After Wyclif: Lollard Biblical Scholarship and the English Vernacular, c.1380-c.1450

by

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In memory of Anne E. Imbrie

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Introduction

After Wyclif: Lollard Biblical Scholarship and the English Vernacular, c.1380-c.1450

"This book seemeth to have been made by John Wickliffe." So reads an inscription on the fly leaf of the manuscript known as University College Oxford 96, a compilation written around 1435 containing a copy of the Wycliffite Bible Prologue and selected lections from the Gospels.[1] The remark, in an early modern hand, captures a perspective that has become familiar in studies of Lollard biblical scholarship, imputing to Wyclif the qualities of an entire interpretive community and its texts. At the same time, the word "seemeth" registers uncertainty about the textual boundaries of this community and its relationship to "John Wickliffe," a reminder that Lollardy's transformation into a popular heresy reframed the movement's underlying theological premises in complex and problematic ways. These different possibilities are legible in the Prologue itself, for as this anonymous reader seems to have realized, there is no reference or allusion in that text to Wyclif. In this, University College Oxford 96 is not alone: while the Wycliffite Bible survives in no fewer than 250 partial and complete copies, none cites or even incidentally mentions its namesake, either in the lengthy and wide-ranging Prologue affixed to several recensions of the translation, or in marginal glosses accompanying the translated scripture itself.[2]

University College Oxford 96 disrupts our assumptions about Wycliffite texts in other ways as well. For instance, it places the Prologue, which contains an extensive and controversial discussion of vernacular hermeneutics, alongside liturgical features such as Gospel lections for Easter day and Palm Sunday.[3] And while most of the manuscript is in English, there is also a Latin table illustrating the genealogies of the Old Testament, an unexpected inclusion given the association in Wycliffite thought between Latinity and clerical power. Among these various compositions, however, it is the Prologue which is directly implicated by the comment that the manuscript merely "seemeth" to be Wyclif's, for the English scriptural versions that it accompanied were often thought to be the theologian's own work.[4] Both John Bale and John Foxe, writing in the wake of opposition to Archbishop Cranmer's Prayer Books, credit Wyclif with the translation, and for liberating the authentic English text from the artificial accretions of Latinity; it was Wyclif, Foxe wrote, "through whom the Lord would first waken and raise up again the world."[5] These and other evangelical reformers envisioned Wyclif as a kind of prophetic translator, architect of the preeminent English book. And even if our early modern annotator predated such remarks, similar attitudes regarding the significance of Wyclif could be found in the work of Henry Knighton, the Augustinian canon whose chronicle surveys the years during which Wycliffism took hold in England. He writes in a well known entry of

> The Gospel, which Christ gave to the clergy and the doctors of the church, that they might administer it to the laity and to weaker brethren, according to the demands of the time and the needs of the individual, as a sweet food for the mind, that Master John Wyclif translated from Latin into the language not of angels but of Englishmen, so that he made that common and open to the laity, and to women who were able to read, which used to

be for literate and perceptive clerks, and spread the Evangelists' pearls to be trampled by swine. [6]

Another chronicler, Adam Usk, later traced the troubles plaguing the kingdom during Richard's youth back to the "errors and heresies" that arose "on account of the seeds sown by a certain Master John Wyclif, whose noxious doctrine contaminated the faith as if by tares, whereby England, and especially London and Bristol, were polluted."[7] In 1407, Archbishop Thomas Arundel reiterated and institutionalized these sentiments when he drafted sweeping prohibitions against the teaching or translation of English scripture, authorizing the examination of any such "book, pamphlet [*libellus*], or tract now lately composed in the time of John Wyclif, or since then."[8] As ecclesiastical audiences confidently ascribed the first English Bible to Wyclif, Wycliffism (also known as Lollardy) became synonymous with the ideas of a single individual.[9] Indeed, for the annotator of University College Oxford 96 no less than his medieval precursors, the concept of Lollard biblical scholarship *after* Wyclif would have been hard to grasp; an unbroken intellectual and hermeneutic genealogy linked the heresiarch to his followers.

The Prologue's reticence when it comes to Wyclif is therefore especially surprising. The Bible versions, which were likely completed by 1395, came at an early point in the history of the movement, when Lollardy was still as much an academic as a popular heresy. Like so many of the movement's most important documents, they were the work of scholars with access to the material and intellectual resources of Oxford, an environment that had been profoundly shaped by Wyclif's university teaching, and which continued to bear the impress of his influence well after his departure in 1381.[10] The mandate suspending key members of his circle—John Aston, Laurence Bedeman,

Nicholas Hereford and Philip Repyngdon—had been issued by the university's chancellor, Robert Rygge, in 1382, following a second hearing at Blackfriars, and then only reluctantly.[11] Throughout this period, Wyclif proceeded to write, and not anonymously, some of his most strident and polemical tracts, including a doctrinal compendium known as the *Trialogus*.[12] Protecting Wyclif from ecclesiastical scrutiny, in other words, was no longer a priority, if it ever had been; he had made his opinions (including those concerning the eucharist) widely known in sermons and academic commentaries, and his prolific final years were merely the culmination of an unusually tumultuous and outspoken life.[13]

All of these circumstances make the Bible versions, and especially the Prologue's energetic defense of vernacular scripture, precisely the place where one would expect to find detailed treatment of Wyclif's work. Forshall and Madden's conjectural attribution of the Prologue to John Purvey, a Lollard priest and close associate of Wyclif's at Oxford, only highlights how the text was the product of a close knit community of scholars and teachers in which Wyclif's own writings would have been closely studied.[14] As a genre, moreover, the Middle English translator's prologue had traditionally provided an opportunity to make such relationships a focal point, supplying a privileged domain for framing the forms of knowledge and authority that had precipitated a given text or translation.[15] Perhaps no other Middle English prologue is as preoccupied with exhibiting its own social logic or with delineating the areas of intellectual exchange governing its production.[16] Thus, while few Lollard texts actually cite the theologian's works, let alone in a form directly recognizable to the uninitiated reader, that the same practice extends to the so-called Wycliffite Bible poses a remarkable challenge to the

different intellectual and cultural histories which have coalesced around Wyclif and the vernacular.[17]

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Although Wyclif's work is no longer regarded as the "source" of English Wycliffite writings, at least as such a concept is understood in attribution studies, our literary-historical paradigms depend in significant ways on the view that Lollardy derived purpose and coherence from Wyclif's thinking.[18] Recent claims that scholars have overestimated the historical significance of Lollardy shed light on the complex nature of late medieval heresy but only indirectly address the assertion, central to most major studies in the field, that Wyclif's own emphasis on the supreme authority of scripture made up the ideological core of the movement, and was the source of continuity as well as a shared set of concerns in the biblical scholarship of his followers.[19] The best known and most compelling such study is Anne Hudson's book *The Premature Reformation*. Hudson argues that from Wyclif's stress on the necessity of scriptural justification "sprang the theology of the eucharist, of confession and absolution, the rejection of clerical temporalities, of the papacy and of all forms of private religion, the doubts about the legality of images, pilgrimages, war and oaths, and the demand that neither civil nor canon law should counter the plain import of scripture."[20] The core of Wycliffism as a religious and social program, she concludes, is Wyclif's own emphasis on the Bible's inerrant truth and authority.

Certainly, Wyclif was not unique in resisting the spiritual mediation of the church, nor even in critiquing ecclesiastical authority in the light of biblical precept and the life of Christ as recorded in the gospels.[21] But his influence should not be underestimated, and Hudson's work has been a salutary reminder of this fact, especially when it comes to the context of vernacular Wycliffism. Although Wycliffism was very much an academic heresy, emerging from the discourses of learning and instruction that dominated late medieval university culture, the practical implications of Wyclif's ideas were impossible to ignore. By emphasizing the authority and sovereignty of scripture to the extent that he did, he prepared the way for what was most distinctive about Lollardy as a vernacular reform movement: the unprecedented and systematic effort to translate Latin sacred texts into English, as well as to render those texts intelligible to new English audiences by supplying an adjacent body of hermeneutic knowledge in the vernacular.[22] Central here are his ties to a core group of university intellectuals who came to prominence in the 1380s. Circulating tracts and preaching in public, men such as Nicholas Hereford, John Purvey, John Aston, and Philip Repyngdon helped introduce Wyclif's ideas to educated and uneducated English audiences alike; their work comprised the textual armature by which heterodox sensibilities spread beyond Oxford.[23] By the 1440s, Wycliffite sentiments may have been widely shared among the laity;[24] even the pious laymen who dominated the later stages of the movement can be shown, in certain instances, to have been knowledgeable about the central tenets of Wyclif's teachings, including those on the Bible.[25]

In support of this position, Hudson shows that many Wycliffite texts were the result of a centralized and well-funded effort for the production and dissemination of

manuscripts. It was through such textual networks, and not only through the itinerant

preaching of his followers, that Wyclif's ideas were transmitted from Latin into the

vernacular. Perhaps the most significant example of this pattern is a reference work

known as the *Floretum*, an alphabetical compendium of Latin theological and

ecclesiological terms intended as a resource for Wycliffite preachers.[26] Redacted into the

Rosarium Theologie, and thence into an abbreviated Middle English version, the text

quotes Wyclif's work at length; scriptural passages and references common in Wyclif's

Latin writings such as his sermons and *De Mandatis* are repeated to the letter, suggesting

both wide access to exemplars and a level of technical care and oversight in copying that

is remarkable even for the late fourteenth century, before Arundel's *Constitutions* and

other anti-heresy measures severely restricted the circulation of Wycliffite material.

Whatever Wyclif's actual role may have been in organizing such work, it seems clear

from the evidence Hudson has presented that his followers thought about the Bible in

much the same way he did, that their scholarship coalesced and cohered around Wyclif's

own understanding of scripture's unique authority as the law of God.

Biblical commentaries such as the English redaction of the *Rosarium Theologie*

offered an extensive archive of terms and categories that vernacular audiences could use

to understand—and thus reinterpret—sophisticated theological problems. The Middle

English translation of the *Rosarium Theologie*, for example, contains discussion and

citations of authorities on such topics as "absolucion," "eukaristia," and "possession."[27]

This hermeneutic work had profound implications for English religious culture, as many

scholars, even those who describe "Lollardy" as a myth, have recognized in their work on

Wyclif and the vernacular. Richard Rex, to take one such scholar, has observed that "the

historical importance of Lollardy consists in the fact that it was the first time that the English ecclesiastical authorities had to grapple with the problem of heresy as anything other than the inconsequential aberration of an eccentric academic or the coarse skepticism of a thoughtful layman."[28]

Wyclif did more, however, than inspire a dissenting movement; his own idea of the Bible impinged in complex ways on the body of vernacular knowledge and interpretation then taking shape under the auspices of Lollardy's adherents. While it is true that during the last decades of the fourteenth century the movement's scholars had laid the groundwork for an interpretive community stretching back to Wyclif himself, his own theological suppositions about the status of biblical writing and scriptural truth, shaped within the disputational ethos of the late medieval university, held out different possibilities for how Lollards understood the nature, meaning, and value of sacred texts. The textual networks and genealogies linking Wyclif to the broader vernacular context of Wycliffism tell us much about the rise of popular heresy in England but are not necessarily evidence of a single and unified scriptural agenda. As I will show, Lollard biblical scholarship *produced* fresh tensions and dilemmas as it grappled with the hermeneutic and interpretive implications of Wyclif's scriptural logic; his theories about the authority and sufficiency of the Bible had a vernacular afterlife that is yet to explored.

Whereas pioneering studies by Anne Hudson and Margaret Aston approached Wycliffism as a dissenting movement whose textual ideology had helped legitimate the vernacular and usher in a "coherent programme" for reformation, my project attends to the polyvocality of Wycliffite thought, its inner contradictions and its complex hermeneutic idiom.[29] These treatments of the subject are distinct not because they are

incompatible—far from it—but because they inscribe different parameters of inquiry. For in addition to being a reform movement and a popular heresy, Lollardy was also an interpretive and intellectual community. Accordingly, my project most directly engages the concerns of scholars such as Rita Copeland, Kantik Ghosh, Ian Christopher Levy, and Fiona Somerset, who focus greater attention on how Lollards shaped and negotiated pressures already present in late medieval intellectual culture, particularly those surrounding the instruction and interpretation of the Bible.[30] Kantik Ghosh's work, to take that nearest mine in scope and emphasis, maps the shifting terrain of late medieval academic biblical study by demonstrating how the Wycliffite "heresy" (his term) reanimated longstanding distinctions between "sciential" and "sapiential" approaches to scriptural interpretation, or between, in the first case, a self-consciously philological and historical understanding of biblical language, and, in the second, an inspired appreciation of the Bible's transcendent and monologic meaning.[31] He foregrounds how this polarity—especially as it was mediated through the prism of Wyclif's own "sapiential" concept of the Bible—generated the discursive processes by which Lollardy "brought out of the Schools, and into the domain of the non-clerical and the vernacular, intellectual discourses of considerable complexity, sophistication and latitude, and thereby changed the always problematic ideological positioning of such discourses within contemporary culture."[32]

By situating Lollardy within the broader context of academic biblical interpretation, and by offering an especially nuanced treatment of Wyclif's own hermeneutic positions, Ghosh not only traces out tensions that deserve further inquiry but also supplies a template for reconsidering the broader problematics of scriptural meaning

and the authority of sacred texts. In these and other respects, my study is heavily indebted to his. But while Ghosh foregrounds the discourses of Latinate intellectuality, focusing on how Wycliffism took shape in dialogue with its "orthodox" opponents, I instead concentrate on the complex set of appropriations and disavowals that marks the reception of Wyclif's thought in the vernacular biblical scholarship of his followers.[33] I do so to explore rather more rudimentary questions about the textuality of the Bible and the nature of scriptural Christianity in this period. Wyclif's understanding of the Bible had been shaped by his troubled relationship to prevailing trends at Oxford in the logical and semantic study of scriptural language; these tensions shed light on the hermeneutic work of Wycliffism more broadly, whose biblical scholars were products of the same academic milieu, and alert to the challenges and opportunities such a culture presented for their own work in the vernacular. This is one reason why Wyclif's response to the universals question—a logico-metaphysical question of the utmost urgency, but one more often approached, if approached at all, in the context of debates over sacramental authority—has implications for how we read the English translations, sermons, and commentaries associated with early Oxford Lollardy, a point my project will continually emphasize as it maps the complex interface of late medieval theology and vernacular hermeneutics.[34]

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It is in these contexts that the annotation in University College Oxford 96 remarking upon Wyclif raises the most provocative questions. Wyclif's followers were

called both Wycliffites and Lollards, the latter a pejorative term derived from the Middle

Dutch verb *lollen*, or "to mumble." Such appellations are clearly problematic, but I will

tend to privilege the adjective "Wycliffite" precisely because it foregrounds the position I

wish to interrogate throughout the project—namely, that there was an identity of outlook

among Wyclif and subsequent biblical scholars regarding the nature and authority of

scriptural texts. Wyclif approached language from the perspective of his own theological

training, which laid emphasis on the omniscience of God and the belief that every sign

affirmed its place within a rational universal order organized according to divine

intention.[35] As a realist of a rather extreme kind, he held that scriptural truth transcended

the language of the Bible as such, which, however desirable it might be to have in the

vernacular, was yet one more layer of mediation shrouding the divine mind behind the

words themselves. Chapter one will return to these ideas in greater detail. What I want

to emphasize here is that for Wyclif scripture in its highest sense resides beyond the

mediation of human language and written books. And yet no sect or movement could

have produced as many scriptural commentaries, paraphrases, and translations as

Wycliffism did (including two complete translations of the Bible into English) without

also accepting that scripture is in some fundamental sense a verbal category, and that

meaning resides in, and devolves from, the conventions of its language. The corollary of

this position, the implications of which I trace throughout the project, entails the idea that

the Bible is properly the object of philological and historical criticism, read and

comprehended within the dialectic of reader and text—all imperatives Wyclif himself

resisted. That resistance is articulated most vigorously through the particular ways in

which Wyclif, writing in academic treatises such as *De Universalibus* (1373-74) and *De*

Veritate Sacrae Scripturae (1377-78), theorized the Bible's primacy as the law of God.

De Veritate is especially significant in this regard, for it is Wyclif's most sustained attack

on those who believed that scripture had become riddled with errors and inconsistencies,

and who had thus come to doubt the Bible's basic veracity. As we shall see, Wyclif

attempts to short-circuit these criticisms by postulating an analogy between the Bible and

the Book of Life.[36] Familiar from John's vision in Apocalypse of a "book" inscribed

with the names of those who would be spared damnation, the Book of Life came to

connote for Wyclif an eternal and incorruptible record of God's intentions. As an

analogue for scripture, it encompassed Wyclif's effort to conceptualize the Bible not as a

material object, nor even as an anthology of texts and traditions, but rather as a divine law

shorn of the "sensible signs" that make up human language and written books.[37] In this

sense, too, the Book of Life functioned as a figure for divine inscription, and thus for the

inherent truth and sacred logic of all scriptural teachings.

This constellation of ideas, at least as I have previewed it here, might give the

impression that the scriptural Christianity of Wyclif was not that of his followers, or at

least that their motives in seeking alternatives to ecclesiastical authority frequently

differed. The issue is more nuanced than that, however. Oberman describes Wyclif's

commitment to scriptural Christianity as a reaction against the growing dominance in the

fourteenth century of canon law and canon lawyers, who insisted on "equal reverence for

scriptural and for extrascriptural oral traditions." Like Bradwardine and other doctors of

theology in the period, Wyclif turned to scripture as "the authoritative source" of

tradition—"the final test," Oberman writes, "of the interpretation of later interpreters."[38]

This latter principle functions as a "mode of reception of the *fides* or *veritas* contained in

Holy Scripture," thereby excluding from tradition any claims of special and continuous revelation that deviate from God's written law.[39] It was the belief that truth could be preserved elsewhere than in scripture, according to Wyclif, which had prompted the church, and the Pope in particular, to impose rites and obligations with no grounding in the words of Bible, the *Decretales* being the most egregious example.[40] Wyclif thus presupposed the illegitimacy of all beliefs and practices not explicitly justified in the Bible itself, holy writ being the standard by which even the church and its highest representatives are to be held. The revolutionary implications of these ideas are obvious, especially in the area of vernacular literacy and religious instruction. Wyclif's conviction that Latinity had departed from the exact words of the biblical text, obfuscating the teachings of Christ and abandoning the ideal of scriptural warrant, provided a powerful justification not only for an English Bible, but for the systematic adaptation and assimilation of Latinate learning into the vernacular as well, a project which his more learned university followers undertook with a vengeance as they revised, translated, interpolated, extracted, paraphrased, and glossed scripture's manifold texts. It is important to realize, then, that the unique provocations and possibilities of this work are impossible to comprehend apart from Wyclif's thought, and in many ways derive from it, even if it was as a university lecturer and doctor of theology that he distinguished himself. Yet the theoretical armature he establishes for Lollardy has its own discursive tensions and contingencies, precisely because it is premised on a return to the "theological" and a renewed emphasis on scripture's privileged status. My project thus seeks to understand the range of questions precipitated by Wyclif's own idea of scripture, and to describe how these are implicated in the vernacular biblical scholarship of his

followers, whose analyses of texts ascribed reality to the written word, not just its divine archetype.

My concern throughout the project, then, is generally not with Wyclif's biblical commentary as such, which has been discussed at some length elsewhere, but instead with the theoretical implications of his *biblicism*, a term first used extensively by G. A. Benrath to describe the nexus of theological realism and ecclesiological politics informing Wyclif's view of the Bible.[41] Wyclif's biblicism incorporated competing emphases, supplying a conceptual schema that exerted contradictory pressures on Lollardy not only as a vernacular reform movement but also as an interpretive community.[42] On one level, the vernacular tracts and translations of Lollardy's adherents (if that is still the best term) had been prompted by Wyclif's conviction that scriptural truth inheres not in the accidents of language but rather in the intentions of the Bible's divine author—as a Wycliffite tract on secular authority explains, "witte stondis not in langage but in groundynge of treuþe."[43] The ideal of a transcendent and uniform register of scriptural meaning, of a direct intelligibility that made little place for the mediating functions of hermeneutics and the verbal arts, represented a potent challenge to the dominion of Latinity because it refused to think of scriptural truth as confined to any single language. In this way at least Wyclif established a rationale for English to emerge as a medium for religious and theological argument on par with Latin, setting the stage for a broader cultural emphasis in late medieval England on the authority of the vernacular.

Yet, on another level, Wyclif's notion of scriptural authority, following from some of the broader ways in which he conceptualized the Bible, made almost no

concessions to English as an independent or privileged socio-linguistic category. He envisions scripture in much the same way John envisions the Book of Life in Apocalypse: as a mode of divine inscription securely outside the domain of temporal and material existence. To locate scriptural truth in human languages and written books is to desanctify the Bible; God's teachings necessarily exceed the outward forms by means of which they are manifest. While Latin may be no more authoritative than English, all sign systems provide at best only a mediated apprehension of the divine mind. Such views, of course, are not unprecedented in the history of biblical exegesis, and in Wyclif's case are well documented, but they acquire a different and more complex valence when considered alongside the vernacular imperative of Wycliffism. The biblical translations and commentaries which figure largely in this study articulate themselves within the discursive field of Wyclif's thought even as they use the vernacular to particularize and locate scriptural truth in textual forms. They proceed from a similar commitment to the authority of scripture even as they confront the limitations of thinking about the Bible as a disembodied, immaterial, unchanging *liber vitae*. They make sense of their own interpretive practices in relation to Wyclif even as they ground their turn to English in a less essentializing, more historically situated hermeneutic.

As influential as they were, then, the most significant energies of Wyclif's thought also unleashed complexities and contradictions that put the very idea of scripture in flux. If his biblicism was an inspiration to English reformers, providing contemporary theology with a new appreciation for the literal level of scripture (however that might be defined), it also predicated scriptural truth in more problematic and elusive ways. Reacting against the terminist inclinations then dominant at Oxford, Wyclif proposed that

the Bible be understood not merely as a collection of signs, but also as "the inscription of sacred truth, whether in its revealing of other truths, or to the extent that it is the revelation of truth itself."[44] Faith comes from scripture because every word is an "emanation" from the mind of God.[45] There is a pronounced emphasis in his work, especially that relating to the universals question, on the idea that the Gospel message is derived not from the individual grammatical and linguistic components of biblical writing—writing which is itself nothing more than ink on quires of parchment—but rather from the reader's spiritual receptivity to an underlying totality of meaning, consonant with the will of scripture's divine author and transmuted in the literal sense. Despite the frankly polemical significance that the literal sense eventually acquires in the work of Wyclif's followers, who made it the core of a textual ideology, for Wyclif the literal sense originated in the intentions of God and not in the referential structures of language itself.[46] The disciplines of philological and historical criticism—precisely the disciplines which gave rise to the Wycliffite Bible, and thence to a broader hermeneutic culture in English—have a limited purview in his thought, since scripture is not primarily a linguistic phenomenon, or a text in history. With this in mind, it is all the more striking that Wyclif came to be so closely identified with a movement as invested as Lollardy was in imagining how scriptural truth might acquire social and historical actuality in the form of a text, of a written document whose meaning is inevitably a function of its language and the priorities of its human interpreters.

Drawing on literary, historical, and theological sources, my dissertation thus explores the multiple determinations of Lollard biblical scholarship from approximately 1380 to 1450, a period bounded by the end of Wyclif's academic career and the

emergence of a new textual environment centered on the study of English scripture. It considers the different expectations that Wyclif's idea of the Bible fostered with respect to reading, interpretation, and the vernacular, and how Lollards negotiated these expectations in four key areas of biblical scholarship: the Wycliffite Bible and Prologue, the vernacular sermon cycle, interpolated versions of the Psalms, and polemical religious writings from later stages of the movement.[47] Commencing with a discussion of Wyclif's antagonistic relationship to intellectual life at Oxford during the 1360s and 1370s, the study goes on to explore the texts and contexts of vernacular biblical translation during the 1390s before directing its attention to Wycliffite scriptural redactions dating from the first half of the fifteenth century, when anti-heresy measures become a key feature of the cultural landscape in England. Within this schema, the project draws together a diverse array of *loci*, considering not only Lollard biblical scholarship but also English religious and devotional texts written or reinterpreted in its ambit, including Richard Rolle's glossed *English Psalter*, Nicholas Love's gospel harmony *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, Reginald Pecock's treatise *Repressor of Overmuch Blaming of the Clergy*, and Trevisa's *Dialogue Between the Lord and the Clerk*.

The opening chapter considers Wyclif's theological realism in the context of late medieval debate over the question of universals, linking both subjects to his hermeneutic thought. I ask what Wyclif, as a committed realist, meant by the term "scripture," analyzing two academic treatises of his that directly address this question, though from different perspectives: *De Universalibus* and *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*. Rarely considered at length in scholarship on vernacular hermeneutics, these texts nevertheless shed light on the habits of thought and interpretation generated by Wyclif's engagement

with the question of scriptural authority; in particular, they document Wyclif's efforts to equate scripture with the Book of Life, his chosen figure, as I have said, for a divine law residing eternally beyond the dialectic of text and audience. *De Veritate* was especially significant in this respect; Wyclif's most resolute attempt to defend the authority and sufficiency of scripture, it gives shape to a set of concerns that were at the center of contemporary debates about the interpretation of sacred texts. The work therefore merits extended treatment in relation to English Wycliffite writing about hermeneutics.

The second chapter examines the Wycliffite Bible and Prologue, the first complete English translation of the old and new testaments. According to much modern scholarship, Wyclif's concern that interpretation adhere to the sense of scripture empowered Lollards to theorize biblical language in more flexible ways, encouraging them to depart from the awkward literalism which had governed their early attempts at translation. I show, however, that Wyclif's hermeneutic logic made few provisions for guaranteeing the Bible's intelligibility as a text or for resolving differences between Latin and English. Only after turning to an archive of English prologues in which the resources of the vernacular are explicitly discussed and theorized—John Trevisa's *Dialogue Between the Lord and the Clerk*, Richard Rolle's preface to the *English Psalter*, and the anonymous prologue to the Middle English translation of Robert de Gretham's Anglo-Norman *Miroir*—did Wycliffite scholars begin to consolidate a more fluent approach to biblical translation. There is, then, no unbroken hermeneutic and intellectual genealogy extending from Wyclif to the defining work of vernacular biblical scholarship in the period.

The third chapter analyzes the Wycliffite vernacular sermon cycle, a collection of 294 sermons for the liturgical year (late 1380s). Wyclif's tendency to locate scriptural truth in a disembodied and indelible *sentence* rather than in written books meant that sermons would occupy an important place in Lollard biblical scholarship. More than any other genre of religious discourse—more even than biblical translation itself—sermons distilled the essence of the gospel message; one might even say that preaching is itself the most efficacious form of biblical "translation," that it most fulfills the mandate to convey the sense of passages. However, I maintain that it was precisely this aspect of Wyclif's thought which generated discursive ambiguities about the medium of gospel preaching, the relationship of the human voice to the sacred text it embodies and performs, and the textuality of the Bible itself. The sermons reference a scriptural truth residing beyond the ink and parchment of biblical books even as they gravitate towards the medium of the text, a conflicted hermeneutic most on display in Wycliffite preaching's polemical confrontation with Jews and the mendicant friars, who figure prominently throughout the cycle as members of misguided and corrupt interpretive communities.

The fourth chapter, which makes extensive use of unedited materials, details how Wycliffites revised and expanded one of medieval England's most venerable devotional texts, Richard Rolle's *English Psalter* (a collection of Psalms with commentary). Scholars have described the refashioning of the Psalter as an attempt to move vernacular theology and criticism to a venue that did not invite ecclesiastical scrutiny; it was one of the few English biblical texts that would have been found acceptable after 1409, when translations of scripture were finally banned. Yet the hegemonic processes set into motion by censorship do not adequately explain interpolation, the particular form of

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manuscript revision at issue in the Wycliffite versions of Rolle's text (c.1400-1475).

Instead, this chapter suggests that the penitential idiom of Rolle's commentary, its focus

on divine affliction and deliverance, appealed to Wycliffites who wanted to thematize

persecution in the age of Arundel. The Psalms thus emerge not so much as an abstract

locus of divine "authority"—a view of the Bible familiar in *De Veritate Sacrae*

Scripturae—than as a text which encodes the confessional hopes and concerns of the

faithful, who read their history in its pages. Lollard biblical scholarship responds to the

constraints of Wyclif's realism by leveraging the textual and symbolic resources of

English devotional writing.

The fifth chapter explores the significance of the literal sense at different points

within the cultural history of Wycliffite biblical interpretation and exegesis. To its

opponents, Wycliffism was a threat not only because the movement posited unacceptable

doctrines but also because it encouraged the explication of sacred texts according to

reason, locating vernacular hermeneutics beyond the reach of church authority. This

chapter reconsiders reason in relation to Wyclif's discussion of the literal sense in *De*

Veritate Sacrae Scripturae. It demonstrates that the literal sense encouraged a more

affective and inferential response to sacred texts, and that this dynamic is at the core of a

Wycliffite hermeneutic sensibility in which the claims of reason and rational

interpretation are sharply delimited. I demonstrate that several Wycliffite texts—

including Wyclif's *Principium* (his inaugural lecture as a doctor of theology), a

vernacular commentary on the Psalms, and, most significantly, a fifteenth-century

dialogue known as *The Testimony of William Thorpe*—frustrate attempts by orthodox

opponents of the movement to associate affect with an exclusively anti-Wycliffite

devotional sensibility.

No single vision of scriptural Christianity links the various texts treated in this

dissertation. Lollard biblical scholarship produced new tensions as it strove to hold

competing alternatives together within its hermeneutic scope. What these tensions tell us

about English religious culture after Wyclif is the main concern of this dissertation.

Notes

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[1] A description of the manuscript's contents can be found in H. Coxe, *Catalogus codicum mss. qui in collegiis aulisque oxoniensibus hodie adservantur*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1852) 1: 28. Forshall and Madden note that the excerpts from the New Testament for the Passion and for Palm Sunday are "seemingly taken from the later version." *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, with the Apocryphal Books, in the Earliest English Versions, made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and his Followers*, ed. J. Forshall and F. Madden, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1850), 1: liii. Hereafter *Forshall and Madden*.

[2] The Prologue, sometimes referred to as the General Prologue and often capitalized in order to distinguish it from prefatory material elsewhere in the Wycliffite Bible, is reprinted in Forshall and Madden, who attributed it to Purvey and the translation to Wyclif himself (1: vi), and included University College Oxford 96 in their collation (then known as Univ. Coll. Oxf. G.3), which they date 1430-1440. (I am grateful to Professor Anne Karin Ro for providing a linguistic profile of the manuscript that confirms the dating range suggested in Forshall and Madden.) The conclusions in this paragraph are based on my review of Forshall and Madden's record of marginal glosses, recently supplemented and revised by M. Dove in *The First English Bible: The Text and Context of the Wycliffite Versions* (Cambridge, 2007), Appendix 2, pp. 210-221. Hargreaves observes that many of the glosses make use of Lyra's postils, a fact that the writers of the Prologue readily acknowledge. H. Hargreaves, "The Marginal Glosses to the Wycliffite New Testament," in *Studia Neophilologica* 33 (Uppsala, 1961): 292. Hargreaves comments in another study that while there were a great many anonymous texts in the late fourteenth century, "it might reasonably have been expected that the author of a widely copied translation would be well enough known to be mentioned by name in some manuscripts at least, particularly if he was as prominent a scholar as Wyclif," later adding that there is "no convincing evidence for Wyclif's active participation in the work at all, and the failure of the manuscripts to provide any indication of his part that would support the clear statements of his friends and foes is the most puzzling feature of the Wycliffite bible." H. Hargreaves, "The Wycliffite Versions," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, ed. G. Lampe, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1969) 2: 390, 404. Anne Hudson notes that "Wyclif's name does not appear in early manuscripts of the Bible translation, nor does he ever claim responsibility for such a work in his own writings." *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*, ed. A. Hudson (Cambridge, 1978), p. 162. Christina von Nolcken concludes that while

Wyclif was a source of *auctoritates*, "the texts that drew on the repertories [such as the *Floretum* and its Latin and English derivatives, all of which included passages by Wyclif] are less likely to advertise Wyclif's presence in them than were the repertories themselves." She adds that "only once do they transparently ascribe an opinion to him," citing the "Doctour Euangelicus" mentioned in the *Twelve Conclusions*. C. von Nolcken, "Lollard Citations of John Wyclif's Writings," in *Journal of Theological Studies* 39 (1988): 417-418. Post-medieval comments remarking on Wyclif are also rare, although Dove points to one marginal note attacking Wyclif's facility as a translator. Dove, "Wyclif and the English Bible," in *A Companion to John Wyclif*, ed. I. C. Levy (Brill, 2006), p. 401, n. 195.

[3] Christopher de Hamel discusses the liturgical aspects of Wycliffite Bible manuscripts in *The Book: A History of the Bible* (Phaidon, 2001), pp. 180-181. See, as well, Dove, *The First English Bible*, pp. 58-67.

[4] Modern attempts to attribute the Prologue and both Bible versions to Wyclif, Nicholas Hereford, John Purvey, John Trevisa, or some combination of the four have been met with much skepticism, especially in Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 241-242, and M. Wilks, "Misleading Manuscripts: Wyclif and the Non-Wycliffite Bible," reprinted in *Wyclif: Political Ideas and Practice* (Oxbow, 2000), pp. 91-92. For the most recent conspectus of the authorship question, see Dove, *The First English Bible*, pp. 68-82. Dove concludes that "Wyclif instigated the project, that work began in the early 1370s in the Queen's College, Oxford, and that Wyclif, Hereford and Trevisa all played a part in the translation" (2).

[5] Cited in P. Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Macmillan, 1988), p. 13. For a fuller treatment of Wyclif's status among sixteenth-century Protestants, see M. Aston, "John Wyclif's Reformation Reputation," reprinted in *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (Hambledon, 1984), pp. 242-272.

[6] Knighton, *Chronica de Eventibus Angliae a tempore regis Edgari usque mortem regis Richardi Secundi*, ed. and trans. G. Martin (Oxford, 1995), pp. 243-245 (pagination here reflects facing Latin text).

[7] *Chronicle of Adam of Usk, 1377-1421*, ed. and trans. C. Given-Wilson (Oxford, 1997), p. 7.

[8] This is the central provision in the seventh of thirteen constitutions, as recorded in *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae, A.D. 466-1718*, ed. D. Wilkins, 4 vols. (London, 1737): "statuimus igitur et ordinamus, ut nemo deinceps aliquem textum sacrae scripturae auctoritate sua in linguam Anglicanam, vel aliam transferat, per viam libri, libelli, aut tractatus, nec legatur aliquis huiusmodi liber, libellus, aut tractatus iam noviter tempore dicti Johannis Wycliff, sive citra, compositus…" (3: 317). On the anti-Wycliffite specificity of the *Constitutions* and their effect on vernacular literary production, see Nicholas Watson, "Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's *Constitutions* of 1409," in *Speculum* 70 (1995): 822-864. For an important reappraisal of Watson's conclusions, see Fiona Somerset, "Expanding the Langlandian Canon: Radical Latin and the Stylistics of Reform," in *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 17 (2003): 78 ff.

[9] Following the practice of many in the field, I employ these terms interchangeably, though with an awareness of their mutual insufficiency, "Wycliffism" for the way it inscribes a teleological

and deterministic progression from individual to movement, "Lollardy" for the way it uncritically reproduces what was in fact a term used by orthodoxy to connote ignominy and sedition. Rather, however, than take a definitional approach—systematically differentiating Wycliffism from Lollardy, or Wycliffite from Lollard—I use such terms as heuristic devices, fully aware that they often exclude as much as they include, and that the most desirable level of historical detail always reveals the artificiality of such descriptive categories. This last point, I hasten to add, is not to echo doubts some scholars have had recently about the scope and historical reality of Lollardy as a "movement"—that, in other words, if it existed at all, it was merely as an invention of the crown, a fiction of organized insurrection meant to justify and bolster the repressive policies of Lancastrian rule. For such views, see, respectively, R. Rex, *The Lollards* (Palgrave, 2002), and P. Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399-1422* (Yale, 1998). Other studies, by contrast, have recently put pressure on the meaning of "Lollardy" by accounting for the varieties of non-conformity that both predated and ran parallel to the movement itself, for which see K. Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, 2006). For a cogent discussion of the term "Lollar(e)" see H. Workman, *John Wyclif: A Study of the English Medieval Church*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1926), 1.327.

[10] J. A. Robson, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools: The Relation of the "Summa de Ente" to Scholastic Debates at Oxford in the Later Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 223-231; J. Catto, "Wyclif and Wycliffism at Oxford 1356-1430," in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 2, *Late Medieval Oxford*, ed. J. Catto and R. Evans (Oxford, 1992), pp. 220, 241, 243-244; A. Conti, "Wyclif's Logic and Metaphysics," in *Companion to John Wyclif*, ed. I. C. Levy (Brill, 2006), pp. 118-125.

[11] For the biographical details of Wyclif's early Oxford associates, see A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1957-59), 1:67 (for Aston), 3:1772 (for Bedeman, who is listed as Laurence Stephen), 2: 913 (for Hereford), and 3: 1565-1567 (for Repyngdon). Rygge's reluctance to publish the findings of the synod and to carry out the suspension is documented in the Carmelite compilation known as the *Fasciculi Zizaniorum*. *Fasciculi Zizaniorum Magistri Johannis Wyclif cum Tritico*, ed. W.W. Shirley (London, 1858), pp. 298 ff.

[12] Thomson dates the tract to c.1382, perhaps as late as 1384, and describes it as "a massive effort at personal doctrinal synthesis." W. Thomson, *The Latin Writings of John Wyclyf: An Annotated Catalog* (Toronto, 1983), p. 80. For anti-heresy measures in place before the *Constitutions*, see H. G. Richardson, "Heresy and the Lay Power under Richard II," in *English Historical Review* 51 (1936): 1-28.

[13] Among the many biographical treatments of Wyclif, the most relevant with respect to the points made here are G. R. Evans, *John Wyclif: Myth and Reality* (IVP Academic, 2006), and S. Lahey, *John Wyclif* (Oxford, 2009), especially pp. 3-31. Also still worth consulting is H. Workman, *John Wyclif: A Study of the English Church*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1926). For a recent discussion of Wyclif with special emphasis on his early philosophical and theological thought, see A. Hudson and A. Kenny, "Wyclif, John (d. 1384)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography LX* (Oxford, 2004; online edition, 2008).

[14] *Forshall and Madden*, 1: xxviii. Thorpe's *Testimony* offers a glimpse of this community when the accused Lollard preacher claims that his teacher had been none other than John Wyclif himself, adding that the heresiarch's sympathizers had "sauouriden so his loore [teaching] þat þei

wroten it bisili and enforsiden hem to rulen hem þeraftir." *Testimony* by William Thorpe, in *Two Wycliffite Texts*, ed. A. Hudson (Oxford, 1993), p. 41.

[15] A. Galloway, "Middle English Prologues," in *Readings in Medieval Texts: Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature*, ed. D. Johnson and E. Treharne (Oxford, 2005), p. 291. For more on the significance of prologues and prefaces in medieval contexts, see F. R. Amos, *Early Theories of Translation* (Columbia, 1920), pp. 3-81.

[16] On the "social logic" of medieval texts, a concept I will return to in later chapters, see Gabrielle Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (John Hopkins, 1997), pp. 3-28.

[17] For discussion of "initiated" readers, see C. von Nolcken, "Lollard Citations of John Wyclif's Writings," in *Journal of Theological Studies* 39 (1988): 424-425.

[18] Hudson judges that "[n]one of the English texts can certainly be ascribed to Wyclif himself," although see her discussion in the notes to the text reprinted in *Selections From English Wycliffite Writings* as "Wyclif's Confessions on the Eucharist." *Selections*, ed. A. Hudson, p. 10, pp. 141-142. Thomson, in his survey of Wyclif's Latin works, calls attention to a passage from *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae* in which Wyclif implies that he had written a tract known as *De paupertate christi* in English, although no such version has come to light. Thomson, *The Latin Writings of John Wyclyf*, p. 257; a similar remark occurs in *Trialogus* 4.28. See, also, S. Justice, "Lollardy," in *Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. D. Wallace (Cambridge, 1998), p. 666, n.16. While evidence that Wyclif himself composed any of the existing English tracts or translations is lacking, the possibility that he did cannot be ruled out, and it is quite likely—though not "certain," as Rex claims—that some of these are translations or at least paraphrases of his Latin works. R. Rex, *The Lollards*, p. 55, citing M. Aston, *Faith and Fire: Popular and Unpopular Religion, 1350-1600* (Hambledon, 1993), p. 30. Perhaps this possibility accounts for what F. D. Matthew referred to as a "certain sameness" permeating the movement's writings, discussed in C. von Nolcken, "A 'Certain Sameness' and our Response to it in English Wycliffite Texts," in *Literature and Religion in the Later Middle Ages: Philological Studies in Honor of Siegfried Wenzel*, ed. R. Newhauser and J. Alford (Binghamton,1995), pp. 191-208. I mean here to gesture towards a larger methodological problem as well. In a recent essay on Catharism, Mark Pegg laments the "intellectual determinism" that he believes has long shaped the study of medieval heresy. Stemming from Grundmann's classic work, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages*, "this methodological tendency presupposes that heresies, like religions, have an intellectual purity and theological coherence in which it is possible to neatly sift out other less coherent ideas and, most crucially, it is a technique that effectively ignores historical specificity." M. Pegg, "'Catharism' and the Study of Medieval Heresy," in *New Medieval Literatures* 6 (2003): 252. While I disagree that "intellectualist" methodologies fail to account for the historical specificity of heresy, I share Pegg's skepticism regarding claims of theological coherence and have tried in my own study of Wycliffism to offer more astringent and nuanced readings of seemingly "analogous attitudes" and "homologous ideas" (257). For a similarly skeptical reading of traditional forms of intellectual and religious history, which have tended to emphasize "discursive unity" and "continuous historical narratives," see Rita Copeland's discussion of De Certeau's *The Writing of History* in *Criticism and Dissent in the Middle Ages*, ed. R. Copeland (Cambridge, 1996), p. 3.

[19] For a skeptical reassessment of Lollardy's scope and significance, see Rex's brief but provocative study, *The Lollards* (Palgrave, 2002). Also useful in this context is Andrew Larsen,

"Are All Lollards Lollards?" in *Lollards and Their Influence in Late Medieval England*, ed. F. Somerset et al. (Boydell, 2003), pp. 59-72.

[20] Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 389.

[21] Gordon Leff writes that "the turning away from the church's mediation thus made for the almost universal tendency in all the main heresies towards simplicity of belief and personal piety: it was actuated by the desire to strip away the accretions with which the church had overlaid Christ's life and teaching," and that "the return to Christ could therefore only be made through renouncing the ways of the present church, which were generally identified with Antichrist." G. Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages: The Relation of Heterodoxy to Dissent, c.1250 –c.1450*, 2 vols. (Manchester, 1967), 1:8. Leff later points to Marsilius of Padua, who is mentioned in Pope Gregory XI's 1377 condemnation of Wyclif's propositions concerning lordship, as an important precursor to Wyclif in this respect (2:419).

[22] A feat only made possible through Wycliffism's presence at Oxford and its close ties to the academic life of the university, a pattern that distinguishes it from other late medieval heresies such as Waldensianism, according to M. Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible and Other Medieval Biblical Versions* (Cambridge, 1920), p. 29.

[23] For this process, see Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 60-119, as well as Catto, "Wyclif and Wycliffism as Oxford," pp. 175-261. See, too, discussion in Copeland, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 213. Purvey was especially influential in this regard, though little is known about his life. See, most recently, M. Jurkowski, "New Light on John Purvey," in *English Historical Review* 110 (1995): 1180-1191.

[24] Aston considers this possibility in *Faith and Fire,* noting that what was "unthinkable in 1370 had happened by 1430" (35). See, also, J. A. F. Thomson, *The Later Lollards, 1414-1520* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 239-250.

[25] C. von Nolcken, *The Middle English Translation of the Rosarium Theologie* (Carl Winter, 1979), p. 24. The critical history outlined in this paragraph has been enriched and complicated by recent research on the complex social and intellectual terrain of vernacular Wycliffism. Shannon McSheffrey has argued, for instance, that women played a less prominent role in Wycliffite communities than scholars have generally recognized, and that the "thoroughly masculine and clerical university environment" in which Lollard ideology had taken shape "affected its appeal to ordinary laywomen." McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy: Women and Men in Lollard Communities 1420-1530* (University of Pennsylvania, 1995), p. 138. Modern studies also frequently focus on the impact of censorship on Wycliffite efforts to democratize the word of God and to make scripture available to non-clerical readers. Watson, "Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, The Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's *Constitutions* of 1409," *Speculum* 70.4 (1995): 822-864. As Kathryn Kerby-Fulton has argued, the prevalence of this narrative has tended to choke off a "broader historiography," in particular one attuned to other dissenting positions and identities in late medieval England, such as revelatory theology and English Joachimism. Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, 2006), pp. 2-3. And Fiona Somerset had shown that Wycliffites not only mediated English texts but also shifted the balance of authority towards lay readers by appropriating clerical forms of argumentation— and the academic ethos in which such forms were deployed—for the sake of "lewd," or

unlearned, vernacular audiences. Somerset, *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1998).

[26] For a discussion of the *Floretum* in light of the points made here, see Hudson's important article, "A Lollard Compilation and the Dissemination of Wycliffite Thought," in *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 23 (1972): 65-81. Hudson asserts that the text was produced between 1384 and 1396. For information regarding the specific texts of Wyclif's which are most extensively cited, see pp. 70-72. Christina von Nolcken points out, however, that the number of passages quoted from Wyclif's own writings decreased significantly in the process of adapting the *Rosarium Theologie* from the *Floretum*, perhaps with the goal of "making its content more easily accessible." C. von Nolcken, *The Middle English Translation of the Rosarium Theologie*, pp. 28-29.

[27] C. von Nolcken, *The Middle English Translation of the Rosarium Theologie*, pp. 55, 71, 83.

[28] Rex, *The Lollards*, p. 11.

[29] Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 508.

[30] R. Copeland, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages: Lollardy and Ideas of Learning* (Cambridge, 2001); K. Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and the Interpretation of Texts* (Cambridge, 2002); I. C. Levy, *John Wyclif: Scriptural Logic, Real Presence, and the Parameters of Orthodoxy* (Marquette, 2003); F. Somerset, *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1998).

[31] Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 8. One of the Latinate scholastic debates that Ghosh does not consider, or explicitly contextualize in relation to Wycliffite vernacularity, is the question of universals, in which (as I will show in chapter one) claims for the transcendent ontological status of the Bible are thoroughly implicated.

[32] Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 210-211. I offer this rather detailed account of Ghosh's study in order to show how the focus of my project can be differentiated from his, which I have nevertheless found compelling and influential.

[33] Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 15.

[34] Alain de Libera asserts that the "problème des universaux" as it was mediated to the Latin West by Greek and Arabic commentaries on Aristotle "est un condensateur d'innovations, nul autre ne permet de voir se former, s'échanger et se codifier autant de langages théoriques, de modèles ou d'instruments analytiques nouveaux," including "l'articulation d'une véritable réflexion sur les signes." A. de Libera, *La querelle des universaux: de Platon à la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris,1996), pp. 446-447.

[35] Kenny, *Wyclif* (Oxford, 1985), p. 29.

[36] Wyclif, *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, 3 vols., ed. R. Buddensieg (Wyclif Society, 1905-1907), I.iii.44, I.vi.107-113; *ibid*., *Tractatus de Universalibus*, ed. I. Mueller (Oxford, 1985), IX.195-196. Subsequent chapters will discuss these passages at greater length.

[37] *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, I.iii.44. See, for a comparable emphasis, Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 17; 43-45.

[38] H. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Harvard, 1963), p. 369. Oberman asserts that what he calls Tradition I, within which he situates Wyclif, "should be seen as a protest against the growing acceptance of the Basilean two-sources theory," which confers validity on extrascriptural ecclesiastical custom (371). Wyclif, however, does not embrace a principle of *sola scriptura*, as is made clear in *De Veritate* I.xv.380: "[E]t sic ne pseudo discipuli fingant, se inmediate habere a deo suam sentenciam, ordinavit deus comunem scripturam sensibilem, ad cuius sensum catholicum capiendum deus non potest deficere, quin semper quosdam irradiet, ad quam irradiacionem confert sanctitas vite et consonancia cum sensu sanctorum doctorum secundum etatem ecclesie a fonte sapiencie derivata. Et continuare istam irradiacionem in matre ecclesia est theologorum officium, quos oportet stare in suis limitibus. Unde non licet theologo, fingere aliena preter fidem scripture catholice."

[39] Oberman, *Harvest of Medieval Theology*, p. 372; Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages*, 1:494.

[40] For instance, Wyclif, *Tractatus de Potestate Pape*, ed. J. Loserth (Wyclif Society, 1907), pp. 108-110. Such objections extend to all canon law, however: "Item, si sint paris auctoritatis cum nostris auctoribus, cum continue multiplicant leges suas addiscere sicut legem fidei scripturarum, quod est contra leges multas ecclesie, que preferunt theologiam et privilegiant eius discipulos, similiter tunc destruerentur iura canonica, quia tota illa facultas foret pura theologia, quia sermo quem Deus in eis loquitur eque evidenter sicut locutus est olim in scribis fidei scripturarum" (p. 110, ll. 11-19).

[41] G. A. Benrath, *Wyclifs Bibelkommentar* (Walter de Gruyter, 1966), pp. 41 ff., 217 ff., 226, 314-320. Benrath's is the most comprehensive study of Wyclif as a postillator and exegete. Central here as well are Smalley's articles on the *Postilla* and the *Principium*, respectively, "John Wyclif's *Postilla super totam Bibliam*," in *Bodleian Library Record* 5 (1953): 186-205 and "Wyclif's *Postilla* on the Old Testament and his *Principium*," in *Oxford Studies Presented to Daniel Callus*, ed. Southern (Oxford, 1964), pp. 253-96. Discussion of individual passages from Wyclif's biblical commentary can also be found in Levy, *John Wyclif: Scriptural Logic, Real Presence, and the Parameters of Orthodoxy, passim*.

[42] Contrast, for instance, Coleman, who argues for the "unity of his thinking." Wyclif, she asserts, "combined theological, political and popular radicalism in a single programme of reform that was not only intellectually unified, but also appealed beyond university circles," and that "[w]hat emerges from a reading of Lollard writings is a definite continuity with Wyclif's thought…" J. Coleman, *English Literature in History, 1350-1400: Medieval Readers and Writers* (Hutchinson, 1981), p. 219.

[43] *Selections*, ed. Hudson, p. 127. Crucial in these respects, again, is Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 42-45. H. L. Spencer makes a similar observation in *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1993), p. 132.

[44] *De Veritate*, I.vi.108: "…sacra veritas inscripta, sive subiectet alias, sive sit veritas subiectata."

[45] Robson, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools*, p. 146.

[46] For discussion of Wycliffite uses of the literal sense, see Copeland, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 1-98.

[47] This body of material presents some unique challenges, not the least of which is that, with the exception of the sermon cycle and some later tracts such as Thorpe's *Testimony*, much of it is unedited or unavailable in modern critical editions. Moreover, many of the texts discussed in individual chapters of the project have yet to be analyzed in full length studies.

Chapter One

<u>"Subtle Theology": Wyclif's Scriptural Logic and the Discourse of Universals</u>

I

Wyclif, like the medieval past itself, has always figured largely in a cultural

narrative about the origins of English biblical scholarship. It is a narrative that begins in

Wyclif's own day, when the translations and commentaries of his followers were

routinely but mistakenly attributed to him, and which reaches its zenith with the English

Reformation, in the confessional politics of John Foxe and John Bale. These and other

early Protestants commemorated Wyclif as a reformer whose staunch commitment to a

vernacular Bible had placed religious life in England on a newly scriptural footing,

thereby hastening the country's emancipation from corrupt and superstitious forms of

Catholic devotion.[1] Bale, in fact, was one of the few evangelical Protestants of his

generation who had actually studied the so-called Wycliffite Bible, the first complete

translation of the Latin Bible into English.[2] So he seems well qualified to assess Wyclif's

influence. Yet, as a biblical scholar himself, he must have known that the translations

which occupied the largest place within the new Church of England, such as Tyndale's

1534 New Testament, had in fact started afresh from the best available Hebrew and

Greek manuscripts rather than relying on existing versions of English scripture.[3] No

innocent philologist, Bale's main interest rather seems to have been in constructing a

linguistic and cultural prehistory for a new English church, aware, of course, that Europe's most fervently Catholic country lacked both.[4]

If the historiographic impulses that motivated Foxe and Bale no longer motivate modern scholarship on Wycliffism and the vernacular, it is not because scholars are necessarily less inclined to locate a kind of author function in Wyclif himself.[5] Indeed, Lollardy is often referred to as Wycliffism, and its adherents Wycliffites, in order not only to affirm Wyclif's pervasive influence but also to identify a set of ideas mediated "to the priesthood and to a wider audience."[6] Much of this work has been attributed to Wyclif's early followers at Oxford, academically trained men who over a period of about 1384 to 1425 enthusiastically translated his ideas, if not his actual writings, from their original Latinate academic milieu into the English tracts and translations we now think of as constituting "vernacular Wycliffism."[7] But while the moral and political views that made the movement suspect in the eyes of authorities, such as Wyclif's anti-sacerdotalism or his understanding of *dominion*, were reinforced as a result of this process, other ideas changed in their transmission and reception—above all, the idea of the Bible itself, and the notion that it be regarded as the primary, if not the only, basis for religious belief and practice.[8]

Earlier treatments of Wyclif and Lollardy saw little evidence of the theologian's influence extending beyond the pulpits and lecture halls of Oxford. In his seminal 1952 study, *John Wycliffe and the Beginnings of English Nonconformity*, McFarlane maintained that as Wycliffism became less academic in character it also ceased to be Wycliffite; the theological concerns that had dominated religious debate at Oxford were eventually eclipsed by the more practical interests of those "semi-literates and pious

laymen" making up the later stages of the movement.[9] Unable to sustain any distinct sense of social and spiritual identity in the years following Wyclif's condemnation and death, Lollardy's adherents were soon routed and dispersed, thereafter surviving more as a "persecuted sect" than a coherent or organized heresy.[10]

As many studies have since emphasized, however, Wyclif's "subtle theology" was not irrelevant to Lollardy as a vernacular movement; the biblical scholarship of his followers seems grounded in a set of hermeneutic principles that have their origins in his academic thought.[11] Leaving the details of this argument aside for a moment, it is important to acknowledge that Wyclif's logic of scripture did indeed entail radical implications, even if his hermeneutic tendencies ultimately bore little resemblance to the *sola scriptura* approach of his self-styled Reformation successors.[12] Anne Hudson, who pioneered modern study of the subject, has maintained that Lollardy as a creed and a social movement derived coherence from the reformer's emphasis on the primacy of scripture.[13] Her work offers a compelling rejoinder to scholars who had claimed either that Wyclif's ideas were too theologically obscure—too much a product of scholastic tradition—to be very relevant to uneducated lay audiences, or that later Lollards lost touch with his thinking because they had no reliable access to Wyclif's own writings.[14]

We need not dwell on the fact that Wyclif's thought on any number of issues was broadly influential, even to those who scarcely understood his theological and philosophical premises. Nor do we need to revise how scholarship since Hudson has modeled the transmission of Lollard texts and ideas.[15] But to concede that Wyclif was the progenitor of influential discourses is not necessarily to argue that Lollardy advanced a coherent hermeneutic agenda, or that its biblical scholarship, though anchored in a

common set of textual practices, did not also at the same time problematize its discursive origins in Wyclif's own scriptural logic. It makes sense, then, to ask what Wyclif himself meant by the term "scripture," and this requires turning to two texts of his which directly address this question, though from different perspectives: *De Universalibus* (1373-74) and *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae* (1377-78). Both texts will appear throughout the following chapters, as they document how, for Wyclif, questions of scriptural authority and interpretation were inseparable from his metaphysics of the Bible. *De Universalibus* gives us insight into Wyclif's academic theology as it had taken shape in the context of his increasingly hostile attitude towards the practice of formal logic at Oxford, which, with its strong nominalist orientation, had made the study of terms a central component in scriptural exegesis. Though no less interested in logical terminology himself, Wyclif went on to argue strenuously for the reality of universals, or the categories of being, inhering in the mind of God, which enable individual terms and propositions to stand for properties common to all things.[16] *De Veritate*, Wyclif's most important work on the subject of the Bible, extends his theological realism into the realm of scriptural interpretation, and so will be particularly significant in trying to understand the intellectual and academic backdrop of Wycliffite vernacular hermeneutics—and what was at stake as Wycliffites undertook their own systematic investigation into the language and logic of the Bible.

It is important to note from the outset that terms such as "realism" and "nominalism" are inherently problematic, remnants, in many respects, of an earlier approach to intellectual history that interpreted the evident diversity in theological views during this period as a symptom of factionalism and decline.[17] How well they

characterize the different sides of the universal question in the fourteenth century, or whether contemporary theologians understood themselves as belonging to distinct schools of thought on the matter, is unclear.[18] As regards William Ockham, who is often held up as the preeminent "nominalist" of the Middle Ages, it has been suggested that those strands of his thinking most concerned with disputing the notion of a nonmental reality existing apart from its individual instantiates might more accurately be labeled conceptualism.[19] Scholars of late medieval philosophy and theology differ with respect to the weight they place on such descriptive categories. For instance, in his study of the collectanea manuscript known as Clm 27034 Trapp showed that "[a]s late as 1381 a dissenter in the question of the universals had to be called with the old Anselmian term *dialecticae haereticus* which seems to show that the term *nominalista* did not have currency, did not describe the philosophical dissenter, let alone the theologian of the 14th century as such."[20] Yet Gwynn, writing about the history of the English Austin Friars, asserted that Oxford during the second quarter of the fourteenth century "seems indeed to have been full of 'modern' masters of arts and theology who were eager to display their skill in the new dialectic of the age."[21] Whatever the case, Wyclif himself, whose intervention in the universals debate was highly self-conscious and polemical, possessed a distinct idea about the methods and priorities attaching to what we might now call, with full recognition of the problems inherent in such a phrase, "nominalistic" theology. "Realism" and "nominalism" are useful designations, then, to the extent that they have a relative value in relation to Wyclif, whose own thought about the Bible is intimately bound up with how he understands the methodological differences between the two.

In its medieval instantiation, the debate over universals can be traced back to Porphyry's introduction to Aristotle's *Categories*, also known as the *Isagoge*, in which he promises

> to rehearse, briefly and as in the manner of an introduction, what the old masters say, avoiding deeper inquiries and aiming suitably at the more simple. For example, about genera and species—whether they subsist, whether they actually depend on bare thoughts alone, whether if they actually subsist they are bodies or incorporeal and whether they are separable or are in perceptible items and subsist about them—these matters I shall decline to discuss, such a subject being very deep and demanding another and a larger investigation.[22]

Of course, it was precisely such "deeper inquiries" which came to dominate medieval discussion of universals, from Boethius' influential *Second Commentary on Porphyry* to Wyclif's own *Tractatus De Universalibus*, the fifth treatise in the first book of Wyclif's two volume *Summa de Ente*, or *Summa on Being*.[23] The subject thus encompasses a variety of theological and philosophical questions, as well as an imposing body of primary and secondary literature. Much of this corpus only tangentially implicates Wyclif, whose realism was a response to a historically late irruption of the universals question, one specific to the preceding generation of schoolmen.[24] Although the debates at Oxford during the second quarter of the fourteenth century concerning what came to be known as English nominalism (often also referred to as terminism) are familiar enough not to recount in detail—and, in any case, their technical intricacies are beyond the scope of the present study, except as they bear on Wyclif and Lollardy—they nevertheless create an important context for understanding Wyclif's thinking about the ontological status of scriptural language and the Bible itself, thereby helping to explain why he found

the forms of language analysis and semantic theory at the center of contemporary

scholastic activity so disquieting.

By far the most influential figure associated with such techniques, and with

English nominalism itself, is William Ockham. In his *Ordinatio*, a commentary on Book

1 of the *Sentences*, Ockham posed five questions about the nature of universals, the most

significant being "whether what is immediately and proximately denominated by a

universal and univocal intention is truly some thing outside the soul, intrinsic and

essential to what it is common and univocal to, and really distinct from them."[25] His

position outlines a theory of predication in which human knowledge does not depend on

the capacity of individual terms or singulars to reference a universal reality, as it does for

Wyclif; rather, in later answering his own question, Ockham states that "No thing really

distinct from singular things and intrinsic to them is universal or common to them…For

by the very fact that the universal is claimed to be intrinsic to the thing and really distinct

from the singular thing, it has to be part of the thing."[26] Terms—subjects and predicates

of propositions, but more generally any word or phrase—need not predicate general

truths to be valid, since reality is in its essence singular ("part of the thing"). Very

broadly speaking, then, Ockhamist logic pushed readers of the Bible to restrict analysis to

signs themselves; if truth depends not on universal being but rather on the content of

propositions, then the logical and semantic study of terms apart from any shared or

common nature is a sufficient basis for understanding scripture.[27]

Although one scholar of fourteenth century scholasticism has argued that the

characteristic features of nominalist theology are largely a "variation on Scotus" and that

"most of Ockham's immediate academic contemporaries rejected one or more aspects of

his thought," the *Ordinatio* and, later, the *Summa Logicae*, nevertheless set down the logical and grammatical framework for Wyclif's own day, a focus which his early treatises on logic reflect.[28] But even these, known collectively as *De Logica* (c.1360-1363), and written before Wyclif had turned to theology full time as a doctor, depart significantly in their treatment of universals and categories from the perspective that had become familiar in the work of scholars such as Henry of Ghent, Duns Scotus, and William Ockham.[29] The first treatise touches only briefly on the subject, and mostly in the context of logical questions related to the proper extension of terms and propositions.[30] In subsequent treatises, however, Wyclif points out that ignorance of universals has led the *moderni*, a term usually interpreted to mean Ockham and his circle, into many errors.[31]

This sentiment is amplified in *De Universalibus* when Wyclif argues that "intellectual and emotional error about universals is the cause of all the sin that reigns in the world."[32] To arrive at this conclusion, he invokes Augustine's Epistle 22, which teaches, according to Wyclif, that "all envy or actual sin is caused by the lack of an ordered love of universals…because every such sin consists in a will preferring a lesser good to a greater good, whereas in general the more universal goods are better."[33] Although Wyclif's metaphysic cannot be reduced to the universals question, as Lahey reminds us, it is clear from these emphatic remarks that his position on the supremacy of universals was a central feature of his thinking not only about being and existence (*De Universalibus* comprises a significant portion of the *Summa de Ente*) but also about the logic of scripture, for it was in the area of scriptural interpretation that Ockham and his allies were most mistaken concerning the relative status of universals and particulars.[34]

Despite, or because, of the fact that he had embraced certain nominalist positions early in his studies, Wyclif went on to distinguish himself not only in his disdain for Ockhamist metaphysics but also in the significance he placed specifically on the *reality* of universals.[35] In particular, he dismisses the nominalists in the arts faculty, influenced by Ockham's opinions, as *doctores signorum* for privileging the analysis of linguistic context and parts of speech over the cognition of universal ideas, which in Wyclif's view are what allow individual words and phrases to supposit for real things in a propositional context.[36] "What the philosopher must first do is to grasp the real universal" in every singular, Wyclif argues, "and then he will grasp that a term is a genus in a derived sense because it is the appropriate sign of a genus in reality."[37] He later goes on to claim that metaphysicians, unlike grammarians and logicians,

> know that before a common nature is shared in effect, it is thought of by God at an earlier stage in the order of nature as common to many supposits. And in this way universality or metaphysical truth does not depend on any created intellect, since it is itself prior, but it does depend upon the uncreated intellect which uses its eternal intellectual knowledge to bring everything into effective existence. Ignorance of this interpretation made Ockham and many other doctors of signs, through the weakness of their understanding, give up real universals….For the doctors of signs hold universals to be spoken or written symbols, and the metaphysicians hold them to be common things in external particulars, as the Commentator [Averroes] says in terms (Metaphysics VII, section 56) 'The universal' says 'is what is common and what is common is in many things at one and the same time.'[38]

Wyclif's position on universals is, at base, an argument about the permanent relationship between thought and reality, but with the specific intention of establishing the conditions for making true propositions in logical and grammatical contexts, thereby recentering academic study of the Bible on God's created order rather than on language itself.[39] To

think of the Bible in these terms is to insist on the unity of scripture as a divine idea, as a "text" whose range of reference is determined not by the particulars or constituent structures of its language but rather by the divinity of its origin and the universality of sacred truth itself.

Far from remaining an abstruse philosophical preoccupation, Wyclif's treatment of the universals question had immediate implications for the medieval reading of the Bible, and particularly for how learned audiences conceptualized the authority of biblical language.[40] For if individual terms have no universal identity in nonmental entities, as the Ockhamists maintained, then the words of the Bible, and the logical and grammatical systems applied to sacred texts, ceased to be grounded in reality.[41] "We say outright," Wyclif writes in *De Universalibus*, "that no proposition is true other than by the truth which it primarily signifies."[42] Only by believing in the existence of real universals can one make truthful propositions about the meaning of scripture. But Wyclif is also a realist of a very extreme kind; his particular brand of theological realism not only drew on authorities such as Augustine and Aquinas but was also formulated specifically against what he perceived as the skepticism of the nominalists, their propensity to find inconsistencies and errors in scripture itself.[43] (Whether this is a judicious characterization of his opponents' positions is, of course, a valid question, but one more properly pursued elsewhere.) Denouncing such arguments as sophistry (a pejorative reinterpretation of what was in fact the accepted use of ambiguous or enigmatic propositions, or *sophismata*, in disputations conducted by the arts faculty), Wyclif instead insisted that because "scripture," as a universal, inheres equally in all its individual instances, every word must be eternally and simultaneously true.[44] He returns to this

position in *De Veritate* when he describes scripture as "the inscription of sacred truth, whether in its revealing of other truths, or to the extent that it is the revelation of truth itself."[45] Wyclif's use of the term "inscripta" in this context is particularly evocative and paradoxical, for it implies both the physical presence of writing and its absence. Although inscription suggests the act of imprinting or impressing the written word onto a material surface, here it also connotes unwritten discourse, an intangible, interiorized scripture beyond the reach of readers like the nominalists, whose logical and grammatical operations are concerned solely with the verbal exterior of the text.[46] We can see, then, how Wyclif's position on the reality of universals enhances the idea of "scripture" even as it makes the Bible's status as a written or historical text more problematic.

