John Wyclif's Metaphysics of Scriptural Integrity in the *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae.*

Michael Tresko

John Wyclif has come to symbolize evangelical zeal for Scripture, and fittingly so. For although his role in the Wyclifite translation of the Bible is uncertain, nevertheless his devotion to Scripture naturally identifies him with a biblically focussed faith and piety. He promoted the translation of Scripture together with the study and the teaching of Scripture because he considered the knowledge of Scriptural truth necessary to the health of the Christian soul and to the very existence of the Church. He furthermore championed Scripture's truth — its possession of all truth — against its detractors. And he himself frequently used the term evangelical to express fidelity to Scripture and commitment to the propagation of its truth. There is much, however, in Wyclif's understanding of Scripture that would be unrecognizable and perhaps even monstrous to those who now like to honour his name. For he developed a metaphysical basis to Scriptural truth out of the Augustinian tradition of Christian Platonism. Indeed, he looked upon the Platonic realist philosophy upheld by this tradition as the necessary and proper means to express Christian thought. This viewpoint gave him the wherewithal to speculate into the ontology of Scripture. The primary place where he did so was his *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, which comprises his theological lectures delivered at Oxford around 1378. It is a long treatise in defense of Scripture's truth, which he felt had been seriously compromised by the bold quibbles that contemporary logicians were bringing against Biblical language.[1] As part of his defense he devised a metaphysical hierarchy of five levels of being in which Scripture consists. The lowest and least significant of these is the physical book of the Bible. According to Wyclif, it can only be called Scripture equivocally, because as a material and perishable copy it does not possess truth in a spiritual, that is a real, way. It is at the furthest remove from Scripture's fulness of being which stands outside time and creation in glorious unity. The ultimate level of Scripture, on the other hand, is Truth itself, *Veritas ipsa*, which, of coarse, is a favoured name for Christ among medieval

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1. Cf. *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, ed. R. Buddensieg (London, 1905, repr. 1966) I, 1.1.

thinkers of the Augustinian tradition. It has this much in common
with Plato's Good, that it comprises eternal and perfect intelligible
truths, the Ideas, which come to be mirrored concretely but with-
out unity in their temporal instantiations. For an Augustinian like
Wyclif these intelligible truths subsist in the divine mind, and as
such are Scripture's second level of being. Their first mirrored
temporal instantiations constitute Scripture's third level; these are
God's words and deeds in the created world. The acts of under-
standing that grasp the truth inherent in God's words and deeds
constitute the fourth level. Thus the intelligent soul is for Wyclif
a locus where Scripture can have a form of existence. And since
the physical Bible is fifth and last in the hierarchy of Scripture's
being, the individual human is, potentially, a superior manifes-
tation of Scripture than is the Bible.[2] The means by which an
individual is conformed to Scripture is naturally a central concern
to Wyclif, the "evangelical". He developed two other fivefold
systems that focus upon the human soul's ontological transforma-
tion. The one describes the metaphysical conceptuality that one's
mind must integrate with itself in order to sustain Scripture. The
second describes the moral, spiritual, and again intellectual con-
ditioning that realize this transformation. The primary authorities
upon which Wyclif founded his way of thinking were St. Augus-
tine, Pseudo-Dionysus, St. Gregory the Great, St. Anselm, and
Robert Grosseteste. He saw their allegorical exegesis of Scripture
as closely related to their philosophical realism and he set himself
the task of giving system to that relation. In order to demonstrate
the metaphysical thought that lies at the heart of Wyclif's under-
standing of Scripture, I shall set forth and explain all three of these
fivefold systems, but only after I have shown how his understand-
ing of Scripture emerged as a reaction against what he saw as a
failure of metaphysics in the exegesis of his day.

   Such a metaphysical view of Scripture cannot hold narrowly to
the simplicity of a literal reading. It rather strains to relate the lit-
eral and its historical particularity to the spiritual and the eternal.
Wyclif, accordingly, should not be too closely associated with the
trend towards literalism in his day. Earlier in the fourteenth cen-
tury Nicholas of Lyra (d. 1340) had written a postill on the Bible
that asserted the supreme value of the literal meaning. It soon
became both influential and controversial and remained so into
the fifteenth century.[3] Its opposition to the artificial sophistication
of the aesthetically ornate but spiritually undemanding exegesis
that had often been practised at the allegorical level naturally ap-
pealed to the sentiments of those who opposed the decadent lack

2. *De Veritate*, I, 6, 108-115.
3. Margaret Deansly, *The Lollard Bible* (Cambridge 1920, repr, 1966) 166.

of spirituality in the ranks of the Church and in the lecture halls
of the University. The Lollards, of course, promoted such literal-
ism for the sake of simplicity and accessibility. By the same token
the author of the general prologue to the Wyclifite Bible warns
against rash allegorizing. He quotes Nicholas of Lyra to demon-
strate the primacy and centrality of the literal sense and to establish
the orderly sequence of interpretation.[4] Wyclif, however, despite
his close associations with Lollardy and the Wyclifite Bible, and
despite his clear understanding of the centrality of the literal to
an honest allegorical reading,[5] nevertheless did not lay particular
stress upon cultivating the literal. On the contrary, he stressed
the cultivation of a spiritual and highly intellectual understand-
ing of Scripture that depended heavily upon allegory. He was
very much a conservative in this regard; he wanted to defend the
allegorical tradition by demonstrating the theoretical basis of its
proper practice. His association, however, with the popularizers
of Scripture, indeed his own commitment to its popularization,
have led some to think that he shared the emphasis upon a sim-
ple literalism. But although he had no dispute with simplicity
he set himself the task of defending the complex involvement of
Scriptural language in its relation to truth. Thus John Robson is
not justified in accusing Wyclif of a fundamentalist reading. He
claims that Wyclif argued in the *De Veritate* "that the literal inter-
pretation alone yields the Catholic sense of Scripture." But here
he not only misrepresents Wyclif's thought at large, he also mis-
represents the specific text that he himself cites.[6] Robson, who has
no misconceptions about the philosophical complexity and depth

4. Ch.12-14 (especially 13).
5. *De Veritate*, I, 6, 120-123.
6. J. A. Robson, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools* (Cambridge, 1961) 168. In
the passage that Robson cites Wyclif is explaining the nature of allegorical
meaning and how it is related to the literal sense. Wyclif states that the
allegorical as well as the tropological and anagogical meaning, is some-
times the literal sense of Scripture and sometimes is a derivative sense: "et
sic vere dicit Rabanus, quod in quibusdam locis Scripture sola servanda
est historia, in quibusdam sola exquirenda est allegoria et in quibusdam
utrumque. utrobique enim tenendus est sensus literalis, qui quandoque
est nude historicus, quandoque allegoricus, et quandoque mixtim. . . . ita
quod istorum trium sensuum misticorum sensus allegoricus docet mediate
vel inmediate credenda, sensus anagogicus docet mediate vel inmediate
speranda, sed sensus tropologicus docet mediate vel inmediate merito-
rie agenda." Wyclif further admits that this way of speaking is rather
subtle and unconventional in that it considers the allegorical levels to be
expressed both indirectly and directly by Scripture. For those who like to
preserve the distinction between the literal and the allegorical he says that
they should call the literal sense that which has a universal (catholicus)
and immediate meaning, and thus leave the allegorical senses to comprise
the non-literal meanings: "illi autem, quibus placent distingwere sensum

of Wyclif's realist metaphysics, expresses a hint of surprise at the
incompatible conjunction between such a capacious philosophical
system and such a narrow exegesis: "It is curious that Wyclif's
fundamentalism followed from his belief in the eternal being of
each sentence of Scripture; a sense of the very fulness of mean-
ing resulted in a rigidly literal interpretation."[7] Curious indeed,
for Wyclif actually drew the opposite consequence. Throughout
the *De Veritate* he consistently upheld that Scripture's fulness of
meaning resulted in rich multivalency. Not that he on the other
hand dismissed the text's unity, as if the Bible were a gathering
of ambiguous and inconsistent refractions from above. The *De
Veritate* sets forth the conception that Scripture's eternal unity and
essential immutability cause the multiplex manifold of meaning in
the sacred page, and by the same token ground it in fundamental
coherency, as we shall soon see.

In order to grasp the significance of Wyclif's position we must
understand that the *De Veritate* represents the culmination of his
reaction against fourteenth century nominalism. This was the
philosophical movement that had originated with William Ock-
ham and his celebrated "razor." That rigorously parsimonious
principle, *quod entia non sunt praedicanda praeter necessitatem*, arose
from Ockham's supreme principle of logical operation, the om-
nipotence of God. On the basis that divine power has the capacity
to be the immediate cause of any phenomenon, Ockham argued
that there was no validity in postulating systems of intermediate
causes because of their lack of necessity. Consequently he denied
any hierarchical system of universals as the cause of a particular
entity's form or nature. He did not even allow them to have an
exemplary function in the mind of God — an Augustinian notion
that even Peter Abelard's nominalism had earlier taken refuge in.[8]
For Ockham regarded this category of being as not only excessive,
that is beyond the realm of assured knowledge, but as a restric-
tion upon the power of God. He would not admit any element of
determinism in nature because he considered it compromising to

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literalem secundum racionem vel partes subiectivas ab aliis, debent dicere,
quod de racione sensus literalis est, quod sit sensus catholicus inmediate
elicitus ex scriptura, et alii tres sensus, si inmediate eliciuntur ex scriptura,
tunc sunt literales. si autem mediate, tunc sunt sensus allegoricus, tropo-
logicus vel anagogicus, non literalis." *(De Veritate,* I, 6, 123-124). These
are hardly the words of one who is arguing for a monolothic and per-
spicuous meaning. Perhaps Robson was led astray here by the presence
of one of Buddensieg's characteristically obtuse marginal glosses: "The
literal sense is the normal and Catholic one."
7. Robson, 169.
8. cf. Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy,* vol. III (London: Burns
and Oates, 1955) 49-57.

God's freedom. The natural order thereby became an appearance. This is not to say that physical reality became a mere illusion, but rather that it lost intelligibility. For it lost the self-reliance upon inherent necessities or laws which empower nature, as nature, to generate order. Ockham considered the perception of an order that binds phenomena into classes or causal sequences an impressionistic "quality of the mind"; that is, it did not inhere in nature. This severe restriction upon reason's applicability to being led Ockham to a form of fideism; for only faith could affirm the presence and power of God in phenomena. But Etienne Gilson has criticized Ockham's philosophy as "the road to skepticism" on account of the "psychologism" that is promoted.[9]

Ockham did, to be sure, consider mental processes highly subjective. This made his philosophy decidedly anti-mimetic, since it allowed objectivity only to the simple apprehension of phenomena, but not to an understanding of their ontology.[10] As a result, those who followed in his track became analytical in their philosophy and gave up the systematic development of positions. Thus this movement displayed a lack of confidence in the ability of proofs to yield positive knowledge. Arguments for the existence of God or the immortality of the soul were overturned, and such doctrines of faith were placed beyond rational certitude. Beryl Smalley points out that at the beginning of the Ockhamist movement the logicians were, like Ockham himself, fideists.[11] They did not intend to apply the destructive power of their logic to matters of faith; on the contrary, they could consider themselves to be protecting the faith by denying logic's application to its content. So they did not subject Scripture to the rigours of their analysis since it was itself an object of faith. But as with most any technique it eventually becomes masterful and demands to be applied to anything that could fall under its power. By the middle of the fourteenth century a generation of scholars took the next step and began to search out contradictions in the sacred text. Its examinations and criticisms of established arguments became destructive in the effort to disgrace the proofs of not only traditional metaphysics, but also traditional exegesis.[12]

9. Etienne Gilson, *The History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1955) 89.
10. For as Paul Ricoeur explains, mimesis is not a simple mirroring of the surface of things, but an insightful representation of the relationship between particular things and universal truths; Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 1, tr. K. McLaughlin and D. Pellauer (Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press, 1984) 31-51.
11. Smalley, 402.
12. Copleston, 123.

