdotes vero parochiales, sive vicarii temporales [...] illa sola simpliciter praedicent, una cum precibus consuetis, quae in constitutione provinciali a bonae memoriae Johanne, praedecessore nostro, bene et sancte in suppletionem ignorantiae sacerdotum edita, quae incipit “Ignorantia sacerdotum”, continentur expresse’ [indeed, parish priests or vicars temporal [...] shall simply preach only those things, together with their customary prayers, as expressly laid down in the provincial constitution which begins with ‘Ignorantia sacerdotum’, rightly and piously promulgated by John [Archbishop Pecham], our predecessor of good memory, to remedy the ignorance of priests]. On Nicholas Watson’s view of orthodox attempts to restrict lay uses of religious literature, see in general ‘Censorship and Cultural Change’, esp. pp. 826-829 in connection to the *Constitutions*. He contends, p. 828, that in the *Constitutions*, ‘Pecham’s minimum necessary for the laity to know if they are to be saved has been redefined as the maximum they may hear, read, or even discuss’.

<sup>653</sup> *DFC* I.51C: ‘secundum mandatum Christi, dicentis: *ite, praedicate Evangelium omni creaturae*’.

<sup>654</sup> *DFC* I.51D: ‘Ecce quod Beatus Joannes ructavit logicam suam ad omnes gentes, quam in secreto potavit. Quare igitur non ita permittit Auditores suos Wicleffus logicam *idearum*, quam in scholis secreto bibunt’. Netter is referring here to Ch. III of Wyclif’s *De ideis* (as yet unpublished in print) which he quotes at I.51A. ‘WICLEFFUS Communicando cum plebejo, non esset dicendum illi, quod equus suus, vel alia vilissima creatura esset Deus suus: quia non concipit, nisi in natura propria’ [WYCLIF. When conversing with an ordinary person, one should not tell him that his horse or any other abject creature might be his God, since he does not conceive [of a horse] except in terms of its own nature].

Church, it lacks mention of advanced instruction, or of the sacramental functions we have seen attributed to the preached word by a range of fourteenth-century orthodox thinkers.<sup>655</sup>

The limits to Netter's definition of preaching are starkest in the sixth book of the *Doctrinale* on the Church's *sacramentalia* (*De sacramentalibus*), presented to the pope in 1430, the year of Netter's death, which will occupy the rest of this chapter.<sup>656</sup> As we have considered, these were the panoply of practices and traditions, so abhorrent to Wycliffites: 'the cult of saints, the veneration of relics and images, pilgrimages', which grew up around the Mass.<sup>657</sup> By contrast, as Netter makes clear in his preface to this book, the growth of such practices fulfilled Scripture's own command for embellishments to adorn [*ornare*] the substance of Christianity contained in Christ's teaching and the sacraments.<sup>658</sup> It is telling that in this section, the *Doctrinale* feels comfortable in outlining a popular role for Scripture, as an adjunct to what he argues is the heart of Christian religion, the Mass. Far from expounding them in detail, Netter emphasizes the importance of the recitation of the 'sacred readings and sacred songs' [*lectiones sacras & sacros cantus*], as prelude to the completion

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<sup>655</sup> See, for example, *DFC* I.629A, Ch. 72: 'Quod Fratribus catholicibus ad praedicandum admissis, non propter hoc tolerantur haeretici' [Because catholic Friars have been permitted to preach, heretics are not on this account tolerated]. On fourteenth-century conceptions of preaching, see Ch. 4 of this thesis, esp. pp. 116-137.

<sup>656</sup> See 'Chronology of Thomas Netter', p. 388.

<sup>657</sup> Catto, 'Wyclif and the Cult of the Eucharist', p. 274.

<sup>658</sup> See *DFC* III.3B-4A: '*Doctrinam Salvatoris nostri Dei ornent in omnibus* [Tit. 2.10]. Tota substantia credendorum de Deo, & Filii ejus generatione perenii [...] de salubri sacramentorum historia [...] in ipsa doctrina Salvatoris fundamenta stravit tutissima. Quid igitur adhuc restat, nisi ut, juxta Apostolum, hanc doctrinam homines modulis suis exornent castibus actibus, precibus sanctis, jejuniis, psalmis, & spiritualibus hymnis: diebus autem feriatis, materialibus fabricis [...] quae temporum successione Sancti studebant adjicere, ne doctrinam Salvatoris nudam, & sine grandu cultu susciperent [...] Quas omnes Wicleffus [...] condemnat: quia in doctrina Salvatoris eas ipse non perspicit' [*Let them adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*]. Concerning the whole substance of what must be believed about God, the perpetual generation of his Son [...] the health-giving history of the sacraments [...]. [God] laid the surest foundations in the very teaching of the Saviour. What therefore still remains, except that, according to the Apostle, people should embellish this doctrine with their singing, with chaste acts, holy prayers, fasts, psalms, and spiritual hymns: moreover with feast-days, material craft-work [...] which over time the Saints strove to increase, lest [people] should receive the teaching of the Saviour bare, without great decoration? [...] All of which Wyclif [...] condemns, since he does not perceive them in the teaching of the Saviour]. I have slightly adapted the *DR* translation of Tit 2.10 ('... that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things'), since Netter has cited only the second half of original clause, thereby slightly altering its meaning. On *sacramentalia*, see also Ch. 1, p. 12.

of the eucharistic Mystery.<sup>659</sup> Within this specific context, he does define preaching in sacramental terms; not, however, as the distribution of scriptural ‘bread’ (a trope conspicuous by its general absence from the *Doctrinale*), but as an office of the Aaronical priesthood appointed by God in the Old Testament to ‘call together the multitude’ (Nms. 10.2) by blowing silver trumpets, a pre-figuration of the privileged status of the ordained Christian clergy.<sup>660</sup>

### **The Light of the World**

However, the limits that Netter places on the role of preaching by no means reflect his broader vision of the sacramental function of signs, besides the Church’s seven sacraments, to popular religion. Just as the shadows of Scripture were vanquished by the coming of Christ, in Netter’s conception, so the full significance of the post-Wycliffite era as an ‘Age of Light’ becomes clear in his defence (also following Arundel’s *Constitutions*) of the necessity of the worship of images [*Cultus imaginum*]; this giant area of late-medieval practice, ranging from veneration of images of Christ and the Virgin to the sight of the eucharistic host itself, was the very backbone of the *sacramentalia*, and indeed the ‘substance of popular religion’.<sup>661</sup> Netter himself underscores one important irony at the

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<sup>659</sup> *DFC* III.232B: ‘instat venerabilis Presbyter cum Ministris suis praeparare se, & populum, secundum antedicta, per lectiones sacras; & sacros cantus ad exercitandum sanctosancti completionem Mysterii’.

<sup>660</sup> *DFC* III.233A: ‘Lege librum Num. cap. X., & invenies quid tibi dixerit Dominus: *Fac tibi duas tubas argenteas ductiles, quibus convocare possis multitudinem*’ [Read the Book of Numbers, Ch. 10, and you shall find what the Lord said to you: *Make thee two trumpets of beaten silver, wherewith thou mayest call together the multitude*]. *DFC* III.233A: ‘Non mediocriter capiendum, quod non omni populo concessum est clangere tubis ad convocandam multitudinem, sed filiis Aaron Sacerdotis’ [It is not permitted for all the people to sound the trumpets to call the multitude].

<sup>661</sup> Catto, ‘Wyclif and the Cult of the Eucharist’, p. 274, with reference to the *sacramentalia*. In addition to the ‘De Cultu Imaginum’ [on the cult of images] (*DFC* III.902C-952C), I include within the scope of the Netter’s treatment of images his two subsequent and closely-related sections: ‘De Adoratione Sanctae Crucis’ [on the adoration of the Holy Cross] (*DFC* III.951C-968A) and ‘De Peregrinando ad Imagines’ [on making pilgrimages to images] (*DFC* III.967B-972C). Again, Netter here echoes the agenda laid out in Arundel’s *Constitutions*. See ‘Constitutiones domini Thomae Arundel’, *CMBH*, ed. Wilkins, III, p. 318: ‘ab omnibus deinceps communiter doceatur atque praedicetur, crucem et imaginem crucifixi, caeterasque imagines sanctorum [...] ac ipsorum loca et reliquias, processionibus, genuflexionibus, inclinationibus, thurificationibus, deosculationibus, oblationibus, luminarium accensionibus, et peregrinationibus, necnon aliis quibuscumque

outset of his argument: while Wyclif had believed that the popular worship of images was tainted by idolatry, ‘let anyone who wants to look [at Wyclif’s writings], and he will not find him to have spoken much against their worship in Church’.<sup>662</sup> Indeed, as Netter pointedly quips, Wyclif ‘favours them on account of his figurative Eucharist, which venerates the imaginary’.<sup>663</sup> The practical motivation behind Netter’s defence of images, however, lay in the more aggressive ‘preaching, tract-writing and public violence’ of his followers against their use.<sup>664</sup> Yet again Wycliffism, for Netter, had exposed ‘the evil inherent in Wyclif’.<sup>665</sup>

As elsewhere in the *Doctrinale*, a major part of Netter’s defence of late-medieval uses of images centres upon proving its authorization in ancient practice and scriptural exegesis. His starting point is no less ancient than the Wycliffites’ own warrant for their iconoclasm, the first commandment handed down by God in Ex. 20:

Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth.<sup>666</sup>

Wyclif’s disciples, according to Netter, had falsely claimed that image-worship had only been introduced into the Church by the third-century Pope Marcellinus.<sup>667</sup> By contrast, Netter can draw on ancient Jewish sources, transmitted by Christian authorities such as St. Ambrose and Peter Comestor, to show that it had been introduced ‘almost from the

modis et formis, quibus nostris et praedecessorum nostrorum temporibus fieri consuevit, venerari debere’ [let it be hereafter generally taught and preached by all that the cross and image of the crucifix, and other images of the saints [...] as well as their localities and relics, must be adored with processions, kneeling, bowings, incense-burning, kisses, oblations, lighting of candles and pilgrimages, and also with whatever other forms and manners which have been the custom for us and in the times of our predecessors].