It seems clear that some of Wyclif's hostility to Ockham and those sympathetic to his ideas was a conservative response to the changing pedagogical habits of late medieval scholasticism, as more than one scholar has asserted.[47] Many of these changes were underway by the late thirteenth century and had much to do with the way disputations were conducted. As disputation increasingly came to privilege rhetorical ability, pupils and masters were prepared to defend almost any position while debating the Bible's meaning, even going so far as to impugn its truth and logic.[48] As McFarlane observed, surveying the classroom practices of the period, "minds thus sharpened could not but be enquiring."[49] Another scholar, examining the intellectual fashions of the day, has concluded that "nominalistic" proofs sometimes knew "no restraint, and therefore daringly and imperturbably carried the play of logic into the most sacrosanct precincts of dogma," but that the purpose of such exercises, which made much use of theological puns and puzzles, was merely to "improve the mind of the future theologian."[50] For Wyclif,

however, the skeptical insistence that reality was reducible to terms which themselves postulate no truth *ex parte rei* had gone too far, prompting him in 1377 to begin writing *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, his most sustained and polemical defense of the Bible's literal and infallible truth.[51]

Like any number of exegetes before him, particularly Augustine, Wyclif's conception of Christian life revolves around the authority of divine revelation in scripture and the certainty that the Bible is therefore necessarily free of any intentional falsehood and error. Augustine had made this point explicitly when he criticized Jerome for seeming to entertain the notion, in reference to Peter's dispute with Paul at Antioch in Galatians 2:11-14, that Peter had dissimulated in upholding Jewish ceremonial law. Nothing false, he maintains, can be found in scripture. "For if you once admit into such a high sanctuary of authority one false statement as made in the way of duty, there will not be left a single sentence of those books which, if appearing to any one difficult in practice or hard to believe, may not by the same fatal rule be explained away, as a statement in which, intentionally, and under a sense of duty, the author declared what was not true."[52] He makes comments to similar effect in book 1, chapter 37 of *On Christian Doctrine*— comments Wyclif reiterates in *De Veritate*: disbelief in scripture's veracity not only denies the essential truth that the books of the Bible were canonized by God [*a deo canonizati*] but also, for that same reason, persuades one "to abandon the faith he ought to receive from scripture."[53]

The Bible's veracity had come under scrutiny many times in the past. Never before, however, had this principle been so imperiled by the very people entrusted with the responsibility and the resources for defending its truth, the theology faculty.[54]

Addressing the errors circulating at Oxford "these days even more so than usual," Wyclif thus begins *De Veritate* by asserting that scripture "is the exemplar and mirror for examining and extinguishing every sort of error or heretical evil."[55] From this it is clear that Wyclif was already thinking of scripture in terms of universals, the theory of which, having been most fully worked out in *De Universalibus*, must be considered closely intertwined with his idea of the Bible in *De Veritate*. Distinguishing five different types of universals, Wyclif had argued in *De Universalibus* that the "first and foremost kind is the eternal notion or exemplar idea in God" [*Primum et supremum genus est ratio vel idea exemplaris aeterna in Deo*], the ideal being through which all of created nature shares in the divine.[56] Not merely an obscure point of academic argument, Wyclif's philosophy of universals was intimately connected to his reading of the Bible; indeed, his arguments concerning its authority and sufficiency issue directly from his theological realism and the framework it provided for approaching scripture as an archetype inhering eternally in God.[57] Wyclif goes on in *De Veritate* to apply the logic of this hierarchy to a crucial discussion concerning the definition of scripture and its different grades [*gradus*] of ontological reality. Equating the highest grade of scripture to the Book of Life in chapters 20 and 21 of Apocalypse, he proceeds to go down the scale, finally arriving at the fifth and lowest order, scripture as "the manuscripts, sounds or other artificial signs intended to bring to mind the first truth."[58] He hastens to add, however, that while the theologian should not reject the lower orders of scriptural meaning, "that scripture which is perceptible through voices and manuscripts is not holy scripture except in an equivocal sense, just as it might be said that the picture or image of a man is called a man by reason of its resemblance to the actual man."[59] Therefore, as Wyclif later argues, this lowest

grade of scripture, that which is perceptible to the senses, "is called holy insofar as it is the means by which one is compelled directly to see by faith the will and order of God, which is itself the most sacred scripture of all."[60]

For Wyclif, then, the Bible is never merely words; his realism posits a necessary correlation between written signs, which make up the individual particulars of scripture, and the divine author by and through whom such signs are imposed and endowed with descriptive value.[61] He had made the fundamentals of this position clear in *De Universalibus*, arguing that "universals in signs are derived from universals in reality [*ab universalibus ex parte rei capiuntur universalia in signo*] in such a way that there is no such thing as a universal sign except in virtue of correspondence to a real universal."[62] This doctrine, as it was later applied to hermeneutic questions in *De Veritate*, meant that the language of scripture mattered and had to be carefully explicated by those with proper theological training; but it also meant that the logic of scripture was not contingent on the Bible's status as a historical document and thus that the critical methods developed to read it as such had limited scope. The gospels, synonymous as they are with the divine intellect itself, are true in an essential or necessary sense, existing independently of their explication and analysis in human hermeneutic systems. Wyclif's objection in *De Veritate* is to those at Oxford who, employing the new techniques of terminist logic in their university teaching, focus inordinately on words themselves, as if to suggest that scripture were not a universal concept but rather a manuscript whose veracity is contingent on the application of specific interpretive practices. Such techniques, according to Wyclif, concealed the "catholic" sense and caused students to find contradictions in holy scripture where they should instead discern forms of equivocation,

for it is through equivocation that scripture instructs.[63] Moreover, the modern

generation's preoccupation with signs gives undue precedence to what is perceptible in

the physical book itself, or that aspect of scripture which is inferior to the "eternal and

indelible" Book of Life.[64] To elevate the former over the latter is no mere hermeneutic

misapprehension but a kind of sin or hypocrisy, a vaguely idolatrous attachment to the

material text of scripture over its spiritual analogue; indeed, this is what Wyclif had

meant when he said that "intellectual and emotional error about universals is the cause of

all the sin that reigns in the world."[65] Wyclif is very clear that the truest sense and

meaning of scripture subsists beyond [*est preter*] the accidents of individual words and

the manuscripts on which they are recorded, and is no more subject to annihilation than

are the substances of bread and wine in the eucharistic elements.[66] As might be expected,

therefore, from someone who had so deeply engaged the ontological problems lurking in

the eucharist, Wyclif's systemization of scriptural meaning tries to make surface and

substance cohere: the Bible is both a historical document and the Book of Life; both a

material thing and an idea abiding in the mind of God; both "lines on parchment" and a

metaphysical reality residing eternally beyond the "veil of words" [*verborum velamine*]

making up the "manuscripts and sensible signs" [*codices vel signa sensibilia*] of the

written book.[67]

Readers having ventured this far into *De Veritate* may sense that Wyclif draws

these different registers of meaning together into a coherent logic of scripture—that, in

other words, Wyclif the polemical realist was nevertheless able to accommodate an

emphasis on the semantic and linguistic properties of sacred texts precisely because

universals inhere in the individual particulars of language.[68] The two are identical, he

would have believed, differing only in form. Thus, while Wyclif postulates a meaning "outside the possession of language," his realism does not utterly disavow the verbal content of the text.[69] After all, he explains, "Christ's priests…employ the words of scripture in prayers, the administration of sacraments, and in the preaching and explication of scripture."[70] Moreover, "holy scripture would be exceedingly harmful if not for the fact that the logic of scripture is correct with respect to the verbal or literal sense, every bit as much in its historical parts as in the sapiential." It is clear, therefore, that the Christian should not disregard "the form of the words."[71] In this sense, Wyclif's position could be characterized as Augustinian in outlook, for it was Augustine who argued that it is the nature of adept minds to love the truth in the form of words, not the words themselves.[72] This case is complicated, however, by the argument that Wyclif's essential Augustinianism gradually yielded to more extreme positions "as the direct outcome of his opposition first to the terminists and later to the church hierarchy."[73] As his position on the reality of universals grew more ideological and entrenched, culminating with his views on ecclesiastical lordship in *De Dominio Divino*, Wyclif's attitude towards language itself became correspondingly more astringent, so that by the time he composes *De Veritate* he is able to declare his steadfast refusal to accept even the form of words; signs are nothing more than "leaves and bark" that must be "disregarded" under the pretense of comprehending the sacred sense of scripture.[74] With the possible exception of the first treatise from *De Logica*, Wyclif's work stands out among late medieval theologians in how radically it attempts to delimit the intellectual processes devoted to investigating the properties of terms, their modes of reference and signification; such pursuits are nothing more than "useless disputations over words"

[*disputacionem verbalem inutilem*].[75] It would take more than a single study to demonstrate the point adequately, let alone one concerned, as this one is, with the broader context of Wycliffite biblicism and the vernacular. But a few passages from *De Veritate* illustrate not only how far Wyclif was willing to depart, in his reaction against the *doctores signorum*, from the forms of speculative inquiry that defined late medieval study of the Bible, but also how such a reactionary movement entailed a corresponding scriptural logic, one in which the mediating functions of language and of texts are constantly interrogated. After arguing, for example, that the empty and inert vessels of signs must be "disregarded," Wyclif adds that "this is one reason why Christ and many saints would not inscribe [their] understanding except upon the tablets of the heart, since that way is more perfect."[76] The Pauline implications of this argument are taken to greater lengths later in *De Veritate* when Wyclif argues that "mental intellection is more truly scripture than the line upon the parchment."[77] And, finally, in perhaps the most radical expression of Wyclif's scriptural logic, he fantasizes about a sense of scripture liberated from considerations of language and textuality altogether: "It is thus confirmed that the whole law of Christ is one perfect word proceeding from the mouth of God, whose individual parts together create the entire authority and efficacy of Christ's law."[78]

Here, perhaps, is the most compelling illustration of Wyclif's kinship with a tradition, at least as old as Paul's letters, in which the inward cognition or realization of the word takes precedence over all other forms of understanding.[79] Wyclif's choices as an exegete are justified by widely shared assumptions about the difference between the spirit and the letter even as they resonate against contemporary disputes over the referential integrity of language, as expressed in the various positions staked out in the

universals debate. Whereas the nominalist would approach the Bible through the operations of language, viewing it primarily as an archive of verbal abstractions with no necessary correlation to a reality beyond the words themselves, for Wyclif scriptural texts should be seen, to use Michael Wilks' apt description, as "signs of inner mystical meanings."[80] This focus on the interior meaning of the letter, while utterly conventional in the history of Christian exegesis, does not suggest that Wyclif's ideas failed to cultivate critical reflection on matters of social and religious jurisdiction, or that his concerns can be understood apart from those motivating late medieval vernacular theology.   His emphasis on scripture as the sufficient basis for Christian life could only encourage a more theologically inquisitive approach to religion, and with it an interest in the language of sacred texts.[81]

Yet even as Wyclif envisions a laity empowered by direct access to the word of God, his biblicism, as we have seen it taking shape in *De Veritate*, holds out the possibility of a more complex and conflicted relationship to language, one in which the expository ethic of hermeneutics is increasingly imperiled. Biblical writing—the textual body of scripture itself—is a deeply vexed category for Wyclif.[82] In this respect, his idea of the Bible reconceives the ways in which scripture might be understood historically, or according to the letter, something his followers no doubt grappled with in their own biblical scholarship. We find an example of this problem in a Wycliffite sermon for Epiphany.[83] Taking as its text John 1: 29-34 (*vidit Iohannes Iesum venientem ad se*), the sermon addresses the question of the Baptist's "dowble spekyng," that is, how he "wytnessude of Crist boþe of his godhede and eke of his manhede" (1:345/15, 1-2). This principle for understanding how figurative language in the Gospel applies to Christ is

then elaborated in relation to verse 32, where John says that he has seen a spirit descending from heaven like a dove (*spiritum descendentem quasi columbam de caelo*). In what sense might the dove "þytokneþ" the holy spirit (1:346/41)? Having addressed the eucharistic implications of this question, the sermon returns to its original problem, asserting that "diuersite of wordis" should be resolved not by attending more closely to their meaning but rather by reconceiving the very nature of scripture itself (1:347/63). Proper interpretation requires turning to the Bible with a specific notion in mind of the divine reality that underlies and transcends the material text itself.[84] Thus, "we graunte þe sentence and no only þe wordys, for þe wordis passen awey anoon when we han spokun hem" (1:348/78-80). To understand scripture is thus to recognize that "Crist in speche is not contrarye to hymself, ne o part of his lawe contrarye to anoþur" (1:348/82-83).

The position this sermon takes on language demonstrates how Wyclif's ontological commitments shaped and delimited Lollard thinking about the authority of sacred texts. But while his theological realism—expressed more pointedly here than in Wyclif's own Latin sermon on the same biblical lection—provided a schema for reading scripture, it did so without actually supplying the interpretive machinery necessary for negotiating the very problem to which the sermon is most attuned: that "strif in wordis" is all too often a feature of reading the Bible (1:348/93). This problem had become even more urgent in the context of vernacular biblical translation, since English could not be made to correspond exactly to Latin, despite the best efforts of scholars such as those who worked on the Early Version Wycliffite Bible, the stiff literalism of which actually hinders interpretation. On this subject, Wyclif says almost nothing; it was up to his

followers, in texts such as the Wycliffite Bible Prologue, to articulate the precise ways in which English scripture might be brought into alignment with the *originalia*, and to formulate guidelines by which other translators could make sound choices about the sense of obscure words and passages.

We have seen how in *De Veritate* Wyclif attempts to fashion an approach to scripture capable of accommodating its authority as a universal, with Christ as its divine author, and how this leads him to conceive of a "catholic" sense through which every contradiction may be resolved and the truth of scripture's every word reaffirmed. Wyclif also referred to this sense as the literal sense, though in general he means something distinct from the historical sense as it had traditionally functioned within the fourfold system of scriptural exposition enumerated by Origen, Bede, Augustine, and Cassian. The literal sense for Wyclif is alone the proper sense of scripture because it subsists in the intentions of the divine author and thus enjoys, as G. R. Evans has succinctly remarked, the "force of proof."[85] Much as Aquinas had, Wyclif argues that the literal sense can be "any orthodox sense," including mystical and allegorical understandings of the word.[86] The operative distinction here, then, is not between literal and spiritual exposition; and even less is the literal sense for Wyclif shorthand for biblical literalism and the close investigation of the text. Instead, as he puts it in *De Veritate*, "those who wish to distinguish the literal sense from the others according to reason or subjective parts [*partes subiectivas*] ought to say, in accordance with this idea, that the literal sense is the universal sense, that one which is immediately elicited from scripture."[87]

II

These, then, are the theological and metaphysical emphases of Wyclif's scriptural

logic, and they will appear throughout the project as I explore the different dimensions of

Lollard biblical scholarship, starting with the Bible translation itself. Wyclif's ideal of

transparent intelligibility, of a meaning "immediately elicited" from scripture, anticipates

the translators' ambitions to fashion a more "open" biblical text in the vernacular. But

behind this apparent rapport, Wyclif's emphasis in *De Veritate* on the disembodied and

eternal reality of scripture—scripture as the Book of Life—offers an important point of

contrast with the hermeneutic environment defined by the Wycliffite Bible translation

project, especially as that project is described in the Prologue. The next chapter will

address these tensions in more detail; here I want only to trace out some conceptual

parameters, and to suggest that the ideas at the core of the universals question in this

period established a complexly textured environment for biblical scholarship in the

vernacular. The Prologue, with its lengthy commentary on the textual and interpretive

challenges of vernacular biblical scholarship, attests to the translators' awareness that

scripture never simply authorizes itself: it does not, as Wyclif had imagined, spring fully

formed "from the mouth of God," a sovereign and autonomous exemplar of truth.[88] For

Wyclif, authority is an issue of authorship, not of texts; emanating from its divine author

and coming to rest in the "mental intellection" of the virtuous, scripture signifies a truth

whose universality is established by God rather than the extraneous hermeneutic systems

men have devised to dispute over words. This is certainly not to suggest that *De Veritate*

or any of Wyclif's other academic writings were irrelevant to Lollardy; to his more

learned followers, Wyclif's logic of scripture, by denying meaningful differences

between individual languages, provided a powerful rationale for elevating the vernacular

relative to Hebrew, Greek, and Latin—and, thus, for translating the Bible into English.[89] The universality of scriptural truth is precisely what makes the Bible, in the words of the Prologue, "opyn to vndirstonding of simple men," ensuring that "the same sentence is in the derkiste placis of holy writ, which sentence is in the opyn placis"; and for this reason "no simple man of wit be aferd vnmesurabli to studie in the text of holy writ."[90] But while these ideas may have motivated Lollard biblical scholarship in important respects, they also implied that language—English or otherwise—is useful only insofar as it signifies beyond itself to a higher order of knowledge, one not mediated by words. Wyclif resists thinking about the Bible as a text in history, let alone as a material document. His analysis of the Bible, coming as it did out of his theological realism, instead proposes that sacred truth exists most fully beyond the pages of scripture, beyond the substance of the written word. In all these ways, then, Wyclif confers no special authority on English, and supplies no program or framework for comprehending scripture in philological or historical terms—as his followers necessarily would in undertaking the enormous task of making an entire tradition of Latin scriptural writing available to English audiences in a systematic and coherent way.

At the same time, Wyclif cannot simply do away with language, because it is through the temporal and ephemeral medium of signs that we come to scriptural meaning, even if scripture in its most authentic and proper sense is that "surpassing sensible signs" (*preter signa sensibilia*).[91] Wyclif's scriptural logic, then, preserves a focus on the written words of the Bible and its accessibility as a book, especially among communities of new vernacular readers and writers, that sits rather uncomfortably alongside the extreme theological realism informing his position on scripture's divine authorship. He

imagines a domain of scriptural intelligibility beyond the range of scholarly or

hermeneutic inquiry even as he looks to the biblical text itself as the authoritative basis

for all religious belief and practice and, thus, to a meaning that can never be realized

apart from the imposition of external interpretive systems.[92] In a final paradox, it is only

by reimagining the Book of Life as the Bible in English that scripture can be brought into

the fold of human community and interpretation, at which point scriptural meaning

ceases to be univocal, for its essence necessarily changes when disclosed through

glossing and exegesis. Michael Fishbane captures this tension well when he suggests that

exegetical interpretation always encodes a tension between these extremes, a tension

between a closed and an open text, between univocality and polyvocality, between

transparency and hermeneutic contestation. "Of considerable importance in the

sanctification of Scripture," he writes, "is that the prestigious literary canon of divine

teachings had become a *closed literary corpus*—one culturally reopened only through

human textual exegesis."[93] We will see these different priorities in play throughout the

following chapters.

At its most extreme, then, the tension in Wyclif's thinking is one whereby biblical

language is both infinitely referential and stripped of referential integrity altogether.

These different notions of scriptural authority are the source of competing attitudes

within Lollard biblical scholarship about the parameters of reading, interpretation, and

the vernacular. They envision, on one level, the Bible as an object of knowledge, to be

opened up and made intelligible as a text. On another level, however, Wyclif's scriptural

logic envisions a Bible resistant to such techniques, a Bible whose truths are instated by

its divine author and directly intuited by the faithful "reader."[94] If the first possibility

stresses textual investigation, philological sophistication, and a critical awareness about the historicity of biblical writing, the second privileges receptivity, personal sanctity, and, as I will show in the last chapter, an affective commitment to scripture as the unchanging and immutable law of God.

The different aspects of Wyclif's scriptural logic provided a highly charged and ambiguous framework for Lollard biblical scholarship as his followers attempted to establish a specifically scriptural paradigm of belief and practice in late medieval England. For what I have discussed so far suggests that there was considerable ambiguity surrounding what it meant to have access to scripture in the vernacular, and thus what it meant to adhere to biblical precepts in the literal manner often imputed to Wyclif and the Lollards. The inflexible outlook with which many in the period— reformers and their adversaries alike—approached such topics largely overlooks the areas of ambiguity that emerged around the idea of scripture itself, as well as how Wyclif's views on its primacy were revised, even displaced, as a result of the demands made on them by discursive practices in the vernacular. This interpretation also questions the coherence of Lollardy itself, at least in the area of its biblical scholarship. As I maintain above, Lollards were heir to competing notions of scriptural intelligibility, believing as Wyclif himself had that the proper understanding of the Bible depends as much on the disciplined reading of its texts as on the apprehension of an eternal and irreducible *sentence* surpassing the outward forms of language. Few Wycliffites would have disagreed, of course, that the essence of Christian life lay in one's adherence to the law of God as recorded in gospels; the Bible is the only legitimate basis for belief and practice, and all forms of social and spiritual authority must be evaluated through the close

investigation of its words. But there is another model of intelligibility running throughout much of Wycliffite discourse, derived more directly from Wyclif himself: the notion that scriptural meaning is most fully realized in the inward spiritual apprehension of the virtuous, a form of inspired intellection rather than textual investigation.[95] The torque between these different models is considerable, and often overlooked in discussions of Middle English religious culture; if Wyclif's biblicism established a new emphasis on "historical scholarship and a critical approach to texts," it also supplied a framework for stressing the irreducibility of scripture, and for regarding sacred texts in more essentializing ways.[96]

As this chapter has shown in a preliminary way, Wyclif's thought brought longstanding intellectual and philosophical tensions to the surface with unusual urgency, sharpening anxieties about the textual history of the Bible and its very status as a written document. To conclude, however, I want to turn briefly to more modern contexts— namely, to a selection from Ludwig Wittgenstein, whose work on the philosophy of language and representation revolves around some of the same questions that had animated Wyclif in *De Universalibus* and *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*. In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein outlines a dilemma that captures the very essence of the universal question as it had been understood by medieval thinkers: "We speak," he writes, "of understanding a sentence in the sense in which it can be replaced by another which says the same; but also in the sense in which it cannot be replaced by any other…In the one case the thought in the sentence is something common to different sentences; in the other, something that is expressed only by these words in these positions."[97] In this terse formulation, we encounter much of what is at stake in the

universals question, not only for Wyclif and his followers, but also for an entire tradition

of theological thought and analysis devoted to understanding the authority of sacred texts.

Thus applied, Wittgenstein's inquiry becomes a problematic for contemplating what it

means to represent God in writing, the implications of which helped shape Wyclif's own

scriptural logic. Wyclif, we have seen, cultivated a sensitivity (sometimes restrictively

so) towards the "supralinguistic" nature of scriptural truth, to the Bible as a "book" so

majestic that it can only be conceived of as the "eternal light" and "flawless mirror"

mentioned in the famous verses from the Book of Wisdom.[98] But if for Wyclif the truth

reflected in scripture abides beyond the constitutive mediation of language, for those

followers of his who worked as translators and textual scholars, scriptural truth was not

simply reflected in language but, in a deep sense, produced by it. Certainly, many

Wycliffites saw themselves as continuing the ambitious hermeneutic project whose first

stirrings had been in the theologian himself. At the same time, Wyclif's scriptural logic,

especially as it had been informed by his position on the subject of universals, entailed

suppositions about divine immutability and the transcendent sufficiency of scripture that

would only became more complex as Lollards conceptualized and positioned the Bible as

an object of vernacular scholarship. In the next chapter, we will see how they negotiate

and move between these different alternatives, between, on one hand, an understanding

of scripture in which "the thought in the sentence is something common to different

sentences" and, on the other hand, one in which the content of verbal expressions is

unique to "these words in these positions."

Notes

[1] In contrast to this model, modern critical treatments generally stress that the revolutionary potential of Wycliffism gave way in sixteenth-century England to a series of ambiguous religious settlements. See A. Hudson, *The Premature Reformation* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 508-517, and D. MacCulloch, *The Reformation* (Penguin, 2003), pp. 35-42.

[2] Bale's *Index Britanniae Scriptorum*, for instance, includes a description of the Wycliffite Bible and Prologue: "Bibliorum libros omnes in Anglicum idioma transtulit adhibitis prefationibus, prologus vniuersalis de tota Bibliorum summa, qui continet xv. capita incipit. 'Viginti quinque libri veteris testamenti sunt libri fidei,' etc." Bale, *Index Britanniae Scriptorum*, ed. R. L. Poole and M. Bateson (Oxford, 1902), p. 266.

[3] Tyndale, *New Testament*, ed. D. Daniell (Yale, 1989), xix, xxii.

[4] For more on Bale's influence in this area, see L. P. Fairfield, *John Bale: Mythmaker for the English Reformation* (West Lafayette, 1976).

[5] On the so-called "author function," see M. Foucault, "What is an Author?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. P. Rabinow (Pantheon, 1984), pp. 101-121.

[6] M. Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 2002), p. 266. See, for context, J. Catto, "Wyclif and Wycliffism at Oxford 1356-1430," in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 2, *Late Medieval Oxford*, ed. Catto and Evans (Oxford, 1992), pp. 175-261.

[7] Hudson defines "vernacular Wycliffism" as the context "in which 'Wycliffite' concerns coincided with the intellectual interests of the time," adding that "such concerns also extended into the areas of social, theological and ecclesiastical questions." A. Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford, 1988), p. 393.

[8] With respect to questions about the sacraments, Aston, pointing to the records of heresy trials in Norwich, maintains that while it may have seemed "far-fetched to the point of insanity to suppose that a glover or skinner in the town of Beccles in Suffolk had from reading or hearing texts come to believe 'that no priest hath power to make God's body in the sacrament of the altar, and that after the sacramental words said of a priest at mass there remaineth nothing but only a cake of material bread,'" the establishment of a vernacular theology intended specifically for lay consumption meant that by the 1440s such sentiments may indeed have been common among even the least educated of Wyclif's sympathizers. M. Aston, *Faith and Fire: Popular and Unpopular Religion, 1350-1600* (Hambledon, 1993), p. 34.

[9] K. B. McFarlane, *John Wycliffe and the Beginnings of English Nonconformity* (London, 1952), p. 115. This view still occasionally informs critical histories of Wycliffite writing, e.g., J. A. W. Bennett, *Middle English Literature*, ed. Gray (Oxford, 1986), pp. 335-346.

[10] McFarlane, *John Wycliffe and the Beginnings of English Nonconformity*, pp. 125-126. Recent research on the Lollard community in Coventry has revealed that "the overwhelming majority of their books were translations of scripture," suggesting that the principles of scriptural sufficiency and justification which made up the core of early Wycliffite ideology survived well into the later stages of the movement. *Lollards of Coventry, 1486-1522*, ed. and trans. S. McSheffrey and N. Tanner (Cambridge, 2003), p. 15. With respect to Lollardy in Earsham, Jurkowski has shown that the community there retained a sense of vitality and social cohesion. M. Jurkowski,

"Lollardy and Social Status in East Anglia," *Speculum* 82.1 (2007): 120-152. For Kent, see N. Tanner, "Penances Imposed on Kentish Lollards by Archbishop Warham, 1511-1512," in *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. M. Aston and C. Richmond (Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), pp. 229-250, as well as C. D'Alton, "Heresy Hunting and Clerical Reform: William Warham, John Colet, and the Lollards of Kent, 1511–12," in *Heresy in Transition: Transforming Ideas of Heresy in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. I. Hunter et al. (Ashgate, 2005), pp. 103-114.

[11] McFarlane's witty but highly dubious conclusion is worth repeating: Wyclif's "subtle theology underwent its final degradation in the unbaked minds of solemn, if well-meaning, bumpkins." McFarlane, *John Wycliffe and the Beginnings of English Nonconformity*, pp. 183-184. By contrast, many recent studies have recognized that vernacular Wycliffite texts were able to assume a great deal about the intellectual resources of lay readers, sometimes going so far as to reproduce academic reasoning and terminology. See, for instance, A. Hudson, "Wycliffite Prose," in *Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres*, ed. Edwards (Rutgers, 1984), pp. 262-263; R. Copeland, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages: Lollardy and Ideas of Learning* (Cambridge, 2001); A. Cole, *Literature and Heresy in the Age of Chaucer* (Cambridge, 2008); and F. Somerset, *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1998).

[12] On *sola scriptura*, see M. Hurley, "'Scriptura Sola': Wyclif and His Critics," in *Traditio* 16 (1960): 275-352. Wyclif instead holds that commentaries are valid and authoritative if commensurate with the teaching of scripture itself, e.g., *De Eucharistia Tractatus Maior*, II.46: "Quantum ad secundum allegatum de autenticacione doctoris, patet quod quilibet doctor est concedendus, sed nullius posterioris doctoris sentencia nisi de quanto est fundabilis ex scriptura." See, also, P. de Vooght, *Les sources de la doctrine chrétienne* (Bruges, 1954), pp. 169-183.

[13] Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 278-389.

[14] McFarlane, *John Wycliff and the Beginnings of English Nonconformity,* pp. 104, 114-115, 125. Echoed by G. Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages: The Relation of Heterodoxy to Dissent, c. 1250-c. 1450*, 2 vols. (Manchester, 1967), 1:8-9. For a pointed response to this position, see, in addition to the foundational studies by Hudson—"A Lollard Compilation and the Dissemination of Wycliffite Thought," in *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 23 (1972): 65-81, and the *Premature Reformation*, pp. 60-119—C. von Nolcken, "An Unremarked Group of Wycliffite Sermons in Latin," in *Modern Philology* (1986): 234. Wilks, too, offers a thoughtful reassessment of MacFarlane's thesis in his essay "Royal Priesthood: The Origins of Lollardy," reprinted in *Wyclif: Political Ideas and Practice* (Oxbow, 2000), p. 103 ff.

[15] One exception, however, is the transmission of Lollard texts and ideas to Prague, a subject in need of further study. See, for instance, recent work by M. van Dussen, especially "Conveying Heresy: 'A Certayne Student' and the Lollard-Hussite Fellowship," in *Viator* 38.2 (2007): 217-234.

[16] Boethius, in his *Second Commentary on Porphyry*, describes the feature of a universal on which later medieval debates would hinge: "…it is supposed to be common in such a way that both the whole of it is in all its singulars, and at one time, and also it is able to constitute and form the substance of what it is common to." *Five Texts on the Medieval Problem of Universals: Porphyry, Boethius, Abelard, Duns Scotus, Ockham*, ed. and trans. P. V. Spade (Hackett, 1994), p. 22. The literature on universals is vast, even that pertaining specifically to the fourteenth

century. On universals generally, see Alain de Libera, whose account extends from classical contexts to what he characterizes as "la révolution du xive siècle." A. de Libera, *La querelle des universaux: De Platon à la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris, 1996). On universals in the context of Wyclif's thought and fourteenth-century academic culture, see references below.

[17] For the view that "Western" (my quotes) philosophical thought in this period maps a decline from an earlier scholastic synthesis achieved under Aquinas, see E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Random House, 1955). For a critique of this view and a discussion of intellectual history more generally, see S. Ozment, *The Age of Reform (1250-1550): An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (Yale, 1980), p. 8 ff.

[18] On the problem of defining "nominalism," see A. McGrath, who likens the term to "humanism," in *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation*, 2nd ed. (Blackwell, 2004), pp. 68-72. See, as well, W. Courtenay, *Schools and Scholars in Fourteenth-Century England* (Princeton, 1987), pp. 193-218.

[19] Weinberg, *A Short History of Medieval Philosophy* (Princeton, 1967), p. 245. See as well Adams, "Universals in the early fifteenth century," in *Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*: *From the Rediscovery of Aristotle to the Disintegration of Scholasticism*, ed. Kretzmann (Cambridge, 1982), p. 434. For illuminating comments on the "problem of the relation of 'Occamism' and 'nominalism,'" see Oberman, *Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Harvard, 1963), p. 4.

[20] D. Trapp, "Unchristianed nominalism and Wycliffite Realism at Prague in 1381," in *Recherches de Theologie Ancienne et Medievale* 24 (1957): 321. On "dialecticae haeretici," see J. Owens, "Faith, Ideas, Illumination, and Experience," in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, p. 444, n. 13.

[21] Gwynn, *The English Austin Friars in the Time of Wyclif* (Oxford, 1940), p. 52. Szittya also uses the term "nominalism" in this context, arguing that Wyclif "connected the nominalist metaphysics of the friars with their (as he saw them) heresies, blasphemies, and apostasies of the Eucharist, of penance, of Scriptural interpretation, of the ordination of priests, of the nature of religion." P. Szittya, *The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature* (Princeton, 1986), p. 156.

[22] Porphyry, *Introduction*, trans. J. Barnes (Oxford, 2003), p. 3.

[23] *Tractatus de Universalibus,* ed. I. Mueller (Oxford, 1985). Hereafter *De Universalibus*. All English citations of *De Universalibus* are from Kenny's edition, *On Universals*, trans. A. Kenny (Oxford, 1985), except where I have provided the Latin in the endnote, in which case the English translation appearing in the body of the chapter is my own. All Latin citations are keyed to chapter and page numbers of the Mueller edition. It should be noted that there is a difference of opinion regarding the date of the text, with Thomson arguing for 1368 or 1369 (*The Latin Writings of John Wyclyf: An Annotated Catalog* [Toronto, 1983], p. 20), and its editor, Mueller, arguing more convincingly for 1373 or 1374, during or shortly after Wyclif incepted as a Doctor of Theology (intro., xxix). It was about this time that Wyclif became embroiled in a dispute with John Kenningham over the literal truth of scripture. Mueller documents that in his exchanges with his Carmelite opponent Wyclif twice mentions *De Universalibus* as a composition soon to be written, suggesting that "Wyclif wrote this treatise in order to present in full his basic

philosophical tenets, which necessarily played a role in this controversy and which determined his answers to Kenningham's arguments" (xxiii). Because much of the debate with Kenningham anticipates concerns that Wyclif addresses at greater length in *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, linking *De Universalibus* to the former also suggests that it can be productively read alongside the latter, making it a key text in the continuum of his thinking about the logic and authority of scripture. Scholarship has yet to acknowledge the implications of this change both for how we understand Wyclif's philosophical work on being and his later writings on the Bible.

[24] On universals in the context of Wyclif's thought and fourteenth-century academic culture, see M. M. Adams, "Universals in the Early Fourteenth Century," in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy: From the Rediscovery of Aristotle to the Disintegration of Scholasticism, 1100-1600*, ed. N. Kretzmann et al. (Cambridge,1982), pp. 411-439; J. Catto, "Thomas Moston and the Teaching of Wyclif's Logic in Oxford, *c.* 1410," in *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale: Essays in Honour of Anne Hudson*, ed. H. Barr and A. Hutchinson (Brepols, 2005), pp. 120-130; A. Conti, "Wyclif's Logic and Metaphysics," in *A Companion to Wyclif*, ed. I. C. Levy (Brill, 2006), pp. 95-99; W. Courtenay, *Schools and Scholars,* pp. 198-201; A. de Libera, *La querelle des universaux: De Platon à la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris, 1996), pp. 305-434; N. Gilbert, "Ockham, Wyclif, and the 'Via Moderna,'" in *Antiqui und Moderni: Traditionbewusstsein und Fortschrittsbewusstsein im späten Mittelalter*, ed. Zimmermann (Berlin, 1974), pp. 85-125; A. Kenny, "The Realism of the *de Universalibus*," in *Wyclif in His Times*, ed. A. Kenny (Oxford, 1986), pp. 17-30; S. Lahey, *John Wyclif* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 32-101; G. Leff, *William of Ockham: The Metamorphosis of Scholastic Discourse* (Manchester, 1975), pp. 78-104; *ibid*., "The Place of Metaphysics in Wyclif's Theology," in *From Ockham to Wyclif*, ed. A. Hudson and M. Wilks (Oxford, 1987), pp. 217-232; I. C. Levy, "John Wyclif's Neoplatonic View of Scripture in its Christological Context," in *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 11 (2003): 227-240; J. A. Robson, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools: The Relation of the "Summa de Ente" to Scholastic Debates at Oxford in the Later Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 141-170; P. V. Spade, "Introduction," in *On Universals,* trans. A. Kenny (Oxford, 1985), vii-xlvii, and, by the same author, "The Problem of Universals and Wyclif's Alleged 'Ultrarealism,'" in *Vivarium* 43.1 (2005): 111-123; S. H. Thompson, "The Philosophical Basis of Wyclif's Theology," in *Journal of Religion* 11.2 (1931): 86-116. Also important here is Levy's monograph *John Wyclif: Scriptural Logic, Real Presence, and the Parameters of Orthodoxy* (Marquette, 2003), although it overemphasizes at times the stability and coherence of Wyclif's theology (e.g., p. 86). This short survey should make it clear that while Wyclif's theological and metaphysical doctrines have been widely discussed, their impact on how we understand the vernacular practices of his followers has mostly escaped attention.

[25] Spade, ed., *Five Texts on Universals*, p. 114.

[26] *Ibid*., pp. 128-129.

[27] For the sense of "term" operative in this context, see G. R. Evans, "Wyclif's *Logic* and Wyclif's Exegesis: The Context," in *The Bible in the Medieval World: Essays in Memory of Beryl Smalley*, ed. K. Walsh and D. Wood (Oxford, 1985), pp. 290-291; and, more generally, P. Boehner, *Medieval Logic: An Outline of its Development from 1250 to c.1400* (Manchester, 1952), pp. 38-39.

[28] Courtenay, *Schools and Scholars*, pp. 186, 217; and see, by the same author, "The Reception of Ockham's Thought in Fourteenth-Century England," in *From Ockham to Wyclif*, ed. A. Hudson and M. Wilks (Oxford, 1987), pp. 89-107. Also important in this context is G. Klima, "Ockham's

Semantics and Metaphysics of the Categories," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham*, ed. P. V. Spade (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 118–142.

[29] It should be noted, however, that Mueller, in the introduction to his edition of *De Universalibus*, dates Wyclif's work on logic from between 1371 and 1374 (xxxvii-xxxviii).

[30] Wyclif, *De Logica*, ed. M. Dziewicki, 3 vols. (Wyclif Society, 1893-1899), 1:8-10.

[31] *De Logica*, 2:33: "Et propter ignoranciam talium universalium lapsi sunt moderni in multos errores." Such references to the errors of the *moderni* suggest that Wyclif had already moved away from the early "nominalist" positions he had taken early in his academic career (for which see Robson, *Wyclif and the Schools*, pp. 144-145), thereby lending support to Mueller's later dating of *De Logica* to 1371-1374. For the problematic nature of the term *moderni*, see S. Lahey, *Philosophy and Politics in the Thought of John Wyclif* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 69-70. Although Lahey questions whether it was meant as a term of anti-Ockhamist abuse, Bradwardine, whom Wyclif admired, repeatedly refers to Ockhamists as "the modern Pelagians," leading Simon Forde to conclude that there was "a broad sense of dissatisfaction with recent developments" in formal logic, a dissatisfaction Wyclif apparently shared. Forde, "Social Outlook and Preaching in a Wycliffite 'Sermones dominicales' Collection," in *Church and Chronicle in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. G. A. Loud and I. Wood (Hambledon, 1991), p. 181.

[32] Kenny, *On Universals*, p. 22, ll. 162-164.

[33] *Ibid*., p. 22, ll.145-149.

[34] S. Lahey, *John Wyclif*, p. 82.

[35] B. Smalley, "The Bible and Eternity: John Wyclif's Dilemma," reprinted in *Studies in Medieval Thought and Learning from Abelard to Wyclif*, ed. B. Smalley (Hambledon, 1981), pp. 404-405; Robson, *Wyclif and the Schools*, pp. 144-145.

[36] See, for instance, *De Universalibus*, II.53: "Unde conformius verbis Philosophi, realius, brevius et minus intricabile est concedere sensum realem iuxta seriem verborum, quam per tam diffusas et imbrigabiles rangas verborum exponere totum principaliter de signis. Habita enim notitia signatorum, consequitur notitia signorum. Unde optarem, quod doctores signorum primo iuxtaponerent expositionem suam expositioni aliorum et indifferenti oculo discernerent, quae esset veritati conformior...." Courtenay questions whether *doctores signorum* refers specifically to Ockham. Courtenay, *Schools and Scholars*, pp. 337-338.

[37] Kenny, *On Universals*, p. 9, ll. 441-443.

[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17, ll. 298-307; ll. 327-331. Elsewhere in his work Wyclif acknowledges that instruction in logic, philosophy, and metaphysics is important, though, again, always with the proper knowledge of how the universal subsists "ex parte rei": "Unde quidam theologi dicunt quod necesse est theolgum in recta logica, philosophia et metaphysica esse instructum et quod cognoscat istam quintuplicem armaturam, primo quod cognoscat universalia ex parte rei; et per hoc potest cognoscere verba Moysi locuta de genere et specie, et non oportet eum modo sophistarum per anteposicionem et postposicionem terminos camerare." *Opus Evangelici Liber III et IV (sive De Antichristo Liber I et II)*, ed. J. Loserth (Wyclif Society, 1896), 2:12.325-326. Wyclif goes on to list the remaining four implements of true theology—the knowledge that there

are no accidents without substance, that God's being is timeless, that all things have an ideal existence in God, that essential nature (*naturalem essenciam*) is perpetual and not composed of formal accidents—before concluding that "Per hec quinque cum suis appendiciis potest subtilis logicus defendere catholice textus theologicos scripturarum" (326). See, for a similar emphasis, *De Veritate*, I.viii.167-174.

[39] Though not made specifically in reference to *De Universalibus*, Catto's observation that in Wyclif's theology there is no order of created being distinct from God is relevant in this context. Catto, "Wyclif and Wycliffism at Oxford," p. 195. This is also the philosophical basis upon which Wyclif formulates his theory of supposition, for which see Spade, "Introduction," in *On Universals*, vii-xlvii.

[40] See, for example, *De Universalibus*, II.69: "Patet, tertio, quomodo ex ista veritate philosophica [Giles of Rome's understanding of universals in his *Sentences* commentary] iuvamur ad intelligendum Scripturam sacram. Nam quando ille eximius philosophus et propheta Moyses dixit, *Genesis* 1˚: 'producat terra animam viventem in genere suo, iumenta, et reptilia et bestias terrae secundum species suas,' non intellexit terminum vel conceptum humanum per 'genus' et 'speciem,' sed naturas universales communicatas multis suppositis, ut loquitur Commentator. Et ita de aliis dictis Scripturae sacrae." See, too, *De Universalibus*, XV.357 (ll.114-120). The broad relevance of the universals question is aptly summarized by Alain de Libera: "L'histoire des universaux est une histoire du *logos*." A. de Libera, *La querelle des universaux: De Platon à la fin du Moyen Age*, p. 452.

[41] Evans, *The Language and Logic of the Bible: The Road to Reformation* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 56. On Wyclif's criteria for true propositions, see J. Ashworth and P.V. Spade, "Logic in Late Medieval Oxford," in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 2, *Late Medieval Oxford*, ed. J. Catto and R. Evans (Oxford, 1992), p. 55.

[42] Kenny, *On Universals*, p. 54, ll. 307-309.

[43] Spade remarks that *De Universalibus* "is very much a work set in the context of on-going controversy." Spade, "Introduction," in *On Universals*, trans. A. Kenny, xi. On the differences between Wyclif's realism and more moderate versions of the same philosophy, see Dziewicki's brief but illuminating remarks in his introduction to *De Logica*, 3 vols., ed. M. Dziewicki (Wyclif Society, 1893-1899), 1:xiv-xv, as well as 2:xi-xiii. Leff also stresses that Wyclif should be "classed as an extreme realist" because Wyclif's philosophy of being "bound the whole of creation so closely to God's will that he thereby excluded contingency and freedom from the universe," a position, Leff argues, which manifested itself less in Wyclif's interpretation of sacred texts than in "his attitude to the Bible" as a "metaphysical entity." His tendency to privilege archetypal realities over all else made Wyclif's thinking incompatible with Ockhamism. G. Leff, "John Wyclif: The Path to Dissent," in *The Proceedings of the British Academy* 52 (1966):148-149, 156, 158.

[44] On sophismata, see Sigerus de Cortraco, *Summa modorum significandi; Sophismata,* ed. J. Pinborg (Benjamins, 1977), xv; N. Kretzmann, "Syncategoremata, exponibilia, sophismata," in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy,* pp. 211-245 (p. 217, n. 24 briefly discusses why it is misleading to think of a sophisma as a sophism); and P. Lewry, "Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric, 1220-1320," in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 1: *The Early Oxford Schools*, ed. J. Catto and R. Evans (Oxford, 1984), pp. 401-433. It should be noted, however, that Wyclif was later forced to qualify his position on the eternity of scripture as a result

of his exchanges with the Carmelite theologian John Kenningham, who asserted that Wyclif's realism made the literal truth of the Bible a deterministic concept. Their debate is documented in the Carmelite compilation known as the *Fasciculi Zizaniorium* (4-103, 453-480) and discussed most fully in Smalley, "The Bible and Eternity: John Wyclif's Dilemma," in *Studies in Medieval Thought and Learning from Abelard to Wyclif*, ed. B. Smalley (Hambledon, 1981), pp. 399-415, and I. C. Levy, "Defining the Responsibility of the Late Medieval Theologian: The Debate Between John Kynyngham and John Wyclif," in *Carmelus* 49 (2002): 5-29.

[45] *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, 3 vols., ed. Rudolph Buddensieg (Wyclif Society, 1905-1907). Hereafter *De Veritate*. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. I have checked my translations against Levy's partial English translation of *De Veritate*, noting differences where appropriate. *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, trans. and ed. I. C. Levy (Kalamazoo, 2001). All Latin citations are keyed to the volume, chapter, and page number of the Buddensieg edition. *De Veritate*, I.vi.108: "…sacra veritas inscripta, sive subiectet alias, sive sit veritas subiectata."

[46] Wyclif, in other words, seems to be exploiting an ambiguity already in the Latin between *inscribō, inscribere*— "To write, inscribe (a notice, title, etc., on)"—and *inscriptus*—"unwritten." *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P. G. W. Glare (Oxford, 1984), p. 921.

[47] See, for instance, I. C. Levy, *John Wyclif: Scriptural Logic, Real Presence, and the Parameters of Orthodoxy* (Marquette, 2003), p. 14, p. 81. Robson argues that Wyclif's ideas "were moulded in opposition to scholastic radicalism." Robson, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools*, p. 19. In the same vein, see S. Forde, "Social Outlook and Preaching in a Wycliffite 'Sermones dominicales' Collection," p. 181, as well as J. Coleman, *English Literature in History, 1350-1400: Medieval Readers and Writers* (Hutchinson, 1981), p. 240.

[48] *Oxford Theology and Theologians, c.A.D.1282-1302*, ed. A. G. Little and F. Pelster (Oxford, 1934), pp. 29-56, provides illuminating details concerning the nature and method of disputation towards the end of the thirteenth century. Such exercises revolved around the artful defense and exchange of particular opinions rather than the systematic exposition of biblical texts (29). "The earliest form of disputation, from which all the others sprang, would be the *quaestio in scolis*," in which "the teacher put a question, a scientific problem: the student attempted to answer it: sometimes the position was reversed: the student asked the question and the teacher answered it" (31). Catto remarks that by about 1400 commentaries on set texts, which had sustained English theology for two centuries, "had ceased to explain the words of the text and had gradually been organized into more or less formal questions corresponding to the established set exercise of the disputation." Catto, "Wyclif and Wycliffism at Oxford," p. 178. Also relevant regarding Wyclif's hostile attitude towards rhetoric is Copeland, "Rhetoric and the Politics of the Literal Sense in Medieval Literary Theory: Aquinas, Wyclif, and the Lollards," in *Interpretation: Medieval and Modern*, ed. P. Boitani and A. Torti (D. S. Brewer, 1992), pp. 1-23. De Lubac also describes how *disputatio* was not only a method for the clarification of texts but also an exercise in dialectical argumentation, which, he notes, "was destined to play an important role in the intellectual formation of clerics." H. de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Sense of Scripture*, 2 vols., trans. Macierowski and Sebanc (Eerdmans, 1998), 1:52-55 (citation at p. 55). Also see M. Bose, "The Issue of Theological Style in Late Medieval Disputations," in *Disputatio* 5 (2002): 1-21.

[49] McFarlane, *John Wycliffe and the Beginnings of English Nonconformity,* p. 22.

[50] Trapp, "Unchristianed Nominalism," p. 344. He goes on to note "the sensationalism of a terminology calculated to dazzle, to surprise, to make a point, a point indeed so thin as to break off," adding that this "morbid term-casuistry has given the 14th century its bad name" (349).

[51] *De Universalibus*, VII.137-138: "Et sic attendendo ad sophismata patet quod negans universalia ex parte rei propter negationem veritatis, intricat se insolubiliter ubi ponentes universalia realia cum Scriptura sacra 'delevi' pronunciant…nulla propositio est vera nisi propter veritatem quam primo significat. Et sic est dare veritatem ex parte rei ut dicunt Augustinus, Anselmus, Lincolniensis et alii sancti philosophi." See, for more on the tension between terminism and realism, Smalley, "The Bible and Eternity: John Wyclif's Dilemma," p. 401 ff. Reading the *Postilla* in the context of Wyclif's realist metaphysics, Smalley has elsewhere argued that Wyclif "looked back to the past to find that certainty which skepticism and terminism had dissolved." Smalley, "Wyclif's *Postilla* on the Old Testament and his *Principium*," in *Oxford Studies Presented to Daniel Callus*, ed. R. W. Southern (Oxford, 1964), p. 279. G. R. Evans maintains that "[w]hen Wyclif reacted against the conventional approach of his day to certain questions and asserted—among other things, this was surely the most significant—the absolute truth of Scripture, he was doing so within this context of rebuttal of fallacious reasoning and technically inaccurate reading of terms," and that "the prompting of the explosive *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae* was perhaps as much irritation with bad logic as the urge to self-defence under attack." Evans, "Wyclif's Logic and Wyclif's Exegesis: The Context," in *The Bible in the Medieval World: Essays in Memory of Beryl Smalley*, ed. D. Walsh and D. Wood (Oxford, 1985), p. 300. In an interesting discussion of Ockham's influence, Weinberg writes that the "strict limitations which Ockham imposed on knowledge properly so-called initiated a period of skeptical and critical philosophy which went far beyond Ockham's intentions." Weinberg, *A Short History of Medieval Philosophy*, p. 265.

[52] "Admisso enim semel in tantum auctoritatis fastigium officioso aliquo mendacio, nulla illorum librorum particula remanebit, quae non, ut cuique videbitur vel ad mores difficilis vel ad fidem incredibilis, eadem perniciosissima regula ad mentientis auctoris consilium officiumque referatur." Augustine, *Epistulae*, CCSL: XXXI (Brepols, 2004), p. 94. Plumer's commentary on this episode places it in the context of Porphyry's attempt to discredit Christianity. *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians: Introduction, Text, Translation and Notes*, ed. E. Plumer (Oxford, 2003), p. 45 ff. The metaphysical basis for Wyclif's arguments here can be found in *De Ente Librorum Duorum*, *Libri II: Tractatus Primus*, ed. M. Dziewicki (Wyclif Society, 1909), pp. 94-112.

[53] *De Veritate,* I.vii.156-157: "a deo canonizati"; "…deficiatur in fide, que debet accipi ex scriptura."

[54] On this point, see *De Veritate*, I.xv.387: "Igitur omnis theologus tenetur cavere de logica scripture sacre contraria. Cum igitur omnis logica dictans, quod scriptura sacra sit heretica et blasfema, sit sibi contraria, videtur, quod omnis talis logica sit a pio theologo detestanda."

[55] *De Veritate*, I.i.1-2: "Restat parumper discutere errores et concordias circa sensus scripture hodie plus solito seminatos, tum quia in illa consistit salus fidelium, tum quia illa est fundamentum cuicunque opinioni catholice, sed et exemplar est et speculum ad examinandum et extigwendum quemcunque errorem sive hereticam pravitatem."

[56] I am borrowing Conti's phrasing from his 2005 entry on Wyclif in the on-line version of the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wyclif/). *De*

Universalibus, II.59: "Primo quod est dare quinque maneries universalium, ut declarat Lincolniensis, I <u>Posteriorum</u>, capitulo 7˚. Primum et supremum genus est ratio vel idea exemplaris aeterna in Deo. Secundum genus est ratio communis creata in causis superioribus, ut intelligentiis et orbibbus caelestibus. Tertium genus universalium est forma communis fundata in suis individuis. Et illa, inquit Lincolniensis, sunt genera et species de quibus loquitur Aristoteles. Quarto: forma communis in suis accidentibus, apprehensa ab intellectu infimo, est universale. Sed quintum modum universalium—pro signis vel actibus intelligendi—dimittit Lincolniensis ut sibi impertinens." Cited by A. Kenny in "The Realism of the *de Universalibus*," p. 23. Note, however, that Wyclif complicates this hierarchy later in *De Universalibus,* 9.197-198, l. 365 ff.

[57] Heath emphasizes that the "unifying root" of Wyclif's various writings is in his realism, but also offers a good discussion of the "vigorous inconsistencies" of his positions within legal and historical frameworks. P. Heath, *Church and Realm 1272-1461: Conflict and Collaboration in an Age of Crises* (Fontana, 1988), p. 169, p. 174. For illuminating comments concerning the nexus of Wyclif's theological realism and the idea of scripture as God's word, see G. Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages*, 2:505, 511-516.

[58] *De Veritate*, I.vi.108-109: "Unde solebam ponere quinque gradus scripture sacre….sed quinto modo sumitur scriptura pro codicibus, vocibus aut aliis artificialibus, que sunt signa memorandi veritatem priorem…" Instead of "level," which Levy uses in his translation, I have chosen to use the term "grade" because it more directly captures the hierarchical connotations of the Latin. See the comparable discussion in the *Trialogus*, ed. J. Lechler (Wyclif Society, 1869), 3.31.238-239.

[59] *De Veritate*, I.vi.111: "Unde ista scriptura sensibilis in vocibus vel codicibus non est scriptura sacra nisi equivoce, sicut homo pictus vel ymaginatus dicitur homo propter similitudinem ad verum hominem."

[60] *De Veritate*, I.vi.108-109: "…quod scriptura sensibilis dicitur sacra, in quantum est medium recte inducens ad videndum per fidem dei voluntatem et ordinacionem, que est scriptura sacratissima." See, also, I.vi.114-115, 189 for a similar discussion. Spencer points out that while "in medieval usage, the definition of 'scripture' as a codex containing an identifiable set of words in an identifiable order constituted only one of the meanings of the term, and that the lowliest of them," Wyclif nevertheless "went further" in this regard than his contemporaries. Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages*, p. 138.

[61] *De Veritate*, I.iv.82: "Istis premissis dico, quod signa recitata sunt vera, si sunt partes scripture sacre, quia sunt signa imposita ab autore huius scripture ad signandum veritatem adequatam suo integro." The implication of this position, as Buddensieg correctly notes in his marginal commentary, is that "Holy Scripture has its own terminology." Compare the linguistic doctrine of the Modistae, who emphasized that because "the coupling of expression and meaning is arbitrary, it presupposes a deliberate act by which it is brought about, an *impositio* associating an expression with an object or content." Jan Pinborg, "Speculative Grammar," in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, p. 257.

[62] Kenny, *On Universals*, p. 89, ll. 541-543; *De Universalibus*, IX.204-205: "Et sic ab universalibus ex parte rei capiuntur universalia in signo sic quod non est universale signum nisi quia correspondet universali reali." Conti comments that "Wyclif hypostatizes the notion of being and considers equivocity, analogy, and univocity as real relations between things, and not as semantic relations between terms and things." A. Conti, "Wyclif's Logic and Metaphysics," pp. 103-104.

[63] *De Veritate*, I.vi.123, I.ix.183, 189; I.ii.23: "[I]n equivocis non est contradiccio sit docta potissime in scriptura." Wyclif returns to this idea at greater length later in *De Veritate*, I.viii.174: "Equivocaciones enim subtilissime latentes philosophos in nostris codicibus exprimuntur, quas, dum theologus cognoverit, potest intelligere veritatem, que non iacet per se in verborum velamine, sicut nec falsitas vel repugnancia…" In a key discussion from a Sunday Gospel sermon on John 3:1, Wyclif writes that controversies regarding the significance of baptism are marred by this tendency to focus on contradictions and inconsistencies in the language of scripture rather than on the sense of Christ's words: "Sed dicendum est sophiste gratis equivocanti quod oportet ipsum sensum scripture primo addiscere et deinde secundum hunc sensum facere argumenta. Est autem sensus Christi pertinens intelligere verbum suum impugnatum a sophistis in sensu composito, ita quod iste sit sensus. Non potest esse quod quis sit salvatus nisi ex aqua et Spiritu Sancto fuerit baptizatus. Nec sunt audiende moderne regule quod ad talem sensum compositum oportet terminum modalem omnino precedere; nam logicus subtilissimus illud negat. Secundo suppono sophiste ut prius quod omne quod fuit vel erit est in aliqua parte maximi temporis. Et tercio patet responsio ad quatuor sophiste instancias. Quantum ad primam, patet quod intelligendo assumptum in sensu diviso verum assumitur, sed hod est impertinens ad aliquid contra sensum evangelicum concludendum. Quantum ad secundam, patet ex supposicione secunda quod si quis posterius erit natus spiritualiter, tunc sic in magno tempore fuit natus. Et patet quod in argucia secunda falsum assumitur." *Sermones*, 4 vols., ed. J. Loserth (Wyclif Society, 1886-1889), 1:218.9-28. See, too, *Sermones*, 2:457.11-36, on the equivocal meanings of "bread" in John vi.59. Indeed, the fourteenth-century *moderni* fail to grasp that biblical books exist in analogous equivocation with the Book of Life, as Wyclif argues in an exposition of Luke 4:17 (*et traditus est illi liber prophetae Esaiae…*): "Unde codex dicitur liber secundum equivocacionem analogam ad librum vite, ut patet de libro dato Cristo, Luc. quarto."

[64] *De Veritate* I.vi.114; I.vi.111: "[S]criptura sacra est descriptive inscripcio veritatis. Ubi ergo est verior talis inscripcio, est verius scriptura, sed hoc est verum de libro vite, ergo in ipso est verior racio scripture. Veritas enim est ibi permanencior, quia eterna et indelebilis, liber est serenior, quia candor lucis eterne et speculum sine macula…"

[65] Kenny, *On Universals*, p. 22, ll.162-164. See erudite comments on this idea in Catto, "Wyclif and the Lollards: Dissidents in an Age of Faith," in *History Today* 37 (1987): 47. Wyclif saw a similarly idolatrous tendency at work in church teaching about the eucharist, as evident in *De Eucharistia Tractatus Maior*, ed. J. Loserth (Wyclif Society, 1892), 2.53.5-24.

[66] *De Veritate*, I.vi.107: "…de lege dei est preter codices vel signa sensibilia dare veritatem signatam, que pocius est scriptura sacra quam codices." Levy's translation of "est preter" as "subsists," which I follow here, strikes me as idiosyncratic, although he helpfully contextualizes this passage in *John Wyclif: Scriptural Logic, Real Presence, and the Parameters of Orthodoxy*, detailing Wyclif's response to the grammarians that God exists beyond signifying signs (81).
[67] *De Veritate*: I.viii.174; I.vi.107. The latter reference is cited by Levy in *John Wyclif: Scriptural Logic, Real Presence, and the Parameters of Orthodoxy*, p. 84. Dziewicki, whose treatment of Wyclif's place in fourteenth century philosophical theology is overly schematic, nevertheless accurately characterizes the "basis of Wyclif's system" as an abiding belief that "Being is really identical in all: a transcendent link, binding the whole universe together, and giving it unity and harmony." M. Dziewicki, "An Essay on John Wyclif's Philosophical System," in Wyclif, *Miscellanea Philosophica*, 2 vols., ed. M. Dziewicki (Wyclif Society, 1902-1905), 1:xi.
[68] On inherence and supposition, see P. V. Spade, "Introduction," in *De Universalibus*, trans. Kenny, xxviii-xxix.

[69] This phrase is from Copeland, whose point is nevertheless somewhat different from the one I am making here. Copeland, "Rhetoric and the Politics of the Literal Sense: Aquinas, Wyclif, and the Lollards," p. 17.

[70] *De Veritate*, I.iii.52: "…de sacerdotibus Cristi utentibus verbis scripture in oracionibus, in sacramentorum ministracionibus, in predicacionibus et scripture exposicionibus." It seems to me that the word "oracionibus" here has the secondary sense of declaring prophetic truths.

[71] *De Veritate*, I.iii.52: "Nisi enim logica scripture quoad sensum verbalem, literalem tam in parte historiaca quam sapienciali foret recta, esset scriptura sacra nimis mala….Sed constat, quod, sicut autoritate sacre scripture debet cristianus loqui in quatuor casibus predictis eius sentenciam, ita eadem autoritate debet habere formam illam verborum, cum sit autoritas precipua et humilima a magistro optimo ad hoc data." I have used Levy's translation, from *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, ed. and trans. I. C. Levy (Kalamazoo, 2001), p. 69.

[72] "Quod cum adepti fuerint, ipsa delectabiliter ueritate pascuntur bonorumque ingeniorum insignis est indoles, in uerbis uerum amare, non uerba." Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* 4.xi.26, CCSL: XXXII (Brepols, 1962), p. 134. Augustine also discusses the form of words in the treatise *De Catchizandis Rudibus*, in *Oeuvres de S. Augustin*, 11, ed. Combès and Farges (Paris, 1949), II.3 (cited in A. Louth, "Augustine on Language," in *Journal of Literature and Theology* 3.2 [1989]: 156).

[73] Leff, "Wyclif and the Augustinian Tradition, with Special Reference to His *De Trinitate*," in *Medievalia et Humanistica* n.s. 1 (1970): 29. See, by the same author, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages*, 2:496.

[74] *De Veritate*, I.iii.44: "Cum enim sensus scripture, quem spiritus sanctus indidit, sit eius fructus principaliter acquirendus, quis fidelis dubitat, quin postponenda sint folia et cortex verborum, nisi de quanto disponunt previe ad hunc sensum?"

[75] *De Veritate*, I.iv.94.

[76] *De Veritate*, I.iii.44: "Et hec est una racio, quare Cristus et multi sancti non scripserant nisi sensum in tabluis cordis, cum hoc sit perfeccius." See, for a similar emphasis, *Opus Evangelicum*, 3.4.14: "Videtur quod iste sanctus sentenciat religionem quam Christus approbat stare in corde et non preponderanter in signis sensilibus, sicut fuit in utraque lege, quando populus a medulla preceptorum Domini declinabat."

[77] *De Veritate*, I.ix.189: "Illa enim mentalis intelleccio est verius scriptura quam lineacio membrane, que non est scriptura sacra…"

[78] *De Veritate*, I.xii.268: "Confirmatur ex hoc, quod tota lex Cristi est unum perfectum verbum, procedens de ore dei, cuius singule partes concausant totam autoritatem vel efficaciam legis Cristi."

[79] For the significance of spiritual understanding in Pauline theology, see H. de Lubac on 2 Cor. 3:8 and Origen's *Homilies on Joshua*, in *Medieval Exegesis*, trans. Sebanc, I:226.

[80] Wilks, "John Wyclif: Reformer, c.1327-1384," reprinted in M. Wilks, *Wyclif: Political Ideas and Practice* (Oxbow, 2000), p. 12.

[81] Dove rightly points out that Wyclif's view of the scriptural books themselves as the lowest register of significance did not mean that he disregarded textual details or was indifferent to the accuracy and reliability of scriptural texts. Dove, "Wyclif and the English Bible," in *A Companion to John Wyclif*, ed. I. C. Levy (Brill, 2006), pp. 394-395. And as de Lubac stressed, at no point did scriptural tradition encourage a dehistoricized approach to the word; it was only the "Judaicizing" interpretation of scripture, the failure to recognize the prophetic truths of the law, that Christians considered incompatible with the spiritual understanding. H. de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, trans. Macierowski, 2:60.

[82] Thus, it is important to remember that Wyclif's sometime resistance to accepted hermeneutic methods was not motivated merely by distaste for figurative glossing and exempla.

[83] *English Wycliffite Sermons*, ed. A. Hudson and P. Gradon, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1983-1996). Cited parenthetically by volume, page, and line number.

[84] For further remarks on this idea, see *De Veritate*, vol. II, p. 226.

[85] Evans, *The Language and Logic of the Bible: The Road to Reformation*, p. 51. The complex authenticating strategies of the literal sense are evident in a passage from *De Veritate* Evans cites later in her discussion: "Something is true when its sense is true and false when its sense is false. I call a sense true by which someone…conceives the truth" (64).

[86] *De Veritate*: I.vi.122: "Quilibet enim sensus ortodoxus primo in ordine ab homine conceptus de scriptura est sic literalis." Aquinas' views on the literal sense can be found in the *Summa* Ia I, article 10. Copeland notes that the similarities between Wyclif and Aquinas extend only so far, and that Aquinas differs considerably from Wyclif in the view that "human rhetoric still has a place in sacred language." Copeland, "Rhetoric and the Politics of the Literal Sense in Medieval Literary Theory: Aquinas, Wyclif and the Lollards," p. 15. The body of scholarly work treating the literal sense is far too vast to summarize here, but particular reference should be made to Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge, 1991), as well as to her more recent study, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages: Lollardy and Ideas of Learning* (Cambridge, 2001). Perceptive interpretations of the literal sense can also be found in Simpson, *Burning to Read: English Fundamentalism and its Reformation Opponents* (Harvard, 2007), pp. 106-142, and Cummings, "Literally Speaking, or, the Literal Sense from Augustine to Lacan," in *Paragraph* 21:2 (1998): 200-226. I thank Professor George Hoffman for this reference.

[87] *De Veritate*, I.vi.123: "[I]lla autem, quibus placet distingwere sensum literalem secundum racionem vel partes subiectivas ab aliis, debent dicere, quod de racione sensus literalis est, quod sit sensus catholicus inmediate elicitus ex scriptura…"

[88] *De Veritate*, I.xii.268, cited above. Wyclif, according to Robson, thought of the Bible as "an emanation of the Supreme Being transposed into writing," *Wyclif and the Schools*, p. 146.

[89] Copeland stresses that Wyclif's "theological discussions of the unity of truth beyond individual human languages did provide others with a mandate, a theoretical justification, for the actual

project of scriptural translation." Copeland, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 112.

[90] *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, with the Apocryphal Books, in the Earliest English Versions, made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and his Followers*, 4 vols., ed. J. Forshall and F. Madden (Oxford, 1850), 1:2.

[91] *De Veritate*, I.vi.110.

[92] Including his own, which is why I have referred in this chapter, as I do throughout the project, to *Wyclif's* logic of scripture, not *the* logic of scripture, the more familiar construction. To assume that the logic of scripture exists serenely apart from human interpreters is to ignore the historical and cultural specificity of sacred texts.

[93] M. Fishbane, *The Garments of Torah: Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics* (Indiana, 1992), p. 37.

[94] For more on this dimension of Wycliffite hermeneutics, see Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and the Interpretation of Texts* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 138.

[95] See, for instance, *De Veritate*, I.iii.44, where Wyclif speaks of the need to set aside logical and grammatical instruction for the more perfect understanding which Christ has inscribed "in tabulis cordis." Cited, with reference to the same points made here, in G. Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages*, 2:522. For similar concerns, see Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy*, *passim*.

[96] Catto, "Wyclif and Wycliffism at Oxford," p. 261.

[97] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. Anscombe, 3rd ed. (Macmillan, 1968), pp. 143-144.

[98] *De Veritate*, I.vi.111. I borrow the term "supralinguistic" from Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy*, *passim*. Spencer also comments on Wyclif's understanding of the Bible as a "repository of metalinguistic truth," in *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 132-133.

Chapter Two

"[O]f harde wordis, and harde sentencis": Translation, Scriptural Authority, and the
Wycliffite Bible Prologue

"…of harde wordis, and harde sentencis, hou tho mi3ten best be vndurstonden
and translatid."[1]

I

Since Margaret Deansely's work on the Wycliffite Bible nearly a century ago,

scholars have pursued a range of questions concerning the evolution of Lollard

translation practices.[2] Many of these studies address the shift from a syntactically

inflexible Early Version of the Bible to a more malleable and fluent Late Version.[3]

Whereas the Early Version carries Latin word order and syntax over into English, the

Late Version eschews exact transposition, striving instead for a translation more

accessible to the lay reader—what Lollards repeatedly call the "open" biblical text. The

idea is most recognizable, perhaps, in connection to Jerome, who made sense-for-sense

translation a mainstay of the Vulgate.[4] Wyclif, though not a biblical translator like

Jerome, shared with patristic writers the conviction that the word of God was not

confined to any one language, and therefore that biblical translation was possible so long

as the translator made sound choices about the sense of obscure words and passages.[5] In

fact, he had gone further than Jerome, whose attempts to recover what he called the

hebraica veritas suggested a clear hierarchy among the *tres linguae sacrae* (Hebrew, Greek, and Latin).[6] Wyclif held no similar view, and in his most important discussions about the nature and authority of the Bible has little to say about scripture as a verbal category, about the problem of language difference, or about the translation of sacred texts. As he argues in *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae* (1377-78), his major treatise on biblical hermeneutics, the proper object of interpretation is not so much the written document itself but the "sense which God teaches."[7] This distinction appears to give credence to the theory that Wyclif's ideas encouraged his followers to construe biblical language in more flexible ways, to prefer the sense of a passage over its exact grammatical and syntactical transposition into English. In other words, the change from the Early Version to the Late Version Bible seems inexplicable, especially given how quickly it occurred, without recourse to Wyclif's concept of scripture and the hermeneutic priorities it evidently cultivated among the anonymous scholars and exegetes who worked on the translations.[8]

In foregrounding the significance of this shift, the present chapter makes no attempt to trace out individual stylistic developments from one version of the Wycliffite Bible to another.[9] Such an approach would not only demand a separate treatment of the manuscripts but would also proceed as if the practice of translation evolved apart from changing ideas about the nature and authority of sacred texts.[10] Fashioning a more "open" biblical text hinged on discrete lexical and syntactic choices, to be sure, but these were themselves conditioned by different and often competing notions about the jurisdiction of the written word and the mediating functions of language. For unlike the Vulgate—which, as Jonathan Sheehan reminds us, was "a translation so long used in the

Christian Church as to be indistinguishable from the Bible itself"—Wycliffite scripture put the very idea of the Bible in flux, and not simply because Wyclif's followers had turned to English.[11] By departing so self-consciously from the kind of meticulous transposition evident in the Early Version, the Late Version demonstrated, to an extent Jerome never had, that the very words of scripture are contingent, and can be recombined or replaced by others which convey exactly the same message. And yet in undertaking a project on the order of the Late Version, which centralized most of what was known at the time about the textual history of the Latin Bible, Wycliffites implied that scriptural meaning subsisted in a particular arrangement of words and expressions, and could not be abstracted from them without distorting what the divine author had meant.