Smalley explains that these logicians left little direct evidence, partly because academic writings from Wyclif's period have not survived well, but more so because they were reluctant to set down in writing their cavils against Scripture. But from Wyclif's contentions against his opponents it is evident that some arts lecturers and perhaps even nominalist theologians were taking satisfaction in quibbling with sacred language by applying to it the power of the new logic. Smalley states that Wyclif found the "sophists", as he liked to call his opponents, "in full cry against the unlogical, imprecise language of the Bible and the liturgy," claiming that they had found "heresies in the Lord's prayer and the Hail Mary."[13] Against the liturgy, for instance, they argue that when the Church prays for help by the merits of Christ's incarnation, nativity, passion, or resurrection the prayer is vain because a past event is being evoked in the present tense, as though it were still happening.[14] In the *De Veritate* Wyclif devoted considerable space to defending Scripture from objections to its figurative language. If Scripture says that Christ is a lion and yet the interpreter must explain that he is not really a lion because Scripture affirms that he is the incarnate Son of God, there is on the face of it a contradiction. Add to this that "in the words of Scripture Christ is a lamb, a sheep, a calf, a ram, a serpent, a lion, and a worm"[15] and the problem is compounded. It is still further compounded when Scripture is seen to call the devil a lion as well. The nominalists thus apparently argued that Scripture's figurative language is replete with contradictions and leads the interpreter into still further contradictions when in his attempt to explain the figure he equivocates by saying that in one sense Christ is a lion and in another sense he is not a lion. They also objected to parables in the New Testament and fables in the Old Testament for being narrative that lacked historical truth. They found contradictions in Scripture's non-figurative language as well. They object to Christ's statement that whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away. They object to his statement that he would not ascend to the feast when he did after all ascend. They object to his statement that to be his disciple one must hate one's father, mother, wife, children, brothers, and sisters, because this excludes from Christ's discipleship Adam and Eve who had no parents or brothers or sisters, and also excludes priests and religious who have no spouse or children.[16]

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13. Smalley, 402
14. Smalley, 402
15. et hinc ecclesia et sancti doctores post exposicionem sensus scripture concedunt verissime de virtute sermonis, quod Christus est 'agnus, ovis, vitulus, aries, serpens, leo, vermis' (I,1,5)

These objections, of course, are based on a highly literal read-
ing. This seems to be generally the case with the nominalists'
claims that Scripture is inconsistent. Their approach to reading
parallels the radically empirical Ockhamist approach to phenom-
ena: it takes words in the most immediate and simple way and
does not consider itself entitled to search more deeply into the
text for a meaning that would reconcile apparent inconsistencies.
An allegorical reading, however, goes beyond the immediate sig-
nificance of the word. For whereas a literal reading discovers the
thing that a word signifies an allegorical reading discovers *how*
that thing signifies. It does so by considering the thing within
the context of Christian theology at large. That is, it discovers
the thing's significance for theological understanding, which for
Wyclif always involves a movement into ontology. This allegor-
ical or theological understanding then, is like a hidden cause. It
undergirds the immediate significance of Scripture's words and
lifts them to a higher significance. It is also like a universal. It
is a unified body which determines the nature, or the force, of
diverse elements. The traditional allegorical reading of Scripture,
moreover, posited an interrelationship between diverse elements
in the text as a whole, which is again akin to the interrelationships
of a causal nexus, where the mind has formed connections not ac-
tually witnessed by the senses. So the nominalist approach to
reading corresponded to nominalist metaphysics. And just as tra-
ditional metaphysics suffered under the application of nominalist
logic so too the most venerable tradition of Scriptural interpreta-
tion, the allegorical method, lay open to nominalists attacks. For
allegory's essential purpose was to discover the underlying unity
of Scripture through the unveiling of the mystery cloaked behind
figurative language.

Wyclif fiercely upheld both the traditional metaphysics and the
traditional allegorical method of reading Scripture. These were
not two different causes for him. His realist metaphysics and his
allegorical hermeneutic were essentially the same position. He had
not come, however, to this position easily. He admitted that he
was once no better than the "sophists" whom he came to oppose.

> Since I am accused of once having said that Scripture is very
> false . . . I confess that if ever I said that Scripture is very
> false this greatly displeases me now and I revoke it and re-
> tract it as something sounding altogether evil, heretical, and
> blasphemous.[17]

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16. Smalley, 402-403
17. sed quia impositum est michi quod ego quondam dixi, scripturam esse

But when he began to defend Scripture, he tried to do so on the nominalists' own terms and confounded himself. As Beryl Smalley says, he had not yet worked out his own metaphysics.[18]

> But when I was younger, I rejected the mystical expressions of Scripture, partly because of my own pride and partly to overturn the foolish glory of the sophists. For they delight to have even just the appearance of an advantage over their brother.[19]

There came a time, however, when he experienced a new insight into the way meaning is contained in Scripture.

> So when I used to speak as a child I got all tangled up in my anxiety to understand and defend the Scriptures on the level of the meaning of their words, since it had become clear to me that the pages on which Scripture was written could not establish its truth. At last God in his grace opened their meaning for me so that I could understand Scripture's practice of equivocation.[20]

He makes a similar confession elsewhere in the *De Veritate*.

> And I confess that I once succumbed to such vainglory. In the course of making many arguments and responses to arguments I fell from the teaching of Scripture. For I wanted not only a lofty reputation displayed to everyone, but also the sophist's arrogant power of stripping people's words and putting them to shame. But now I think differently. I hold that every instance of logic contained by Scripture was set there with the purpose of pointing out a mystery for Scripture's disciples to imitate — and that is especially so with the instances of logic that the fool finds contradictory. For as Christ says through his apostle in Rom. 15, "whatever was written was written for our instruction."[21]

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falsissimam . . . tamen confiteor, quod, si umquam dixero, scripturam falsissimam, hoc multum displicet michi modo, et illud humiliter revoco et retracto tamquam pessime sonans, hereticum et blasfemum. (*De Ver.* II, 5; cf. Smalley, 405; The *dixero* in the above sentence illustrates how Buddensieg's edition has periodic lapses in editorial judgment. This word should most certainly be *dixerim*.)

18. Smalley, 405

19. quando autem fuit minor, abieci locuciones misticas partim propter meam superbiam et partim ad destruendum inanem gloriam sophistarum. ipsi enim gaudent, si possunt habere apparens inconveniens contra fratrem suum. (*De Ver.* I,5,100)

20. unde quando loquebar ut parvulus, fui anxie intricatus ad intelligendum ac defenendum istas scripturas de virtute sermonis, cum manifestum sit, quod non verificantur de pellibus bestiarum, et demum dominus ex gracia sua apperuit michi sensum ad intelligendum equivicacionem predictam scripture. (*De Ver.* I,6,114)

21. unde de ista vana gloria confiteor, sepe tam arguendo quam respon-

The turning point that Wyclif describes was his conversion to realism. He came to consider this metaphysics a tradition that had been upheld by the providence of God in order that the Church would be equipped to combat heresy and the human mind could continue to have the confidence to apprehend truth.[22] For without universals, he held, there can be no truth, and without a philosophy that relies upon universals there can be no assurance of truth. He believed that God had led him to the realization of this philosophy through the help of Augustine and others such as Gregory the Great and Anselm of Canterbury. He describes this event in *De Dominio Divino.*

> For I cannot demonstrate and understand the creature except through demonstrating and understanding God. I went a long time before I understood this theory of ideas from Scripture. But I discovered it unexpectedly when I received illumination from God, whereupon I gave joyful thanks to him, along with his servant Augustine and all the others, whom God ordains from eternity to minister to me and help me to this understanding.[23]

What is most striking here is that Wyclif claims to have found universals in the teaching of Scripture. His conviction that universals were at work in the pages of Scripture enabled him to escape the reliance that the nominalists put on the bare words. He expressed his delight in this freedom a little later in the same treatise: "But blessed be God, who has freed us from the traps inherent in a superficial apprehension of words in order that we may direct the insight of our mind to their meaning."[24] That it was universals that enabled him to have such insight he states still more clearly elsewhere.

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dendo prolapsus sum a doctrina scripture, cupiens simul apparenciam fame in populo et denudacionem arrogancie sophistarum. nunc autem considero, quod non sit aliqua logica inscripta scripture sacre, et specialiter de illa, que apparet stultis contradiccio, quin inseratur propter notandum misterium scripture discipulis imitandum, dicente Cristo in apostolo Rom. decimo quinto quecunque scripta sunt, ad nostram doctrinam scripta sunt. (I,2,23)

22. Cf. Robson, 153.

23. Non enim possum demonstrare vel intelligere creaturam nisi demonstrando et intelligendo Deum. Et diu fuit antequam ex Scripturis intellexi istam sentenciam de ydeis; quam cum illustratus a Deo perfunctorie repperissem, cum gaudio gracias egi Deo, cum suo famulo Augustino et aliis quos Deus eternaliter ordinat ad hoc minsterialiter me iuvare. (*De Dominio Divino*, 63; cf. Smalley, 406)

24. Sed benedictus Deus qui nos liberavit ab invisicacionibus superficialibus verborum ad penetrative dirigendum mentis intuitum ad signata. (*De Dominio Divino*, 65; cf. Smalley, 406)

> And so the knowledge of universals is the highest rung on the
> ladder of wisdom for searching out hidden truths. I believe
> that this is the reason why God does not allow the school of
> universals utterly to fail.[25]

Wyclif's conversion to Scripture and universals led him to see
Scripture as the perfect and complete vehicle of philosophical
truth. In his earlier *De Logica* he had set himself the task of work-
ing out a logic based on Scripture. This work turned out to be
far from a revolution in logic but his prologue shows the direction
that his thought was taking.

> I have been encouraged by some friends of the law of God
> to compile a treatise that will show forth the logic of Holy
> Scripture. For inasmuch as I have seen many who have gone
> off to be logicians and have claimed that they understood the
> law of God better through their logic but have rather deserted
> it in their empty endeavour to construct propositional argu-
> ments with a foolish mingling of pagan terminology, I pro-
> pose to show how propositional arguments should be taken
> from Scripture for the purpose of sharpening the minds of the
> faithful.[26]

The result, however, is hardly innovative. The *De Logica* looks
much like a standard medieval treatise on logic oriented toward
realism. Contrary to the expectation that it engenders, Scripture
does not loom especially large on its pages, although it enters
into the discussions of certain points of doctrine. But in the *De
Veritate* the seed that had earlier taken root came to maturity. Here
the integrity of Scripture's truth, and its supremacy over all other
philosophical writing is the focus everywhere. He repeatedly gave
Christ the epithet "summus philosophus". On the authority of
Augustine he declared that "every law, every philosophy, every
logic, and every aspect of morality is in Holy Scripture."[27] He
claimed then that the follower of truth must imitate Scripture's
words and logic in order to appropriate true philosophy.[28] When
he met the objection that this absolute reliance upon Scripture's
logic would spell the end of Aristotelian philosophy — literally that
it would perish from speech — Wyclif explained that Scripture's
philosophy is not exclusive but all inclusive.

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25. Ideo noticia universalium est gradus precipuus scale sapientie ad inda-
gandum veritates absconditas; et hec credo est racio quare deus non per-
mittit scolam de universalibus in toto deficere. (*Summa de Ente,* in Robson,
p. 154)
26. *De Logica* ed. M. H. Dziewicki (London, 1893, reprinted 1966) 12.
27. et idem [Augustinus] dicit epistola tercia ad Volusianum ostendens
quod omnis lex, omnis philosophia, omnis logica, et omnis ethica est in
scriptura sacra.(I, 22)
28. I,3,2-6

But as for Aristotle's philosophy, surely it would become completely sound and cleansed of all its errors if it were revised and corrected throughout by means of Scripture's philosophy. As long as this is not done it remains incomplete. For Scripture alone gives it its full completion. It is impossible for secular bodies of knowledge not to be deficient when from their inception they have lacked the formative principles that the knowledge contained in the Scriptures provides. So when a Christian who is studying philosophy works rigourously through the books of Aristotle, he does not do so as if philosophy belongs to Aristotle. He does so with the understanding that it belongs to the authors of Holy Scripture, and that consequently it also belongs, in a certain way, to himself. He also understands that philosophy has been taught with a greater accuracy in books of theology. Nevertheless, I do not deny that Aristotle was a great philosopher. It is quite legitimate to read his books and profitable to learn from them.[29]

Wyclif evidently finds truth itself within the words of Scripture. But in order to defend that truth he had to counter the nominalists' claims that the words of Scripture contained contradictions. He did that by showing how these contradictions were mere appearances arising from false readings. He explained that Scripture is far superior to the maze of words before our eyes. To resolve the contradictions he took his stand on the logical principle, that "in equivocation there is no contradiction". He argued that what seems on the face of it to involve Scripture in contradiction really involves an equivocation, that is that a word is being used in more than one sense. Equivocation was an important concept in the middle ages. It was not necessarily a term used to discredit someone's words as deceptive. It was indeed frowned upon when used deceptively by "sophists", who shift the meaning of the term but continue as if the meaning were unchanged. If, however, the equivocation openly transfers the meaning of the term there is, of course, no deception. Wyclif called his opponents sophists, however, not because they tacitly shifted meaning but because they confounded truth by not recognizing the different meanings underlying the same words. That such an equivocal use of terms

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29. quantum ad omnem philosophiam Aristotelis, patet, quod ex integro foret salva colata a suis erroribus, si fuerit per philosophiam scripture ubicunque expedita et retracta. et aliter cararet suo ultimo complemento, cum impossibile sit, secularem scienciam non deficere, cum caruerit forma sciencie scripturarum. unde cristianus philosophiam, quam religiose discit de libris Aristotelis, non ipsam discit quia Aristotelis, sed quia autorum scripture sacre et per consequens tamquam suam scienciam, que in libris theologie reccius est edocta. non nego tamen, quin Aristoteles fuit magnus philosophus cuius libri licite leguntur et meritorie adiscuntur (I, 2, 29).

had been considered legitimate among scholastics is testified by
the prevalence of pseudo-Dionysius' authority. Equivocation is
exalted in his *De Divinis Nominibus*, where he called God "good"
in one sense but "not good" in another sense without contradic-
tion. No less a luminary than Thomas Aquinas had promoted this
way of thinking.[30] And Wyclif defended the apparent contradic-
toriness of Scriptural language by appealing to this well-attested
principle of thought.

