

GRACE AND FREEDOM IN THE SOTERIOLOGY OF JOHN WYCLIF

BY IAN CHRISTOPHER LEVY

The popular portrayal of John Wyclif (d. 1384) is that of the inflexible reformer whose views of the Church were driven by a strict determinism that divided humanity into two eternally fixed categories of the predestined and the damned. In point of fact, however, Wyclif's understanding of salvation is quite nuanced and well worth careful study. It may be surprising to find that Wyclif's soteriology has not received a thoroughgoing analysis, one that would pull together the many facets involved in medieval conceptions of the salvific process. Instead, one finds some insightful, but abbreviated, analyses that tend to focus more on specific aspects, rather than offering a comprehensive view. The best sources are Lechler,¹ Robson,² and Kenny,³ all three of whom offer valuable appraisals. Actually, Lechler comes the closest to a broad view within his study of Wyclif, but well over a century has passed since it was first published. Needless to say, there has been an enormous amount of research done on late medieval thought since then, research that enables us to situate Wyclif more thoroughly within the discussions of his day. Even Robson's work is more than forty years old by now. And, while Kenny's treatment is comparatively recent at twenty years old, he tackles the subject only as part of a more strictly philosophical discussion of necessity and contingency. We will, of course, consider the views of each of these scholars in the course of this essay, the purpose of which is to offer a full appraisal of Wyclif's soteriology in its many facets. This means that we will first discuss the related questions of divine will and human freedom, and their impact upon his soteriology. Then we will examine his views on sin, grace, merit, justification, faith, and predestination, all within the larger medieval context. What we should find is that Wyclif's soteriology makes quite a lot of room for human free will even as he insists on the leading role of divine grace in all good works. Furthermore, Wyclif will emerge as a subtle thinker who most often presents a God who is at once just and merciful, extending grace and the possibility of salvation to all.

¹ Gotthard Lechler, *John Wyclif and His English Precursors*, trans. P. Lorimer (London, 1904), 288–314.

² J. A. Robson, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools* (Cambridge, 1961), 196–217.

³ Anthony Kenny, *Wyclif* (Oxford, 1984), 31–41.

DIVINE POWER AND HUMAN FREEDOM

The Divine Will

Here it may be helpful to begin with Hugh of Saint Victor, for much of what he says in the 1130s will be echoed by others in later centuries, and specifically by Wyclif. Hugh contends that nothing in God's kingdom may avoid his regulation. As it is for providence (*providentia*) to give each its own, so sin receives death and justice life; to what is blameworthy God gives punishment, and to what is virtuous glory.⁴ As for the place of evil in the cosmos, Hugh insists that God is not the author (*auctor*) of evil itself, but rather the orderer (*ordinator*) of all things, including evil.⁵ Hence God made the good and permitted the evil, though he then brings good from evil.⁶ Hugh also draws what will become a classic distinction: when Scripture speaks of God's will, it sometimes refers to what is truly in God, identical and coeternal with him, while at other times it is meant figuratively, referring to a sign of his will (*signum voluntatis*).⁷ What is known as the will of God's good pleasure (*beneplacitum*) is eternal; it is fixed and certain and cannot be frustrated. In this sense, all that God wills he always wills to be done, though not always at the time he wills it.⁸ But the signs of God's will, such as his prohibitions and precepts, do not always correspond to God's good pleasure, and thus are not always in keeping with what will actually occur.⁹ In the following century, Thomas Aquinas also noted that God's will is single and identical with his essence, though it can be signified in the plural. And like Hugh, he believed that God's will in its proper sense is the will of his good pleasure (*voluntas beneplaciti*), while metaphorically it is his signified will (*voluntas signi*).¹⁰ These distinctions hold well into the fourteenth century, as we shall see.

In his ca. 1372/73 *De volucione Dei*,¹¹ Wyclif explicitly follows Hugh of Saint Victor and Peter Lombard when drawing a distinction between God's

⁴ *De sacramentis christianae fidei* 1.2.19 (PL 176:213).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.2.20 (PL 176:213).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.4.5 (PL 176:236): "Quod Deus bona fecit, mala permisit."

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.4.2 (PL 176:235).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.4.8 (PL 176:237).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.4.10 (PL 176:237–38).

¹⁰ *Summa Theologiae* 1.19.11.