<sup>662</sup> *DFC* III.902E: ‘Aspiciat qui vult, & non reperiet eum contra conditores imaginum, vel earum cultum Ecclesiasticum multa locutum’.

<sup>663</sup> *DFC* III.902E: ‘Favent enim eis propter habitudinalem Eucharistiam, quam imaginarium veneratur’.

<sup>664</sup> *DFC* III.902E-903A: ‘ipsi contra imagines sacras praedicare, & tractatus facere, & violentias publicas inferre non cessant’ [the same [Wycliffites] do not cease from preaching, writing tracts, and causing public acts of violence against images].

<sup>665</sup> Anne Hudson, ‘Thomas Netter’s *Doctrinale* and the Lollards’, p. 179, discussing Netter’s general idea of the relation of Wyclif and Wycliffism, with reference to *DFC* III.491A: ‘vox serpentis solius erat in Wicleffo: vox diaboli in Lollardo est’ [in Wyclif there was the voice of the serpent only, in the Lollard is the voice of the devil].

<sup>666</sup> Ex. 20.4: ‘Non facies tibi sculptile, neque omnem similitudinem quae est in caelo desuper, et quae in terra deorsum, nec eorum quae sunt in aquis sub terra’.

<sup>667</sup> *DFC* III.903A: ‘Discipuli ejus scripserunt quod Marcellinus Papa primus jussit adorari imagines’.

beginning of the world', by no less a figure than Enos, Adam's grandson'.<sup>668</sup> In the era of the New, as John of Damascus relates, the *cultus imaginum* was re-instituted by Christ Himself, who had impressed the features of his radiant face directly onto a cloth.<sup>669</sup> Netter also points to the mass of patristic evidence, from the third-century Greek Father Eusebius, through to Gregory the Great in the sixth century and Hugh of St. Victor in the twelfth, signalling a widespread worship of images from antique Christianity. If image-worship was an innovation, why indeed 'did the Ancient Holy Fathers paint in Churches, and sculpt images?'<sup>670</sup> Conversely, such accounts also show that Wycliffite iconoclasts belong among the historic persecutors of Christianity.<sup>671</sup>

Yet such historical arguments are only a prelude to the heart of Netter's defence of late-medieval images and their most interesting aspect for our argument: his assertion of their divinely-appointed function as 'Scripture', and the constant parallels and contrasts that his argument draws with Wyclif's conception of Scripture, as tackled by Netter in his earlier book on the Eucharist.<sup>672</sup> This context is central to Netter's defence of the late-medieval image which was 'most worthy of destruction', according to his citation from the late fourteenth-century Wycliffite 'Twelve Conclusions': that of the Trinity, which depicted the

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<sup>668</sup> *DFC* III.908A-C: 'Ad primum pene hujus mundi si transcurramus initium, sanctus ille Enos filius Seth, quem Josephus virtuosum & egregium patrem scribit, & per quem in carnem Adae mundi Redemptor advenit; ille, inquam, cultum imaginum in Dei honorem'.

<sup>669</sup> *DFC* III.907D-E: 'DAMASCENUS. "Fertur autem & quaedam historia, quod Abgarus eo pictorem miserat, ut imaginem Domini figuraret. Nequeunte pictore propter coruscantes a facie ejus claritates, ipse vestimentum propriae faciei divinae & vivificae superimponens, in vestimento illo suo ipsius imaginem astrinxisse, & ita cupienti Abgari misisse". [It is also related in a certain history, that Abgaraus had sent a painter to him, so that he might portray the image of the Lord. Since the painter was unable to do so due to the glittering brightness of his face, [Christ] himself, placing a cloth over his divine and life-restoring face, committed to the cloth its image].

<sup>670</sup> *DFC* III.906C-D; 'Cur sancti Patres antiquitus sanctorum triumphos pingebant in Ecclesiis, & insculpebant imagines?'

<sup>671</sup> *DFC* III.905C: 'cum eis dissuadet sanctas imagines, cum eis interdicat preces ad Dei Matrem fieri, vel sanctos celestes; cum eis contaminat sacras virgines, Religiones prophanat, immunditias praedicat, sacras vigiliis temerat' [along with them [the Wycliffites], he [the ninth-century Byzantine ruler and iconoclast Constantine] warns against holy images; with them he forbids prayers to be made to the Mother of God, or the saints in heaven; with them he defiles holy virgins, profanes religious systems, preaches filth, violates sacred vigils].

<sup>672</sup> See above, pp. 162-176. See also Ghosh's brief discussion in *Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 201-203, on Netter's understanding of images as interpreted signs, and its broad parallel to Netter's conception of Scripture.

Father as an old man, the son as a young man, and the Holy Ghost as a dove.<sup>673</sup> As Netter paraphrases this text, their objection lay in the attempt to depict the:

the spirituality and boundlessness of the divine essence, which we cannot imagine [...] they say: The Father was not, nor has been seen, as a man: by what boldness do they [painters and sculptors] therefore give Him the image of a man, whom he least recalls?<sup>674</sup>

‘By what boldness’, Netter replies, ‘let Scripture itself already answer the Wycliffites’, producing a slew of examples from the Old Testament:

In the psalms the prophet gives the Lord God hands: *the firmament declareth the work of his hands*. He gives Him feet: *we will adore in the place where his feet stood*. The prophet Him gives shoulders: *and he carried him on his shoulders*. He gives Him fingers: *the works of thy fingers: the moon and the stars*. He gives Him a womb: *from the womb before the day star I begot thee* [...] he gives Him an arm [...] eyes [...] guts [...] he gives Him a heart: *my heart hath uttered a good word*. In brief, behold how Scripture attributes all the parts of the human body to God the Father.<sup>675</sup>

The first remarkable feature of Netter’s argument is that it invokes the same class of scriptural figures, attributing human qualities to God, whose ability to communicate anything of the divine nature Netter had denied in his previous attack upon Wyclif’s scriptural hermeneutics. Here, by contrast, Netter defends such visual depictions not only by pointing out their scriptural warrant, but also by arguing that they function in the same way

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<sup>673</sup> DFC III.933A: ‘Unde in libello eorum jam dicto, conclusione VIII. “Quamvis ista inhibita, & imaginaria sint liberi erroris populo laicali, adhuc imago usualis de Trinitate est maxime abominabilis.” For the full text, see ‘Conclusiones Lollardorum [...] anno ejus circiter XVIII’, in *FZ*, pp. 360-370. DFC III.933A ‘Haec Wiclevistae. Imaginem usualem astruunt, ubi Pater habet speciem viri fenis, Filius junioris, & Spiritus sanctus columbae typum habet’.

<sup>674</sup> DFC III.933A: ‘Cum vero coeperint in communicando sensum suum exprimere, spiritualitatem, & incircumscribilitatem, causanter divinae essentiae, quam cogitare non possumus: qualiter ergo sensibili forma depingere? & Pater, inquit, homo non erat, nec visus ut homo; qua ergo audacia dant illi imaginam hominis, quam minime recognovit?’.