> Accordingly, on the basis of the evidence from Augustine's
> words, Christ is not a door. Therefore he is not a door. But
> on stronger evidence from his words Christ *is* a door — and
> Scripture upholds him in this. Therefore he is a door. So
> Augustine clearly and distinctly makes both statements. But
> our faith sets forth the affirmative statement. For in John 10:7
> Truth, who cannot lie, says, "I am the door.". . . Now when
> Augustine makes two such seemingly opposed but logically
> coherent statements he establishes himself upon the authority
> of Scripture and upon this well known logical principle, that
> in the equivocal use of a term there is no contradiction. For
> a contradiction does not apply to a term alone but to a thing
> and a term.[31]

When Scripture seems to involve itself directly in contradiction
Wyclif further explains that there is no duplicity in such difficul-
ties. On the contrary they provide the faithful reader with the
opportunity to discover a mystery. They are there, he suggests to
exercise the Christian's spiritual understanding through the use of
sound and faithful insight. He mentions three such apparent con-
tradictions and describes the attitude they require of the reader.

> Now when Christ says to his brothers in John 7:8, "You go
> up to this feast; I, however, shall not go up to this feast," the
> text nevertheless continues, "Then he himself went up to this
> feast, not openly but as if in secret." Far be it from anyone to
> believe that Truth lied or stated a falsehood in this matter or
> any other. Furthermore that same Truth says in Luke 19:26,
> "But from him who does not have, even what he has will
> be taken away." And in Prov. 13:4 his ancestor Solomon,

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30. Cf. Summa Theologiae Ia, 9.13, r.5; *Summa Contra Gentiles* I, ch. 34.
31. unde ergo evidencia secundum verba Augustini, Cristus non est os-
tium, ergo ipse non est ostium, quin pociori evidencia secundum verbum
eiusdem Augustini, Cristus est ostium, sicut et dicit scriptura Augustinum
autenticans, ergo est ostium. Augustinus enim expresse ponit utrumque
et fides nostra apponit affirmativam, cum Joh. decimo dicat veritas, que
mentiri non poterit: ego sum ostium. . . . fundatur autem Augustinus su-
per autoritate scripture in ista logica et super isto famoso principio logica
et super isto famoso principio logicio: in equivocis non est contradiccio,
cum non sit nominis tantum, sed rei et nominis (I, 1, 8-9).

whom he himself instructed, says, "The sluggard wants and does not want." Far be it from a Christian to believe that the statements in these three passages of Scripture, and others like them, have a form that displays falsehood and holds no mystery for us to unfold. Scripture does have a pattern and category of mystery. So the humble Christian is not ashamed to admit that there is an equivocal meaning in such passages, though they seem contradictory to sophists and to people who do not understand them very well.[32]

Wyclif takes the first of these three difficulties and demonstrates its resolution. He says that he knows at once how to approach such a case. He realizes that there is an equivocation and that he must commit himself to learning it. For Wyclif that means not only understanding how it works but adapting it into his own heart by speaking in conformity to it.[33] This latter activity is, of course, the exercise of *imitatio*, through which Scripture finds subsistence in the human soul. Wyclif explains that we must understand how Christ is limiting his words to a point in time for the sake of our limitations.[34] For we regularly make statements, Wyclif points out, where a temporal limitation is understood, even though they are in the form of absolute statements. Statements such as "I have not eaten" or "I am not going to read" require a time frame understood by those communicating.[35] Christ, through his charity, limited his words to our understanding, and Wyclif says that serves as an example to us: "We must speak in such a way that our words meet the common understanding of the people with

32. dicit autem Cristus Joh. septimo fratribus suis: vos ascendite ad diem festum hunc, ego autem non ascendam ad diem festum istum, et tum sequitur in textu: tunc et ipse ascendit ad diem festum non manifeste, sed quasi in oculto. absit quod credatur, veritatem in isto vel alio mentitum fuisse vel falsum asseruisse. iterum Luc. undevicesimo dicit eadem veritas: ab eo autem, qui non habet, et quod habet auferetur ab eo. et Prov. tredecimo dicit pater suus Salomon ab eo instructus, quod wlt et non wlt piger. absit cristianum credere, quod ista tria exempla scripture cum eis similibus asserantur secundum talem formam, ut sapiant falsitatem vel quod vacent a notando misterio. est ergo generale et exemplare misterium, quod humilis cristianus non verecundetur concedere talia ad sensum equivocum, que tumorosis sophistis et aliis minus bene intelligentibus videntur esse contradicenda (I, 1, 9-10).
33. quando ergo video apparenciam contradiccionum scripture, statim agnosco, quod innuitur discenda equivocatio, ut quod nos pro loco et tempore loquamur conformiter (I, 2, 23).
34. quando ergo Cristus dicit: ego autem non ascendam, condescendit infirmitatibus hominum (I, 2, 23).
35. dicimus enim communiter: non comedi, non celebravi, cum sibi similibus, subintelligendo singulariter tempus certum pertinens sensui communicancium et negando quod pro illo tempore faciam talem actum (I, 2, 23-24).

whom we are communicating; let us put aside duplicity; let us fear more the lack of charity within ourselves than the attack of sophistical refutations".[36] But not only do Christ's words give us an example of how we should limit out words in charity they also cover mysteries for our edification. Wyclif finds in Christ's deferment of going up and in his limitation of himself to this present moment a complex of spiritual truth for the unfolding. All three levels of spiritual reading he puts into play.

> So let me tell you what it means that Christ went to the feast of booths in secret. At the tropological or moral level it teaches us not to desire wordly glory. At the allegorical level it makes us realilze that Christians do not have a city here. At the anagogical level it shows us how the great feast of that day prefigures the ascension and the perpetual feast of that man who descended from heaven.[37]

Wyclif concludes from his reading that we must not be so presumptuous, as to accuse Scripture of contradiction, which is only to display ignorance. If Christ's utterance in this passage seems to us unlearned and contradictory, Wyclif maintains that is because we do not understand equivocation and Scripture's reason for it.[38]

Wyclif has little patience for such accusations against Scripture. He does not consider them honestly come by. He holds that they generally derive from an arrogant ignorance and a vainglorious pride. He portrays such accusers as people who love to hear themselves talk and who seek to gain themselves a reputation by overthrowing with their mockery those who present to them that which demands their obedience.[39] To these derisive claims that Scripture and its upholders involve themselves in contradictions Wyclif replies that such thinking is shallow and loses the opportunity to discover the richly layered multivalency in Scripture's

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36. sic ergo debemus iuxta sensus comunes communicancium aptare sermones nostros duplicitate postposita timendo plus defectum caritatis in nobis et aliis quam quotlibet redarguciones sophisticas (I, 2, 24).
37. pro istis, inquam, nobis notandum erat in occulto, scilicet ne appetemus secularem gloriam quoad mores, secundo ut cognoscamus cristianos non habere hic manentem civitatem quoad allegoriam, et tercio, ut videamus, quomodo magnus dies festus figurat ascensum istius hominis, qui descendit de celo et festum suum perpetuum quoad anagogiam (I, 2, 27).
38. quod videtur nobis incultum et contradiccionem sapiens eo quod ignoramus equivocacionem et causam propter quam Scriptura sic equivocat (I, 2, 27).
39. ignari logice et cupientes inanem gloriam ut sophiste prorumpunt verba huius modi: ecce, redargutus es contrarius tibi ipsi; hodie didici in scolis quod contradiccio secundum sacram paginam concedi debeat. ymmo hii subsanant derisionibus, nutibus, et contumeliis, quando deficiunt argumenta (I, 2, 20).

language: "But I tell you, if we understood these things properly we would say that there is no self-refutation in the words of the Lord and what follows from them, but rather that they contain multiple information".[40]

Multivalency is, of course, also at work in figures as well as apparent contradictions. Here the multivalency of a term can point to manifold realities. Thus when Wyclif defends Scripture's figurative language his discussion moves onto the level of metaphysics outright. For he does not consider a Scriptural figure to be a metaphor on the level of mere rhetoric. He considers Scripture's words to express reality and thus to have ontological force. We saw him developing this way of thinking in his statement that Christ both is not a door and *is* a door. He resolves the apparent contradiction again by appealing to equivocation. He works this resolution out most fully in the figure of the lion. As he explains how the second person of the Trinity, who is certainly no lion, really is a lion we see how the outworking of equivocation involves him not in mere distinctions of signification but in metaphysical distinctions of the reality underlying those significations.[41]

> I reply that in one sense Christ has the property of being a lion and that it is supremely his own, and that in another sense he does not have it. In order to understand this we need to realize that in the use of figurative language the notion of having or lacking a property applies to two different things in two different ways. It applies to the figure one way and to the thing figured another. Now Christ does not have the property of being a lion in the sense of having the property of a four-footed wild beast that goes about roaring. So when we speak of the figure, that is the lion, and those properties belonging to it that do not correspond to Christ, Christ is not really a lion. And yet when we speak of the one who is figured as a lion, that is Christ, and the leonine properties that are analogous to him, he really is a lion. For as it is said in Rev. 5, "No one is worthy in heaven and earth to open the book and loose its seven seals except the Lion of Judah who was slain." So to say that Christ is a lion and yet that this same Christ is not a lion does not set up a disagreement. Both these statements are in harmony with Scripture and the teachings of the saints.[42]

40. si, inquam, hec debite nosceremus, diceremus, quod nec in verbis domini nec in eorum sequela sit redargucio, sed multiplex informacio (I, 2, 27). Consider also Wyclif's statement at the conclusion of his reading of Christ at the feast of booths: ecce, quot misteria parturit festum Cristi et verbum (I, 2, 27).

41. And Wyclif himself explicitly indicates that figurative language is not merely metaphor: "et non solum dicantur talia secundum similitudinem analogam" (I, 3, 41).

42. hic dicitur, quod Cristus propriissime est leo et tamen improprie est

Wyclif describes elsewhere in the *De Veritate* his procedure with figures. He says that the reader must isolate the properties from a figure that apply to the thing figured. If the figure is mystical, that is if it applies to God, one must select whatever properties express perfection, and in that way the figure corresponds to divinity. If the figure is relative, that is it applies to a creature, one must first ascertain whether the figure is used in approval or reproach, and then once again select the appropriate properties. Wyclif, accordingly, is able to show how the lion is figurative both of Christ and the devil.[43] It is figurative of Christ in its power and regal bearing. It is figurative of the devil in its violence.[44]

Thus Wyclif argued against the accusation that Scripture's language involved it and its interpreters in contradictions on the grounds that this language was equivocal and multivalent. The essential task then was to see through the appearance of the words to their manifold of meanings. The words themselves were not

leo. pro quo notandum, quod duplex est proprietas ac improprietas, scilicet figure et figurati. Cristus igitur non proprie proprietate bestie quadrupedis rugitive est leo, ideo est leo improprie loquendo de improprietate figure, verumptamen est leo proprie, loquendo de proprietate analoga figurati, cum nemo dignus est in celo vel terra, aperire librum et solvere eius septem signacula preter leonem de tribu Juda et agnum, qui occisus est, ut dicitur Apoc. quinto. si ergo non sit dissonum, sed scripture ac doctoribus sanctis consonum, quod Cristus est leo, et tamen idem Cristus non est leo, ut patet per Augustinum Super Joh. omelia quadragesima septima, a pari est consonum, quod Cristus tam proprie quam improprie est leo (I,3,40-41).

43. ulterius restat videre, ad quem sensum locuciones huiusmodi figurative scripture debent intelligi. et sepe dixi, quod debent intelligi ad sensum misticum, sensum spiritualem, simbolicum et proporcionalem, ut sancti postillantes scripturam loquntur crebrius, sic videlicet, quod signata una proposicione mistice theologie, in qua alterum extremum est nomen creature et tamen attributum deo, notari debent condiciones analogice fundantes proprietates secundum genus in creaturis, cuius nomen accipitur. et colando illud, quod est perfeccionis in illo analogo, ac adiciendo proprietates imperfeccionis in genere, attribuendum est illud predicatum deo ad sensum equivocum. et sic proporcionaliter de nominibus creature unius generis attributis creature nature alterius sive in comendacionem sive in vituperium. et illum sensum est proprium philosophorum elicere, ut ostendi De Dominio in tercio libro cap. vicesimo septimo sub autoritate Augustini secundo Contra Simplicianum. exempli gracia leo signifcat rudes gramaticos bestiam quadrupedem rugitivum, sed secundum theologos signifcant preterea nunc Cristum, nunc diabolum unde ad exprimendum equivocacionem sensus dicit unus propheta, quod Cristus est leo, et alius, quod diabolus est tamquam leo. et ita de aliis terminis in scriptura (I, 1, 14-16).

44. Wyclif went on at some length describing both Christ the lion and Satan the lion. For its mystical nature Wyclif drew from the bestiary. For its relative diabolic nature he drew primarily from Gregory the Great's description of Behemoth in his *Moralia in Iob* (I, 1, 16-19).

the essential thing. On the authority of Gregory the Great Wyclif
asserted that the words of Scripture were of no value if they did
not lead us to Scripture's meaning.