Although Wycliffites aspired to make the Late Version accessible to English audiences who lacked knowledge of Latin, the forms of textual authority and interpretive jurisdiction specific to the concept of an "open" translation remained difficult to define.[12] To insist on the intelligibility of sacred texts is to raise larger questions about the nature of biblical writing and scriptural truth. It is perhaps no surprise, then, that all eleven extant copies of the Prologue to the Wycliffite Bible, one of the earliest and most extensive Middle English discussions of translation, circulated with the Late Version.[13] While not the first discussion of translation theory in medieval England, it is one of the most vivid and engaging, especially when recounting the scholarly challenges that were involved in fashioning a "trewe" text of the Bible (57). These passages are especially significant for what they reveal about the difficulties of transferring Wyclif's own idea of scripture into the vernacular milieu of late fourteenth-century biblical scholarship. In effect, the Prologue suggests that biblical translation, at least as it was practiced by

Wyclif's followers, required thinking of scripture as historically determined writing rather than—or not exclusively as—an "eternal and indelible truth," or what Wyclif, in *De Veritate*, refers to as the Book of Life.[14]

I will contend throughout this chapter, then, that Lollard translation practices can never entirely accommodate Wyclif's own idea of the Bible.[15] Although the movement would never have gained prominence if its members (such as they were) had not so ably seized on the practical implications of Wyclif's tenets, certain features of his thinking resisted assimilation into vernacular contexts. In particular, Wyclif's theological realism, his resistance to seeing the Bible as a text, severely limits the ways Lollards can talk about translation. They consequently situate biblical translation—and the idea of the Bible itself—in a broader discursive context. Central here is the genre of the vernacular translator's prologue; Wycliffites mine the rich seam of discussion it offered about language difference and the intelligibility of sacred texts. The prologue—and the Prologue—was thus one significant route by which Wyclif's academic biblicism would cede authority to what Anne Hudson has termed "vernacular Wycliffism," or the body of Lollard texts and ideas available to lay, English-reading audiences in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.[16]

<center>II</center>

Scholars have discussed the implications of Wycliffism at length. Less well described, however, and much less frequently scrutinized in connection to vernacular religious writing, is Wyclif's own idea of the Bible. As G. R. Evans has observed,

<center>71</center>

modern studies have more often invoked Wyclif to explain the Reformation, or to argue

for continuity between the late medieval and the early modern, than to understand how

Wyclif himself conceptualized the language and logic of scripture.[17] Setting aside the

question of Wyclif's influence on later generations of reformers, we can begin to see how

the episteme in which the Lollards read and translated their texts was mediated by

Wyclif's own ambivalent relationship to late medieval conventions of critical thought and

analysis.

Before proceeding further, then, it will help to consider some of the basic

principles informing Wyclif's own biblical scholarship and their significance to

translation as a discursive practice. These ideas form a dense conceptual nexus; Wyclif's

scriptural logic involved sometimes complicated and contradictory suppositions about the

authority of the Bible and the nature of its language. But we can anchor at least some of

the discussion in the Latin treatise *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, Wyclif's most

sustained engagement with these issues. I have already discussed this text at some

length, situating it in the continuum of responses to the universals question. The previous

chapter also emphasized the extent to which such debates implicated and informed

Wyclif's hermeneutic positions. My concern here is to illustrate how Lollard translation

practices—and vernacular biblical scholarship more generally—take shape in intimate

dialectical tension with Wyclif's own theorizations of scriptural truth in *De Veritate*.

In a key discussion early in his argument, Wyclif addresses the problem of the

Bible's figurative language, endorsing the Augustinian principle that equivocation is not

contradiction. Commenting on seemingly incommensurate designations of the term

"lion" as a predication of Christ in Revelation 5:5 and 1 Peter 5:8, Wyclif attacks those

who considered scripture's figurative language a hindrance to understanding or, worse, a

reason for doubting the veracity of the Bible in the first place:

> On this point I have often said that it is a false assumption, because one must learn a new grammar and a new logic in expounding or interpreting holy scripture, as is made clear by way of the blessed Gregory and other saints who, on scripture's authority, expound new senses of scripture's terms which are not to be found in [their] books of grammar…Therefore, when interpreting holy scripture we ought to reject the childish sense and accept the sense which God teaches […].[18]

Here and elsewhere, *De Veritate* situates the problem of the Bible's ambiguity in

a familiar tradition of Augustinian interpretation.[19] Within this paradigm, however,

Wyclif carves out his own distinctive emphasis on scripture's divine authorship, the

cornerstone of his theological realism.[20] Subordinating language to things, or real

universals, Wyclif reasons that because "God and all being exists in reality [*ex parte rei*]

beyond the mode of the signifying sign," scripture's meaning is not a function of

linguistic signification.[21] He therefore counterposes the sense which God teaches [*quem

deus docet*] against the logical and grammatical operations of learned exegesis. Wyclif's

excursus later in *De Veritate* on the five grades [*gradus*] of scripture, ascending from

mere manuscripts to the disembodied and transcendent Book of Life itself, makes this

point even more vividly, and is worth quoting at length:

> For just as I have demonstrated elsewhere, the law of God subsists beyond all manuscripts and sensible signs which yield the signified truth. And it is for this reason that it is more suitably described as holy scripture than the manuscripts themselves. I have been in the habit of describing holy scripture as the inscription of sacred truth, whether in its revealing of other truths, or to the extent that it is the revelation of truth itself. I have as a rule posited five grades of holy scripture. The first is the Book of Life, which Apocalypse speaks of in Chapters 20 and 21. The second consists of the truths inscribed in the Book of Life, according to their intelligible

being [*esse intelligible*]. Both grades of these scriptures are absolutely necessary, although they do not differ essentially, but rather according to reason, as I said of this matter in *On Ideas*. On the third grade, scripture is considered in light of the truths to be believed in their proper genus, which are inscribed in the Book of Life according to existence and effect. The fourth grade considers scripture in light of the truth which must be believed as it is inscribed in the book of the natural man, that is, in his soul….Yet in the fifth manner, holy scripture is understood as referring to the manuscripts, sounds or other artificial signs intended to bring to mind that first truth, in the wayAugustine speaks of in his letter 39 *to Paulinus on Seeing God*.[22]

In its highest connotation, then, scripture is a form of divine inscription; its meaning is determinate because truth does not rest in the language of the Bible alone, or in the relationship of reader to text. God is an ontological reality, and so too is his word; to believe otherwise would require accepting that the truth of scripture is embodied in biblical books and manuscripts which can themselves be continually refashioned through editorial intervention or the improper imposition of human grammar and logic. "And so as many people as it pleases," Wyclif worries, "could then render all scripture heretical, damnable, and potentially harmful, promoting no virtue or honor, and as a consequence possessing no authority." [23] In fact, were it not for his emphasis on preaching, Wyclif would have little need for the physical scripture itself, made up as it is of so many dead images and signs:

For that scripture which is perceptible through voices and manuscripts is not holy scripture, except in an equivocal way, just as it might be said that the picture or image of a man is called a man by reason of its resemblance to the actual man.[24]

He concludes, therefore, that the fourth and fifth grades of scripture, which are nothing more than mere likenesses of a "prior scripture" [*scriptura priori*] are to be considered

holy "in an even more remote fashion than vestments and other priestly ornaments are said to be holy."[25] Here Wyclif is at his most anti-representational, as the ironic nature of this analogy subtly demonstrates: that which possesses no sanctity in the first place—the outward forms and material objects associated with priestly power, a constant source of irritation for Wyclif and his followers—possesses even more sanctity than human language and written books.

Extending Wyclif's thinking about scriptural language and authority in *De Veritate* to its logical conclusion, it becomes evident that the eternal and uniform *lex dei* has no language; the Bible, as it were, is not any single authoritative text, or series of texts, but instead a kind of exemplar or divine idea residing serenely above local debates over signification and meaning.[26] Wyclif's thought therefore poses a challenge to the view of the Bible as a literary-historical category of writing, seeming somewhat out of place in a period characterized by the transformation and adaptation of scripture across widely different literary and historical contexts. But this disjunction appears even more acute when Wyclif is juxtaposed against the Bible prologue and its attendant areas of critical and historical inquiry: How should vernacular biblical translation proceed? What kind of authority do existing biblical translations have? Which books of the Bible require glossing and clarification? How might teachers and translators of sacred texts negotiate the very real differences among Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and English? All of these questions recognize the mutability of the written word and the mediating functions of scholarship.[27] For Wyclif, however, the highest understanding of scripture is not as a text in history—subject as all texts are to the vicissitudes of manuscript survival, the temporalities of language, and the violence of partial or selective signification—but

rather as "one, perfect word proceeding from the mouth of God, whose individual parts together create the entire authority and efficacy of Christ's law."[28] Situating the Bible, in its highest sense, beyond the domain of human intervention, *De Veritate* attempts to resolve the problem of scripture's fundamental *textuality* by insisting that its sufficiency and universality in fact allow for no exterior critical or historical vantage point: "insofar as all truth is in holy scripture," Wyclif argues, "it is clear that every disputation, every signification of terms, or [every] linguistic science which does not have its origin in holy scripture is profane."[29]

Wyclif's rigorous notion of scriptural sufficiency, deriving as it does from his theological realism, provides almost no rationale for the textual practices at the center of Wycliffite biblical translation—and vernacular religious culture more broadly; in his view, the Bible's sufficiency exists *prior* to the instantiation of God's teachings in language, making the urgent philological and textual inquiries discussed in the Prologue, which I will turn to shortly, secondary and contingent. Scripture is thus not at all present for Wyclif as a verbal category; the Bible is authoritative precisely because it is not comprised of words, because its meaning does not reside in the conventions of its language, or in the relationship of reader to text. If Lollards, in the words of Steven Justice, cared most of all "that the written word be audibly and visibly present within its communities of believers," then Wyclif's idea of the Bible made this objective more improbable than scholarship has generally recognized.[30] Nor do the rules of grammar and signification provide a satisfactory basis for comprehending scriptural truth. Unlike his contemporaries, orthodox and otherwise, Wyclif is relatively unconcerned with the distinctions between Latin and English, believing as he does that the Bible is less a text to

be interpreted than a transcendent and inerrant law to be directly intuited by the faithful person who "has no doubt that the leaves and bark of the words must be disregarded" when they obscure the sacred sense. All human grammars have the capacity to lead the reader astray, which is why "Christ and many saints would not inscribe [their] understanding except upon the tablets of the heart, since that way is more perfect"[31]

It is important to point out, however, that Wyclif was by no means uninterested in the Bible as an instrument of study. Not only had he distinguished himself as an exegete, completing his *Postilla in totam Bibliam* in the years immediately preceding his writing of *De Veritate*, but he also routinely drew on the work of other biblical commentators, especially that of Nicholas of Lyra and Augustine. Perhaps, as Malcolm Lambert has written, Wyclif turned to such authorities because the aura of heresy associated with *sola scriptura* was too great.[32] Yet his analysis of the Bible is difficult to explain in reference to any interpretive approach that so foregrounds the philological and historical status of sacred texts, or which regards the operations of signs as constitutive of meaning.[33] Wyclif instead attended to the Bible's organic unity and permanence, hypostasizing these categories so far as to make the very notion of emending or translating the word of God nearly inconceivable. And thus while *De Veritate* does not (with the exception of a few passing references) explicitly address the issue of religion in the vernacular, the implications it entails for how we understand the vernacular project of Lollardy, and the significance of English biblical scholarship within it, are impossible to ignore.

Wyclif's discussion of the pagan authors, for example, illustrates how his rather extreme position on the Bible's reality as a universal exerted a delimiting influence on vernacular biblical scholarship by overlooking the problem of language difference.

Raising the issue of Aristotelian logic, Wyclif answers those critics who attacked him for marginalizing the pedagogical conventions of the day:

> Third, some object to my statements by arguing that if the logic of scripture were to be upheld always and everywhere then the logic of Aristotle would need to be rejected for the most part, and consequently the young would no longer learn the logic of Aristotle, but only that of scripture, since his logic habitually violates it. To this I say that the conclusion does not follow, precisely because the logic of Aristotle, which is for the greater part correct, is the very logic of scripture…[Therefore] the logic of Aristotle is not to be upheld on the grounds that it is Aristotle's, but only inasmuch as it belongs to holy scripture.[34]

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this passage, and of the discussion of Aristotle as a whole, is Wyclif's apparent indifference to a point his contemporaries repeatedly made in defending vernacular translation, biblical and otherwise—that, in the words of Trevisa's Lord, "Aristoteles bokes and oþere bokes also of logyk and of philosofy were translated out of Gru into Latyn" (128-130).[35] Wyclif's university training in logic and metaphysics, which stressed the technical problems of linguistic signification, would have recognized that interpreters of the Bible had to contend not only with difficult passages in which the meaning of words seems to be multiple, but also that what they were reading was very likely itself already a translation.[36] Can the logic of Aristotle, so to speak, be commensurate with the logic of scripture if more than one language is involved? While always alert, however, to the complexities of signification in sacred texts, Wyclif makes no effort to entertain the thorny question of language difference; the many asymmetries between Latin and English are not a *locus* of hermeneutic concern for him in the way that they would be for Wycliffite translators of the Bible. Nor is there any attempt in Wyclif's work to trace out etymologies on the model of Isidore, whose

writings were the source for so much of the most specific thinking about translation and linguistic equivalence.[37] For Wyclif, as we have seen, the universality of the Bible guarantees that individual differences between languages are not constitutive of meaning; the sacred sense is not confined to one language or another. But, importantly, this is true not merely because Christ's teachings inhabit all languages equally, the version of linguistic equivalence most familiar in patristic thought, but also because for Wyclif language itself is not where reality lies.[38] His reasoning extends even to the secular authors, for as his comments concerning Aristotle suggest, all discourse is ultimately assimilated to a divine logic that transcends differences among individual languages. So while Wyclif's biblicism endows English with authority relative to Hebrew, Greek, or Latin, it also resists the specific forms of linguistic self-consciousness in which *translatio studii* is most invested as a discursive practice. There is no attempt here to imagine the vernacular as a site of cultural production; consequently, Wyclif's thinking empties translation of analytical force. Departing considerably from the subtlety that marked literary discussions of translation, Wyclif projects backwards onto "tradition" a presuppositional scriptural meaning, generalizing its import to the point that otherwise significant distinctions among languages are abolished. Scripture is so universally applicable, so totally sufficient, that all language can only be a secondary structure, an impoverished mediating layer concealing the underlying Book of Life.

Translation, by its very nature, is a disjunctive act, forever jeopardizing the narrative and formal continuity it seeks to realize between the source and its instantiation in the vernacular.[39] As such, it openly challenges interpretive hegemonies, inscribing oppositional relationships between elite and non-elite, Latin and the vernacular, clerical

and lay discourse. For Wycliffites as well as for their orthodox opponents, translation was about the control of canonical texts, it is true, but much more about the role sacred texts played in defining the parameters of community and representing forms of membership.[40] However, in looking beyond individual human languages to an archetypal and exemplary *scripta*, Wyclif's biblicism also fails to pass on the polemical socio-linguistic categories his followers would need if their own vernacular translations aspired to represent new spiritual communities.[41] The social logic of the Bible Prologue revolves around expressions which find no equivalent in Wyclif, at least in their authority and potential volatility: the linguistic community of "English men," the vernacular as a "modir tunge" and "comoun langage of this lond," scripture as something possessed by "oure puple" (45, 59).[42] (Nor is the Prologue unique in this respect: one of the most strident and socially reflexive of English Wycliffite texts, a sermon known as *Vae Octuplex*, addresses itself to "þe puple" in much the same way.[43]) Moving, then, from Wyclif's theorizations to the English biblical scholarship of his followers, we can see how his scriptural paradigm was in no position to endow translation with the kind of political and social urgency specific to Wycliffite texts, which were eager to make a larger set of claims for English as a religious and theological language. *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae* thus provides only the most precarious basis for a cultural agenda built on translation and realized in lay access to the written word.

III

I have suggested that with *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae,* Wyclif's biblicism (and its theological underpinnings) becomes the centerpiece of a larger drama about what it means to represent God in writing, about the problematics of scriptural translation, and about the expanse separating the Book of Life from the Bible in English. Many of these questions highlight divisions within late medieval intellectual life at Oxford. Wyclif's insistence on the Bible's ontological reality was the outcome of academic disputes in which he had found it necessary to defend the principle of biblical inerrancy from "nominalist" philosophers influenced by the ideas of William Ockham. As Smalley has commented, Wyclif the schoolman "looked back to the past to find that certainty which skepticism and terminism had dissolved."[44] Yet such debates did not stay neatly confined to academic discourse; Wyclif's attitude towards biblical language and scriptural truth implicates those English Wycliffite texts, such as the Bible Prologue, most invested in cultivating a broad intellectual and religious culture in the vernacular. If we can hold up Wyclif's theological realism as the central feature of his approach to the Bible and its language, then it is certainly true that his thinking was difficult to adapt to the milieu of vernacular learning and instruction taking shape during the latter half of the fourteenth century.[45]

This is a rather counterintuitive interpretation when one remembers that Wyclif was himself a religious teacher; like other such authorities, he mediated sacred texts—as well as the terms of his engagement with them—in the form of sermons and a wide range of academic writing in which biblical commentary and exposition is a key component. As "the foundation of every universally acceptable opinion" [*fudamentum cuicunque opinioni catholice*], and "the pre-eminent authority for every Christian" [*precipua*

autoritas cuilibet cristiano], the Bible must be accurately interpreted and its essential

truths (if not its precise words) conveyed in a reliable and accessible fashion.[46] Yet the

strictures of Wyclif's realism must have been felt acutely by those whose scholarly

practices were dependent on conceptualizing the Bible as a text. To render scripture into

an intelligible form, one accessible to the laity, would mean glossing the Book of Life.

Teachers and translators of the Bible thus required a developed hermeneutic framework

despite Wyclif's conviction that most forms of hermeneutic inquiry were ultimately

nothing more than an imperfect and fallen human grammar, an interpretive accretion

standing between the individual believer and sacred truth as it was imparted in the literal

sense. A late fourteenth-century reference evinces some of the paradoxes that emerged as

Wycliffite scholars positioned themselves in relation to this matrix of ideas. The Middle

English *Rosarium Theologie*, a compendium of scriptural terms widely used by Lollard

exegetes and preachers from about 1384 onwards, distinguishes between "Goddez law &

mannez lawe" in much the same way that Wyclif himself does in assigning priority to

"the sense which God teaches" over the rules of allegorical interpretation. The entry for

"lex" refers to the Bible as "the law of the spirite wiche is writen into the hertis be the

instincte of the Holy Gost," arguing that it is "opone" or "schewed" only in these terms.[47]

Although such a formula would seem to insulate scripture from hermeneutics, the

Rosarium Theologie is, after all, a compilation of *hermeneutic* terms; whatever Wyclif's

commitment to a disembodied scriptural text, questions of meaning must nevertheless be

resolved in the context of language in order to guarantee interpretive accessibility and, by

extension, to justify Lollard conceptions of the Christian life.

These ambiguities are most on display with respect to what Hudson has called a

"Lollard sect vocabulary," a critical lexicon characterized by recurrent usages in Lollard

vernacular writings of certain words and expressions: "trewe prechours," "trewe cristen

men," "pore prest," "it semeþ to many men," "þenken many men," and "ground," either

as a noun or a verb.[48] Steven Justice describes the semantic force of *Grounden* and its

derivites as "doctrine *grounded* or *not grounded* (i.e., in the Bible)," but in the examples

Hudson herself provides to show how the term was used by Wycliffite writers, the

Bible's status remains rather opaque. The sense of *ground* as a noun, she writes, is

exemplified in the phrase of a Wycliffite writer who urges that "þei shulden teche men

bileve þe which is ground of Cristis ordre"; as a verb, "Aftir þis my3te a man axe…how

groundiþ þis frere his ordre, and in what tyme it bigan…but noon groundiþ here his word,

as noon of þes new ordris groundiþ þat he cam in bi Crist."[49] While it seems that, in the

case of the verb especially, the sense of *ground* strongly implies the necessity of "finding

justification in scripture," as Hudson puts it, what this means in practice is far from

clear.[50] None of Hudson's examples implies the degree of close textual investigation

Justice describes by pointing to *Grounden* as the centerpiece of a sophisticated

hermeneutic approach to the Bible as a written document. For its part, the Wycliffite

Bible Prologue employs the verb in a way that foregrounds its derivation from the Latin

fundare, as when it speaks of beliefs that are "groundid opynly in the text of holy

scripture" (43). Other usages, however, are more ambiguous about the specifically

textual resonance of the verb—and in at least one important instance, the emphasis shifts

from the process of finding justification in scripture to the knowledge that the Bible's

meaning is "groundid on trewthe," and comes not only to the reader but also "the herere"

whose "herte is ful of charite" (45). So where we might most expect occurrences of *grounden* that confirm the status of the Bible as a spiritual guidebook for the laity, as a *regula fidei*, we see instead a more abstract and universalizing hermeneutic, suggesting that grounding religious observance in scripture is not precisely the same thing as looking to the Bible as a *text*. Hudson's examples do not assume a specifically textual paradigm for lay religion; the Bible is as much an idea about the proper parameters of authority as a text to be consulted and scrutinized for everyday guidance on matters of faith.

What is most noteworthy about this lexicon, especially when considered alongside Wyclif's own view of a biblical "sense" which eludes hermeneutic appropriation, is how few of its key terms actually strive for a standard of expository precision in reading and commenting on the text of scripture. Expressions such as "trewe prechours" or "pore prest," while indicating something important about the way Wycliffites regarded themselves, say little about how the movement aspired to read sacred texts. Even the theological terms Wycliffites transfer into English from academic Latin—in particular, locutions pertaining to the eucharistic elements and transubstantiation, such as "accidents," "subjects," and "substaunce"—remain restrictively scholastic, offering little interpretive or hermeneutic assistance to lay readers encountering these ideas for the first time in the vernacular.[51] And interestingly, the hermeneutic term most invested in such a goal, "open," is nowhere to be found in Hudson's delineation of a "Lollard sect vocabulary."

Thus, even as Lollards begin to distill their explication of sacred texts into key terms and categories, as evinced in the codification of a specialized lexicon, they are constrained by an episteme that resists regarding the Bible in linguistic and historical

terms. Given that Wyclif's idea of scripture was difficult to sustain in a coherent fashion

or transfer intact into the vernacular, we might wonder where Lollards turned to find the

interpretive machinery necessary for conceptualizing translation—especially intelligible

translation, one imbricated with a sense of lay supremacy—as an authoritative practice?

Before proposing an answer to this question, it will be necessary to consider the

Wycliffite Bible Prologue in more detail, especially its discussion of vernacular

translation and hermeneutics in chapters XII to XV.

<center>IV</center>

     "The desire for a whole vernacular Bible," David Lawton has written, "comes out

of a different experience of sacred text than that which informs partial translations, say,

of the Gospels and epistles of the Mass, or the psalms found in the breviary or primer."[52]

The truth of this observation is borne out in chapter XV of the Wycliffite Bible Prologue,

which recounts the textual and philological challenges the translators encountered as they

sought to establish an accurate Latin exemplar for rendering into English. Translation

was not just the process of bringing "the Bible out of Latyn into English" but a massive

interpretive and exegetical effort as well, involving several layers of authoritative

intervention. The project required

> myche trauaile, with diuerse felawis and helperis, to gedere manie elde
> biblis, and othere doctouris, and comune glosis, and to make oo Latyn
> bible sumdel trewe; and thanne to studie it of the newe, the text with the
> glose, and othere doctouris, as he mi3te gete, and speciali Lire on the elde
> testament, that helpide ful myche in this werk; the thridde tyme to
> counseile with elde gramariens, and elde dyuynis, of harde wordis, and
> harde sentencis, hou tho mi3ten best be vndurstonden and translatid; the

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iiij. tyme to translate as cleerli as he coude to the sentence, and to haue manie gode felawis and kunnynge at the correcting of the translacioun. (57)

It would be tempting, in coming across a discussion that so explicitly concerns itself with arduous technical problems such as manuscript collation and lexical variation, to assume that the Prologue is wholly remote from Wyclif's own sense in *De Veritate* that scriptural truth is what one is left with when individual words pass away, a form of inspired "mental intellection" rather than textual investigation.[53] And to a certain extent this is true. But constructing too strict a binary between Wyclif and Wycliffism in this regard overlooks the fact that Wyclif's teaching also implied the importance of careful translation; the goal of bringing "manis lawis and ordynauncis" into conformity with the gospel would only come about with the certainty that sacred texts were reliable and free of corruption (30).[54] Wyclif's biblicism in fact makes provisions for both points of view, constantly circling back to the written word even as it wants to regard the Bible as anything but a text in history. In a profound departure from Wyclif, however, the Prologue envisions the Bible as a book with a particularly *complex* textual history, and in this sense represents scriptural intelligibility, and hence accessibility, as the outcome of prolonged scholarly engagement, presupposing precisely the kind of professional and elite exegetical mediation that Wyclif often found inimical to lay interests. Starting with its extensive inventory of apocryphal books, the Prologue's reflections on scripture's troubled textual history quickly multiply to include remarks on the Psalms ("Noo book in the eld testament is hardere to vndirstonding to vs Latyns, for oure lettre discordith myche fro the Ebreu") and, eventually, the Latin Bible from the Vulgate onwards (one "shal fynde ful manye biblis in Latyn ful false, if he loke manie, nameli newe; and the

comune Latyn biblis han more nede to be corrected, as manie as I haue seen in my lif,

than hath the English bible late translatid") (38, 58). Such comments envisage and enact

a scholarly approach devoted to resolving problems of language difference, and

especially to discerning linguistic lineage. Underscoring the importance of Jerome, Lyra,

and Fitzralph to this process, the Prologue emphasizes that scripture can never be

evaluated apart from whatever language it happens to be in, especially given the many

incongruities between Latin and Hebrew. So, the authors explain, where the Latin base

text diverges from Jerome and Lyra's translations from the Hebrew, a marginal gloss has

been supplied drawing on both authorities (58). As much as the Prologue valorizes a

pure biblicism akin to that of Wyclif's, arguing that the "best translating" is "aftir the

sentence, and not oneli aftir the wordis" (thereby invalidating the excessive literalism of

the Early Version), and however frequently it references scripture as "Goddis lawe," the

discussion always reverts back to the interlingual nature of the project, and of

interpretation itself (57, 30).[55]

As a statement, therefore, of critical and interpretive practice, the Prologue, and in

particular its comments on translation, directly confronts Wyclif's notion of an ideal

divine meaning realized in the literal sense and dislodged from human systems of

grammar and signification. It envisions the Bible as nothing if not a document

constituted in discourse—discourse not merely in the Foucauldian sense of the term but

also in the more concrete sense of intellectual and social exchange. As Brian Stock has

emphasized, such relationships in the Middle Ages organized themselves around material

texts, and the Prologue's account of the "diuerese felawis and helperis" who assisted in

preparing a "trewe" Bible reinforces this point vividly (57).[56] In its meticulous

exposition of the grammatical and syntactical alternatives that always shadow biblical translation, the Prologue conceptualizes scripture as something inseparably linked to the manuscript page itself, thereby materializing the word in a way Wyclif would very likely have found disquieting. Perhaps, too, those involved in producing the Late Version had little practical use for Wyclif's radical biblicism. None of the 250 or so surviving partial and complete copies of the Wycliffite Bible cites or even incidentally mentions Wyclif, either in the Prologue (where it would be reasonable to expect at least some discussion of his views, especially those set down in *De Veritate*) or in the marginal material accompanying the translated scripture itself.[57] One passage in particular obliquely gestures towards this displacement. "No doute," the Prologue asserts near the end, "men mi3ten expoune myche openliere and shortliere the bible in English, than the elde greete doctouris han expounid it in Latyn, and myche sharpliere and groundliere than manie late postillatours, either expositouris, han don" (58).

Wyclif was not a doctor of the church but he was in fact one of England's "late postillatours," having completed his *Postilla in totam Bibliam* while teaching at Oxford in the 1370s.[58] The Prologue, in other words, positions its most vociferous embrace of the open text *against* the very exegetical expertise Wyclif himself had brought to the movement as a life-long student and expositor of the Bible. This contrast becomes even more pointed when one recalls that Nicholas Lyra was a central figure to the project— and, with Wyclif, the only other person to have completed a Postilla on the entire Bible during the fourteenth century.[59] Of the two major "late postillatours," then, only one seems to have been useful for the specific aim of making a more open and intelligible vernacular Bible. This undoubtedly has much to do with Lyra's conception of the literal

sense, as many scholars have argued.[60] But Wyclif's marginalization here and throughout the Prologue cannot be explained merely by Lyra's apparent prominence, especially because their biblical scholarship, at least in the case of their respective postillations, ran parallel in important respects. The implication, rather, is that some of the obstacles to realizing an "opinliere" Bible in English were specific to Wyclif himself and lay in his identity as an Oxford academic who was relatively unconcerned with codifying rules for ensuring the intelligibility and accessibility of vernacular scripture. Can we assume, then, that his ideas led inexorably to the Late Version? Nothing about his intellectual background, especially to the extent that he had fashioned himself into a committed realist, suggested that he should entertain such questions in detail. And so while the Prologue itself circulated in extremely limited numbers, and rarely in any complete form, it is nonetheless an important text in the history of the movement for the critical reflexivity it generates about Wyclif's own idea of the Bible, most notably his commitment to the disembodied universality of scriptural truth, and for the role it plays in reminding audiences about the significance of language difference to the interpretation of sacred texts.[61]

V

Although later generations of Lollards were familiar, to varying degrees, with Wyclif's views on the authority of scripture, the compilers of the English Bible directly confront the implications of his thought in their scholarship. For them, Wyclif's biblicism may well have represented certain constraints. The production of two full-scale

Bibles in English evinced an unprecedented commitment not only to lay theological

inquiry, whatever that may have meant in practical terms, but also to a concept of

vernacularity organized around modes of textual criticism and the detailed philological

study of English texts. So even before the balance of Lollardy shifted away from

university culture, Wyclif's scriptural logic was at pains to provide the expository

machinery necessary to reconceptualize translation or to supply a schema by which the

goal of biblical intelligibility might be realized in English practices.

   This basic tension runs deep in early Lollard biblical scholarship, though Wyclif's

problematic status within the history of the movement has always been somewhat

obscured by arguments, on the part of reformers and ecclesiastical officials alike, that the

Bible versions emerged seamlessly from his own scholarly labor.[62] In a letter addressed

to Pope John XXIII in 1412, for instance, Arundel writes,

> This pestilent and wretched John Wyclif, of cursed memory, that son of
> the old serpent…endeavoured by every means to attack the very faith and
> sacred doctrine of Holy Church, devising—to fill up the measure of his
> malice—the expedient of a new translation of the Scriptures into the
> mother tongue.[63]

The circumstances under which a polemical definition of Lollardy took hold in England

are complex but have much to do with the way a clerical elite and their allies traced

vernacular biblical translation back to Wyclif himself.[64] Discussion of the Bible

translations is therefore often framed in terms of Wyclif's own influence, reifying what

was largely a clerical perspective and neglecting to historicize the relationship between

his academic theology and the broader current of vernacular Wycliffism. One of the

most widely copied and disseminated texts of the Middle Ages, the Wycliffite Bible

constitutes an intervention in religious culture that far exceeds the intellectual influence of any single person, even if Wyclif's ideas were in fact sometimes taken up in purposeful and self-conscious ways. One need only glance at the four volumes edited by Forshall and Madden to get a sense for the magnitude of the project and the continuum of practices—translation, commentary, glossing—that were necessary for producing such a text. The Wycliffite *Glossed Gospels*, circulating at roughly the same time as the Bible versions and notable for their ambitious use of textual exposition and analysis, are another example of the way Lollards clearly saw themselves participating in the larger transfer of authority into the vernacular already well underway in fourteenth-century England, a process, however, in which Wyclif himself may have figured more ambiguously than some of his contemporaries.[65]

One such person was John Trevisa. A likely acquaintance of Wyclif's at Oxford, Trevisa is a key figure for the critical task of assessing the cultural and political status of the vernacular in late medieval contexts. His *Dialogue Between the Lord and the Clerk* (1387) is an important early argument for English translation with which the Wycliffites were almost certainly familiar.[66] Written in the 1380s as a part of the prologue to his English translation of Higden's *Polychronicon*, Trevisa's *Dialogue* is the most comprehensive discussion of vernacular translation prior to the Wycliffite Bible Prologue and an important point of reference in later debates over English scriptural versions. In his exchange with the Clerk, the Lord mounts a broad defense of translation, touching on a range of topics central to Lollard justifications for vernacular usage.

The debate initially revolves around the problem that language difference— "dyuers tonges"—poses to the transmission of learning (2). The widespread

comprehension of Latin notwithstanding, vernacular translation is necessary given the absence of a universal language. It is on this basis that the Lord promotes an English translation of Higden's *Polychronicon*: "Þarvore Ich wolde haue þeus bokes of cronkys translated out of Latyn ynto Englysch," he argues, "for þe mo men scholde hem vnderstonde and haue þereof konnynge, informacion and lore" (34-36).[67] Yet the debate inevitably turns to the question of religion in the vernacular, and it is at this point that the Lord cites familiar examples from the history of medieval translation. Although Hebrew is "ywryte by inspiracion of þe Holy Gost," Jerome's translations of scripture into Latin are nevertheless praised by the Church; why should English translation be any different? (107-108). He then offers several examples of texts that have—inevitably, it seems— migrated out of their original linguistic settings:

> Aristoteles bokes and oþere bokes also of logyk and of philosofy were translated out of Gru into Latyn. Also, atte prayng of Kyng Charles, Iohn Scot translatede Seint Denys hys bokes out of Gru ynto Latyn. Also holy wryt was translated out of Hebrew ynto Gru and out of Gru into Latyn and þanne out of Latyn ynto Frensch. Þanne what haþ Engly sch trespased þat hyt my3t no3t be translated into Englysch? (128-135).[68]

The Lord proceeds to offer other well known examples, including Alfred's translation of the Latin Psalter into Anglo-Saxon and Bede's translation of the Gospel of John (now lost) (135-144). Yet he conspicuously omits linguistic equivalence as a justification for biblical translation, despite having an authoritative precedent in Augustine for precisely such an argument.[69] Departing from what would have been a potentially convincing argument in the eyes of orthodoxy, the dialogue instead highlights the importance of a "skylfol translacion þat my3t be knowe and vnderstonde" (164).

Hudson has shown that as late as 1401 discussions about the translation of scripture into English could still take place without the imputation of heresy, even if that same year saw the promulgation of the anti-Wycliffite edict *De Haeretico Comburendo*.[70] Entrenched positions on the issue did not emerge until some years later, when Arundel's Oxford *Constitutions* impose sweeping and severe restrictions on theological discourse in English.[71] Even so, Trevisa is clearly attempting to deflect criticism for his stance on the legitimacy of the vernacular by adopting the persona of the Clerk, who ventriloquizes the orthodox arguments against English scripture even as the Lord savages the reasoning behind them. The Lord's call for a "skylfol translacion þat my3t be knowe and vnderstonde" implicitly advances the controversial claim that England is in need not only of a generic English Bible but also an intelligible one. In this way, the *Dialogue* envisages a lay, English-reading public whose members are defined by shared interests and assumptions; and it envisages a certain idiom of translation specific to such a community. Of course, Trevisa's own work on Higden's *Polychronicon*, a text directed to a learned elite, hardly makes him a qualified spokesperson for the spiritual needs of the laity.[72] Moreover, the Lord assigns no more priority to scriptural versions than he does to chronicles or other examples of secular writing. Yet, within the cultural ambit of Lollardy, his insistence on "skylfol translacion" is—inevitably—synonymous with an ideal of opening up the biblical text to the laity, for whom a more literal mode of translation might prove opaque. The text therefore naturalizes a link between skillful translation and the intelligibility of sacred texts, situating itself in the same discursive field as Wycliffite vernacular hermeneutics.

These points suggest that fashioning an accessible English Bible was never merely about making stylistic choices between idiomatic and literal modes of translation, especially because these categories did not always correspond to the more elusive quality of intelligibility; even lay readers with a liturgical knowledge of Latin might find a translation such as the Early Version Wycliffite Bible unintelligible for its careful adherence to Latin word order and syntax. Trevisa's emphasis on "skylfol translacion" implicitly recognizes, then, what Wycliffite translators understood so well in their own stress on the "open" biblical text: remaking the text in translation is itself the highest kind of fidelity towards the original, so that fashioning an intelligible and accessible English version of the Bible could only mean *refusing* the notion that scripture exists as some supernal ideal beyond the hermeneutic interventions of its human interpreters.

One objection to this reading might rest on the assertion that the term "skylfol" has multiple determinations and that, when applied to translation, provocatively accounts for a wide range of discursive possibilities, not all of which are commensurate with the Prologue's model of vernacularity. Skillful translation in this period could just as readily signify the very qualities the Late Version shunned, such as an inflexible fidelity to Latinate word order and vocabulary. Yet a translation might be equally skillful for its syntactic flexibility, its departure from philological accuracy in favor of the "sense" and context of a passage. Translators, having read their Jerome, were often willing to entertain both possibilities and to employ these different categories strategically, even— or especially—in cases involving scriptural texts. For his part, however, the Lord comes down firmly on the side of those who eschew excessive literalism; this is especially clear when he announces his preference for prose over poetry, for "prose ys more cleer þan

ryme, more esy and more pleyn to knowe and vnderstonde" (167-168). The sheer redundancy of terms signifying direct and open apprehension of meaning here clearly privileges the concept and needs of a lay audience. This, moreover, is precisely the hermeneutic idiom—one of openness, clarity, understanding—that the Lollards adopt in their thinking about translation and lay accessibility in the Wycliffite Bible Prologue.

But the story of these two texts does not end there. Trevisa's *Dialogue* exposes an asymmetry in contemporary thinking—one inflected with some of the polarities we have encountered in Wyclif's own thought—that has consequences for the way Wycliffites conceptualize vernacular biblical translation. Scripture in English is acceptable, the Lord implies, because the truths that sacred texts embody remain the same regardless of what language they are in. "Holy wryt" can move "out of Hebrew ynto Gru and out of Gru into Latyn" without erosion or corruption of meaning (132-133). The Lord envisions translation as paralinguistic mobility, a kind of divine *mouvance*. At the same time, however, the translator must attend to the specific matters of textuality and interpretation that go into "skyfol" translation. Vernacular biblical translation is both a natural consequence of the dispersal and circulation of knowledge and an individual human effort to remake a text according to certain hermeneutic standards. It would not be going too far to suggest that these positions encapsulate radically different notions of intelligibility and the "open" text. I will assess the consequences of this asymmetry later, after addressing some further implications of the translator's prologue as the genre was practiced by Trevisa and others.

Although the Lord's arguments in favor of vernacularizing sacred texts are deployed within the relatively neutral context of discussing Higden's *Polychronicon*—

chronicles and encyclopedias were hardly foremost among the materials ecclesiastical officials sought to suppress in their campaign against heresy—the *Dialogue*, as have seen, is implicated in a larger conversation about English biblical translation. The text signals its place within this discursive economy by deploying some of the most familiar tropes of medieval translation theory, including, in an epistle to his patron that circulated with some copies of the *Dialogue*, Trevisa's pledge to "sette worde vor word" in rendering Higden's text (220).[73] Though putatively discussing a non-biblical text, Trevisa has in mind, of course, Jerome's rules of biblical translation set forth in his prologues, which were shortly to become the object of intense speculation among Wycliffite translators and teachers of scripture, nowhere more so than in their own Prologue to the Bible. Trevisa thus speaks of his project with a theoretical vocabulary supplied by a tradition of biblical prologues in which the parameters and techniques of translation were a defining feature. Why would Wycliffites not avail themselves of such knowledge, especially when their engagement with the vernacular had been so strictly demarcated by Wyclif's own biblicism?

From Jerome onwards, the translator's prologue offers a transferable body of knowledge—a set of terms, rules, and categories—that could be generically adapted by a range of medieval English writers. It supplied—for Trevisa, for Wycliffites, for Chaucer in his Prologue to the *Treatise on the Astrolabe*—a privileged site for articulating one's motives and techniques concerning translation. Widely practiced throughout the 1380s and 1390s, the genre carves out an ongoing conversation about translation and the authority of the vernacular that the Lollards inherit and expand into a venue for their own thinking concerning such matters.[74] Just as Trevisa, then, avails himself of the

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conventions of the translator's prologue, so the translators of the Wycliffite Bible make their Prologue a centerpiece of hermeneutic discussion, likewise delineating the terms by which a skillful translation may be carried out.

Picking up the conversation where Trevisa leaves off, the Wycliffite Bible Prologue draws out the implications of the Lord's arguments with a discussion that mirrors not only the rhetoric of the *Dialogue* but also its reasoning.[75] Latin was once a "comoun langage," just as English is now, and yet there are numerous local variations even within those languages, such as Italians who now "spekiþ Latyn corrupt" (59). There are, then, only vernaculars, the premise from which Trevisa's *Dialogue* proceeds before mentioning the very texts and textual traditions later evidenced in the Wycliffite Bible Prologue:

> …for if worldli clerkis loken wel here croniclis and bokis, thei shulden fynde, that Bede translatide the bible, and expounide myche in Saxon, that was English, either comoun langage of this lond, in his tyme; and not oneli Bede, but also king Alured, that foundide Oxenford, translatide in hise laste daies the bigynning of the Sauter into Saxon, and wolde more, if he hadde lyued lengere. Also Frenshe men, Beemers, and Britons han the bible, and othere bokis of deuocioun and of exposicioun, translatid in here modir langage; whi shulden not English men haue the same in here modir langage, I can not wite, no but for falsnesse and necgligence of clerkis, either for oure puple is not worthi to haue so greet grace and 3ifte of God, in peyne of here olde synnes. (59)

These texts, as I have stressed, were standard reference points in discussions of English translation, and the mere fact that both Trevisa and the Wycliffites mention them in their prologues is not in itself surprising. What is surprising, however, is the way in which both the *Dialogue* and the Wycliffite Bible Prologue envision the history of translation, especially of biblical translation, as a history of hermeneutic work. It is a history of

human skill in interpretation, of arduous textual scholarship, not simply one anchored in the intellection of divine intention or a "prior scripture."[76] The Prologue therefore turns to the question of equivocal terms, which test the ability of even the most skillful translators.   For what happens when one encounters a term whose signification is not only ambiguous in itself but also capable of engendering an incorrect translation in the target language?

> But in translating of wordis equiuok, that is, that hath manie significacions vndur oo lettre, mai li3tli be pereil, for Austyn seith in the ij. book of Cristene Teching, that if equiuok wordis be not translatid into the sense, either vndurstonding, of the autour, it is errour; as in that place of the Salme, *the feet of hem ben swifte to shede out blood,* the Greek word is equiuok to *sharp* and *swift,* and he that translatide *sharpe feet,* erride, and a book that hath *sharpe feet,* is fals, and mut be amendid; as that sentence *vnkynde 3onge trees shulen not 3eue depe rootis,* owith to be thus, *plauntingis of auoutrie shulen not 3eue depe rootis.* Austyn seith this there. Therfore a translatour hath greet nede to studie wel the sentence, both bifore and aftir, and loke that suche equiuok wordis acorde with the sentence, and he hath nede to lyue a clene lif, and be ful deuout in preiers, and haue not his wit ocupied about worldli thingis, that the Holi Spiryt, autour of wisdom, and kunnyng, and truthe, dresse him in his werk, and suffre him not for to erre. Also this word *ex* signifieth sumtyme *of,* and sumtyme it signifieth *bi,* as Jerom seith; and this word *enim* signifieth comynli *forsothe,* and, as Jerom seith, it signifieth *cause thus, forwhi;* and this word *secundum* is taken for *aftir,* as manie men seyn, and comynli, but it signifieth wel *bi,* eithir *vp,* thus *bi 3oure word,* either *vp 3oure word.* Manie such aduerbis, coniuncciouns, and preposiciouns ben set ofte oon for another, and at fre chois of autouris sumtyme; and now tho shulen be taken as it acordith best to the sentence. Bi this maner, with good lyuyng and greet trauel, men moun come to trewe and cleer translating, and trewe vndurstonding of holi writ, seme it neuere so hard at the bigynnyng. God graunte to us alle grace to kunne wel, and kepe wel holi writ, and suffre ioiefulli sum peyne for it at the laste! (59-60)

Augustine's solution to equivocal terms had been to rely on figurative rather than literal translation. He points to the difficulty of translating Romans 3:15 (*veloces pedes eorum ad effundendum sanguinem*) from Greek, in which the word "ὸξύς" can mean both

"sharp" and "swift," though the former is clearly alien to the "sense" of the biblical passage.[77] The Prologue likewise urges that ambiguous terms be brought into alignment "with the sentence"; it twice asserts that difficult language should "acorde" with one's understanding of the passage as nurtured by *caritas*. These remarks, of course, can easily be read against the backdrop of Wyclif's Augustinianism. But what is also evident in the passages cited above is that Wycliffites, working parallel to Trevisa, introduce a much more systematic concept of "skilleful" translation than either Augustine or Wyclif do, going so far as to make specific provisions for the correct translation of adverbs, conjunctions, and prepositions. The Prologue proceeds with much greater sensitivity with respect to how translation *acts* upon the biblical text, how language generates meaning within particular communities, and how the Bible itself might function as an object of vernacular scholarship. Such concerns lay the groundwork, one might argue, for the philological and historical procedures that characterize early modern biblical exegesis. At the same time, the bifurcation I have been tracing out in Wycliffite hermeneutic theory, in which the biblical text is alternately embodied and disembodied, is very much on display here in the tension between a pretextual, almost intuitive concept of "sentence" and an equally insistent emphasis on the technical aspects of "skilleful translacioun." Lollardy's commitment to a more accessible vernacular Bible, in other words, is mediated by antithetical concepts of scriptural authority: the Bible merits scholarly appropriation but is no less "open" to the direct moral intellection of the charitable or virtuous reader.[78]

The stress on openness so evident throughout the concluding chapters of the Prologue posits the unmediated accessibility of scriptural meaning to the laity, to those

"symple men" who live virtuously.[79] "With good lyvyng and greet travel [travail]," the Prologue asserts, "men moun come to trewe and cleer translating" (60). To translate "aftir the sentence" situates the process of translation in the reciprocal movement between languages not of words but of meaning, language being nothing more than a kind of verbal or semantic accretion. The "best translating" therefore dispenses with translation altogether, privileging instead the direct and reflexive apprehension of inner meaning no matter what language scripture is in (57). The hermeneutically "open" text is so transparent that it paradoxically reclaims the Bible from hermeneutics altogether. Yet this ideal of scriptural legibility is precisely what produces the urgent need for more hermeneutic guidance.[80] The revelation of "sentence" not only never completely resolves questions of scriptural interpretation and meaning but also generates precisely the interpretive questions that Wyclif's biblicism, with its emphasis on the undifferentiated and irreducible literal truth of holy writ, sought to transcend.

Rather than rearticulating Wyclif's scriptural logic, then, Wycliffites look to other models, grafting Trevisa's vernacular idiom—with its emphasis on a prose style that is "cleer," "more esy and more pleyn to knowe and vnderstonde"—into the Bible Prologue so that they can speak practically and concretely about the translation of sacred texts into English (167-168). While Wyclif's more radical conception of scripture survived in some highly polemical Lollard works such as "The holi prophete Dauid seiþ" and select sermons, his thinking must have seemed increasingly out of place as the translators of the Late Version Wycliffite Bible concerned themselves ever more directly with fashioning a viable model for the intelligible translation of sacred texts into English.[81]

VI

If not necessarily proof that Trevisa collaborated with Wycliffites on the

production of the Late Version Bible, the close verbal parallels between his *Dialogue* and

the Prologue—as well as the latter's reference to vernacular "cronicles" and its Trevisa-

like rhetorical turns—suggest that Wycliffites indeed respond to some of the ideas

Trevisa's text puts forward concerning scriptural translation. From this vantage point,

Trevisa's significance to the project consists in the way the *Dialogue* provides the

framework for an ideal of intelligibility to take shape and acquire discursive authority.

The vernacular translator's prologue, I have suggested, was crucial to this process; with

its wide proliferation and accessibility, the genre created conversations among texts and

traditions that might not have occurred otherwise. Lollardy gains analytical purchase on

the practice and theory of biblical translation by mining the most authoritative examples

of the genre, resignifying and assimilating ideas already in the vernacular and, in the

process, all but repudiating the more radical biblicism of *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae.*

This pattern disrupts standard models of Wycliffism and the vernacular, which so often

situate both in hierarchical relation to Latin. In reformulating vernacular precedents of

the "open" text, Wycliffites present a rather less deterministic view of *translatio*,

demonstrating that movement between languages can occur laterally (from one

vernacular to another), and not just genealogically (from Latin to English). As much as

Wycliffites self-consciously situate themselves at the polemical crossroads of Latin and

English, they also import key hermeneutic terms and categories from an adjacent archive

of vernacular texts—many of which have yet to be fully theorized in connection to

Lollardy.[82]

A glossed translation of the Latin Psalms made for Margaret Kirkby, nun and later

anchoress of Hampole, Richard Rolle's *English Psalter* is one such text. It dates from the

1340s and is perhaps the most significant redaction of biblical material prior to the

Wycliffite Bible.[83] Rolle's work was an obvious and authoritative precedent for

vernacular scripture because of its popularity (the Psalter itself survives in no fewer than

40 manuscripts) and the way it had centralized a large body of material concerning

psalmic translation and interpretation. This was important to Wycliffites on a practical

level since available versions of the Psalms, the translators note, were particularly

unreliable:

> For the chirche redith not the Sauter bi the laste translacioun of Jerom out
> of Ebru into Latyn, but another translacioun of othere men, that hadden
> myche lasse kunnyng and holynesse than Jerom hadde; and in ful fewe
> bokis the chirche redith the translacioun of Jerom, as it mai be preuid bi
> the propre origynals of Jerom, whiche he gloside. (58)

Rolle himself is probably not one of the "othere men" whom Wycliffites criticize

here for adulterating the legacy of Jerome with their own unreliable versions of the

Psalms. Interestingly, the same charge had been made against Wycliffites themselves: an

anonymous fifteenth-century metrical prologue prefaced to one copy of the *English

Psalter* complains that Rolle's version had become contaminated by Wycliffites who

interpolated their own comments into the text: "Copyed has this Sauter ben; of yvel men

of lollardy: / And afterward hit has bene sene; ympyd in with eresy."[84] Such anxieties

also suggest, however, that the *English Psalter* appealed to a wide range of vernacular

literary communities, a pattern which had much to do with Rolle's dexterity as a translator, his ability to balance the competing demands of the *verbum ex verbo/sensum ex sensu* distinction. His English rendering of the Psalms does not reproduce the original so literally that meaning is incomprehensible to anybody lacking proficiency in Latin, but neither does Rolle reveal the sense of the passage to the point of superseding the Latin altogether.[85] Appealing to vernacular audiences interested in private devotional usage but still receptive to the authority of Latin as a religious language, the English Psalter "proved easily adaptable for a very much wider audience than its first recipient."[86]

When the focus of Rolle's prologue shifts to his own expository and translational methods, as convention for such introductory remarks dictated, he makes no effort to resolve the obvious tension between literal transposition and syntactical flexibility: "In this werke, I seke na straunge Ynglis, bot lyghtest and comonest and swilk that is mast lyke til the Latyn, swa that thai that knawes noght Latyn by the Ynglis may com til mony Latyn wordis" (4).[87] Even as he promises intelligibility, Rolle pledges to subordinate English idiom to the syntax and word order of the source text, affirming the authority of the Latin Psalter as it had come down from Jerome and Peter Lombard. These comments, which have no precedent in the Lombard's version of the Latin psalms, go far beyond his initial promise to avoid "straunge" or eccentrically literal translation. Deploying vernacularity for the education of a lay audience, Rolle's *English Psalter* at the same time pays "exegetical service" to a received Latinate text in its intention to "folow the lettere als mykyll as I may" (4).[88]

This declared fidelity to the Latin original perhaps proved less elusive for Rolle than for the translators of the Early Version Wycliffite Bible, the extreme literalism of

which must have seemed incompatible with the goal of a Christian community grounded in and guided by scripture in English. In a way perhaps appropriate for a prophetic book produced "by the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit, without any external aid," in the Lombard's description of the Psalms, Rolle preserves the possibility of translation introducing a meaning not explicitly authorized in the Latin.[89] For no sooner does he declare the need to translate by the word than he offers a formula for departing, at least in theory, from the exact wording of the original: "[A]nd thare [where] I fynd na propire ynglis I folow the wit of the worde, swa that thai that sall red it thaim thare noght dred errynge" (4-5).[90] The key word in this passage, the word around which the most pressing questions of authority and individual interpretation cluster, is of course "wit," a Middle English noun here equivalent to "sense" or "understanding."[91] The assumption that one could discern the "sense" or "understanding" of scriptural texts had obvious political and social resonance in the context of late medieval disputes over the validity of vernacular biblical translation. Opponents of Englishing the Bible, men such as the Franciscan academic William Butler, argued that the meaning and divine content of scripture would be lost on an unlearned laity.[92] Such objections, however, were also predicated on the very thing they denied, obliquely acknowledging that lay readers would learn to use the Bible in politically and theologically enabling ways—in the process, of course, redefining both the Bible and the domain of "lay" religion itself. The Prologue envisions this possibility in vivid terms, describing how

> with Goddis grace and greet trauail, men miȝten expoune myche openliere and shortliere the bible in English, than the elde greete doctouris han expounid it in Latyn, and myche sharpliere and groundliere than manie late postillatouris, eithir expositouris, han don. (58)

Rolle, for his part, takes a more moderate stance, warning against "dred errynge" and announcing his intention to "fologh haly doctours" in expounding the Psalms (5). But in laying the groundwork for a specifically lay theological culture in England, Wycliffite translators of the Bible must have found "the wit of the worde" a potent concept; indeed, the phrase seems to have gained wide currency in Wycliffite discourse at precisely the moment texts such as the *English Psalter* were emerging as potential models for a new kind of vernacular rendering. A Wycliffite sermon on Mark 7:31-7, for instance, describes the allegorical interpretation of scripture as "whan men vnderstonden by wit of þe lettre what þing schal fallen here byfore þe day of doome."[93] Elsewhere in the cycle, a sermon on John 16:5-15, commenting on the priestly duty to interpret the gospel for "comune puple," argues that "hit were neede hem to knowe wyt of þes wordis."[94] A sermon on 1 Corinthians 12:2-11 emphasizes that the Holy Ghost "3eueþ men to vndirstonde witt of wordes, as þis Goost 3eueþ many men witt to knowe what holi writ meneþ."[95] A sermon on Jeremiah 23:5-8 similarly distinguishes between the "nakid wordis" of scripture and "þe witt þat God spekiþ in hooli writt," suggesting, yet again, that Rolle's focus on the "wit of the worde" appealed to Wycliffites as they undertook projects such as the vernacular sermon cycle, where the emphasis is on making gospel precepts intelligible to lay audiences.[96] While the extent to which the sermon cycle and the Late Version translation involved overlapping resources and personnel is unclear, they are alike in stressing the virtue of intelligibility in the translation and instruction of biblical writings. That Rolle's formulation is not only more frequent but more exegetically prominent in both than it is in the Early Version Wycliffite Bible indicates

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that the prologue to the English Psalter was an important feature of the landscape from which a new understanding of "vernacular Wycliffism" emerged.

Moreover, Rolle had himself appropriated the term "wit" from academic discourse, where it was associated primarily with faculty psychology and the concept of human reason or understanding; in eliding these different senses of the noun, and in linking a preexisting (and elite) vocabulary of intellectual capacity with an ideal of nonliteral translation and the accessibility of sacred texts, the preface to the *English Psalter* enacts the very model of cultural diffusion so fervently envisioned by the Wycliffite Bible Prologue, with its assurances that the rules of learned exposition and analysis are open to "symple mennis witt" (55).[97] The Middle English *Rosarium Theologie*, always an important reference for testing assumptions about the semantic range and force of Wycliffite vocabulary, likewise refers to "gostili witte or understandyng," infusing the term with topicality and interpretive resonance.[98] Both the Middle English *Rosarium Theologie* and the Wycliffite Bible Prologue, then, demarcate socio-linguistic boundaries between the referential range of "wit" within the movement's lexicon and more elite usages in academic discourse. For in medieval usage, "wit" was often associated with philosophical theology, as when Bishop Reginald Pecock, countering Wycliffite arguments for the sufficiency of scripture, argues that God's moral law is grounded in the operations of "mannis witt" rather than in the words of the Bible itself.[99] Pecock's emphasis on scripture as the authoritative manifestation, not the basis, of moral law leaves significant room for accepting the legitimacy of traditions that were not necessarily synonymous with scripture itself, such as papal decrees. His polemical intervention occurs at a much later date than the *English Psalter*, of course, but the

Repressor is working with an understanding of "wit" as natural reason that had long existed in academic theology. Rolle's prologue, as the intellectual genealogies of its key terms suggests, thus powerfully encodes the drift of learned divinity into popular religious culture that motivated Wycliffites to undertake a translation of the Bible into English.

Wycliffites thus gained momentum from Rolle's own expository strategy in the way that the *English Psalter* preface insists both on the availability of scripture to hermeneutic appropriation and—more fundamentally—on the possibility of a translation not wholly determined by Latinate diction and syntax. His emphasis on the "wit" of the word offered a sound rationale for choosing one kind of translation over another, offering intellectual and technical latitude where Wyclif's biblicism, with its essentializing idea of scripture, did not. And though brief, Rolle's comments were authoritative, helping to shape a way of thinking about biblical language, authority, and interpretation that became centrally important within the textual community of the Wycliffite Bible project. These symmetries are even more apparent in light of the codicological relationships between the two texts. In one late fourteenth-century recension of Wycliffite bible material, Dublin, Trinity College A.1.10, the Prologue concludes with an excerpt of Rolle's complete preface to his commentary on the psalms.[100] And in a Huntington Library manuscript, HM 501, a collection of Wycliffite commentaries dating from the first half of the fifteenth century, excerpts from chapter XII of the Wycliffite Bible Prologue were placed next to Rolle's preface.[101] The latter manuscript is particularly suggestive because it places Rolle's preface alongside the chapter of the Bible Prologue dedicated to formulating rules of interpretation and, more specifically, for differentiating between

literal and figurative speech. Here the problem under discussion is "whanne not oo thing aloone but tweyne, either mo, ben feelid, either vndirsonden, bi the same wordis of scripture" (45). In such instances there is "no perel, if it may be preuyd bi other placis of hooly scripture, that ech of tho thingis acordith with treuthe" (*ibid*.). But the discussion then takes a different turn, sounding themes very much like those Wyclif had invoked in his discussion of the "sense which God teaches":

> And in hap the autour of scripture seith thilk sentense in the same wordis which we wolen vndirstonde; and certys the Spirit of God, that wrou3te these thingis bi the autour of scripture, bifore si3 without doute, that thilke sentense *schulde come to the redere*, either to the herere, 3he, the Holy Goost purueyde, that thilke sentence, for it is groundid on trewthe, *schulde come to the reder*e, either to the herere, for whi what my3te be purueyed of God largiliere and plentyuousliere in Goddis spechis, than that the same wordis be vndirstonden in manye maners, whiche maners, either wordis of God, that ben not of lesse autorite, maken to be preued. (45, emphasis added)

Risking redundancy to make its main point that the understanding of God's word "schulde come to the redere" rather than being imposed on the text, chapter XII of the Wycliffite Bible Prologue reminds its audiences that scriptural meaning can subsist in different modalities of speaking and translating. We can recognize the influence of Wyclif in such sentiments. Yet we know, too, that the Late Version and the Prologue were predicated on a desire to avoid exactly the kind of "straunge Ynglis" of which Rolle speaks in his preface. Both prologues are keenly aware of the manifold ways in which language always mediates scriptural meaning, and how easily the wrong kind of language can conceal the intended sense of a passage—how easily, in other words, the intelligible can become unintelligible in a different context. In a religious culture characterized by the continual adaptation and translation of scriptural texts, the sacred "sense" does not

merely "come to the redere," as the very existence of the Wycliffite Bible Prologue demonstrates. Meaning must always be contextualized, brought out and made more prominent within a hermeneutic of the *written* word. Far more than Wyclif himself was, then, his followers were attuned to the textuality of the Bible and the contingency of scriptural "truth."

<div align="center">VII</div>

The boundaries between the material I have already considered in this chapter and the text I am about to discuss, the prologue to the Middle English translation of Robert de Gretham's Anglo-Norman *Miroir*, would seem well defined. Unlike Trevisa's *Dialogue*, the *Miroir*, a cycle of sixty verse sermons dating from the thirteenth century, is devotional in nature, concerned not with the politics of biblical translation but instead with what is "profetabil boþe to lif & to soule" (l.11).[102] Explicating Lamentations iv.4, for instance, the prologue comments on the priestly obligation to break the bread of holy writ and "fede þe soules wiþ gode sermouns," which the *Miroir* offers as a substitute for romances and other sinful reading (p. 11, ll.15-16; p. 3, ll.1-3).[103] Although sentiments of this kind are not completely incompatible with Lollard views on preaching, the sophisticated theological speculation so characteristic of Wycliffite texts such as the vernacular sermon cycle or the tract known as *De oblacione iugis sacrificii*, which use English to address controversial issues like the nature of the eucharistic elements, is nowhere to be found here.[104]

Nevertheless, like Rolle's prologue to the *English Psalter*, portions of this prologue, which prefaced an anonymous late fourteenth-century English translation of the *Miroir*, circulated with Wycliffite texts defending the legitimacy of vernacular biblical translation—namely, the fifteenth-century compilation known as Cambridge University Library Ii.6.26, the eleventh tract of which extracts lines 67-74 and, more freely, lines 85-91.[105] The latter section of the text speaks in vivid terms about what it means to open up the words of scripture:

> Þe letter semeþ derk & hard, ac he þat setteþ his entent to se þe gostlich writ, & ȝif he schake it as þurȝþ vndoinge þe gode þat God wold don vs, michel gode frout he schal finde þerinne & derworþ, þat ben sentens of mani maners, & michel þat swettnesse schal turnen him to gode whiche þat aforn he ne vnderstode nouȝt. (p. 7, ll.22-27)

Although the English version is perhaps too early to be considered a reliably Wycliffite text—the *Miroir*'s editor assigns the translation a date of approximately 1375 to 1380— the prologue was poised to enter the repertoire of vernacular Wycliffism at precisely the moment Wyclif's followers were at work on their versions of the Bible.

Asserting that it is "ful gret foli to spek Latyn to lewed folke," the prologue's author discusses how he intends to make the gospels intelligible to English audiences (p. 5, l.9). He promises to proceed by giving "first þe tixt, & þan þe vndoinge schortlich," the term "vndoinge" signifying the explanation or exposition of the letter (p. 5, ll.4-5). This sense accurately carries over the meaning of "exposiciuns" in the Anglo-Norman original, but it also foreshadows a secondary resonance of the English word that would soon come to mean the action of separating something into its component parts, or a kind of dissolution.[106] While we can view the promise to render "first þe tixt, & þan þe

vndoinge schortlich" as an exegetical commonplace, repeated in countless commentaries and translations in the period, the distinction is carefully sustained and elaborated throughout the prologue—so much so, in fact, that the supplemental relationship of gloss to text modulates into a radical disjunction, making the secondary sense of "vndoinge" described above broadly topical. Accordingly, the prologue goes on to assert that the "letter of holi writ" is "derk" with figurative speech until "vndon & oponed" (p. 3, ll.28; 33). It continues: "Ac þe cloude ȝeueþ þe rayn whan þe vndoer openeþ holi writ openlicher to mannes vnderstondinge þat afornhond was derke…" (p. 3, ll.33-35). And later, recapitulating his earlier distinction between "þe tixt" and its "vndoinge," the translator remarks that he has "made þis boke, þat ich man mai haue delite for to here & rede openliche what apendeþ to God & to him," for which purpose he has drawn the Sunday gospels "out into englische, first efter the letter, and then the vnderstonding and undoinge schortliche, þat men may wel vnderstonden hem…" (p. 7, ll.3-4, 9-11). He describes his motives again near the end of the prologue: in order that all "vnderstonde" the gospel, "ich dare take þis werke vnder hond, þat al mai heren openlich, heren what þe godspelle techeþ hem" (p. 10, ll.3-5).

These passages demonstrate how the prologue adapts a highly conventional exegetical *topos* to new uses, laying emphasis on the implicit disparity between the biblical text and its underlying wisdom in order to justify a sharp departure from literal translation. On one level, of course, medieval sermons always do this, as their concern was to translate less the words of the Bible itself than its spiritual sense. It is not entirely surprising, nor does it necessarily presage a Wycliffite hermeneutic orientation, that the prologue to an English sermon cycle should refer to the open text of scripture; even the

Northern Homily Cycle, an early fourteenth-century collection of orthodox sermons in the

vernacular, features a preface calling on the officiating cleric to "undo" the gospel in

"Opon Inglis."[107] Yet, like the Wycliffite Bible Prologue, the prologue to the Middle

English *Miroir* repeatedly and insistently distinguishes the "tixt" from its "vndoinge" in

order to rationalize a more expansive ideal of vernacular intelligibility, one where holi

writ is "openlicher" in English than in any other language. Careful readers of the

Wycliffite Bible Prologue will no doubt pick up the echoes of such comments in chapter

XII, which promises "to make the sentence as trewe and open in English as it is in Latyn,

either more trewe and *more open* than it is Latyn" (57, italics added). Comparative forms

of the adjective—"opinliere," "openere," "more open," etc. (57-58)—are pervasive in the

Bible Prologue, where they describe a level of direct intelligibility unavailable not only in

Latin but also, and more significantly, in texts like the Early Version that attempt to graft

or transpose the Vulgate into the vernacular. It is important to remember that in

departing so insistently from the style of the Early Version, Wycliffites had severed a link

between the Wycliffite Bible and other versions of vernacular scripture that had sought to

legitimate themselves by employing almost ostentatiously literal translation.[108] The

prologue to the Middle English *Miroir* seems alert to the same problem, assuring its

readers that "þer nis nou3t on word writen in þat it nis in holi writ & out of þe bokes þat

þis holi men þat weren toforn vs an made" (p. 5, ll.5-7). This remark occurs immediately

after, and perhaps is meant to qualify, the prologue's promise to distinguish between "þe

tixt" and its "vndoinge" (p. 5, ll.4-5). Nevertheless, by positing a radical disjunction

between the obscurities of the biblical text and its underlying logic, the prologue to the

Middle English *Miroir* made the contingency of the Late Version less obvious, validating

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Wycliffism's embrace of a new kind of intelligibility in translation. Thus, while the Wycliffite Bible Prologue does not actually cite passages from this earlier text, or draw directly from its contents in the way that Cambridge University Library Ii.6.26 would, it nevertheless finds common ground with a discourse of vernacular intelligibility already evident in the prologue to the Middle English version of the *Miroir*, a discourse concerned not merely with the sense or "sentence" of scripture (as Wyclif would have it) but also with identifying what clear translating is and the specific hermeneutic routes by which scriptural truths might find their way into new linguistic contexts.