¹¹ This date was suggested to me by Dr. Jeremy Catto for whose advice I am most thankful. Unless otherwise noted, though, I follow the dating of Wyclif's works as given in Willliell R. Thomson, *The Latin Writings of John Wyclif* (Toronto, 1983). Note that Wyclif likely revised some of his works in later years. On this see Anne Hudson, "Cross-Referencing in Wyclif's Latin Works," in *The Medieval Church: Universities, Heresy, and Religious Life*, ed. P. Biller and B. Dobson (Suffolk, 1999), 193–215.

intrinsic will, namely the eternal will of his good pleasure, and God's extrinsic or signified will, the latter being a temporal sign representing the former. Like Hugh, he notes that the signified will consists of precepts, prohibitions, counsels, examples, and threats, all of which are temporal. God's will of good pleasure is surely irresistible, says Wyclif, for if God is omnipotent and supremely good then he must make happen whatever he wills to happen. As such, it would be a contradiction to say that this will is not fulfilled. And, since God has eternal knowledge and free will with respect to all future events, he clearly does not ordain anything that he knows would rebel against his good pleasure. For even if God were to do so, he would have eternally known and ordained such a rebellion, with the result that it too would end up fulfilling the divine will rather than impeding it. Hence it is absolutely necessary (*absolute necessarium*) for the will of God's good pleasure to be fulfilled. In that sense there is no reason to pray that his will be done. Instead, prayer should be understood as the elevation of one's mind to God through an outburst of praise in which we assent to what we know to be the case.¹² As for sinners, they do indeed resist the Holy Spirit and in that sense resist divine counsel. But they do not thereby thwart the divine will, which is universally efficacious in accomplishing its purpose and can never be frustrated.¹³

Wyclif notes, furthermore, that God's will is spoken of in three ways in Scripture. First of all, it refers essentially to the God who wills. Secondarily it is the eternal volition by which he wills something to be thus. And while this eternal volition is distinct from God, it is so only formally, not essentially. In the third place, God's will refers to the effect his will produces *ad extra*, as in the Lord's Prayer: "thy will be done." The first two ways of speaking about God's will are not "makeable" (*factibilis*), since they can only exist eternally and thus cannot be made. He also points out that the will of God can be fulfilled directly or indirectly, the former pertaining to what is good and useful for a creature, and the latter if justice is done when the creature sins. And because God eternally knows all things present, past, and future, the will of God must be fulfilled for human beings in all things, be they good or bad. In this vein, the discussion turns to interpreting 1 Timothy 2:4, "[God] wills that all people be saved (*qui omnes homines vult salvos fieri*)." This passage, though invoked within a more abstract discussion of the divine will, strikes at the heart of the soteriological mystery. Wyclif

¹² *De volucione Dei* in *De ente librorum duorum excerpta* 2.3.1 (ed. Michael Henry Dziewicki [London, 1909], 114–16). Cf. Hugh, *De sacramentis* 1.2–4 (PL 176:205–46); and Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in IV libris* 1.42 (ed. Ignatius Brady, 2 vols. [Grottaferrata, 1971–81], 1:294–98).

¹³ *Tractatus de universalibus* 14 (ed. Ivan Mueller [Oxford, 1985], 345; translation: Anthony Kenny, *On Universals* [Oxford, 1985], 162).

points out here that God also wills all people to live justly, which does not happen either. In other words, the passage should be read more along the lines of a wish, expressing what God wants to happen, not what he wills to happen. Wyclif insists that God does not damn anyone except on account of that person's own sin, but this does not mean God wills that all people are saved (*sunt salvi*). For if this were the case then it would have to be true (the assumption here being that it is not true). Hence the passage must be read as though it were a volitive subjunctive, such that God wills that all people would be saved (*sint salvi*).¹⁴ We will examine the various medieval readings of this biblical passage at greater length below.