> The blessed Gregory says that Scripture's utterances are made
> of words, and as such they are no more that the leaves of a tree
> serving to produce the fruit of meaning. So if they obscure the
> meaning, or confuse and distract us from the meaning, or hin-
> der us in any way whatsoever, they are to be removed, taken
> figuratively, or adapted in some other way that will enable us
> to receive Scripture's meaning. It would, of course, be better,
> if only our weakness did not prevent us, to grasp its thought
> without its words, as surely the blessed now do.[45]

Wyclif acknowledged that to make meaning prior to words and
to cultivate equivocation could lead to gross abuse. Allegory al-
ways leaves the door open to excess and flights of fancy.[46] But
Wyclif was untroubled by the possibility of such behaviour — at
least in regard to Scripture's own integrity. It only displayed an
improper and devious use of Scripture's logic that grew out of the
pride of knowledge. It did not invalidate Scripture's truth. He
responded that "a Christian must not devise any equivocations
unless they can be properly established upon the content of Scrip-
ture."[47]

But this statement leads to an obvious question for Wyclif's
time. How is the content of Scripture itself established? That it
was there objectively Wyclif had no doubt. He held very firmly to
the notion of authorial intention and did not doubt its ascertain-
ability for the faithful reader. This meaning or truth, however,
was not to be found *in* the multiplicity of words that make up
the sensible codex of Scripture; it rather was to be found *through*
them. They are signs pointing to the truth, not the truth them-
selves. In Wyclif's thought the text's meaning which is the text's

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45. et conformem sentenciam dicit beatus Gregorius primo Moral: 'vo-
ces enim verborum scripture non sunt nisi ut folia ad fructum sensus
proficiencia. unde si obumbrant sensum, si confundunt, si distrahunt
vel quomodocunque impediunt, sunt extirpanda, figuranda vel aliter ap-
tanda', ut prodest capcioni sensus scripture, sic quod melius foret, ut
patet in beatis, capere sentenciam sine verbis, si nostra inferioritas non
obesset (I, 2, 21).
46. Wyclif provides for the objection saying that with such an approach
to Scripture "confundaretur omnis disputacio doctrinalis, cum quilibet
posset fingere equivocaciones tales ad votum et sic ubilibet contradicere
sibi ipsi . . ." (I, 2, 28).
47. eonceditur tamen, quod homo posset abuti sciencia logice scripture,
cum sciencia distincta a moribus quandoque inflat secundum apostolum.
ideo non debet cristianus fingere equivocaciones nisi pertinenter fund-
abiles ex scriptura (I, 2, 28).

real actuality, is above. The words in the Bible derive their proper meaning from a purely spiritual text of truth. The reader in one sense stands between the spiritual text and the physical text, mediating truth to the one below, through his understanding of that truth. But in another sense the reader must use the physical text as a set of signs to point him to the higher truth. Regardless, the reader and the physical text must participate in the sublime text in order to have truth. They do not have truth in and of themselves. The way in which they do so Wyclif elaborated at some length.

One of the first things he pointed out was that truth does not come easily. It is not a matter of first appearances. He explained that before we can even begin to make any advance toward it we must accept that we ourselves must go through a process of development to become apt for it. In response to the objection that Scripture should not be read in such a complex and convoluted way as equivocation and allegory demand (which is another nominalist objection to finding hidden meanings) Wyclif responded that Scripture must be read on its own terms. It is a matter of maturity, he said, to be able to receive Scripture's meaning: "in order to understand Scripture we must put aside childish thought and receive the meaning that God teaches".[48] To support himself Wyclif first invoked St. Paul, who in I Cor. 13 describes the putting aside of childish thinking and speaking. He then drew upon the authority of pseudo-Dionysius and Robert Grosseteste. Because his quotations of them are so highly paraphrased and adapted to his argument it is well not to paraphrase them further but to observe the force of Wyclif's thought as it mingles with his authorities.

> The blessed Dionysius describes this process further in the *Divine Names* 4: "It is, I think, irrational and foolish to pay attention to the words that are used instead of the force of their meaning. For that is not the way of those who want to understand divine things; it is the way of those who are interested only in mere words." Grosseteste, in part 12 of his work, provides an example of what Dionysius means. "Scripture contains sentences that use the noun ἔρος and the verb ἐράω to refer to divine and chaste love. These words are gracious when they express this love, but they are disgraceful when they express the love of something base. And there are those who hear the noun ἔρος used in holy utterances but understand through it the fervor of dishonorable love. (This, of course, is what it usually means in common speech because its underlying intention has this force.) Such people do not pay

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48. debemus ergo intelligendo scripturam sacram sensum puerilem abicere ac sensum quod deus docet accipere (I, 3, 42).

attention to the way that the word is used in holy utterances but only to the meaning that it acquires in common speech. It is a foolish and irrational way to think." Dionysius then continues: "It is also, I think, irrational and foolish, as well as idle and perverse, for someone reading Scripture to take a certain word in the same way that he would take it in common speech. He does not notice the force of the word's own intention here, which is, of course, the author's intention. This is not the way of those who want to understand divine things. The Lord's words are absolutely distinct to themselves and are spoken in their own proper way. Those who are limited to common speech do not recognize what they mean, only the wise do. It is the way of such limited minds to recognize mere familiar sounds. For mere sounds satisfy those whose understanding does not apprehend what these sounds signify."[49]

Thus Scripture is seen as the understanding of truth, not as sensible words. Hence Wyclif did not consider Scripture's meaning obvious and immediately accessible. Notwithstanding his commitment to Scripture's propogation in the vernacular he would have found the reformational doctrine of its perspicuity naive and perhaps dangerous. For such a notion has correspondences to the nominalism that he was opposing, in that it works from appearances and not theology. He described, in fact, a long process to the attainment of Scripture's meaning. It involved new stages of familiarity with the reality underlying the text. This progression required self-awareness on the part of the disciple so that he would know when it is time to move on to a higher understanding

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49. ideo signanter dicit beatus Dionisius in De Divinis Nominibus quarto cap. 'est', inquit, 'irracionabile, ut estimo, et stultum, non virtuti intencionis attendere, sed diccionibus, et hoc non est divina intelligere volencium proprium, sed sonos nudos suscipiencium'. super quo Lincolniensis parte duodecima ponit exemplum. 'in eloquiis', inquit, 'inveniuntur hoc nomine ereos et hoc verbum ereo posita in designacione divini et casti amoris, quod decenter est in hoc amore, sicut in turpi amore indecenter. unde audientes nomen ereos in eloquiis divinis positum et comprehendentes per ipsum vehemenciam amoris inhonesti, ut consuetum est fieri in sermone wlgari virtuti intencionis verbi, secundum quod in eloquiis sacris ponitur, non attendunt, sed voci comuniter sumpte, quod est stultum et irracionabile'. unde subiungit Dionisius, 'est quidem, ut estimo, irracionabile et stultum seu vanum seu pravum, non attendere virtuti intencionis verbi videlicet et autoris, sed diccionibus secundum wlgarem usum acceptis. hoc enim non est proprium volencium intelligere divina, cum sermones domini sint maxime per se et proprie dicit, sicut eos suscipit non wlgus, sed sapiens. sed hoc est proprium suscipiencium sonos nudos. satis enim sunt nudi hiis, in quorum intellectus non imprimunt plenas et perfectas eorum significaciones' (I, 3, 42-44). Wyclif here is drawing from pseudo-Dionysius' De Divinis Nominibus 4, 11 and Grosseteste's De Celestia Hierarchia.

and leave the understanding he may once have cherished behind. Thus Wyclif again stressed that a good reader requires maturity. For it is with maturity that we move beyond our dependence on words and approach nearer to Scripture's Truth.

> Even the earliest theologians made an unmistakable effort to acquire an understanding of Scripture's own meaning and to dismiss interpretations that arose from unfaithful or childish thinking. Consider how a child learns first to recite the alphabet, second to form syllables, third to read, and fourth to understand. He has in each of these stages his own apprehension of things that is limited to what he then knows, for his mind is narrowly focused upon whatever he is learning at that time. But after he has passed through any stage he discards his former apprehension, because now it would only lead to confusion. A theologian goes through a similar process. First he learns the discipline of grammar. Second he learns the grammar of Scripture which prepares him to understand its meaning, and so he leaves the first discipline behind. Third he again leaves something behind, this time the meaning of signs as his senses apprehend them and gives his attention to the author's meaning. And fourth he comes to the point where he sees the Book of Life without the veil of words. Every human skill has some such order of progress. For when we take up or learn the approach to any task we abandon imperfect approaches as we come closer to a perfect approach. For the imperfect can only take us so far; at some point it confuses us in our attempt to improve ourselves and consequently holds us back from the goal we want to achieve. Now when we study Scripture the fruit that we should seek to attain above all else is the meaning that the Holy Spirit has imparted. So who among the faithful would doubt that we should toss aside the leaves and husks, that is the words, except in so far as they lead us to this inner sense? For if they somehow lead us away from that meaning they are to be condemned as poison. The failure of words to make their meaning clear is the sole reason why Christ and many other saints did not leave any writings but only wrote the meaning of their teaching upon the tablets of the heart — for this is the most perfect way of imparting it.[50]

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50. patet ergo, quod antiqui theologi laborarunt ad cognoscendum sensum scripture et dimittendum alios sensus infidelium seu puerorum. unde sicut puer primo discens alphabetum, secundo sillabicare, tercio legere, et quarto intelligere, habet in quolibet istorum graduum sensum suum distincte intentum circa illud, quod primo discit, et posterius propter confusionem excutit primum sensum, 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. et talem ordinem

In describing that there are degrees to the apprehension of Scripture Wyclif also implied that there are degrees of Scripture; for to move from grammar to the understanding of words, to the understanding of the author's meaning behind those words traces a kind of metaphysical hierarchy of the received text. Wyclif explicated such a hierarchy later in the work. It is, of course, the five levels of Scripture.

His description arises out of his response to an objection. At the beginning of book VI he offers the objection that there is nothing inappropriate in Scripture having falsehood since by definition it has been copied by human scribes, who are a class of people that make more mistakes than most.[51] Wyclif denies this definition of Scripture — though not by defending the scribes. He says that codices and sensible signs (that is, words) do not have the capacity to give expression to the law of God, for the expression of truth is not a codex but *is* Holy Scripture itself.[52]

He continues by stating that his definition of Scripture is the "inscribed Holy Truth". By this he means the truth as it has subsistence in an entity. Thus its inscription is a metaphysical act, not a scriptorial one. For he adds to his definition of this "inscribed Holy Truth" that it has ontological significance: it comprises both the truth from which all things arise and the expressions of truths that are derivative, that is, dependant upon truth itself.[53] Scripture then is inscribed in those things that have the capacity for truth as truth. And Wyclif excludes from this class the non-spiritual entity of a codex.

In consequence of this definition of Scripture as the inscribed Holy Truth Wyclif distinguishes the five grades or levels of Scripture. The first is the book of life, which is referred to in Revelation;

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procedendi habet omne genus hominum in cavendo vel opus quodlibet discendo, quod, cum ad perfeccius attigerit, deserit imperfectum, cum foret confusivum ac retardativum a fine, quo tenderet. 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 (I, 3, 44).

51. ulterius arguitur, quod non est inconveniens scripturam sacram esse falsam, cum non sit scriptura nisi codices scriptorum, qui, cum sint plus falsi quam solebant, non est mirum, si opera artis sue sint plus solito falsificata (I, 6, 107).

52. hic negatur assumptum. nam sicut ostendi alibi, de lege dei est preter codices vel signa sensibilia dare veritatem signatam, que pocius est scriptura sacra quam codices (I, 6, 107).

53. unde solebam describere scripturam sacram quod sit sacra veritas inscripta, sive subjectet alias, sive sit veritas subiectata (I, 6, 108).

it is heavenly Truth. On the second level are the truths inscribed in the book of life. These inscribed truths are the actuality of intelligibility; for with a realist such as Wyclif the intelligible has an exalted ontological status. He adds that these two levels of Scripture are both absolutely necessary. That is they partake in the Anselmian category of being that cannot not exist, namely divinity. The distinction between these two levels, he continues, is not essential but rational, for they are of the same necessary substance. The one refers to the essence itself, the other to the essential nature.[54]

Thus we see that truth and Scripture are not formally distinguished in Wyclif's mind. We further see that the first inscription of truth is in that to which it is precisely suited: necessary divine being or, in Wyclif's own way of speaking, Truth itself. And Wyclif does indeed directly indicate that this ultimate level is none other than Christ. He describes this ultimate Scripture as an altogether complete and the altogether holy reality. Its altogether completeness, he indicates, requires divine subsistence. For the only place where that which is inscribed by the highest Wisdom can have its own complete inscription is in God. For Wisdom can only communicate itself fully and completely with itself. It cannot share or reproduce the divinity of its nature outside itself.[55] This discussion enters into the theology of the Trinity, for Wisdom is the word of the Father, which of course corresponds to book of life and is a reference to the second person. Note how the image of language is at work here. Scripture's primary and essential act of communication on this level is to itself. Indeed, Scripture fully subsists here and here alone, because only the Trinity has the perfect and complete communication of truth. Wyclif further explains that the divine subsistence of Scripture is the most sacred because of the sanctity of its place of subsistence. That is, it inheres in the utter holiness of the Trinity. It also inheres in the unchanging stability of the Word inscribed in God, and thus possesses his role of being the ultimate good for humankind. For this primary scripture, Wyclif points out, is our salvation, because, after all, it was sent down from heaven to save men.[56]

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54. unde solebam ponere quinque gradus scripture sacre: primus est liber vite, de quo Apoc. vicesimo et vicesimo uno, secundus est veritates libro vite inscripte secundum esse earum intelligibile, et utraque istarum scripturarum est absolute necessaria, non diferens essencialiter, sed secundum racionem (I, 6, 108).

55. prima autem scriptura est propriissima et sacratissima; propriissima, quia a summa sapiencia inscripta, que inscripcio est deo tam propria quod non potest communicari alteri nature (I, 6, 111).