<sup>675</sup> DFC III.933A-C: ‘Qua audacia faciunt hoc, Scriptura jam Wiclevistae respondeat. In psalmis dat propheta Domino Deo manus : *opera manuum ejus annuntiat firmamentum*. Dat pedes : *adorabimus in loco, ubi steterunt pedes ejus* : Dat humeros propheta : *atque portavit in humeris suis*. Dat digitos : *opera digitorum tuorum lunam & stellas*. Dat uterum : *ex utero ante luciferum genui te*. Dat brachium [...] Dat oculos [...] Dat viscera [...] Dat cor : *eructavit cor meum verbum bonum*. Breviter, ecce Scriptura omnia membra humani corporis Deo Patri designat.’

as written scriptural signs, as conceived of by Wyclif. While the Wycliffites accuse the laity of worshipping an object instead of God ‘since they call the sculpted image Christ, or the Trinity’, they fail to grasp that this is because such worshippers are referring not to the *figura* but, unselfconsciously, what it signifies to them: ‘simply and confidently, they call [the image] that which they adore’.<sup>676</sup> Indeed, Netter argues, the physical baseness of the matter from which images are carved highlights their distinction from transcendent divinity: ‘if such resemblance of signs to what they signify were required’, he quips, ‘you would surely never write the letters in black ink, by which God might be signified to you’.<sup>677</sup> Equally, Netter’s defence of depictions of the Trinity strongly mirrors Wyclif’s conception of Scripture in stressing that the image is fundamentally not the physical form, but a spiritual reality interior to the recipient (an idea central to Wyclif’s own conception of Scripture): ‘is the paint-brush at greater fault than the pen, or the image than the letter, since through what has been figured by the pen, God has painted his image in the soul?’<sup>678</sup> This parallel usefully allows Netter an opportunity to reverse the charge of idolatry back upon Wyclif. At this interior level, Wyclif ‘has fashioned for himself in his mind a false understanding against sacred images’, making an idol worse than an ‘external idol’.<sup>679</sup>

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<sup>676</sup> *DFC* III.950B: ‘Immo, iniquunt Wiclevistae, quia Christum appellant, aut Trinitatem, aut beatam Virginem sculptam imaginem, dicentes: *eamus ad Mariam Cantuariae, aut crucifixum sancti Pauli Londoniis*, & hac conditione veneratur & colunt’ [On the contrary, the Wycliffites say, since they call the sculpted image Christ, or the Trinity, or the blessed Virgin, saying, “let us go to Mary of Canterbury, or the crucifix of St. Paul at London”, they also venerate and cherish [these images] in this manner]. *DFC* III.950A-B: ‘Non enim est idololatra qui Deum suum hoc lignum appellat, cum numen, vel daemonum supra grossum lignum hoc esse concipiat [...] enim simpliciter adorant, & simpliciter & fidenter [...] quod adorant, appellant’ [The person who calls this piece of wood his God is not an idolater, when he understands that divinity or supernatural being is above coarse wood [...] indeed [the faithful] worship in a simple manner, and they call [the image] that which they simply and faithfully adore]. Relevant here is the important observation in Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 203, of Netter’s argument elsewhere in this section that image-worship is not idolatry, because ‘images, as express signs of him, are valid objects of *dulia*’.

<sup>677</sup> *DFC* III.931A: ‘quia si signorum cum signatis requiretur tanta conformitas, nunquam atramento nigro literas scriberes, quibus significaretur tibi Deus’. Albert Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*, rev. by Paul Tombeur. Turnhout: Brepols, 2010, in *DLD*: ‘conformitas [...] ressemblance, imitation’.

<sup>678</sup> *DFC* III.933C: ‘An majus peccatum circa hanc rem incurrit pennicillus quam penna, imago quam litera, dum vero transumpto pennicillo Deus imaginem suam depinxit in anima?’.

<sup>679</sup> *DFC* III.909D: ‘Sic Wicleffus, sicut omnis vir haereticus, insculpsit sibi in mente falsum conceptum contra sacras imagines: & hoc est idolum haeresis pejus & nequius quam idolum exterius’.

Thus far, Netter's relatively stock defence of the image of the Trinity justifies one key reason why he denies a significant popular role to the Bible, whether read or heard. Images can perform the basic communicative functions that had been denied them by some late fourteenth-century evangelists; moreover, images (integral to 'Scripture' in its broadest medieval conception) had been the living conduit for transmitting religious belief from antiquity.<sup>680</sup> This being the case, as Netter argues, why should the Church set aside images [*evacuaret imagines*] on account of 'carnally minded thinkers, ignoramuses, heretics, or chattering hypocrites'?'<sup>681</sup>

However, the equivalence of the image, as understood by Netter, with the Scripture of Wyclif's conception by no means ends with this basic instructional function. This becomes clear as Netter answers the assertion of the Wycliffite 'Twelve Conclusions' that the 'Father was not, nor has been seen, as a man'. To prove the contrary, Netter produces numerous examples of God's appearance in the Old Testament in the shape of a man. As the Greek Father Athanasius recounts, Jacob saw 'the Lord leaning upon the ladder' (Gn. 28.13); Daniel relates that he saw the Father in human form as the 'Ancient of days', his clothes 'as white as snow' and hair 'like clean wool', and the Son of Man approaching on the clouds (Dn. 7.9, 13).<sup>682</sup> According to St. Augustine, the deity may have been present in human form

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<sup>680</sup> On Wycliffite rejection of pictures as books, see, for example, Ch. 3, p. 146, fn. 540.

<sup>681</sup> *DFC* III.937A-B: 'Nec, quantum video, satisfaceret Ecclesia statui gratiae, in qua est, si propter paucos carnales, vel idiotas, vel haereticos, vel garrientes hypocritas, evacuaret imagines'; See 1 Cor. 13.11 'Quando autem factus sum vir, evacuavi quae erant parvuli' [*Wycliffite Bible*, IV, p. 363, Col. B (Later Version): 'but whanne Y was maad a man, Y auoidide tho thingis that weren of a litil child' [*MED*: 'avoiden [...] to empty [...] to shun']. In particular, Netter's broader treatment of images recalls the theologically-charged sense of *evacuare* as kenosis. See *Blaise Patristique*: 'euacuatio [...] 2. (fig). action de se vider de soi- même (le Christ prenant la nature humaine)', renoncement (kenôsis~g)' [the action of emptying of one's self (Christ taking on human nature), renunciation (Greek kenosis)].

<sup>682</sup> *DFC* III.933E: 'In Genesi ergo de Jacob ita refertur [...] quod viderit Dominum incumbentem super scalam'; *DFC* III.934A 'Item Daniel propheta Patrem humano habitu se vidisse describit: *aspiciebam [...] vetustus dierum sedebat. Vestimentum ejus candidum ut nix, capilli capitis ejus ut lana munda [...] in sequentibus quoque de Filio ita dixit: Ecce in nubibus coeli filius hominis veniebat [...]*'.

to Adam himself when he heard the ‘voice of God as he was walking in the Garden of Eden’ (Gn. 3.8).<sup>683</sup>

To a reader of the *Doctrinale*’s earlier books, Netter’s enthusiasm for God’s Old Testament theophanies might be unexpected, given that this was a form of divine presence which he strove to avoid discussing in detail in his earlier attacks upon Wyclif’s scriptural hermeneutics. Even more surprisingly (given Netter’s previous denial that the words of scripture could ‘embrace the being’ of their signified objects), he now links the presence of God in these outward forms, as recounted in the Old Testament, to their interpretation as sacred signs.<sup>684</sup> Through grasping the utter unlikeness of God to the base physical forms used to depict Him, Netter argues, the Old Testament prophets ‘directly regarded [*immediatus intuitus*] Him’.<sup>685</sup> This is why Jacob, who saw only the image of a man, nonetheless ‘*saw God face to face*’.<sup>686</sup> Indeed, where Netter had previously denied that in Pharaoh’s dream, the imagined seven heads could become the seven years, now he invoked Augustine’s assertion that through such visions, even the godless pagans ‘Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar saw what neither wanted to understand’.<sup>687</sup>

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<sup>683</sup> DFC III.934E-935A, quoting Augustine, *de Trinitate*, Bk. 2, 10.17: ‘in eo, quod scriptum est in Genesi, loquutum Deum cum homine [...] si excepta figurata locutione [...] in specie hominis videtur Deus cum homine tunc loquutus. Non quidem expresse hoc in libro positum est, sed circumstantia locutionis id rosonat [sic]’ [Concerning what is written in Genesis, that God spoke with man [...] putting aside the figurative meaning [...] it seems that God then spoke with man in the shape of a man. This is not explicitly stated in the book, but the context of the speech suggests it].

<sup>684</sup> See above, pp. 163, 171. I see this assertion as implicit in Ghosh’s observation concerning Netter’s defence of images, mentioned above, fn. 676.

<sup>685</sup> DFC III.930A ‘Omnia ista per imagines plus remotas a rebus, quam ligna, vel lapides nostri removentur a nobis, propter similem tamen dissimilitudinem suarum imaginum clarissime rebus conceptis videbatur eis immediatus intuitus’. [All those visions [of divine things] were through images more remote from the things [they depicted] than wood or stone is removed from us. However, on account of the similar unlikeness of their images, when the things [they signified] had been grasped, He appeared to them, directly perceived].

<sup>686</sup> DFC III.930A: ‘Ita ut diceret Jacob: *Vidi Dominum facie ad faciem*, cum solam hominis vidisset imaginem’.

<sup>687</sup> DFC III.936E: ‘Per informationem spiritus [...] aut per somnia, sicut non solum plerique sancti, sed & Pharao & Nabuchodonosor vidit quod neuter eorum intelligere volebat’ [through a spiritual representation [...] or through dreams, not only very many holy men, but also Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar saw what neither wanted to understand], quoting Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum*, Bk. 2, q. 1.1.