VIII

At the outset of this chapter, I asked how Wycliffite translators and teachers of the Bible, those who were most directly involved in producing the Late Version, negotiated the discrepancies between their own discursive practices, which sought to make the word of God in scripture verbally and even materially present to new English audiences, and Wyclif's realist preoccupation with the disembodied and "supralinguistic" truth of holy writ.[109] Turning to a preexisting body of theory about vernacular biblical translation, Wycliffites assimilate hermeneutic concepts which effectively displace Wyclif's own more thoroughgoing realism. Wyclif's idea of the Bible, and the discursive problems such an idea entails for Wycliffite biblical scholarship, begins to recede from view as Lollards inherit the tradition of the vernacular translator's prologue. Among the implications of this argument, one is that the Prologue, a text which captures the defining interpretive problematics of Lollard biblical scholarship, is of more significance to the

cultural history of Wycliffism than critics have allowed.[110] To read scripture is,

inevitably, to glimpse the history of a material text, not an essential and unchanging truth,

and it is precisely the realization that biblical writing has no autonomous existence which

suggests why it needs to be supplemented by commentaries like the Prologue. But this

interpretation also accounts for the question of Wyclif's influence in new ways.

Sequestering biblical meaning to a preexisting and eternal "sentence," Wyclif assigns

priority to what is beyond language, supplying little guidance for those who were

interested in codifying rules for the intelligible translation of sacred texts. On one level,

as I have stressed, this idea hastened a more individualistic approach to religion; by

making interpretation a matter of inspired intellection, Wyclif offered a framework for

circumventing institutional mediation of the Bible. The most discursively "open" text is

not a text at all, but an eternal and uniform idea; how it exists on the manuscript page

itself is largely beside the point. But while this notion may have encouraged Wyclif's

followers to envisage a more flexible register of vernacular biblical translation, to shift

their focus away from the rigidly literal style of the Early Version Bible to the more

fluidly idiomatic one of the Late Version, they also find, as the Prologue documents, that

scriptural truth cannot be entirely abstracted from language. Far more than Wyclif

himself had, his followers confronted the Bible as a written document; their turn to

English had been prompted by his doctrines, to be sure, but their agenda of vernacular

translation and commentary invoked questions that Wyclif's extreme theological realism

was scarcely prepared to answer. Although for Wyclif English certainly figured as a

vehicle for both clerical and lay education, he never formulates an idea of the vernacular

with the broad cultural jurisdiction it has in the Wycliffite Bible Prologue; this was only

consolidated after Wycliffite translators departed from the intellectual strictures of

Wyclif's teachings and began thinking about the Bible as a historically determined text,

one text among many in a broad spectrum of English religious and devotional writing.

The ingrained assumption that Wyclif was the "guiding spirit" or "intellectual mentor" of

Lollard biblical scholarship is difficult to reconcile with the reality of the mid 1390s—

namely, that with the advent of the Late Version Bible, "vernacular Wycliffism"

represents a different mentality concerning the translation of sacred texts.[111]

 Notes

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[1] *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, with the Apocryphal Books, in the Earliest English Versions, made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and his Followers*, 4 vols., ed. J. Forshall and F. Madden (Oxford, 1850), 1:57.

[2] Margaret Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible and other Medieval Biblical Versions* (Cambridge,1920), pp. 252-267. In using the terms "Wycliffite" and "Lollard" interchangeably, I follow the practice of Anne Hudson and other scholars, although Andrew Cole's recent assertion that the two "require separate dilations" should be taken into account: "it would be beneficial to start thinking of 'lollardy' and Wycliffism as two different things, because the frequent conflation of these two terms, a conflation that happens frequently yet casually in criticism…has encouraged an underestimation of the richness of 'lollardy' per se, 'lollardy' as not only a word for Wycliffites (epithet or otherwise) but, more importantly, as a veritable genre in late medieval religious writing." A. Cole, "William Langland's Lollardy," in *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 17 (Kalamazoo, 2003), p. 27. G. R. Evans suggests, on the other hand, that while the term "Lollard" may have been projected onto the movement by its opponents, the term "Wycliffite" inaccurately implies a unified and historically self-conscious sectarian identity. Unlike other spiritual figureheads such as Francis or Calvin, Wyclif "had not got as far as any of them towards the creation of an entity which could be expected to bear his name." Evans, *John Wyclif: Myth & Reality* (IVP Academic, 2005), p. 255. Lambert similarly argues that Wyclif lacked the "personal leadership" and the "direct interest in the practicalities of building up a new religious group." Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, 3rd ed. (Blackwell, 2002), p. 250. These disjunctions, however, have rarely been explored through the nexus of vernacular theory and practice.

[3] Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 238-247; C. Lindberg, "The Alpha and Omega of the Middle English Bible," in *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale: Essays in Honour of Anne Hudson*, ed. Barr and Hutchinson (Brepols, 2005), pp. 191-200; and, most recently and comprehensively, M. Dove, *The First English Bible: The Text and Context of the Wycliffite Versions* (Cambridge, 2007). I am grateful

to Professor Dove for allowing me to see portions of the her book prior to publication. For a broad treatment of biblical translation, but one nevertheless useful with respect to questions concerning Wyclif and the Lollards, see David Lawton, *Faith, Text and History: The Bible in English* (Harvester, 1990). Too much can be made in attempting to locate the extremes of Wycliffite translation practice in the differences between the Early Version and Late Version Bible: there is also at least one substantial intermediate version, according to Henry Hargreaves, "The Wycliffite Versions," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 2, ed. G. Lampe (Cambridge, 1969), p. 403. My own evaluation of two important Wycliffite Bible recensions, MSS Bodley 959 (an Early Version) and Bodley 277 (a Late Version owned by King Henry VI), suggests that while in certain places the differences between the two are indeed stark, judgments about the greater accessibility of the latter wholly depend on which books or passages of these rather vast codices one is discussing, the various interpretive demands made on specific audiences, and the manner in which the *mise-en-page* might aid comprehension.

[4] See Jerome's comments to this effect in his letter to Pammachius (no. 57), which cites the actual source of what became the "non verbum pro verbo" commonplace, Cicero's *de optimo genere oratorum*. Rita Copeland, "The Fortunes of 'Non Verbum Pro Verba': Or, Why Jerome is not a Ciceronian," in *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, vol. 1, ed. Ellis (D. S. Brewer, 1989), pp. 15-37. In practice, Jerome did not consistently adhere to any one style of translation, as he explains in his preface to Job.

[5] See Hudson, "Wyclif and the English Language," in *Wyclif in His Times*, ed. A. Kenny (Oxford, 1986), pp. 85-103, and references therein, for support of this assertion. Hudson elsewhere cites Wyclif's opinion in *De contrarietate duorum dominorum* that "language, whether Hebrew, Greek, Latin or English was *quasi habitus legis domini*, that the teaching of Christ was not affected by language and that therefore the most familiar should be used." Hudson, "Lollardy: The English Heresy," reprinted in *Lollards and Their Books* (Hambledon, 1985), pp. 152-153.

[6] See Jerome's prefaces to Samuel and Kings for remarks on the authority of Hebrew, as well as his letter to Pammachius (no. 57) on the "true Hebrew text," *Epistola LVII ad Pammachium*, VII, 4, ed. G. J. M. Bartelink, *Liber de Optimo Genere Interpretandi, Mnemosyne*, supplement 61 (Leiden, 1980), pp. 15, 80. On the *tres linguae sacrae*, see Isidore, *Etymologiae*, IX.3.

[7] *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, 3 vols., ed. Rudolph Buddensieg (Wyclif Society, 1905-1907) (hereafter *De Veritate*). All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. I have checked my translations against Levy's partial English translation of *De Veritate*, noting differences where appropriate. *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, trans. and ed. I. C. Levy (Kalamazoo, 2001). All Latin citations are keyed to the volume, chapter, and page number of the Buddensieg edition. Wilks dates *De Veritate* to 1378 but argues that it was conceived six years earlier. Wilks, "*Reformatio Regni*: Wyclif and Hus as Leaders of Religious Protest Movements," reprinted in Wilks, *Wyclif: Political Ideas and Practice* (Oxbow, 2000), p. 70. *De Veritate*, I.iii.42: "Debemus ergo intelligendo scripturam sacram sensum puerilem abicere ac sensum, quem deus docet, accipere…"

[8] This is one dimension of a broader critical tradition that sees continuity in the transmission of ideas from Wyclif to his followers, especially in the area of Lollard biblical scholarship. It is rooted in Workman's early observation, widely repeated, that "…Wyclif laboured to effect the revival of religious life, especially among the lower classes, by the restoration of simple preaching, and by the distribution to the people of the Word of God in their mother-tongue." H. Workman, *John Wyclif: A Study of the English Medieval Church*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1926), 1:6.

Although scholarship now takes a much more skeptical view on the question of Wyclif's direct responsibility for the Bible translations, the contours of Workman's argument are still visible in modern accounts. Baugh anticipates the modern view: "Even though Wyclif may have had no part at all in the actual work of translation, the important step of putting the whole Bible into English for the first time was the result of his attitude toward Scripture as the ultimate authority in all questions concerning man's moral and spiritual life." A. Baugh, *A Literary History of England*, vol. 1: *The Middle Ages* (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948), p. 272. Some years passed before textual evidence was finally adduced to demonstrate the process by which Wyclif's ideas were transmitted into the vernacular, although this leaves unanswered the question of how Wycliffites understood those ideas in relation to their own discursive practices, a problem I discuss at more length in the introduction. By far the most significant studies in this regard are A. Hudson, "A Lollard Compilation and the Dissemination of Wycliffite Thought," in *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 23 (1972): 65-81, and, more fully, *The Premature Reformation*, pp. 60-119.

[9] Though an intriguing problem, I am prompted by the critical position of Ruth Evans, who argues for a shift away from what she refers to as the "moralizing idiom of fidelity and error"; she instead calls attention to medieval translation as a cultural construct—as a site of social and political contestation—as much as an instrumental practice. R. Evans, "Translating Past Cultures?" in *The Medieval Translator*, vol. 4, ed. R. Ellis and R. Evans (Binghamton, 1994), p. 22. Walter Benjamin, of course, was saying very much the same thing when he remarked that "the traditional concepts in any discussion of translations are fidelity and license—the freedom of faithful reproduction and, in its service, fidelity to the word. These ideas seem to be no longer serviceable to a theory that looks for other things in a translation than reproduction of meaning." Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's "Tableaux Parisiens," in *Illuminations*, ed. H. Arendt, trans. H. Zohn (Schocken Books, 1968), pp. 77-78.

[10] Spencer, for example, assumes as much when arguing with respect to late medieval sermon writers that "[t]here was little or no stability of practice in translation to guide them; they made individual choices from the range of options available to them about what to do when faced with particular difficulties." H. L. Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1993), p. 127.

[11] Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton, 2005), p. 11. Readers were certainly conscious of the fact that the Vulgate was a translation, but Jerome's careful rendering of Greek and Hebrew texts also meant that audiences could be lulled into forgetting that no two languages are exactly equivalent. Most scholarly considerations of Wyclif and the vernacular concentrate on the relative lack of standing English enjoyed in comparison to Latin. For instance, Evans, *John Wyclif: Myth & Reality*, p. 228 ff. But it is also important to note that objections to English scripture reflect less any real concern about the *sufficiency* of the vernacular in comparison to Latin than they do the prospect of a theologically informed laity, as David Lawton points out in "Englishing the Bible," in *Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. D. Wallace (Cambridge, 1998), p. 458. Wycif himself, of course, wrote almost exclusively in Latin; for a guide to extant works, see W. R. Thomson, *The Latin Writings of John Wyclyf: An Annotated Catalog* (Toronto, 1983).

[12] Hanna comments that the term "open" relates most directly to the way Wycliffite translators of the Late Version Bible put the text "into English idiom for vernacular consumption," adding, however, that "in adopting that procedure, the Wycliffite translation team simultaneously

jettisoned the possibility of some sophisticated textual operations the work was initially, in some measure, designed to facilitate." R. Hanna, "'Vae Octuplex,' Lollard socio-textual ideology, and Ricardian-Lancastrian prose translation," in *Criticism and Dissent in the Middle Ages*, ed. R. Copeland (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 256-257.

[13] Throughout this essay, I will be referring to Forshall and Madden's version of the Prologue in their edition of the Wycliffite Bible*, The Holy Bible…Made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and his Followers*, 4 vols., ed. J. Forshall and F. Madden (Oxford, 1850). (References correspond to this edition are cited parenthetically by page number.) Chapter 15 of the Prologue has been edited by Hudson in S*elections from English Wycliffite Writings* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 67-72, and an extract of Chapter 12 appears in *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520*, ed. J. Wogan-Browne et al. (Pennsylvania State University, 1999), pp. 91-97. No single one of these editions is a complete collation of the entire Prologue; nor do they capture the dispersed and often fragmented nature of the text, which is evident in the manuscripts I have consulted for this chapter: MS Bodley 277, a Late Version Wycliffite Bible containing the first chapter of the Prologue acting as an introduction to Genesis; MS University College Oxford 96, a small and unprepossessing devotional compilation which contains the Prologue in its entirety; and British Library MS Harley 1666, another modest and well used recension, lacking part of chapter 12. In contrast to the Bible translations proper, the Prologue is extant in a relatively small (eleven) number of manuscripts. Hudson writes: "The important point to note is that that Prologue is not the regular concomitant of the LV translation, but an exceptional addition to it." Hudson, *Selections*, p. 173. For further discussion of the Prologue, see Dove, *The First English Bible*, pp. 120-136.

[14] Wyclif, as this chapter will discuss in more detail shortly, equates the first or highest order of scripture, that which is "propriissima et sacratissima," with the Book of Life, "quia a summa sapiencia inscripta, que inscripcio est deo tam propria, quod non potest comunicari alteri nature." *De Veritate*, I.vi.111. Citing the Book of Wisdom (7:26), he goes on to argue that "veritas enim est ibi permanencior, quia eterna et indelebilis, liber est serenior, quia candor lucis eterne et speculum sine macula." *Ibid*. Robson writes that Wyclif thought of the Bible as "an emanation of the Supreme Being transposed into writing," a description which echoes the verse from the Book of Wisdom immediately before the one Wyclif cites: "vapor est enim virtutis Dei et emanatio quaedam est claritatis omnipotentis Dei sincera et ideo nihil inquinatum in illa incurrit." *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, ed. B. Fischer et al., 3rd ed. (Stuttgart, 1984), p. 1011. (All Latin biblical citations are taken from this edition of the Vulgate.) J. A. Robson, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools: The Relation of the "Summa de Ente" to Scholastic Debates at Oxford in the Later Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1961), p. 146.

[15] My argument has its genesis in A. J. Minnis' insight that "the Lollard Bible Prologue employs an amalgam of the views of FitzRalph and Lyre, without recourse to Wyclif's rather abstruse contribution to the debate" in *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*. A. J. 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," in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 75C (1975): 1. Minnis finds that Wyclif ultimately differentiated himself from Lyra and FitzRalph in several respects, but most of all in his "attitude to the physical aspects of scripture," an attitude he characterizes as an "ultrarealist dislike of images or signs of any kind, whether in writing or in a church, unless they immediately and efficiently place the viewer on the ladder of being, from whence he may become aware of the realities to which they refer" (15).

[16] This is Hudson's phrase, meaning "the way in which 'Wycliffite' concerns coincided with the intellectual interests of the time…such concerns also extended into the areas of social, theological and ecclesiastical questions." Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, p. 393. "Vernacular Wycliffism," so defined, suggests an epistemology, not just texts harboring identifiably Lollard conclusions.

[17] G. R. Evans observes that "In looking to Wyclif for leadership in directions which were to lead to the thinking of the Reformation, modern studies have perhaps neglected to look closely at the implications of his early training in language and logic for the detailed working out of his own analysis of the Bible." Evans, *The Language and Logic of the Bible: The Road to the Reformation* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 111.

[18] *De Veritate* I.iii.42: [H]ic sepe dixi, quod falsum asumitur, cum oportet in scripturam sacram exponendo vel intelligendo adiscere novam gramaticam ac novam logicam, sicut patet per beatum Gregorium et alios sanctos, qui exponunt autoritate scripture novos sensus terminorum scripture, qui nusquam originantur ex libris gramatice…[D]ebemus ergo intelligendo scripturam sacram sensum puerilem abicere ac sensum, quem deus docet, accipere […].

[19] For Wyclif's reading of Augustine and Augustinianism, see G. Leff, "Wyclif and the Augustinian Tradition, with Special Reference to His *De Trinitate*," in *Medievalia et Humanistica* n.s. 1 (1970): 29-39. Also worth consulting in this context are D. Trapp, "Augustinian Theology of the Fourteenth Century," in *Augustinia* 6 (1956): 201-39, and, though not specifically about Wyclif, W. Courtenay, "Augustinianism at Oxford in the Fourteenth Century," in *Augustiniana* 30 (1980): 58-70. More recent assessments concerning Wyclif's complex assimilation of Augustinian thought can be found in W. Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and the Interpretation of Texts* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 10 ff., and I. C. Levy, "John Wyclif and Augustinian Realism," in *Augustiniana* 48 (1998): 87-106.

[20] For more on this topic, see chapter one of the present study, as well as I. C. Levy, *John Wyclif: Scriptural Logic, Real Presence, and the Parameters of Orthodoxy* (Marquette, 2003), pp. 47-60; J. A. Robson, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools* (Cambridge, 1966), p. 141 ff.; and, though outdated in certain respects, S. H. Thompson, "The Philosophical Basis of Wyclif's Theology," in *The Journal of Religion*, XI (1931), 86-116.

[21] *De Veritate*, I.iv.82: "…deum et omne ens et ex parte rei preter modum signandi signi." See, as well, *De Veritate*, I.viii.169: "Secunda armatura est, quod ex parte rei est dare universalia preter signa…"

[22] *De Veritate*, I.vi.107-109: "Nam sicut ostendi alibit, de lege dei est preter codices vel signa sensibilia dare veritatem signatam, que pocius est scriptura sacra quam codices. Unde solebam describere scripturam sacram, quod sit sacra veritas inscripta, sive subiectet alias, sive sit veritas subiectata. Unde solebam ponere quinque gradus scripture sacre: primus est liber vite, de quo Apoc. vicesimo et vicesimo uno, secundus est veritatis libro vite inscripte scedundum esse earum intelligibile, et utraque istarum scripturarum est absolute necessaria, non diferens essencialiter, sed secundum racionem, ut dictum est in materia De Ydeis. Tercio sumitur scriptura pro veritatibus credendis in genere, que secundum existenciam vel effectum inscribuntur libro vite. Quarto sumitur scriptura pro veritate credenda, ut inscribitur libro hominis naturalis ut anima, quam scripturam quidam vocant agregatum ex actibus et veritatibus tercio modo dictis, quidam, quod est habitus intellectivus, et quidam, quod est intencio vel species. Sed quinto modo sumitur

scriptura sacra pro codicibus, vocibus aut aliis artificialibus, que sunt signa memorandi veritatem priorem, quomodo loquitur Augustinus epist. undequadragesima Ad Paulinam De Videndo Deum." For more on this passage and the Book of Life, see B. Smalley, "The Bible and Eternity: John Wyclif's Dilemma," reprinted in *Studies in Medieval Thought and Learning from Abelard to Wyclif*, ed. B. Smalley (Hambledon, 1981), pp. 409-410, as well as G. Zamagni, "Per scalam sapientiae: L'ermeneutica metafisica di John Wyclif," in *Dianoia: Annali di Storia della Filosofia* 9 (2004): 43-57.

[23] *De Veritate*, I.vi.111: "…et omnis scriptura foret a quotlibet hominibus hereticabilis, dampnabilis et adversabilis, nullius virtutis directive vel honoris et per consequens nullius autoritatis."

[24] *De Veritate*, I.vi.111: "Unde ista scriptura sensibilis in vocibus vel codicibus non est scriptura sacra nisi equivoce, sicut homo pictus vel ymaginatus dicitur homo propter similitudinem ad verum hominem." Wyclif later explains, however, that a "scripturam sensibilem" was ordained to forestall claims of special revelation directly from God. *De Veritate*, I.xv.380.

[25] *De Veritate*, I.vi.115: "Et sic remocius dicitur sacra, quam vestis vel alia ornamenta sacerdotalia dicuntur sacra."

[26] Not surprisingly, is was their opponents who referred to Lollards as "Bible men," disregarding just how problematic and multivalent Wyclif's biblicism could be. The phrase appears in Pecock, *The Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy*, 2 vols., ed. C. Babington (Longman, 1860), 1:37, 175 ff. Wyclif himself refers repeatedly to this eternal and transcendent ideal of biblical meaning as the *lex dei* or *lex Cristi* (e.g., *De Veritate*, I.xii.268), the different valences of which are astutely analyzed in Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 22-66. Ralph Hanna observes: "At such a level of theological abstraction, language is but the empty and dead covering of an unmistakable supernal presence which is not read but almost speaks itself directly to those with ears to hear." Hanna, "The Difficulty of Ricardian Prose Translation: The Case of the Lollards," in *Modern Language Quarterly* 51 (1990): 337. Hanna's specific concern is the way in which Lollardy predicates textual understanding on election.

[27] Ghosh notes Wyclif's "extraordinary lack of interest in textual criticism," but here Wyclif is concerned not solely with disciplinary practices properly so-called but also, and more urgently, with the validity of their underlying philosophical assumptions. Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 54.

[28] *De Veritate* I.xii.268: "Confirmatur ex hoc, quod tota lex Cristi est unum perfectum verbum, procedens de ore dei, cuius singule partes concausant totam autoritatem vel efficaciam legis Cristi." For more on this passage and its implications for our understanding of the literal sense, see chapter five of the present study.

[29] *De Veritate* I.vi.138: "Cum autem in scriptura sacra sit omnis veritas, patet, quod omnis disputacio, omnis terminorum significacio vel sermocinalis scientia, que in scriptura sacra non habet originem, est prophana."

[30] S. Justice, "Lollardy," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. D. Wallace (Cambridge, 1998), p. 679.

[31] *De Veritate* I.iii.44: "Cum enim sensus scripture, quem spiritus sanctus indidit, sit eius fructus principaliter acquirendus, quis fidelis dubitat, quin postponenda sint folia et cortex verborum, nisi de quanto disponunt previe ad hunc sensum? Quod si abducunt, sunt contempnenda ut venenum. Et hec est una racio, quare Cristus et multi sancti non scripserant nisi sensum in tabulis cordis, cum hoc sit perfeccius." Wyclif repeated this sentiment often, e.g., *Opus Evangelicum* III.14.1-5: "Videtur quod iste sanctus sentenciat religionem quam Christus approbat stare in corde et non preponderanter in signis sensilibus, sicut fuit in utraque lege, quando populus a medulla preceptorum Domini declinabat."

[32] Wyclif, Lambert argues, "never made the text of the Bible alone the standard of judgment for all doctrine and conduct, for he always retained the need for an established interpreter—the Fathers—as a shield against heresy, above all Augustine." Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, 3rd ed., p. 255. See, as well, Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 375-378. On *sola scriptura* more generally, see H. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Harvard, 1963), p. 363 ff.

[33] One may usefully contrast Wyclif in this respect to later Reformation exegetes such as Tyndale and Valla, for whom the authority of scripture is inseparable from its *philological* accuracy; the latter concept, then, would become closely bound up with evangelical justifications for *sola scriptura*. On Tyndale and philology, see J. Simpson, *Burning to Read: English Fundamentalism and its Reformation Opponents* (Harvard, 2007), pp. 168-169. On Valla and the claim that his philological approach to the *Donation of Constantine* was the source of a "new hermeneutic," see D. Shuger, *The Reformation Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity* (California, 1994), pp. 17-21 (reference at p. 19).

[34] *De Veritate* I.iii.47-48: [S]ed tercio arguitur contra dicta per hoc, quod si logica scripture esset semper et ubique tenenda, tunc logica Aristotelis ut plurimum esset abicienda, et per consequens iuvenes non adiscerent logicam Aristotelis, sed scripture, cum contra eius logicam peccatur comuniter. Hic dicitur, quod consequencia non procedit, cum logica Aristotelis, que ut plurimum est recta, sit logica scripture […] ideo logica Aristotelis non est sustinenda ut Aristotelis, sed ut scripture sacre […].

[35] "Trevisa's Original Prefaces on Translation: A Critical Edition," ed. R. Waldron, in *English Studies Presented to George Kane*, ed. Kennedy et al. (D.S. Brewer, 1988), p. 292. Line numbers here cited parenthetically.

[36] Evans, *The Language and Logic of the Bible: The Road to Reformation*, p. 54.

[37] See, for instance, Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae,* ed. W. M. Lindsay, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1911), 1:3 ("De litteris communibus"), 1:4 ("De litteris latinis").

[38] On linguistic equivalence, see *De Doctrina Christiana*, II.xv.22, CCSL: XXXII (Brepols, 1962), p. 47. Augustine notes that Greek translations can be consulted to emend Latin ones, asserting that the Septuagint should take precedence over any Hebrew version that might contain variant readings. See, as well, Augustine's comments on "signs that differ only in sound," in *De Magistro*, in *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 59, trans. Russell (Catholic University, 1968), pp. 28-29 (reference at p. 29).

[39] Copeland asserts that "as a practice, *translatio studii* means the carrying over of learning [through reading and commentary], but it works like the disjunctive act of translation itself."

Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 106.

[40] B. Stock, *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Princeton, 1983). Such concerns were also expressed in Lollardy's campaign against "priuat religion." See, for instance, the text edited as *Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards* in *Selections*, ed. Hudson, p. 24, l. 5.

[41] Wilks contends that "Wyclif continued to treat the Bible, divine law, as very much a higher and therefore—in a fundamental sense—unwritten law, quite unsuitable for general lay use." M. Wilks, "Misleading Manuscripts: Wyclif and Non-Wycliffite Bible," reprinted in M. Wilks, *Wyclif: Political Ideas and Practice* (Oxbow, 2000), p. 157.

[42] On the "social logic" of medieval texts, see Gabrielle Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Johns Hopkins, 1997). Spiegel argues that "it is by focusing on the social logic of the text, its location within a broader network of social and intertextual relations, that we best become attuned to the specific historical conditions whose presence and/or absence in the work alerts us to its own social character and function, its own combination of material and discursive realities that endow it with its own sense of historical purposiveness" (26-27).

[43] *English Wycliffite Sermons*, 5 vols., ed. A. Hudson and P. Gradon (Oxford, 1983-1996), 2:378/335.

[44] Smalley, "Wyclif's *Postilla* on the Old Testament and his *Principium*," in *Oxford Studies Presented to Daniel Callus*, ed. Southern (Oxford, 1964), p. 279.

[45] Copeland makes a similar point, but with respect to "literary culture." Copeland, "The Fortunes of 'Non Verbum Pro Verbo,'" p. 20. Minnis comments that while it is not unlikely Wyclif himself participated in or even organized the translation effort, his "enthusiasm for the Word of God in the NeoPlatonic sense blinds him to the flesh and blood reality of scribes, compilers and authors," adding that "what comes across very strongly is Wyclif's categorical refusal to regard the Bible as a book *per se.*" A. J. 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," p. 13, 14.

[46] *De Veritate*, I.i.4; I.ii.39. The latter reference is cited in M. Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (Hambledon, 1984), p. 270. Wyclif makes numerous remarks in *De Veritate* on the status of the Bible as a *regula fidei*.

[47] *The Middle English Translation of the Rosarium Theologie*, ed. C. von Nolcken (Carl Winter, 1979), p. 76. Wyciffite texts habitually enjoin their readers to distinguish between "mannys lawe" and the *lex dei*, as in *English Wycliffite Sermons*, I:241-242.

[48] A. Hudson, "A Lollard Sect Vocabulary?" reprinted in Hudson, *Lollards and Their Books* (Hambledon, 1985), pp. 165-80; see esp. p. 171 for "ground" and p. 173 for English terms derived from Latin. See, also, M. Aston, "Were the Lollards a Sect?" in *The Medieval Church: Universities, Heresy, and the Religious Life: Essays in Honour of Gordon Leff*, ed. P. Biller and B. Dobson (Boydell and Brewer, 1999), pp. 163-191.

[49] Hudson, "A Lollard Sect Vocabulary?" p. 171, citing *Select English Works of John Wyclif*, 3 vols., ed. Arnold (Oxford, 1868-1871), 1:248/2, 3:353/15.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 172

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 17. This comes through clearly in the Lollard tract known as *De oblacione iugis sacrificii*, in which the author laments that "fewe can tel clerli what is an accident! For men be not 3it determined in Oxeford hou3 an accident schal be discriued or diffinid, or hou3 many most general kinddis ben of accidentis." *The Works of a Lollard Preacher*, ed. A. Hudson (Oxford, 2001), p. 226, ll.2726-2728.

[52] D. Lawton, "Englishing the Bible," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. D. Wallace (Cambridge, 1998), p. 457.

[53] *De Veritate*, I.ix.189: "Illa enim mentalis intelleccio est verius scriptura quam lineacio membrane, que non est scriptura sacra…"

[54] See, on this point, R. Hanna et al., "Latin commentary tradition and vernacular literature," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 2: *The Middle Ages*, ed. A. J. Minnis and I. Johnson (Cambridge, 2005), p. 393.

[55] Copeland refers to the "necessarily interlingual project" of all translation in "The Fortunes of 'Non Verbum Pro Verba': Or, Why Jerome is not a Ciceronian," p. 20.

[56] Brian Stock, *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Johns Hopkins, 1990).

[57] For further discussion of this point, see the notes in the introduction to this project.

[58] For analysis of the organization and structure of the *Postilla*, a massive work, see W. R. Thomson, *The Latin Writings of John Wyclyf*, pp. 192-215. For discussion of individual commentaries, see G. A. Benrath, *Wyclifs Bibelkommentar* (Walter de Gruyter, 1966), as well as Smalley, "John Wyclif's *Postilla super totam Bibliam*," in *Bodleian Library Record* 5 (1953): 186-205 and, by the same author, "Wyclif's *Postilla* on the Old Testament and his *Principium*," in *Oxford Studies Presented to Daniel Callus*, ed. Southern (Oxford, 1964), pp. 253-296.

[59] Lyra's postils can be found in *Biblia Sacra, cum glossa ordinaria…et postilla Nicolai Lirani…necnon additionibus Pauli Burgensis…& Matthiae Thoringi replicis*, 6 vols. (Antwerp, 1617).

[60] Dove maintains, for instance, that Lyra "enlarged the domain of the literal sense" to the point that Wycliffites could conceptualize the "open" text. Dove, *The First English Bible*, p. 229. On Lyra's understanding of the literal sense, see *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism, c.1100-c.1375*, ed. A. J. Minnis et al. (Oxford, 1988), pp. 197-212.

[61] I offer this conclusion as a way of countering what I think has been a tendency among scholars of Wycliffism to dismiss the Prologue. For instance, in his excellent but as yet unpublished Oxford dissertation, Simon Hunt argues that the Prologue "received no currency amongst those responsible for the mass dissemination of the translation, and, fascinating document as it is, has to be seen as an offshoot of the project—perhaps only intended for consumption in Lollard circles?—rather than an integral part of the finished project." S. A. Hunt, *An Edition of Tracts in*

Favor of Scriptural Translation and of Some Texts Connected with Lollard Vernacular Biblical Scholarship, 2 vols. (unpublished. D. Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1996), 2:52.

[62] While Wyclif obviously endorsed religion in the vernacular, there is no evidence that he was personally involved in preparing the Bible versions. For further discussion and references, see Introduction, note 17.

[63] As quoted in H. Hargreaves, "The Wycliffite Versions," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, ed. G. Lampe (Cambridge, 1969), p. 388. Text printed in *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae, A.D. 466-1718*, 4 vols., ed. D. Wilkins (London, 1737), 3:350.

[64] On the clandestine and subversive aspects of Lollardy, an early emphasis in the field, see Margaret Aston, "Lollardy and Sedition, 1381-1431," in *Past and Present* 17 (1960):1-44, as well as Pamela Gradon, "Langland and the Ideology of Dissent," in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 66 (1980):179-205. See, also, Hudson, "Lollardy: The English Heresy?" reprinted in *Lollards and Their Books*, pp. 141-163. For a more recent treatment of these concerns in connection to vernacularity and translation, see Copeland, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages: Lollardy and Ideas of Learning* (Cambridge, 2001).

[65] On the *Glossed Gospels*, see Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 247-259, as well as Hargreaves, "Popularising Biblical Scholarship: The Role of the Wycliffite Glossed Gospels," in *The Bible and Medieval Culture*, ed. W. Lourdaux and D. Verhelst (Leuven, 1979), pp. 171-189.

[66] On Trevisa's life and possible connections to Wyclif and Hereford while at Queens College, see D. Fowler, "John Trevisa and the English Bible," in *Modern Philology* 58 (1960): 81-98, and, by the same author, *The Life and Times of John Trevisa, Medieval Scholar* (Seattle, 1995). On Trevisa's alleged involvement in translating the Wycliffite Bible, see Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 395-397.

[67] On Trevisa and vernacular "informacion," see F. Somerset, *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 62-103.

[68] See Waldron's remarks on lines 132-133 ("Also holy wryt was translated out of Hebrew ynto Gru and out of Gru into Latyn"), which are missing from one manuscript group, possibly as a result of censorship (289).

[69] See, in addition to *De Doctrina* II.xv, *De Civitate Dei*, XVIII.xli-xliii. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, CCSL: XXXII (Brepols, 1962), pp. 47-48; *De Civitate Dei*, CCSL: XLVIII (Brepols, 1955), pp. 635-640. Andrew Cole's discussion of translation and linguistic equivalence is informative in this context as well. Andrew Cole, "Chaucer's English Lesson," in *Speculum* 77 (2002): 1128-1167. He cites *Confessiones* 11.3.5, CCSL: XXVII (Brepols, 1981), p. 196.

[70] Anne Hudson, "The Debate on Bible Translation, Oxford 1401," in *English Historical Review* 90 (1975): 1-18.

[71] Nicholas Watson, "Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's *Constitutions* of 1409," in *Speculum* 70 (1995): 822-864.

[72] Fiona Somerset makes a similar point in her discussion of the *Dialogue* in *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1998) p. 66.

[73] Although he leaves open the possibility of a more idiomatic translation: "But yn som place Y mot change þe rewe and þe ordre of wordes and sette þe actyue vor þe passiue and a3enward. And yn some place Y mot sette a reson vor a word to telle what hyt meneþ" (222-225).

[74] For more on the cultural and political work of vernacular prologues, see R. Evans, "An Afterward on the Prologue" in *The Idea of the Vernacular*, pp. 371-378, as well as A. Galloway, "Middle English Prologues," in *Readings in Medieval Texts: Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature*, ed. D. Johnson and E. Treharne (Oxford, 2005), p. 291, and A. Cole, "Chaucer's English Lesson," in *Speculum* 77 (2002): 1138. Other important resources are F. R. Amos, *Early Theories of Translation* (Columbia, 1920), pp. 3-81, and *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism, c.1100-c.1375: The Commentary-Tradition*, ed. A. J. Minnis et al. (Oxford, 1988), pp. 374-376. This study provides a context for some of the my comments concerning the genre conventions of prologues but ultimately concentrates more on *accessus* materials.

[75] I am not the first to point these parallels out. See, for example, Cole, "Chaucer's English Lesson," p. 1160.

[76] *De Veritate*, I.vi.115.

[77] *De Doctrina Christiana*, II.xii.18, CCSL: XXXII (Brepols, 1962), p. 44. The example of Romans 3:15 is preceded by Augustine's remark on the sense of passages: "Et ex ambiguo linguae praecedentis plerumque interpres fallitur, cui non bene nota sententia est, et eam significationem transfert, quae a sensu scriptoris penitus aliena est…."

[78] One of the prologues to the translation of the Gospel of John in the Wycliffite Bible explicates this duality in some detail:

> But for cristen men the newe testament is open ynow3. And whanne ony doute cometh in the lettre, outhir in ony vndirstondinge of the lettre, the Holi Goost schal teche us al truthe, as Crist seith in the gospel, if we doon truli that that is in us…For he that hath charite, hath Crist, in whom alle tresouris of wisdom and kunnynge ben. Netheles men schulde bisely lerne the bookis of holy writt, and speciali the newe testament, lest thei taken Goddis grace in veyn, and tempten God, in desirynge to haue kunnynge bi myracle, withoute traueile and lernynge of holy writ, where thei mowe come li3tly to verri knowynge of Goddis wil, bi good lyuynge and deuoute preiers, and bisi studie and lernynge of holi writt. And God graunte us a stidefast wil hereto. (685)

[79] This is a recurrent locution in the Prologue (e.g., 3, 35, 49, 52, 55, 58).

[80] Modern interpreters have been especially alert to this problem in their attempts to articulate a hermeneutics of the sacred. Ricoeur, for instance, writes that "the place where language escapes from itself and escapes us is also the place where language comes to itself…" P. Ricoeur, "The Problem of Double Meaning as Hermeneutic Problem and as Semantic Problem," in *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. D. Ihde (Northwestern, 1974), p. 67. For perceptive comments on how the literal sense is implicated in this problematic, see J. Simpson,

Burning to Read: English Fundamentalism and its Reformation Opponents (Harvard, 2007), pp. 140-141.

[81] Copeland notes that the "more radical hermeneutic view" articulated in *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, that the Bible is always "contained elsewhere, beyond material words," informs some Lollard polemic, such as *Vae Octuplex* and the Lollard tract "The holi prophete Dauid seiþ." Copeland, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent*, p. 203, n. 33.

[82] The promise of such an approach—that is, of treating Lollardy within the broader field of late medieval religious writing—is demonstrated in Hanna, "English Biblical Texts Before Lollardy and their Fate," in *Lollards and Their Influence in Late Medieval England*, ed. F. Somerset et al. (Boydell, 2003), pp. 141-153. He examines several compilations—most centrally, MS Pepys 2498, which included a Wycliffite-interpolated version of *Ancrenne Riwle*—in which Wycliffite and orthodox devotional materials circulated together at precisely the time distinctions between the two were becoming programmatic. This convergence, he suggests, lent a Wycliffite inflection to what became the canonical English Bible, despite a long history of attempts to stamp out Lollard translations.

[83] On such redactions, see C. D' Evelyn et al., "Translations and Paraphrase of the Bible, and Commentaries," in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English: 1050–1500*, ed. J. Severs, vol. 2 (Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1970).

[84] Cited and discussed in K. Gustafson, "Richard Rolle's *English Psalter* and the Making of a Lollard Text," in *Viator* 33 (2002): 294-309.

[85] I am drawing here on Nicholas Watson's description of Rolle's exegetical practice. Watson, *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 243-248.

[86] N. Watson, "Middle English Mystics," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. D. Wallace (Cambridge, 1998), p. 548.

[87] *The Psalter or Psalms of David and Certain Canticles With a Translation and Exposition in English by Richard Rolle of Hampole*, ed. Bramley (Oxford, 1884), p. 4. Quotations of Rolle's preface are from this edition and cited parenthetically.

[88] For the concept of "exegetical service," see Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation*, p. 202 ff.

[89] Peter Lombard, "Prologue to the Commentary on the Psalter," in *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism* c. *1100*–c. *1375: The Commentary-Tradition*, ed. A. J. Minnis et al. (Oxford, 1988), p. 105.

[90] In my view, this undermines Deanesly's assertion that Rolle was the "strongest precedent" for the very literal Early Version Wycliffite Bible. Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible*, p. 254.

[91] *MED*, "wit," *n.* The *MED* cites this passage from Rolle's preface under sense 6(d): "meaning, significance; also, interpretation; a meaning, sense; also, an interpretation."

[92] W. Butler, "Determination against biblical translation, 1401," in M. Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible*, appendix 2.

[93] *EWS*, 1:269/19-21.

[94] *EWS*, 1:451/77, 86-87.

[95] *EWS*, 1:646/98-100.

[96] For additional usages in this sense, see *EWS*, 2:160/29-30: the words Christ speaks to his disciples "ben spirit and lif, for siche is witt of his wordis"; *ibid.*, 3:225 and 3:5/18. If, as Deanesly argues, the gospel text used as the basis for translations in the sermon cycle was made before the Late Version Bible, then the shared usages I have adduced here help establish that Rolle's hermeneutic protocols not only shaped Wycliffite translation practices generally but also became especially prominent in the years preceding the production of a more fluent version of scripture. Rolle's understanding of "wit" as a quality of discernment appropriate to the vernacular translator may also have proven useful within the scope of a project, such as the sermon cycle, in which scriptural passages were apparently translated "at sight" from the Latin (rather than being taken from a known Wycliffite Bible version). Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible*, p. 317.

[97] For evidence that Wycliffites were not only aware of but extremely interested in this etymology, see *EWS*, 1:320/77-80, where the academic senses of "wit" are discussed.

[98] *The Middle English Translation of the Rosarium Theologie*, ed. C. von Nolcken (Heidelberg,1979), p. 60. The importance of the *Floretum* and its various redactions (of which the *Rosarium Theologie* was one) is evident in Hudson's important article, "A Lollard Compilation and the Dissemination of Wycliffite Thought," in *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 23 (1972): 65-81.

[99] Pecock, *Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy*, ed. C. Babington (London, 1860), pp. 12-13, and p. 14 for reference to "naturall witt." See, too, S. Justice, "Lollardy," in *Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, p. 687.

[100] Reprinted in Forshall and Madden, 1:40, as well as lx and lxi of introduction.

[101] As detailed in *The Index of Middle English Prose* 1, ed. R. Hanna (D. S. Brewer, 1984), p. 27.

[102] *The Middle English Mirror: Sermons from Advent to Sexagesima with a Parallel Text of the Anglo-Norman Miroir*, ed. T. Duncan and M. Connolly (Heidelberg, 2003). Page and line numbers correspond to this edition and are cited parenthetically.

[103] Discussed in Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages*, p. 113.

[104] For the ways in which English Wycliffite texts appropriated a Latinate theological vocabulary concerning the eucharist, see Aston, "Wyclif and the Vernacular," in *From Ockham to Wyclif*, ed. A. Hudson and M. Wilks (Oxford, 1987), pp. 209-305.

[105] *The Middle English Mirror*, ed. T. Duncan and M. Connolly, intro., xx. The English prologue and translation of the *Miroir* also circulated with a fifteenth-century collection of Wycliffite sermons, John Rylands Library MS Eng. 109. C. von Nolcken, "An Unremarked Group of Wycliffite Sermons in Latin," in *Modern Philology* 83 (1985): 237-238.

[106] *MED*, "undoing(e," *ger*., sense 3b.

[107] *The Northern Homily Cycle*, ed. A. Thompson (Kalamazoo, 2008), prologue, l. 97.

[108] Ralph Hanna observes in regard to Rolle's *English Psalter* that the "carefully non-English word order of the actual translation…may have influenced the first Wycliffite biblical translation." Hanna, "Rolle and Related Works," in *A Companion to Middle English Prose*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (D. S. Brewer, 2004), p. 26.

[109] This is a term Ghosh employs in his discussion of *De Veritate* in *The Wycliffite Heresy*, pp. 22-66, and *passim*.

[110] For instance, Dove, whose recent book is the most comprehensive textual study of the Wycliffite Prologue and Bible to date, holds that the Prologue does little more than echo Lyra. Dove, *The First English Bible*, p. 196.

[111] P. McNiven, *Heresy and Politics in the Reign of Henry IV: The Burning of John Badby* (Boydell, 1987), p. 41. The phrase "intellectual mentor" comes from J. Simpson, *The Oxford English Literary History*, vol. 2, *1350-1547: Reform and Cultural Revolution* (Oxford, 2002), p. 372.

Chapter Three

<u>"We speke not of enke and parchemyn": the English Wycliffite Sermon Cycle</u>

"We speke not of enke and parchemyn, but of þe sentence þat God seiþ."[1]

I

The previous chapter considered the Wycliffite Bible Prologue, which describes

the full range of textual and philological challenges Wycliffites encountered as they

established an accurate Latin exemplar for translation into English. The project, it says,

required "mych trauaile"; the translators had to seek out "diverse felawis and helperis" to

assist with a wide range of difficult tasks: evaluating the reliability of existing Bibles,

studying commentaries, discerning linguistic lineage, resolving variant readings, and

collating text with gloss. Especially challenging was putting the Bible's many "harde

wordis, and harde sentencis" into a form at once broadly intelligible to new vernacular

audiences and faithful to the meaning of the Latin source text.[2]

This approach stands in stark contrast, however, to what one finds in the

Wycliffite vernacular sermon cycle, a collection of 294 sermons for the liturgical year.[3]

Only rarely do they discuss the difficulties of translating scripture into English. Whereas

the writers of the Prologue explain that the Late Version translation of the Bible

proceeded from an authoritative Latin exemplar of their own making and not the Vulgate as they had found it, the English sermons, which were likely completed by the late 1380s and whose compilers are also anonymous, make no similar claim; in fact, as Anne Hudson has detailed, the base text for the translated lections in the sermons appears to have been a version of the Vulgate, which was then translated *ad hoc* as the individual sermons were put into written form.[4] There is scarcely any effort in the cycle, as there is elsewhere in Lollard biblical scholarship, to address potential incongruities between Latin and English, to flag and explain variant readings, or to reference existing translations of scripture.[5] More often than not, translated passages from the gospels and epistles are integrated into the narrative order of the sermon without discussion of syntax or lexis, topics which merit extensive consideration in the Wycliffite Bible Prologue.[6] Whereas the Bible project sought to give scripture fixity in an authoritative written text, here the scholarly procedures and forms of analysis requisite to such an aim give way to the very different task of conveying the gospel's underlying wisdom, or the "sentence þat God seiþ."

Yet sermons also owe their appeal, and their effectiveness as moral exhortation, to the preacher's ability to shape a message from the raw material of scripture (to "teche þe book of liȝf," in the words of a Wycliffite sermon for the fourth Sunday after Easter on John 16:5-15 [1:450/47-48]).[7] As Henry Ward Beecher observed in an address given before the theology department at Yale in 1872,

> To quote texts to men is good for some purposes; but that is not preaching.
> If it were, then you would better read the Bible altogether, without note or
> comment, to men. The reason why reading the truths that are just as
> plainly stated there has sometimes so much less effect than stating them in

your own way, is that the truth will gain force when it becomes a part of you that it would not have when merely read as a text.[8]

Beecher, of course, was not the first to suggest that gospel preaching is in some sense a displacement of the textual medium from which it is derived. Even in Wyclif's own day, the Pauline paradigm of preaching was being adapted by Mirk and others to allow for anecdotal amplification, and hence for extra-scriptural material like exempla—or, in the view of one Wycliffite sermon, "dremes, fablis and gabbyngis" (3:229/43).[9] And elsewhere, especially in his claim that the effective preacher "digests the truth and makes it personal, and then brings his own being to bear upon that of his hearers," Beecher comes perilously close to privileging *inventio* at the expense of *enarratio*.[10] But while Wyclif certainly did not think of preaching as a rhetorical art, he was equally prepared to set aside the lifeless letter on the page. "In preaching," he writes, "one must follow the example of Christ, who has written his law, not on the skins of dead animals, but in the hearts of men."[11]

Such an emphasis was familiar from Augustine's discussion of Christian oratory and the arts of preaching in *De Doctrina Christiana*.[12] Wyclif, however, did not rest complacently in a received Augustinianism, instead reimagining questions about language and reality in the context of his own debates with Oxford terminists, debates recounted in *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae* and, to a lesser extent, *Tractatus De Universalibus*. In these works, he argues that the truth of scripture lies neither in the grammatical and semantic relationships between terms in a sentence, nor in the disputes such questions had generated about the interpretation of sacred texts, but rather in the "sense which God teaches" the virtuous.[13] Wyclif's theological realism—a shorthand

and perhaps somewhat reductive designation for a continuum of ideas all broadly opposed to the conventions of terminist logic—thus assigned priority not to individual *signa* but rather to the universals perceived in them, with the understanding that the latter can be known innately.[14] As Michael Wilks has argued, Wyclif's literalist hermeneutic, if that is the right phrase, actually departs from any notion of literal translation for this very reason, providing a schema for privileging the sense of biblical passages over the word-for-word approach that had governed much of medieval biblical translation from Jerome onwards and had perhaps reached its terminus in the awkward literalism of the Early Version Wycliffite Bible.[15]

In drawing attention to Wyclif's conception of the Bible as an "unwritten law, quite unsuitable for general lay use," Wilks suggests why sermon literature may have come to occupy such a prominent place in the vernacular output of the movement: "The sermon," he points out, "was itself the best 'translation' of the bible, the handing on or transfer (*translatio*) of the divine truths behind the written words."[16] As is indeed evident from the great quantity of biblical material it makes available in the vernacular, the cycle is committed not only to liberating sacred texts from academic and ecclesiastical control but also to presenting gospel precepts in an intelligible fashion to English lay audiences. Collectively, the sermons represent perhaps the most ambitious and comprehensive effort in Wycliffite biblical scholarship to fashion a discursively open text of scripture. I argue in the following pages that it is precisely the attempt to build an interpretive culture on this basis which generates ambiguities about the textuality of the Bible, the boundaries of hermeneutic authority, and the nature of scriptural truth itself. Wyclif's biblicism,

already an unstable compound of different ideas, motivates the project of the sermon cycle in complex and contradictory ways.

<div align="center">II</div>

"Messengers," Peter Heath memorably observes in a discussion of Wycliffite preaching, "are extremely ephemeral; their task is remarkably difficult and vulnerable without written messages, outward and physical evidence of inward and spiritual beliefs."[17] With the significant exceptions of Nicholas Hereford and Philip Repyngdon, we know very little about Wycliffite preachers during the last two decades of the fourteenth century, despite contemporary accusations that the preaching of Wyclif's itinerant followers had helped bring about the rebellion of 1381.[18] Given the aftermath of the revolt, in which its leader was hanged and dismembered, Wycliffite preachers had every reason to be circumspect, and were no doubt a fleeting presence in the manner Heath describes.[19] Yet statutes such as Arundel's 1409 *Constitutions*, the first four of which imposed strict licensing requirements on preachers while also defining the proper content of vernacular preaching itself, implicitly acknowledge that sermons were a potent medium for transmitting revolutionary ideas and doctrines in the period; indeed, the spread of heresy was dependent as much on public preaching and oratory—Nicholas Hereford's 1382 Ascension Day sermon, which urged the clergy to embrace apostolic poverty, is a good example—as on the circulation of texts themselves.[20] Unwritten messages are more difficult to regulate and censor than written ones; their very transience

is part of their power, as both Wycliffite preachers and their opponents seem to have known only too well.

These different attitudes towards the ephemeral nature of preachers and preaching invoke questions about the status of the voice as a medium for scriptural truth, a *topos* which opens up Wycliffite vernacularity to a new set of complexities. Although it may seem misguided to approach the sermons as if they were actually preached, especially given their tendency to proceed in the manner of a postillation, they are nevertheless alert to the effects of the preacher's voice, often citing the example of Christ's own agency as a speaker of the word of God.[21] We can begin, in this case, by considering a Feria sermon for the fourth week after Easter. Taking as its text John 3:25-36, the sermon discusses how "Ion bar witnesse of Crist" but soon turns to the question of what it means for the faithful to hear "Cristis voys" (3:213/2, 16). Like the friend of the bridegroom at a wedding, the Baptist "*ioyeþ by ioye for þe voys of þe hosebonde*," in the words of verse 29. In its exposition of this verse, the sermon emphasizes that the Baptist himself has "myche ioye boþe in body and in soule whanne he heriþ Cristis voys, þat is þe hosebonde of holy chirche" (3:213/15-16). Christ's words—his very voice—are inseparable from the will and grace of the holy spirit. Stressing the trinitarian dimension of this argument, the sermon next comments that "men ben myche to blame þat trowen not to Cristis word, '*for he whom God haþ* þus *sent, spekiþ wordis of God*'" (3:214/33-35). It goes on to emphasize the tropological sense of verse 34, implicating contemporary preaching by arguing that "many ben out of bileue þis day in þe chirche, for þey trowen to sensible wordis, and oþere syngnes þat men maken; but vnsensible wordis of Goddis Sone þat may not passe þey trowen litil or nou3t, but putten þes wordis byhynde" (3:214/36-39).

The distinction here between "sensible wordis" and "vnsensible wordis" is important; it reflects the larger concern in much Wycliffite discourse not only to differentiate outward forms from inward grace, or the old law from the new (preoccupations Wycliffites shared with their less radical Christian contemporaries), but also to discern one kind of scriptural fundamentalism from another. "We speke not of enke and parchemyn," a Sunday epistle sermon for the second week in Advent reminds its audience, "but of þe sentence þat God seiþ" (1:481/5-6). "[U]nsensible" in a way that written words are not, the preacher's voice is both motif and instrument, resembling the very thing it communicates: the word of God in its highest form, pure essence or effect with no substantiality itself.[22] Although, as Calvin later remarked, the "human voice cannot by its own power penetrate into the soul," the preacher's word is no mere somatic phenomenon when infused with the "þe sentence þat God seiþ," a point underscored by the sermon's extended treatment of verse 29.[23]

An earlier Feria sermon on Matthew 3:1-6 , for the first week of Advent, similarly references John the Baptist in order to comment on the disembodied nature of God's word, this time prefigured in John's own preacherly voice. The relevant section proceeds from a particularly awkward interpolation of the phrase "Goddis word" into verse 3 of the gospel text: "Þis Ion *is he of whom it is seyd by Isay þe prophet þat seiþ 'Þer is uoys* of Goddis word *þat crieþ in desert "Make 3ee redy þe weye of þe Lord! Make 3ee ri3t þe paþþis of hym!"'"* (3:5/8-9). This revision can be understood in relation to a suggestion Wyclif himself makes in *De Veritate*. "Do not be troubled," he writes, "by the fact that a vocal proposition does not constitute scripture itself," for while the voice is "spread out across the air," the true sense of scripture is "inscribed in the mind."[24] The cycle,

however, does indeed seem troubled by the notion that the human voice is nothing more

than an impoverished corporeal medium, for such a claim could easily be turned against

the Baptist's own preaching, which foretells that of Christ's. But if the messianic arc of

the gospel narrative is put at risk by such an assertion, so too is the kind of vernacularity

modeled in the sermon cycle, which foregrounds the power of human speech to grant

access to a divine script. Both the long cycle and other Wycliffite sermon collections

thus seem attuned to questions about the authority of the Baptist's voice and the nature of

preaching as a speech act, and in what ways "vocal propositions" reference sacred

realities. A Wycliffite sermon on John 1:19 for the fourth Sunday in Advent, also on the

Baptist but dating from the first half of the fifteenth-century and not part of the long

cycle, comments that "a voice is a feble þyng and goþ awey wiþ þe wynt [wind], but þe

word þat comeþ aftur dwelleþ in mennes hertes."[25] For its part, however, the sermon on

Matthew 3:1-6, from the long cycle, suggests a more nuanced view, as is clear from the

lengthy exposition following the interpolated material in verse 3 of the gospel text:

> Drede we not for to graunt þat Ion Baptist is a uoys, for his word haþ
> many wittis and one of hem is takun heere. As a uoys is a sound þe which
> is formed of a mouþ, and is formed of word of herte, freel in beyng to þis
> word, so Ion Baptist was formed of þe word of Goddis mouþ, þe which
> word is Iesu Crist, more wurþ þan many Iones. And so seiþ Baptist wittily
> and mekely þat he is a uoys, for he haþ no beyng but of þe word God
> wiþinne. And he haþ passinge beyng in body, as a uoys haþ. But as a
> uoys beriþ þe witt of þe word wiþinne þe soule, so Baptist bar þe witt of
> Goddis word wiþouten errour. (3:5/10-19)

Through this series of associations surrounding highly significant episodes of

John 3 and Matthew 3, Wycliffites attempt to consolidate their authority as messengers of

the "vnsensible," of an immaterial and unwritten scriptural truth that can only be voiced

in preaching. Though the task of preaching is complicated by the fleeting nature of the spoken word and the sometimes all-too-brief attentions of the audience, here the most enduring language is not encased in "sensible wordis, and oþere syngnes þat men maken," as the sermon on John 3:25-36 puts it, but instead released from writing altogether, heard by the faithful just as Christ's own "voys" is heard by his disciples. "[I]t is ful nedeful to preche nou as it was þanne," a sermon for Sabbath in Advent Ember week asserts, exalting John the Baptist's preaching as recounted in Luke 3:1-6 (3:16/38-39). "Ion prechide not for worldy wynnyng, and so he fledde fablis and lesingis, but telde opynly profitable treuþe þat God puttide in his mouþ," thus becoming, in the historical logic of the sermon, the conduit for a truth that simultaneously fulfills and supersedes the "writun" prophecies embodied in "þe bok" of Isaiah (3:16/33-36, 26). These and other sermons in the cycle thus implicitly argue for the unique agency of preachers, who transmit the authentic kerygma of the gospel narrative, and who can, like John the Baptist or even Christ himself, make the spiritually deaf hear again.[26]

Preaching, it is assumed here, does not act on the text; it is not a mode of interpretive work or hermeneutic mediation. A sermon for the first week after the octave of Epiphany from the Ferial Gospels, explicating Luke 4:14-22, emphasizes this understanding of preaching in its closing remarks: "Certis, trauele of þe prechour, or name of hauyng of good witt, shulde not be þe ende of preching, but profit to þe soule of þe puple; and houeuere þis ende comeþ best is most plesing to God" (3: 27/47-50). The desire to manifest scriptural meaning with perfect equanimity (without "trauele"), to capture and transparently convey the "sentence" of gospel teachings, is nothing less than an effort to distinguish the "Bible" from its surrounding textual and linguistic armature,

an appropriation that leaves more than sufficient scope for the voice of the preacher to emerge as an authentic index of divine reality. Accordingly, the cycle is laced with comments emphasizing the unique authority of preachers and preaching. A sermon on I Thessalonians 4:1-8 for the second Sunday after Lent, to take one example, explicates verse 8 ("*And þus, he þat dispuysuþ þis* lore, *he dispuysuþ not* al only *man, but God þat 3af his hooly spiri3t in his apostlis*") this way: "Certis he þat dispuysuþ þe prechour, whanne he prechuþ Godus wordus, dispuysiþ boþe God and man, but moste to charge þe godhede" (1:551/73-75). [27] Another, a Quinquagesima sermon on 1 Corinthians 13, remarks that preaching "is the hy3erst dede of man, whan þat it is wel don" (1:539/7-8). And a sermon for the fifth Sunday after Trinity, explicating Christ's sermon by the river of Ghenasereth in Luke 5:1-11, likens preachers to fishermen whose nets are the law of God "in whyche vertuwes and trewþus ben knytted" (1:242/50-51).

The cycle also reserves authority for preachers and preaching—and, specifically, for the transparent medium of the voice—as an alternative to hermeneutic practices that disfigure the literal meaning of the biblical text, such as glossing.[28] The sermon on John 16:5-15 for the fourth Sunday after Easter, briefly mentioned above regarding its insistence that preachers "teche þe book of li3f," argues that because many audiences are "ful rude to conseyue" such matters as the nature of the Godhead, preachers should therefore "schapon of þe wordys of þis gospel wat myte profi3te to his puple aftur vndurstondyng of hem" (1:451/47-48, 86, 77-79). Acknowledging that the Bible can be difficult to understand, the sermon implies that preaching is a form of mediation, but not in the abstractive sense that glossing is, with its unlimited interpretive privilege. As mediation, gospel preaching is transparent, humbly proceeding in whatever manner is

most profitable and edifying to lay audiences without concealing the plain and unadorned significance of the words themselves. Such an overdetermined schema for vernacular religious education demands hermeneutic latitude and evanescence of a kind perhaps only available in preaching, where the voice of the preacher guides interpretation without necessarily standing between the audience and the word of God in the way a gloss might.[29]

Elsewhere in the sermons, however, the voice of the preacher does not promise unmediated access to God's word. This dilemma becomes apparent in places where the cycle modulates from thinking about the voice as a transparent medium to thinking about the voice as a *figure* for transparency itself, for a divine meaning released from the impure material substrate of the text. While Wyclif's own idea of the Bible had encouraged such a view, the sermons suggest that the spoken word is also itself a form of mediation, not quite the same thing as directly intuiting "þe sentence þat God seiþ," to reference the Advent sermon I have taken as the *thema* of this chapter (1:481/6). We encounter this tension in a Passion Sunday sermon on John 8:46-59. The sermon describes Christ's words as "fulle of wyt," invoking his response to the Jews in verse 58: "byforn þat Abraham schulde be I am" (1:421/90-91). The Jews, though, are unable to understand the plain import of these words, which emphasize the timeless being of the godhead: "For godhede may not be chaunghed, neyþur fro ȝougþe to eelde, ne fro worse to beture, for hit is euere on" (1:421/ 94-95).[30] Jerome and Augustine had situated John 8:58 in the continuum of typological interpretations stemming from Exodus 3:14, where God says to Moses "Ego sum qui sum," instructing him to tell the children of Israel that "qui est misit me ad vos." The author of the Wycliffite tract *De oblacione iugis sacrificii*,

applying the understanding of this verse to a discussion of the antichrist, likewise writes that

> þis verbe *sum* in Latyn, þat betokeneþ a pure beyng or substaunce, betokeneþ chifli þe purist beyng and substaunce of God, the wiche beyng or substaunce is þe uerri name of God þat haþ beyng, power, goodnes, ri3twisenes, kunnyng and strengþe of himself, wiþ all seche oþur most uertous namys wiche alle ben þe foreseid name betokened bi þis uerbe *sum*.[31]

That these comments are brought forth specifically in sermons implies, if only obliquely, that preachers partake of the power of the words that Christ himself speaks—and yet the voice is also just another form of human language, which can never escape temporality in the way that Christ's own words can with their eternal, indelible "beynge" (1:422/106). There is an unbridgeable gulf between the words of the preacher and the pure efficacy of Christ's own self-disclosure in the divine logos.[32] Perhaps it is this realization that motivates the abrupt and frustrated reflection that comes next: "And so to blaberyng in þis speche mennys voises by not sufficient, but som glymeryng we han in owre sowle of þis trewþe, and bettur knowen hit in owre herte þan we kan speke hit in voys" (1:422/108-110).[33]

Proceeding from an Augustinian notion of divine illumination ("som glymeryng we han in owre sowle"), this sermon is just one of many discussions in the cycle seeking to specify the authority of true Christians by distinguishing between an inward conformity to divine law and an outward devotion to false rites and human conventions.[34] In the Passion Sunday sermon above, this distinction motivates the implied contrast between the "sowle" and "voice," the latter belonging to the register of the "sensible," or that which is worldly, temporal, or outward.[35] And in this way, it follows the pattern of

other sermons in the cycle that attempt to define Wycliffites in contrast to the mendicant orders and the Jews, who are alike in their presumed devotion to "sensible signs."[36] Christ demands that his followers "stonden in vertewes of mannys sowle and not in sensible signes" as the friars do, with their affinity for the host, their begging, their separate teachings, and their "worldly lyuyng" (1:353/253). Similarly, "Moyses lawe" is inferior to the law of Christ because "wrytyng in lettris was foul to writyng in mennus soulis" (1:654/86, 89-90). In these passages, the discourse of divine illumination exposes the limitations of the voice, and ultimately of preaching itself: the voice does not "beriþ þe witt of þe word wiþinne þe soule"; it is not the transparent medium through which the divine is effortlessly apprehended, nor the instrument by which scriptural truth is released from the *vestigia* of writing and of books. Instead, the voice is something closer here to a false and distorting gloss, mediating a "text" that is "bettur knowen" in the heart.

<center>III</center>

Wyclif's suppositions about the logic and authority of scripture entail radically different possibilities for gospel preaching, as we have seen in the cycle's conflicted engagement with the discursive limits and ambiguities of its own medium. On one level, preaching promises to liberate scripture from the "sensible signs" that conceal the *sentence* of divine intention; here we can again refer back to the sermon on Romans 15:4-13 for the second Sunday after Advent that defines the proper scope of the Wycliffite preacher as "þe sentence þat God seiþ," in contradistinction to the "enke and parchemyn" of written books (1:481/5-6).[37] Such a position clearly reflects the theological and

metaphysical preoccupations of Wyclif in *De Veritate*, where his major concern is to argue that "scripture" in its highest sense resides eternally beyond its material and physical instantiations.[38] Nevertheless, preaching by its very nature confers hermeneutic authority on human intercessors, whose sacred oratory inheres in, and depends on, the physical reality of the body itself . "[F]ormed of a mouþ" and possessing mere "passinge beyng in body," in the words of the Feria sermon on Matthew 3:1-6 discussed earlier, the voice is a reminder of preaching's intrinsic corporeality (3:5/12, 17).[39] It is easy to see how the same logic applies to the *body* of scripture. Although there is an effort throughout the cycle to shift the ground of interpretation to the divine reality that underlies and transcends the material text itself, there is also an accompanying awareness that scripture is never completely independent from the outward forms and figures through which it is made manifest, notwithstanding Wyclif's belief that the "scripture which is perceptible through voices and manuscripts is not holy scripture, except in an equivocal way, just as it might be said that the picture or image of a man is called a man by reason of its resemblance to the actual man."[40]

This tension runs throughout the cycle, but comes to the surface with special urgency in the idea of "forme." Although topical in any number of late medieval contexts, form is a crucial reference point in the sermons, where it often functions as a mediating concept between a eucharistic discourse of signs and accidents and a closely related discussion about the status of language as a verbal and material medium. My analysis of these claims will center on a Good Friday sermon from the Ferial Gospels, the lection for which spans the betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion of Jesus as recounted in John 18:1 to 19:42. Selecting Christ's Passion as its theme, the sermon promises to make the

audience "se in what *forme* he sufferide" (3:172/1-2, italics added). Most educated

audiences would have recognized the sacramental resonance of the term "forme" in this

context, particularly in relation to Wycliffite discussions about how to understand

Christ's body in the form of bread.[41] For instance, the Wycliffite tract known as *De*

oblacioni iugis sacrificii, chronologically later than the sermon cycle but suffused with

the same concerns and very likely the work of a preacher, reminds its audience that "þes

two wordis *forma* and *species* in Latyn disceyuen our ypocritis þat ben alle dreint

[drowned, overwhelmed] in signys and accidentis."[42] These "ypocrits" cannot

comprehend that Christ and Paul "vnderstonden comynli bi þes [two] wordis 'þe kinddes'

and 'þe substancis' of þinggis"; they will not grant that the sacrament is Christ's body "in

forme of brede," form here meaning an essential nature coexisting with the real body of

Christ even after the words of consecration are spoken, not a set of accidental qualities

remaining once the substance of bread is annihilated (for such an understanding of

transubstantiation, according to Wyclif, would be perverse).[43] As Hudson notes, Wyclif

had discussed the sense of *forma* in his tract *De apostasia*, there referencing Philippians

2:6-7—which tells of Jesus Christ *qui cum in forma Dei esset non rapinam arbitratus est*

esse se aequalem Deo sed semetipsum exinanivit formam servi accipiens in similitudinem

hominum factus et habitu inventus ut homo—to extrapolate a distinction between the two

natures of Christ: *in forma Dei* and *formam servi*.[44] The sermon for Good Friday, taking

as its theme the "forme" in which Christ "sufferide," draws on this distinction when

discussing how Christ in his human aspect "feeliden fully þe peynes þat his body hadde"

(3:186/363). He was not any less divine for suffering as a man, and it is this idea, the

sermon implies, which should guide not only how true Christians read scripture but also

how they regard the formal qualities of biblical writing. For clerks know the gospel

merely as a "bok" (the sermon opens with the suggestive comment that its lection

"conteyneþ many capitilis in Iones bok, *as clerkis knowen*"); unlike faithful Christians

who dispense with the non-essential and truly "marken þe gospel," they dwell on the

accidents of form, on the exigencies of ink and parchment, such as the division of John

into "capitilis" (3:172/4-5, italics added; 3:183/304).