56. et est sacratissima propter sanctitatem subjecti, propter sentencie inscripte firmitatem, et propter finis utilitatem. est enim propter salutem

Wyclif's claim that Scripture is most properly the divine being rests upon a distinction between the book and the codex which he now makes explicit. In this passage the term *liber* does not refer to the material entity of ink and parchment that comprise the *codex*. The *liber* is the meaning or the truth of which the *codex* is a sign; it is the metaphysical reality of which the *codex* has the form but not the actuality.[57] Wyclif brings two arguments to support this distinction. The first is a *reductio*. He reasons to the impossible from the false premise that the codex is Scripture. If this were true, he continues, rather picturesquely, the cobbler could destroy Scripture by using its parchment to patch shoes, or a dog could tear it apart. It would furthermore be under the authority of the scribe, for he would be its maker. Thus not only could its pages be torn, but its words could be altered and its meaning corrupted. Any scoundrel could defile it under the pretence of correcting it. Scripture would become fragmented into different versions; any group of heretics could revise it into something heretical, blameworthy, and misleading. But then Scripture would lose its authority, and therefore would no longer be Scripture.[58] From this absurdity Wyclif returns to demonstrate Scripture's divine hypostasis. He repeats his definition that Scripture is the inscription of truth. He has shown that this cannot mean the codex, which is corruptible and thus is incapable of truth. But since nothing is more capable of truth than divine being he consequently states that nowhere could the inscription of truth be fully realized except in the book of life (*liber vitae*), which, of course, he has already indicated to be Christ himself. For there, in an eternal place where nothing can be erased or destroyed, truth is absolutely permanent. There, in the place that sustains the splendor of eternal light and its spotless reflection, Truth is absolutely clear.[59] Wyclif adds that this pure

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hominum mundo missa (I, 6, 111).

57. This distinction has a certain correspondence to the modern conception of the text as opposed to the book. The former is the subjective determination of meaning and the latter is the sensible, objective reality. But this conception is decidedly opposed to metaphysics as well as to any suggestion of determinate meaning.

58. confirmatur quod non solum est tale signum, scilicet scriptura, primo per deducens ad impossibile, nam sic esset omnis scriptura sacra viciabilis a sutore, autorizabilis a scriba, ymmo a cane solubilis et corrigibilis a scurra sicut maculabilis, et omnis scriptura foret a quotlibet hominibus heretica-bilis, dampnabilis et adversabilis, nullius virtutis directive vel honoris et per consequens nullius autoritatis (I, 6, 111).

59. secundo confirmatur sic; scriptura sacra est descriptive inscripcio ver-itatis. 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 (I, 6, 111).

inscription of Truth demands a purity of textuality. The divine tex-
tuality consists of three aspects: the Truth itself, the book wherein
it subsists, and the scribe who gives it expression. All these three
elements Wyclif says are one; they are together the Word of life,
they are the ideal intelligible truths. Thus they subsist in the unity
of the first two levels of Scripture.[60] Wyclif's thinking is again un-
doubtedly Trinitarian, for one can see a direct correspondence to
the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It is perhaps most evident in the
case of the Truth, Christ. But Wyclif's assertion of the identity of
these three components of divine textuality suggests the Trinity.
Thus if Christ is the inscription of Truth, it is in his Father that
he is inscribed, and it is through the activity of the Holy Ghost,
the "scribe", that this Truth has expression and communication.
Christ is, of course, most directly identified in Wyclif's mind with
Holy Scripture, since he is truth and so is Scripture. But Wyclif
also indicates here how in the unity of the Trinity all three persons
comprise this textuality.

The second level of Scripture, the ideal intelligible truths, can
easily be seen to correspond to the Augustinian notion of the di-
vine ideas which subsist in the mind of God. However, the move-
ment to the third level of Scripture does not exactly correspond
to the Augustinian movement from the divine ideas, which is the
movement to creation. For Wyclif is dealing with Scripture, which
he does not identify with the general creation. Nevertheless, since
the third level of Scripture is its first realization outside of the pure
being of divinity its operation is *within* the created order. Wyclif
first describes it as the truths that are generally to be believed. We
see thereby that it operates upon intelligent, created beings, since
it requires their credence. Even so, it does not have subsistence
within the created order. Its existence and its operation proceed
from the book of life. It is still heavenly and partakes of eter-
nity.[61] Wyclif elaborates upon this description. He explains that
this level of Scripture comprises God's utterances for the created
order. As such it is not of the created order but is present and
operating within it. Wyclif supports this notion of Scripture from
its own words. He quotes Christ's statement concerning his own
words, that "heaven and earth will pass away but my words will
not pass away". He also quotes Christ's statement concerning the
law that "it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than one
stroke of a letter from the law". And again he supports the notion

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60. et est causata ydemptitas libri scripti, veritatis scripte, et persone
scribentis, quod omnia hec tria distincta secundum racionem sunt ver-
bum vite et veritates in abstracto (I, 6, 112).

61. tercio sumitur scriptura pro veritatibus credendis in genere, que se-
cundum existenciam vel effectum inscribuntur libro vite (I, 6, 108).

of Scripture's transcendence over the created order with Christ's statement that "not one jot or stroke of the law will perish until all things come to pass".[62] Wyclif, of course, claims that the law and Christ's words are Scripture, in fact the very Scripture referred to by Christ in the gospel when he says, "Scripture cannot be broken".[63] But these divine utterances do not refer simply to verbal utterances in Wyclif's mind but to acts. For Scripture, he says, is fulfilled by Christ's work. His incarnation, his earthly ministry, his sacrifice of himself, his resurrection and ascension constitute the height of Scripture's effective operation among mankind. Accordingly, Wyclif returns to his distinction between the book and the codex. Christ's works, he says, are not preserved through human works such as parchment, ink, speech, codices, or other means of manufacture. So there must be, he concludes, a higher form of Scripture; these other "Scriptures", which conform to the physical senses, are merely its representation.[64]

The fourth level of Scripture Wyclif defines to be the truth as it finds subsistence in the book of the natural man. "Natural man" is man in his earthly existence. The book of man is his soul. The means by which Scriptural truth finds subsistence there is faith.[65] Wyclif explains that this level of Scripture can be described in different ways. It can be seen as "an aggregate" of understandings culled from the acts and truths that subsist on the third level.[66] The reception, then, of Scripture sets up a correspondence or a mirroring of Scripture in the "reader". The human soul comes to share in the textuality of the superior Scripture through the act of investing faith in its content; for faith in Wyclif's thought involves an *imitatio* — as we shall soon discuss at more length. The other ways of describing this level of Scripture is either as an intellectual

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62. unde tercio confirmatur ex testimonio scripture. nam Marc. tercio decimo dicit Cristus: celum et terra transibunt; verba autem mea non transibunt, illa autem verba sunt sermones, de quibus proximo capitulo est locutum. que verba exponuntur Luc. secto decimo: facilius, inquid salvator, est celum et terram preterire quam de lege unum apicem cadere, quia Matth. quinto dicit eadem veritas: iota unum aut unus apex non preteribit a lege, donec omnia fiant (I, 6, 112).

63. et indubie ista lex, ista verba et isti sermones sunt hec scriptura, de qua Joh. decimo non potest solvi scriptura (I, 6, 112-113).

64. unde ut ista scriptura impleretur, venit Cristus in mundum faciens totum opus vacionis . . . cum ergo opera Cristi non sunt finaliter propter opera hominum ut pelles, incaustum, voces vel codices vel alia artificialia, relinquitur esse scripturam superiorem, cuius iste sensibiles scripture sunt ymagines (I, 6, 113).

65. quarto sumitur scriptura pro veritate credenda, ut inscribitur libro hominis naturalis ut anima (I, 6, 108).

66. quam scripturam quidam vocant agregatum ex actibus et veritatibus tercio modo dictis (I, 6, 108).

condition, or else as an insight or inward vision.[67] Wyclif seems to prefer the term "aggregate" but considers them all to refer to the condition of the soul that has allowed itself to be formed by Scripture.

The fifth and last level of Scripture, which we have already mentioned frequently, comprises the codices, the sensible words, and other things of material or physical devising.[68] He is quick to indicate that this level of Scripture does not possess the truth but points to it: it is not the presence of truth but the signification of it whereby our minds are directed back toward it.[69] Wyclif here depends upon the Augustinian notion of illumination and memory. He, in fact, alludes to the *De Videndo Dei* in support of his thought that the codex of Scripture is a set of signs that prompt the memory of our soul. It thus recalls the truth that it is aware of through the illumination from above.

Wyclif accordingly does not allow that the Scripture perceived by the senses is actually Scripture. Not only is this the case with codices but it is also true of the recital of Scripture. Neither the sight nor the hearing of the Bible's words constitutes Scripture. Just as parchment does not have the aptitude for truth neither do sounds. He says that these sensible things can only be called Scripture equivocally, in the same way that a painting or statue of a man can be called a man by virtue of its likeness to a real man.[70] Thus the codex of Scripture is an image or representation of the real Scripture, the book of life. Its value is in its analogousness to that book of life, for that is what enables it to prompt our mind to look through it to the inscribed truth.[71] Wyclif compares the analogousness between Scripture and the codex to the analogousness between Christ and the scroll which he received in the synagogue at the beginning of his earthly ministry.[72] For in that setting Christ in his own person gave fulfillment to the spoken and the written words; and that, Wyclif suggests, is what Christ continues to do for us when we read Scripture faithfully, in that he is what fills our sensible text with spiritual meaning.

The sensible text then, as a representation of the truth, does

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67. quidam [vocant] quod est habitus intellectivus, et quidam quod est intencio vel species (I, 6, 108).
68. sed quinto modo sumitur scriptura sacra pro codicibus, vocibus aut aliis artificialibus (I, 6, 108-109).
69. que sunt signa memorandi veritatem priorem (I, 6, 109).
70. unde ista scriptura sensibilis in vocibus vel codicibus non est scriptura nisi equivoce, sicut homo pictus vel ymaginatus dicitur homo propter similitudinem ad verum hominem (I, 6, 111).
71. unde codex dicitur liber secundum equivocacionem analogam ad librum vite (I, 6, 114).
72. ut patet de libro dato Cristo, Luc., quarto (I, 6, 114) cf. Luke 4:16-21.

participate in the truth. Wyclif calls this level of truth formal, which means that it is a formed likeness. It is different from the truth that he calls essential. For essential truth has subsistence in that which has the spiritual capacity for truth. Truth finds such essential existence in both the human soul and in the divine being; as such it is the third and fourth levels of Scripture, the words and acts of God that go forth into creation and, on the one hand, are received by the believing soul and, on the other hand, continue and remain in their source of origin. But this essential truth is different again from the Truth itself. That is understood by Wyclif to be both intelligible being and the very act of existence; as such, Truth itself is the divine reality, in which subsists both the first and second levels of Scripture. Thus the five levels of Scripture are in another way of speaking a threefold hierarchy of truth: formal, essential, and actual. This threefold understanding of Scripture is, as Wyclif indicates, more conventional than his fivefold one.[73]

We must not, however, consider Wyclif to be demeaning the sacred page when he describes it as a formal representation of truth as opposed to an essential subsistence of truth. He is in no way legitimating a break from the sensible or spoken word in favour of the cultivation of an individualistic, self-authenticating authority. His scheme of Scriptural hierarchy does not promote any form of spiritual receptivity to the Lord's word that considers itself superior to the use of the Bible. Thus he is not giving the Christian license to dismiss the Bible, for he argues that although the Bible is only Scripture equivocally and is only a formal representation of truth it is nevertheless sacred on account of its *utilitas* to the Christian in his earthly sojourn.

Yet the sacredness of the codex is not, of course, self-sustaining. It derives sacrednesss through its relation to the truly sacred. Wyclif develops the thought that this level of Scripture is only called Scripture metonymically. He states that this level of Scripture is, in and of itself, no more in possession of actual Scripture than the lines of our hands when they are read by a palm-reader. The codex, he says again, is no more in possession of Scripture than the dot-to-dot diagrams of geomancy. Through these comparisons Wyclif is suggesting that to invest the sensible words of the codex with spiritual truth is a form of superstition. And this, he complains is what the modern generation of Biblical Scholars are doing. Thus they are a generation that "seeks after signs"; and like Christ's generation, they miss the truth by placing their confidence in the signs themselves. But these signs, Wyclif reasserts

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73. unde scriptura accipitur famosius pro triplici veritate libro inscripta, que nunc intelligitur formaliter, nunc essencialiter, nunc secundum esse intelligibile et nunc secundum esse existencie (I, 6, 114).

with still greater emphasis, are no more the truth of Scripture than is the track that a turtle leaves as it lumbers over a rock. The biblical codex is only Scripture insofar as its words are informed with the content of the superior, more actual, Scripture.[74]

Its sacredness then is not that it has the truth but that it points to the truth. Its task is to lead the faithful reader into the knowledge of divine Scripture. So just as the Bible is called Scripture metonymically, so too is it called sacred. It is interesting to note that Wyclif says that the Bible is further removed from sacredness than priestly vestments and ornaments.[75] These are not thoughts that one would expect from an evangelical. Wyclif seems to be suggesting that the Bible has less immediate contact with what is holy than does the priestly function of celebration.[76] Nevertheless, the sacred page is justly so called because of its *utilitas* for the believer. Wyclif again appeals to the thought of pseudo-Dionysius and Robert Grosseteste to help explain how the sacred can be, by extension, not just the holy itself but also the way to the holy. According to these authorities the sacred refers to the means of becoming directed into the ultimate end of human existence, who is God. It refers to the activity that directs itself into that end.[77] The codex then could be called Holy Scripture when it is involved in this activity. Its holiness and its scripturality are part of a human *praxis* that engages in the attainment of God. It has the important and necessary task of bringing its readers to the vision of God's will and his governance of human affairs. This

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74. et tamen generacio moderna signa querens ad illam scripturam attendit precipue, ipsa autem non habet quod sit scriptura pocius quam lineacio manus in ciromancia vel figura punctorum in geomancia, ymmo non plus quam vestigium testudinis super saxum, nisi de quanto exemplatur a scriptura priori (I, 6, 114-115).