Some Medieval Views on Necessity and Contingency

The question of necessity and contingency was taken up by Aristotle, as well as by early Christian writers such as Boethius and St. Augustine. In his *De civitate Dei*, St. Augustine had criticized Cicero (*De divinatione* 2) for insisting that there can be no human freedom if one also admits divine foreknowledge. To admit the existence of God and then deny him foreknowledge is madness, says Augustine. Still, the exercise of a voluntary act is in no way hindered by God's foreknowledge. While there is for God a fixed order of causes, this order does not mean that nothing depends upon human free choice. This, says Augustine, is because our wills belong to that very order of causes contained in God's foreknowledge; human acts of will are themselves the causes of the actions that God knows.¹⁵

It would be fair to say, though, that St. Anselm establishes some of the basic distinctions that frame later medieval discussions. To speak of necessity in the Middle Ages was not tantamount to speaking of coercion. And this was a vital distinction to make if one were to preserve human free will in any meaningful sense. Thus Anselm notes that we often say something is necessary even when it is not compelled by any force, as God is necessarily immortal. So also, when God foreknows that an act will occur by free choice, he foreknows that it is not compelled by any force, and thus is done freely. To say that, "if God foreknows something it will be necessarily" is the same as saying, "if it shall be it shall be of necessity." Yet this neither compels nor prevents the future existence or non-existence of anything. For the necessity does not precede, but rather follows, the assertion of the thing as a fact. In line with Aristotle, therefore, Anselm observes that a piece of

¹⁴ *Opus evangelicum* 2.11 (ed. Johann Loserth, 2 vols. [London, 1895], 1:281).

¹⁵ *De civitate Dei* 5.9 (CCL 47:136–40). See also Simo Knuuttila, "Time and Creation in Augustine," in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge, 2001), 103–15.

wood is not always necessarily white, because before it was whitened it was possible for it to be made non-white. But a white piece of wood is necessarily white. And so it is that a thing is not necessarily present, but a present thing is necessarily present.¹⁶ Anselm will, therefore, delineate two different types of necessity: a sunrise happens by an antecedent necessity, he says, but a rebellion happens by a subsequent necessity, since it was possible before it happened that it would not. This subsequent necessity means only that if the rebellion shall happen it shall happen. The sunrise, however, has two necessities; an antecedent necessity, which causes it to happen, as well as a subsequent necessity. Hence to say that what God foreknows will necessarily happen does not mean that it will happen by necessity, that is, by antecedent necessity.¹⁷

By the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas was making the common distinction between absolute and hypothetical necessity. It is a case of absolute necessity when, for example, the predicate is included within the definition of the subject, as it is necessary that a man be an animal. In other words, absolute necessity applies to things that cannot not be. Thus it is not an absolute necessity that Socrates be sitting, though it can be called a hypothetical necessity, for on the supposition that he would sit, then it is necessary that he is sitting as long as he sits. When applied to God's will, Thomas argued that, on the supposition that God does will a thing, he cannot not will it, since his will is immutable. But there is no absolute necessity that he will such a thing at all.¹⁸ As we shall see, Wyclif will make much of this distinction, at times appealing specifically to Aquinas.

Wyclif's persistent fear is that he will be taken to be an inflexible determinist not unlike his Oxford predecessor and mentor, Thomas Bradwardine. And on this point Kenny rightly argues that, far from being a strict determinist, Wyclif did preserve the freedom of human beings by giving them some control over God's volitions. But, as should be borne out below, the degree to which Wyclif assigned contingency to divine volitions is really not

¹⁶ *De concordia praescientiae et praedestinationis* 1.2 (*Opera Omnia*, ed. F. S. Schmitt, 6 vols. [Edinburgh, 1946], 2:247–50). Cf. Aristotle, *De interpretatione* 9; 18b–19a.

¹⁷ *De concordia* 1.3 (p. 250): “Scilicet et praecedenti quae facit rem esse — ideo enim erit, quia necesse est ut sit — et sequenti quae nihil cogit esse, quoniam ideo necesse est, quia futurus est.”

¹⁸ *Summa Theologiae* 1.19.3 (Rome, 1950, 109–10): “Respondeo dicendum quod necessarium dicitur aliquid dupliciter: scilicet absolute, et ex suppositione. . . . Sequitur quod alia a se eum velle, non sit necessarium absolute. Et tamen necessarium est ex suppositione: supposito enim quod velit, non potest non velle, quid non potest voluntas eius mutari. . . . Ad primum ergo dicendum quod ex hoc quod Deus ab aeterno vult aliquid, non sequitur quod necesse est eum illud velle, nisi ex suppositione.”