It is worth noting that in addition to *De apostasia* one of Wyclif's more salient

discussions of form occurs in *De Veritate*, in a section devoted to explaining the logic of

scripture. Having learned grammar, Wyclif writes, the theologian should then "forsake

the sensible signs" and turn his attention to the "sense of the author," at which point "he

might gaze upon the unveiled [*sine velamine*] Book of Life."[45] The argument proceeds in

a familiar fashion until Wyclif acknowledges that "Christ's priests…employ the words of

scripture in prayers, the administration of sacraments, and in the preaching and

explication of scripture."[46] If we follow the reasoning of this assertion closely, we notice

that he seems trapped in a recursive logic: Christ's priests use the words of scripture to

explicate scripture. But in light of what Wyclif has said about the Book of Life, such

reasoning appears more coherent, since, as he elsewhere asserts in *De Veritate*, the Book

of Life is the highest grade of scripture, superior to the written book itself, or what he

refers to in the next moment as the "form of its words [*forma verborum*]."[47] He quickly

adds, however, that "Holy Scripture would be exceedingly harmful if not for the fact that

the logic of scripture is correct with respect to the verbal or literal sense, every bit as

much in its historical parts as in the sapiential." For this reason, then, it is clear that the

Christian should not disregard "the form of the words."[48]

This is a significant qualification, and Wyclif's comments about the form of words here may seem incongruous given that he has just finished explaining why "the leaves and bark of the words" should be disregarded, especially if they hinder one's comprehension of the "sense of scripture which the holy spirit introduced."[49] We know, however, that Wyclif understood the scope of words and language in relation to how they were used by priests in the administration of the sacraments, as his numerous discussions of the eucharist demonstrate.[50] For Wyclif as much as his learned followers, then, the concept of form evokes the exercise of sacramental authority and the non-scriptural nature of priestly discourse. Yet Wyclif's theological realism as we have seen it expressed in *De Veritate* and *De Universalibus* also permitted an analogy between eucharistic accidents and linguistic ones, for just as the formal qualities of bread cannot exist independently of its substance, so the words of scripture cannot exist independently of the divine author by which they are imposed. Any suggestion to the contrary would be to embrace a world in which universals have no reality. In a manner of speaking, then, neither bread nor word can be annihilated, for doing so would require annihilating the substance underlying both, which is nothing other than God himself. Wyclif found confirmation for the view that scripture is insolubly united with Christ himself in John 10:35-36, which speaks of the scripture *quem Pater sanctificavit et misit in mundum*. It is this book, "rather than the one which is product of human hands," Wyclif writes in *De Veritate*, to which the scriptural passage refers in its use of the masculine relative pronoun *quem*.[51]

We can see how this reasoning was transferred to the context of the cycle, and employed to comment on matters of scriptural authority, by turning to a Proprium

Sanctorum sermon on Luke 2:33-40 for the sixth day after Christmas. The lection narrates the events following the circumcision in the temple and the visit by Simeon, whose prophecies concerning the infant Jesus bewilder Joseph and Mary. The child, he tells them, will be a light *ad revelationem gentium et gloriam plebis tuae Israhel*. Putting its audience in the position of the astonished and slightly incredulous parents, the sermon insists that Simeon's words were "seyde of God," that they apply to Christ in his divinity (2:226/12). The argument is reinforced a few lines later when it is again asserted that "þis sentence was seyd of Crist" (2:226/16). The prepositional structure of the phrases "seyde of God" and "seyd of Crist" is initially misleading, for what sounds like the semantic relation between subject and predicate in a sentence is in fact the description of a shared reality, as the central hermeneutic insight of the sermon proceeds to make clear: the basis of scripture's authority is not merely that its "manye trewþus and diuerse resonys" can be applied to Christ but also that "eche of þes trewþus is þe substaunce of God hymself" (2:227/22-23). This, according to the sermon, is the condition by which our belief is drawn away from "þese skynnys þat is clepud booc" and towards "þe sentence þat þei seyen, whyche sentence is þe booc of lyf" (2:227/20-22).

Predication, while a ubiquitous concern in medieval hermeneutics, was given much broader scope and significance in the context of the universals debate, where it became an important procedure for exploring how the universal entity, or category of being, might be predicated of its many particulars—"predicated of many," to use the customary locution.[52] Predication thus emerges as a central concern of Wyclif's in texts such as *Purgans Errores Circa Universalia in Communi* and, more fully, *De Universalibus*, in which he argues that universal entities underlie the apparent differences

among things.[53] The same concept allows him to privilege the essential truth of holy writ, its undifferentiated ontological reality, over the formal and semantic properties of biblical language. Implicit in this argument is the idea that linguistic or formal predication reflects real relationships, or what in *De Universalibus* he calls essential predication. Discussing the senses of "predicare," Wyclif writes that the *moderni*, a pejorative expression he seems to associate with the school of Ockham and terminist logic more broadly, take it to mean "the predication of one term of [i.e., by way of] another."[54] In fact, he continues, "this kind of predication is modeled on real predication, the third kind of predication which is being shared by or said of many things in common," adding that it is "in this manner that every actual universal is predicated of its inferiors in nature."[55] Wyclif's thinking about the nature and logic of scripture thus takes shape within a theological framework where archetypal realities possess more authority and are more desirable to contemplate than signs themselves. Essential predication, in other words, deflects hermeneutic attention away from textual form altogether; it is the intellectual procedure that guarantees one does not confuse the words on the page with the Book of Life, and would therefore be an important way of thinking about language in the context of the sermon cycle, which aspires to distill the "sentence" of gospel teachings.

Although indebted to Wyclif on several levels, the cycle is not completely comfortable with his notion that the form of words—the outward and inferior verbal husk of scripture, or what the sermon on Luke 2 refers to as the medium of "figurus" and "mannys writyng" that one encounters on the page itself, in the "enke" and "skynnys" of books (2: 227/17, 20)—can be entirely subordinated to the universal Book of Life when

hermeneutically convenient, in the manner his theory of essential predication invites. This problem becomes evident in a Wycliffite Commune Sanctorum sermon on Matthew 10:23-26, where it is stated that "[3]if we vndirstonde not þe wyt, grawnte we þe forme of þe wordys, and confesse we þe trewþe of hem, al 3if we wyte not which it is" (2:62/57-59). Wyclif's own position on such matters has already been discussed: the "leaves and bark of the words must be disregarded" if they cannot be accommodated to the sacred sense of scripture.[56] Yet this sermon contemplates precisely the same problem—the difficulty involved in interpreting biblical language, especially Christ's parables—only to arrive at the opposite conclusion: far from an invitation to stop reading, or to disregard the words on the page altogether, the Bible's opaque and sometimes contradictory language is precisely what affirms the reader's faith in the authority of scripture, a faith which inevitably spurs further reading. Paradoxically enough, then, it is the perfectly open and transparent text that forecloses on the possibility of continued hermeneutic inquiry. Ghosh, who does not discuss Wyclif's own comments about the *forma verborum*, reasons that this passage is "informed by a hermeneutic abdication: the devout reader merely 'believes' that the Word of God is 'true', and God does not fail him when the need arises."[57] It is also true, however, that the sermon envisions a very different kind of reader than Wyclif does, one for whom belief is always mediated by words, and for whom hermeneutics can never be set aside. In this sense, the passage is very nearly a complete repudiation of how Wyclif understands the "folia et cortex verborum" in *De Veritate*. Reading the Bible is never just a matter of pure intellection or of intuiting the universal in its many particulars, even less so when it comes to the problem of interpreting scripture's figurative language.

It is all the more significant, then, that the cycle's interest in the "forme of þe wordys" should emerge in a discussion of Matthew, the obscurities of which challenged even the earliest commentators to consider the extent to which biblical meaning can inhere in language itself.[58] On this question, most, including Jerome and Augustine, remained within the framework established by Origen in his Commentary on Matthew.[59] Elucidating the parable of the field and the treasure from Matthew 13:44 (*simile est regnum caelorum thesauro abscondito in agro quem qui invenit homo abscondit et prae gaudio illius vadit et vendit universa quae habet et emit agrum illum*), Origen comments that

> The field, indeed, seems to me according to these things to be the Scripture, which was planted with what is manifest in the words of the history, and the law, and the prophets, and the rest of the thoughts; for great and varied is the planting of the words in the whole Scripture; but the treasure hidden in the field is the thoughts concealed and lying under that which is manifest….[60]

In an important passage from *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine formulates similar guidelines for understanding the Bible's many opaque passages, guidelines that apply as much to parables as to prophecies (the subject he is here discussing):

> These secrets of divine Scripture we investigate as well as we can. All will not accept our interpretation with equal confidence, but all hold it certain that these things were neither done nor recorded without some foreshadowing of future events, and that they are to be referred only to Christ and His church, which is the city of God, proclaimed from the very beginning of human history by figures which we now see everywhere accomplished. From the blessing of the two sons of Noah, and the cursing of the middle son, down to Abraham, or for more than a thousand years, there is, as I have said, no mention of any righteous persons who worshipped God. I do not therefore conclude that there were none; but it had been tedious to mention every one, and would have displayed historical accuracy rather than prophetic foresight. The object of the

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writer of these sacred books, or rather of the Spirit of God in him, is not only to record the past, but to depict the future, so far as it regards the city of God; for whatever is said of those who are not its citizens, is given either for her instruction, or as a foil to enhance her glory. *Yet we are not to suppose that all that is recorded has some signification; but those things which have no signification of their own are interwoven for the sake of the things which are significant.* It is only the ploughshare that cleaves the soil; but to effect this, other parts of the plough are requisite. It is only the strings in harps and other musical instruments which produce melodious sounds; but that they may do so, there are other parts of the instrument which are not indeed struck by those who sing, but are connected with the strings which are struck, and produce musical notes. *So in this prophetic history some things are narrated which have no significance, but are, as it were, the framework to which the significant things are attached.*[61]

Augustine seems to suggest here that even the linguistic and formal minutiae of the biblical narrative, *littera* "which have no signification of their own," contribute to the process by which one is instructed and edified in the word of God, much as the Wycliffite sermon on Matthew urges its audience to accept the "forme of words" even if their spiritual sense remains opaque. Though Augustine's influence would be felt just as profoundly outside the schools, this way of thinking about scriptural language became central to semantic theory at Oxford, providing a context in which we can consider further some of the questions about form I have raised in connection to Wyclif and the English sermon cycle.[62] In this vein, Augustine's discussion about how to read biblical prophecies intimates a distinction of particular relevance, that between categorematic and syncategorematic terms, or between terms that signify by themselves and those that have meaning only in relation to other terms in a sentence (such as *omnis*, *quilibet*, *si*, *non*, *pro*, etc.).[63] It is not unreasonable to infer that for Wyclif, whose Augustinianism was hardly unproblematic to begin with, the idea that there are parts of scripture which have no descriptive value whatsoever was unpalatable, even more so for its association with

Ockham, whose discussion of syncategorematic terms in *Summa Logicae* was widely known and referenced.[64] As Spade points out, many scholastics concerned themselves with the *syncategoremata*, but Ockham seems to have held more extreme views than most in affording such terms no signifying value at all.[65] For Ockham, then, there are terms that do not signify anything outside the human mind, that exist as mere formal elements of language. This idea not only denied the unity of language, thought, and reality central to Wyclif's theory of being but also introduced uncertainty into the biblical narrative itself, undermining the inherent truth and authority of scripture.[66] To the author of *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, such a view was tantamount to calling God a liar.[67] Accordingly, in defining syncategorematic terms, Wyclif instead turns to Henry of Ghent, whose theory of consignification held that the meaning of such terms was indefinite until "adjoined" to categorematic parts of speech in the same sentence.[68] His position on syncategorematic terms in *De Logica* anticipates his later view that there are no accidents in biblical language; terms stand for common properties, the reality of which inhere in, and are predicated of, each and every particular.

As I have emphasized in an earlier chapter and to a lesser extent here, such a perspective did not lead Wyclif to assign any special priority to the textual body of scripture itself, as might be expected. Instead, signs, like the bread of the altar, are merely mirrors of a "genus in reality" [*generis ex parte rei*], or a universal, a formulation which locates metaphysical truth most fully beyond "external particulars" and outward forms, including even language itself.[69] The same view informs Wyclif's austere comments on the form of words—the "folia et cortext verborum"—in *De Veritate*.[70] Yet it is the Augustinian recognition that even the accidents of language have a certain

authority which so often informs the cycle's exposition, especially in the case of Christ's

parables. One particularly significant commentary occurs in a Commune Sanctorum

sermon on Matthew 13, adopting verse 44—*simile est regnum caelorum thesauro*—from

the parable of the field and the treasure—as its text. The sermon explains that the "reume

of heuene" is "Godus word, oure lord Iesu Crist" (2:167/15-16). The field, it continues,

is to be understood as "þe feiþ of holy wryt, and Godus word is hyd euerywhere in þis

feeld"; this is true because "euery part of holy writ telluþ Godus word, þe olde lawe in

fygure, the þe gospel expressely" (2:167/16-19).[71] Having clarified the meaning of the

kingdom of heaven and the field, the sermon might then be expected to specify the sense

of "thesauro," or treasure, yet it never directly answers this question, merely assuming

that such treasure can be found when one "takuþ þe feiþ of Godus Sone of heuene, þat is

ȝet hid" (2:167-168/19-20). The force of the verb *hiden* becomes more specific a few

sentences later. Explaining that "He huyduþ þis tresor fowndon in þis feeld þat kepuþ

hooly wryt in forme of here wordus, and kepuþ þe wyt of it in his soule," the sermon

cautions that "no man schule presume to amende holy wryt, but kepe it in þe forme þat

God hymself haþ ȝouen it" (2:168/23-27).[72] One reading of these lines might be that the

field is scripture, which hides its treasures in the form of words, form thus acquiring

hermeneutic prominence. The idea that "euery part" of scripture signifies "Godus word,"

that it is "everywhere" in holy writ, very subtly adapts the lexicon of theological realism

even as it locates meaning in linguistic form itself, thereby departing from Wyclif's view

that signs have no constitutive authority.[73] The Wycliffite treatment of this parable, then,

suggests that what is manifest in the body of the text itself, its literal level, is just as

significant as any underlying or hidden "wyt," since it is through the "studye" of such words and signs that truth is eventually made known (2:168/ 31).

Although the above material is highly selective, it is enough to suggest that form became a site in Wycliffite discourse for negotiating questions not only about the theology of the eucharist but also about the textuality of the bible, the material qualities of the written word, and the constitutive power of language itself. With this in mind, we can now return to the Ferial sermon on John 18 and 19 for Good Friday, where the discussion revolves around the "forme" in which Christ suffered the passion. The intention of the sermon, declared in the very first line, is to make us "se" this suffering, and it does so not by employing the visual and iconographic *topoi* of late medieval passion narratives but quite literally by grafting large swaths of almost uninterrupted gospel text from both chapters of John into the sermon itself.[74] We see Christ's suffering first of all on the page itself, in the form of words. The gospel of John—scripture itself— exists not solely as a static and supernal moral law but also as a text in constant dialectical tension with different communities of readers: "clerkis" who navigate its different "capitilis," (l. 5); "cristen men" who rightly interpret Jesus' command that Peter sheath his sword in 18:11 (l. 32); "heretikis" who "taken amys Goddis wordis" in the same verse (ll. 46-47); "þe pope and his cardenals" who disregard Jesus' words to Pilate that true lordship derives solely from God (l. 242, l. 205); "bischops" and "seculer iugis" whose actions "today" imitate the "wordis" of the chief priest in verse 19:15 who declares that "'We han no kyng but þe emperour'" (ll. 255-258; ll. 252-253); "freris" who, to justify their own begging, "gabben falsly" about the worthlessness of Christ's clothes, ignoring the knights who cast lots for his coat in verse 19:24 (l. 277); "auerous

men" who fail to heed the words that Christ speaks on the cross itself (l. 337); and, finally, the sermon's contemporary audience, who are enjoined to study "Þis passioun of Ion…wel wiþ oþere þre," as if the sermon were nothing more than a diaphanous and ephemeral supplement to the concrete material reality of the text itself (l. 388). While not completely departing from the pure biblicism of Wyclif, for whom the highest grade of scripture is the supernal and disembodied Book of Life, this sermon nevertheless refers us back to the medium of inscription, insisting that we acknowledge the fundamental historicity of all biblical writing, the authority of which is inescapably conditioned by the form of its words.[75]

IV

Wyclif's theological realism, as it were, is the backdrop for a complex and often conflicted set of ideas concerning the medium of gospel preaching, the nature of form, and the different modes of predication. But the imperative to discern in the semantic field of scripture an unwritten law that can be directly conveyed in preaching also necessitates a confrontation with two communities who are closely linked in Wycliffite thought with control over the *written* word: the mendicant friars and the Jews.[76] The two groups are frequently and deliberately conflated throughout the cycle: the sermons represent the religious orders as the modern day equivalents of Christ's biblical enemies, the "scribes and pharisees" familiar from Matthew 5:20 and elsewhere.[77] Taking that book and verse for its lection, a sermon for the sixth Sunday after Trinity lays out the relevant identifications: "We may vndirstonde by scribes and pharisees men of the fendys

chirche as we duden byfore, so þat scribes ben clepud seculer prelates, and pharisees ben clepud þes newe religious" (1:244/12-15). Among the latter, it is "þese frerys þat laste comen in" which most absorb the cycle's attention (2:366/3-4).

Wyclif's relationship with the English friars, though initially untroubled, became profoundly antagonistic with the 1381 publication of his *confessio*, in which he first broaches his opinions on transubstantiation and the eucharist.[78] By this point, as Gwynn has shown, none of the communities of friars then actively preaching and teaching in England, least of all the Austin Friars, was in a position to accommodate Wyclif's increasingly radical views concerning the eucharist.[79] Whether the bitter anti-mendicant orientation of Wyclif's post 1381 writing reflects the realization that his erstwhile allies could no longer support him on doctrinal grounds, or merely that the political sympathies of the friars as a whole had changed, his hatred of them became a preoccupation, even an obsession, attitudes the compilers of the English sermons share.[80] Throughout the cycle, the subject inspires ever more polemical assumptions about the moral application of biblical teachings. No sooner, for instance, does the sermon on John 16 attempt to distill the "vndurstondyng" or "wyt" of the gospel text than it condemns "worldy lordschipe" and "religiows þat ben today drawen more to þer abyte and to þer stinkynge ordenaunce than Crist" (1:451/78, 87; 452/104, 107-108). The most vitriolic comments are reserved, however, for the friars; like Pharisees who "casten to desseyue Crist by wordis of ypocrisye," they knowingly misuse language and misconstrue scripture (1:313/1-2). They speak "fagyng wordys, as ypocrytes don" (1:313/4). They concern themselves not with underlying and universal truths but rather with the deceptive surface of things: with accidents rather than substance, with indiscreet "habyts" rather than "meedful werkys,"

and with empty words rather than God's law (1:314/40, 41). A Wycliffite Feria sermon for the second week of Lent comments on Matthew 23:5 that just as the scribes and Pharisees of Christ's day "*alargen þer philateries and maken hem gret hemmys*," so "þes new ordris" falsely enhance their own spiritual authority "wiþ þer habitis" (3:89/38, 42-43). In fact, the friars "don wrse nou, for in stede of philateries men maken greet uolyms of newe lawis þat ben not Goddis comaundementis" (3:89/43-45). The cycle's anti-mendicant satire, and specifically that directed at the friars, thus revolves around an image of Old Testament Hebraism—of phylacteries and ancient "scrowis writen wiþ Goddis heestis"—in which "scripture" possesses an unmistakable and problematic material presence (3:89/39-40).[81] Phylacteries are a potent thematization of this problem, suggesting both the physical enclosure or concealment of biblical writing (here distantly recapitulated in the image of friars' habits, which similarly envelop and obscure) that the Lollards found so objectionable, and the sanctification of the written word itself.

The Wycliffite treatment of charity follows closely from this matrix of concerns. Lacking charity, monks, canons, and friars can only embrace sin, and it is in the cycle's engagement with the orders that it develops a restrictive reading of those biblical texts most centrally concerned with this highest of theological virtues. A Sunday epistle sermon for Quinquagesima on *caritas* in 1 Corinthians 13 approaches the problem by introducing the second part of Paul's epistle as "sixtene condiciones by whiche men mown knowe þis loue [charity]" (1:540/38-39). Particularly arresting here is the word "condiciones" for the way it imputes to the text all the unambiguous rigidity and interpretive transparency of a legal document (the term is repeated throughout, yet appears nowhere in the Vulgate, and in the sense employed here seems to be a

specifically Wycliffite usage).[82] The prescriptive force of the word "condiciones"

becomes even more pronounced as the sermon proceeds to condemn the orders because

they "leuon Godis lawe and worchen by here fynede fyndyngis" (1:541/52-53). Listing

all the different ways in which the orders "faylen" to uphold charity as defined by Paul,

the sermon also, in the same gesture, pushes aside a long history of speculation on the

hermeneutic centrality of *caritas*, the diversity of scriptural meaning, and the validity of

context as an interpretive guide (l.93). Augustine, for instance, was keenly attuned to the

myriad lexical and linguistic ambiguities that inevitably confront the reader of sacred

texts.[83] But unlike Augustine, the Wycliffite sermon on 1 Corinthians 13 instead

envisages scripture as a static moral code, the claims and precepts of which express "the

wille of God" and must therefore be "wel kept" (1:542/88, 90). Much as Wyclif himself

had in his many references to scripture as the *lex dei* or *lex christi* or *doctrina christi* the

English sermons theorize the gospel as God's law, compared to which "newe mennys

lawes" such as decretals and decrees lack all legitimacy (2:58/116); God's law "telluþ

alle trewþe þat is nedful to men" (2:59/123-124).[84] By the same logic, as a Vigil of the

Assumption sermon on Luke 11:27-8 shows, the sermons reject "lettris of fraternyte,"

which have no standing in comparison to God's law (2:286/44). In a telling move, the

sermon does not actually discuss the contents of such writings or dispute the friars' own

reading of the Bible, instead simply asserting that it is "ynow to here his word and to

kepe it, for to come to blisse of heuene wiþouton any suche lettres" (2:287/48-49).[85] The

sermon grounds its anti-mendicant stance, then, not in the biblical text itself but rather in

God's law as it subsists in the "wyt" of the believer's "soule" and rules "his li3f þerby,"

thus shifting the *locus* of hermeneutics to more subjective grounds (2:285-6/19-20).

There is virtually no room made here for biblical reading and interpretation, for searching out meaning in an ambiguous text; nor is there much effort to foreground scripture as an object of historical and philological knowledge. To "here" God's word is to "kepe" God's word (ll.20-21). If there is a moment of "hermeneutic abdication" in the cycle, to recall Ghosh's comment, this is it.[86]

The attitude that scripture need not be interpreted so much as lived is also behind one of the more disquieting implications of the sermon on 1 Corinthians 13, discussed above. The last section of the text imagines what it would mean for England if Paul's epistle were "fully executed"—if, to reference a familiar Wycliffite antinomy, God's law were to supplant man's law in the governance of the kingdom: "And þenne my3te the kyng wyte how he schulde putte ow3t þese foure [sects], and ouer þis he my3te more dispende by monye hundret þowsynd mark, and þe rewme were more plenteuous to brynge forþ men to þe blisse of heuene" (1:545/157-160). In its direct appeal to the king to rid England of the orders, this sermon evokes an earlier expulsion, one no less shaped by the intersection of spiritual and material motives: the expulsion of the Jews by Edward I in 1290. The analogy is far from exact, of course: the orders cannot be said to occupy the same deeply ambivalent space in the English religious imaginary that the Jews did for much of the European Middle Ages (and even more so after 1290).[87] As a dissident religious community, moreover, it is the Wycliffites themselves who more closely resemble the Jews of pre-expulsion England. But in imagining how the realm might "dispende monye hundred þowsynde mark more þen it dispenduþ now, 3if alle þese sectis weron auoydude," the sermon reprises arguments that were made a hundred years earlier in the context of the king's negotiations with commons over the Jewish question,

and the growing recognition on the part of the crown that expulsion would be a useful expedient in coping with the realm's mounting debts (1:545/149-150).[88]

The wealth of the orders is a recurrent grievance in the sermons, one inevitably bound up with the cycle's gloss on Christian charity and its relationship to biblical interpretation. Much of this discussion coalesces around how Wycliffites read Matthew. A sermon on Matthew 21:1-9 for the first Sunday in Advent insists, for instance, that the orders adhere to the "rewle of charyte, þei schulden sille þer hy3e howses and alle þe mebles þat þei han, and helpe þer breþren in neede" (I:329/74-76). Alongside this emphasis there is a more concerted attempt elsewhere in the cycle to identify boundaries between "Cristes owne ordre" and "any new ordre fownden of synful men" (1:353/67-68). If the orders were legitimate, according to the Octave of Epiphany sermon on Matthew 3:13-17, then Christ had necessarily "fayled in power, in wit or in wille," a belief that cannot be accommodated to the soteriological implications of the lection (1:353/69). The suggestion, then, is that the orders have misinterpreted this most significant of scriptural texts for what it says about the spiritual disciplines of poverty and chastity: "Men may vndyrstandan amys þis obedience to Crist, and trowen þat hit stondeþ in doyyng of eche þing þat þi priyuat priour byddeþ þe do," as opposed to those who are concerned solely to "holde Godes comaundementis" (1:353/76-78, 1:354/95). One's obedience should be to Christ, who is the most perfect abbot of all.

Such comments also seem intended to implicate the Jews as well, who are similarly inclined towards misinterpretation, especially regarding Christ's divine nature. When, for instance, the scribes and Pharisees witness Christ's miraculous casting out of the demon in Luke 11:14, they "interpretiden hit amys" as evidence of his demonic

power. The specific way in which the scribes and Pharisees misread Christ's miracles

have much to do, of course, with the fact that both groups concerned themselves with the

observance of the law, the former with the legal and ethical codes collected into the

Pentateuch, the latter with the particularities of Jewish ceremonial practice. Matthew 23

reserves some of its most fervent denunciations for the latter, who exemplify the problem

of hermeneutic literalism. Verse 23, for instance, reads: *Vae vobis, scribae et Pharisaei,*

hypocritae quia decimatis mentam et anethum et cyminum et reliquistis quae graviora

sunt legis iudicium et misericordiam et fidem. John 8 was another *locus classicus* of

Christian irritation with the Jews' refusal to accept a more spiritual interpretation of the

Mosaic law. A Wycliffite sermon for Passion Sunday on verses 46-59 of that gospel text,

discussing Jewish skepticism regarding Christ's promise that "'*whoeuere kepuþ my word*

schal neuere dy3e,'" laments "þe folye of þese Iewes, for þei kouden not knowe dyuersite

of þese wordes" (1:420/55-56, 58-59). It goes on to explicate verse 58, accusing Jews of

misconstruing what Christ meant when he claimed to be "byfore" Abraham, commenting

that in this passage the word betokens "forþerhede of beynge, and not forþerhede of

tyme" (1:422/106-107). The Jews are especially blameworthy, the sermon implies,

because God set down his law in a way that elicits precisely the spiritual understanding

they deny: "And blessud be þe Hooly Goost þat sette syche wordis in his lawe, that alle

men here in erthe kan vnnethe vndirstande hem" (ll. 110-112). True ministers of the

church, a sermon on 2 Corinthians 3:4-9 for the twelfth Sunday after Trinity later argues,

"wirchen now *not bi lettere, but bi spiry3t* þat God 3yueþ," the latter being superior

because it is "preentide" in the heart rather than set down in mere books, which are

nothing more than the amalgam of ink and parchment (1:652/37-38, 82).

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The sermon on 2 Corinthians 3:4-9 very specifically imputes "Jewish" qualities to the friars.[89] Yet it is Matthew 23 that is the most crucial biblical text here for differentiating Jewish literalism and carnality from the more inward intellection of those who truly "vndirstande" Christ's words, and for illustrating how the sermons leverage their scriptural agenda against competing communities of interpretation in the period. The most forceful and extensive effort in this direction is an exposition of Matthew 23 known as *Vae Octuplex*, which, like many other sermons in the cycle, locates its anti-fraternal arguments in that gospel's condemnation of scribes and Pharisees.[90] The assumption of the sermon, put forth with little theological or hermeneutic exertion, is that verses 13-33 "tellon oponly of makyng of freerys" (2:368/51-52). Like the Jews of Christ's day, the friars concern themselves with the wrong register, with "sensible signes þe whiche þei putton to bytoknen her holynesse" rather than inward virtue itself (2:373/197-198); with bread rather than the "vertew of Cristus wordis" (2:375/275); with glosses rather than "the byleue that God hymself haþ ordeynot" (2:375/258). We can approach these themes by looking more closely at the exegetical strategies of the sermon itself. One significant aspect of *Vae Octuplex*, often neglected in criticism, is the rhetorical texture of the biblical material it appropriates. Matthew 23:13-33 recounts Christ's scathing refutation of the scribes and Pharisees, whose hypocrisy rests in their inflexibly literal interpretation of Jewish law, a charge announced in verse 13: *Vae autem vobis scribae et Pharisaei hypocritae quia clauditis regnum caelorum ante homines vos enim non intratis nec introeuntes sinitis intrare*. Unlike the elusive and paradoxical style of the parables, Christ's words in this section of Matthew directly address the internal audience of the gospel narrative. He is present throughout verses 13-33 not as the

sometimes diffident teacher he is elsewhere in scripture but rather as a forceful critic of Jewish tradition whose message initiates a series of crucial distinctions between him and his adversaries. These distinctions are elaborated through the repetition of the phrase "vae vobis" throughout verses 13-33. The second person plural form is especially important here, as it both highlights Christ's alienation from the synagogues—the Wycliffite sermon refers to the "synagoge of Sathanas" and the "feendys synagoge"— and elides political and religious boundaries among the different factions of Judaism (2:367/294, 319).

Christ's mode of address is all the more vivid in the sermon's vernacularization of this episode, where there is an assumed identification between the "vobis" which Christ uses to address the Pharisees and the "ȝow" which the sermon uses to address its vernacular audience. Wycliffites would have been the first to point out that such an identification between Christ and preacher is problematic on theological grounds; although Wyclif himself maintained that the holy spirit could be present in preaching, this was not an invitation to ignore or supplant the preaching Christ himself had actually performed, as recorded in the gospels. But while Wycliffite texts such as the *A Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* attacked religious drama for representing miracles that God had already employed during Christ's historical life, *Vae Octuplex* depends on a similar conceit, staging Christ's voice as if to suggest that revelation continues even to the present day.[91] The sermon thus shows the transgressive and paradoxical way in which gospel preaching could sanction analogies between Christ and his authoritative interpreters. In doing so, *Vae Octuplex* effaces (or aspires to efface) the contingency and historical particularity of Wycliffism itself, intertwining the imperatives of preaching and

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vernacular biblical translation in ways which make its own deeply polemical intervention in late medieval culture seem normative, a projection of Christ's own voice.[92]

But if *Vae Octuplex* overlays a biblical past with an English present, it does so with very different ends in mind than other medieval texts similarly concerned with the spiritual and historical status of Judaism. V. A. Kolve, noting the tendency in cycle plays to anglicize the setting of sacred history, argued that the anachronistic treatment of the gospel in late medieval dramatic literature was the result of Christianity's cultural and historical *agon* with Jewish tradition: by interspersing references to local English landmarks in the representation of Christ's life, "the drama, in common with other medieval art forms, presents the religion of Christ shorn of its specifically Jewish national character."[93] *Vae Octuplex* makes no similar pretense; indeed, even as it reprises Christianity's larger historical aspiration to emancipate itself from Judaism—refracted though such an aspiration might be through the more immediate concern of the friars— the sermon bespeaks an awareness that "oold byleue" is also the most authoritative, and that the law as originally ordained by God has been "mysschapon" by novel interpretations (2:376/302; 375/254). The "pure" apostolic Christianity to which this Wycliffite text aspires begins to look very much like Judaism the more it appeals to "þe byleue þat God hymself haþ ordeynot," in contrast to friars who would cast themselves as "newe seyntus and newe doctoures" (2:375/264). So just as *Vae Octuplex* maligns friars by equating them with Christ's persecutors, it also positions Wycliffism as the restoration of a religious antiquity grounded in God's law. Strikingly, the closing passages of the sermon make no reference to Christ at all, setting aside doctrinal questions such as "wheþer þow schalt be saued or dampnyd" and once again emphasizing the need to live

according to the "trewþus" which God has "ordeynot" (2:378/346-347, 356). [94] It is

precisely this undifferentiated and monotheistic "oold byleue" which the friars attempt to

"reverse" by "takyng of straunge trewþ as byleue of al þe churche" (2:376/304-305).

Thus, in one sense, Judaism is precisely the problem, for it establishes a template

for the mistaken readings of the friars. At the same time, Wycliffism authenticates itself

by claiming lineage in "oold byleue," an ambiguous category which encompasses the

Christian dispensation as much as an antecedent textual culture of old testament books.

The intense difficulties of this position are signaled at the close of *Vae Octuplex*, when

the sermon abruptly forecloses on the very inquiries which its straddling of old and new

would seem to invite—for instance, how one might know, given such a conflicted

hermeneutic, "wheþer þow schalt be saued or dampnyd" (2:378/346-347). Instead of

entertaining such questions, it urges that "wee schuldon holden vs in hise bowndis and

trowe trewþus þat he haþ ordeynot, and taw3t cristene men to trowe, and put vs not in

straunge perelus þat we han no nede to treete" (ll. 355-357). The conclusion of *Vae*

Octuplex is an oblique recognition, perhaps, that the effort to initiate audiences into a new

understanding of sacred text depends on appropriating the beliefs of those who stand

outside the discursive economy of gospel preaching altogether; and in this sense, the

evangelical task of the cycle encounters its limit in the figure of the Jew. Whereas other

sermons in the cycle express confidence that the spiritually deaf can be made to hear

again through the agency of gospel preaching, just as Christ himself gave the deaf man in

Mark 7 "vertew to hery [hear] God ri3tly," *Vae Octuplex*, and the scriptural text on which

it is based, instead describe Jews as blind (1:270/50-51; 2:368/73, 371/147). [95] So, too,

does the Passion Sunday sermon discussed earlier, where Jews are characterized as

"blynde" in the sense that they obdurately refuse to recognize Exodus 3:14 in John 8:58

(1:421/89). Preaching has no effect on them; they cannot be made to hear God "ri3tly,"

because they are not deaf in the first place; their spiritual deficits are of a more profound

nature. In this sense, Jews function as the emblem of an interpretive resistance that

cannot be overcome, and thus of preaching's limits; they can never be fully assimilated to

the cultural project, which is the cycle's project, of rendering scripture hermeneutically

transparent, a text whose meaning is so perfectly open and pellucid that it ceases to

signify as a text. If it is preaching that purges "scripture" from ink and parchment, that

translates sensible signs into sacred speech, the Jews in this and other sermons are

reminders of the Bible's stubborn textuality, and of the unique contingencies of a

hermeneutics that looked to the written word even as it sought to escape its constraints.

Notes

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[1]*English Wycliffite Sermons,* ed. A. Hudson and P. Gradon, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1983-1996), 1:481/5-6. Hereafter *EWS* and cited parenthetically by volume, page, and line number. Material from the lection is italicized following the conventions of the cycle's editors. Throughout the chapter, I identify each sermon by its liturgical occasion and its lection, rather than by its number in the cycle.

[2] *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, with the Apocryphal Books, in the Earliest English Versions, made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and his Followers*, 4 vols., ed. J. Forshall and F. Madden (Oxford, 1850), 1:57. Latin biblical quotations are from the *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, ed. B. Fischer et al., 3rd ed. (Stuttgart, 1984).

[3] To what extent Wycliffite preachers made use of the long sermon cycle in their preaching is impossible to document. Nor is it known whether the cycle was prepared for oral delivery, for reading, or as a compilation capable of supporting both practices simultaneously. There is the possibility, too, that the sermons were models meant to supplement and aid the production of other sermons. It seems plausible, in any case, that the cycle was designed to function primarily as a textual resource, a body of continuous exposition that could enable an array of interpretive practices, not just preaching. *EWS,* 5:34. For instance, the lection of each sermon is underlined in the manuscripts, visually distinguishing translated scripture from surrounding commentary and paraphrase. Structural features such as these presuppose a literate audience and a common

interest in the recovery of original sources; they foreground critical practices and scholarly priorities that are particular to the sermons' use as written documents. Thus, although the cycle provides access to material and models relevant to preaching, it is not unlikely that the sermons—either individually or as a complete set—were read and studied in Wycliffite pedagogical circles, where the particular patterns of reference and exposition evident throughout the cycle would have aided exegetical practices. *EWS*, 4:35-36. For discussion of the numbering system and headings, see *EWS*, 3:xxvii-xxxv, as well as 4:34-36. The translations are in practice usually quite literal, which, as Deanesly observes, would present difficulties if the sermons were recited from the pulpit. M. Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible and Other Medieval Biblical Versions* (Cambridge, 1920), p. 317. Owst notes that sermons were frequently adapted into tracts and tracts into sermons, in G. R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England* (Cambridge,1926), p. 284. According to Kantik Ghosh, "there is no evidence that any part of the cycle was allowed to circulate before the whole was complete," although it is not clear on what basis this assertion is made. Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 112.

[4] Hudson and Gradon date the cycle as a whole to the late 1380s or 1390s, but cite evidence suggesting that a date as specific as 1389-90 might be justified. *EWS*, 5:19-20. On conventions of biblical translation in the cycle, see *EWS*, 3: lxix-xcviii. Hudson argues that "the translation from the biblical lection was made at the same time as the sermon was written, straight from the Vulgate, and to suit the convenience of the preacher" (xcvi). Given the description in the Wycliffite Bible Prologue of the different stages and forms of scholarly expertise required to complete the translation, it seems logical to infer that responsibility for compiling the sermons was similarly shared among many people, perhaps at a center dedicated specifically to such work. *EWS*, 1:195-202.

[5] Evidence also seems to rule out the possibility that a version of the Wycliffite Bible was itself the source of translated scripture in the sermons. Knapp concludes in her study of the sermons' prose style that the early and late versions of the translation are "overwhelmingly closer to each other in diction" than either of them is to the cycle. P. Knapp, *The Style of John Wyclif's English Sermons* (Mouton, 1977). p. 37. Nevertheless, this finding does not entirely preclude the possibility that the Wycliffite Bible was used as a reference, even if Hudson is right that "the sermon writer or writers made their own translations as they went along." *EWS*, 3: lxx.

[6] That the cycle represents a departure from the mentality of the Wycliffite Bible translation is evident in the fact that the boundaries between scriptural and extra-scriptural writing would have been difficult to discern for audiences whose experience of the sermons was exclusively through hearing them preached. Although the manuscripts identify biblical words and phrases by underlining them, thereby calling attention to the authority of scripture, distinctions between gospel narrative and commentary or paraphrase may well have been elided in the act of preaching, despite the effort in much Wycliffite hermeneutic theory to highlight the difference in status between source and supplement. On underlining in the manuscripts, see *EWS*, 1:135. It would have taken a preacher of unusual ingenuity to signal the different layers of commentary and paraphrase at work in passages such as this one, from a Wycliffite sermon on John 16:5-15 for the fourth Sunday after Easter:

> '3et', seiþ Crist, 'I haue monye þingus to sey to 3ow, but 3e may not beron hem
> now; but þe Spiri3t of trewþe schal comme to 3ow and teche 3ow alle trewþe,
> and make 3ow stronge to bere trewþe to suffryng of deþ þerfore.' Þis goode
> maister schal here bygynne for to teche þe book of li3f, and he schal neuere
> eende to teche tyl þat hise disciples comen to heuene, and þere schal þei clerly
> knowe eche trewþe þat men can telle. '*He schal not speke of hymself* wiþowten

any cause byfore, *but alle þingus þat he schal here* of þe Fadur and of þe Sone *schal he speken* and tell 3ow, and 3e schal aftur teche his chirche; *and þingus þat herafter ben to comene schal þis Gost telle 3ow'*. For þe apostles knewon here al þat now is neede to knowe, for in þis mesure ladde God hem, and meuede hem to do his dedis. He chargede hem not wiþ ydel wyt þat herfore þei schulde be prowde, but al þat nedide hem to konnen, þei cowden þat redily. '*Þis Goost schal clarifye me, for he schal taken of myn and schewe 3ow* þe trewþe þat I am, and þat I haue.' And so, in knowing of þis trewþe, þe apostles schullen wel knowe Crist, how by his godheede he is euene wiþ his Fadur, and anemptis his manheede he is euene in kynde wiþ his breþren, but in grace of onhede he passeþ alle oþre men þat may be, siþ noo man may be God but he and welle of grace as he is (1:450/44-64).

[7] G. R. Evans calls attention to "the exegetical nature of preaching" in the Middle Ages. Evans, *The Language and Logic of the Bible: The Road to the Reformation* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 144.

[8] H. W. Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching* (J. B. Ford & Company, 1872), p. 7.

[9] On Paul's preaching, see H. O. Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church, Vol. I: The Biblical Period* (Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 174-80, 180-220, 239-50. Paul's sermon to the philosophers of Athens in Acts 17:22, for instance, suggests how remote the missionary and evangelical tradition of preaching could be from the gospel preaching practiced by the Wycliffites, for in this sermon, Old notes, "[n]o text of Scripture is given or expounded" (176). Disputes over the proper scope of preaching also, of course, implicated the friars, whom Wycliffites accused of using "fablis" and "feined myraclys" in their sermons. See, for instance, *Jack Upland*, in *Jack Upland, Friar Daw's Reply and Upland's Rejoinder*, ed. P. L. Heyworth (Oxford, 1968), p. 64, l. 233. The Middle English translation of the Wycliffite text known as the *Rosarium Theologie*, a redaction of the longer Latin alphabetical compendium for preachers known as the *Floretum*, includes an entry on "fabulacion," which lays out the Lollard objection to sermon exempla. Citing Wyclif's arguments in *De Mandatis* ("Hec Doctor Euangelicus super 3. mandato"), it explains that those preachers who "telleþ talez or fablez in holi cherchis doþ 3. yuelez. First 'þei infectiþ þamself & þe puple and leseþ þe holy day & defouleþ þe place. Þe 2., þei waste and turneþ vp þe lawe of God & mandementis of holy chirche. Þe 3., in scornyng þe Lorde of þe holy day þai tresour to þamself & to þe puple ire of God into þe day of dome.'" *The Middle English Translation of the Rosarium Theologie,* ed. C. von Nolcken (Carl Winter, 1979), pp. 74-75. For Mirk and exempla, see J. Ford, *John Mirk's Festial: Orthodoxy, Lollardy, and the Common People in Fourteenth-Century England* (D. S. Brewer, 2006), p. 9.

[10] Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, p. 4. On *inventio* and *enarratio*, see R. Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 2, and, in the context of preaching, p. 60.

[11] Wyclif, *Sermones*, 4 vols., ed. J. Loserth (Wyclif Society, 1886-1889), 1:vii (citing *Sermones* 2.22.159).

[12] "Habet autem ut oboedienter audiamus, quantacumque granditate dictionis maius pondus uita dicentis." Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, IV. xxvii, CCSL: XXXII (Brepols, 1962), p. 163.

[13] *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, 3 vols., ed. Rudolph Buddensieg (Wyclif Society, 1905-1907). Hereafter *De Veritate*. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. Citations are by volume, chapter, and page number. *De Veritate* I.iii.42: "…[D]ebemus ergo intelligendo scripturam sacram sensum puerilem abicere ac sensum, quem deus docet, accipere […]."

[14] *Tractatus de Universalibus,* ed. Ivan J. Mueller (Oxford, 1985). Hereafter *De Universalibus*. All English citations of *De Universalibus* are from A. Kenny's edition, *On Universals*, trans. Kenny (Oxford, 1985), except where I have provided the Latin in the endnote, in which case the English translation appearing in the body of the chapter is my own. All Latin citations are keyed to chapter and page number of the Mueller edition. On the date of this text, see chapter one, note 23. *De Universalibus* 9:84.309-319: "There is a naturally inborn knowledge of the transcendent, and a knowledge of the most general which immediately follows, given a small amount of light for research, as is clear in the treatise on the first objects of knowledge [earlier in the *Summa de Ente*]. But to descend through all the intermediate species to the ultimate particular of the ultimate species would be an intolerable labor for us. So during the time of our earthly pilgrimage we should devote our energy to obtaining the virtues; in our homeland, in the book of life, we will see the number and the accidents of all the things which today are unknown to us." Also relevant with respect to the ideas introduced here is J. A. Robson, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools: The Relation of the "Summa de Ente" to Scholastic Debates at Oxford in the Later Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 145-147.

[15] Earlier in this study, I challenged this teleology, maintaining that Wyclif's idea of scripture in fact sequesters biblical writing from the most penetrating forms of critical and historical hermeneutics, providing little basis for translation to emerge as an authoritative discursive practice (whether world-for-word or sense-for-sense) and offering few guidelines for his followers as they sought to consolidate a model of fluent rendering.

[16] M. Wilks, "Wyclif and the Non-Wycliffite Bible," reprinted in *Wyclif: Political Ideas and Practice* (Oxbow, 2000), pp. 96-97.

[17] P. Heath, *Church and Realm, 1272-1461: Conflict and Collaboration in an Age of Crises* (Fontana, 1988), p. 179.

[18] The accusation that Wycliffite preachers had fomented the uprising of 1381 is made by Walsingham, although their absence from trial records and other documents suggests that many such preachers, if they existed, escaped prosecution. Lambert notes that Lutterworth, where Wyclif retreated in the wake of the Peasants' Revolt and the Blackfriars Council, would have made a convenient center for preaching campaigns yet "produced no single Lollard in all the record of heresy trials." M. Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, 3rd ed. (Blackwell, 2002), p. 264. See, as well, G. Harriss, *Shaping the Nation: England 1360-1461* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 229-234. The poor priests myth comes from H. L. Cannon, "The Poor Priests: A Study in the Rise of English Lollardy," in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1899* 1 (1900): 451-482. For comments which draw sympathetically from Cannon, see S. Lahey, *John Wyclif* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 165-168.

[19] John Ball's execution is recounted in *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*, ed. B. Dobson (MacMillan, 1970), p. 314.

[20] *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, ed. D. Wilkins (London, 1737), 3:314-319. Translated in Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 8 vols., ed. G. Townsend (Seeley, Burnside, and

Seeley, 1843), 3:242-248 (243-245 for the provisions mentioned here). The first constitution in particular is concerned with the transitory nature of preachers and preaching, especially in its attempt to map and control their whereabouts. No person is to preach in English, it stipulates, unless he "first present himself, and be examined by the ordinary of the place, where he preacheth." Being found fit to preach, he "shall be sent by the said ordinary to some one church or more, as shall be thought expedient by the said ordinary, according to the quality of the person." Even those who preach by special privilege are required to present proof of their status to "the parson or vicar of the place where they preach." The second constitution elaborates upon the provisions of the first. The third constitution restricts the content of preaching to moralistic treatments of the vices, a theme continued in the fourth, which admonishes preachers to avoid discussing anything "contrary to the wholesome doctrine of the church." On preaching and the *Constitutions*, see H. L. Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 163-188, as well as K. Kerby-Fulton's recent discussion of the preaching statutes in *Books Under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, 2006), pp. 397-398. On Hereford, see S. Forde, "Nicholas Hereford's Ascension Day sermon, 1382," in *Mediaeval Studies* 51 (1989): 205-241. Although disendowment was a particularly sensitive issue at this moment in England, not the least because Wyclif himself had become closely identified with the idea (though not always justifiably so), different parties had long traded heresy accusations regarding the merit of apostolic poverty and the question of whether Christ and the apostles had exercised ownership of property; indeed, as Forde points out, Hereford and his associates were soon excommunicated (205). For a provocative study that indirectly bears on preaching and the investigation of heresy in late medieval England, see A. Roach and P. Ormerod, "The medieval inquisition: scale free networks and the suppression of heresy," in *Physica A* 339 (2004): 645-652. Also important here is C. Kightly, "The Early Lollards: A Survey of Popular Lollard Activity in England, 1382-1428" (unpublished D. Phil thesis, York, 1975). For preaching and the spread of ideas, see S. Menache, *The Vox Dei: Communication in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1990).

[21] Wenzel argues that the English Wycliffite sermons mark a return in the period to a homiletic preaching style, associated particularly with Repyngdon, in which exposition follows the narrative order of the Gospel pericope. This "simple *postillatio* form" distinguishes them from "'real' sermons written in a form suited to actual preaching." Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections from Later Medieval England: Orthodox Preaching in the Age of Wyclif* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 358. For discussion of "ancient" and "modern" form, see Spencer, *English Preaching in Late Middle Ages*, pp. 228-268.

[22] Compare this passage to one in the Lollard tract known as *De oblacione iugus sacrificii*, where the gospel is described, in a closely related figure, as the breath of Christ. *The Works of a Lollard Preacher*, p. 179, l. 883 ff. On Wyclif and "sensible signs," see I. C. Levy, *John Wyclif: Scriptural Logic, Real Presence, and the Parameters of Orthodoxy* (Marquette, 2003), p. 65.

[23] Calvin, *The Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Romans*, trans. R. Mackenzie (Eerdmans,1960), p. 233 (cited in Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church,* 1: 182).

[24] *De Veritate*, I.xii.287: "Nec moveat, quod vocalis proposicio non sit scriptura, quia agregatum ex voce et sensu catholico inscripto in anima est scriptura, quia vox lineatur in aere et sensus inscribitur in mente."

[25] *Lollard Sermons*, ed. G. Cigman (Oxford, 1989), pp. 49-50, ll. 193-194. For dating and manuscript characteristics, see Jeremy Griffith's introductory discussion, p. xii. Whether the sermons in this volume make up a separate cycle remains an open question, although Hornbeck's review of the issue suggests we should be skeptical of the Lollardy of this collection as a whole. Hornbeck, "Lollard Sermons? Soteriology and Late-Medieval Dissent," in *Notes and Queries* 53.1 (2006): 26-30.

[26] Further examples of preaching as an instrument of spiritual conversion can be found in a sermon for the twelfth Sunday after Trinity on Mark 7:31-7, which treats the significance of the "def man and doump" healed by Christ: "And wiþ his spotle he towchyde his tong[e], whanne he 3af hym vertew to hery God ri3tly...for he made deef men to here and doumpe men to speke—for men deef in Godis lore he made to here what God spaak in hem, boþe in mawndementys and cownselis, and herby þei leernedon to speke." *EWS* 1:268/2; 270/49-58. See, as well, the Commune Sanctorum sermon on Matthew 24:42-7, *EWS* 2:119-120, and *Lollard Sermons*, ed. Cigman, p. 37, l. 234 ff.

[27] According to the table of the 294 sermons in *EWS*, the lection for this sermon is 1 Thes 4:1-7, although the last section of commentary treats verse 8; this numbering sequence is confirmed in the Vulgate.

[28] Wyclif's position on glossing is summarized in *De Veritate*, I.xii.290: "Sic enim posset sophista introducere quotlibet novas logicas extraneas a scriptura, per quas destrueretur decertacio doctrinalis theologi, quia non restaret nisi facta quacunque consequencia quantumlibet bona de materia et forma fingere, quod antecedens bene sonat, sed consequens male sonat." See, too, *De Apostasia*, ed. M. Dziewicki (Wyclif Society, 1883), p. 49, ll.17-25: "Item, si sine auctoritate scripture licet variare vocando sacramentum, quod ipsa vocat panem, non panem sed quantitatem, vel aliam vanitatem (et non est finis potencie sic glosantis), videtur quod totam scripturam sacram pari auctoritate poterit sic glosare et sic totam fidem scripture antiquam pervertere et novam inducere, ut totam historiam gestorum Christi negare ad literam et glossare ad suum oppositum: et sic de aliis que in biblia inseruntur." Both Lahey and Ghosh cite the latter passage in their discussions of glossing. Lahey, *John Wyclif*, p. 150; Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 1. To these rich discussions I would simply add: what is clear from both *De Veritate* and *De Apostasia* is that for Wyclif glossing is dangerous not only because it grafts novel terms and vocabularies into scripture, thereby concealing the Bible's true meaning, but also because it leads to more glossing, and thus to a radical alienation from the redemptive promise of the word. The objection here, then, is not solely that such techniques empower the individual commentator to make the text say what he wants it so say.

[29] The entry for "prechour" in the Middle English translation of the *Rosarium Theologie* provides an extensive inventory of biblical and patristic excerpts touching on edification. The entry begins by explicating the "condiciouns" to which a preacher of the word of God is beholden: he must "preche trewly"; he must preach "frely or kyndely and no3t for grace or cause of foule lucre, ne for mannes louyng, ne for enuy"; and he must "luffe like or conformely as he techiþ." C. von Nolcken, *The Middle English Translation of the Rosarium Theologie*, p. 85, ll. 15, 20-21; p. 86, l.14. The end of preaching, the entry goes on to say, is "edificacion," and no less an authoritative source than 1 Corinthians 14 is adduced to prove that "Al þingis be done to edificacion: ouþer if any man speke wiþ tonge after tuo, or mych þre, and by partiez, and one interprete or make interpretacion." *Ibid.*, p. 89, l. 29, 31-33. Preaching, then, is a space in which edification and interpretation closely intertwine. Incidentally, the remaining verses of 1 Corinthians 14 constitute

one of the most forceful biblical condemnations of women who speak—that is, preach—in church.

[30] For reference to these passage in John within the set of concerns I am tracing here, see R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray (Blackwell, 1971), pp. 327-328.

[31] *The Works of a Lollard Preacher: The Sermon "Omnis plantacio," the Tract "Fundamentum aliud nemo potest ponere," and the Tract "De oblacione iugis sacrificii*," ed. A. Hudson (Oxford, 2001), p. 177, ll. 796-801 (Titus Tract).

[32] It seems to me that this is a duality specific to Wycliffite representations of John the Baptist, whose preaching is the work of one who "baptisede only in watur," not "þe Hooly Goost." *Lollard Sermons*, ed. G. Cigman, p. 51, ll. 263-264.

[33] Knapp remarks briefly on this passage in *The Style of John Wyclif's English Sermons*, p. 27

[34] See, as well, *EWS*, 1:244-245 for a description of "rightwiseness" as inward conformity to divine law, in contradistinction to such human conventions as consistory and chapter law. Augustine's position on divine illumination is spelled out most fully in *De Trinitate* XV.12, but his comments in *De Magistro* are especially significant to the points I make here. Augustine wonders what it means to hear the word *caput* for the first time, distinguishing between the sound it makes as a sign and its meaning. He argues that meaning is perceived not by attending to a "vocal sound" [*uox ista sit tantummodo sonans*] but rather "by looking at the reality it signifies," which leads him to conclude that "we learn nothing from signs which we call words." Learning is a question of perceiving "the meaning hidden in the sound" rather than relying "upon the words of another." *De Magistro*, in *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 59, trans. Russell (Catholic University, 1968), pp. 47-49. Original Latin in Augustine, *De Magistro*, X.34-35, CCSL: XXIX (Brepols, 1970), pp. 193-194. For (illuminating) comments on Augustinian illumination theory as it relates to Wyclif, see Lahey, *John Wyclif*, p. 45. On *De Magistro* and divine illumination more broadly, see M. Colish, *The Mirror of Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge* (University of Nebraska, 1968), pp. 39-41.

[35] *MED* "sensible," *adj*., sense 4b.

[36] For instance, *Vae Octuplex*, *EWS,* 2:366-378, discussed below.

[37] *MED*, "sentence," *n*., sense 5a,which cites this passage in defining "sentence" as "An utterance, expression; a statement, an assertion; also, a prophecy [quot.: a1420]; ~ of, the act of expressing (sth.); derk ~, an obscure utterance, enigma."

[38] See, for instance, *De Veritate*, I.vi.111, discussed at length in previous chapters.

[39] This argument becomes more problematic when applied to Christ himself, but a Proprium Sanctorum sermon on Luke 11: 27-8 frankly acknowledges that the savior's words were heard in two manners: "fyrst in bodily by eron of body, and eke goostly by eron of sould." *EWS*, 2:285/11-13. The first, of course, is "luytel worþ," for even beasts and birds heard Christ's voice in this manner.

[40] *De Veritate*, I.vi.111: "Unde ista scriptura sensibilis in vocibus vel codicibus non est scriptura sacra nisi equivoce, sicut homo pictus vel ymaginatus dicitur homo propter similitudinem ad verum hominem." Wyclif later explains, however, that scripture in this more inferior sense is necessary if the faithful are to have a textual basis for refuting claims of special revelation from God. *De Veritate*, I.xv.380.

[41] One such discussion, though postdating the sermons, occurs in the *Testimony* of William Thorpe, edited in A. Hudson, *Two Wycliffite Texts* (Oxford, 1993), 53.968-55.1019. On the *Testimony* and sacramental theology more generally, see D. Aers, *Sanctifying Signs: Making Christian Tradition in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, 2004), pp. 83-98.

[42] *The Works of a Lollard Preacher*, ed. A. Hudson, p. 175, ll. 707-708 (Titus Tract). For evidence that this is the work of a preacher, see p. 162, ll. 220-221; on authorship, see introduction, lvii.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 175, ll. 711-712; p. 208, l. 2014; and see, in a similar vein, *EWS*, 2:23 and 2:342. This is the connotation of "form" Thorpe seems to have in mind when he initially admits during his interrogation by Arundel that "þe worschipful sacrament of þe auter is verri Cristis fleisch and his blood in forme of breed and wyne," only to suggest in the next moment that what he means by the word "forme" is not what the Archbishop means: "I axe of 3ou for charite þat 3e telle here pleynli how we schulen vndirstoonde þis tixte of þe apostil Poul [Philippians 2:6] þat seiþ þus "þis þing fele 3e in 3ou or vndirstonde þat is [in] Crist Iesu whiche whanne he was in fourme of God." Ser, wheþir Poul clepiþ not here "þe fourme of God" þe substaunce o[r] þe kynde of God?" Hudson, *The Works of a Lollard Preacher*, p. 53, ll. 968-981. For a similar emphasis on "form" as essential nature ("þe kynde of God"), see Wyclif, *Trialogus*, ed. J. Lechler (Oxford, 1869), IV.4.255-256 : "Sic oportet credere, quod iste panis virtute verborum sacramentalium fit consecratione sacerdotis primi veraciter corpus Christi, et non potius desinit esse panis, quam humanitas ex hoc, quod fit Deus, desinit esse homo; cum natura panis non ex hinc destruitur, sed in digniorem substantiam exaltatur." See, as well, *Vae Octuplex*: the "sacred hoost" is "Godus body in forme of breed, as trewe clerkis and lewede men han byleued siþ God wente to heuene." *EWS*, 2:375/259, 261-263.

[44] *The Works of a Lollard Preacher*, ed. Hudson, p. 312, n. 707.

[45] *De Veritate*, I.iii.44: "…sic theologus post doctrinam gramatice discit secundo gramaticam scripture, aptatam ad sensum relicta priori, tercio relictis signis sensibilibus attendit ad sensum autoris, quousque quarto viderit sine velamine librum vite."

[46] *De Veritate*, I.iii.52: "…de sacerdotibus Cristi utentibus verbis scripture in oracionibus, in sacramentorum ministracionibus, in predicacionibus et scripture exposicionibus." For similar reference to the "fourme of wordes" in the context of sacramental practice, see C. von Nolcken, *The Middle English Translation of the Rosarium Theologie*, p. 71, l. 23.

[47] *De Veritate*, I.iii.52.

[48] *De Veritate*, I.iii.52: "Nisi enim logica scripture quoad sensum verbalem, literalem tam in parte historiaca quam sapienciali foret recta, esset scriptura sacra nimis mala….Sed constat, quod, sicut autoritate sacre scripture debet cristianus loqui in quatuor casibus predictis eius sentenciam, ita eadem autoritate debet habere formam illam verborum, cum sit autoritas precipua et humilima a

magistro optimo ad hoc data." Here I have followed Levy's translation, from *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, ed. and trans. I. C. Levy (Kalamazoo, 2001), p. 69.

[49] *De Veritate*, I.iii.44: "Cum enim sensus scripture, quem spiritus sanctus indidit, sit eius fructus principaliter acquirendus, quis fidelis dubitat, quin postponenda sint folia et cortex verborum, nisi de quanto disponunt previe ad hunc sensum?"

[50] For instance, his disquisition in the *Trialogus* on the meaning of the term "est" in the words of consecration. Wyclif, *Trialogus*, ed. J. Lechler (Wyclif Society, 1869), IV.4.

[51] Levy discusses the grammar of this passage in J*ohn Wyclif: Scriptural Logic, Real Presence, and the Parameters of Orthodoxy* (Marquette, 2003), p. 87. Ricoeur explores the hermeneutic implications of this idea in his preface to Bultmann's *Jésus: Mythologie et Démythologisation* (Ed. du Seuil, 1968), reprinted in *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essay in Hermeneutics*, ed. D. Ihde (Continuum, 2004). The modern disciplines of historical and philological criticism, he maintains, have deflected attention away from "the primitive constitution of the Christian kerygma" and "the witness character of the Gospel." The kerygma, he continues,

> is not first of all the interpretation of text; it is the announcement of a person. In this sense, the word of God is, not the Bible, but Jesus Christ. But a problem arises continually from the fact that this kerygma is itself expressed in a witness, in the stories, and soon after in the texts that contain the very first confession of faith of the community. These texts conceal a first level of interpretation. We ourselves are no longer those witnesses who have seen. We are the hearers who listen to the witnesses: *fides ex auditu*. Hence, we can believe only by listening and by interpreting a text which is itself already an interpretation. In short, our relation, not only to the Old Testament, but also to the New Testament itself, is a hermeneutic relation (386).

[52] On predication as it relates to Wyclif, see P. V. Spade's introduction to *On Universals*, trans. A. Kenny (Oxford, 1985), p. xvii, xxxi ff.

[53] *Purgans errores circa universalia in communi,* in *De ente librorum duorum excerpta,* ed. M. Dziewicki (Wyclif Society, 1909). For chapter two, which discusses predication, see *Purgans errores circa universalia in communi,* chap. 2, in S. H. Thomson, "A 'Lost' Chapter of Wyclif's *Summa de ente*," *Speculum* 4 (1929): 339-346.

[54] *On Universals*, trans. Kenny, p. 1, .1.32.

[55] *On Universals*, trans. Kenny, p. 1, ll.33-36. For further discussion, see Spade's introduction to the same, especially remarks on p. xxxiii.

[56] *De Veritate*, I.iii.44 (cited above).

[57] Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 118.

[58] Appropriately enough, the phrase is invoked to describe Christ's speech in a Wycliffite exposition of Matthew 23 known as *Vae Octuplex*, *EWS* 2:373.

[59] D. Brown, "Jerome and the Vulgate," in *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 1: *The Ancient Period*, ed. A. Hauser and D. Watson (Eerdmans, 2003), p. 369.

[60] Origen, *Commentary on Matthew*, X.5, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 9, ed. A. Menzies (Hendrickson, 1995), p. 416.

[61] Augustine, *The City of God*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series I, vol. 2, ed. P. Schaff (Hendrickson, 1995), pp. 310-311 (italics added). Original Latin can be consulted in *De Civitate Dei*, XVI.ii, CCSL: XLVIII (Brepols, 1955), pp. 500-501.

[62] On the fourteenth century "Augustinian revival" in England, see W. Courtenay, *Schools and Scholars in Fourteenth-Century England* (Princeton, 1987), pp. 307-324.

[63] A full list can be found in William of Sherwood's *Treatise on Syncategorematic Words,* trans. and ed. N. Kretzmann (University of Minnesota, 1968). See, too, P. Boehner, *Medieval Logic: An Outline of its Development from 1250 to c. 1400* (Manchester, 1952), pp. 19-26.

[64] The key discussion occurs in William of Ockham, *Summa Logicae*, *Pars Prima*, ed. P. Boehner (Franciscan Institute Publications, 1951), pp. 15-16.

[65] P. V. Spade, "The Semantics of Terms," in *Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy: From the Rediscovery of Aristotle to the Disintegration of Scholasticism, 1100-1600*, ed. N. Kretzmann et al. (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 190-191. Adams points out that "while Ockham does hold that syncategorematics do not have signification, strictly speaking, he does not intend thereby to suggest that syncategorematics are meaningless, but only that they have a different logical function from categorematic terms." M. M. Adams, *William Ockham*, 2 vols. (Notre Dame,1987), 1:317-318.

[66] On Wyclif's ontology, see *De Universalibus*, Books I, XIII, *passim*, as well as M. Dziewicki, "An Essay on John Wyclif's Philosophical System," in *Johannis Wyclif Miscellanea Philosophica*, vol. I (Wyclif Society, 1902), xi. Dziewicki's essay offers a good introduction to Wyclif's theory of being but should be supplemented by more recent discussion in Lahey, *John Wyclif*. Courtenay notes that fourteenth-century terminist logic concerned itself with the *syncategorematica* as part of a larger interest in "linguistic problems arising from ambiguity," in contrast to a "more realist" approach to logic centered on "external reality." Courtenay, *Schools and Scholars*, pp. 224-225.

[67] The truth—and perceived falsehood—of scripture occupies Wyclif in *De Veritate* 1.ix through 2.x.

[68] In *De Logica*, for instance, Wyclif writes that "Syncategorema est terminus consignificans, cui non correspondet intencio in animo de significato; ut iste terminus, omnis, quilibet, si, non, pro, etc." *De Logica*, 3 vols., ed. M. Dziewicki (Wyclif Society, 1893-1899), 1:3.18-20. Dziewicki's annotations make no mention of Henry of Ghent, despite the fact that Wyclif is clearly influenced here by the latter's discussion of "consignificant" terms in his *Sincathegoreumata*, as cited in Pinborg, "Syncategoremata, sophismata, exponibilia," in *Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 213-214, and note 12 on p. 214.

[69] *De Universalibus*, I:51.443; II:66-67.325-328: "…cum doctores signorum ponunt universalia voces et scripta et metaphysici ponunt universalia esse res communes in singularibus extra…"

[70] *De Veritate*, I.iii.44, cited above.

[71] Wyclif's reading of the parable, which bears comparison in this regard, can be found in S*ermones*, 4 vols., ed. J. Loserth (Wyclif Society, 1886-1889), 2:426-429. He concludes: "Patet eciam veritas istius parabole de Christi discipulis et sequentibus sanctis doctoribus qui plus gaudebant de veritate scripture quam de omnibus aliis bonis mundi, ut de Ambrosio, Augustino et specialiter Jeronymo, Basilio et eius similibus; et isti doctores modo mirabili inventum habent thesaurum meriti beatitudinis qui non veterascit iuxta doctrinam Christi" (427).

[72] On the oddity of the word "here" in the phrase "forme of here wordus," see the editors' textual notes in *EWS*, 5:197. They suggest that "here" might be emended to "his."

[73] Indeed, this is one implication of Wyclif's debate with the Carmelite theologian John Kenningham over the eternity and literal truth of scripture's every word. See the *Fasciculi Zizaniorium Magistri Johannis Wyclif cum Tritico*, ed. W. W. Shirley (London, 1858), pp. 4-103, 453-480. See, especially, p. 20, pp. 474-476. For more on this context, see chapter one, note 43 of the present study, and references therein.

[74] Including verses 18:1 through 18:11, 18:12 through 18:21, 19:4 through 19:11, 19:12 through 19:16, 19:17 through 19:30, and 19:31 through 19:37.

[75] Wyclif's comments on the five grades of scripture occur in *De Veritate* I.vi.107 ff. and have been discussed at length in previous chapters.

[76] Peggy Knapp offers insight into a slightly different dimension of the same problem, arguing that the sermons invite "very specific interpretation of the Old Testament events and practices in view of the New Testament," the justification for which is apparent in commentary from a Feria sermon on Matthew 5:17-19 which argues that just as "mater and foorme ben o þing in substance (as þe body and soule ben o persone þat is þe spirit), so þe olde lawe and þe newe ben o þing in substaunce." *EWS*, 3:250/33-35. Knapp, *The Style of John Wyclif's English Sermons*, p. 90. On polemic between Lollards and friars, with a particular emphasis on Lollard accusations that Franciscans restricted access to books and libraries, see R. Rouse and M. Rouse, "The Franciscans and their Books: Lollard Accusations and the Franciscan Response," in *From Ockham to Wyclif*, eds. A. Hudson and M. Wilks (Blackwell, 1987), pp. 364-384.

[77] On the Pharisees as an antifraternal type, see Penn Szittya's discussion of William of St. Amour's thirteenth-century sermon *De Pharisaeo et publicano* in *The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature* (Princeton, 1986), pp. 34-41.

[78] H. Workman, J*ohn Wyclif: A Study of the English Medieval Church,* 2 vols. (Oxford, 1926), 1:286. Wyclif's hostility towards the friars was also grounded on his critique of "private religion" and his rejection of anyone who "lived apart in accordance with man-made rules instituted for peculiar (and self-centered) purposes, removing themselves from the community of the faithful who lived in accordance with the precepts instituted by Christ and, thereby, doing harm to the *res publica* of Christendom." R. Rouse and M. Rouse, "The Franciscans and Books: Lollard Accusations and the Franciscan Response," p. 381.