75. sacra autem nullo modo dicitur, nisi propter manuduccionem, qua inducit fideles in noticiam scripture celestis. et sic remocius sacra quam vestis et alia ornamenta sacerdotalia dicuntur sacra (I, 6, 115).

76. This thought might not seem to square with what we commonly consider Wyclif's stance against transubstantiation. It is, important, of course, to mention that the *De Veritate* was written shortly before he entered fully into the fray of controversy with the ecclesiastical establishment. His sacramental thinking may not yet have formed so rigidly at this point as it did shortly thereafter. Nevertheless, it is also important to realize the Wyclif's stance against transubstantiation did not make him oppose sacramentalism. The sacraments were in his way of thinking an effective means of grace for the believer, who was thereby brought into contact with the divine reality. The holiness of the grace that was at work in the mass may simply have been what lay behind Wyclif's interesting comment.

77. sacrum signat direccionem in deum tamquam infinem ultimum et optimum . . . sacra est accio que in deum ut finem optimum et consumativum dirigitur (I, 6, 115).

vision is the pilgrim's vision of the most sacred Scripture, which
he identifies with Christ.[78] If the Bible is not put to the sacred use
of being the means to Scripture but is rather exalted as being the
truth itself, then Wyclif says that it becomes an idol, which is a
form of falsehood. It becomes like the images and the icons that he
considers profanely invested with holiness. It takes great effort,
he says, on the part of the Christian, especially, the theologian,
not to let the Bible become such an impious vessel of idolatry and
a profanity.[79]

There is a significant correspondence between Wyclif's view of
the Bible and his view of the eucharist. In neither case would
he allow that the sensible material sign had the capacity to be
the divine reality. Neither were themselves the object of venera-
tion. In both cases their sacredness lay for Wyclif in their efficacy,
their *utilitas*, for the transformation of the believer. For if there
is any sense of transubstantiation in Wyclif's thought its subject
is the Christian. It is the *believer* who is changed in the eucharist
through the infusion of divine grace and the receptivity of human
faith as they are at work in the sacrament. There the believer be-
comes the body of Christ, together with the Church. The same
is the case with Scripture. When a Christian reads the Bible he
takes on the essential qualities of Scripture. The Bible is only the
means through which that happens; it itself cannot sustain the
subsistence of truth, a spiritual reality.

The central concern of the *De Veritate* is this realization of Scrip-
ture in the human soul. For although this treatise has at its
outset an apologetic form and tone in its desire to defend Scrip-
ture against its detractors, nevertheless it has a pastoral burden.
Wyclif's purpose in defending Scripture's truth is to enable Chris-
tians to receive its truth. Thus he comes to focus on the process
by which the Christian becomes a subsistence of Scripture through
reading the Bible.

Wyclif indicates this pastoral concern at the very outset of the
treatise. As he states his position and takes up his stance to defend
Scripture against any attack upon its integrity, he reveals that his
interest in doing so lies in his concern for the discipleship that
bases itself upon Scripture.

> Now there are many different arguments against Holy Scrip-
> ture's truth and logical coherence. My position, however, has

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78. ex quibus colligitur quod scriptura sensibilis dicitur sacra, in quantum
est medium recte inducens ad videndum per fidem dei voluntatem et
ordinacionem, que est scriptura sacratissima (I, 6, 115-116).
79. ideo fidelis et theologus precipue laboraret, ut sibi foret sacra per rec-
tum intellectum et affectum et non ydolum infidelitatis, sicut sunt ymag-
ines nobis sacre, que sunt prophane ydolatris (I, 6, 116).

consistently been that the meaning of the words in each and every part of Scripture is true. And along with this I hold that those who teach and profess Holy Scripture should place much more importance on following the style and the logic inherent in its way of speaking than following anything from any of the writings of unbelievers, which lie outside the faith.[80]

He continues in the opening portions of the first chapter to set forward and uphold the practise of the *imitatio* of Scripture. He maintains that the Christian must copy and adopt into his own person Scripture's style and logic. The necessary attitude is discipleship, where one follows and imitate's one's master in humble obedience.[81] It involves a process of growing perfection.

We, of course, are not capable of having as perfect a logic and style as Scripture. What we have we derive from it in humility, and we come closer to perfection the closer we conform our style and logic to the original.[82]

Wyclif, however, does not pursue this theme immediately. In the first several chapters he meets the various objections and quibbles that his opponents bring against Scripture's veracity. Not until Book 6, as we have seen, does he provide the theoretical basis of this *imitatio*. After that he is at liberty to explain how the transformation that it entails can be realized. There are two passages that are of particular interest to the metaphysical theme of our essay. Wyclif devises two other five-fold schemes that correspond to his hierarchy of Scripture. These schemes, however, do not describe Scripture's whole realm of subsistence; they consider it only in the context of the human soul. The first scheme describes the soul's intellectual *conditio*. The second conjoins the intellectual *conditio* with the moral *dispositio*.

In the first scheme Wyclif lists five concepts that condition the soul to support Scripture. He adapts the Pauline metaphor of

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80. Primo igitur arguitur multipliciter contra veritatem et consequenciam scripture sacre, de qua dixi sepius, quod ista est vera de virtute sermonis secundum quamlibet eius partem et quod professores scripture sacre debent sequi eam in modo loquendi quoad eloquenciam et logicam plus quam aliquam alienam scripturam gentilium (I, 1, 2). Wyclif has not at this point distinguished between Scripture and the codex, and so he is not upholding certain distinctions that he has yet to make. Nevertheless this is a helpful quotation for pointing out that Scripture, even on the level of its sensible signs, has an integrity. Its aggregate of elements that reflect the truth must be respected.
81. illa eloquencia non decet alios autentice, sed imatatorie tamquam eorum discipulos (I, 1, 5).
82. non sufficimus habere tam perfectam logicam vel eloquenciam sicut habet scriptura, sed unam humiliter derivatam, que est eo perficcior, quo est sibi conformior (I, 1, 6).

the Christian's armour to the elucidation of this scheme. These five concepts, he says, equip the Christian to defend Scripture; thus they form an armour, which he compares to Paul's spiritual armour. It is important to keep in mind that Wyclif's spiritual warrior is not defending Scripture in the way that a Christian knight defends the helpless. Scripture, as Scripture, is inviolate. It is, of course, true that the Christian soldier uses these concepts to defend the Bible and its words against intellectual attacks. But more importantly, he uses them to defend himself. This armour allows the soul to possess the truth of Scripture in the face of intellectual opposition. It gives the soul the strength to sustain Scripture in the earthly sojourn.[83]

This armour then defends celestial logic in its earthly subsistence. As such it must do so on the level of the words of the Bible that point the soul to truth. It must defend the words of the Bible by showing how their meaning is a vehicle for divine truth. This armour must provide the means of showing how there is a unity of truth to be understood in the sacred page.[84] Consequently, all five parts of the armour are the means of relating the fragmented particularity of words back to this divine unity of truth. The first armour is the most basic. It lies at the centre of the Christian realist tradition. It is to regard the Ideas as coeternal with God and to understand that they remain in him and were the exemplary forms through which he created the universe.[85] Wyclif shows how this first conceptual armour enables one to understand the Scriptural account of creation in its relation to the divine reality.

> Through this one can understand how heavily freighted with meaning is that passage of Scripture in Genesis I, where "God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." In the first place the very act of speaking here is the word of God.[86] Secondly, the "Let there be" is the exemplary form.[87] Thirdly, the "and there was" expresses the production of the created thing and the existence of the creature.[88]

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83. unde sicut est quintuplex maneries scripture sic est quintuplex armatura, secundum quam defendi potest a callidis sophistis, qui nituntur sibi imponere falsitatem (I, 8, 167-168).
84. sic correspondenter sunt quinque genera armorum defensivorum celestis logice, per que potest catholicus iacula et omnes insultus sophistarum evertere incassum nitencium sacre pagine veritatem de virtute sermonis subvertere (I, 8, 168).
85. primum est, quod est dare ydeas deo coeternas, que sunt in eo raciones vel exemplaria, iuxta que universitas est creata (I, 8, 168).
86. Which, of course, is Christ.
87. For it gives rise to the created reality.
88. per hoc enim potest intelligi, quomodo ista scriptura Gen. 'primo dixit deus: ffiat lux et facta est lux,' sit onusta sentencia, ita quod primum

This capacity for metaphysical insight into the text's ontological referentiality enables one to attain Scripture's richness, height and depth. Wyclif, in Pauline terms, calls this part of the armour the helmet of salvation because it protects the central and the chief conceptual moment. He invokes the authority of Augustine to support the importance he attaches to this tenet of realism: "Without the knowledge of ideas no one can be wise or happy."[89]

The second, third, and fourth parts of the armour are corollaries of the first. They are metaphysical conceptions that elaborate upon the relation of divine being to earthly temporal being. The second is to regard the universal ontologically above and beyond the individual thing, which is merely a sign of that universal.[90] This is to understand the unity within the diversity of any class of creatures, and it is the correct means for going on to understand the unity of the uncreated Trinity.[91] He appeals to the authority of Anselm to support this understanding of universals: those who deny them are what Anselm calls "dialectical heretics" since any heresy regarding the Trinity or the Incarnation can be traced back to a correspondingly false understanding of Universals.[92] This second armature Wyclif likens to the leatherwork of a breastplate. For it is the conceptual capacity to bring together into one contiguity all the various particularities of subsistence within genera and species.[93]

The third armuture relates closely to this last. It is to understand the fundamental unity of all being, that is that it stands together as one universe under one creator.[94] This conception asserts that differences of time, place, and species, do not constitute

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'dicere' sit verbum dei, sucundum 'ffiat' sit racio exemplaris, et tercium 'facta est' dicat faccionem rei et existenciam creature (I, 8, 168).

89. per hoc eciam potest intelligi in multis locis scripture fecunditas, profunditas atque sublimitas, ut sepe meminit Augustinus. ista autem est galea salutis, cum secundum Augustinum Octaginta Trium Questionum qu. quadragesima sexta; 'sine noticia ydearum nemo sit sapiens vel beatus.' (Augustine does not actually say so in so many words in his *De Diversis Quaestionibus*; Wyclif is again distilling the thought of his authority.)

90. secunda armatura est, quod ex parte rei est dare universalia preter signa (I, 8, 169).

91. et noticia istarum creaturarum comunium est medium ad intelligendum trinitatem increatam (I, 8, 169).

92. et hinc dicit Anselmus in *De Incarnacione* secundo cap, quod negantes talia universalia sunt dialectice heritici. non enim est alique fallacia in materia de trinitate vel incarnacione, quin potest proporcionaliter detegi materia de universalibus (I, 8, 169).

93. et ista armatura est quasi lorica, secundum quam genera et species per differencias in suis suppositis sunt contexta (I, 8, 169).