as unusual as Kenny suggests.¹⁹ Indeed, it seems that we will be able to agree with Schabel that Wyclif's theories of necessity and contingency were not only orthodox, but even commonplace.²⁰ Thus, as we look at Wyclif's position in some detail, we should be cognizant of some of Wyclif's near contemporaries. Hoenen offers a valuable appraisal of an English tradition in the first half of the fourteenth century, comprising the likes of Richard Campsall, Adam Wodeham, and Robert Holcot. These theologians maintained that God's knowledge is contingent, such that it is within the power of human beings to make it happen that God knows something different from what he knows. Because the existence of X depends upon a decision of the free human will, so then, the human being can make it happen that God eternally foreknows that X will occur, or conversely, that God never knew that X would occur.²¹

One other prominent Oxford theologian worth mentioning in this vein is Thomas Buckingham, who set out to refute what he took to be the determinism of Thomas Bradwardine. In a question devoted to future contingency, Buckingham is keen to keep God's foreknowledge and forewilling contingent.²² He contends that the contingency of the divine will is the root of created freedom. Hence divine foreknowledge and verification in some way follow the free human decision, such that God can eternally foreknow that Peter will do A, though he might never have foreknown that Peter will do A; for this will be based upon Peter's free decision. Thus if Peter uses his divinely given freedom to produce A, God will verify the proposition: "Peter will do A." And if Peter will not do A, God will then falsify: "Peter will do A," and will verify the contrary if it be the case.²³ While Buckingham admits that divine causality must precede human action, that causality still follows the free decision of the rational creature. It is true, therefore, that

¹⁹ Kenny, *Wyclif* (n. 3 above), 31–41. See also idem, "Realism and Determinism in the Early Wyclif," in *From Ockham to Wyclif*, ed. Anne Hudson and Michael Wilks (London, 1987), 165–77.

²⁰ Chris Schabel, *Theology at Paris 1316–1345* (Aldershot, 2000), 290–92.

²¹ Maarten J. F. M. Hoenen, *Marsilius of Inghen: Divine Knowledge in Later Medieval Thought* (Leiden, 1993), 208–12.

²² For a synopsis and analysis, see Bartholomew R. De la Torre, *Thomas Buckingham and the Contingency of Futures: The Possibility of Human Freedom* (Notre Dame, 1987), 103–40.

²³ *De contingentia futurorum et arbitrii libertate* (ed. De la Torre, pp. 173–74): "Praescientia et verificatio divina aliquo modo sequuntur liberam potestatem hominis. . . . Similiter potest Deus praescire Petrum facturum A et aeternaliter praescire Petrum non facturum A, et numquam praescivisse Petrum facturum A. Et si Petrus faciat quod in eo est iuxta posse et possibilitatem liberam quam recepit a Deo ut A producatur ab eo, Deus verificabit illam propositionem positam, 'Petrus faciet A.' Et si Petrus non faciet A, Deus falsificabit istam, 'Petrus faciet A,' et verificabit contrariam si sit."

the creature does nothing that God has not eternally known and willed, but God could have known and willed differently.²⁴

Wyclif on Necessity and Contingency

The aforementioned English theologians are not usually associated with Wyclif, but I think we will find that he follows along very similar lines to his English predecessors. It is Wyclif's position that, although God can with complete contingency will or not will a given object of volition, he cannot begin or cease to will, and so cannot change from volition to non-volition or vice versa.²⁵ Every volition of God is eternal, even as the thing that is willed may still be temporal. And yet while God's will with regard to intelligible being is absolutely necessary (*absoluta necessaria*), it is still contingent (*contingens*) with respect to contingent things. Thus to say that God wills something to be possible is not to say he wills it to exist; just because God wills *Peter's salvation does not mean that he wills him to be saved. Here we must also remember that, for Wyclif, all of God's volitions are determined by what God knows. God does not begin to will before he knows why he should will what he wills. This means that he loves or hates someone only conditionally, depending upon his knowledge of whether that person acts well or evilly, though this is something he would know from all eternity.*²⁶

Wyclif is perfectly at ease with the fact that a temporal truth can be the cause of an eternal truth, which depends upon that temporal truth in a contingent manner. For example, Christ said that God the Father loves the disciples because they have loved Christ himself. Thus the eternal love of God the Father was caused by the love that the disciples showed to the humanity of Christ, even though the disciples' love had its beginning in time. In fact, says Wyclif, this is a vital principle to bear in mind when considering the question of predestination.²⁷ Many effects are indeed within a rational

²⁴ Ibid. (pp. 174–75): “Immo prius est Deum ordinare, praevenire, producere, et subsequenter est creaturam quasi instrumentaliter agere suum actum. Et tamen dico, ut prius, quod si homo faciat quod potest, Deus praeveniet volendo et preordinando, et prius ac principaliter aget quam creatura.”