[79] A. Gwynn, *The English Austin Friars in the Time of Wyclif* (Oxford,1940), pp. 211-279. See, as well, M. Keen, "Wyclif, the Bible, and Transubstantiation," in *Wyclif in his Times*, ed. A. Kenny (Oxford, 1986), p. 5. As Levy shows, Wyclif moves from unease with transubstantiation

as church doctrine to a strident insistence of its impossibility on metaphysical grounds. Levy, *John Wyclif: Scriptural Logic, Real Presence, and the Parameters of Orthodoxy* (Marquette, 2003), pp. 275-319.

[80] Leff asserts that Wyclif resented the orders because they lacked scriptural warrant, although such an explanation, while no doubt true in a general sense, does not completely account for how his relationship to the friars changed following publication of his *Confessio.* G. Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages*, 2:541. Similarly, although *De Civili Dominio*, book 1, establishes the scriptural reasons for rejecting endowment of monastic orders, Wyclif returns to such arguments more forcefully following the eucharistic controversy stoked by his *Confessio*, suggesting that doctrinal differences over the eucharist indeed doomed Wyclif's relationship with the friars. For this emphasis, see Gwynn, *The English Austin Friars*, p. 258.

[81] On anti-mendicant satire in general, see P. Szittya, *The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature*, *passim*.

[82] *MED*, "condicioun," *n.*, sense 4a: "A stipulation or proviso; also, an exception, reservation, or qualification." A high concentration of Wycliffite citations occur under this sense: "**a1425(a1382) *WBible(1)* (Corp-O 4)** Gen.47.26: The fifthe part to kyngis is payed..with outen the preestis loond, that free was fro this condicioun. **a1425 *Wycl.Serm.*(Bod 788)** 1.80: Sum þing men seien, witinge þat it is soþ, affermynge þe sentence wiþouten ony condicioun. **c1475(a1400) *Wycl.Pseudo-F.*(Dub 245)** 297: Þus þei speken bi condicioun or supposyng or gessyng þat, ȝif freris don þus cristen, men schulden be war wiþ hem."

[83] These he discusses at length in book three of *De Doctrina Christiana*, culminating in his remarks on *caritas* in chapter fifteen, which Patterson calls "the central principle of Augustine's hermeneutic." Patterson, *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature* (Wisconsin, 1987), p. 32.

[84] On the *lex dei* in the sense described here see H. L. Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages*, p. 147. She points to a Wycliffite sermon for the fifth Sunday after Trinity, in *EWS*, 1:242/51-54.

[85] Thomson, in his conspectus of the *Sermones*, notes that Wyclif's ubiquitous attacks on the friars and on mendicancy itself were not always accompanied by debate over specific scriptural passages—with some notable exceptions, such as S*ermones*, 4 vols., ed. Loserth (Wyclif Society, 1886-89), pp. 105-114. W. R. Thomson, *The Latin Writings of John Wyclyf: An Annotated Catalogue* (Toronto, 1983), p. 149.

[86] Such a "hermeneutic abdication," as it were, is also strategic, responding to the longstanding exegetical authority of the friars by positing an irreducible scriptural meaning lodged in the "wyt" of the faithful. See relevant discussion in L.-J. Bataillon, "Early Scholastic and Mendicant Preaching as Exegesis of Scripture," in *Ad Litteram: Authoritative Texts and Their Medieval Readers*, ed. M. Jordan and K. Emery (Notre   Dame, 1992), pp. 165-198.

[87] For the argument that the Jew becomes a hermeneutic construct—a projection of Christian theology and exegesis—in post expulsion England, see J. Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (California, 1999), pp. 2-3.

[88] J. Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (Columbia, 1996), p. 54, summarizing R. Stacey's unpublished 1992 talk at the Association for Jewish Studies. Wyclif's views on the financial

encroachments of the friars are worth comparing to the comments cited in this paragraph from the sermons.   See S*ermones*, 4 vols., ed. J. Loserth (Wyclif Society, 1886-89), 2:435.

[89] For example, 1:654/ 97-101.

[90] On the relationship of this text to the cycle, see *EWS*, 1:49-50; and to Wyclif's own *Exposicio textus Matthei xxiii*, from which the sermon is inconsistently derived, R. Hanna, "'Vae Octuplex,' Lollard socio-textual ideology, and Ricardian-Lancastrian prose translation," in *Criticism and Dissent in the Middle Ages*, ed. Copeland (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 248-251.

[91] On the problem of continuous revelation, see Hanna, "'Vae Octuplex,' Lollard socio-textual ideology, and Ricardian-Lancastrian prose translation," pp. 252-263.

[92] Hanna offers a similar conclusion, though with reference to different evidence. Hanna, "'Vae Octuplex,' Lollard Socio-textual Ideology, and Ricardian-Lancastrian Prose Translation," p. 251.

[93] V. A. Kolve, *The Play Called Corpus Christi* (Stanford, 1966), p. 114.

[94] *MED*, "ordeinen," *v*., senses 6a-6h.

[95] For this emphasis in the gospel text, see Matthew 23:16-19, which repeatedly describes the Pharisees as blind people (*caeci*).

Chapter Four

Rolle's "blessyd boke": The *English Psalter* and its Wycliffite Readers

> Copyed has this Sauter ben; of yuel men of lollardry:
> And afturward hit has bene sene; ympyd in [interpolated] with eresy.
> They seyden then to leude foles; that it shuld be all enter,
> A blessyd boke of hur scoles; of Rychard Hampole the Sauter.[1]

I

Richard Rolle, the Yorkshire hermit and spiritual writer, produced a large body of religious texts in both Latin and the vernacular that proved highly influential throughout the Middle Ages. His English writings, especially the prose epistles *Ego Dormio* and the *Form of Living*, have long been at the center of discussions concerning late medieval spirituality and devotion. Rolle's Latin works, widely available in English translation, have similarly received much attention. Less familiar is the *English Psalter*.[2] A glossed translation of the Latin Psalms, Rolle's Psalter was probably made for the Yorkshire anchoress Margaret Kirkby sometime between 1337 and 1349.[3] As such, the text obviously precedes important developments in the debate over vernacular biblical translation.[4] We also know, however, that Wycliffite redactors later altered manuscripts of the *English Psalter*, grafting their own commentaries and revisions into copies made during the first half of the fifteenth century.[5] The resulting textual situation can therefore be quite complex; insofar as there is an "original" version of the *English Psalter*, it

circulated widely and in different forms, not all of which enjoyed equal authority. Like all psalmic translations, these were dispersed across different contexts and likely adapted to a variety of uses, from simple household devotion to formal liturgical ritual.[6] The textual intervention of the Wycliffites, of course, only complicates matters, especially since their remarks are at times very difficult to distinguish from Rolle's own.[7] Perhaps the daunting textual problems posed by interpolation explain why so few critics have dealt with the Psalter and its revisions at length.[8] Yet this dearth of scholarship surely has as much to do with the challenge of finding a critical vocabulary that takes into account the complex relationship of Wycliffism to the devotional works its adherents sometimes copied and revised.[9]

One reason this critical vocabulary has remained elusive has to do with how scholars have understood the significance of the *Constitutions*, the ecclesiastical statute drafted at convocation in 1407 and authorized by Archbishop Thomas Arundel two years later.[10] The statute, and the bleak landscape of censorship and suppression it instantaneously evokes, continues to occupy a central place in discussions of late medieval vernacular culture, and not without some justification. Wycliffite texts bitterly denounce its strictures, evidence, perhaps, that opponents of English biblical translation—men such as the Dominican Thomas Palmer, the Franciscan William Butler, but most of all the Archbishop himself—had indeed "won the day," in Nicholas Watson's memorable judgment.[11] Yet while recent scholarship has questioned the intended scope of the *Constitutions*, emphasizing that the measure's many restrictions were mostly an attack on the university and on Latin pedagogy in particular, few studies have considered the challenges which statutory discourse presents to the historical and critical recovery of

Wycliffite texts.[12] The *Constitutions* have been so extensively documented, in fact, that it is easy to proceed as if they were not themselves a construct, designed to predetermine decisions about what constituted heresy and dissent.[13] Even critics most sensitive to the ways in which Lollardy drew on a wide variety of discourses thus often approach Wycliffite texts as if exterior to a single category of orthodox religious writing.[14]

The reifying effect of the *Constitutions* suggests that there is a need to look more closely at the status of Wycliffite texts read and revised in the ambit of its various prohibitions.[15] Indeed, scholars often point to the refashioning of existing manuscripts as a response to censorship under Arundel, who stipulated the examination of any "book, pamphlet [*libellus*], or tract now lately composed in the time of John Wyclif, or since then."[16] There was a powerful incentive, it is assumed, for Wycliffites to move vernacular theology and criticism to venues that did not invite ecclesiastical scrutiny, Rolle's *English Psalter* being one of the few English biblical texts that would have been found acceptable in this new environment of suspicion.[17] Vincent Gillespie has argued, for instance, that "the ubiquity of Rolle as a privileged *auctor* from before the time of Wyclif suggests that he could be seen as a convenient guarantor of safe passage for texts that lacked obvious pedigree but possess obvious worth."[18] Similarly, Margaret Aston considers the possibility that insinuating Wycliffite views into Rolle's text may have been a way "of climbing into the laps of people."[19] As we shall see, however, many of the interpolated passages are theologically ambiguous—if "theological" at all—and rarely concerned with promoting a body of teachings. What, then, would be the point of deceiving the reader? A more plausible explanation for the interpolations is that Wycliffites were constrained to work with whatever texts had not yet been suppressed by

clerical authorities, as Michael Kuczynski contends.[20] But in addition to assuming that

such suppression was extensive, which is by no means certain, this interpretation also

underestimates the appeal of the Psalms themselves, and the kind of non-institutional and

household-based mode of devotion they sponsored.[21]

   At the risk of neglecting the very real hegemonic processes that shaped Wycliffite

vernacularity, I want to propose that we attempt instead to understand the interpolation of

devotional texts as a dialectic which sheds light on the difficulty of sequestering "heresy"

from the broader current of religious expression. The readerly appropriation of the

English Psalter challenges dichotomies between Wycliffite reformism and popular

devotion as it was reconstituted in Rolle. Such a dynamic also sheds light on the broader

problematic of this dissertation: the complex relationship of Wyclif to the vernacular

enterprise of his followers. For Rolle's Wycliffite readers, the Psalms emerge not so

much as an abstract locus of divine "authority"—a view of scripture encountered in

earlier chapters on *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*—than as a text which bears the imprint

of the Bible's reception among new English audiences, underscoring the basic historicity

of all sacred texts.

II

   An anonymous metrical prologue affixed to a fifteenth-century copy of the

English Psalter, MS Laud 286, complains that Rolle's otherwise orthodox text had been

contaminated by its Wycliffite revisers:

   Copyed has this Sauter ben; of yuel men of lollardry:

And afturward hit has bene sene; ympyd in [interpolated] with eresy.
They seyden then to leude foles; that it shuld be all enter,
A blessyd boke of hur scoles; of Rychard Hampole the Sauter.[22]

The author was not alone in such sentiments; unease over the interpolation of devotional texts was widely shared, and linked to heresy well before the advent of Wycliffism.[23] Yet there was also a sense among ecclesiastical authorities that deception itself was particular and essential to the movement.[24] Wycliffites, the parliamentary act known as *De Haeretico Comburendo* warned, preach "under the color of dissembled holiness."[25] An orthodox sermon, likely composed by the Benedictine abbot Thomas Spofford and dating from the first half of the fifteenth century, discusses Lollardy in similarly threatening terms, likening its adherents to foxes "full of all sotylte and sleyghtys to desayuyng of Crystys pepyll."[26]

We can begin to test these assumptions by turning to an interpolated version of Rolle's *English Psalter*. Bodley 288 is a large lectern volume (26 cm. x 37 cm. x 7.2 cm.) dating from the first half of the fifteenth century, with an anonymous inscription describing it as Wycliffite: "Pater, hoc vocabit, psalteriu[m] Wicklevi" (fol. 271r).[27] It is easy to see how a reader might arrive at such a conclusion. Interpolated commentary on Psalm 108, for example, takes over Rolle's own ambiguous gloss on shrift in order to emphasize the penitent's obligation to confess directly to God, questioning the validity of auricular confession as it had traditionally been practiced. Priestly absolution, only possible in instances of auricular confession, was a crucial component of orthodox penitential theology, and Rolle himself departs somewhat from this model. Commenting on Psalm 108:29 (*confitebor domino nimis in ore meo: in medio multorum laudabo eum*), he writes, in a rather ungainly sentence, that "in comun [community] of cristen men and

rightwys is the fadur of heuen louyd, or in thair hertis where the luf is" (392-393).

Commentary on the same verse in Bod. 288, however, argues explicitly that one should

"schrive to God" and adds the following verse: "þe fadir of heuen regneþ and ruliþ þat

soule in þe ri3t wey of hise comaundementis" (fol. 211v). While not completely

rejecting the orientation of the original, the revised version reinforces the impression of a

natural relationship between the individual soul and God that implicitly denies the

validity of ecclesiastical control over the remission of sins. A similar pattern is evident

with respect to Psalm 78:14 (*nos autem populus tuus et oves pascuae tuae confitebimur*

tibi in saeculum), about which Rolle comments: "we thi folke, kepand thi comandmentis

and fed in thi luf with thi worde sall loue the til we dye" (293). Bod. 288 expand Rolle's

comments on this verse to argue that the godly are "fed in undirstonding of his lawe…þei

schulen schryve hem to þee lord god, þat oonli for3evest synne in to þe world." God, it

continues, "oonli bi him silf for3eveth synne and so bi sownynge of þis lawe, the scheep

of goddis pasture knowen whom þei schulen fle and whom þei schulen folowe" (fol.

157v).[28] Other Wycliffite readings of the Psalms often made the same point. A sermon

on Luke, for instance, argues that "God seiþ in þe psalme how man in purpos to leve is

synne seide þat he wolde shryve him to God, and God for3af him his synne."[29]

Although their repudiation of auricular confession was only one part of a broader

religious agenda, Wycliffites were often attacked specifically on this position, as when

the author of MS Bod. 649, a collection of macaronic sermons, argues that

> this confession of mouth is necessary to anyone who wishes to be
> saved…how then are these Lollards so bold to preach the opposite? How
> can they find it in their hearts to teach the people of Christ that they must
> not confess to their parish priests? Beware of them, for certainly their
> doctrine is true poison, a straight way to hell.[30]

Indeed, the Lollard preacher William Thorpe had been questioned by Arundel and his clerks on this very point, telling the Archbishop that "preestis schulden bisie hem euere to lyue wele and holyli, and to teche þe peple bisili and treweli þe word of Gode, schewinge to alle folkis in opin prechinge and in priuy counseylynge þat God oonly for3eueþ syne."[31] For all the polemic surrounding questions of confession, however, Wycliffite interpolations in the examples given above converge easily with the trajectory of Psalms themselves, as in the case of Psalm 78, which recounts the Israelites' failure to remember the covenant, their deliverance from Egypt, and the founding of the Davidic dynasty. Although an audience might have drawn dangerous conclusions from interpolated passages claiming that only God can forgive sin, which was indeed a Wycliffite trope, the deliverance of the faithful from persecution was a widely familiar narrative, nowhere more so than in the Psalms themselves, and here Wycliffites enfold themselves within the scope of that larger providential history. Thus, what in most other contexts would be considered an alternative theology of confession is here assimilated to an authoritative religious and historical narrative.

Changes as subtle in emphasis as these may not seem consequential in themselves, especially when confined to only a few volumes. And given the size of recensions such as Bod. 288, which comprises 272 double-columned folios, it would take an unusually alert reader to notice all but the most obvious interpolated passages. Yet it is worth noting that many of the Wycliffite recensions of the *English Psalter* are lectern books, suggesting that their redactors intended them for reading before an audience.[32] The interpolated passages may well have received a wider airing than it at first seems,

with incremental changes accumulating force through instruction and group study. It is

all the more significant, then, that Bod. 288 includes very little in the way of explicit

doctrinal speculation. Instead, Rolle's focus on the self-enclosed piety of the

contemplative life—its highest realization being the gift of *canor*, the inward spiritual

transformation he associated specifically with reading the Psalms—closely intertwines

with a Wycliffite desire for a faith liberated from the established church and rooted in

adherence to biblical law.[33] Changes to Rolle's translation and commentary for Psalm

4:10 (*quoniam tu domine singulariter in spe constituisti me*) are illuminating in this

regard. Translating the verse as "ffor thou lord syngulerly in hope has sett me," he then

comments that

> in a hope, thurgh the whilke i hope a thynge, that is verraily goed thou has
> festid my hert: noght in many fald thyngs of the warld: thai perisch that
> sekis many thyngs and syngularite is halden in halymen for thai sett all
> thaire hert to luf anly a god. (17-18)

Bod. 288 removes the word "halymen"—a problematic term, perhaps, since it attaches

sanctity, even a hint of inerrancy, to the individual rather than to scriptural law itself—

and adds a passage underscoring the prescriptive force of holi writ: "lastingly I am sett to

holde the ri3t wey of the comaundementis, knowinge þat god is to be loved oonly" (fol.

7r).[34] The emphasis on the *lex dei* could not be more explicit in the interpolated version,

and as such lends a more polemical inflection to Rolle's text by implicitly distinguishing

the authority of biblical precepts from the false dictates of civil and canon law, but there

is little evidence here of any effort to deceive credulous readers, to palm off heretical

doctrine, or to refashion an otherwise orthodox text.

As is evident from the above examples, many interpolations in Bod. 288 consist of nothing more than a few words added onto the end of Rolle's own commentary. While sparse in themselves, such changes register larger shifts in semantic range and social logic, as with the addition to Psalm 8:3 of comments criticizing those who "glosen and tellen þi lawe aftir her lustful lyvyng and not aftir resoun," a phrase which introduces multiple *loci* of Wycliffite concern (fol. 12r). References to God's "comaundementis" in passages interpolated into Rolle's comments on Psalm 4:10 achieve a similar effect. Yet it would be a blinkered reader who interpreted the aspiration to live according to God's "comaundementis" as an exclusively Wycliffite concern, despite the fact that it makes up the substance of this and many other "Wycliffite" interpolations. In his gloss on Psalm 78:14 (*nos autem populus tuus et oues pascue tue confitebimur tibi in seculum*), Rolle's brief commentary likening the sheep of God's pasture to those who keep his commandments prompts the Wycliffite writer to discourse at length about how "moyses comaundide to al þe peple þat þei schulden bisily heere goddis lawe and lerne it" (193; fol. 157v). Although this kind of enthusiasm for the decalogue certainly bespeaks a polemical orientation towards the words of the biblical text, the commandments were already a central feature of religious education; the *Constitutions* themselves stipulate that parish priests shall preach "only those things which are expressly contained in the provincial constitution set forth by John," that is, the syllabus of pastoral and catechetical materials compiled by Archbishop John Pecham in 1281 known as the *Ignorantia Sacerdotum*, which mandates study of the decalogue.[35] Although when the compiler of Bod. 288 talks about "the ri3t wey of the comaundementis" he does not only mean the decalogue but the *lex dei* in a more total sense, the association of such a concept with an

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instructive and devotional paradigm of an earlier tradition, rooted in Pecham's vision of vernacular lay education, would have been strong—at least as strong, probably, as any association with Wyclif's own commentary on the decalogue, *De Mandatis*. The choice, in other words, to equate scripture with "God's commandments" bespeaks a readiness on the part of Wycliffite redactors of the *English Psalter* to work within the boundaries of pastoral theology as it had been conceived for some time.

Bod. 288 also invokes the prescriptive power inherent in the idea of the decalogue to underscore the status of scripture as an injunction to righteousness, as a source of everyday moral guidance for laity and clergy alike. Such an emphasis arrogates a good deal of authority to the written word, and to the Bible as written law.[36] To identify this as a uniquely Wycliffite preoccupation, however, would be impossible; even Paul himself, writing against heresy in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, had argued that *omnis scriptura divinitus inspirata et utilis ad docendum ad arguendum ad corrigendum ad erudiendum in iustitia ut perfectus sit homo Dei ad omne opus bonum instructus*. Wycliffites distill a similar ideal from the discursive intersection of their own thinking about scriptural authority with Rolle's emphasis on the reception of the written word among his followers, for whose edification he undertook the project of making the *English Psalter*. The Wycliffite interest in Rolle is thus shaped by the recognition that the godly life obtains and inheres in textual forms, that edification requires something more concrete than the Book of Life—it requires, that is, a tradition of instructive and devotional material; and it requires a view of scripture informed by Rolle's own understanding of the Psalter, a word he situates in an etymology stressing the Psalms' scribal reality: "This

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boke is cald the psautere, the whilk nam it has of an instrument of musyke that in ebru is nablum, in grek psautery of psallm, that in inglis is to *touche*” (3, italics added).

<p style="text-align:center">III</p>

Recent scholarship on the instabilities and discursive complexities of late medieval piety provides a valuable context in which to approach Rolle’s Psalter. Andrew Brown has argued, for instance, that “[p]rivate devotion could encourage deviation from the path of orthodoxy,” and that “[i]ntrospection, the habit of private prayer, or devotional study could encourage withdrawal from and even criticism of outward conformity.”[37] Indeed, one significant tension in the religious culture of this period is that contemplation of this kind was sustained with the help of texts, which, like the *English Psalter* itself, circulated ever more widely, thereby redefining the parameters of private devotion and the inner spiritual life.[38] If the interpolation of devotional and instructional texts exemplifies this dynamic, it also shows that contemplation itself was never a very orthodox prerogative. Rolle associated contemplation specifically with the Psalms, mentioning “the ioy of contemplacioun” in the preface to the *English Psalter* and discussing the virtue “psalmis & ympnis [hymns] & praiers” in an excursus from the *Form of Living* on the contemplative life (4). In this latter text, he goes on to write that in true contemplatives “þe fire of lufe verraili lightis in til þaire hert & brennis þer-inne, & makes it clene of al erthli filth,” at which point “þai see in til heuen with þaire gasteli iee.”[39] Rolle’s commentary on Psalm 78:5 (*usquequo domine irasceris in finem accendetur velut ignis zelus tuus*) uses much the same language in describing how God’s

love shall be "kyndild in oure hertis, as fire that purges the rust of oure syn" (291). What is interesting here is how the interpolated version of the same verse in Bod. 288 does not supplant Rolle's emphasis on devout prayer and meditation or the penitent's internal realization of God's love—precisely the spiritual values that made his text orthodox in the eyes of ecclesiastics—but instead infuses contemplation itself with new potential, adding the following:

> for þi loue schal be kyndelid as fier in þe hertis of trewe men bifore þe eende fully (?) come bi þe which fier þou schalt purge þi churche for þei in whom þou schalt kyndele þi churche schalen of þin hond take þe corowne of virtue…" (fol. 155v)

The revised version's implicit contrast between hypocritical prelates and "trewe men" is predictable enough within the idiom of Lollardy. But the real focus of this interpolation is on the wide scope of devout contemplation itself, and the way it frames conclusions about the moral status of the "churche." Bod. 288 translates Rolle's intensely personal mode of spiritual discipline to a wider register, co-opting his penitential rhetoric to speak directly to a social context in which it is the church that is in need of purgation as much as the individual penitent. But where one might expect an attack on sacramentality or on the powers of the clergy to absolve and remit sins, Wycliffite additions to the *English Psalter* just as often widen the range of associations clustering around late medieval penance. The conflation of these two models of reform—one directed at the inner spiritual transformation of the individual, the other at the very institution that defines and sustains penitential practices—makes Rolle and his Wycliffite redactors closer in some regards than one might expect. Of course, Rolle's own religious individualism could be taken up rather easily by Wycliffites who wanted to make the point, for instance, that

priestly absolution lacked merit, and that, as Rolle himself argues in a very Wycliffite-sounding commentary on Psalm 33:22, Christ's servants "hafe remyssion of synnes" in God (121).[40] But Bod. 288 also turns to Rolle's penitential discourse with its meanings fully in mind, enhancing the implications of his thinking about the inner spiritual life while *at the same time* abstracting the idea of spiritual improvement and discipline in order to reflect on the standing of the "churche." Whether as part of a larger commitment to the solitary life or simply as everyday devotional meditation or devout reading, contemplation here is *not* a mere construct of orthodoxy, despite the claim that *contemplatio* of this kind was a casualty of the more cautious approach to English theology which took hold after the *Constitutions*.[41]

What is more, it is precisely the life of devout contemplation as represented in Rolle which provides a rationale for *contravening* Arundel's prohibitions on vernacular biblical translation. Although Rolle's commentary on Psalm 15:13 warns against English versions of scripture—a finger points to the verse with the annotation "nota" in the manuscript of the base text, University College Oxford 64—Bod. 288 adds a key passage: "for noon schulde be so hardi to translate or expounde holy writt in prechinge or in writinge, *but if he feelide þe holy goost wiþynne him for he is speker and enditer of al holy writt and of alle þe truþis that springen out þereof*" (fol. 29r, italics added).[42] The internal realization of "holy writt" foreshadows its transposition into scripture, and in this way the interpolated version of Rolle's text pictures devout contemplation as the starting point for precisely those discursive practices of reading and writing that ecclesiastical authorities sought to proscribe. Here, then, we can glimpse a discourse in which *contemplatio* has not yet acquired a sense remote from Wycliffism, demonstrating that

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even in the era of the *Constitutions* the emotive and devotional mode of texts such as the *English Psalter* could sponsor considerable discursive freedoms.

Evidence of this sort could be multiplied in a tedious fashion, so I will confine myself to some of the more significant revisions to Rolle's commentary in Bod. 288. Interpolations in his commentary on Psalms 73, 76, and 80 demonstrate how Wycliffites locate themselves in relation to Rolle's emphasis on individual moral reform and the problem of sin. Psalm 73, for example, is a plea to God to remember the covenant and deliver his people from affliction; references to enemies who have destroyed the sanctuary, smashing its carved work and setting it on fire, evoke the destruction of the temple. This is, then, a central moment in the historical arc of sin and divine deliverance that distinguishes the Psalms, and Rolle uses these themes to underscore the urgency of penitential reflection. Glossing verse one (*ut quid deus repulisti in finem iratus est furor tuus super oues pascue tue*), he writes that God's wrath shows itself to those who are "blyndid in the deuels seruys of tha that thou fedis in this life with the sacrament of thi body" (273). The Wycliffite version refocuses this verse on "greet errour in þe churche and speciali of hi3e prelatis and lowe þat schulde so plenteuousli be fed in goddis lawe," for they are the "cheef cause whi god is so wraþþed to his peple for consentinge to her synnes" (fol. 132v). Predictably enough, Rolle's reference to the sacrament of Christ's body is removed in Bod. 288, but the need for spiritual discipline and fortitude, already explicit in the *English Psalter*, is voiced even more strongly in the Wycliffite version, which changes the organizing metaphor of verse one in order to warn against "false sheperdis" who neglect the spiritual "heelþ of þe peple" by feeding their own "foule lustis" (fol. 132v). Passages interpolated into commentary on verse five (*et gloriati sunt*

qui oderunt te in medio solempnitatis tue) carry these themes even further, greatly

expanding Rolle's own brief exposition on the sacrilege of the temple to speak about the

defilement of the church by those who live contrary to the law of Christ, who was

"ordeyned and sent to bere þe charge of his peple, and þat he dide mekely to þe last

eende, 3evinge us ensaumple to folowe him" (fol. 133r). Succeeding verse commentaries

in Bod. 288 build on this orthodox christology, contrasting Christ's exemplary authority

with the false authority of papal bulls and "wordly [sic] lordschip" (fol. 133r). But

perhaps the most poignant moment in Psalm 73 is when it describes the Jews' spiritual

despair: *signa nostra non vidimus iam non est propheta et nos non cognoscet amplius*.

Rolle's gloss on this verse stays close to the sense of the biblical text itself, which

describes an alienation from God so great that even the prophets are unable to foretell an

end to the Jews' affliction. But he also relates this problem to the moral failings of

priests and prelates: "preste or prelate is nane," he writes, "that dare chasty [chastise] vs,

for thaim selfe ere als synful as we, and swa god sall knaw us namare" (265). For his

part, the Wycliffite writer extends the import of Rolle's remarks even further, glossing

the phrase "signa nostra non vidimus" thusly:

> men of þe churche þat schulden schewe to us tokenes of good liif we seen
> not now þer is no profete to telle us þe drede of goddis doom and we ben
> as scheep with outen heerde goinge in rooten [rotten] pasture etinge oþer
> mennys corn delitinge us in lustis þis þe peple schulde crie to god and seie
> lord we have synned folowinge þe loore of þi enemies whiche we knewen
> þat lyveden not ri3tfulli. (fols. 133v-134r)

Rolle's commentary on Psalm 76:2 (*in die tribulationis meae deum exquisivi*

manibus meis nocte contra eum et non sum deceptus rennuit consolari anima mea)

emerges as another site of Wycliffite interest in Bod. 288. This is one of the most

significant statements in the Psalms about tribulation and spiritual endurance, *topoi* which

translated easily into the context of Arundelian England. Rolle translates the verse in

quite literal terms, especially the phrase "deum exquisiui manibus meis nocte," which he

renders as "i sought god with my hend in nyght." But he then suggests that the way one

seeks God "with my hend" is "with werkis of charite," and it is from this point that the

especially long Wycliffite interpolation proceeds (273):

> [M]anye men as lowers of þis world kunnen not in tyme of tribulacioun
> but weile and sorowe (?) in froward grucching a3ein god as if he dide hem
> wrong but þese knowen not þe vertu of tribulacioun, where inne þe lower
> of crist is persued moost feiþfuli in ny3t, þat is, in þis derk tymme of
> synne. (fol. 141r)

Stressing the need to live "in kepinge of þe comaundementis of god," the Wycliffite

writer reassures his readers that "I am not here inne disseyved for ful meede of reward in

hevene schal be 3olden to feiþful men" (fol. 141r). While stopping short of embracing

persecution, this and other interpolations echo the theme announced in a passage grafted

into Rolle's original preface: "þe moost comfort and hope þat gode men han of truþe is

þat yuele men dispisen her wordis and her werkis" (fol. 1v).

As with Psalms 73 and 76, Wycliffite additions to Rolle's commentary on Psalm

80 are extensive, in some cases spanning several manuscript pages. Looking at Rolle's

own comments, one can see why Wycliffites might have found his interpretation of this

Psalm appealing. For instance, his treatment of verse seven (*in tribulacione inuocasti me*

et liberaui te exaudiui te in abscondito tempestatis probaui te apud aquam

contradiccionis) centers on the notion that God hears those who call out to him in

anguish. Giving his commentary over to God's own voice, Rolle writes that "when thou

was cumbird and chargid with syn thou kald on me inwardly til help and I delyuerd the of that birthin, for I herd the doand [doing] penaunce in hid of storme," which storm he interprets as "fightynge of thi saule agayns the wynd of temptacioun" (299). The Wycliffite version takes over Rolle's deeply penitential meditation on sin and forgiveness, situating it more explicitly in the context of the Egyptian captivity and of God's covenant with the Israelites:

> [S]umme doctours seyen and it semeþ sooþ þat þe children of israel weren so sogettid in þraldom of þe cursid kyng of egypt, þat þei durste not make complaynt to god ne to man apeertli but god þat knowith the privyte of mannyes herte, herde wiþ outen wis of hem þe cruelte of her enemyes, and he delyveride hem not as þei wende or wolde have coveitid to have ben delyverid but a þousinde <time?> moore wodirfulli and grivousli he delyveride hem for þat he wiste þat the feiþful men of hem schulden þere aftir moore enforce þem to kepe his lawe and also he wiste þat þe unfeiþful schulde þerefore take þe more hard dampnacioun. (fol. 165r)

Again, we encounter the familiar emphasis on God's law, as well as the equally familiar Wycliffite condemnation of those who live according to man's law, that is, prelates who afflict "feithful men." Not surprisingly, then, the rest of the interpolated passage turns into an attack on priests:

> [A]llas what schulen prestis do þat schulen not oonli rikene of her owne tresour þat þey han take of god but þe tresour of þe peple schal be askid of prestis whi thei leete hem waaste it and delyveride not her soulis of hem markinge hem rebellours aȝens god…. (fol. 165r)

If priests carried out their duties faithfully, it continues, the people would be ashamed of their sins, "and þanne schulden prestis be excusid for þei fulfilliden þe lawe of god for to þat eende prestis ben ordeyned þat þei lyven aftir þe lawe not of men but of god, for he haþ sett abiddynge in israel þat is his peple" (fol. 165r). Thus, while Bod. 288 adds a

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great deal of material about the proper spiritual vocation of priests, such comments are not the production of a wholly new text—not, that is, an example of Wycliffites insinuating hostile and perhaps heretical comments into what was hitherto one of England's most venerable devotional texts—so much as they are a continuation of Rolle's own penitential and devotional readings. To explore questions about temptation and the tribulation of sin, about spiritual affliction and divine deliverance, is to generate critical reflexivity about such matters in relation to fifteenth-century England, and in this way Wycliffites sustain and enrich their own concerns in tandem with Rolle.

IV

If the preceding paragraphs have taken a more descriptive approach to the evidence than is strictly necessary, it is with the intention of specifying some thematic cruxes: the "churche," "goddis lawe," "tribulacioun," and "þe peple." These *topoi* capture the tenor of Bod. 288's Wycliffism—a Wycliffism, I argue, which is ultimately much closer to Rolle than to Wyclif himself, despite the ecclesiastical attempt to construct a line of heretical thought stretching from the *doctor evangelicus* directly to his fifteenth-century sympathizers, such as they were. Although it was inevitable that later stages of the movement would depart somewhat from the forms and discourses of early Oxford Lollardy, this was precisely the premise Arundel rejected by insisting that any book written before Wyclif's time must perforce be orthodox—and any after heretical. The Archbishop seems to have assumed, in other words, that the class of vernacular instructive and devotional materials which Pecham intended for the edification of the

laity, and with which the *English Psalter* has much in common, would map reliable

distinctions between orthodoxy and heresy in the age of Wyclif. In fact, Wycliffites

interpolate the *English Psalter* at precisely the moment when it became impossible to

read instructive and devotional material without also engaging in a critique—implicitly,

at least—of Arundelian England, when allusions to sin, tribulation, and spiritual despair

would necessarily take on a broader social resonance.

On its face, this conclusion seems difficult to accept—after all, it is often claimed

that late medieval popular religion privileged "spiritual rather than rational

understanding, and was generally wordless and non-discursive."[43] Moreover, Rolle

himself often seems to conform to this model, offering an example of what this sort of

"non-discursive" spirituality looks like in practice. Where Wycliffites might insist, for

instance, on reason and scriptural authority, he instead dwells on tropes of spiritual desire

and the problem of one's entanglement with earthly things.[44] In the prologue to the

English Psalter, Rolle mentions the effects of reading the Psalms using very much the

same lexicon, describing an experience at the center of devotional meditation that he

often referred to as *canor*:

> Grete haboundance of gastly comfort and ioy in god comes in the hertes of
> thaim at says or synges deuotly the psalmes in louynge of ihū crist. [T]hai
> drope swetnes in mannys saule and hellis delite in thaire thoghtis and
> kyndils thaire willes with the fyre of luf makand thaim hate and brennand
> withinen & faire and lufly in cristis eghen. (3)

The contemplative life demands withdrawal from the mundane distractions of the

world and an unrelenting concentration on one's inner spiritual condition. "Otherwise,"

Rolle wrote elsewhere, "we fall away from song and lose the richness of that invisible

melody."[45] The pursuit of *canor*, then, necessarily discourages questions about institutional authority and jurisdiction, about the rights and roles of the church, about the entire superstructure of ecclesiastical custom. Presumably, this is one aspect of the argument that late medieval spirituality and devotion tended towards the "non-discursive," inscribing a strictly delimited and self-enclosed apprehension of the sacred. Rolle's commentary throughout the *English Psalter* is conditioned by this devotional imperative and hence confined to the spiritual needs of an audience for whom meditation had little to do with the status of the church itself, either as a kind of community of the faithful or a political institution. However much his comments in this respect may seem to diminish the intercessory privileges of the church, the object of reform and renovation is always the individual herself, not the existing ecclesiological order or even the individual's place within it. By contrast, Wycliffite arguments extended into the more controversial terrain of ecclesiological politics, inviting speculation on the institutional authority of the church in a way that Rolle's eremitic focus on the inner spiritual life would not. [46] Perhaps this clear sense of priority regarding the object and outcome of moral reform (and not the fact that his translation of scripture so often retains Latin syntax and word order) is one reason why the *English Psalter* remained licit reading even throughout the ensuing controversies about biblical translation.[47] The text figured largely in the 1401 debate at Oxford, having been mentioned by Richard Ullerston, a secular master of theology, to suggest that works of spiritual guidance in English were already a fixture of official pastoral teaching.[48] It is by means of Rolle's Psalter, he argues, "that Engliche men han ben gretli edified, and he were cursed of God, that wolde the puple schulde be lewder either wors than thei ben."[49]

Would Ullerston have changed his mind upon reading Bod. 288? It seems unlikely. Arnold claimed that all the passages of "advanced Lollardism" in the manuscript appear in the Canticles, yet even here it is precisely Rolle's "orthodox" penitential idiom which informs the "Lollardy" of the revised version, as is the case in additions to his commentary on the fourth verse of the Song of Isaiah (*notas facite in populis adinuenciones eius mementote quoniam excelsium est nomen eius*).[50] Rolle writes that this is a call to preach "a mange [among] the folke that thai may knaw his incarnacioun," adding that Christ is found through "charyte and goed werkis" (495). He stresses the need to "haldis him ay in mynd," for only then does one "noght fall in till pride, na couayt godis name, as lucifere and adam did" (495). The internal penitential focus on Christ is almost a trope in anti-Wycliffite religious writing of the period, such as Nicholas Love's *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, an adaptation of the pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes Vitae Christi* intended for the "edification of the faithful and the confutation of heretics and lollards."[51] Nevertheless, the interpolated version of this commentary similarly enjoins the reader to "holdiþ him evere in mynde," going even further than Rolle in suggesting that "ech soule" is "clensid of vicious filþe" through meditating on the homely persona of "Jesus," for then "no devel ne yvel man may noien þat soule, þou3 þe body suffre peyne in which it restiþ peesibly" (Arnold, 7). Other interpolations in the Canticles follow a similar pattern, preserving the penitential force of Rolle's commentary but opening up the possibility of discursive reflection on contemporary abuses, which, after the passage of *De Haeretico Comburendo* in1401 and especially the promulgation of the *Constitutions* in1409, did not stop short of the bodily "peyne" mentioned by this Wycliffite writer.[52] In references such as these, the revised

version opens out onto Arundelian England by leveraging Rolle's own representation of virtuous Christian suffering. For instance, his commentary on the Prayer of Habakkuk 3:4 (*splendor ejus ut lux erit cornua in manibus ejus*) brings this verse into alignment with a late medieval tradition of affective and penitential meditation on the suffering body of Christ, stressing that the "verray knawynge" of God in this form "makis all men bright and shynand that lufis him" (508). Rolle then glosses the second half of the verse in reference to the crucifixion, reading "cornua"— *cornu, cornus*, n., "horn"—as a figure for the nails used to fasten Christ's hands to the wood of the cross: "for hornys in his hend, that is, his hend was strekid and nailyd in twa corners of the cross" (*ibid*.). The Wycliffite treatment of the same verse in Bod. 288 instead exalts the "verri knowyng" of God's law, which "makiþ alle men þat holden it bri3t and schinynge in his love" (Arnold, 25). But if the reader is expecting an argument for the authority of scripture or the legitimacy of the vernacular, what comes next is surprising:

> He knowiþ it [God's law] verrili þat fulfilliþ it, not þat rediþ it or telliþ it, for so doon ipocritis, enemyes þerof; and hornys in hise hondis, þat is, hise hondis weren strecchid and nailid in two corners of þe cros. Bischopis mytrid wiþ two hornys figuren þat þei schulden þoru good ensaumple putte þe folk fro vicis to virtues, but now þoru pride and covetise þei ben principal ensaumpleris of turnynge fro virtues to vicis; for þe which distruccioun Crist dyede on þe cros. (Arnold, 25)

The Wycliffite writer has very subtly reinterpreted "cornua" as Christ's own hands raised above his head during crucifixion, staying well within Rolle's framework while revising the original just enough to establish a contrast between the "cornua" of crucifixion and the distinctly more worldly horns of a bishop's ceremonial headdress. Bod. 288 thus accommodates itself to an "orthodox" devotional image as impossible to detach from

Rolle as it is from the more immediate context of ecclesiastical violence. The "advanced Lollardism" of the Canticles emerges not as an alternative to Rolle's orthodoxy, such as it was, but rather in dialectical conjunction with it.

<center>V</center>

Like the iconoclasm of a later period, anti-Wycliffite orthodoxy in the early fifteenth century operates according to a paradoxical logic: contesting the movement was an acknowledgement, however oblique, that it had social and theological appeal. The *English Psalter* was complicit in this project not because Rolle's text is actually orthodox but rather because Arundel, by reaffirming the status of Pecham's pastoral syllabus, envisioned instructive and devotional materials as vernacular alternatives to Wycliffite writing. His assumption seems to have been that the spiritual ardor of Rolle's text, the matrix of intense feelings it imputes to the contemplative life, would sequester devout readers from Wycliffite prerogatives. He could not, in other words, imagine the religious mutuality at the heart of the Psalter: a text meant to support solitary affective meditation on rather uncontroversial topics such as the problem of sin and the purification of the individual soul through penance had also given voice to a community ready to suffer for its adherence to God's law in scripture. Just as important, by turning to Rolle, Wycliffite redactors of the *English Psalter* demonstrate that theological argumentation was not the only form of social critique in the period. Instructive and devotional texts may not foreground challenging ideas in the way Wycliffite tracts and treatises do, but they cannot therefore be uncritically dismissed as remote from Wycliffite concerns; the *vita*

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contemplativa was itself a component of a larger late medieval ethic of spiritual

improvement and moral reform that did not end with the individual but extended to the

"churche" as an institution. Devotional meditation of the kind we see in Rolle, precisely

because it had been particularized as an anti-Wycliffite genre, intimates the very

questions of spiritual authority and religious jurisdiction it was thought to occlude. The

individualistic, self-enclosed spiritual life is not securely distinct from the ecclesiological

preoccupations of Wycliffites, such as the problem of the church's entanglements with

the world, of property and ownership. And this problem was as important for Rolle's

own sense about the significance of the eremitic life as it was for Wycliffites concerned

over the basis for just rule and the failure of the clergy to adopt the life of evangelical

poverty.[53]

I have already pointed to interpolated material in Psalm 73 criticizing "wordly

lordschip" and to the long addition to Psalm 80 expanding Rolle's rather laconic

commentary into a sustained attack on the "dampnable errors" of priests who refuse to

make Christ's poverty their own. Rolle's interpretation of Psalm 104, an account of the

origins of God's covenant with Israel which ends with an exhortation to observe his

statutes and keep his laws (*ut custodiant iustificationes eius et legem eius exquirant*),

asserts that God gave the Israelites "noght erthly thynge for thai sould sett thaire likynge

thar in and wax slaw in his seruys for sikirnes thar of" (372). Bod. 288 makes Rolle's

remarks on earthly things the starting point for more pointed criticism of "princis and

prelatis and riche men" who "han welþe in þis world" but who fail to "kepe hise

ri3twisnessis þat is þe love of god and of her nei3bore" (fol. 204r). And in the canticle

known as the Song of Moses, Bod. 288 reproduces much of Rolle's own commentary

but very deliberately extends his condemnation of "princys" and "gloryous men of this warld" to include "prelatis" who "setten al her love and her likyng in erþeli welþe" (504; Arnold, p. 19).

In these examples, the "advanced Lollardism" of the canticles, to return to Arnold's description, belongs to a broader anticlerical discourse that is difficult to associate exclusively with heresy. As Wendy Scase has shown, anticlericalism became a powerful vehicle for expressing general discontent over the state of pastoral care in England and disquiet over the lapsed duties of the lower clergy, a question forced by the increasing prominence of the friars and their competition with secular clergy over pastoral responsibilities.[54] What is more, both Bod. 288 and the original version of Rolle's text contribute equally to this anticlerical attitude, even if interpolated passages are more specific in directing their criticism to contemporary clergy. Rolle's commitment to the solitary life is predicated on some of the same discontents with the clerical hierarchy, its presumed rights and privileges, that motivated Wycliffites to deny the authority of extra-scriptural law. Moreover, none of the interpolations puts forward an overtly theological argument for disendowment, instead emphasizing Christ's authoritative poverty and virtuous work in the world—concerns shared with any number of late medieval texts.[55] And while it is true that references to the worldly lordship of the clergy are often found in Wycliffite texts from this period, England was accustomed to such disputes following the dissemination of Fitzralph's *De Pauperie Salvatoris* in 1356.[56] Wyclif had included parts of Fitzralph's treatise in his own *De Dominio Divino*, written some years later, thereby taking part in a very old debate about the extent to which the sinful have the authority to exercise dominion, evangelical or civil. The

metrical prologue's assertion that Rolle's "blessyd boke" had been "ympyd in with eresy," an assertion echoed in much criticism surrounding the *English Psalter* and its Wycliffite versions, would be more convincing if the prominence given to familiar anticlerical sentiments in Bod. 288 had instead been given to questions about the eucharistic teachings of the church or a defense of the vernacular.[57]

For Wyclif and his learned Oxford contemporaries, many of whom were preoccupied with the question of clerical hierarchies, uneasiness over the role of priests was the logical outcome of their wide reading in the late medieval university curriculum, with its emphasis on finding universal templates for civil and evangelical arrangements.[58] On what universal principle, a reader of Aristotle might be impelled to ask, is the relationship between lord and subject predicated?[59] The anticlericalism of Bod. 288, however, seems motivated more by the very real moral failings of the clergy. Focusing on such failings as consistently as it does, the manuscript also naturalizes Wycliffites' own status as spiritual intercessors. The pastoral framework of Rolle's text, in which he assumes responsibility for the spiritual wellbeing of Margaret Kirkby, implicitly recognizes that one's salvation may depend on the intervention of a spiritual guide or authority; the question of whether or not this was to be an ordained priest is beside the point for the most strident of Wyclif's followers. While even the most ambiguous kind of mediation does not suit Wyclif's own idea of pure religion, in which the individual need only keep the law, it presents no problems for the redactor of Bod. 288. The Wycliffite version, to be sure, invests the *topos* of anticlericalism with a different range of associations simply by introducing terms and referents—such as "prelates"—where they never were before, as the lengthy interpolated passages in the canticles demonstrate. Yet

even the most strident condemnations of institutional religious authority—such as an interpolated passage mentioned earlier referring to "Bischopis mytrid wiþ two hornys"—are not enough to efface the fact that Rolle's own pastoral responsibility towards Margaret Kirkby, though non-clerical, itself instates a kind of spiritual hierarchy (Arnold, 25).[60] In this respect, the Psalter suggests that the laity's need for authoritative instruction and guidance was not any less urgent simply because more people could read religious texts for themselves. These overlapping tensions and ambiguities in the reception of the *English Psalter* reveal the difficulty of pointing to anticlerical discourse to substantiate claims that Wycliffites wanted to dispense with every kind of prescriptive social or religious arrangement.[61] At the same time, they show how Bod. 288 negotiated the disjunction between Wyclif's sometimes extreme formulations of religious jurisdiction and a late medieval tradition of devotional writing concerned with providing pastoral care and spiritual guidance.[62] What we encounter here, then, is the survival into post-1409 contexts of a contemplative and individualistic mode of spirituality, one which (as Rolle's text amply demonstrates) does not insist on transcending all forms of intercessory authority but which does not make any special provisions for religious mediation either. There was space within mainstream devotional culture for Lollard biblical scholarship of the type we see in Bod. 288.[63]

VI

That Rolle's "blessyd boke," to reference the metrical prologue from MS Laud 286, acquired a different range of associations once it left the cloister comes as no

surprise. Nor is the anxiety so evident in the prologue concerning the possibility of

religious works falling into the hands of new vernacular audiences hard to comprehend;

the appropriation of devotional literature by a wider reading public is a particularly

disjunctive form of cultural translation.[64] Though it uses the term "heresy," the real

concern of the prologue in Laud 286 is not with erroneous doctrine—it does not impute

any specific belief or set of beliefs to those whom it blames for tainting Rolle's original

text. It is precisely this irreducible logic which, in its very lack of theological specificity,

permits readers to generalize Wycliffism into an oppositional discourse. The

Constitutions project Wycliffism in much the same way, taking issue less (or not at all)

with any specific doctrinal or theological conclusions supposedly held by the

movement's adherents but all the while still concerning itself, as a statute, with the

problem of alternative theologies.

It is therefore easy to miss the different points at which the *English Psalter* and its

Wycliffite revisions converge, and especially their shared investment in a broader

psalmic tradition valorizing tribulation and spiritual endurance. Although I mentioned

these themes earlier, I now want to return to them in more detail, analyzing two instances

where Bod. 288 is revealing not so much for what it adds or revises but instead for how

little it departs from the vocabulary and reasoning of Rolle's own commentary. In the

Wycliffite text known as *The Lanterne of Li3t*, an exegetical treatise reliably dated to

between 1409 and 1415, the discussion of Arundel's *Constitutions* centers on an

exposition of the "fyue hidouse sau3tis" [five hideous assaults] of the antichrist "a3en þe

seruauntis of God" (17).[65] The first assault consists of "thise þise newe constituciouns bi

whos strengþe anticrist enterditiþ chirchis, soumneþ prechours, suspendiþ resceyuours, &

priueþ hem þer bennefice, cursiþ heerars, & takiþ awey þe goodis of hem þat forþeren þe precheing of a prest, 3he þou3 it were an aungel of heuene…" (17-18). The second through fifth assaults of antichrist follow naturally from discussion of the *Constitutions*: "tribulacioun," "inquisiscioun," "persecucioun," and "execucioun." The treatise explains these concepts in reference to Psalm 10, twice citing verse 9 (*insidiatur ut rapiat pauperem rapere pauperem dum adtrahit eum*).[66] In its exposition of "persecucioun," the treatise glosses this verse with the assertion that "Anticrist sittiþ & sottiþ in pees of þis world wiþ riche men in her dennes, but þe pore meke symple and loweli hem he aspiseþ & pursueþ, hem he ouer-lepiþ & ouer-renneþ, raveisching hem boþe bodili & goostli" (19). The second gloss on verse 9 is in reference to "execucioun," explaining that "whanne anticrist seþ þat he availiþ not in þese forseid turmentis, þanne he executiþ his malice a3ens Cristis chosen" (20).

Rolle translates Psalm 10:9 so literally that most audiences without a knowledge of Latin would find it difficult to comprehend, but his commentary is clear enough:

> He waites with treson to rauysch the pore fra god, to rauysch the pore fra blissid pouert and make him riche in fals delites, whils he drawis him til him with fayre hetis & sare pynes. Wha may thynke whatkyn tribulacioun that sall be when he that will desaife sall hafe the swerd in the ta hand & the myracle in the tother. (37)[67]

Given the evident significance of Psalm 10:9 to how Wycliffites conceptualized suffering and persecution in the age of Arundel, it would be logical to expect Bod. 288 to expand the original considerably, or at least to make it clear to the reader that this verse now connotes something very different than it did in Rolle's day, before the *Constitutions* set new discursive processes in motion. Yet the commentary we find in Bod. 288 stays

remarkably close to Rolle, keeping the first sentence of his gloss intact and merging with the second a rather familiar critique of a clergy besotted with material wealth:

> þat folowe antecrist he schal be richid wiþ false geten goodis and for hem he schal graunte hem her lustis a3ens resoun and goddis bidding: who may þinke what tribulacioun schal be whanne he þat wole disseyne [deprive, dispossess] schal haue þe swerd of veniaunce in þat oon hond and feyned myraclis in þe toþer. (fol. 16r)

In its interpretation of Psalm 10:9, Bod. 288 highlights the power of antichrist much as *The Lanterne of Li3t* does, but articulates that power through the logic and lexicon of Rolle's commentary. Instead of providing a novel gloss on this crucial verse, or deploying it within strict Wycliffite parameters, Bod. 288 makes itself heard in terms already supplied by Rolle. If this is an instance of an orthodox text being corrupted by the interpolation of heretical passages, those passages seem to have more in common with the *English Psalter* itself than they do with a highly polemical conspectus of Wycliffite tenets.[68]

The Lanterne of Li3t* also cites Psalm 33:19 (*multae tribulationes iustorum et de omnibus his liberavit eos dominus*) in a later section concerning the "ioye in tribulacioun," invoking this verse as evidence that "Crist behi3t þis maner of lijf to hise owene disciplis and 3aue hem in counfourt þat þei schal haue a graciouse delyueraunce, for þanne schal blisse be miche þe swetter whanne þei comen þerto" (77). Again, the Wycliffite gloss in Bod. 288 on the same verse shares the *Lanterne*'s emphasis on the forms of tribulation and affliction which distinguish Christ's true disciples from their enemies, but makes its argument by extrapolating the logic of Rolle's own commentary, which consists of the following: "Many ere thaire tribulaciouns for thai ere of the deuel,

of enuyouse men and of thaire fleysse, ffor thi he that suffirs not he is not rightwis: faere anguys ere of wickid men" (121). Rather than introducing heretical views into Rolle's commentary on a well-known psalmic reference to tribulation, Bod. 288 situates itself within the penitential discourse of the original, juxtaposing its meditation on "enemyes" with Rolle's emphasis on the contemplative's struggle against sin:

> [M]anye ben þe tribulaciouns of ri3twise men for þe devel and wickide men and mennes owne flesch ceessiþ nevere to assaile hem and noie hem wherefore who þat suffriþ not persecuciouns here of summe of þese enemyes or of alle ben not ri3twiis. þerefore suffre gladli and mekely alle anoies [hardships, adversities] for þere þoru a man is maad a glorious victour and bri3t angel bifore god, and þat no man be schamyd to suffre for god alle anoies. (fol. 63v)

Both Rolle and his Wycliffite readers consolidate their spiritual authority in relation to the idea that all those who are members of the true church are "sumtyme sore wounded, as seint paule and marie magdalene and mony other were."[69] Their readings of the Psalms draw on a discourse of persecution and endurance with deep roots in the biblical story of Israel. And both overlay this providential history with contemporary representations of Christ's suffering. Even without the obligatory references to Mary or the graphic depictions of Christ's wounds, interpolated passages in Bod. 288 share in the power of the crucifixion as a devotional schema, one in part derived from Rolle himself in works such as *Meditation B* and *Incendium Amoris*.[70] More than one Wycliffite addition is in the mode of commentary added to Psalm 7:4 (*si reddidi retribuentibus mihi mala decidam merito ab inimicis meis inanis*) counseling that "men schulden my3tili fi3te a3ens goostly enemyes, wiþ bisy and ofte þinkynge on cristis harde passioun, in which alle enemyes ben overcomen" (fol.10v). In commentary on Psalm 77.3, an utterly

orthodox exposition of Christ's humanity is followed by the conclusion that the passion

"is occasioun of hardynes to alle othere to suffre wilfulli what evere tribulacioun be

profrid [for proffered] to hem, sithin no man aftir it schal suffre nether so myche dreede

ne peyne as he dide crist whanne he heng on the cros" (Bod. 288, 77.3). And, in a long

interpolated passage from British Library Royal 18, a recension of the *English Psalter*

dating from the first half of the fifteenth century, commentary expanding Rolle's remarks

on Psalm 108:29 articulates Wycliffite positions regarding priestly poverty and the

sufferings of the elect, but as components of a much broader concern for recovering the

apostolic ideals of the early church, the central motif of which is readiness to suffer for

the love of Christ:

> Þe hooly lyuyng of crist and his trewe and charitable techyng, whiche is þe
> moost acceptable sacrifise to þe fadir of heuene, is knowe in heuene and in
> erþe…and whanne crist wente oute of þis lijf, he comaundide hise apostlis
> and by hem alle his prestis to þe worldis eende…and to lyue so þeraftir þat
> þur3 her goode ensaumple of hooly lyuyng and trewe techyng and pacient
> suffryng of alle aduersitees…And moost glad we shulden be forto haue a
> trewe cause and to suffre þerefore martirdom, for þer þur3 is moost sikir
> passage hennes, and it is þe moost acceptable sacrifise þat any creature
> may pleese wiþ þe lord god here in erþe.[71]

It is the penitent's focus on the exemplarity of Christ, together with the *caritas*

such a focus induces, which most matter to Wycliffites, although these criteria do not

preclude depicting the scene of the crucifixion in vivid terms, as in the above examples,

or using devotional images as templates for understanding Lollard persecutions in

fifteenth-century England. The discourse of "martirdom" holds all these different social

and historical registers together, invoking both an underlying biblical narrative and a

post-biblical history of inquests and executions extending into fifteenth-century England.

In such an environment, works of spiritual edification and complaint articulate

interrelated concerns, as Janet Coleman has argued; this convergence, already implicit in

Rolle's text, intensifies under the pressure of its Wycliffite revisions.[72] At the same time,

Wycliffite texts such as *The Lanterne of Li3t* or the interpolated versions of the *English*

Psalter share in the violence of the sacred *already* at the center of orthodox penitential

spirituality, in such a way that the exemplarity of Christ's suffering includes even those

whom the church has labeled heretical.

VII

In these instances, then, interpolation, notwithstanding the anxieties it caused

among anti-Wycliffite factions, bespeaks a larger truth about what is in fact the

movement's attachment to the symbolic order of "orthodoxy," at least as such a term

applies to Rolle's text.[73] It is this reciprocal relationship which allows Wycliffite *topoi* to

take shape within the nexus of Rolle's commentary even as the *English Psalter* itself

intimates the reformist themes of the early and mid fifteenth century. And it is this same

reciprocity which Arundel utterly fails to comprehend. The framework set up by the

Constitutions for conceptualizing Wycliffism cannot, for instance, fully accommodate

and contain the emphasis so many of the interpolated passages lay on the life of simple

apostolic devotion, and its close relationship to the contemplative life as it was

envisioned and practiced by Rolle himself. It is true that Rolle's focus on the interiority

of penance could shade suggestively into Wycliffite anti-institutionalism and that such

distinctions, though not always obvious, had real significance in an era where so many of

the most upending controversies involved jurisdictional questions.[74] Nor does either

version of the Psalms, Rolle's or its various Wycliffite redactions, project a singular and

uniform narrative; both are vast and profoundly dialogic texts—devotional compilations

in themselves—capable of sustaining multiple voices and ideological positions. But the

key point is that the particular mode of "orthodoxy" licensed and sustained by the *English

Psalter* is precisely what appeals to the Wycliffite(s) responsible for making Bod. 288.

It is easy to imagine Wycliffites recoiling from mainstream devotional culture,

and in some important respects they did.[75] But in the connections traced out above, it is

the idiom of popular piety, the psalmist's and Rolle's own, that sets the terms for a kind

of spiritual authority from which Wycliffites are in no way excluded. Seen from this

perspective, Wycliffism did not always need to introduce a totally new theology in

making the case for reform. Just as often, the movement's views interacted dialectically

with received beliefs and practices, especially in cases where these were themselves

already ambiguous, as with Rolle's understanding of spiritual mediation and the

dynamics of penance. In other words, there was room for the development of Wycliffite

sensibilities in the interstices of "traditional religion."[76] The interpolation of devotional

texts disrupts the idea that there is a basic, unbridgeable gulf between "heresy" and the

rest of contemporary religious culture. And although Wycliffites often disparaged the

dominant forms of lay piety in the period, these were themselves never so placid or inert

that they could not invoke alternative representations in an environment already altered

by searing controversies over the vernacular. This blurring of categories is all the more

remarkable because the *Constitutions* sought to combat heresy by establishing firmer

borders among different modes of late medieval religious discourse; by this measure, at least, they seem to have failed.[77]

But perhaps the more important point is that the sense of spiritual immobility and self-enclosure Arundel and his allies sought to cultivate amongst the laity still serves as a rationale for excluding Wycliffism from late medieval devotional culture. That the movement is so often perceived as exterior to "orthodoxy" is itself a *precept* and an *effect* of anti-Wycliffite measures such as the *Constitutions*.[78] Whether or not we agree with the emphasis Nicholas Watson and others place on the statute as an agent of cultural change, there can be no doubting that they were predicated on an idea of Wycliffism as an oppositional discourse. Yet the interest Wycliffites took in Rolle's *English Psalter*, and the nature of their revisions in a prominent recension, Bodley 288, suggests that their relation to mainstream religious culture remained intimate and complex. Wycliffite texts and traditions may indeed seem apart from the canon of popular religious writing that takes hold in the wake of efforts to contain heresy and codify proper belief. We should not, however, take this as evidence that Arundel won the day, only that we have yet to recover Wycliffites and their books from the reifying effects of statutory history.

VIII

Nor does the way Bod. 288 envision the Bible and its community of readers allow Wyclif's own idea of scripture to stand unchallenged. This problem is an important corollary to some of the points I have made above, especially those concerning the decalogue and the authority of God's law. The discourse of scriptural authority in Bod.

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288 revolves around these concepts, but as they are refracted both through the ambiguous paradigm of Rolle's own "orthodoxy" and (like so many other Wycliffite texts) a more general Augustinian notion of scripture as a truth reflected in the mortal mind and realized "þoru good ensample of word and werk," in the words of a passage interpolated into Psalm 112:8 of the *English Psalter* (fol. 214r).[79] There is, however, another dialectic at work here, a dialectic between different ideas of scripture. The first considers the Bible a written document which encodes the confessional hopes and concerns of the faithful, who read their own history in its pages. The second considers the Bible the emanation of a divine author, the instantiation of a sacred truth which exists independently of material books and human interpretive grammars.

This is, of course, not only too stark a contrast, but also just one of many such dialectics that are constitutive of Lollard biblical scholarship. But it is one worth focusing on here because the interpolation of manuscripts lays bare these competing models of scriptural authority. Interpolation allows Wycliffite redactors of the *English Psalter* to define—or, more properly speaking, redefine—the community of the faithful through the prism of an authoritative biblical narrative, made even more poignant and topical in Rolle's vernacular commentary. The social and political register of Bod. 288 is, to use one of its key terms, "þe peple," an expression which, in its vernacular and linguistic self-consciousness, has no equivalent in Wyclif. But this process of spiritual self-definition also requires the medium of the text itself, not just a disembodied and immaterial Book of Life; it is the very condition of interpolation that what Rolle's Wycliffite readers find in the *English Psalter* is a biblical book already shaped and inscribed by successive communities of reception.

On the evidence of academic writings analyzed in earlier chapters, it seems fair to say that Wyclif himself was loath to imagine such a possibility. He elevates his disdain for the materiality of biblical reading and writing—for the textual body of scripture itself—into a philosophical position. For if the Bible were a book in any sense, "as many people as it pleases could then render all scripture heretical, damnable, and potentially harmful, promoting no virtue or honor, and as a consequence possessing no authority." [80] Here he does not sound very different from the "orthodox" writer of the metrical prologue who decries scriptural texts "ympyd in with eresy" (2). *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, Wyclif's most capacious discussion of scriptural authority and interpretation, is in many respects a sustained effort to deny a broader history of the Bible's textual reception, as well as the authority of the manuscript page itself—the very places where the Wycliffism of interpolated texts such as Bod. 288 comes into view.

In an article written some time ago, the implications of which scholarship is only now beginning to explore, Alaister Minnis remarked that Wyclif's "enthusiasm for the Word of God in the NeoPlatonic sense blinds him to the flesh and blood reality of scribes, compilers and authors," adding that "what comes across very strongly [in *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*] is Wyclif's categorical refusal to regard the Bible as a book *per se.*"[81] The flesh and blood realities of book production may not have been germane to Wyclif, but they most certainly were to Wycliffite writers in the age of Arundel, if interpolated manuscripts such as Bod. 288 are any evidence.

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[1] *The Psalter or Psalms of David and Certain Canticles With a Translation and Exposition in English by Richard Rolle of Hampole*, ed. H. R. Bramley (Oxford, 1884), p. 2, ll. 49-52. Hereafter cited parenthetically by page number.

[2] Although it circulated widely in late medieval England, Rolle's *English Psalter* has yet to be published in a modern critical edition. The only edition in print is Bramley's incompletely collated 1884 edition, cited above. For all of its editorial faults, however, the Bramley edition carefully follows its base manuscript, University College Oxford 64, a description of which can be found in H. Coxe, *Catalogus codicum mss. qui in collegiis aulisque oxoniensibus hodie adservantur*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1852) 1: 19. I have checked my citations of Bramley's text against the corresponding passages in UCO 64 and found them to be consistent. Therefore I have made it the practice throughout this chapter when citing passages from the "original" version of Rolle's text to use Bramley's edition rather than UCO 64 itself. The close correspondence between Bramley and one of the better and more complete versions of Rolle's *English Psalter* does not, however, lessen the need for a fully collated critical edition. To date, the only modern effort to edit the entire *English Psalter* is an incomplete series of Fordham University dissertations. *English Psalter*, eds. Carney, Cavellerano, Callanan, Rodriguez (unpublished dissertations, Fordham University, 1976-1980). Until such an edition becomes available, any account of the relationships among the Psalter's various manuscript editions, interpolated or otherwise, must be considered provisional. At the same time, this chapter does not attempt to offer a description of the manuscript tradition; instead, it uses a textual problem—interpolation—as a heuristic device, as an opportunity to recover a complex range of attitudes towards the sacred, and to understand how different mentalities coalesced around the text of Rolle's *English Psalter* in fifteenth century England.

[3] N. Watson, *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 246-247. Riddy, noting that several of Rolle's works were written for Kirkby, comments that it is women "whose spirituality obliges the elusive and eccentric solitary to discover his own capacity for teaching in English on the contemplative life." F. Riddy, "'Women talking about the things of God': a late medieval sub-culture," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. C. Meale (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 106-107.

[4] For which see A. Hudson, "The Debate on Bible Translation, Oxford 1401," in *English Historical Review* 90 (1975): 1-18, as well as R. Hanna, "The Difficulty of Ricardian Prose Translation: The Case of the Lollards," in *Modern Language Quarterly* 51 (1990): 319-340.

[5] My analysis of one recension in particular, MS Bodley 288, will supply most of the material for this chapter. A summary of the extant manuscripts of the *English Psalter*, original and interpolated, can be found in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500*, 9 vols., ed. J. Severs and A. Hartung (Archon Books, 1967-1993), p. 3415 (in the section by V. Lagorio and M. Sargent). With one exception—MS Royal 18.b.xxi, to which the *Manual* assigns a dating range of 1525 to 1575—all thirteen known interpolated versions are fifteenth-century texts. The absence of an edited revised version has only highlighted the growing awareness of how central the *English Psalter* is to our understanding of Wycliffism, as Fiona Somerset points out in "Wycliffite Prose," in *A Companion to Middle English Prose*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (D. S. Brewer, 2004), p. 199. For similar remarks on the interest of Rolle's text, see H. Barr and A. Hutchinson, "The Aftermath," in *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale: Essays in Honour of Anne Hudson*, ed. Barr and Hutchinson (Brepols, 2005), pp. 405-406. A full discussion of the manuscripts still awaits, but for an indication of the complexity of the textual relationships, see Hudson "The Variable Text," in *Crux and Controversy in Middle English Textual Criticism*, ed.

A. J. Minnis (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 55-58. Following Everett (D. Everett, 'The Middle English prose Psalter of Richard Rolle of Hampole,' in *Modern Language Review* 17 [1922]: 217-27, 337-50; 18 (1923): 381-93), Hudson, who is currently editing the interpolated versions, identifies three groups of revised Psalter manuscripts; Bodley 288 is one of three from the first group that includes the entire Psalter. For ease of reference, all Psalm citations in this chapter correspond to the numbering of Bramley's edition, which occasionally differs both from Bod. 288 and the Vulgate itself. Latin biblical quotations are from the *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, ed. B. Fischer et al., 3rd ed. (Stuttgart, 1984).

[6] An English commentary once ascribed to Wyclif underscores this point, speaking of "deuyn officis…out taken þe sautir, of wheche þei may have breuyaries, þat is smale sauteris or abreggid." *The English Works of Wyclif*, 2nd ed., ed. F. D. Matthew, (Trübner, 1880), p. 41. Hanna remarks that Rolle's close replication of Latin syntax and word order "implies the potential use of the translation as liturgical primer." R. Hanna, "Rolle and Related Works," in *A Companion to Middle English Prose*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (D. S. Brewer, 2004), p. 26. Swanson argues that the *English Psalter* was used by nuns alongside the Latin text. R. W. Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe*, *c.1215-c.1515* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 77.