94. tercia armatura est quod res unius speciei quam disparis licet distiterint loco et tempore sunt realiter unum totum iuxta illud Ioh. primo: "mundus per ipsum factum est" (I, 8, 169).

a disunity within the created order. Wyclif says that this is to shoe
the feet of the soul and make them swift to uphold the unity of
the gospel. For it frequently enables one to defend the apparent
disunity of number in Scriptural language.[95] When Paul speaks of
the oneness of Abraham's offspring in Gal 3:16[96] this principle is
at work. When Paul says in Eph 5:8 that you were (*fuistis*) once
darkness (*tenebrae*), but now are light (*lux*) in the Lord he speaks
according to this logic (*iuxta quam logicam*). The same logic is at
work in the notion that the whole Church is the body of Christ,
the bride of Christ, and also the mother of the faithful; and also
in the notion that this unified composite contains men of the past,
present, and future together with the blessed angels. It is still at
work when we understand that Christ is the head of this body
and that Christians are one with him. Thus this principle of logic
is a hermeneutical principle.[97] In order to elucidate this principle
Wyclif pushes against the conventions of language. He does not
do so simply for effect. He considers himself entitled to imitate
Scripture's own abuse of convention. He considers himself to be
accurately expressing a sublime reality when he says, "For with
their head Christians 'is' one Christ."[98]

The fourth armature follows directly from the third. It is the
conception of the unity of time in the presence of God. This he
calls the exalted metaphysics, and he emphasizes that this is a
real unity of time. It is not that God understands all time at once,
as if he too were in time but had a prophetic knowledge of all
time; God rather has all time before him in a real way. And, as
with the other three principles, Wyclif shows that this one too is
alive within Scripture. For Ecclesiastes 3:1 says "everything has
its time"; the word "time" (tempus) is a singular here and there-
fore, for Wyclif, unified.[99] This metaphysical conception Wyclif
calls a shield, presumably because it, like the breastplate, gathers

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95. et hec est quasi incitatorium pedum anime ad tendendum in evan-
gelicam unitatem, et ad defendendam sepissime de virtute sermonis (I,
8, 69).
96. Where he says: "Now the promises were made to Abraham and to
his offspring." It does not say, 'And to offsprings,' referring to many;
but, referring to one, 'And to your offspring,' which is Christ (RSV).
97. et hoc fuit medium Augustino et sanctis doctoribus concedendi cum
apostolo prima Cor. duodecimo quod ecclesia est unum corpus, ymmo
una persona, quia mulier fortis de qua Proverb. tricesimo uno, et sponsa
Cristi ut dicitur in Canticis, ac mater fidelium composita ex omnibus pre-
destinatis preteritis vel futuris, sed et ex angelis beatis ut dicit Augustinus
Enchiridion . . . ipsi enim cristiani cum capite suo, quod ascendit in celum
unus est Cristus, unus ergo homo Cristus, capud et corpus, quod est ec-
clesia (I, 8, 170).
98. Ipsi enim Christiani cum capite suo unus est Christus (I, 8, 170).
99. Since Latin has no article the Vulgate's *tempus* in *Omnia habent tempus*

into itself a wide expanse of reality.[100] Wyclif puts this principle to a hermeneutic use as well. It resolves difficulties that otherwise do not make sense. One can imagine the nominalists objecting to Christ's language when he sends his reply to Herod in Luke 13:32, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course." They may similarly have pointed out an inconsistency in Christ's exposition of Exodus 3:6 where God says, "I am the God, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Christ calls God the God of the living, but these men have died and have not yet risen from the dead. Wyclif says that an understanding of the unity of time resolves these difficulties. It also, he claims, enables one to understand predestination, and the relationship between necessity and contingency in the possible eventualities of future events, although he does not elaborate here.[101] This metaphysical conception of time is, for Wyclif, an indespensible means for comprehending Scripture. It enables us to believe on the one hand that creatures successively follow upon one another as time changes and on the other hand that God in the unchangeability of eternity stands before the past and the future all at once. This shield of faith thus comprehends and reconciles all time. Without it Scripture would become incomprehensible according to Wyclif. Its metaphysical teaching that God has immediate knowledge of all things could not be resolved with its teaching on the level of natural philosophy that events succeed upon one another.[102]

The fifth armature is the quintessential metaphysical conception needed for the defense of Scripture's unity. It is the principle of equivocation. Wyclif likens it to Paul's girdle of truth since it surrounds or embraces all the other armatures, that is metaphysical conceptions.[103] The principle of equivocation is not in and of itself metaphysical; it rather is the means by which one applies the

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can be read as not a particular indefinite time but as singularly unified time. Of course the subsequent image of the sun, as God, encompassing all things lends to this sense of unity.

100. quarta armatura quasi scutum tutissimum est illa alta methaphysica, que dicit, quod omnia, que fuerunt vel erunt, sunt apud deum nedum secundum suum esse intelligibile, sed secundum esse reale, pro tempore suo presencia, iuxta illud Ecclesiastices tercio: "omnia tempus habent et suis spaciis transeunt universa sub sole." (I, 8, 171).

101. per hanc itaque armaturum cognoscitur materia de predestinacione, de necessitate futurorum cum contingentia ad utrumlibet (I, 8, 173).

102. unde sine isto scuto fidei, quo credimus creatura mutabiliter succedere et deum immutabilem racione eternitatis omni preterit vel futuro assistere, non video, quomodo salvaretur scriptura methaphysica de dei noticia intuitiva vel philosophia de succesivis edocta (I, 8, 174).

103. quinta armatura quasi cingulum latum amplectens hec omnia est noticia equivocacionis terminorum scripture, qua cognoscitur non esse

other metaphysical conceptions to the reading of the text in order to resolve its difficulties and elucidate its meaning more fully. For as Wyclif has been indicating, Scripture's apparent difficulties as well as its wealth of meaning involve metaphysical conceptions.

He does not repeat the discussion of equivocation that he had already given in chapters I and III; but he does make two general observations. He first notes that the Bible presents some very difficult equivocations which are inaccessible to philosophers, by whom he means the sophisticated and the worldly wise. But the moment that the theologian, who is Scripture's disciple, learns them he can comprehend the truth. Thus Wyclif suggests that to distinguish the equivocation is to distinguish truth. Accordingly he adds that truth does not show itself as itself in the sensible words, which are an integument that must be pulled aside. The sensible words do not display truth as truth, Wyclif further asserts, any more than they display falsehood or contradiction. Thus the truth that the theologian discovers on the one hand and the confusion that the sophist discovers on the other does not lie so much with the words themselves as with the reader. Wyclif presents a kind of reader-response theory here, but not a relativistic one. The reader understands or misunderstands the text according to the truth or falsehood that is at work in his own soul. If we recall that for Wyclif the soul is itself a text more or less in imitation of Scripture we see that for him the act of reading Scripture is a "text calling to text", where sometimes the texts answer well to one another and sometimes they do not.[104] This brings him to his second observation. The logic of equivocation, he says, is itself the form of Scripture, not the immediate appearance of the words. It is this logic then that forms the Christian soul into the likeness of Scripture. But this logic does not operate simply in the soul's intellect. It operates more fundamentally in its will and its love. For, as we saw Wyclif state earlier, the understanding and practice of equivocation demands humility and honesty as opposed to pride and arrogance. And this moral orientation derives, as Wyclif now states, from a pure love of Christ.[105]

So at the end of his fivefold scheme of the metaphysical conceptions needful for the pilgrim Christian in his defence of Scripture,

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contradiccionem in signis equivocis ut exemplatum est primo capitulo (I, 8, 174).

104. 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 (I, 8, 174). In this regard, cf. D. L. Jeffrey, "John Wyclif and the Hermeneutics of Reader Response" *Interpretatio* 39 (1986).

105. et ille qui casto amore diligit Jesum Cristum, non gloriam sophisticam, utitur hac logica instar scripture (I, 8, 174).

Wyclif suggests that these intellectual categories are not them-
selves sufficient for the true reading of Scripture. They operate
within the larger operation of pure Christian love. This larger op-
eration Wyclif explains in the following chapter. Here he speaks
of the fivefold means of conditioning one's internal awareness to
Scripture's truth. The metaphysical understanding of Scriptural
logic stands second in this scheme; it is not the ultimate means to
this awareness. The five levels of this scheme he lists as the cor-
rection of Scripture's codices, the instruction of Scripture's logic,
the synthetic understanding of Scripture's parts, the virtuous dis-
position of the devout student of Scripture, and finally the internal
instruction of the Master Teacher.[106] These five levels stand in a
somewhat different relationship than the latter scheme, where the
first level was the foundation for what followed. This scheme is
rather like the former scheme of Scriptural being where the last
level is the ultimate level upon which all the others depend.

   The dependence of a lower level upon that above it is partic-
ularly clear in the first level. For Wyclif did not conceive of the
correction of the codices along the lines of modern textual criticism.
Our textual criticism regards itself as independent of external au-
thority. It is a self-governing discipline that relies upon a scientific
examination of the relationship between codices. Wyclif's chief
criterion for the correction of texts, however, is truth itself. He is
aware that he is contravening normal human practice. He chiefly
disclaims the tendency to emendate, or rather paraphrase, the text
out of consideration for aesthetic sensibility. But he also rejects
any correction that proceeds from strictly human technique. For
this does not communicate with the theological nature of Scrip-
tural truth. Wyclif proposes that the correction of the text must
proceed from an understanding of the author's meaning. Thus
again there is a "text calling to text", because there is a relation-
ship between the sensible text and the internalized text through
which they are both built up. So for Wyclif the goal of the cor-
rection of texts is not to restore a pristine and historically precise
model of an original; it is simply to exclude falsehood and pre-
serve the truth.[107] Thus it is not a task that should be limited to
the original language. Any language could be a sign of Scriptural

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106. sicut quintuplex est scriptura ex sexto capitulo et quintuplex ar-
matura pro eius defensione ex octavo capitulo, sic quintuplex est medium
disponens ad sue veritatis noticiam, scilicet codicum scripture correccio,
logice scripture instruccio, parcium scripture magis collacio, sui devoti
studentis virtuosa disposicio, et primi magistri interna instruccio (I, 9,
194).
107. Not that historical considerations are to be excluded. They are rather
insufficient in themselves, and so must be subsumed under the theolog-
ical understanding.

truth; and so the correction of codices should be undertaken in any language. Thus this first level is, at least in part, a manifesto for translation. More essentially, however, it is a manifesto for a theologically sound and coherent text.[108]

The priority that Wyclif gives to meaning over words might appear to allow an attitude of negligence towards the words themselves. But that is not actually the case. His very concern here for *correccio* reveals the importance that he attaches to the words themselves: incorrect words have the potential to falsify the author's meaning. So for Wyclif the integument's own form is important even if it does not display the truth in its own right. For it must nevertheless be a telling device of the truth, one that can be rightly understood by the right understanding of the reader. He honours Scripture's sensible words on the grounds that they were instituted in the form that would reveal Scriptural truth. In his defense of the *imitatio* of Scripture's logic in Chapter 3 Wyclif says:

> A Christian should speak Scripture's words on Scripture's authority in the form which Scripture itself provides. . . For if Scripture's logic were incorrect on the literal level, the level of the simple, direct meaning of its words, that is in the presentation of both history and Wisdom, Holy Scripture would be exceeding evil.[109]

Wyclif, accordingly, does not take lightly the correction of the codices. At the end of the same chapter he stated that, "it is better to take Scripture in its own form than let rash stupidity attempt to correct it."[110]

Nevertheless, he allows here in chapter 9 that a sound understanding of Scripture may correct the codices. That sound understanding of Scripture could not then derive simply from the codices themselves. It comes from the understanding of the nature of truth. This is Wyclif's second level, the knowledge of Scripture's logic. This understanding of equivocation and the metaphysical

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108. oportet enim codices scripture, in quacunque lingua fuerint esse correctos. . . . correccio codicum non ffiat secundum ornacionem sumptuosam nec secundum rectificacionem factam iuxta humanam scienciam, sed proporcionaliter, ut lector concipiat autoris sentenciam. . . . dum veritate detecta falsitas sit exclusa, falsitatem autem odiunt sancti inesse eciam nostris codicibus ut venenum (I, 9, 195).
109. cristianus debet loqui sub autoritate scripture verba scripture secundum formam qua scriptura ipsa explicat. . . . nisi enim logica scripture quoad sensam verbalem, literalem tam in parte historiaca quam sapeinciali foret recta, esset Scriptura sacra nimis mala (I, 3, 51-52).
110. ideo melius est scripturam poni sub hac forma, quam sub forma qua eam corrigeret vesana temeritas (I, 3, 61).

concepts upon which it relies prevents the reader from misunderstanding Scripture. But whoever does not have this knowledge comes to the text as a false reader. For, according to Wyclif, he will inevitably distort Scripture, and by virtue of his unspiritual thinking he will abuse the text and will be incapable of defending it against the attacks of the sophists. Without the knowledge of Scripture's logic its words become a trap. Its logic alone can lead the theologian through this labyrinth of words. In fact, the logic of Scripture would seem to transform the confusion of the labyrinth into the comprehensibility of the map. For when we take the words as the reality, Wyclif seems to be suggesting, they take on the concreteness of a trap. But Scripture's logic allows the words to be signs.[111]

In his discussion of this second level Wyclif also says that the only way to acquire the intellectual habit of Scriptural logic is through habitual reading and hearing of Scripture. The deep awareness of Scripture that results from this practice will bring about a twofold transformation. Not only will it transform the soul that gains this awareness into a repository of Scriptural logic and style, but it will also transform the appearance of Scripture from something crude and of little intellectual value into something wise and shrewd.[112] Of course, the latter transformation is really only an effect of the soul's transformation.

This habituated appropriation of Scriptural logic could not occur, however, without the synthetic knowledge of Scripture in all its parts, which is the third means to its attainment. Wyclif also calls this a "close reading" of the parts of Scripture.[113] This "close reading", however, is not focussed closely in upon detail after detail. It is the gathering together, or "crowding" together of the text as a whole. Perhaps it would better be called an "enclosed" reading. For, as Wyclif indicates, without an apprehension and understanding of the text's fundamental unity, the reader will find confusion in its particularity. This *collacio* enables the reader to reconcile apparent discrepancies and contradictions between parts of

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111. secundum, scilicet logice scripture noticia est valde necessaria. Aliter falsificaret lector scripturam et abhominaretur irreverenter eius formam, nec sciret ipsam defendere contra sophistarum instantiam. ideo valde decet theologum logicam sue scripture cognoscere, ne capiatur in verbis (I, 9, 195).

112. unde Augustinus cap quarto decimo [*De Doctrina Christiana*], ubi supra dicit, quod 'forma loquendi scripture consuetudine legendi et audiendi innotescat.' tanta enim est vis consuetudinis, ut testatur experimentum comune, quod illa forma tam quoad logicam quoad eloquenciam, que videbatur in principio esse indebita et inculta, per consuetudinem videbitur sapida et subtilis (I, 9, 195).