Most startling of all, however, is how Netter now relates these phenomena of the Old Testament to late-medieval religion: just as God was present to figures such as Abraham, so the divine can be similarly present in latter-day images of the Godhead themselves:

if God wanted to appear [*apparere*] in the form of an old man, it is not out of the question that he should now appear [*appareat*] in the likeness of an old man through a painting [...] the Son likewise in the form of a younger man [...] and even the Holy Spirit in the shape of a dove through which it similarly appeared [*apparuit*].<sup>688</sup>

### **5.3. A Hidden Eucharist**

This argument for divine presence within late-medieval religious images of the Godhead through a hermeneutic process marks the most significant assertion, as well as the greatest irony, of the *Doctrinale*'s entire dispute with Wycliffism about the role of signs in popular religion. This is the area of Netter's discussion of images in which he least acknowledges any parallels to the Wycliffite conception of Scripture. And why should he? Netter derives and authorizes his arguments from a much more ancient Greek theology of image, transmitted to the West by figures such as the eighth-century John of Damascus, which held that the Incarnation 'rendered signs of Christ "express"' [*expressus*], or uniquely prominent.<sup>689</sup> In contrast to Wycliffite hermeneutics, which Netter along with other orthodox critics portrays as a self-conscious fixation with signification, Netter highlights how the efficacy of images rests upon a fundamentally non-intellectual, even non-cognitive, rapture:

He who sees the image, sees Him to whom the image belongs [...] he therefore almost forgets the image, provided that in the first instant of contemplation he is snatched up into what is signified [*rapitur in signatum*]. And thus many see clothed people, but do not know when asked about the colour of the garments, since they have been borne off to the person [*ferebantur in hominem*] [...] to

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<sup>688</sup> *DFC* III.935C-D: 'Si ergo voluit apparere in specie hominis, & hoc antiqui, non abs re est, si in effigie antiqui hominis per picturam appareat. Filius quoque in specie hominis junioris [...] Spiritum quoque sanctum in columbae specie, qua item apparuit, Ecclesiastica ratio congruenter admittit.'

<sup>689</sup> Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 203, and see Ch. 1, p. 10, fn. 34.

see the image, is not to stop at the appearance, but to be carried to him [*transferre in eum*] to whom [the image] belongs.<sup>690</sup>

It is the belief that the image was divinely ordained to perform these functions in the age of Christ which ultimately justifies Netter's portrayal of scriptural signs in the *Doctrinale* as mere shadows [*umbra*]. It is God's will that the physical image, and not any old 'wisp of straw' or abstract sign, is worthy of adoration.<sup>691</sup> Whereas Wycliffites remain in the 'condition of the congregation of Jews', dwelling in shadow, this is why the condition of Christians is, in the words of Ambrose, to 'walk within the image', until 'we see face to face'.<sup>692</sup> However, it is exactly in this area of Netter's argument that the parallels with Wyclif's conception of the scriptural sign are clearest. Chiming with Netter's own jest about Wyclif's 'veneration of the imaginary', we have seen that the very language and theology of icons may have provided Wyclif with the core metaphors by which he described the nature of Scripture itself.<sup>693</sup> The hermeneutics of the icon offer the closest parallel in medieval culture to the fundamentally non-rational process by which, according to Wyclif, the reader or listener grasps the scriptural meaning that is Christ, as well as to the rapture by which they become oblivious to its outward signifying forms.<sup>694</sup> Beyond this, Wyclif had argued that the Divine Word becomes present in Scripture through a 'hypostatic union' with the

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<sup>690</sup> *DFC* III.943D-E "Ecce qui videt imaginem, videt eum, cuius est imago, eo, scilicet, intuito, ita quod pene obliviscitur imaginis, dum prima contemtionis instantia rapitur in signatum: & sic vident multi quosdam vestitos, qui interrogati de colore vestis, ignorant, quia toti ferebantur in hominem [...] In hac enim sequela videre imaginem, non est ibi sistere visu, sed transferre in eum, cuius est'.

<sup>691</sup> *DFC* III.944A: 'Nec enim omne signum adoro, sed signum expressum, & evidens apud sensum' [I do not adore every sign, but an express sign, apparent to the sense], refuting the Wycliffite charge that if the orthodox worship images then they should worship any created thing which has the imprint of the Trinity, such as straw]. See also the discussion of this passage in Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 203.

<sup>692</sup> *DFC* III.937E: 'Status ergo Synagogae fuit in umbra, noster in imagine'; III.938C-D: "'Hic umbra, hic imago, illic veritas [...] Hic ergo in imagine ambulamus, in imagine videmus, illic facie ad faciem, ubi plena perfectio [...]" [In this place shadow, image, in that place truth [...] in this place, therefore, we walk in the image, we see in the image, in that place face to face, where there is complete perfection], quoting Ambrose, *De officiis*, Ch. 48. See also Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 202.

<sup>693</sup> On Netter's quip, see above, p. 179, fn. 663. On Wyclif's use of images as analogies for Scripture, see Ch. 2, p. 51.

<sup>694</sup> See Ch. 2, p. 49, fn. 161. See also Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 8, on Wyclif's idea of scriptural understanding as a 'non- or supra-rational apprehension of divine meaning, perhaps as a result of direct inspiration from the Holy Ghost'.

parchment, an idea whose closest analogue in medieval thought is the quasi-Incarnational presence ascribed by figures such as Netter to the icon.<sup>695</sup>

The great significance of Netter's argument about images, therefore, is to expose his fundamental agreement with Wyclif about the function of 'Scripture' (taken in its broadest medieval definition), besides the eucharistic bread and wine, to connect worshippers to God; the major difference lies in his assertion that visual signs, rather than the scriptural signs promoted by Wyclif, were divinely appointed to this function. Netter's argument thereby demonstrates its continuity with the debates about the nature, scope and function of 'Scripture' that developed in the late fourteenth century (his position echoes, for example, the promotion of the physical image of Christ crucified as 'Scripture', as opposed to the words of the Bible, in writings such as the 'chartre of hevene').<sup>696</sup> This is also further evidence of the degree to which Netter and Wyclif (akin to the other medieval figures we have considered in this thesis) are what Ghosh has termed 'hermeneutic confrères'.<sup>697</sup> However, what makes such an agreement about 'Scripture' so important as well as surprising is how comprehensively it has been hidden, compared to the debates in the fourteenth century: not only by the *Doctrinale* itself, with its denial that Scripture can 'encompass the being' of its signified object, but by prevailing historical accounts of fifteenth-century Wycliffite and orthodox controversy.<sup>698</sup>

Moreover, I believe that the occlusion of the *Doctrinale*'s agreement with Wyclif about 'Scripture', and of its entire associated medieval tradition of thought, is not the by-product of Netter's defence of the Eucharist (overtly the *raison d'être* of the *Doctrinale*), but of a different, even more central goal. The principal reason why Netter should want to hide this tradition of 'Scripture' emerges in his defence of role of imagery in the function of the

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<sup>695</sup> Ian Levy, *John Wyclif: Scriptural Logic, Real Presence, and the Parameters of Orthodoxy* (Marquette: Marquette University Press, 2003), p. 88.

<sup>696</sup> See Ch. 4 of this thesis, pp. 143-148.

<sup>697</sup> Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 174.

<sup>698</sup> On these historical accounts, see below, p. 199.

Eucharist itself, centrally in the elevation of the consecrated host among the laity.<sup>699</sup> As we have previously charted, lay viewing of the elevated host formed the heart of the *sacramentalia* of the Mass: the popular belief that one could thereby see Christ Himself, and receive some of the core benefits of sacramental reception, made it the most important religious ritual for a laity which took sacramental communion as infrequently as once a year.<sup>700</sup> For the same reason, Wyclif and Wycliffites had argued, it was the acme of idolatry, buttressing a belief that the bread and wine were physically transformed into Christ's body and blood.<sup>701</sup> Netter in large part justifies Wyclif's criticism; in his book on the sacraments, Netter had argued that Christ's body and blood were so visible through the bread and wine that they were both physically and visibly eaten. As he cites Hugh of St. Victor:

we eat Christ on the altar visibly through the outward appearance of the sacrament and physically through the true presence of the body and the blood.<sup>702</sup>

Similarly, in his treatment of images, Netter argues that Christ's body is truly visible to the laity in their sight of the elevated host. Yet more importantly, he also stresses that the apprehension of Christ's body happens through the signifying power of the host, as a sign; akin to Christ's presence in icons, the bread on the altar is the 'express image and seal of his body'.<sup>703</sup> Indeed, the body's visible presence must happen through symbolism, Netter insists, since the visible accidents of the transubstantiated bread and wine lack any physical

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<sup>699</sup> *DFC* III.259E: 'Cap. XXXVIII [...] De elevatione Eucharistiae in conspectu plebis'.

<sup>700</sup> See Ch. 1, pp. 13-14 on viewing of the elevated host and declining lay reception of the bread and wine.