[7] A problem compounded by the fact that many of the Wycliffite versions of the *English Psalter* are not simply Rolle's original with comments added in a different hand but rather independent recensions in a single hand (often that of a professional scribe, as in Bod. 288) of an interpolated or otherwise revised exemplar. Rolle also employs collocations that would later become associated with Lollardy, such as "trewe men" and "trewe cristen men," making strict distinctions between an "original" text and its revised versions all that more difficult. On the Wycliffite valence of these expressions, see A. Hudson, "A Lollard Sect Vocabulary?" reprinted in *Lollards and Their Books* (Hambledon, 1985), pp. 166-167.

[8] The body of modern scholarship on the Psalter and its Wycliffite revisions consists primarily of the following: D. Everett, "The Middle English Prose Psalter of Richard Rolle of Hampole," in *Modern Language Review* 17 (1922): 217-227, 337-350; 18 (1923): 381-393; K. Gustafson, "Richard Rolle's *English Psalter* and the Making of a Lollard Text," in *Viator* 33 (2002): 294-309; A. Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*: *Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 259-264; and, by the same author, "The Variable Text," in *Crux and Controversy in Middle English Textual Criticism*, ed. A. J. Minnis (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 55-58; M. Kuczynski, *Prophetic Song: The Psalms as Moral Discourse in Late Medieval England* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995); and, by the same author, "Rolle among the Reformers: Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Wycliffite Copies of Richard Rolle's Psalter," in *Mysticism and Spirituality in Medieval England*, ed. W. F. Pollard and R. Boenig (Boydell and Brewer, 1997) pp. 177-202; L. Muir "The Influence of the Rolle and Wyclifite Psalters upon the Psalter of the Authorized Version," in *Modern Language Review* 30 (1935): 302-310.

[9] Rolle's was not the only such text Wycliffites interpolated. A whole class of materials made for the religious instruction of the laity, common after the pastoral reforms of 1238 and 1281, survived into the fifteenth century, only to be taken up by Lollard redactors. The *Lay Folk's Catechism*, the *Pore Caitiff*, and a version of the *Ancrenne Wisse* all exist in interpolated versions. Christina von Nolcken notes the "known Wycliffite habit of simply editing and augmenting existing works," including the following: Rolle's *English Psalter*, Clement of Llanthony's *Harmony*, Thorseby's *Lay Folk's Catechism*, the *Elucidarium*, the *Pore Caitiff*, and a version of the *Ancrenne Wisse* known as *The Recluse. The Middle English Translation of the Rosarium Theologie,* ed. C. von Nolcken (Carl Winter, 1979), p. 21 (and see n. 24 on the same page). See,

by the same author, "The *Recluse* and its Readers: Some Observations on a Lollard Interpolated Version of *Ancrene Wisse*," in *A Companion to Ancrene Wisse*, ed. Y. Wada (D. S. Brewer, 2003), pp. 175-197. In regard to the interpolated version of *Ancrenne Wisse* found in MS Pepys 2498, see R. Hanna, *London Literature, 1300-1380* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 202-221. See, as well, Anne Hudson "A New Look at the *Lay Folk's Catechcism*," in *Viator* 16 (1985): 243-258, and, by the same author, "The *Lay Folk's Catechism*: A Postcript," in *Viator* 18 (1988): 307-309. Also relevant is Michael Kuczynski's chapter on interpolated Psalm versions in *Prophetic Song: The Psalms as Moral Discourse in Late Medieval England* (University of Pennsylvania, 1995). Margaret Aston asserts that the *Prick of Conscience*, extant in more than a hundred manuscripts, was another Wycliffite-interpolated text. M. Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (Hambledon, 1984), p. 210, n. 83. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton briefly mentions London, Burlington House, Society of Antiquities, MS 687, which contains a Wycliffite-interpolated *Prick of Conscience*. K. Kerby-Fulton, "Piers Plowman," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. D. Wallace (Cambridge, 1998), p. 537. This archive should make us reconsider or widen the range of associations surrounding late medieval pastoral theology like Rolle's *English Psalter*, for heterodox material was widely adapted and anthologized in devotional compilations throughout the fifteenth century. On this process, see Gillespie, "Vernacular Books of Religion," in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain*, ed. F. Griffiths and D. Pearsall (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 317-344. While their growing religious and political extremism is frequently remarked upon, Wyclif and his followers nevertheless sought to engage and appropriate precisely those audiences for whom texts such as the *English Psalter* were a setpiece of private devotion; they carried this process out not only through preaching and sermonizing but also by remaking existing manuscripts. These symmetries have not always been visible to scholarship, perhaps in part because the views "attributed to the would-be reformers were calculated to provoke religious outrage and moral scandal," as P. McNiven recounts in *Heresy and Politics in the Reign of Henry IV: The Burning of John Badby* (Boydell, 1987), p. 94

[10] For the text of the *Constitutions*, see *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, ed. D. Wilkins, 4 vols. (London, 1737), 3:314-319; an English translation is available in Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 8 vols., ed. G. Townsend (Seeley, Burnside, and Seeley, 1843), 3:242-248. The significance of the *Constitutions* with respect to Wyclif and the vernacular is well known, article 7 especially so. This is the provision of the statute decreeing that "no man, hereafter, by his own authority translate any text of the scripture into English or any other tongue, by way of a book, pamphlet [*libellus*], or treatise; and that no man read any such book, pamphlet, or treatise now lately set forth in the time of John Wyclif, or since" ("…statuimus igitur et ordinamus, ut nemo deinceps aliquem textum sacrae scripturae auctoritate sua in linguam Anglicanam, vel aliam transferat, per viam libri, libelli, aut tractatus, nec legatur aliquis hujusmodi liber, libellus, aut tractatus jam noviter tempore dicti Johannis Wycliff" [Wilkins, 3:317]).

[11] N. Watson, "Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's *Constitutions* of 1409," in *Speculum* 70 (1995): 859. The determinations of Palmer and Butler against vernacular biblical translation are reprinted in M. Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible and other Medieval Biblical Versions* (Cambridge, 1920), pp. 399-437. Their (equally orthodox) interlocutor was Richard Ullerston, whose tract on the question remains unedited but served as the basis for an English commentary mistakenly attributed by Deanesly to John Purvey, as demonstrated in A. Hudson, "The Debate on Bible Translation." The English adaptation of Ullerston's determination can be found in "A Lollard Tract: On Translating the Bible into English," ed. C. Bühler, in *Medium Aevum* 7 (1938): 167-183. Fiona Somerset discusses post-*Constitutions* Wycliffite texts in "Expanding the

Langlandian Canon," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 17 (2003): 73-92. The sermons of Longleat 4 also "refer unambiguously and critically to the *Constitutions*," according to A. Hudson and H. L. Spencer, "Old Author, New Work: The Sermons of MS Longleat 4," in *Medium Aevum* 53 (1984): 220-238 (reference at p. 222).

[12] A growing body of work has demonstrated the extent to which the *Constitutions* were centrally concerned with intellectual life at Oxford, thereby qualifying Watson's view that the statute and its injunctions against English scripture ushered in a newly restrictive environment for all of vernacular writing. The most important of these studies, to my mind, are the following: A. J. Minnis, "Absent Glosses: A Crisis of Vernacular Commentary in Late-Medieval England?" in *Essays in Medieval Studies* 20 (2003): 1-17; J. Simpson, "Saving Satire after Arundel: John Audelay's *Marcol and Solomon*," in *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale: Essays in Honour of Anne Hudson*, ed. H. Barr and A. Hutchinson (Brepols, 2005), pp. 387-404; F. Somerset, "Expanding the Langlandian Canon: Radical Latin and the Stylistics of Reform," in *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 17 (2003): 73-92, and, by the same author, "Professionalizing Translation at the Turn of the Fifteenth Century: Ullerston's *Determinacio*, Arundel's *Constitutiones*" in *The Vulgar Tongue: Medieval and Postmedieval Vernacularity*, ed. F. Somerset and N. Watson (Pennsylvania State University, 2003), pp. 145-157. See, also, Copeland's discussion of the eleventh constitution, which she argues "alone probably did more damage to freedom of intellectual exchange at Oxford than all the other decrees in this legislation," in *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages: Lollardy and Ideas of Learning* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 208 ff. Workman, in his biography of Wyclif, long ago noted that the *Constitutions* were "specially aimed at crushing out freedom of thought in the schools." H. Workman, *John Wyclif: A Study of the English Medieval Church*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1926), 2: 356. On the authorial vagaries of statutory discourse and the hazards of attributing individual acts to the official "in whose name they were promulgated," see I. Forrest, *The Detection of Heresy in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 89-90. Whatever conclusions we may draw about Arundel's focus on Oxford, it is important to note, as Catto does, that the university was very much part of a wider Latin-European culture of learning, not to mention a center of learned preaching, which meant that any provision affecting the status of theological teaching and study at the university would very likely have ramifications for intellectual culture elsewhere. J. I. Catto, "Wyclif and Wycliffism at Oxford, I356-I430," in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 2: *Late Medieval Oxford*, ed. Catto and R. Evans (Oxford, 1992), pp. 175-261. Of course, this could be the very reason for a focus on Oxford, as Copeland suggests: "Arundel's decrees of 1407 would have a profound but also curious impact on the link between academic and lay cultures. By suppressing new ranks of heresy within Oxford it succeeded in restoring (at least in terms of ideological compliance) the hierarchical difference between elite academic powers and non-latinate laity, cutting off university intellectuals from renewed involvement with lay heretical communities." Copeland, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent*, p. 214. For the significance of the *Constitutions* to late medieval traditions of preaching and sermonizing, see H. L. Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 163-195. Finally, for a recent forum on the *Constitutions* and Watson's influential article, see *English Language Notes* 44.1 (Spring, 2006): 77-127.

[13] R. W. Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe, c. 1215-c.1515*, pp. 8-9.

[14] Watson, for instance, proceeds from the premise that Wycliffite discourse can be separated out from other forms of religious writing, thereby allowing to stand unchallenged an implicit distinction between Wycliffite thought and the larger literary culture in which the movement was very much embedded (as the existence of interpolated manuscripts vividly illustrates): his intent,

he says, is to focus "on the effects of the campaign against Lollardy on what are traditionally thought of as mainstream religious texts: devotional, pastoral, and 'mystical' writing the orthodoxy of which is generally taken for granted." Watson, "Censorship and Cultural Change," p. 825. However much anti-heresy measures may have affected writing not commonly affiliated with "Lollardy," the presumed distance between Wycliffite and "mainstream religious texts" is itself rarely scrutinized, in part because much scholarship on vernacularity in the period is predicated on sustaining this very distinction. For illuminating remarks on this methodological problem, see Hanna, *London Literature, 1300-1380* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 305-313. This understanding of textual culture has been perpetuated even by those who argue that the *Constitutions* failed, such as Michael Sargent: "Vernacular theological writing in England in this period was characterized by a polarization that involved both the continued spread of Wycliffite literature on the one side, and, on the other, by a closing of ranks around precisely those kinds of literature to which the Wycliffites most objected." *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, ed. M. Sargent (Exeter, 2004), xix. James Simpson similarly concludes that Lollardy, being "primarily focused on theological and ecclesiological issues," had "moved quite outside the devotional and penitential limits that clerical cultivators of lay spirituality had sedulously defined." Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution* (Oxford, 2002), p. 436. To these positions contrast A. Patschovsky, who, referencing Grundmann, remarks that "…heretical movements of the Middle Ages had arisen out of the mainstream of medieval religious developments. As a result, they don't reflect isolated phenomena, but can only be understood in a broader context, on which they themselves produce repercussions at the same time." A. Patschovsky, "Heresy and Society: On the Political Function of Heresy in the Medieval World," in *Texts and the Repression of Medieval Heresy*, ed. P. Biller and C. Bruschi (Boydell, 2003), p. 25. Yet this truth has not generally been extended to Wycliffism, except to demonstrate the movement's reactionary attitude towards contemporary religious culture.

[15] My understanding of reification draws loosely from a tradition of Marxist cultural criticism which attempts to analyze the processes whereby social and economic constructs are given the status of objective reality. Central to this tradition is the work of Lukács, especially his essay "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," in *History and Class Consciousness* (Merlin, 1967). For insightful discussion of reification in post-Marxist contexts, see P. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Doubleday, 1966).

[16] This is the central provision in the seventh of thirteen constitutions, as recorded in *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, ed. D. Wilkins (London, 1737): "statuimus igitur et ordinamus, ut nemo deinceps aliquem textum sacrae scripturae auctoritate sua in linguam Anglicanam, vel aliam transferat, per viam libri, libelli, aut tractatus, nec legatur aliquis huiusmodi liber, libellus, aut tractatus iam noviter tempore dicti Johannis Wycliff, sive citra, compositus…" (3:317).

[17] Coletti nicely encapsulates the dominant critical perspective, arguing that fifteenth-century vernacular writers "resort to strategies of indirection in the prevailing climate of censorship established by Arundel's *Constitutions*." Coletti, *Mary Magdalene and the Drama of the Saints*: *Theater, Gender, and Religion in Late Medieval England* (University of Pennsylvania, 2004), pp. 148-149. See her note (p. 49) on H. L. Spencer's discussion of "safe books" in *English Preaching in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 320-334.

[18] Gillespie, "Anonymous Devotional Writings," p. 135.

[19] M. Aston, "Lollardy and Literacy," in *Lollards and Reformers* (Hambledon, 1984), p. 211; R. W. Swanson, "Literacy, Heresy, History and Orthodoxy: Perspectives and Permutations for the Later Middle Ages," in *Heresy and Literacy, 1000-1530*, eds. Biller and A. Hudson (Cambridge, 1994), p. 291. C.f., J. Coleman, *English Literature in History, 1350-1400: Medieval Readers and Writers* (Hutchinson, 1981), p. 211. Similar points about interpolation and the surreptitious spread of ideas are made in P. Heath, *Church and Realm 1272-1461: Conflict and Collaboration in an Age of Crises* (Fontana, 1988), pp. 179-180.

[20] Kuczynski writes that "…Arundel's prohibitive *Constitutions* of 1408 [sic] compelled the reformers to find sanctioned works that could be adapted to their own purposes. Preeminent among these was Rolle's Psalter, which had already circulated widely." Kuczynski, *Prophetic Song*, p. 165. I thank Professor Kuczynski for his illuminating comments on my ideas for this chapter and for sharing some of his work on the Psalter with me in advance of publication.

[21] For this emphasis, see K. Gustafson, "Richard Rolle's *English Psalter* and the Making of a Lollard Text," in *Viator* 33 (2002): 294-309. On the investigation of heresy and the mechanisms of censorship, see I. Forrest, *The Detection of Heresy in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 2005). Christopher de Hamel observes that the church "turned a blind eye to respectable middle-class owners, with no taint of Lollardy, who used English Bibles for private piety. It is inconceivable that upwards of 250 copies could have survived if every manuscript had been at daily risk from the heresy police." C. de Hamel, *The Book: A History of the Bible* (Phaidon, 2001), p. 187.

[22] Bramley, p. 2, ll. 49-52. Though unbeknownst to the author of the prologue, who asserts that Rolle wrote this copy "with his hondes," MS Laud 286 is itself, in fact, an interpolated text (1).

[23] For instance, in Isidore's *Sententiae*: "Tanta est hereticorum calliditas ut falsa ueris malaque bonis permisceant, salutaribusque rebus plerumque erroris sui urius interserant, quo facilius possint prauitatem peruersi dogmatis sub specie persuadere ueritatis." *Isidori Hispalensis Sententiae*, III, 12.6, CCSL: CXI (Brepols, 1998), p. 235; and see J. Pelikan's brief discussion of the same, in *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, Vol. III: The Growth of Medieval Theology, 600-1300* (University of Chicago, 1978), p. 18.

[24] The extent to which Wycliffites would go to obtain books is well known, and even in Wyclif's day interpolation was considered "one of the defining strategies of the heresy." V. Gillespie, "Anonymous Devotional Writings," pp. 127-149. On Wycliffite book ownership, see M. Aston, "Lollardy and Literacy," in *History* 62 (1977): 34-71.

[25] *The Statutes of the Realm*, 11 vols., ed. A. Luders (University of London, 1810-1828), 2:126.

[26] This comment appears in an Annunciation/Passion Sunday sermon from MS Harley 2268, recently edited, with three others belonging to the same collection, in *Four Middle English Sermons*, ed. V. O'Mara (Heidelberg, 2002), p. 99., l. 802. As the editor notes, the sermon likens the Lollards to the foxes in the story of Samson, from Judges xv.4-5 (p. 157). For the argument in support of Spofford's authorship, see pp. 37-52.

[27] Bodley 288 comprises 272 folios of double columned gothic book hand and dates from the first half of the fifteenth century, if not later. The *Manual* specifies a dating range of c.1425-c.1475 (p. 3415). The manuscript commences with Rolle's preface and includes not only the entire Psalm commentary but also twelve canticles, which begin at fol. 249v. with the Confitebor. There are very few marginal notations and the writing seems to be that of a professional scribe.

Latin Psalm verses are followed by English translations, which are invariably underlined (unlike the Latin itself). The manuscript is in good condition. Although Bodley 288 has never been edited, the twelve canticles following the Psalter commentary proper were included by Arnold in volume three of his *Select English Works of John Wyclif*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1868-1871), 3:3-81. He notes what he calls their "advanced Lollardism" (3:4). I have retained Arnold's punctuation where I cite passages from his edition.

[28] This is Psalm 76:14 in Bod. 288.

[29] From *Select English Works of John Wyclif*, 3 vols., ed. T. Arnold (Oxford, 1868-1871), 1:34.

[30] Edited and translated in S. Wenzel, *Macaronic Sermons*: *Bilingualism and Preaching in Late Medieval England* (Michigan, 1994), p. 299.

[31] *Two Wycliffite Texts: The Sermon of William Taylor 1406, The Testimony of William Thorpe 1407*, ed. A. Hudson (Oxford, 1993), p. 82.

[32] I owe this insight to Anne Hudson (private conversation).

[33] Rolle's fullest description of *canor* occurs in chaper fifteen of *Incendium Amoris*. On *canor* and its significance, see N. Watson, *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority*, p. 68.

[34] Compare this interpretation to Gustafson, has a slightly different reading of the term "halymen" in the *English Psalter*. K. Gustafson, "Richard Rolle's *English Psalter* and the Making of a Lollard Text," in *Viator* 33 (2002): 306.

[35] Article 1 of the *Constitutions* states: "Secerdotes vero parochiales, sive vicarii temporales, et non perpetui, in forma supradicta non misti, in ecclesiis illis, in quibus officia hujusmodi gerunt, 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,' contenentur expresse." *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae, A.D. 466-1718,* ed. D. Wilkins, 3:315. But whereas Pecham's intent had been to improve religious education, Arundel's was to abbreviate it, though not completely; theological argumentation must be acceptable within certain limits if the lower clergy is to counter Wycliffite thinking about the eucharist and other erroneous conclusions. Because the authority of Pecham's syllabus was never so in question that it actually needed reaffirming, the decision to do so in the body of the *Constitutions* reveals something important about the place of pastoral theology and the wide range of texts designed to facilitate religious instruction and edification within the ecclesiastical offensive against Wycliffites. See H. L. Spencer, *Preaching in Late Medieval England*, p. 145, which references William of Pagula's remarks, in one of the most popular manuals of pastoral theology in the period, about the authority of Pecham's syllabus. Spencer also notes that "Pecham's legislation need not be interpreted to indicate official restriction of the subject-matter of parish sermons to the Lambeth syllabus. It does not encourage, but also does not forbid, preaching on other matters," p. 156. On Pecham generally, see W. A. Pantin, *The English Church in Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1955). I would note here as well that Arundel knew that abolishing all theological discourse, a motive often imputed to the *Constitutions*, would only make the enforcement of clerical orthodoxy more difficult; even he seems to have grasped that a better-informed parish clergy would be more capable of combating erroneous conclusions. For a discussion about how the required syllabus of catechetical knowledge was adapted into textual forms, see V. Gillespie, "Vernacular Books of

Religion," as well as R. Hanna's useful introduction in *IMEP XII: Manuscripts in Smaller Bodleian Collections* (Cambridge, 1997). The ten commandments were high up in the list of essential catechetical points. Deanesly quotes from Pecham's 1281 constitutions: "…we command and enjoin that each parish priest, four times in the year (that is, once in each quarter of the year), upon one or more holy days shall himself or by his deputy explain to the people in the vulgar tongue…the fourteen articles of faith, the ten commandments of the decalogue, the two precepts of the gospel, the seven works of mercy, the seven mortal sins, the seven principal virtues, and the seven sacramental graces." M. Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible*, p. 196; this is canon 9 of the 1281 Lambeth council, the text of which can be found in *Councils and Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church, A.D. 1205-1313*, 2 vols., ed. F. M. Powicke and C. R. Cheney (Oxford, 1964), 2:91. Wycliffite texts such as *The Lanterne of Li3t* appropriate and expand some of the instructional imperatives behind the pastoral teaching of the ten commandments. Aston outlines the importance of the decalogue to Lollard thinking in *Lollards and Reformers*, p. 144.

[36] In anticipation of arguments I make later in this chapter, it is worth noting that Wyclif's understanding of the decalogue as God's law is premised on a rejection of this very idea. See, for instance, *De Mandatis*, iv.26.9-16: "[P]rimo per hoc quod signa hec sensibilia non sunt per se leges; quia si sic, tabule Moysaice erant lex Dei, antequam erant scripte; ergo si sint leges, per accidens sunt leges, et cum omne per accidens sit reducible ad aliquid per se, sequitur quod est dare signata que per se et proprie erunt leges; propter quod enim est unumquodque per accidens, illud est maius…"

[37] A. Brown, *Popular Piety in Late Medieval England: The Diocese of Salisbury, 1250-1550* (Oxford, 1995), p. 208, in a discussion of "private devotion" and Lollardy. This study is usefully contrasted with E. Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (Yale, 1992), which itself strips lay Christianity of heterodoxy and dissent. For foundational methodological questions, see N. Z. Davis, "Some Tasks and Themes in the Study of Popular Religion," in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion* (Brill, 1974), pp. 307-336.

[38] That is to say, the teaching program of the late medieval church and the synodal and ecclesiastical decrees upon which such teaching rested was not a simple matter of transmitting doctrine to the laity, as Duffy suggests. Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 7, and *passim*. Scase points out that "examples of a genre originally intended to help the clergy instruct the laity, became available directly to a lay readership," and that as a result "conscience might be prepared, and contrition awakened, in anyone who could read English." W. Scase, *Piers Plowman and New Anticlericalism* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 45. For more on this corpus, see R. Raymo, "Works of Religious and Philosophical Instruction," in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English: 1050-1500*, vol. 7, ed. A. Hartung (Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1986), pp. 2255-2378 and 2467-2582.

[39] *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole and his Followers*, ed. C. Horstmann (D. S. Brewer, 1999), p. 417.

[40] Coletti comments that "…the emphasis on individual piety that was such an important aspect of late medieval orthodoxy was not only perfectly compatible with but also prefatory for the emphases on reformed religion in the sixteenth century." T. Coletti, *Mary Magdalene and the Drama of the Saints*, p. 148.

[41] Watson, "Censorship and Cultural Change," *passim*.

[42] This is Psalm17:13 in Bramley. The references here to corporal punishment and the spiritual resilience that is required to translate scripture might help narrow the dating range of Bod. 288 to after 1409, when the *Constitutions* were promulgated, but in my analysis of the interpolated passages I have not found explicit mention of the statute, in contrast to other English Wycliffite texts from the same period. Nevertheless, given the single-minded concentration on suffering and persecution, as well as likenesses in expression with Wycliffite texts reliably dated after 1409 (such as *The Lanterne of Li3t*), it would be surprising if Bod. 288 had a *terminus post quem* before that same year.

[43] V. Edden, "The Devotional Life of the Laity in the Late Middle Ages," in *Approaching Medieval English Anchoritic and Mystical Texts*, ed. D. Dyas et al. (D. S. Brewer, 2005), pp. 42-43. Such views, again, echo Eamon Duffy's argument in *Stripping of the Altars*.

[44] E.g., Psalm 4:1, p. 15.

[45] N. Watson, *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority*, p. 71, citing *Contra Amatores Mundi*. For discussion of the contemplative life in this respect, see C. Horstmann, ed., *Yorkshire Writers*, xi.

[46] Regardless, then, of how the *English Psalter* was actually used, Rolle's ambivalence about confession and clerical authority do not in themselves necessarily *invite* a specifically Wycliffite critique of the same in interpolated versions, as Gustafson implies. Gustafson, "Richard Rolle's *English Psalter* and the Makings of a Wycliffite Text," p. 301ff. Rolle is indeed ambiguous on certain crucial points, but ultimately the discourse of religious individualism and spiritual self-improvement we see in the Psalter is more significant for its potential *adaptation* by Wycliffite readers than for how it may or may not actually have anticipated Wycliffite views.

[47] The argument attributing the Psalter's licit status to Rolle's very literal translation from the Latin is Ralph Hanna's. Hanna, "Rolle and Related Works," in *A Companion to Middle English Prose*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 19-33.

[48] Ullerston mentions Rolle but not in very much detail—the text is in Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible*, pp. 437-445 (reference at p. 443), but see "A Lollard Tract: On Translating the Bible into English," ed. C. Bühler, in *Medium Aevum* 7 (1938): 167-183.

[49] Bühler, ll. 185-187. It should be noted that what Ullerston means by edification carries none of the challenging social and political implications associated with vernacular literacy in texts such as the Wycliffite Bible Prologue, where the "edifying of the peple" does not always "conferme the autorite of techingis of holy chirche." *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, with the Apocryphal Books, in the Earliest English Versions, made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and his Followers*, 4 vols, ed. J. Forshall and F. Madden (Oxford, 1850), 1:2.

[50] *Select English Works of John Wyclif*, 3 vols., ed. J. Arnold (Oxford, 1868-1871), 3:4. My analysis here, however, does not extend to the last five canticles of Bod. 288, which do not appear in University College 64 and thus do not seem to be Rollean in origin.

[51] Nicholas Love, *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ: A Reading Text*, ed. M. Sargent (Exeter, 2004), p. 7.

[52] I am hesitant to relegate a complex historiographic issue to the footnotes, but it is worth noting that there is some debate about the extent of Lollard persecutions in this period. Anne Hudson has remarked that Wycliffite additions to the base text of the *English Psalter* seem designed "to console and encourage the committed during persecution…The commentary comes closest of any Wycliffite text to a devotional work, dedicated to a spiritual purpose." Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 263-264. Bod. 288 certainly intensifies the focus on persecution, as material interpolated into Rolle's commentary on Psalms 7:1, 7:2, 7:4, 15:1, 15:7, and 32:1, to take only a few significant examples, demonstrates. Many of these interpolations express a desire to be liberated from the deceit and treachery of "enemyes." See, for instance, commentary in Bod. 288 at Psalm 7:1, cited in D. Everett, "The Middle English prose Psalter of Richard Rolle of Hampole," p. 219. At the same time, imagined enemies were every bit as important to Wycliffite self-understanding as real ones. Michael Wilks has documented many instances in which Wyclif's own words suggest that "the dangers involved may have consisted more of risks being taken than of actual atrocities suffered." Wilks, "Wyclif and the Great Persecution," in *Prophecy and Eschatology,* ed. M. Wilks (Oxford, 1994), p. 40. He also points to Wyclif's own comfortable retirement at Lutterworth, where he remained for the rest of his life churning out treatises and polemical works; the lack of any public execution of a known Wycliffite before 1401; and the relative scarcity of anti-Wycliffite cases in the ecclesiastical courts following the condemnation of the eucharistic heresy at the Blackfriars Council in 1381-2 (which did not even mention Wyclif by name) (42). "On the whole," Wilks concludes, "captured Lollards were treated with tolerance, and released after making purely formal assurances of good behavior, to an extent which borders on the ridiculous. It amounted to one of the most restrained campaigns against heresy in history, and this is a discrepancy that requires an explanation" (42). (For a slightly more balanced assessment, though one no less skeptical about the extent of actual persecution under Arundel, see P. McNiven, *Heresy and Politics in the Reign of Henry IV*, p. 113.) Wilks' larger point is that the discourse of persecution we see in Wyclif fit into a "prophetic programme" already deeply familiar to Wycliffite audiences, although he does not mention that the Psalms would have been the main vehicle through which Wyclif's followers had become accustomed to symbolic history of this kind (46). Bod. 288 belongs to this program even as it brings into view the very real ecclesiastical persecution of Lollardy in the fifteenth century.

[53] On dominion and just rule in Wyclif, see S. Lahey, *Philosophy and Politics in the Thought of John Wyclif* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 119 ff.

[54] W. Scase, *Piers Plowman and the New Anticlericalism* (Cambridge, 1989). Also useful in this context is A. Gwynn, *The English Austin Friars in the Time of Wyclif* (Oxford, 1940).

[55] For this nexus of concerns in a range of late medieval literary texts, see the provocative essays in D. Aers and L. Staley, *The Powers of the Holy: Religion, Politics, and Gender in Late Medieval England* (Pennsylvania State University, 1996). See, as well, A. Cole, "William Langland's Lollardy," in *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 17 (2003): 25-54.

[56] J. Catto, "Wyclif and Wycliffism at Oxford 1356-1430," p. 181. Walsingham, *St. Alban's Chronicle*, *vol. 1: 1376-1394*, ed. J. Taylor et al. (Oxford, 2003), pp. lxxix, 176-188, 190-192. For references to worldly lordship, see the Lollard tract known as *De oblacione iugis sacrificii*, in *The Works of a Lollard Preacher*, ed. A. Hudson (Oxford, 2001), pp. 163, 185 (Titus Tract). For lucid contextualization of questions related to dominion, see J. Dawson, "Richard Fitzralph and

the Fourteenth-Century Poverty Controversies," in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 34 (1983): 315-344.

[57] What polemical discussion of English there is in Bod. 288 usually centers on vernacular preaching, as at fol. 133v. See A. Hudson, "Lollardy: The English Heresy?" reprinted in *Lollards and Their Books* (Hambledon, 1985), p. 155, n. 49. In fact, even the most explicit discussions of English in Bod. 288 are ambivalent, as is this interpolation into the canticle known as the Prayer of Habakkuk: "And it seemeþ not inow3 men to sey bi word þat þei trowe fulli as hooly Chirche trowiþ; for þus seyn Paynyms and manye out of þe bileeve; siþ men seien comounli þat all han sich bileeve. And so love and good liif ben needful to ri3t bileeve. And God forbede þat men bileeven þat ech man þat schal be saaf mut trowe expresly ech word þat here is seid; for feue or noone en in þat staat, or Grekis or Lateyns. And 3it to us falliþ, Englisch to telle þat litil þat we bileeven; for to bileve is of truþe, þat is bifore oure langagis; and, as we seyn, God 3eveþ bileeve boþe to children and to men, alif þei ben not of power to lerne bileeve of her briþeren" (my transcription; reprinted in Arnold, pp. 71-73).

[58] See, for instance, *De Civili Dominio*, I.i: "Tractando de civili domino hominis superaddito naturali, oportet in primis videre si civile dominium presupponat dominium naturale fundatum in gracia, sicut ius civile presupponit ius divinum, tamquam causam essencialiter exemplantem." *De Civili Dominio*, ed. J. Kilcullen, 1999: www.humanities.mq.edu.au/Ockham/wlatcor.html. See, also, *De Dominio Divino*, I.iii.16.18-22, cited in S. Lahey, *Philosophy and Politics in the Thought of John Wyclif*, p. 68, n. 2.

[59] See J.A. Robson, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools: The Relation of the "Summa de Ente" to Scholastic Debates at Oxford in the Later Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1961), as well as D. Luscombe, "Wyclif and Hierarchy," in *From Ockham to Wyclif*, ed. A. Hudson and M. Wilks (Blackwell, 1987), pp. 233-244.

[60] Passage cited in D. Everett, "The Middle English prose Psalter of Richard Rolle of Hampole," in *Modern Language Review* 17 (1922): 225.

[61] In fact, Bod. 288 envisions religious hierarchies as one response to the problem of erroneous belief, a problem not limited to the "dampnable errors" of priests ensnared in temporal wealth—Rolle himself writes in the prologue that he has translated from the Latin according to the "wit of the worde, swa that thai that sall red it thaim thare noght dred errynge" (5). Notwithstanding the obvious respect he has for Kirkby as a religious acolyte, Rolle envisions biblical reading occurring within a larger framework of pastoral guidance.

[62] Some of the complexities in how Wycliffites respond to the question of dominion derive from the fact that Wyclif's own understanding of lordship and religious jurisdiction was heavily inflected with his metaphysical realism, as Stephen Lahey emphasizes. Lahey, *Philosophy and Politics in the Thought of John Wyclif*, pp. 68, 93-97.

[63] M. Keen, *England in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1973), pp. 226-228. For a more recent and specific exploration of Lollardy within the terms of mainstream religious thought (especially as defined by Rolle), see F. Somerset, "Wycliffite Spirituality," in *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale: Essays in Honour of Anne Hudson*, ed. H. Barr and A. Hutchinson (Brepols, 2005), pp. 375-386.

[64] On the cultural dynamics of *translatio*, see R. Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge, 1991). The metrical prologue in MS Laud 286 registers these anxieties sharply, reassuring readers that the manuscript lies chained to its shelf at Kirkby's Hampole nunnery (2).

[65] On the context and dating of this text, see Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 211-214. On antichrist and Wycliffite apocalypticism, with special reference to the *Lanterne*, see C. Bostick, *The Antichrist and the Lollards: Apocalypticism in Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Brill, 1998), pp. 114-124. On the *Lanterne* and Arundel's *Constitutions*, see Somerset, "Expanding the Langlandian Canon," p. 74.

[66] This is Psalm 9 in Bod. 288 and in Bramley's edition of the *English Psalter*.

[67] The *English Psalte*r has the following: "He waites that he rauysch the pore: to rauysch the pore i whils he drawis him." The Douay-Rheims Bible translates the verse this way: "He lieth in ambush that he may catch the poor man: to catch the poor, whilst he draweth him to him."

[68] The *Lanterne*'s editor surmises that its author "apparently made his own translation of the passages of Scripture used to illustrate his theme" rather than relying on existing English versions, such as the *English Psalter* (intro, xv). The Wycliffism of the *Lanterne* was sufficient for one reader, John Claydon, to be convicted of heresy. J. A. F. Thomson, *The Later Lollards, 1414-1520* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 139-143.

[69] This is an interpolated comment in MS Laud 286 occurring at Psalm 17:47, as transcribed in D. Everett, "The Middle English prose Psalter of Richard Rolle of Hampole," in *Modern Language Review* 17 (1922): 220.

[70] On Rolle's centrality to late medieval affective spirituality and devotion, see N. Blake, "Varieties of Middle English Prose," in *Chaucer and Middle English Studies in Honor of R. H. Robbins*," ed. B. Rowland (London, 1974), pp. 348-356, as well as Watson, "Middle English Mystics," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. D. Wallace (Cambridge, 1998), p. 547.

[71] Cited and transcribed in Everett, "The Middle English prose Psalter of Richard Rolle of Hampole," in *Modern Language Review* 17 (1922): 221.

[72] J. Coleman, *English Literature in History, 1350-1400: Medieval Readers and Writers* (Hutchinson, 1981), *passim*. She notes the close relationship between a literature of edification and a literature of social complaint. See, also, M.B. Parkes, "The Literacy of the Laity," in M. B. Parkes, *Scribes, Scripts and Readers* (Hambledon,1991), pp. 275-297. Relevant here as well is W. Scase, *Literature and Complaint in England*, 1272-1553 (Oxford, 2007).

[73] One implication of this point involves recent attempts to see Lollardy as a fiction of the state, a spectral presence around and against which orthodox Lancastrain prerogatives could cohere. This thesis is most familiar in the work of Richard Rex and Paul Strohm, both of whom have noted orthodoxy's attachment to Wycliffism as the supplement which sustains and consolidates its own symbolic order. Richard Rex, *The Lollards* (Palgrave, 2002). Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399-1422* (Yale, 1998). The relationship I map out between Rolle's "blessyd boke" and its Wycliffite readers suggests, however, that this dynamic could sometimes work the other way around—that, in other words,

Wycliffism could see and exploit heterodox possibilities in the discourses of "traditional religion."

[74] A point emphasized by K. Gustafson, "Richard Rolle's *English Psalter* and the Making of a Lollard Tract," pp. 294-301.

[75] The anonymous author of the *Twelve Conclusions*, for instance, laments the physical and emotional exuberance of popular piety: "pilgrimage, preyeris and offringis made to blynde rodys and to deue ymages of tre and of ston, ben ner of kin to ydolatrie and fer fro almesse dede." *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*, ed. Hudson, p. 27.

[76] I recast this phrase deliberately, as a way of revealing the discursive interplay of forms and ideas that Duffy's notion of "traditional religion" occludes. E. Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (Yale, 1992). For a critique of "traditional religion," though along somewhat different lines than those I have sketched out in this chapter, see D. Aers, "Altars of Power: Reflections on Eamon Duffy's *Stripping of the Altars*," in *Literature and History* 3 (1994): 90-105.

[77] This is just one area in which Arundel's measures seems to have had a rather more limited impact than Watson acknowledges. Simon Hunt points to the surviving number of Wycliffite Bibles, and the existence of only a single license, as evidence for a "lack of rigorousness with which they [the *Constitutions*] were applied." S. Hunt, *An Edition of Tracts in Favor of Scriptural Translation and of Some Texts Connected with Lollard Vernacular Biblical Scholarship*, 2 vols. (unpublished D. Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1996), 1:36. He adds that "the carefully controlled and very well resourced production of the manuscripts themselves, and their survival rate—approaching 250 are known to exist—is testimony to the failure of this part [article seven, which stipulates restrictions on vernacular biblical translation] of the archbishop's design" (1:40).

[78] These seemingly more abstract concerns are in fact central to understanding the circumstances under which a certain social definition of Wycliffism took hold. Recognizing the need to return reifications to their original historical and social contexts, Thomson contends that historians "must therefore avoid imposing their preconceived ideas of Lollardy on their examination of its development." J. A. F. Thomson, "Orthodox Religion and the Origins of Lollardy," in *History* 74 (1989): 39-55. And he makes a similarly important point when he says that it was not until orthodoxy defined itself doctrinally that it sought to impose strict definitions on the meaning of Lollardy, implying that scholars should see the critical history of the movement not as an intellectual genealogy extending from Wyclif to his vernacular followers but rather as a ceaseless process of ideological repositioning and struggle.

[79] Rolle comments on this verse (*qui habitare facit sterilem in domo matrem filiorum laetantem*) that "halykirke, that was first barayn, he makis ioyand in his luf & modire of gastly sunnys and swa to won in his hous of heuen" (Bramley, 399). Bod. 288 has: "holy churche þat was so bareyn first he maketh ioynge in his loue and modir of goostli sones þat is ech trewe < ? > and curat moun ioie of her children whiche þei geten to god þoru good ensample of word and werk for her wonyyng is maad in þe hous of heven" (Bod. 288, fol. 214r).

[80] *De Veritate*, I.vi.111: "…et omnis scriptura foret a quotlibet hominibus hereticabilis, dampnabilis et adversabilis, nullius virtutis directive vel honoris et per consequens nullius autoritatis."

[81] A. J. Minnis, "'Authorial Intention' and 'Literal Sense' in the Exegetical Theories of Richard Fitzralph and John Wyclif: An Essay in the Medieval Theories of Biblical Hermeneutics," in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 75, Section C, no. 1 (1975): 13, 14.

Chapter Five

<u>"De ore dei": Wyclif, Affectivity, and the Hermeneutics of the Literal Sense</u>

> Confirmatur ex hoc, quod tota lex Cristi est unum perfectum verbum,
> procedens de ore dei, cuius singule partes concausant totam autoritatem
> vel efficaciam legis Cristi.
>
> It is thus confirmed that the whole law of Christ is one perfect word
> proceeding from the mouth of God, whose individual parts together create
> the authority and efficacy of Christ's law.

> --Wyclif, *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*[1]

I

William Thorpe's *Testimony* recounts his examination by the Archbishop of

Canterbury, Thomas Arundel, on August 7, 1407, following Thorpe's arrest for preaching

"errours and heresies" at St. Chad's church in Shrewsbury (43.641-642).[2] The

proliferation of unlicensed preaching and instruction in England had alarmed Arundel,

whose anti-heresy laws, introduced at convocation in November of that year, would make

the ecclesiastical enforcement of orthodoxy the main concern of his tenure.[3] From

whom, he now wanted to know, had Thorpe "taken þin enformacioun" (40.555-556)? In

a response rich with implications for how we understand the cultural history of

Wycliffism, Thorpe claims that his teacher had been none other than John Wyclif

himself, provocatively adding that the heresiarch's sympathizers had "sauouriden so his loore [teaching] that thei wroten it bisili and enforsiden hem to rulen hem theraftir" (41.562-563). He goes on to describe his own relationship to Wyclif and his teachings in similar terms: it is "of Wicleef speciali," he says, that "I toke the lore whiche I haue tau3te and purpose to lyue aftir, if God wole, to my lyues ende" (41.581-583).

The overt determinism informing this scene is striking; the *Testimony* imagines a religious genealogy extending from Wyclif to Thorpe himself, a line of descent in which theology subsists as a pristine and unified whole.[4] Such a claim, of course, is deeply problematic, imputing coherence to ideas that were appropriated over time by diverse audiences.[5] Thorpe's *Testimony* thereby raises questions about the cultural diffusion of Wyclif's thought, and of academic theology more generally: in what ways does it still make sense to think of "vernacular Wycliffism" in terms of Wyclif himself?[6] As previous chapters have explored, Lollardy tapped into populist themes consolidated by a long tradition of vernacular preaching and pastoral instruction in England. Yet the assumption of doctrinal coherence motivating Thorpe's description of Wyclif's "loore" seems to efface this very reality—strangely enough, for it is the *Testimony* itself, as we will see, which most compellingly illustrates how Wyclif's biblicism crossed paths with late medieval discourses of spirituality and devotion.

I admit that this wording is counterintuitive, especially given a historiographic tradition linking Wyclif to the English Reformation.[7] Wyclif was not in the business of cultivating piety in the manner implied by terms such as "spirituality" and "devotion," the affective resonances of which seem remote from Lollardy's most defining social and political concerns. Though rooted in an earlier tradition of spiritual writing, discourses of

affect and emotion are often seen as attributes of an intense Christocentric piety that

flourished in the fifteenth century, a milieu of fervent meditative devotion seemingly at

variance with the forms of intellectual labor, above all vernacular scriptural

hermeneutics, which gained Wyclif and his university companions so much notoriety,

especially after the promulgation of the *Constitutions* in 1409.[8] The beliefs and practices

associated with late medieval affective piety are of course too heterogeneous to collect

into any single paradigm, and at many points I will be referring simply to "affectivity" or

"feeling" as I attempt to sketch out the contours of a Wycliffite hermeneutic sensibility

defined by forms of emotional discernment.[9] At the same time, such terms underscore

the cultural agenda of devotional texts such as the *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, which

helped consolidate "an individual and intensely inner spirituality" that came to exclude,

in the view of much scholarship, the interpretive and textual concerns raised by Wyclif.[10]

Yet however "traditional" and "popular" it may appear by the fifteenth century, affective

discourse of this kind was also articulated—or rearticulated, in vernacular adaptations of

Latin texts—in opposition to the threat of heterodoxy.[11] The cultural values placed on

affective forms of prayer and meditation in the fifteenth century were inescapably

conditioned by the rise of Lollardy, England's first and most notorious "heresy." In the

contexts I address here, then, my concern is with the way affectivity itself often

functioned as a conceit of "orthodox" writers who attacked what they perceived to be

Wyclif's rationalist appropriation of Christianity.[12]

Wyclif and his sympathizers indeed went out of their way to criticize what

Richard Kieckhefer has described as the "burgeoning devotionalism of the age, a piety

focused on specific objects of reverence: the Eucharist, the Passion, the name of Jesus,

the Virgin, the saints."[13] Protesting the sacramentalism of the late medieval Church, with its emphasis on the objective power of images and objects, Lollards found little to esteem in the customs of parish devotion. More than one account finds Lollards mocking the crucifix as a devotional image.[14] And when not denouncing the forms of mediation that had come to define religious observance, they spoke out against the gross immoderation and unrestrained behavior of popular devotion. "Somtyme þer is vndiscrete zele," cautions a gloss on Romans 10 from a Wycliffite preacher's handbook. Citing the apostle's words, the anonymous author warns against those who "'haue the zele of God, but no3t after knowyng or konnyng or science.'"[15] The writer's visceral dislike of religious enthusiasm reflects a deeper certainty on the part of Wyclif's more learned followers that divine truth is intelligible through human reason rather than ritualistic practices or revelatory experience. As Michael Wilks argues, this position proceeded from the premise that "God would not have created the natural order without giving men the capability of knowing what was right, and accordingly religion had to be reasonable."[16]

In keeping with such concerns, scholars have long insisted on the significance of reason to Wyclif's hermeneutic thought, and justifiably so.[17] Without exactly refuting this emphasis, I do, however, want to place alongside it an alternative interpretation of *ratio* within the context of Wycliffite claims for the superiority of scripture. I argued in earlier chapters that the vernacular biblical scholarship of Wyclif's followers revised and reframed some of Wyclif's own doctrines, chiefly as they relate to his theological realism. Yet it was precisely this strain of his thinking, especially as it was reiterated and intensified in his discussion of the literal sense in *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, that

supplied a paradigm for affective and inferential engagement with scriptural truth, and

which consequently pushed Lollard biblical scholarship into more ambiguous areas. In

particular, Wyclif's understanding of scripture as a real universal, emanating directly

from the mind of God, makes significant room for an "affective reader"—and for

affectivity itself to emerge as an interpretive practice.[18] Rather than demystifying

orthodoxy, Wyclif's rationalist critique of late medieval religion enacted a paradox,

making reason "the ultimate basis" of hermeneutic inquiry even as it arrogated to affect

and devotional feeling a considerable role in comprehending sacred truth.[19] This claim is

all the more topical given that much popular devotional writing in this period is directed

against Wyclif's arguments for the indispensability of reason as a guide in scriptural

interpretation and theology.[20] My discussion will therefore begin by attending to the

boundary lines between Wycliffites and their adversaries concerning reading, affectivity,

and the literal sense.

II

The rapid diffusion of Wycliffism beyond university circles, and the significance

of English preaching and biblical translation to this process, prompted a wide range of

responses from the movement's opponents.[21] Among those in the vernacular, few were

as influential or as far-reaching as Nicholas Love's gospel harmony, *The Mirror of the

Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* (c.1410).[22] A popularization of the Pseudo-Bonaventuran

Meditationes Vitae Christi, Love's text had been published at the behest of Arundel

himself.[23] Although both the Early and the Late Version Wycliffite Bibles had appeared

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some thirty years prior to its publication, the *Mirror*'s goal of constructing a pious lay reader cannot be treated separately from the controversies precipitated by Wycliffite interpretive practices. For Love, such controversies centered on the question of scriptural literacy and the danger of lay readers assuming the role of amateur theologians. In its use of the gospel accounts of Christ's life, according to James Simpson, the *Mirror* thus encourages "emotional sympathy and moral reflection, but not abstract theorizing of any kind."[24] These, however, were not always incompatible alternatives; a text directed specifically against Wyclif and the Lollards, the *Mirror* is constantly in jeopardy of reproducing the very structures of thought it strives to efface, engaging in precisely the kind of "abstract theorizing" Love associates with heresy. Yet unlike Reginald Pecock, whose refutation of Lollard belief resulted in his being charged with doctrinal errors, Love is savvy enough to understand that this is a problem specific to theological discourse, so he deploys other discursive strategies, such as rewriting key scriptural scenes in order to enhance the authority of affect and emotion in religious devotion.[25] Rather, for instance, than refute on doctrinal grounds "þe fals opinyon of lollardes þat shrift of mouþe is not nedeful" and "þat is sufficeþ onely in herte to be shriuen to god," Love grafts these criticisms into an excursus on Mary Magdalene's conversion that has no equivalent in the *Meditationes* for its affective intensity (90).

Love is acutely sensitive to the Wycliffite argument that Mary Magdalene's inward sorrow for her sins represents the sufficiency of private confession, as opposed to the auricular confession that would ideally end in priestly absolution.[26] He therefore takes care to point out that such an interpretation of Mary's conversion would be mistaken, arguing strenuously that "oure lorde Jesus to whome she made hir confession

in herte was þer in bodily presence verrey god & man, to whom by vertue of þe godhede

was also opune þe þouht of hert as is to man þe spech of mouþe" (91). And because "we

haue not here his bodily presence as Maudleyn hade," therefore "in his stede vs behoueþ

to shewe to þe preste by worde" (91). Mary Magdalene's association, moreover, with

vernacular preaching and scripture, as many critics have noted, inevitably conjures up the

Wycliffite intervention (in principle, at least) on behalf of female teachers of the Bible.[27]

The scene of her outdoor and public preaching in the Digby *Mary Magdalene*, an East

Anglian play dramatizing the legendary vita of the saint, "corresponds to the open-air

venues with which Lollard preachers were identified."[28] This episode in the *Mirror* thus

shows Love trying to undo a powerful set of associations involving Wycliffism and the

vernacular then beginning to coalesce, in exegesis and drama, around the figure of Mary

Magdalene. His polemical appropriation of Mary as an anti-Wycliffite icon is a

sophisticated refashioning both of the Pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes* and of

contemporary Wycliffite thinking concerning the role of women in lay religion.

Against this backdrop of controversy over gender and vernacular preaching, a

key element in Love's narration of Mary Magdalene's conversion is what the *Mirror*

refers to as her "inwarde affeccion." In contrast to Mary's role as it was sometimes

imagined in Wycliffite sermons, where she hears and understands Christ's words, Love's

depiction of her grants no similar interpretive agency.[29] His earlier description of the

Virgin's own "inward affeccion" as she gazes meekly upon the infant Christ anticipates

his representation of Mary Magdalene later in the text, where the reader is asked to

imagine her kissing Jesus' feet "with grete trist of his mercy & inwarde affeccion of his

loue" (39, 89). Jesus suffers Mary's devotions gladly, "knowyng þe inward affeccion &

þe trewe loue of hir herte" (89). By highlighting the affective bond between Mary

Magdalene and Jesus, Love mitigates the problem that Wycliffites had already identified:

that in the gospels themselves, Mary never actually voices her repentance, suggesting that

auricular confession as church doctrine lacked scriptural warrant. Love therefore

comments that "þouh we rede it not of hir by worde spekyng," there "was no nede to him

þat knewe fully hir herte," so that "without any more penance he fully for3afe alle hir

sinne" (91-92). His willingness to depart from the gospel text in his *lectio* on the

Magdalene—to deploy hermeneutics for the sake of suspending close investigation of the

Bible's words—goes beyond subtly contesting those Wycliffites who argued that all truth

and authority were grounded in scripture; Love insists on a mode of "reading" in which

questions of interpretation and meaning do not require investigation of the Bible itself,

thereby leaving hermeneutics to professional clerics and the church.

Love's focus on Mary's inward spiritual regeneration tropes her in highly

polemical ways and, in doing so, accomplishes several important things in the context of

the *Mirror*'s conservative, anti-Wycliffite agenda. It presents "inwarde affeccion," or

meditation on the life of Jesus, as a substitute for reading and preaching the words of the

Bible. And in contrast to those who defended the validity of English as a theological

language, it employs the vernacular merely as a means to the greater end of personal

piety; the penitent's emotional attachment to the humanity of Christ and the holy family

casts aside the kind of intellectual and interpretive labor Love imputes to Lollardy.

Finally, as a result of these strategies, the *Mirror* cements a close identification between

reason as an instrument of critical theology and Wycliffite arguments from scripture.

To some extent, Love's emphasis on the authority of "inwarde affeccion" was already implicit in the *Meditationes* themselves. Establishing a model of devout meditation for later medieval contexts, the *Meditationes* carved out an important place for affect and emotion in the contemplation of God. "You must know," the author writes, that "there are two heights of the mind, that is, the intellectual and the affectual."[30] This distinction was familiar from Bernard's influential 49th sermon on the Canticles, which the author of the *Meditationes* goes on to cite verbatim: "'There are two heights [of] blessed contemplation, the one in intellect and the other in affection; the one in light, the other in fervor; the one in action, the other in devotion. The chief is surely affection.'"[31] Bernard's sermon on the Ascension also figures largely in the *Meditationes*, serving as the basis for the author's assertion that "the intellect is truly burdened and weighted when it thinks much, when it does not compose itself to a single meditation alone."[32] The Pseudo-Bonaventuran text therefore reaches back very deliberately to one of the defining expressions of affective piety in the Middle Ages, and it is this tradition that Love attempts to make newly topical in the era of Wyclif. While drawing on the standard authorities, the *Mirror* also adapts, transforms, and redirects their spiritual import, conferring a narrow polemical meaning on the categorical distinctions that had motivated Bernard and the author of Love's source text.[33] We need not see this dynamic as exclusively anti-Wycliffite—indeed, as Hudson has remarked, "the inculcation of Christian virtues through the consideration of Christ's life and passion is not, of course, inimical to Lollard thought." [34] But Love's declared interest in the spiritual needs of "symple creatures þe whiche as childryn hauen neded to be fedde with mylke of ly3te

doctryne & not with sadde mete of grete clargye & of h[ye] contemplacion" explicitly counters the theological and institutional prerogatives of the movement (10).

The particular form of "hye contemplacion" Love has in mind involves theological speculation on the nature of the eucharistic miracle, and here again he returns to the concept of "inward affecioun" in order to meeet and preempt Wycliffite arguments against transubstantiation. Love's comments occur in a coda to the *Mirror* entitled "Treatise on the Sacrament." Often overlooked by critics, the treatise reiterates some of the *Mirror*'s key themes but also undertakes a sustained attack—one of the most ambitious in the vernacular—on Wyclif's eucharistic doctrine.[35] In *De eucharistia* (1379-80), Wyclif had argued that the body and blood of Christ were not actually present in the eucharistic elements at any point, since this would necessitate annihilating the substance of bread and wine, a proposition Wyclif's theological realism was not prepared to entertain.[36] Although Wyclif repeatedly argues for the superiority of the Bible over the pagan authors, Love nevertheless does not refrain from attacking "the grete clerke" and condemning his "kunnyng of philosophye," which he thinks led Wyclif to give "more credence to þe doctrine of Arestotele þat stant onely in naturele reson of man þan he did to þe doctrine of holy chirch & þe trewe doctours þerof touching þis preciouse sacrament" (236).[37] Throughout the "Treatise on the Sacrament," Love makes a very deliberate contrast between "naturele reson" and "inward affeccion."[38] Condemning Wyclif's philosophy of the Bible—and, indeed, the academic discourses from which that philosophy had emerged—he projects affect and emotion as orthodox alternatives to "reson, & the principales of philosophy," which ultimately lead to doctrinal error and heresy (235). He goes on to differentiate inward affection from reason in explicit ways,

arguing in a passage (marked "nota racionem" in the manuscript) that the Wycliffites lack

belief in transubstantiation because they put "kyndely reson" above the emotive, inward,

highly affective spiritual apprehension that characterizes the truly faithful (226). The

miracle of transubstantiation is "abouen þe reson of man" and "may not be comprehendet

fully by mannus reson bot onely standeþ in byleue" (226-227).

By the end of the treatise, Wycliffites are characterized most of all by their

exclusion from the emotional community surrounding the eucharist, by their lack of

affective fervor for the host and their want of emotive absorption in the central mystery

of the faith: they have "neiþer trewe drede nor parfite loue of oure lorde Jesus, & þerfore

þei fele not þe gostly swetnesse of þis heuenly mete of his precious body, ne þe likyng

mynde of hees merueiles shewede in þat blessede sacrament" (237).[39] The word "fele"

stands out in this passage, describing an ideal of affective receptivity in the reader that

marks a return to Love's emphasis, in the concluding passages of the treatise, on the

merit of "feruent affecciones in þe loue of oure lorde Jesu" and the "inwarde affeccion"

with which one desires the body of the lord (238).

III

In what sense, then, does the *Mirror* promote an alternative to Wycliffism? On

the most basic level, the answer lies in how Love uses scripture: as a starting point for

pious meditation, not as an authoritative source of precepts necessary for living a virtuous

life. He envisions Bible reading as a specialized interpretive undertaking, one more

suitable for professional clerics and theologians. Concerned as much with refuting

individual Wycliffite teachings and doctrines as with naturalizing orthodox attitudes towards the sacred, Love endorses affective prayer and meditation as the only acceptable forms of spiritual discipline for secular audiences. But Love's polemical efforts also belong to the broader cultural project, galvanized by Arundel's *Constitutions*, of preventing the popular adaptation of university theology, with its methods of textual inquiry and its formal procedures for illuminating the meaning of the letter by reasoning and speculation.[40] His model of vernacular piety, and the significance of the inner spiritual life to that model, attempts to counter "hye contemplation," that is, a mode of critical reflection rooted in Aristotelian science and natural reason; these, according to Love, had led Wyclif down the path of eucharistic heresy by prohibiting sentimental absorption in the mysteries of the faith.[41] Love's ideal reader is therefore one who "mowe haue somwhat accordynge vnto [h]is affection where wiþ he maye fede & stire his deuocion" (10).[42] However, what Love fails to imagine is the possibility that such a reader is in some abstract sense already "Wycliffite," for even from a very early point Wyclif's own hermeneutics made provisions for affect and emotion in ways that were not always incompatible with mainstream conventions of private devotion.[43]

Wyclif was nothing, of course, if not a close reader of scripture. He had worked from 1371 to 1376 to complete a commentary on the entire Bible, known as the *Postilla super totam Bibliam*, before embarking on *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae* a year later.[44] Though often neglected in discussions of Wyclif's scriptural logic, his *Postilla* is an important text to consider in light of Love's attack on Wycliffite rationality precisely because it exposes some of the uncertainties surrounding reason in the study of the Bible. Originating from his lectures on the Bible while at Oxford, the *Postilla* includes two

discussions of the Song of Songs, the second of which is an extended prologue that served as his *Principium*, or the inaugural address he delivered upon inception as a doctor of divinity in 1372.[45] Although Wyclif would discuss scriptural interpretation at more length in *De Veritate* and other works, the *Principium* is an important document because it elucidates the connection between one's disposition as a reader of sacred texts and the modes by which the Bible's spiritual senses are open to the mind.[46] A pedagogical term, "disposition," in late medieval discussions of biblical *formae tractandi*, signified the concept that exegesis should proceed according to the modes dictated by scripture itself. Scripture's inspired human *auctores* employed various forms and styles in order to dispose the will towards sacred truth in the most efficacious ways; the successful exegete must therefore appreciate even those parts of the Bible that seem illogical or beyond the scope of "ratiocinative argument."[47] Citing 1 John 2:16, Wyclif begins with a conventional emphasis on the appropriate disposition of the will and the moral conditions necessary for the biblical scholar to undertake the study of theology successfully.[48] Yet even by the formal standards of the *Principium*, which was an occasion to praise the superiority of divine over secular science, Wyclif places remarkable emphasis on the idea that scripture does not make its strongest appeal to human reason.[49] In a digression, he imagines that the natural philosopher [*philosophus naturalis*] would object to his argument that intellectual understanding is less important than the "disposition of the affection" [*dispositio affectus*] in the study of theology.[50] Here Wyclif is speaking of the moral requirements for understanding scripture's eternal truths, but he adds that intellectual speculation is insufficient if one wants to study a subject that surpasses

human understanding, and which is given to us from above [*ab extra quam studio humano perquiritur*].

In preparation for his own lecture on the Song of Songs—Smalley notes that his remarks in the *Principium* are in substance a prologue to tropological commentary on the *Cantica Canticorum* which is now lost—Wyclif had no doubt read Giles of Rome's commentary on the same biblical text, as well as the prologue in which Giles maintains that theology "must be described as affective and concerned with love, and not as practical."[51] With this distinction, according to Alaister Minnis, Giles "drove a wedge between faith and reason," excluding from theology "those speculative and practical questions which concern the intellect."[52] That such as distinction (whatever its merits) should take shape around the Song of Songs is perhaps no surprise given the longstanding association of that biblical text, in works as early as Bede's commentary *In Cantica Canticorum*, with affective forms of prayer and meditation.[53] What is more surprising is Wyclif's personal stake in such a project. Yet Wyclif himself had every reason to accentuate the focus on affect—both as a kind of pious disposition in the study of scripture, and as the particular form of love God shows for his beloved in the Song of Songs—already explicit in late medieval discussions of theology as a divine science.[54] As he suggests in the *Principium* and illustrates more fully in later writings on biblical interpretation, human reason and logic have significant shortcomings: on the most basic level, they are not always of service in the study of a subject "which surpasses human understanding, and which is given to us from above." This leaves significant room for a different kind of engagement with the Bible, one focused as much on inward illumination and personal sanctity as the disciplined investigation of its words. Indeed, these different

domains of interpretation are not always clearly delineated in Wyclif's thought, and quite often they become the source of hermeneutic circularity—as they do at the close of the *Principium*, where Wyclif urges his audience to seek "the unity and perfection of Christ's mystical body, until we ourselves arrive at all perfection, are taught all truth, have full knowledge of Scripture, and read unfailingly in the book of life in proportion to our meritorious acts and habits."[55] God's intentions are illuminated in the virtuous, who thereby interpret the words of scripture properly. Because the Bible is also a *regula fidei*, however, the proper interpretation of its words is necessary before one can grasp what is taught in the book of life, which is nothing other than God's own intentions. We can put this dilemma another way: to grasp what Wyclif would later call the "universal" [*catholicum*] or "literal" sense, one must strive for "sanctity of life" [*sanctitas vite*], but such sanctity is only brought about by one's adherence to scripture's divine intended meaning, which is discerned in the Bible's "universal" or "literal" sense.[56]

The *Principium* and, later, *De Veritate*, foreground interpretive dilemmas that have everything to do with how Wyclif understands affect in the context of scriptural hermeneutics; such dilemmas, moreover, extend from the Latinate pedagogical setting of these works, and have their origins in the various intellectual and rational procedures that characterized university study of the Bible. Directly linking Wyclif's early biblical commentary to the broader framework of late medieval devotion just because he reveals an interest in the authority of affect would overlook very real differences in the cultural location of texts. And yet the *Principium* nevertheless details a piety of sorts, in which one's disposition as a reader of scripture stems from the realization that its inner logic cannot be understood apart from the way it makes us feel; the study of the Bible is not

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just an intellectual undertaking but an emotional one as well, a process supplemented not

only by the application of logical and grammatical rules but also by the individual's

emotive certainty that the letter is true—a certainty, moreover, that exists in the true

theologian almost as a kind of physiological inclination, as late medieval discussions

about the proper disposition of the will suggest.[57] Even from a very early point in his

career as a biblical scholar, then, Wyclif presupposes a category of private devotional

feeling that points the way towards scripture's divine content and which, therefore,

cannot be productively sequestered from hermeneutics. Although it would be going too

far to suggest that here, as in Love's *Mirror*, affect and emotion are presented as

substitutes for the close hermeneutic investigation of the text, there is a strong sense in

the *Principium* and, as we shall now see, *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, that the *logica*

scripturae cannot be unlocked without them.

IV

Medieval understandings of reason had their roots in the variety of meanings

clustering around the Latin term *ratio*. In legal and philosophical discourse, *ratio* often

connoted that part of the rational intellect imbued with the knowledge of eternal truths,

but it also referred to the intellectual process of dividing a larger topic into its constituent

parts; both operations were necessary if one aspired to comprehend the divine.[58] And as

many scholars have remarked, Wyclif was himself explicit about the necessity of

reason's functioning as a guide in theology and exegesis.[59] Although Reginald Pecock

later attacked him for arguing that all moral law was sufficiently represented in holy

scripture, a position which Pecock believed rejected the important truths that reason by itself may "fynde, leerne, and knowe," Wyclif insisted that the conclusions of the fathers were grounded in reason as much as in sacred texts themselves.[60] He is firm in his assertion, for instance, that scriptural interpretation requires formal training in logic and philosophy—"it is absolutely necessary," he argues in *De Veritate*, "that every person be a theologian."[61] A Lollard preacher's declaration that "if Crist seie any sentens, alþough alle þe resonable creaturis þat euer God made or schal make wold varie from Crist or reuerse hym, I wold leue alle hem and hold me to Crist" would most likely have struck Wyclif as a drastic repudiation of the intellectual armature needed to comprehend scripture's truths.[62]

At the same time, Wyclif worries about the inherent limitations of *ratio* in elucidating sacred writing. Although he never went so far as to declare, with Gregory, that "the kind of faith for which human reason provides proof has no merit," Wyclif undercuts his own embrace of *ratio* by so often emphasizing in *De Veritate* that human reason and logic may be misapplied or overly influential in exegesis, leading the theologian to misunderstand the Bible's language as contradictory and therefore false, or as figurative in ways that invalidate scripture's literal truth.[63] Those who presume the Bible's equivocal and parabolic statements to be fictitious, Wyclif writes, are merely in the grip of their own flawed logic, resembling "'the verbose sophist'" [*hanc sophista verbosus*] of which Jerome speaks in his epistle *Ad Paulinam*.[64] "It is not permissible to mangle Holy Scripture," in the way grammarians and logicians do, by declaring it false in places; instead, "one should cite it in its wholeness according to the author's sense."[65]

If the *Postilla*, and especially the *Principium*, exhibited Wyclif's efforts to shift biblical commentary away from a strictly logical and semantic context, then *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae* (1377-78) takes this project to new extremes, especially with its emphasis on the literal sense as that mode of understanding which circumvents the sophists' "useless disputation over words" [*disputacionem verbalem inutilem*].[66] He becomes even more strident a few pages later:

> The saints understand that disagreement over words in the teaching of scripture is useless. For the sense of the author should be humbly searched out, and whatever impedes the understanding of that sense is to be prudently set aside, since the meaning of scripture is comprehended through devotion [*ut affectus comprehendat*]…Indeed, there is little or no strength to be found in sophistical speech. This is why I am accustomed to say that each part of holy scripture is true according to the divinely intended literal sense.[67]

Locating divine truth in the literal sense, the sense most resistant to the figurative glossing and exegesis of sophistical logicians and grammarians, Wyclif's hermeneutic approach is attuned to the infinite and indivisible reality of the word. Such ideas, as we have seen, have their roots in Wyclif's theological realism, and in particular his understanding of universals. In his *De Universalibus* (1373-74), Wyclif had distinguished five types of universals, arguing that the "first and highest kind is the eternal notion or exemplar idea in God."[68] *De Veritate* goes on to equate the highest level of holy scripture with the divine intellect, so that the law of God in its truest and most universal sense lies beyond the "veil of words" [*verborum velamine*] making up the "manuscripts and sensible signs" [*codices vel signa sensibilia*] of the written book.[69] Separating the ontological wheat from the verbal chaff, Wyclif takes pains throughout *De Veritate* to remind his readers that scripture as a divine idea or a universal is of greater

authority than its material instantiation in language, represented by the historical sense. Wyclif's understanding of the literal sense draws on authoritative writings such as Aquinas' commentaries in *Summa Theologica* and *Questiones Quodlibetales* as well as Lyra's *Postilla literallis*; the latter was a standard reference both for Wyclif and his followers, who cite Lyra in the Prologue to the Wycliffite Bible.[70] However, Wyclif also supposes that the meaning of God's words exceeds the accidents of language altogether; discerning the truth and logic of scripture is therefore as much a matter of mental intellection as hermeneutic inquiry. As he argues in *De Veritate*, "those who wish to distinguish the literal sense from the others according to reason or subjective parts [*partes subiectivas*] ought to say, in accordance with this idea, that the literal sense is the universal sense, that one which is *immediately elicited from scripture*."[71]

In addition, however, to raising questions about whether sacred texts can be productively illuminated by hermeneutic intervention, Wyclif's realism also shifts the ground of hermeneutic inquiry to more inward forms of engagement and realization, and it is this dynamic that most vividly illustrates how the movement brought an affective sensibility to the reading of scriptural texts. Wyclif's thinking about scriptural authority set Lollardy on a path that could lead to familiar forms of personal piety. This point can be clarified by turning to an elusive but crucial passage from *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae* in which Wyclif likens the maturing theologian to a child learning how to read. Just as the child progresses from learning the individual and disparate elements of language to understanding how these work together to form meaning, so the theologian passes through stages of scriptural study, moving from grammatical instruction to grasping "the sense of the author" [*sensum autoris*].[72] But what seems a banal analogy at

first quickly shifts to emphasize that the highest form of scriptural study is not a form of

reading at all, but rather the condition in which the theologian "might gaze upon the

unveiled Book of Life," shorn of the "sensible signs" that constitute the foundation of

grammatical instruction in the first place. "So then," Wyclif concludes,

> if the prize to be sought above all else is that sense of scripture which the
> holy spirit set forth, what faithful person would doubt that the leaves and
> bark of the words must be discarded, except insofar as they are previously
> accommodated to this sense? But if they merely lead that person astray,
> they should be condemned as poisonous. This is one reason why Christ
> and many saints would not inscribe [their] understanding except upon the
> tablets of the heart, since that way is more perfect.[73]

The literal sense, though it retained for Wyclif some of its traditional functions as

the historical sense, also initiates a movement inwards, validating one's intensely held

religious beliefs. Although, as Rita Copeland has shown, Lollardy broke from

pedagogical tradition by putting the literal sense to more polemical and intellectually

sophisticated uses, Wyclif's own appeal to the literal sense of scripture is not an attempt

to authorize the dispassionate reading of sacred texts.[74] His thinking, in fact, transfers

interpretation into the realm of the affective in ways that one might not expect from a

theologian so closely identified with rational motives of "clarification and explication."[75]

For far from elucidating the Bible's obscurities, the literal sense is "that sense of scripture

which the holy spirit primarily intends so that the faithful soul would journey upwards

into God."[76] Like his earlier description of the theologian fit to "gaze" upon the Book of

Life, the notion that God "primarily intends" the literal sense all but denies that scripture

is a body of texts whose content is conditioned by linguistic mediation and the

interpretive logic of its readers.