113. tercium scilicet crebra leccio parcium scripture (I, 9, 196).

the text, because it involves the perception of the underlying logic
whereby they agree. It sets at work in the reader's mind the re-
ciprocal truth that binds together differences in interpretation and
detail into a common meaning. The variety in the parts of the
text thereby becomes no longer a hindrance but a help to the dis-
covery of meaning; for the readers find that the variations serve
to expound one another in a process of synthetic unity. The syn-
thesis, of course, takes place from the reader's point of view as
he works from the sensible text; Scripture itself is a homogeneous
whole.[114]

This synthetic reading, therefore, is the process of coming to
understand Scripture's logic, especially its principle of equivoca-
tion. Wyclif accordingly calls it beneficial, and exhorts his readers
through the authority of Jerome to read Scripture frequently in
order to gain its manifold fruit. His implication here, of course,
is that the nominalists perceive discrepancy and disunity in the
words of Scripture because they do not know Scripture.[115]

This synthetic understanding, however, that leads to the knowl-
edge of scripture's logic is not sufficient to do so in and of itself.
Wyclif explains that it depends upon a higher principle, which is
the fourth level of this scheme, namely the virtuous disposition of
the reader. This disposition he calls the attitude of discipleship. It
essentially involves humble obedience towards the text, which is
the willingness to receive its authority. This, of course, puts the
reader into a special relation with the text, which could be called
a subjectivity. For as a disciple of the text he is subject to it. His
intention is not to analyze the text as though it were a mere object
for the application of intellectual technique, as Wyclif's sophists
would have been doing. His intention is rather to receive the
text in devotion to its truth. But besides obedience Wyclif posits
a second element of the virtuous disposition. This is an act of
understanding, whereby the reader knows that everywhere Scrip-
ture conforms to reason. This involves virtue because it honours
the truth of Scripture. It allows the reader both to receive from
Scripture statements that would seem to contravene reason but do
not; it also equips him to reject sophistical readings of Scripture

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114. videtur ex hoc esse necessarium, quod sepe una pars scripture ex-
ponit aliam. sicut enim interpretum varietas salva semper veritate re-
ciproce se exponit, sic ewangelistarum variacio et aliarum, que vel addunt
vel variunt stante eadem sentencia (I, 9, 196).
115. sic igitur prodest crebro partes scripture pro habendo conceptu sue
concordancie et excludenda apparencia sue repugnancia. unde Ierony-
mus epist tricesimma quarta *Ad Nepocianum* precipit sibi "divinas scrip-
turas sepe legere", sicut et alibi precipit Demetriadi propter fructum mul-
tiplicem. prodest igitur notare equivocacionem et logicam scripture se-
cundum concordancias et processus (I, 9, 197-198).

that actually do contravene reason. Wyclif adds yet a third ele-
ment to this virtuous disposition. This is to receive the witness of
the holy doctors of the Church into one's understanding of Scrip-
ture. This too venerates Scripture, for the disciple of Scripture is
thereby taught by other disciples who had learned the conformity
to Scripture. Since their work was to edify through Scripture, their
authority must be received as something that derives from Scrip-
ture.[116] Nevertheless Wyclif by no means considers the interpre-
tive tradition the central location of truth for pilgrim Christians.
That is the work of Scripture itself, Christ, in the hearts of the
readers. This Scripture testifies to the authenticity of the help that
is found in the earthly sojourn: "We must realize therefore, that
Scripture itself teaches us how to understand Scripture, and that
is what moves us to put faith in the codices and the commenta-
tors."[117] As Wyclif wrily remarks earlier in the treatise, the holy
doctors of the Church are reliable witnesses to Scripture's lack of
falsehood because they themselves did not know that the meaning
of its words, even at the literal level, could be nonsense.[118]

Without this virtuous disposition of obedience Wyclif says that
the effort that a reader puts into a "synthetic reading" will fail
him. It will become poison to him, no doubt because it opens
up the poison of his pride. And it will ring false to those who
understand the humility that truth requires. So a capable reading
of Scripture is beyond intellectual capacity alone. It requires in-
ward obedience, which in turn, as Wyclif points out, requires the
inner workings of Christ's Spirit. For, as he says, the fruit of dis-
cipleship to Christ is hidden from the proud. The reader is not,
therefore, sufficient to himself in his own intellect. He requires
the help, indeed, as Wyclif says, the friendship of this teacher.
His friendship is available not to the worldly-wise who are shut
up in their pride, but to those who have the humility and open
receptivity of children.[119]

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116. Wyclif again shows himself to be somewhat removed from the world
of the protestant reformation. He also indicated earlier in the treatise that
the authority of the Fathers was necessary for a sound interpretation. He,
in fact, says that Scripture's actual meaning cannot be determined without
the help of the interpretive tradition: "and what that sense is cannot
be determined without drawing upon reliable sources, that is upon the
witness of sound interpreters." (Sed quid sit ille sensus non deducitur
nisi per locum topicum, ut puta a testimoriio postillantis) (I, 2, 36).
117. oportet ergo quod ipsa doceat se ipsam et moveat ad fidem adhiben-
dam codicibus et postillantibus (I, 2, 37).
118. ecce, quanti sancti doctores laborarunt ad excusandam scripturam
sacram a falsitate. ipsi enim nescierunt, quod aliquis sit sensus scripture
literalis verbalis qui sit impossibilis (I, 4, 73).
119. quoad quartum, scilicet virtuosam disposicionem discipuli scripture,

The work of this teacher is, of course, the fifth level, namely the internal instruction of God. Wyclif describes it as the *sine qua non* for the apprehension of truth. Without the instruction of Wisdom himself he says that it is impossible for anyone to learn anything.[120] For this Wisdom is the first "agent intellect".[121] Yet his thought is more Augustinian here than Aristotelian or Averroistic. Just as his mentor in the *De Magistro* he identifies the apprehension of truth as the work of Christ, the teacher, within the soul, who, after all, is Truth himself. Wyclif is avowedly Platonic here, or to put it from his perspective, he finds Platonic thought in keeping with Scripture. For since Christ is the true light who illuminates everyman there can be no avoiding the conclusion that without the light of Christ shining within the mind no one can know anything.[122] All the more clearly then must Christ be the instructor of Scripture, which possesses all truth. Indeed, as Wyclif indicated earlier, Scripture is the divine reality. So then it is Scripture herself who is this inward teacher. She inscribes herself upon our souls:

> For faith assures us that Scripture actually is God, who is the direct author of every correct understanding of our written copies.[123]

But the truth of Scripture involves more than elementary rationality. It involves innocence and purity. The process of learning it restores our souls: "for we have been taught the logic of heaven

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patet, quod aliter studium suum foret nocivum et quidquid loqueretur, male sonaret. ymmo cum oportet deum apperire et claudere illum librum, patet quod quicunque fuerit amicus huius magistri, habet fructum discipline superbis absconditum. et ad hoc preter racionem demonstrativam sunt quotlibet testimonia scripture et sanctorum doctorum. sic enim dicit Cristus Matth. undecimo, quod pater abscondidit misteria scripture a sapientibus et revelavit ea parvulis, ut eciam dicit apostolus prima Cor. primo. unde solebam dicere quod virtuosa disposicio discipuli scripture specialiter stat in tribus, scilicet in autoritatis scripture humili acceptacione, in sui et racionis conformacione et sanctorum doctorum testificacione (I, 9, 198). For Wyclif's further description of these three elements of virtue cf. I, 9, 198-201.
120. quintum autem, scilicet dei instruccio, est medium tam necessarium, quod impossibile est quemquem aliquid adiscere sine sapiencia prima docente (I, 9, 201).
121. et illa sapiencia est primus intellectus agens (I, 9, 204).
122. cum enim Cristus est lux vera, que illuminat omnem hominum patet quod absolute impossibile est sensum hominis illuminari ut quidquam cognoscat nisi per eum primo irradientem sicut est impossibile ex supposicione lucem astri vel candele quidquam ostendere nisi in virtutis solis materialis hoc prius ostendentis ut placet multis philosophis et istam racionem invenit Augustinus in libris Platonis, ut confitetur septimo Confessionum nono (I, 9, 202).
123. ipsa enim ex fide est deus qui est autor inmediatus cuiuscunque sensus recti nostrorum codicum (I, 3, 48).

by the Master Teacher in ordere that we would learn a logic that is virtually the same as the logic of the state of innocence."[124] The Christian accordingly, who, of course, falls short of the state of innocence, requires above all the gracious light of Christ to begin to learn how to read. But those who refuse to submit to Christ's instruction remain perverse and obtuse. They have excluded themselves from truth. It is, therfore, pride not simplicity that keeps a reader from understanding Scripture. For pride contradicts Scriptural logic; but God's truth humbly adapts itself to the needs of all, however simple and humble they may be.

> For the Lord is not jealous of others having his way of speaking. On the contrary, he commands us to have it and thereby shows how he loves to share and how he hates pride in ownership. He handed down his logic with such great humility that it can correspond to the needs of everyone.[125]

And so at the end of this third fivefold scheme we can reiterate that Wyclif's thought has a Platonic character. For he shares with Plato the notion that God is essentially generous of himself, and thereby wills that all should share in himself and be like unto himself.[126] And like Plato Wyclif refers this human participation in the divine primarily to the soul and the intellect, thus considering the divine not only the ground of all being but the active and inhering ground of all knowing. Now it may appear that Wyclif has not thereby saved Scripture from the morass of subjectivity into which nominalist skepticism had placed it. And that, in a way, is true. Far from restoring confidence in an empiricially objective meaning of coherence within the sensible text, he stripped the sensible text of objective meaning and thereby rendered it not an actual text. Wyclif's text, the one that possessed meaning, was inward, idealistic, and ultimately spiritual Truth itself. Wyclif's purpose never was, however, to render empirical objectivity viable. That principle of Ockhamism embodied the skepticism that he was combatting. It, moreover, led to a false subjectivity because it divorced itself from the possibility of rational insight into metaphysical reality, rendering its adherent disengaged from the correspondence

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124. cum sit logica celestis a primo magistro edocta, ut discatur logice status innocencie simillima (I, 3, 48).

125. non enim est dominus iste invidus, si alii habeant modum suum, sed hoc precipiendo amat comunicacionum et odit proprietatem suberbam. unde in tanta humilitate tradidit logicam suam, quod potest competere cuicunque (I, 3, 48).

126. cf. the *Timaeus* (29E), where Timaeus says to Socrates that the Creator is good and therefore does not have envy in respect to anything; his generous nature desires especially that all be similar to himself (ἀγαθὸς ἦν, ἀγαθῷ δε οὐδεὶς περὶ οὐδενὸς οὐδέποτε ἐγγίγνεται φθόνος˙).

between his own rationality and the nature of reality, and thus subjecting him to his own uncertainties and to ungrounded attempts at certainty. Wyclif sought to restore confidence in the communication between human rationality and ultimate reality. That is, he sought to restore a rational subjectivity that subjected itself to the Truth upon which all things relied. His own Augustinian tradition taught him, as indeed did the negative example of the current fashions of thought, that this confidence could not derive from a consideration of the immediate and sensible. It had to rely upon the inward discovery of the aptitude of the human mind for truth and the transcendent. As Hugo Meynell has recently remarked in a rather different connection, the most radical skepticism and subjectivity demands of itself a return to a form of Platonism. Its own truth-claims concerning its own subjectivity unavoidably posits a correspondence between itself and the nature of things. This capacity of the human mind to represent the world, Meynell argues, requires Platonic theory to give it a satisfactory basis.[127] Wyclif, similarly, was arguing that a skeptical attitude to metaphysics was incoherent, both in itself and in respect to the whimsicality of fashion. He repeatedly pointed out that the pride and vainglory that were at work in the current trends of thought could not long sustain an intellectual system. Endurance and stability require the integrity of truth.

> So Scripture's logic is perfectly reliable. It does not lead through long, twisting pathways, but leads directly to that final goal. Other logics have little endurance and there is a far to vast multiplicity of them. We can see that clearly enough right here in Oxford. A new system of logic arrives and then scarcely lasts twenty years. And every new logic constantly goes through so many changes and alterations that there come to be as many logics as there are professors of logic. For they want to satisfy their own sense of self-importance. Scripture's logic, however, stands for eternity. It is established on unbreakable truth and exists independently of fame or the approval of men.[128]

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127. Hugo Meynell, "On Deconstruction and the Proof of Platonism." I am grateful to Professor Meynell for showing me his compelling essay in advance of its publication. It is forthcoming in *Blackfriars*. Meynell does not mean by Platonism the necessity of positing disembodied, substantial, eternal "forms," but simply the positing of objects of knowledge and thought, as opposed to objects of sense.

128. ista ergo logica, que tam recte ducit ad finem ultimum sine tumultuosis ambagibus, est certissima. in cuius signum alie logice sunt periodice et nimis multiplices; periodice quia, ut patet in Oxonia, vix durat una aliena logica per viginti annos sed sepissime variantur, quia quot sunt capita logicorum, tot ex affeccione proprietatis superbe sunt logice vari-

Wyclif had in common with his modern evangelical counter-
parts the intention to internalize Scripture and conform one's heart
to it. But the philosophical and metaphysical foundation that he
gave to that process, along with his participation in what he con-
sidered an authoritative philosophical and exegetical tradition, as
well as the very limited honour that he accorded to the physi-
cal Bible — in fact his reluctance to call it Scripture — in favour
of an ontologically superior manifestation of Scripture, place him
irrevocably on the far side of the Reformation.

Simon Fraser University,
Burnaby, B. C.

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ate. logica autem scripture in eternum stat, cum fundatur independenter
a fama vel favore hominum infringibile veritate (I, 3, 54).