<sup>701</sup> See Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, I, 18/10-12: 'dicit non quod indignus visibiliter premit dentibus corpus Christi sed quod visibiliter premit dentibus sacramentum corporis Christi et sanguinis' [He [Augustine] does not say that the unworthy recipient visibly presses the body of Christ with his teeth but that he visibly presses with his teeth the sacrament of Christ's body and blood]; *De Eucharistia*, I, 19/2-3: 'nullus sensus hominis sed pure intellectus per fidem percipit corpus Christi' [no human sense but rather the intellect purely through faith perceives the body of Christ]. See also Levy, *Parameters of Orthodoxy*, p. 299.

<sup>702</sup> *DFC* II.326A-B: 'HUGO. "Quod nunc visibiliter secundum sacramenti speciem, & corporaliter, secundum corporis & sanguinis veritatem, Christum in altari sumimus [...]" Haec ille', quoting Hugh of St. Victor, *Commentariorum in hierarchiam coelestem* (PL 175.952D). *DFC* II.326B-C: 'Quam plane ecce dicit Hugo, quod visibiliter & corporaliter Christum sumimus in altari, secundum sacramenti speciem, & corporalis veritatem' [See how clearly Hugh says that we eat Christ visibly and physically in the Mass, according to the outward appearance of the sacrament, and the truth of the body].

<sup>703</sup> *DFC* III.937D: 'Christus modo noscitur in expressa imagine sui corporis naturaliter in altari'.

connection to the body of Christ that they conceal.<sup>704</sup> Just as God was also detached from the outward forms by which He appeared to men in the Old Testament, so, Netter concludes:

the white and round [thing], raised and seen, is the body of Christ to mortal eyes: the body of Christ present there is not however, round, nor white, nor a heretical bread [*panis hereticus*].<sup>705</sup>

This true, symbolic presence of the body through the sight of the host is of course premised upon the greatest distinction, laboured throughout the *Doctrinale*, between Netter's eucharistic theology and the *panis hereticus* of Wyclif. This distinction consists in the physical, local presence of Christ's body beneath the appearance of the bread and wine, brought about through the consecration uttered by the Mass-priest; as with other symbolic forms of communion, viewing the host would not have any meaning without it.

Yet, if Netter had not so thoroughly occluded the consciousness of signs developed in Wyclif's scriptural hermeneutics, here above all, his own defence of the *sacramentalia* would engender in his audience the same problematic questions which we have seen to pervade late fourteenth-century religion. In the immediate context of the bread and wine of the Mass, his readers might ask, how far was the experience of the body mediated through symbolism (a 'trans-figuration' rather than transubstantiation) rendering it irrelevant whether or not one believed the body was in heaven or hidden beneath the appearance of the bread and wine? Critically, how far did the essence of the Eucharist dwell not in the rite

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<sup>704</sup> *DFC* III.265A: 'Perspicue ergo manifestat Dionysius corpus Christi posse videri oculo corporali, cum levatur manibus sacerdotis, non secundum suam essentiam, sed per symbola [...] Haec tamen species nec subjectis prioribus insunt, nec corpus Christi afficiunt. Nec ideo minus corpus Christi visibile ibi reddunt'.

<sup>705</sup> *DFC* III.265D: 'Probat Augustinus Divinitatem Patris invisibilem oculis mortalibus secundum divinam substantiam & naturam: apparuisse tamen eis visibilem in visibilis formis [...] erat Deus Pater; nec tamen Deus Pater erat pedatus alicubi' [Augustine shows that the invisible divinity of the Father appeared to mortal eyes, according to its divine substance and nature, visibly through visible forms [...] it was God the Father; however God was not confined in a place]. *DFC* III.265D: 'Sic illud album & rotundum, levatum, & visum mortalibus oculis est corpus Christi: nec tamen corpus Christi est ibi album, nec rotundum, nec panis hereticus'. Netter's language here suggests a riposte to Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, I, 21/12-19: 'si tam clare intuentur corpus Christi in sacramento altaris [...] oportet eos dicere quod hostia una sit albius, in alia autem fuscus, in una maius, in alia minus [...] et sic Deus noster foret in una hostia plene rotundus et integer, et in alia hostia oblongus et fractus' [If they can see the body of Christ so clearly in the sacrament of the altar [...] they should say that in one host it is whiter, in another darker, in one larger, in another smaller [...] and so our God would be fully round and untouched in one host, and in another oblong and broken].

itself but in the broader body of symbolism, from preaching and the culture of devotions to Christ crucified, which Netter defines as mere *sacramentalia*? Indeed, is the *raison d'être* of Netter's *Doctrinale* not to prove to its readership that this 'Scripture' continued to perform precisely this function, rather than Scripture as Wyclif defined it; is this not the reason why the *Doctrinale*'s defence of the *sacramentalia*, rather than the Church's sacraments, is its longest and final book?

#### **5.4. Conclusion**

Thomas Netter, therefore, does not reflect the demise of the eucharistic function of 'Scripture' in medieval religion in the early fifteenth century. On the contrary, his very need to comprehensively defend the sacramental function of the *sacramentalia* makes him a crucial (if unwilling) witness to a further stage in its history. Before considering further what the *Doctrinale* tells us about this continuity and its significance for accounts of the period, I shall recapitulate the evolving tradition of 'Scripture' that we have charted in this thesis, whose central relevance to Netter's work and period he so strongly sought to obscure.

Fundamentally, texts from the thirteenth century through to the *Doctrinale* acknowledged what we described in the Introduction, that the reception of Christ's body and blood in medieval culture had always meant much more than their physical consumption in the Mass; and that the restriction of this eating to the physical presence was always largely a cultural construct, hiding from the laity and posterity alike the underlying importance of a scripturally-rooted symbolism. As we saw, all medieval theologians, from heretical deniers of Christ's physical presence to its staunchest defenders, followed St. Augustine in insisting that the worshipper could not efficaciously eat Christ's flesh without recognizing that the consecrated bread and wine functioned as signs, whose logic was at root that of a scriptural

sign.<sup>706</sup> However, the writings considered throughout this thesis have also continually highlighted the even more important dimension to the role of symbolism in Christ's bodily presence, namely that the latter extended into a range of other scripturally-rooted signs besides the bread and wine.

These were, fundamentally, the words themselves of Holy Scripture. As St. Augustine's interpretation of the miracle of the loaves in Jn. 6 emphasized, it was by Christ's own teaching (the content of Scripture) as much as his consecration of the bread and wine, that he offered 'spirit and life' to mankind; nor, without the faith fostered by Scripture, could one efficaciously eat Christ's body and blood. Moreover, authorities as seminal as St. Jerome asserted that one ate Christ's body and blood by receiving Scripture itself, even if Augustine's writings (somewhat contradicting themselves, it has been argued), elsewhere warn against equating Scripture with Christ's body and blood. Such language nonetheless showed how, in medieval perceptions, Christ's scriptural presence overlapped with his presence in the bread and wine so far as to extend the definition of 'Eucharist' itself. The pervasive eucharistic function of Scripture in medieval religion (through preaching and other forms) first became clear, we considered, in its ritual uses in monastic communities to effect what Augustine saw as the core efficacies of the Eucharist, of causing Christ to dwell in the worshipper and the worshipper in Christ, that is the Church.<sup>707</sup>

This expanded definition of 'Eucharist' was completed by a third group of symbols, which were much more visibly employed in medieval religion than those of Scripture, narrowly defined: images of Christ crucified. A wealth of medieval accounts attest to worshippers consuming blood from the Crucifix, both spiritually and physically, reflecting the belief that, like the bread and wine, images had been mystically appointed by God as vessels for Christ's presence. Nonetheless, like the eucharistic bread and wine, we saw that

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<sup>706</sup> See Ch. 1, p. 4-7.

<sup>707</sup> See Ch. 1, pp. 6-9.

the efficacy of such images was also mysteriously bound to the content of Scripture. Theologians from Odo of Cheriton through to Netter himself promoted the belief that images expressed the ‘essence’ of Scripture, and could perform its functions in medieval culture. Nor, as accounts of such *lectio domini* throughout the Middle Ages attest, was the reading of the *sensus* of such images clearly distinct from the eating of Christ’s body itself. Thus, as we have seen throughout this thesis, images of Christ, along with the words directly derived from the Bible, constituted an extended medieval definition of ‘Scripture’ as much as they did that of the ‘Eucharist’, and that as their overlapping vocabularies highlight, these two functions could not be clearly separated.<sup>708</sup>

Furthermore, the centrality of this symbolism to the meaning of the medieval Eucharist was foregrounded by its increasing uses, in parallel with the development of the cult of the Mass in the thirteenth century, as substitutes for the reception of the consecrated bread and wine. Its symbols were the same ones which, as scholars have charted, the Church employed to emphasize the uniquely full presence of the humanity of Christ in the bread and wine brought about by the Mass Priest’s consecration.<sup>709</sup> However, as a wealth of contemporary accounts also indicated, many theologians understood this same symbolism (above all the viewing of the host) to allow the laity access to the ‘matter of the sacrament’ [*res sacramenti*] without physical eating; indeed that, as the latter form of eating declined among the laity, so the former became the primary means of regular communion. Thus, we saw that the cult of the Mass effectively and necessarily hid a paradoxical tension: the degree to which the content of this broader symbolism constituted the meaning of the medieval Eucharist.<sup>710</sup>

However, we also saw in the thirteenth century the roots of the major later-medieval threat to the stability of this system, in the increasingly bold claims made for ‘Scripture’.