The receptivity one must have towards scripture as a kind of divine archetype or idea rules out another medieval function of reason: discerning "degrees of Catholic truth."[77] Although some traditions may not originate in scripture, they can acquire authority if reason indicates they are valid, as Pecock had argued.[78] For Wyclif, however, this was as good as calling scripture false, since all scripture is coextensive with truth itself. There are no "degrees of Catholic truth," since no part of scripture can be denied; only its "wholeness" or "totality" of meaning are what matter.[79] In perhaps his clearest expression of this principle, Wyclif argues that "the whole law of Christ is one perfect word proceeding from the mouth of God whose individual parts together create the entire authority and efficacy of Christ's law."[80] The argument here revolves around the double sense of the adjective "perfectus," which can mean "perfect" or "complete": if all truth is in holy scripture, then human reason and logic must accommodate themselves to what is evident in the Bible; scripture's perfection is its completeness. What is striking about these remarks in the context of Nicholas Love's attack on Wycliffite rationality is how little they anticipate—and indeed how much they seem to restrict—critical reflection on the Bible and its language; Wyclif's understanding of scriptural sufficiency and the literal sense offers no grounds for making rational choices about what to accept or reject in reading sacred texts. His biblicism, as it is represented in *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, ultimately privileges the reader's inward knowledge of the truth, transferring authority away from the traditional concerns of academic disputation such as signification and scripture's linguistic complexities—the very means by which one might discern "degrees of Catholic truth." Instead, "the theologian has something which infinitely surpasses these categories of evidence, for it is by internal inspiration that the Lord speaks his

meaning."[81] It would appear, then, that despite openly valorizing reason as the basis of

exegesis, Wyclif's logic of scripture prepares the way for affect and emotion as much as

reason to emerge as the means guaranteeing greatest access to the Bible's divine wisdom.

The *Principium* and *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae* exhibit the competing

imperatives of Wyclif's biblicism, that is, the aspiration to build up a *summa* of textual

commentary and analysis (including a gloss on the entire Bible, the purpose of the

Postilla) even as Wyclif's own understanding of the literal sense imposes limits on this

project. There is, then, a constitutive incoherence at the heart of his hermeneutic. In both

preaching and theological instruction, the correct elucidation of the Bible's words was

vitally important to Wyclif; his insistence that religious belief and practice find

justification in scripture meant that one had to interpret its words carefully, not only in

the context of direct reading and study but also with the help of patristic commentary and

exposition to guard against erroneous readings.[82] Wyclif is equally convinced, however,

that the true logic and grammar of scripture is exemplary [*hac logica instar scripture*],

exceeding local debates about scripture's difficult words and passages.[83] Insofar as the

literal sense is the sense best suited to comprehending scripture's divine logic, the true

and faithful exegete can proceed without attempting to resolve scripture's apparent

contradictions on the level of language itself. The expository and disputational

techniques of the schools, the whole machinery of learned exegesis, is of limited utility

since these do not properly respond to scripture's sufficiency as a universal.[84] When he

speaks of approaching scripture according to its "wholeness" or its "totality," then,

Wyclif has in mind something other than the formal methods of semantic and definitional

analysis that had traditionally governed study of the Bible, thereby diminishing the

authority such techniques had always bestowed upon human reason and logic.[85] To a

surprising degree, especially for someone whose intellectual temperament and training

were premised on such practices, Wyclif's literalist hermeneutic provides little rationale

for inquiring into the linguistic and logical complexities of sacred texts, or, by extension,

for confronting the very real incongruities between the Vulgate and its vernacular

versions.

<center>V</center>

The affective trajectories of Wyclif's own scriptural logic acquire legibility as one

turns to the context of English biblical commentary and analysis. My first example is a

tract known as "The holi prophete David seith," a late fourteenth-century commentary on

the Psalms sometimes attributed to Wyclif.[86] Although evidence for such an attribution is

lacking, the text's emphasis on the sanctifying power of persecution is consistent with,

perhaps even inspired by, Wyclif's own powerful and evocative apocalypticism.[87] Nor

would the author's praise of those who "suffre gladli and ioiefuli tribulation and

persecucion for the laue of God" have seemed out of place to anyone familiar with the

Wycliffite sermon cycle or interpolated versions of Richard Rolle's *English Psalter*, both

of which lay emphasis on the spiritual meanings of suffering and ascribe, with a similar

urgency, historical and biblical significance to the plight of Wycliffites in the age of

Arundel (446).[88] Moralizing sacred history more than any other biblical text, the Psalms

provided a framework for historical comparison and analogy, for engaging with

contemporary religious and political questions without, however, abandoning the more

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inward forms of devotion characteristic of lay piety in the period.[89] But the Psalms, as a

reading of this tract will show, also assume a less critically engaged reader, one for whom

the Bible is not an archive of textual or theological knowledge—as Love supposed it was

for Wyclif's followers—but rather a source for the "edificacion of othere men," who are

thereby encouraged "to brynge forth very charite and goode werkis" (447). Such a goal,

of course, is in fact a compelling argument for vernacular biblical translation, as the tract

later makes clear in glossing Matthew 4:4 (*dixit scriptum est non in pane solo vivet homo*

sed in omni verbo quod procedit de ore Dei): "Thanne sithen Ihesu Crist ordayneth his

word to be sustynaunce of mennys sowlis, it is a fendis condicion to refreine cristene men

fro this goostli mete, sithen with-outyn it thei mowe not liuen in grace neither comen to

bliss" (454).[90] It is significant, too, that one of Wyclif's most important statements in *De*

Veritate regarding the literal sense—"the whole law of Christ is one perfect word

proceeding from the mouth of God"—echoes the same biblical passage, for it shows how

his hermeneutic thought could be aligned with a vision of vernacular piety emphasizing

moral and spiritual edification.[91]

The discourse of edification, as readers familiar with the Pseudo-Bonaventuran

corpus will recognize, embodies some of the most familiar *topoi* of late medieval

affective piety, such as spiritual nourishment and the strengthening of the soul through

devout prayer and meditation. In his Prologue to the *Mirror*, for instance, Love expresses

his hope that his translation of the *Meditationes Vitae Christi* will prove "edifiyng to

symple creatures the whiche as childyn hauen nede to be fedde with mylke of ly3te

doctryne & not with sadde mete of grete clargye & of h[ye] contemplacion" (10). "The

holi prophete David seith" anticipates this focus in its use of Bernard's commentary on

the Canticles, a source of highly affective spiritual writing later appropriated by the author of the *Meditationes*.[92] Citing sermon XXXVI, the author of the English tract argues that the end of biblical learning rests in "edifying of thi silf or of thi negebour," likening mere curiosity about scripture to undigested meat that "corrumppith the bodi and not nourischith" (448). Critics have often discussed affective devotion in terms of how it tropes the body, tropes evident here as well in references to "the hoolsum mete of hooli writ" and those who would "fede here soulis on Goddis word" (449; 454).[93] While providing an array of biblical passages in English—a use of the vernacular Arundel would later attempt to restrict with the *Constitutions*—the tract focuses almost exclusively on their tropological implications, the exegetical counterpart to themes of spiritual nourishment.

Right reading, the tract argues, arises out of a desire for spiritual edification, not "foul coriouste" (448). Although the true Christian has an obligation to read and to understand "the text of hooly writ," the integrity of the interpretive process is predicated on one's "good lyuynge," which is like "the legt of lampe bifore hise iyen of his herte, and openeth the wai of treuthe" (450). Proper interpretation is also a function of the reader's absolute certainty that God is the "auctor of al wisdom and kunnynge [knowledge]," and that the Bible is therefore free of falsehood or error (451). To the virtuous, God's intentions are legible in the text; there is no need, then, for a historical or philological approach to biblical study, since the word of God can be taken "trustili and deyutously ["duteously"] (451).[94] Indeed, much as in the *Mirror*, the whole notion of biblical study is subordinated to the imperatives of edification and virtuous living. And while this tract supplies scriptural material in the vernacular where Love's text does not,

it similarly celebrates a remarkably passive relationship to the word, praising "symple men of witt that litil vndirstonden the lawe of Crist and bisie hem to lywe weel in charite to God and man" (453). In important respects, then, "The holi prophete David seith" closely aligns with Love's understanding of edification as one's affective and emotional absorption in the moral dimension of scripture, which, more than a text itself, is the aggregate of Christ's life and teachings.[95] Unlike the philologically informed who flaunt their "nakid cunnynge," affective readers are alert to the tropological implications of the Bible (447); it is they who "knowe here [their] owene freelte and defautis and eschewe deedli synnes and to kepe wilfulli the comaundements of God, and to do the werkis of merci and gewe hooli ensample to here negebours" (448).[96]

Going further, however, the tract then links some of these concerns to Wyclif's understanding of the literal sense in *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*. Only those who study the Bible meekly and with reverence for God's law, it argues, avoid becoming mired in the exigencies of language and interpretation. The Bible is full of equivocations and apparent contradictions, leading the unfaithful reader astray and causing him to proclaim its essential untruth. Wyclif, as we have seen, detested the implications of this idea, and so argued that every word of holy scripture is literally true, even where scripture seems to contradict itself. The literal sense thus becomes a register for comprehending the veracity of the Bible, the truth of which rests not in words themselves but rather in the intention of its divine author.[97] To deny this is to ignore, either through obstinate skepticism or lack of faith, all the passages in the Psalms affirming that holy writ is nothing other than "the entent of the Hooli Gost" (451). This point was also affirmed by the fathers, the author continues, citing Augustine's epistle to Jerome to

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argue that "if ony part of holy writ were fals al were suspect" (451).[98] Although it is

impossible to know without embarking on a larger study whether this tract can be

attributed to Wyclif, his academic writing covers very similar terrain in ascribing to the

literal sense the capacity to capture the true, undifferentiated intent of the Holy Ghost as

intimated in scripture.[99] This way of reading, it seems to me, places the Bible, as much

as Christ himself, at the center of an emotional community. The remarkable crucifixion

scene with which "The holy prophete David seith" concludes accordingly urges readers

to transfer their affective embrace of Christ's body on the cross to the "lawe of God"

collected into scripture:

> ...as Crist strecchid forth hise armes and hise hondes to be nailid on the
> cros, and hise leggis and hise feet also, and bowide doun the heed to
> schewe what lowe he hadde to mankynde, so alle cristene peple schulde
> strechyn forth here armes and hondis and alle here menbris to enbrace to
> hem silf the lawe of God thourg veri bileue and trewe obedience thereto,
> and trewe mayntenaunce therof to here lyues ende. (456)

VI

As a final consideration, I would like to return to William Thorpe's

"autobiographical" account of his examination by Archbishop Thomas Arundel.[100] I

mentioned Thorpe's *Testimony* earlier in order to frame questions about the parameters of

Lollardy and the cultural diffusion of Wyclif's scriptural logic. Wyclif's emphasis on the

primacy of scripture, and more particularly on an idea of biblical reading grounded in and

sustained by the literal sense, was not always out of place in a religious culture valuing

affective and emotional forms of devotion, despite anxiety among orthodox writers about

what they perceived to be the rational ethic of Lollard theology. This fact suggests that

important aspects of Lollardy biblical scholarship are not easily categorized as heretical; the movement's hermeneutic beliefs and practices not only drew on the accepted *loci* of late medieval religious and devotional culture but also merged with what Anne Clarke Bartlett has described as the heightened "emotionalism" of fifteenth-century lay piety.[101] Nicholas Love's intimate familiarity with Wyclif's theological opinions puts this dialectical relationship on display even as the *Mirror* itself attempts to efface the discursive interactions and shared investments of religious writing in the period.

It is important not to push these parallels too far, of course. Wyclif, along with anybody even slightly sympathetic to his thinking, resisted the popular tendency to sanctify material forms, scoffing at such things as saintly relics, transubstantiation, and the use of images in devotional settings.[102] On the last of these subjects, Lollards had been harshly criticized by Reginald Pecock, who argued that the laity's use of devotional images aided vernacular learning and literacy.[103] Thorpe himself denounces images of all kinds with especial vigor, criticizing "the keruynge [carving], the 3etynge, neither the peyntynge of ymagerie with mannus hond" (56.1071-1072). This criticism applies even to the sacrament itself, which was, like all such objects, unnecessary when "heerynge and knowinge of Goddis worde" was sufficient (59.1151). In his Shrewsbury sermon, Thorpe had apparently made similarly disparaging comments about shrines and pilgrimage, suggesting a typically Wycliffite resistance to the materiality of late medieval lay religion.[104] These positions would seem to place the *Testimony*, and Wycliffite concerns more generally, well beyond the currents of mainstream belief and practice.

But while the ease with which Thorpe refutes Arundel on scriptural grounds epitomizes the redistribution of hermeneutic agency that Wycliffism's opponents worried

would accompany an English Bible, such agency is made more ambiguous in the *Testimony* by the idea that the gospel in its highest sense is not a semantic medium.[105] So Thorpe asserts that "manye men now touche and seen, write[n] and reden þe scripture of Cristis lawe, whiche neiþer touchen, ne seen, ne reden effectualli þe gospel" (79.1799-1801). He arrives at this conclusion through a lengthy exposition of both biblical and patristic writing which despite being dismissed by one of the Archbishop's clerks as "ful derk mater" comes back to the conviction that "God and his word ben of oon autorite" (79.1804; 79.1793-1794). The same idea motivates the *Principium*.[106] For both men, the "godhede" is "knowen þoru3 bileue" and one's conformity to "þe lyuynge and techynge of Crist and of hise apostlis" (79.1801-1802; 80.1822-1823). "Sentence" inheres not in the literal verbal content of scripture, which is nothing more than ink on parchment, but rather in Christ himself.[107] Hence the hermeneutic reverence Thorpe and other Wycliffites express for the word of God, their sense that "it is not permissible to mangle holy scripture" through grammatical and logical exegesis. The Bible should be comprehended "in its wholeness according to the author's sense," which is most legible to those who live by the example of Christ's own life and teachings, as Thorpe repeatedly reminds the Archbishop.[108]

Such a hermeneutic position inevitably refers the "reader" to the crucifixion, where Christ's life and teaching meet most urgently. The *Testimony*, in fact, begins in much the same mode as where "The holy prophete David seith" leaves off: with an intense absorption in the most stirring and emotive elements of Christ's anguish on the cross. Granted the opportunity to explain his beliefs, Thorpe turns to the question of the

eucharist, describing it as a commemoration of Christ's "wilful and pacient suffrynge of the moost peyneful passioun" (31). Christ

> went forth wilful a3ens his enemyes; and he suffride hem moost pacientli for to leyen [her] hondis moost violentli vpon him, and to bynden him and to leden him forth as a theef, and to scorne him and to buffeten him, and to al tobawme him with her spittinge[s]. Ouer this I bileue that Crist suffride moost mekeli and pacientli hise enemyes for to beten out with scharpe scorgis the blood that was betwexe his felle and his fleisch; 3he, withouten grucchynge Crist suffrid the cruel Iewes to crowne him with moost scharp thornes and to beten him with a reed. And thereaftir Crist suffride the felle Iewes for to drawen him out vpon the cros, and for to naile him thervpon hoond and foot. And so thoru3 this dispiteous nailynge Crist schedde out wilfulli for mannes loue the blood that was in his veynes; and Crist 3af wilfulli his spirit into the hondis or power of his Fadir. (31.246-32.258)

This scene draws heavily on the iconographic vocabulary of contemporary Passion narratives such as Richard Rolle's *Meditation B*, where there is a similar emphasis on the intense physicality of Christ's suffering, the material implements of crucifixion, and the malice of God's spiritual enemies.[109] One has the sense that the Passion is as visually present to Thorpe as to any late medieval parishioner—including Nicholas Love. Thorpe's understanding of the eucharistic elements as a commemoration of Christ's "moost peyneful passioun" is not entirely consistent with established church teaching on the sacraments, and his use of the savior's suffering body as a devotional reference point should be understood for the polemical tactic that it is (31.243).[110] Yet it is a tactic that refuses to disavow, and in some sense depends on, the potency of crucifixion as an image, the power such a scene has to unsettle and provoke viewers.[111] Although Wycliffite texts such as *A Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* warned that an overly affective absorption in *figura* would distract audiences from Christ's actual historical miracles, the

Testimony renders Christ's suffering in stark visual terms, paying little attention to the typical Lollard distinction between representation and reality.[112] For Thorpe, if not for all of his Wycliffite contemporaries, the social referentiality of Christ's sacrifice made the Passion a potentially powerful mental image, another example of how late medieval Christocentric piety could provide a symbolic idiom for thematizing persecution and inquisitorial violence in the age of Arundel. The goal of "heerynge and knowinge of Goddis worde" does not entirely preclude devotional literacy of a more conventional kind.

Although not a work of biblical scholarship in the manner of the long English sermon cycle or the interpolated versions of Rolle's *English Psalter*, Thorpe's *Testimony* is no less defined by a particular *idea* of the Bible. Described in the prologue as an attempt to answer Arundel "bi holi scripture," Thorpe's account explicitly situates itself in the cultural current of Wyclif's own literalist hermeneutics (29.163). As we have seen, Wyclif understands the literal sense to be any sense, including mystical and allegorical understandings of the word, that is in keeping with God's intentions: it is whichever interpretive register God "primarily intends" [*primo indidit*] for the faithful.[113] Thorpe echoes this idea, and the theory of scriptural sufficiency upon which it is predicated, when he tells the Archbishop that God's law "suffisen to mannes saluacioun, and I bileue in euery article of these lawes to the *entent* that these articlis weren ordeyned and comaundid of these persoones of the moost blessid Trinite to ben beliued" (33.314-316, italics added). What is important to point out here, then, is that the fixation on divine intent so evident in Wycliffite postulations of the literal sense does not sanction a hermeneutic method dedicated to clarifying the historical context or cultural idiom of

biblical writing. While the literal sense could be the bare historical narrative of the Bible, it could also just as readily subvert philological inquiry—for instance, investigating which version of a particular scriptural text is the most accurate or reliable—in favor of an ideational approach to scriptural meaning, one dedicated to affirming a "prior scripture" whose passage into human language does nothing to erode its essential truth.[114]

Thorpe later figures his intellectual and spiritual relationship to Wyclif in overtly genealogical terms, recalling both the theologian himself and the university men of the 1380s whose biblical translations and commentaries helped carry Wyclif's teachings into the vernacular.[115] "And herefore o Wicleef speciali and of these men I toke the lore whiche I haue tau3te and purpose to lyue aftir, if God wole, to my lyues ende," Thorpe defiantly tells the Archbishop (41.581-583). The notion of such a continuum foregrounds the authority of Wyclif's own idea of the Bible, which indeed supplies the connective tissue for much of what Thorpe has to say in defending his positions on preaching, tithes, oaths, images, confession, and the eucharist. To the Archbishop, however, Thorpe's defense of Wyclif's "loore" reveals an intent among Lollards "to pike out scharpe sentencis of holy writ and of doctours for to mayteyne her sect and her loore a3ens the ordenaunce of holi chirche" (51.889-890). Arundel is unable to conceive of lay reading in terms of anything other than biblical literalism, and so insists that Thorpe "be gouerned bi holi chirche" in all religious matters (51.895). Thorpe's recalcitrant reply, in which he rejects worldly definitions of the church, prompts Arundel to ask once again that he disavow his erroneous beliefs by swearing upon the Bible, and it is in the ensuing debate over the status and validity of such oaths that the affective hermeneutic orientation of the *Testimony* comes most sharply into focus.

Thorpe's objection to oaths and oath-taking has a scriptural basis but becomes all the more pointed in the *Testimony* because it invokes Wyclif's own metaphysics of the Bible, with its emphasis on the disembodied reality of divine truth. [116] He refuses a clerk's demand to lay his hand upon the Gospels and swear, commenting that all such oaths are invalid because they are premised on a notion of scripture as a material text.[117] Such a practice turns the Bible into a sacred object, privileging physical forms over spiritual truths in much the same way that shrines and relics do.[118] Alluding to Jerome, Thorpe then draws a surprising distinction for someone who has promised to explicate his views "by holy scripture": "the gospel is not the gospel for redyng of the lettre, but for the bileue that men haue in the word of Crist—that is the Gospel that we blieue, not the lettre that we reden" (78.1770-1772). This is true because "the lettre that is touchid with mannes honde is not the gospel, but the sentence that is verily belieued in mannes herte that is the gospel" (78.1772-1774). Invoking Jerome but working within categories made newly urgent by Wyclif in *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae* and other writings of his, Thorpe argues that "Goddis word is not in the leues of a book but it is in the roote of resoun," adding later that "as the godhede of Crist that is the vertue of God is knowen thoru3 bileue, so is the gospel that is the vertue of Cristis word" (78.1775-1776-79.1801-1803).

Here the discourse of reason actually discourages the systematic investigation of scriptural texts, assigning priority to what is already "knowen thoru3 bileue" rather than what is read in the pages of books. Put another way, the gospel which one believes and has faith in precedes and legitimates the gospel which one reads and interprets, such that one's affective identification with Christ is the starting point for exegesis. In these

moments, Thorpe's testimony demonstrates how Wyclif's biblicism underwrote less a skeptical and demystifying hermeneutics—in which the Bible is nothing more than an archive from which to "pike out scharpe sentencis of holy writ," in Arundel's formulation —than an affective one grounded in the firmness of belief. The irreducible sufficiency of scripture as a universal idea—the centerpiece of Wyclif's biblicism—exceeds particularization in language, in turn abstracting Thorpe from strictly textual questions; and this, more than philological investigation or textual inquiry, is exactly what it means to answer "bi holi scripture" (29.163). To be sure, Thorpe's self-conscious adaptation of Wyclif's scriptural logic preserves an attachment to "resoun" as a hermeneutic principle.[119] For Thorpe as much as Wyclif, however, the literal sense also cultivates a powerful certainty in the truth of one's convictions; the correct interpretation of scripture discloses itself in the medium of the emotions as much as in the words on the page themselves. Thorpe's Wycliffism, as it were, therefore documents a paradoxical kind of literate mentality, one devoted to the explanation and defense of theological ideas, but always with the potential for subordinating such procedures to an intuitive and deeply felt apprehension of the truth.[120] The *Testimony* bears witness, finally, to an interpretive self-confidence that is powerful precisely because it is anchored in the belief that to understand the Bible one's name must already be written in the Book of Life (32.285).

<center>VII</center>

In chapter one, I argued that Wycliffite scholars, finding Wyclif's own idea of the Bible a constraint on their textual practices, derived a more flexible understanding of

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biblical language and translation from existing vernacular models. In the contexts I have

traced out above, something of Wyclif's own intellectual identity *did* find expression in

the broader spectrum of Lollard writing, though it is not that which has become most

visible in the history of scholarship, which has tended to foreground Wycliffism's status

as a dissenting movement.

As Lollardy proliferated, Wyclif's biblicism underwrote new knowledge of the

Bible, but also revivified conventional ways of relating to the sacred, a duality embodied

in the affective hermeneutics of Thorpe's account. If claims can still be made for

Wyclif's pivotal role in demystifying late medieval orthodoxy, then it is surely significant

that England's foremost "heresy" absorbed traditional devotional sentiments from texts in

which his biblicism was at its strongest. Taken together, the *Principium*, *De Veritate*

Sacrae Scripturae, "The holi prophete David seith," and the *Testimony* of William

Thorpe mystify the Bible as much as Love himself had. From Wyclif later Lollards

inherited a literalist hermeneutic that affirmed the Bible as a universal exemplar of truth,

thereby restricting the ways in which scripture could be accessible as a text; the Bible's

transcendent unity resisted the reasoned exposition and analysis by which pedagogical

instruction sought to unveil the meaning of the text for lay vernacular audiences. This

conclusion challenges assumptions about Lollardy's radical commitment to the

vernacularization of knowledge, but it also suggests that Wyclif's biblicism, and in

particular his thinking about the literal sense, opens out onto the cultural history of affect

and emotion in compelling ways. The interpretive ideology we encounter in his wake

incorporates rational demonstration only to privilege those aspects of scripture that are

simply felt to be true in the most immediate, affecting manner. My earlier discussion of

The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ raised a similar point in respect to Mary

Magdalene and the discourses of affect and emotion. Love's account of her "inwarde

affeccion" counters Wycliffite claims of scriptural sufficiency by drawing attention to the

unwritten verities of the Bible, to teachings which are not expressly stated in writing but

nonetheless true in spirit. Although Love had set himself against the specter of

Wycliffite intellectuality, in fact the literal sense cultivates a similar mentality with

respect to scripture: the Bible's sufficiency as a real universal meant looking to its

language as the source for all authority and law, but only after one's affective knowledge

of the truth transmuted the words on the page into something more than a collection of

linguistic signs or a text in history.[121] If the rise of England's first heretical movement

can be explained, as Hudson has argued, by "an alliance of the academic and the gentry,

an alliance born of the intellectual excitement generated by Wyclif's extension of

scholastic argument into the world of everyday politics," then perhaps its continued

existence, especially in the face of censorship and suppression, depended upon how those

very intellectual structures could translate into affective commitments.[122]

Notes

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[1] *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, 3 vols., ed. R. Buddensieg (Wyclif Society, 1905-1907),
I.xii.268. Hereafter *De Veritate*. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.
Citations are by volume, chapter, and page number.

[2] *Testimony* by William Thorpe, in A. Hudson, ed., *Two Wycliffite Texts* (Oxford, 1993). Cited
parenthetically by page and line number.

[3] For more on the *Constitutions*, especially in light of Arundel's investigation of Thorpe and
unorthodox preaching in the realm, see P. McNiven, *Heresy and Politics in the Reign of Henry
IV: The Burning of John Badby* (Boydell, 1987), pp. 93-117. The *Constitutions* are reprinted in
Wilkins, *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae A.D. 446-1717*, 4 vols., ed. D. Wilkins

(London, 1737), 3:314-319. On the *Constitutions* as a response to heretical preaching, see I. Forrest, *The Detection of Heresy in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 67-68, 73-75; and, on the authorship of statutes, *ibid.*, p. 89.

[4] For remarks concerning the presumed theological coherence of Wyclif's thought, see K. B. McFarlane, *John Wycliffe and the Beginnings of English Nonconformity* (English Universities Press Ltd., 1952), p.86.

[5] Claims for the continued cohesion of Wycliffism are therefore difficult to sustain, as Shannon McSheffrey observes in "Heresy, Orthodoxy, and English Vernacular Religion 1480–1525," in *Past and Present* 186.1 (2005): 49.

[6] On the parameters of "vernacular Wycliffism," which is Hudson's phrase, see A. Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 390-445.

[7] The *Testimony*'s representation of "Wicleef" anticipates the attitudes of later reformers who cast the Oxford theologian in the improbable role of "the morning star" of the Reformation. Aston traces this famous description to Bale's 1548 catalogue, but it also appears in his 1544 history of the Oldcastle revolt, *A Brief Chronicle concerning the Examination and Death of Sir John Oldcastle*. Bale's description of Wyclif as the "morning star" was repeated by Foxe in *Acts and Monuments*, and eventually, Aston documents, as "the Morning-Star of the Reformation" by the eighteenth-century historian, David Neal. M. Aston, "John Wycliffe's Reformation Reputation," reprinted in *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (Hambledon, 1984), pp. 243-250. No one, of course, needs to have read Foxe or Bale to pick up the echoes of their work in comments such as this one, from the introduction to an edited volume of Wyclif's writings printed for the Wyclif Society in 1884: "John Wiclif," its editor begins, "is the true, original spirit, the bringer of a new light, another Prometheus in the realm of spiritual things." He continues: "But it was not only by the generations following Wiclif that his overpowering influence was felt. He was also the first who, at a period of general helplessness, when the Church, lost in worldliness, was unable to satisfy the spiritual and national aspirations of her adherents, gave utterance to new ideas which seemed fully to replace the fading traditional forms of life and thought; and who thus made England to become the glorious leader of the greatest spiritual movement of modern times—the Reformation of the Western branch of the Catholic Church….At the same time it was he who brought a thorough change over medieval Christianity by sweeping away through his influence all its peculiar forms of life and teaching— pardons, indulgences, the merits of Saints, pilgrimages, images, and absolutions. He was the first who denied transubstantiation in the Holy Eucharist; he rejected the doctrine of purgatory and the alleged infallibility of the Church of Rome. He proved the sufficiency of Holy Scripture, rejected the claims of tradition as opposed to Biblical teaching, and opened to his countrymen, learned and simple, the fountain of a new spiritual life by translating the Bible for the first time into their mother tongue." R. Buddensieg, ed., *John Wiclif, Patriot & Reformer: Life and Writings* (T. Fisher Unwin, 1884), p. 10; 11-13. For illuminating comments on Buddensieg's historical scholarship, see G. R. Evans, *John Wyclif: Myth & Reality* (IVP Academic, 2005), pp. 243-244. This is not to deny that parts of Wycliffism may well have been assimilated into the spiritual order of early Protestantism, as some historians have suggested. D. MacCulloch, *The Reformation* (Viking, 2004), p. 204. Outside the framework of Reformation historiography, however, the cultural history of Wycliffism maps a complex and ambiguous landscape, one resistant to the various teleological narratives and national histories within which Wyclif's life and work—and late medieval heterodoxy more generally—have so often been explained. The significance of this realignment for how we understand what Fiona Somerset has referred to as

"Wycliffite Spirituality" remains mostly unexplored. F. Somerset, "Wycliffite Spirituality," in *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale: Essays in Honour of Anne Hudson*, ed. H. Barr and A. Hutchinson (Brepols, 2005), pp. 375-386.

[8] In R. W. Southern's influential account, Anselm's prayers and spiritual soliloquies conferred new authority upon personal affect and emotion in devotional practice, leading the way to what he calls "the somewhat hectic piety" of subsequent periods. R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (Yale: 1961), p. 227, 234; for evidence that this dynamic extended beyond the monastic context, see *ibid.*, p. 241. In an important critique of Southern, however, Scott DeGregorio argues that the close identification of affective spirituality with Anselm and Bernard of Clairvaux ignores the complementary concerns of an earlier Anglo-Latin tradition in which devotional works by Bede and Alfred the Great figured prominently. S. DeGregorio, "Affective Spirituality: Theory and Practice in Bede and Alfred the Great," in *Essays in Medieval Studies* 22 (2005): 129-139. On affective spirituality generally, see D. Gray, *Themes and Images in the Medieval English Religious Lyric* (Routledge, 1972), pp. 18-30. For the significance of the *Constitutions* in these contexts, see N. Watson, "Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, The Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's *Constitutions* of 1409," in *Speculum* 70.4 (1995): 822-864.

[9] For a useful discussion of such terms and their limitations, see Sarah McNamer's recent essay on "feeling" in *Oxford Twenty First Century Approaches to Literature*: *Middle English*, ed. P. Strohm (Oxford, 2007), pp. 241-258. A focused treatment of Lollardy and late medieval devotion, with particular attention to the methodological questions arising out of scholarly attempts to reconstruct forms of piety, can be found in Robert Lutton, *Lollardy and Orthodox Religion in Pre-Reformation England* (Boydell, 2006), pp. 5-38.

[10] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (Yale, 1992), p. 19. See, also, Émile Mâle's comments to this effect on the fourteenth-century *Meditationes Vitae Christi* in *l'Art religieux du XIIe au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1946), p. 92.

[11] "Traditional religion" is Eamon Duffy's (in)famous phrase, forcefully critiqued by Aers in "Altars of Power: Reflections on Eamon Duffy's *Stripping of the Altars*," in *Literature and History* 3 (1994): 90-105.

[12] I hope this implicitly recognizes the historical contingency of affect and emotion, the ways in which they always operate within broader systems of knowledge and authority. For relevant methodological questions, see Barbara Rosenwein's essay "Worrying about Emotions in History," in *The American Historical Review* 107.3 (2002); her work on "emotional communities" there as well as in her monograph, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Cornell, 2006), informs the present argument, despite the fact that neither study is concerned with Wycliffite texts. Other recent and important recontextualizations of emotion are S. Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh, 2004); S. Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford, 2004); and A. Cole, *Literature and Heresy in the Age of Chaucer* (Cambridge, 2008), which includes a discussion of Margery Kempe's religiosity and the "affective register" of fifteenth-century Wycliffite discourse (170). For a prescient and influential attempt to treat "structures of feeling" within the realm of the social, a prerogative very much at the center of my treatment of the literal sense, see Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 128-135.

[13] R. Kieckhefer, "Convention and Conversion: Patterns in Late Medieval Piety," in *Church History* 67 (1998), p. 37. Andrew Brown finds that "the areas where Lollardy had been found were also areas marked by a vigorous indulgence in very orthodox practices." A. Brown, *Popular Piety in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 1995), p. 247.

[14] Recounted in Aston, *Faith and Fire: Popular and Unpopular Religion, 1350-1600* (Hambledon, 1993), p. 24.

[15] Entry for "zele" in *The Middle English Translation of the Rosarium Theologie*, ed. C. von Nolcken (Carl Winter, 1979), p. 104. Forrest observes that "[w]hat characterized the social stratum in which heresy seemed to thrive was religious zeal and contact with the written word, whether in Wycliffite reading circles or in discharging the legal duties of a *fidedignus*." I. Forrest, *The Detection of Heresy in Late Medieval England*, p. 236.

[16] M. Wilks, "John Wyclif: Reformer, c.1327-1384," reprinted in *Wyclif: Political Ideas and Practice* (Oxbow, 2000), p. 12. Maurice Keen, comments that Wyclif's Christianity follows from the idea of a God "whose universal knowledge of all things makes knowledge of some things in a degree accessible to men who are made in his image," natural reason being the basis for this relationship. M. Keen, "Wyclif, the Bible, and Transubstantiation," in *Wyclif in His Times*, ed. A. Kenny (Oxford, 1986), p. 3. In the same vein, Catto comments that "the respect for natural reasoning, and the belief that certain knowledge was attainable, would be the marks of Wyclif's reaction against the 'possibilism' of his colleagues." J. Catto, "Wyclif and Wycliffism at Oxford 1356-1430," in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 2, *Late Medieval Oxford*, ed. Catto and Evans (Oxford, 1992), p. 190. Beryl Smalley notes that Wyclif "wanted to restore belief in revelation by showing that it could be proved by reason." B. Smalley, "The Bible and Eternity: John Wyclif's Dilemma," in *Studies in Medieval Thought and Learning from Abelard to Wyclif*, ed. Beryl Smalley (Hambledon, 1981), p. 399. And Gordon Leff has important insights into the status of reason in Wyclif's theology in "Wyclif and the Augustinian Tradition," in *Medievalia et Humanistica* 1 (1970): 29-39.

[17] Wyclif himself emphasizes the importance of interpreting scripture according to reason. See, for example, *De Veritate*, I.ix.200.

[18] Robson's description is apt: the Bible is "an emanation of the Supreme Being transposed into writing." J. A. Robson, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools: The Relation of the "Summa de Ente" to Scholastic Debates at Oxford in the Later Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1966), p. 146. I borrow the phrase "affective reader" from James Simpson, which he employs in relation to Langland in his article "Desire and the Scriptural Text," in *Criticism and Dissent in the Middle Ages*, ed. R. Copeland (Cambridge, 1996), p. 236.

[19] The phrase "ultimate basis" comes from M. Hurley, "'Scriptura sola': Wyclif and his Critics," in *Traditio* 15.1 (1960): 304.

[20] In the *Remonstrance against Oldcastle*, for instance, Hoccleve reproaches Oldcastle, a once trusted companion of the king's, for teaching Wycliffite views on a number of subjects. He implies that arguments from reason are an impediment to accepting the mysterious nature of the sacrament: Oldcastle has fouly erred "in the sacrament / Of the auter, but how in special / For to declare it needith nat at al," adding later that "For if we mighte our feith by reson preeue, / We sholde no meryt of our feith haue" (ll. 99-101; 141-142). *Selections from Hoccleve*, ed. M. C. Seymour, (Oxford, 1981).

[21] On this process, see Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, pp. 390-445.

[22] Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, ed. M. Sargent (Exeter, 2004). Cited parenthetically by page number.

[23] A memorandum that circulated with many recensions of the *Mirror* relates how the "original copy" had been personally presented to the Archbishop "for inspection and due examination," and how Arundel had then "commended and approved it personally, and further decreed and commanded by his metropolitan authority that it rather be published universally for the edification of the faithful and the confutation of heretics or lollards." *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, ed. Sargent (Exeter, 2004), p. 7. The phrase "contra lollardos" appears repeatedly in the margins of the text, most often in relation to discussions of auricular confession and transubstantiation—spheres of religious practice that, while always marked by disagreement, had become openly controversial as discussion of theological topics moved into English. For manuscript descriptions, see Sargent's intro, lxii-lxxxvi, as well as A. I . Doyle, "Reflections on Some Manuscripts of Nicholas Love's *Myrrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesus Christ*," in *Leeds Studies in English*, new series 14 (1983).

[24] James Simpson, *The Oxford English Literary History: Reform and Cultural Revolution* (Oxford, 2002), p. 436. Simpson elsewhere argues that while Love's version is a "free" translation, thereby inducing in the reader a similar kind of interpretive agency in reading or hearing biblical texts, "the freedom he encourages is imaginative and affective rather than ratiocinative—the reader is never encouraged to follow this imaginative freedom through to ecclesiological questions." J. Simpson, "Desire and the Scriptural Text," in *Criticism and Dissent in the Middle Ages*, ed. Copeland, p. 235. Steven Justice similarly comments that the *Mirror* "shows what Arundel imagined as the proper use of the Bible among the laity: its brief translations of biblical Latin are swamped by detailed verisimilar narrative that in effect interprets the translations into a purely meditative, rather than theological, significance." S. Justice, "Lollardy," in the *Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. Wallace (Cambridge, 1998), p. 678. Kantik Ghosh has also discussed how Love's version counters Wycliffite prerogatives in its effort "to locate authority in a discourse outside the text, in the interpretations dictated or 'determined' by the Church." K. Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and the Interpretation of Texts* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 152. The central duality of Love's text, he argues, exists in its "emphasising the hermeneutic authority of the Church, and of the devout reader operating within the Church, while acknowledging the textual authority of scripture" (158).

[25] On Pecock, see M. Bose, "The Opponents of John Wyclif," in *A Companion to John Wyclif*, ed. Levy (Brill, 2006), pp. 407-455. On Love's "polemical affectivity," see K. Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and the Interpretation of Texts* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 147-173.

[26] For example, in *English Wycliffite Sermons,* ed. A. Hudson and P. Gradon, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1983-1996), 3:299 (cited in T. Coletti, *Mary Magdalene and the Drama of the Saints* [University of Pennsylvania, 2004], p. 145). For the argument that "pryuey shrifte is autorisid of oure Iesu," see *EWS*, 2:228.

[27] A. Blamires, "Women and Preaching in Medieval Orthodoxy, Heresy, and Saints' Lives," *Viator* 26 (1995): 135-152. S. McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy: Women and Men in Lollard Communities 1420-1530* (University of Pennsylvania, 1995), p. 141 ff., offers a bleaker view concerning the social and religious status of women in Lollard communities.

[28] Coletti, *Mary Magdalene and the Drama of the Saints*, p. 145.

[29] For example, *EWS*, 1:430-432.

[30] I. Ragusa and R. Green, ed. and trans., *Meditations on the Life of Christ* (Princeton, 1961), p. 262.

[31] *Ibid*., p. 263.

[32] *Ibid*., p. 263.

[33] On the relation of Love's text to its source, and the ways in which the *Mirror* inhibits "the progression to spiritual contemplation that had made Gospel meditations so useful to various of their earlier and later authors," see Michelle Karnes, "Nicholas Love and Medieval Meditations on Christ," in *Speculum* 82.2 (2007): 387.

[34] Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, p. 439.

[35] One important exception to this critical neglect is Aston, in her essay "Wycliffe and the Vernacular," reprinted in *Faith and Fire*, p. 50 ff.

[36] *De Eucharistica Tractatus Maior: Accedit Tractatus de Eucharistica et Poenitentia sive De Confessione,* ed. J. Loserth (Wyclif Society, 1892), ii.29. Wyclif's eucharistic theology was a good deal more complex and paradoxical than what I have indicated here, maintaining as it did that the bread and wine substantially remained after consecration but as "an efficatious sign of the body of Christ truly and really present." Hurley, "'Scriptura Sola': Wyclif and his Critics," p. 300. On Wyclif's theological realism, see J. A. Robson, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools,* pp. 141-170, but the connection between realism and Wyclif's certainty in the impossibility of transubstantiation is perhaps best illustrated in *De Universalibus* XIII, where he discusses the metaphysical problems raised by annihilation. A recent and provocative reading of Wyclif's eucharistic thought can be found in D. Aers, *Sanctifying Signs: Making Christian Tradition in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, 2004), pp. 53-65. On medieval sacramental theology in general, and specifically in relation to Wyclif, see I. C. Levy, *John Wyclif: Scriptural Logic, Real Presence, and the Parameters of Orthodoxy* (Marquette, 2003), pp. 123-319.

[37] Compare the many passages in *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae* where Wyclif actually disowns Aristotle, or says that the Bible is more authoritative than Aristotle when scripture contradicts him, as Anthony Kenny discusses in *Wyclif* (Oxford, 1985), p. 59.

[38] Although scholars should be wary of supposing that reason and affect are mutually exclusive constructs, or that they operate in contrast to each other, it is this distinction—as opposed to the more recognizably medieval one between reason and authority—that Love foregrounds in his reading of Lollardy.

[39] On "emotional communities," see B. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," in *The American Historical Review*, 107.3 (2002): 842; and, more broadly, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Cornell, 2006). Love, David Aers comments, is mistaken in arguing that "it is only on vulgarly empiricist and rationalist grounds that Wycliffites object to the

Church's current determination that the 'substance of bred' no longer exists 'in his kynde' after consecration." D. Aers, *Sanctifying Signs*, p. 24.

[40] B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, 1964), p. 293, regarding Aristotelian science.

[41] Aston, *Faith and Fire*, pp. 82-83.

[42] Cited, with a similar emphasis, in J. Simpson, *Oxford English Literary History, 1350-1547: Reform and Cultural Revolution* (Oxford, 2002), p. 477.

[43] Many otherwise illuminating studies of late medieval religious culture have followed Love's lead in this sense, e.g., Watson, "Censorship and Cultural Change," *passim*.

[44] For chronology and context of the *Postilla*, see W. Thomson, *Wyclyf's Latin Writings* (Toronto, 1983), p. 192 ff., as well as G. Benrath, *Wyclif's Bibelkommentar* (De Gruyter, 1966), *passim*.

[45] B. Smalley, "John Wyclif's *Postilla super totam Bibliam*," in *Bodleian Library Record* 5 (1953): 186-205; *idem*, "Wyclif's *Postilla* on the Old Testament and his *Principium*," in *Oxford Studies Presented to Daniel Callus*, Oxford Historical Society, New Series, Vol. XVI (Oxford, 1964), pp. 253-296. The date of Wyclif's inception is not certain; Smalley suggests 1372 or 1373. "Wyclif's *Postilla*," p. 256. For more on Wyclif's scriptural commentary and the *Principium*, see D. L. Jeffrey, "Chaucer and Wyclif: Biblical Hermeneutic and Literary Theory in the XIVth Century," in *Chaucer and the Scriptural Tradition*, ed. D. L. Jeffrey; and G. R. Evans, *John Wyclif: Myth and Reality*, p. 115; as well as I. C. Levy, *John Wyclif: Scriptural Logic, Real Presence, and the Parameters of Orthodoxy*, p. 86, 93. For useful remarks on the scholastic context of *principia*, especially as practiced at Oxford, see *Oxford Theology and Theologians*, eds. Little and Pelster (Oxford, 1934), pp. 26-27, 44-45. The text of the *Principium* is transcribed in Benrath, *Wyclif's Bibelkommentar*, pp. 338-346. All translations are my own.

[46] For more on disposition in the context of Wycliffite hermeneutics, see K. Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 138.

[47] A. J. Minnis et al., eds, *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism: The Commentary Tradition*, rev. ed. (Oxford, 1992), p. 136, 198. For a recent theorization of form in medieval contexts, see C. Cannon, "Form," in *Middle English: Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature*, ed. Strohm (Oxford, 2007), pp. 177-190.

[48] "Primum est moralis disposicio informans affectum, excludendo triplicem concupiscenciam de qua I Jo 2°: *Omne quod est in mundo, concupiscencia carnis et concupiscencia oculorum et superbia vite est*, in qua quidem trinitate nepharia peccata singula sunt fundata." Benrath, *Wyclif's Bibelkommentar*, pp. 338-339.

[49] Smalley, "Wyclif's *Postilla*," p. 255, and cited in Levy, *John Wyclif*, p. 93. It should be noted, however, that this point does not preclude biblical proofs based on reason, in conjunction with "auctoribus et exemplis." Benrath, *Wyclif's Bibelkommentar*, p. 339.

[50] "Sed hic quereret philosophus naturalis quomodo disposicio affectus antecedit disposicionem intellectus ad sapienciam theologicam capescendam, cum intellectus antecedit voluntatem in ordine cognoscendi. Sed huic dicitur quod rectus ordo expostulat affectum disponi previe, ut est

dictum, antequam intendatur huic sciencie, tum quia dicta disposicio affectus est previe necessaria in statu quolibet viatoris et specialiter intendentibus huic sciencie, cum pocius ab extra quam studio humano perquiritur, tum eciam quia sine disposicione anime per predictas sciencias humanitus adquisitas possunt multe veritates theologice satis sciri, non autem sine disposicione voluntatis debita, unde quamvis infidelis, hereticus vel peccato mortali quolibet irretitus putat se satis cognoscere sapienciam scripturarum, errrat tamenin hoc quod non sapit sapore debito propter discrasiam potencie voluntve, cum veritas theologica antonomastice sapiencia, quasi sapida sciencia, sit vocata." Benrath, *Wyclif's Bibelkommentar*, p. 340. On debates over how to define theology, and specifically whether it was scientific in nature, see M.-D. Chenu, *Théologie comme science aux XIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1957), as well as P. Nash, "Giles of Rome and the Subject of Theology," *Mediaeval Studies* 18 (1956): 61-92.

[51] Minnis, *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism*, p. 247 (trans. Minnis), as well as Minnis, "Literary Theory in Discussions of *Formae Tractandi* by Medieval Theologians," in *New Literary History*, 11.1 (1979): 138. Smalley argued that Wyclif probably toned down some of his commentary throughout the *Postilla* simply so he could get it done in the midst of all his other responsibilities as a Master, making it an open question as to what extent this text or the *Principium* itself is representative of Wyclif's thinking. Smalley, "Wyclif's *Postilla*," p. 256. She adds on the same page that his commentary tends to follow a predictable pattern in its reliance on authorities such as Grosseteste and Lyra. While formulaic at times, both the *Postilla* and the *Principium* are important for framing his later engagement with the language and logic of scripture in *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae* and elsewhere. Hudson agrees that Wyclif's early commentary on the Bible "probably gave rise to many of his later theories." Hudson, *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings* (Cambride, 1978), p. 2.

[52] Minnis, "Literary Theory in Discussion of *Forma Tractandae* by Medieval Theologians," p. 138.

[53] DeGregorio, "Affective Spirituality: Theory and Practice in Bede and Alfred the Great," p. 2.

[54] Wyclif's focus on affect may be one component of a fierce reaction against the logical and grammatical appropriation of scripture by Oxford "nominalists," whom Wyclif severely criticizes in *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, a generation earlier. For the context of such disputes, though without the suggestion I have made here concerning affect, see W. Courtenay, *Schools and Scholars in Fourteenth-Century England* (Princeton, 1987), pp. 258-306.

[55] "…ut sic alter alterius membra sine detrahente discordia procedamus viantes non privata commoda, sed unitatem et perfeccionem corporis Christi mistici principaliter intendentes, donec occurramus omnes in virum perfectum, omnem veritatem edocati, scripturam sacram plenarie cognoscentes et proporcionaliter ad actus meritorios et habitus librum vite indefectibiliter intuentes." Benrath, *Wyclif's Bibelkommentar*, p. 346.

[56] *De Veritate*, I.380.19-29: "[E]t sic ne pseudo discipuli fingant, se inmediate habere a deo suam sentenciam, ordinavit deus comunem scripturam sensibilem, ad cuius sensum catholicum capiendum deus non potest deficere, quin semper quosdam irradiet, ad quam irradiacionem confert sanctitas vite et consonancia cum sensu sanctorum doctorum secundum etatem ecclesie a fonte sapiencie derivata. Et continuare istam irradiacionem in matre ecclesia est theologorum officium, quos oportet stare in suis limitibus. Unde non licet theologo, fingere aliena preter fidem scripture catholice."

[57] As Beryl Smalley has observed, Wyclif "looked back to the past to find that certainty which skepticism and terminism had dissolved." Smalley, "Wyclif's *Postilla*," p. 279. Leff similarly comments that Wyclif's doctrines were "a singular attempt to gain certainty in an age when the prevailing intellectual fashion was doubt," adding that such an outlook was especially significant because it led him to reject the church "in its contemporary state as untrue to its real nature." Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages: The Relation of Heterodoxy to Dissent, c. 1250-c. 1450*, 2 vols. (Manchester, 1967), 2:515. My remarks here about affect and pious disposition in the interpretation of scripture draw conceptually from Raymond Williams, who orients cultural analysis around "meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt," pointing to "specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought." Williams goes on to describe a "structure of feeling" as a "cultural hyposthesis" with "special relevance to art and literature, where the true social content…cannot without loss be reduced to belief systems, institutions, or explicit general relationships, though it may include all these as lived and experienced, with or without tension, as it also evidently includes elements of social and material (physical or natural) experience which may lie beyond, or be uncovered or imperfectly covered by, the elsewhere recognizable systematic elements." Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 132-133.

[58] See, for example, *De Trinitate*, IX.6 and, more significantly, XII.3, where Augustine speaks of "illa rationali nostrae mentis substantia qua subhaeremus intellegibili atque incommutabili ueritati tamquam ductum et inferioribus tractandis gubernandisque deputatum est." Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XII.3, CCSL: L (Brepols, 1968), p. 357. John of Salisbury, in the *Metalogicon*, similarly writes that reason "examines, with its careful study, those things which have been perceived, and which are to be, or have been, commended to memory's custody." It is "that power of the soul which examines and investigates things that make an impression on the senses or intellect." John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, ed. and trans. D. McGarry (Berkeley, 1955), p. 34, 35. For illuminating comments on *ratio* in the context of natural law theory, see J. A. Alford, "The Idea of Reason in *Piers Plowman*," in *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*, ed. Kennedy et al. (Woodgridge, 1988), pp. 203-204.

[59] For instance, F. Somerset, "Vernacular Argumentation in *The Testimony of William Thorpe*," in *Mediaeval Studies* 58 (1996): 212 ff.

[60] Reginald Pecock, *Repressor of Overmuch Blaming of the Clergy*, 2 vols., ed. Babington (London, 1860), 1:10; *De Veritate*, I.x.228: "unde sancti doctores eliciunt conclusionem tam ex scriptura quam racione, quod omnes patriarche et prophete habuerunt fidem incarnaciones et aliorum articulorum ut moderni."

[61] *De Veritate*, I.xv.378: "et sicut dixi superius, oportet, omnem hominem esse theologum…" For Wyclif's position on the necessity of natural philosophy in the study of scripture, see Smalley, "Wyclif's *Postilla*," pp. 292-293. Stephen Lahey offers insightful comments in "Reginald Pecock on the Authority of Reason, Scripture and Tradition," in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 56.2 (2005): 19.

[62] *De oblacione iugis sacrificii*, in *The Works of a Lollard Preacher*, ed. A. Hudson (Oxford, 2001), p. 168 (Titus Tract). Similar remarks appear on p. 200.

[63] Gregory, cited in H. de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, 2 vols., trans. Sebanc and Macierowski (Eerdmans, 1998), 1: 66; *De Veritate*: I.iv, *passim.*

[64] *De Veritate*: I.iv.80.

[65] *De Veritate*: I.iv.82: "ideo non licet lacerare scripturam sacram, sed allegare eam in sua integritate ad sensum autoris."

[66] *De Veritate*: I.v.94.

[67] *De Veritate*: I.v.103: "est ergo sanctorum sentencia, quod verbalis contencio est in doctrina scripture inutilis, cum sensus autoris sit humiliter indagandus, et quidquid ab intellectu illius sensus retardat, ut affectus comprehendat scripture sentenciam, est prudenter abiciendum…ideo soleo dicere, quod quelibet pars scripture sacre est vera de virtute sermonis divini." I am drawing here on Levy's translation.

[68] *De Universalibus*, II.165: "Primum et supremum genus est ratio vel idea exemplaris aeterna in Deo." See Kenny's insightful discussion of this passage in "The Realism of the *De Universalibus*," in *Wyclif in his Times*, ed. Kenny (Oxford, 1986), p. 23. For dating of the text, see Thompson, *Latin Writings of John Wyclyf*, p. 20, as well as the discussion in chapter one, note 23 of the present study.

[69] *De Veritate*: I.viii.174; I.vi.107. The latter phrase is cited by Levy in *John Wyclif: Scriptural Logic, Real Presence, and the Parameters of Orthodoxy,* p. 84.

[70] Aquinas' comments on the literal sense can be found in *Summa Theologica* Ia 1, articles 9 and 10, as well as in *Questiones Quodlibetales* 7.16.14. For Lyra, see Minnis, "'Authorial Intention' and 'Literal Sense' in the Exegetical Theories of Richard Fitzralph and John Wyclif: An Essay in the Medieval Theories of Biblical Hermeneutics," in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 75, Section C, no. 1 (1975): 1-30, as well as *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism, c.1100-c.1375*, ed. Minnis et al. (Oxford, 1988), pp. 197-212. Also crucial for understanding Lyra's influence on Wycliffite translation and exegesis is Mary Dove, *The First English Bible: The Text and Context of the Wycliffite Versions* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 11-12, 133-135.

[71] *De Veritate*, I.vi.123: "[I]lla autem, quibus placet distingwere sensum literalem secundum racionem vel partes subiectivas ab aliis, debent dicere, quod de racione sensus literalis est, quod sit sensus catholicus inmediate elicitus ex scriptura…" Italics added.

[72] *De Veritate*: I.iii.44.

[73] *De Veritate*: I.iii.44: "…tercio relictis signis sensibilibus attendit ad sensum autoris, quosque quarto viderit sine velamine librum vite…cum enim sensus scripture, quem spiritus sanctus indidit, sit eius fructus principaliter acquirendus, quis fidelis dubitat, quin postponenda sint folia et cortex verborum, nisi de quanto disponunt previe ad hunc sensum? quod si abducunt, sunt contempnenda ut venenum. et hec est una racio, quare Cristus et multi sancti non scripserant nisi sensum in tabulis cordis, cum hoc sit perfeccius." Cited in D. L. Jeffrey, "Chaucer and Wyclif: Biblical Hermeneutic and Literary Theory in the XIVth Century," in *Chaucer and the Scriptural Tradition*, ed. D. L. Jeffrey (Ottawa, 1984), p. 120.

[74] R. Copeland, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages: Lollardy and Ideas of Learning* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 55-140.

[75] Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy,* pp. 52-53.

[76] *De Veritate* I.vi.120: "…scripture sensam, quem spiritus sanctus primo indidit, ut animus fidelis ascendat in deum." Cited, with slightly different language, in Levy, *John Wyclif: Scriptural Logic, Real Presence, and the Parameters of Orthodoxy*, p. 99, where the use of the verb "impart" captures even more vividly the passivity of the relationship I am describing.

[77] This is Gerson's standard, according to J. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, 5 vols. (Chicago, 1973–1990), 4:122: "These 'degrees of Catholic truth' included not only what was asserted in so many words by the Scriptures but also what had to be 'concluded from this by a clear process of reasoning,' even though it might not be explicitly stated."

[78] Pecock, *Repressor of Overmuch Blaming of the Clergy*, pp. 12-18. On moral questions such as usury, for instance, "Holi Writt 3eueth litil or noon li3t therto at al," yet reason judges "that y be waar forto not do it" (p. 16).

[79] *De Veritate*: I.vi.136-137.

[80] *De Veritate*: I.xii.268: "Confirmatur ex hoc, quod tota lex Cristi est unum perfectum verbum, procedens de ore dei, cuius singule partes concausant totam autoritatem vel efficaciam legis Cristi."

[81] *De Veritate*, I.380.6-10: "Iudices autem secundum leges humanas vix attingunt evidenciam topicam sive probabilem, theologus autem infinitum excedit has evidencias, cum sit ex inspiracione interna, quod sentenciam suam dicit dominus."

[82] For example, *De Veritate* I.ii.39, in reference to Ambrose, Jerome, Gregory and Bernard: "ipsi enim, rogantes deum assidue pro eius sensu habendo, verisimiliter sunt auditi."

[83] *De Veritate*: I.viii.174.

[84] For Wyclif, the proper response to universals is both a hermeneutic and an ethical imperative. He argues in *De Universalibus* III.77.161-163, for instance, that "indubie error intellectus et affectus circa universalia est causa totius peccati regnantis in saeculo."

[85] G. R. Evans, *The Language and Logic of the Bible: The Road to Reformation* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 51-53.

[86] Edited by M. Deanesly in *The Lollard Bible and Other Medieval Biblical Versions* (Cambridge, 1920), p. 268 for comments, p. 445 ff. for text itself. Deanesly dates the tract to c.1378-80, about the time Wyclif was at work on *De Veritate*, although this is highly conjectural (269). Cited parenthetically.

[87] See Wilks, "Wyclif and the Great Persecution," reprinted in *Wyclif: Political Ideas and Practice* (Oxbow, 2000), pp. 180-181.

[88] Hudson observes that in two Wycliffite recensions of Rolle's *English Psalter*, Lambeth 34 and BL Royal 18 C.xxvi, "we have a different kind of Lollard text, one whose primary purpose is not to teach Wycliffite views or to castigate the conventional wisdom of the contemporary, worldly church, but to console and encourage the committed during persecution…the commentary comes

closest of any Wycliffite text to a devotional work, dedicated to a spiritual purpose." Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, pp. 263-264.

[89] I advance this argument in my fourth chapter, "Rolle's 'blessyd boke': The *English Psalter* and its Wycliffite Readers." For similar points about how the psalms "invite deeply personal appropriation by the persecuted," see J. Simpson, *Burning to Read: English Fundamentalism and its Reformation Opponents* (Harvard, 2007), pp. 142-183 (reference at p. 163).

[90] This idea also served as a justification for preaching the Bible in English, e.g., *The Middle English Translation of the Rosarium Theologie*, ed. von Nolcken, p. 91, l. 7 ff.

[91] *De Veritate*, cited above. For more on the nexus of edification, lay devotion, and the vernacular, see N. Watson, "The Politics of Middle English Writing," in *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520*, ed. J. Wogan-Browne et al. (Pennsylvania State University, 1998).

[92] On Bernard of Clairvaux and the origins of medieval "affective piety," see D. Gray, *Themes and Images in the Medieval English Religious Lyric*, pp. 20-21.

[93] For instance, Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (California, 1987), pp. 260-276.

[94] In brief remarks on this tract, Coleman observes that "[t]he question of literacy has become subordinated to that of the readers' intention for this author." J. Coleman, *English Literature in History, 1350-1400: Medieval Readers and Writers* (Hutchinson, 1981), p. 207.

[95] The Middle English translation of the *Rosarium Theologie*, which contains an entry for "edifiyng," comments that "Spiritual edifiyng is ane ordinate knyttyng of vertuez in þe soule of a resonable creature," adding that the "foundement or grounde opon wiche it is edified is Criste." *The Middle English Translation of the Rosarium Theologie*, ed. von Nolcken, p. 71.

[96] Citing a similar passage (p. 447 in Deanesly), Copeland argues that the tract "attacks the elaborate systems of exposition associated with the friars in terms that clearly mark a distinction between literal truth and external mechanisms of rhetorical 'colours': 'Thei takyn the nakid vndirstondynge bi presumcion of mannes witt, and bryngen forgt pride veynglorie and boost, to coloure here synnes and desceiue sutilli here negebours.'" Copeland, "Rhetoric and the Politics of the Literal Sense in Medieval Literary Theory: Aquinas, Wyclif, and the Lollards," in *Interpretation: Medieval and Modern*, ed. Boitani and Torti (D. S. Brewer, 1992), p. 21.

[97] The literal sense thus "always points to Christ," in Mary Dove's succinct phrase. Dove, *The First English Bible: The Text and Contexts of the Wycliffite Versions* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 202; and see Hanna, "'Vae octuplex,' Lollard socio-textual ideology, and Ricardian-Lancastrian prose translation," in *Criticism and Dissent*, ed. Copeland (Cambridge, 1996), p. 255.

[98] Augustine, *Epistulae*, CCSL: XXXI (Brepols, 2004), pp. 92-97.

[99] I will say, however, that the likely early date of this tract, the many concerns it shares with *De Veritate*, and its choice of quotations (including from Chrysostom, whose writings Wyclif often cites in discussions concerning the truth and authority of scripture) are all worth noting in reference to his potential authorship.

[100] On Thorpe, the veracity of the *Testimony*, and the genre of the text, see Hudson's intro, xlv-lix.

[101] *Cultures of Piety*: *Medieval English Devotional Literature in Translation*, ed. Bartlett and Bestul (Cornell, 1999), p. 2.

[102] Duffy comment on the widespread late medieval "insistence on the objective power of sacred things and formulae." E. Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 281.

[103] Pecock, *Repressor of Overmuch Blaming of the Clergy*, pp. 191-274.

[104] There is no documentation either of Thorpe's Shrewsbury sermon itself or of the examination recounted in the *Testimony*. With respect to the latter, Somerset rightly observes that "the text's value is not as a record of actual procedure but as a representation of ideal, even exemplary, steadfastness in adversity." F. Somerset, *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 179. For what little is known about Thorpe's life, see Hudson, "Thorpe, William (fl. 1381–1407)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004; online edition., 2008).

[105] On Thorpe's skill with forms of academic disputation, see Somerset, "Vernacular Argumentation in The Testimony of William Thorpe," in *Mediaeval Studies* 58 (1996): 207-243; and, by the same author, *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience in Late Medieval England*, pp. 179-215.

[106] For example, where Wyclif speaks of scripture, whose author is the Holy Spirit (*cuius auctor est Spiritus sanctus, cui voluntas personaliter correspondet*). Benrath, *Wyclif's Bibelkommentar*, p. 340.

[107] Thorpe gestures towards this point in his description of preaching licenses as "enke vpon parchemyne" (47.762).

[108] *De Veritate*, I.iv.82, cited above.

[109] *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse*, ed. S. J. Ogilvie-Thomson (Oxford, 1988), pp. 69-83. N. Watson, *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 241-242.

[110] Thorpe's other references to the sacraments as God "in foorme of breed and of wyne" are ambiguous enough that Arundel asks him to clarify whether "þou and þi sect techen it to be in substaunce of breed," a question which elicits yet more indirection from the preacher (53.969-972).

[111] Indeed, what is most problematic about Arundel's position on images, the *Testimony* suggests, is the assumption that because an image in "manus mynde" is stirring, the material and manmade representation of that image should be worshipped (57.1082-1086). Thorpe does not reject all images but rather those "madde wiþ mannes hond" (58.1138).

[112] The *Tretise* argues that "sithen miraclis of Crist and of hise seintis weren thus efectuel, as by oure bileve we ben in certein, no man schulde usen in bourde and pleye the miraclis and werkis that Crist so ernystfully wroughte to oure helthe. For whoevere so doth, he errith in the byleve,

reversith Crist, and scornyth God." *A Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*, ed. Davidson (Kalamazoo, 1993), p. 93, ll. 22-27.

[113] *De Veritate* I.vi.120, cited above.

[114] *De Veritate*, I.115.1, as well as *De Universalibus* II.65.300-67.328: "Et sic universalitas vel veritas metaphysica non dependet ab intellectu creato, cum praecedit ipsum, sed dependet ab intellectu increato. Quae ex aeterna notitia intellectuali producit omnia in effectu. Et ignorantia huius sensus fecit Ockham et multos alios doctores signorum ex infirmitate intellectus declinare ab universali reali…cum doctores signorum ponunt universalia voces et scripta et metaphysici ponunt universalia esse res communes in singularibus extra…" On philological method and the literal sense, though not in relation to Wyclif, see A. Nemetz, "Literalnesss and the Sensus Litteralis," in *Speculum* 34 (1959): 82.

[115] Copeland, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 214. For a comprehensive account of this process, see Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, *passim*.

[116] Thorpe is perhaps somewhat unique in this emphasis, at least in comparison to the well known Lollard case against oaths and oath-taking recorded in "The Trial of Richard Wyche," ed. F. D. Matthew, *English Historical Review* 5 (1890): 531-535. As von Nolcken has observed, Wyche argues that the validity or otherwise of oaths centers on the question of one's intentions. C. von Nolcken, "Richard Wyche, a Certain Knight, and the Beginning of the End," in *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Aston and Richmond (Stroud, 1997). For a similar emphasis on intentionality and the perils of false swearing, see *Dives and Pauper*, 2 vols, ed. P. H. Barnum (Oxford, 1976), 1:235-237. It is also worth comparing the *Testimony*'s treatment of "Crisostom" in regard to oaths with that of the *The Lanterne of Li3t*, ed. Swinburn (Keegan Paul, 1917), pp. 87-90.

[117] On Thorpe's resistance to oaths, see Henry G. Russell, "Lollard Opposition to Oaths by Creatures," in *The American Historical Review* 51.4 (1946): 673-674.

[118] M. Aston, "Devotional Literacy," reprinted in *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (Hambledon, 1984), pp. 108-110. Aston observes, however, that some Lollards were "less than inhibited about revering the text of holy scripture," noting one Wycliffite manuscript which defends the practice of kissing the gospel-book (p. 110, n. 32). Thorpe twice refuses to make such a gesture (30, 74).

[119] Evident, for instance, in Thorpe's remarks on the authority of "open resoun" (37.430).

[120] See H.L. Spencer, *Preaching in Medieval England* (Oxford, 1993), p. 197, cited in Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief in Medieval Europe* (Hodder Arnold, 2005), p. 61, n. 118.

[121] A similar attitude finds expression, I think, in modern critiques of philology, the most representative of which is perhaps to be found in Gilson, who claims that "the meaning of texts is in neither grammars nor dictionaries, but in the mind of the reader who translates or interprets them." *Christian Philosophy: An Introduction* (Toronto, 1993), p. 25.

[122] Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, p. 119.

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