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<sup>708</sup> Ch. 1, pp. 9-11.

<sup>709</sup> See Ch. 1, p. 12.

<sup>710</sup> Ch. 1, pp. 12-16.

This challenge was starkest in the promotion of preaching to the laity, as a range of preachers answered a major question posed in Canon Law ('I ask you, what is greater, the body of Christ or the Word of God?'), by privileging reception of the preached word *above* that of the consecrated bread. The challenge posed to the Mass by these assertions was reflected in Robert Grosseteste's claim that the preached word transmitted to the listener not only the *verbum Christi* ('the word of Christ') but the *verbum Christum* ('the word that is Christ'). While the idea of Christ's 'real, partial' presence in Scripture was intellectually established, its import for the lay Mass was much more explosive; it privileged to preaching something of the 'whole Christ' which, the laity were taught, lay in the consecrated bread and wine. The threat that this posed to the Mass was already visible in the expressions of a direct preference for the reception of this *verbum Christum* over established rituals (if not sacramental reception itself) which began to emerge in this period, ranging from its competition with viewing the host (at least in elite lay devotions), to arguments that preaching could fulfil the function of sacraments such as Confession.<sup>711</sup>

Nonetheless, we argued, this thirteenth-century tradition of favouring preaching over the Mass was not primarily important for anticipating the collapsing belief in Christ's presence in the bread and wine which would become so visible in Wycliffite thought. Rather, it signalled the more important reason that this belief could collapse: namely that the sacramental scope of preaching was *expanding*, because in the perceptions of its proponents it performed, more effectively, the core functions of the Mass itself. The power of its logic lay in foregrounding what we have seen throughout this thesis, a central, yet hidden, paradox of the medieval Mass and its system of signs (and indeed why assertions of the sacramental status of Scripture represented such a dangerous *problème ecclésiologique*): namely, the degree to which Scripture had always furnished their psychological and emotional

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<sup>711</sup> Ch. 1, pp. 16-22. On the term 'real, partial presence', see Ch. 1, p. 21, fn. 80.

content.<sup>712</sup> The same logic and challenges to the Church, we considered, could be discerned in an expanding conception of the ‘force of words’ [*virtus sermonis*] in the thirteenth century, much more broadly, as writers relocated in words the same powers of access – to divinity, to the past, to other human selves – which had previously distinguished the role of non-verbal symbolism in English culture.

Most importantly, these developments suggested how the words of Scripture were appropriating the functions of the bread and wine in the Mass itself as their use expanded in popular culture, constituting a new stage in the development of the medieval Eucharist. However, throughout this thesis, we have seen that this expanding role was less obviously though the dissemination of words directly derived from the Bible, than that of the ‘Scripture’ (more broadly speaking) of Christ crucified. In the fourteenth century, the spread of literary depictions of such images in the vernacular constituted a sacramental experiment in the diffusion of Christ in words, which not only paralleled the aspirations of the preaching tradition, but quietly anticipated the latter’s most brazen challenges later in the century. Not least, such textual images seemed primarily intent upon directly enacting, rather than merely describing, Christ on the cross, or in the bread and wine; equally, they aspired to connect their readership and Christ together in a form of a ‘textual community’. This ‘Scripture’ thereby duplicated, as in monastic scripturalism, the sacramental and social functions privileged to the Mass but on a far wider and thus more challenging scale, arguably hidden only by the associations of its imagery with the Cult of the Mass itself.<sup>713</sup>

These were the impulses and aspirations which, as this thesis has shown, substantially underpinned the dissemination and use of late-medieval English religious writings in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. In Chapter Two, we turned to one of the most visible signs of this development, the writings of the theologian John Wyclif, starting with

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<sup>712</sup> Ch. 1, p. 24.

<sup>713</sup> Ch. 1, pp. 24-29.

his identification of Scripture with Christ Himself. Far from being the product of Wyclif's novel metaphysics, as both historians and his late-medieval opponents argued, the context of the medieval preaching tradition showed that Wyclif was resurrecting one of its central assertions, whose articulation would shape his hermeneutic thought and its threat to the Church.<sup>714</sup> This challenge became explicit in the 1380s, as Wyclif promulgated the eucharistic doctrine that secured his infamy: that Christ's body was solely yet truly present through a symbolic transformation of the bread and wine which left the latter's physical substance unchanged. His opponents argued that such a symbolic, yet real, presence was a heretical impossibility that destroyed belief in the physical presence. Indeed, we saw that Wyclif was unable, as his opponents alleged, to distinguish such a symbolic presence in the Eucharist from that in the other signs of Scripture.<sup>715</sup> Nonetheless, the seeming collapse in Wyclif's belief in the eucharistic presence was inseparable from the central development in his thought about the sacramental significance of Scripture: his understanding of Christ's presence in Scripture as the source of the powers improperly attributed to the Church's visible rites, including the Mass. This conviction most informs his late sermons, which imagined an English religion in which preaching assumed (or rather recovered, in Wyclif's view) the core functions that the Church vested in the consecrated bread and wine.<sup>716</sup>

As Chapter Three showed, this vision was also central to a range of late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century Wycliffite sermons, which similarly cast the preached word as a substitute for the Mass by appropriating to preaching a range of tropes (most importantly, those of the miracle of the loaves in Jn. 6) with an overwhelmingly eucharistic resonance. Not least, these writings suggested that the uses of Scripture (above all, when preached) had, *de facto*, taken over the ritual functions of the Mass in Wycliffite culture. Such functions may have helped to cement the identity of a movement which, as scholars have increasingly

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<sup>714</sup> Ch. 2, pp. 24-54.

<sup>715</sup> Ch. 2, pp. 54-70.

<sup>716</sup> Ch. 2, pp. 70-80.

argued, was riven by doctrinal disagreements.<sup>717</sup> However, as other Wycliffite writings suggest, such as the impassioned defence of the Mass in the Wycliffite tract *De oblatione*, this substitution may also have been one of the major sources of disunity in the movement. Most dangerously, it validated the orthodox charge that the Wycliffites themselves, rather than the late-medieval Church, manifested Antichrist's desire to destroy the Mass.<sup>718</sup>

Nonetheless, Chapter Four exposed the more important relevance of Wycliffite ideas about Scripture to the broader culture of the later fourteenth century. We saw this to be the case with the preaching of Scripture, by considering the range of clearly non-Wycliffite preachers who privileged the hearing of the preached word of Scripture over the Mass. The prevalence of such ideas suggested the degree to which Wycliffism shared its most apparently idiosyncratic ideas, including its perception of Christ's primary presence in Scripture, with the much broader preaching tradition. Many so-called 'Wycliffite' texts more clearly belonged to a vernacular preaching tradition of which Wycliffism was an offshoot. While more scholarly work remains to be done on this tradition, its clearest difference from Wycliffism was one of degree, in that it did not push its ideas so far as to undermine the Church's sacramental system. Its 'Wycliffism' was actually a reformist tendency whose latent dangers the Wycliffite movement successfully exposed, thus spurring the marginalization of this tradition. It was anger at the fate of this tradition rather than evidence of Wycliffite affiliation which, we argued, was revealed in early fifteenth-century texts such as *Dives and Pauper*.<sup>719</sup> However, the dialogue with Wycliffism about Scripture was most profound in the very writings which aimed to dilute the appetite for scriptural knowledge, through offering the laity an alternative literature focussed upon devotions to Christ crucified. Running counter to their rhetorical opposition to the identification of Christ with Scripture, texts such as the late fourteenth-century miscellany *Pore Caitif* ultimately justified

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<sup>717</sup> Ch. 3, pp. 81-105 in general, and pp. 98-99 on doctrinal disagreement over the Eucharist.

<sup>718</sup> Ch. 3, pp. 106-110.

<sup>719</sup> Ch. 4, pp. 116-137.

the uses of such images, in place of Scripture, not only because are they ‘Scripture’, but because this ‘Scripture’, as offered through its writings, is better able to mediate the whole Christ to its readers.<sup>720</sup>

The existence of this dialogue between Wycliffite and non-Wycliffite writers about ‘Scripture’ highlighted one of the major contentions of this thesis, which also informs long-held scholarly intuitions concerning the profound relationship between Wycliffism and the broader religious culture of the time: namely, that the Wycliffite substitution of Scripture for the Mass was not peculiar to the movement but rather illustrative of how the diffusion of ‘Scripture’ through late-medieval religious writings was, on an unprecedented scale, appropriating the functions of the Mass and its existing system of symbols; indeed that this developing role of ‘Scripture’ was integral to this broader culture’s ‘horizons of expectations’. Wycliffism’s greatest threat to the Church’s sacramental system was to heighten the already-growing consciousness of this broader appropriation. It was this threat, we considered, which may have motivated the broad orthodox discouragement of uses of sophisticated religious literature among the laity in the early fifteenth century in all forms, that is witnessed in texts such as Archbishop Arundel’s *Constitutions* of 1407-1409.<sup>721</sup>

Nonetheless, we have seen evidence in the writings of one of Wycliffism’s fiercest fifteenth-century persecutors, Thomas Netter, that ‘Scripture’ did not cease to perform this function. Netter’s work undoubtedly promotes the opposite impression. In his book on the sacraments, defending the belief in Christ’s physical presence in the bread and wine, Netter refutes the idea that scriptural signs (narrowly defined) can make things present, as Wyclif had argued, *ad absurdum*. This posture tallies with the *Doctrinale*’s indifferent, near-total silence on the need for Scripture in popular religion, beyond seeing it as an adjunct to the

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<sup>720</sup> Ch. 4, pp. 137-149.

<sup>721</sup> Ch. 4, pp. 150-152.

Cult of the Mass.<sup>722</sup> Yet as we also saw, the final book of the *Doctrinale* then defended the use of images in medieval religion by attributing to them precisely the functions vested by Wyclif in Scripture; when interpreted as signs, they not only transmitted scriptural knowledge but connected worshippers to the divine, centrally in the case of the Mass. In other words, Netter agreed with Wyclif about the central importance of ‘Scripture’ to medieval religion, even if like other thinkers in the later medieval period they differed as to its definition. But what makes this agreement about ‘Scripture’ so significant was its fundamental occlusion within the *Doctrinale* itself, and its absence from historical accounts of the period. Moreover, we have seen that the *Doctrinale*’s occlusion of this awareness of ‘Scripture’ was not primarily motivated by its attack on Wyclif’s eucharistic theology. Centrally, Netter was seeking to hide that the *sacramentalia*, from preaching through to devotions to Christ crucified, continued to constitute much of the function of the Eucharist, presenting the same challenges that had characterized late fourteenth-century religion. Thereby he also aimed to hide what was arguably the most important goal of the *Doctrinale*: to prove to its readership that this culture could continue to perform the vital sacramental roles that Wycliffites had privileged to Scripture, the reason why its tract on the *sacramentalia*, rather than the sacraments, was the longest in the entire work.<sup>723</sup>

### **5.5 A Sacrament of Forgetfulness**

Netter’s occlusion of the role of ‘Scripture’ in his account of medieval religion also reflects what I believe is the most significant development in its function between the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, one which informs (and helps to explain) the conflicting accounts of post-Wycliffite religion and how it influenced later periods. Eamon Duffy, for example, has influentially portrayed English religion from around 1400 (the

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<sup>722</sup> Ch. 5, pp. 168-178.

<sup>723</sup> Ch. 5, pp. 178-190.

Wycliffite heresy excepted) as a healthy and meaningful culture of symbols centred upon Christ's Real Presence in the Mass, brought to an end in the mid sixteenth-century not by internal decay but the iconoclastic 'sacrament of forgetfulness' of Protestant Reformers, for whom 'text was everything, sign nothing'.<sup>724</sup> By contrast, figures such as Nicholas Watson have inferred that Duffy's portrayal, so 'idyllically preoccupied with the round of "traditional" devotion', itself reflects a 'construct inherited from the fifteenth century', deriving from the repressive measures taken to quell Wycliffism and other threatening forms of religious literacy.<sup>725</sup>

Nonetheless, Netter's *Doctrinale* has indicated that this construct does not straightforwardly rest, as Watson suggests, upon the mere suppression of a spiritually ambitious late-medieval devotional culture which had reached its apogee in the fourteenth century.<sup>726</sup> Rather, I believe that this view itself reflects the decisive solution to Wycliffism adopted by the fifteenth-century Church, which the *Doctrinale* promotes: the concerted effort to suppress not the sacramental uses of 'Scripture' itself, broadly, but rather popular self-awareness of the role played by signification in its sacramental efficacy. The *Doctrinale* thereby continues a process that we have already seen in early fifteenth-century versions of 'Charters of Christ', which had revised fourteenth-century Charters by removing references suggesting that the text represented, rather than merely described, the historical Christ.<sup>727</sup> Through discouraging the exploration of hermeneutics, 'Scripture' could avoid undermining the belief in Christ's physical presence in the Mass that underpinned the Church's authority.

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<sup>724</sup> Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 480, 532.

<sup>725</sup> Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change', pp. 858-9, 822. See also, for example, the response to Duffy's account in David Aers, 'Altars of Power: Reflections on Eamon Duffy's *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580*', *Literature and History*, 3 (1994), 90-105.

<sup>726</sup> See Watson, 'Conceptions of the Word', on the fifteenth-century *Mirror* of Nicholas Love (pp. 94-98), which is contrasted with what Watson sees as more spiritually ambitious and sophisticated late fourteenth-century devotional works such as *Pore Caitif* (pp. 101-123). His view of the latter works is also discussed in Ch. 4 of this thesis, pp. 113-114. See in general Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change', for Watson's view of the fourteenth-century growth of 'vernacular theology' and the effects of Arundel's *Constitutions* in the early fifteenth.

<sup>727</sup> See Ch. 4, p. 150.

The contribution that Netter most clearly intended to make to this solution, however, was to restrict his clerical readers' conception of 'Scripture' on an intellectual level. Netter effectively rewrites the existing medieval account of sacred hermeneutics, by re-interpreting its most important biblical and patristic authorities; centrally, he offers to the reader an Augustine whose hermeneutic theories can be invoked, in a controlled fashion, to defend the religious function of images but who has almost nothing to say about the sacramental powers of scriptural words.

The solution outlined in the Netter's *Doctrinale* thereby creates its own formidable problems, not least the demand it makes on its audience to divorce belief and reason: as with the viewing of images, the reader, following the example of Netter himself, must offer up the intellect as 'captive' to the obedience of faith in the Church:

there will be no error of thought [*error in intellectu*], where there is no wilfulness of disposition [*affectu praesumptio*].<sup>728</sup>

Nor was Netter's *Doctrinale* the only blueprint for popular religion in a century whose later orthodox thinkers, such as Thomas Gascoigne, mid-century Chancellor of Oxford, desired to rehabilitate the medieval tradition of scriptural preaching and its intellectual heritage.<sup>729</sup>

Nonetheless, that Netter's occlusion of the function of 'Scripture' became a central part of

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<sup>728</sup> *DFC* III.937A: 'Ubi autem capacitas deficit, charitas ipsa non deest, si captivum submittant intellectum in obsequium fidei. NEC TUNC ERIT ERROR in intellectu, ubi non est in affectu praesumptio' [Where however capacity is lacking, charity itself will not be, if [worshippers of images] submit their intellect as a captive to the obedience of faith]. As Christopher O'Donnell comments in 'A Controversy on Confirmation: Thomas Netter of Walden and Wyclif', in *Thomas Netter of Walden*, pp. 317-332 (p. 332): 'The very limitations of Netter allow him a serene possession of the truth'.

<sup>729</sup> As Gascoigne commented: 'et iste Arundel cito post illam constitutionem factam de Verbo Dei alligando fuit obtrusus in suo guttore quod non potuit bene loqui nec deglutire et sic moriebatur' (Thomas Gascoigne, *Loci e libro veritatum: Passages selected from Gascoigne's Theological Dictionary [...] 1403-1458*, ed. by J. Thorold Rogers. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881, pp. 34-35) [And that Arundel, soon after composing his Constitution, was blocked up in his throat for fettering the Word of God, due to which he could not speak or swallow, and so he died]. For more on the orthodox thought of Gascoigne and its overlaps with that of Wyclif, see Mishtooni Bose, 'Prophecy, Complaint and Pastoral Care in the Fifteenth Century: Thomas Gascoigne's *Liber Veritatum*', in *Texts and Traditions of Medieval Pastoral Care: Essays in Honour of Bella Millett*, ed. by Cate Gunn and Catherine Innes-Parker (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2009), pp. 149-162; esp. p. 155 on the importance Gascoigne attached to preaching, p. 161 on his interest in the thought of Robert Grosseteste and pp. 150-154 on his membership of the medieval 'tradition of prophetic denunciation' of corruption in the Church. Wyclif's self-identity as a prophet has been discussed in Ch. 2 of this thesis, p. 43, fn. 140.

fifteenth-century culture may help to explain why, in the perception of scholars such as Duffy, the flourishing culture of religious representations in this period (images of the saints; the devotions to Christ crucified; miracle plays; preaching) held such an untroubled yet immediate power for the laity. This arguably reflects the success with which the Church had suppressed sophisticated lay discourses about their function as signs; among evidence of this success, not least, is the lack of scholarly accounts of the eucharistic function of ‘Scripture’ in medieval culture.

Furthermore, this solution did not merely allow such representations to flourish, I shall suggest, but also allowed them to continue displacing forms of communion centred upon the reception and sight of the bread and wine in the Mass, buoyed by innovations such as printing.<sup>730</sup> The hidden yet increasingly central function of ‘Scripture’ within fifteenth-century culture, in turn, also helps to explain why so many of the cruces in late-medieval religious hermeneutics, explored in this thesis, re-emerged as if new-born and with such violence on the eve of the Reformation. Such continuities illuminate the claims made in the ‘Paraklesis’ (‘Exhortation’) of Desiderius Erasmus (1467 – 1536) for his ground-breaking 1516 edition of the New Testament [*Novum Instrumentum*], which placed the restored Greek Scriptures besides their most thorough Latin re-translation since the fourth-century Vulgate (a return *ad fontes* utterly eclipsing that which late- fourteenth-century Wycliffite biblical scholarship had achieved or even imagined):

He (who promised to be with us always, unto the end of the world), stands out especially in this writing, in which he even now lives, breathes and speaks for us, I might say almost more effectively than when he lived among men. The Jews saw and heard less than you see and hear in the Gospel writings. [...] all of

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<sup>730</sup> As Aston comments in *Lollards and Reformers*, p. 119, single-sheet devotional woodcut images ‘became cheap and commonly available in the fifteenth century. This kind of text was a sort of halfway house between church image and illustrated text: a paper icon. It was expected simultaneously to teach the unlettered believer [...] and to be venerated by him or her’. On the plethora of indulgenced woodcut ‘Images of Pity’ which emerged in the later fifteenth century, see C. Dodgson, ‘English Devotional Woodcuts of the Late Fifteenth Century, with Special Reference to Those in the Bodleian Library’, *Walpole Society*, 17 (1928-29), 95-108; Plates XXXV-XXXVII (esp. pp. 95-100, 102; Plates XXXV-XXXVI).

his possessions [...] would not exhibit Christ more distinctly [*expressius*] and truly than the Gospel writings [...] A stone or wooden statue [...] portrays only the form of the body (if it portrays anything at all of him) while these words bring back [*referunt*] the living image of his holy mind and the speaking, healing, dying, rising Christ Himself. In short they render him so completely present that you would see less if you had him before your own eyes.<sup>731</sup>

As Brian Cummings has observed: ‘to make the text the receptacle of Christ “fully present” – even more than in his human body or implicitly than in the sacrament – is a startling principle’, an observation which was among the inspirations for this thesis.<sup>732</sup> Erasmus’s claims for Scripture suggest, not least, the logic which drove the dwindling of the Eucharist to mere memorial for a large section of Protestant culture. Yet, we have also discovered in this thesis that such developments do not credibly derive from a resurrected sixteenth-century awareness of the *enargeia* (vividness) of language, after a millennium of medieval *barbarismus*, that Erasmus’s writings appear to suggest.<sup>733</sup> On the contrary, his claims are the fruits of a distinctively late-medieval shift in perceptions of the *limites Scripturae*, the divinely-appointed boundaries of Scripture’s authority and power, whose first vocal proponents in England had been Wyclif and his followers.<sup>734</sup> Like them, Erasmus articulates

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<sup>731</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, ‘Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami Paraclesis id est Adhortatio ad Christianae Philosophiae Studium’, in *Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami Opera Omnia emendatoria et auctiora [...] cum indicibus totius operis copiosissimis*, ed. J. Leclerc, 10 vols. (Leiden, 1703-1706; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1961-2), V, cols. 137-144 (142-144): ‘qui quod pollicitus est sese semper nobiscum fore usque ad consummationem seculi, in his litteris praecipue praestat, in quibus nobis etiamnum vivit, spirat, loquitur, paene dixerim efficacius, quam cum inter homines versaretur. Minus videbant, minus audiebant Judaei, quam tu vides & audis in Euangelicis litteris [...] [col. 144] Atqui ut totam illius supellectilem proferas, nihil erit, quod Christum expressius ac verius repraesentet, quam Euangelicae litterae. Ligneam aut saxeam statuam, amore Christi, gemmis auroque decoramus [...] Siquidem illa, quid aliud, quam corporis figuram exprimit? si tamen illius quicquam exprimit; at haec tibi sacrosanctae mentis illius vivam referunt imaginem, ipsumque Christum loquentem, sanantem, morientem, resurgentem, denique, totum ita praesentem reddunt, ut minus visurus sis, si coram oculis conspicias’. See also the translation of the ‘Paraclesis’ in *Christian Humanism and the Reformation: Selected Writings of Erasmus, with the Life of Erasmus by Beatus Rhenanus*, ed. by John C. Olin (New York: Fordham University Press, 1965), pp. 92-106, from which I have drawn his rendering of ‘praestat’ as ‘stands forth’ (p. 102).

<sup>732</sup> Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 106.

<sup>733</sup> On *enargeia*, see Terence Cave, ‘*Enargeia*: Erasmus and the Rhetoric of Presence in the Sixteenth Century,’ *L’Esprit Créateur*, 16 (1976), 5-19.

<sup>734</sup> On Wyclif’s conception of the *limites Scripturae*, see Ch. 2, p. 37.

the ability of Scripture to make Christ immediately present [*expressus*], to transport [*referere*] the beholder to Him; like them expresses this power by the analogy of the visual because he too sees Christ as present in Scripture rather than in such visual symbols.<sup>735</sup>

However, the full importance to the Reformation period of the shifting late-medieval uses of Scripture is suggested in the riposte of one of Erasmus's opponents, Bishop of Rochester, John Fisher (c. 1469-1535). Writing several years after the 'Paraklesis', his 'sermon preached on a good Friday' argued that the:

most wonderfull booke [...] of the Crucifixe [...] maye suffice for the studie of a true christian man [...] A booke hath boardes, leaues, lynes, wrytinges, letters booth small and great [...] The leaues of this booke be the armes, the handes, legges and feete, with the other members of his most precious and blessed body. Neuer anye Parchement skynne was more strayghtlye stratched by strength vpon the tentors then was this blessed body vpon the crosse [...] This booke was written with in and without. Fyrst within was wrytten but one worde: neuerthesse this one word compryseth in it, as sayth saint Paule, the whole treasure of al cunning and wisdome partayning vnto God [...] *In principio erat verbum.*<sup>736</sup>

As scholars have recognized, Fisher's evocation of the crucifix as Book responds directly to the claims of the 'Paraklesis', using tropes derived from the fourteenth-century Charter of Christ tradition.<sup>737</sup> Yet what must also be observed is that Fisher's response itself appears to draw upon the late-medieval Charter Tradition's own disagreement with the conception of 'Scripture as Christ', as promoted by Wycliffism. As with the late fourteenth-century 'chartre of hevene', written Scripture for Fisher is not the source of Christ, but Christ Incarnate is the source of Scripture. But, paradoxically, the crucifix itself is a 'wonderfull'

<sup>735</sup> See Ch. 1 of this thesis, p. 53.

<sup>736</sup> John Fisher, 'A Sermon verie fruitfull, godly, and learned, vpon thys sentence of the Prophet Ezechiell, Lamentationes, Carmen, et vae, very aptely applied vnto the passion of Christ: Preached vpon a good Friday', in *English Works of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester (1469-1535): Sermons and Other Writings, 1520-1535*, ed. by Cecilia A. Hatt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 300-323 (pp. 301-303). See *John Fisher*, ed. Hatt, p. 298, on the likely composition of the sermon in the 1520s.

<sup>737</sup> On the references to the 'Paraklesis' and to the Charter of Christ Tradition in Fisher's Good Friday sermon, see *John Fisher*, ed. Hatt, pp. 295-299.

Book, the ‘essence of Scripture’,<sup>738</sup> precisely because it mysteriously imparts to the beholder, through a Reading of the Lord [*lectio domini*], the logos that is Christ.<sup>739</sup> Furthermore, by the dawn of the Reformation, the popularity of the crucifix as book in English religious culture was bound more inexorably and ironically to textual representations of Christ than ever before; the very cross that Fisher describes was now itself a printed as well as a written artifact, and the devotional classics of late-medieval religion found new audiences beyond the scope of what their original authors imagined in the period’s burgeoning printed literature. These developments may help to explain why, come the mid-century Reformation, a religion of the text replaced one of the visual symbol as quickly and comprehensively as it seems to have done.

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<sup>738</sup> Richard Rex, *The Theology of John Fisher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 47, also qtd. in *John Fisher*, ed. Hatt, p. 297. Rex’s idea of the cross as the ‘essence of Scripture’ echoes Augustine’s assertion in *De Doctrina Christiana*, II, 41.52 that ‘in the sign of the cross is written every Christian act’ (discussed in Ch. 1 of this thesis, p. 10).

<sup>739</sup> On *lectio domini*, see Vincent Gillespie, ‘Lukyng in haly bukes’, p. 11 and also Ch. 1 of this thesis, p. 10. See Ch. 4, pp. 146-148 on the opposition to the idea of ‘Christ as Scripture’, as conceived of by Wycliffites, in the late-medieval devotional text, the ‘chartre of hevене’.

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