²⁵ *De universalibus* 14 (n. 13 above, p. 335; trans. Kenny, 157).

²⁶ *De volucione* 1 (n. 12 above, pp. 116–17, at 117): “Ex quo patet quod non sequitur: ‘deus vult istud possibile, igitur vult istud existere,’ nec sequitur: ‘si deus vult Petri salutem, tunc vult ipsum salvum fieri;’ et ita de consimilibus. . . . 3^o sequitur, quod omnis volucio dei est determinata, et per consequens deus neminem amat vel odit, solum conditionaliter, si bene vel male se gesserit.”

²⁷ *Sermones* 1.29 (ed. Johann Loserth, 4 vols. [London, 1887–90], 1:194): “Ex quibus convincitur, cum amor patris sit eternus et amor discipulorum quo humanitatem Christi dilexerant, inceptit in tempore, quod unum temporale potest esse causa eterni contingit a temporali huiusmodi dependere. Aliter enim non diceret Veritas quod Deus pater amat dis-

creature's free power when it comes to choosing between alternatives. Were they not, then merit and demerit would be abolished. Hence it really is within a human being's power to make it such that any of God's eternal volitions will be or not be, and likewise his non-volitions.²⁸ And yet this position would seem to expose Wyclif to the charge of subordinating the eternal to the temporal, the creator to the creature. Lahey offers an important insight into Wyclif's thought on this score, which should provide the proper perspective. For Wyclif, it is true that the creature's act does have a certain causal power to determine God's knowledge, but the fact remains that God is always ontologically prior to the created order. God first knows created beings through their eternal exemplars, so that the being of the creature's action is itself dependent upon the exemplar's eternal being in the divine mind. Hence one can say that Wyclif relies on the priority of the power of being over the power of knowing.²⁹

It is not surprising to find Wyclif appealing to Richard FitzRalph when arguing that God's volition does not impose a necessity on future contingents, since the action or omission on the part of the human being can itself be the cause why God eternally willed the action.³⁰ God willed to damn Lucifer precisely because he sinned, though it must be admitted that the sin is temporal while the divine volition is eternal. This means that the devil was able to refrain from sinning and thus could have made it that God never willed to damn him.³¹ Wyclif insists that because God created creatures to be free, he must allow that their free volitions determine his own. And this freedom means that I can make it to be so that God never willed my damnation, though I cannot prevent God from willing this when he

cupulos, quia ipsi Christum amaverant. Et ista noticia est notabilis in materia de predestinatione et multis aliis veritatibus eternis dependentibus a veritatibus temporalibus contingenter."

²⁸ *De universalibus* 14 (p. 343; trans. Kenny, 161).

²⁹ Stephen E. Lahey, *Philosophy and Politics in the Thought of John Wyclif* (Cambridge, 2003), 91. I realize that Wyclif's particular brand of metaphysical realism, specifically having to do with God's knowledge of eternal exemplars, may appear to conflict with the level of contingency Wyclif proposes. And yet it must also be admitted that Wyclif himself is quite confident that no such conflict exists.

³⁰ *De volucione* 8 (p. 189). For much of this discussion Wyclif is indebted to Book 16 of FitzRalph's *Summa de questionibus Armenorum*. Robson points out that in Books 15 and 16 FitzRalph argues that divine foreknowledge and omnipotence are compatible with future contingents. Human beings, says FitzRalph, can never lose their freedom of choice. See Robson, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools* (n. 2 above), 93–94. See also Gordon Leff, *Richard FitzRalph: Commentator on the Sentences; A Study in Theological Orthodoxy* (Manchester, 1963), 39–50.

³¹ *De volucione* 7 (p. 190).

does.³² A person can make God will to punish him by his own demeriting, just as he can make God not will to punish him by preserving himself from sin, albeit by means of God's gracious assistance. Precisely because God is just, Wyclif insists that sins are ultimately the cause why God wills to punish sinners, just as merits are the reason why God wills to save.³³ As for God's love towards the peccable, predestined creature, it does not increase or decrease depending upon the person's sin over the succession of time. For it is necessary that God would hate the person's sin and yet always will the final good of beatitude to inhere within him, inasmuch as he is eternally predestined.³⁴

When Wyclif took up the question of necessity and contingency in the 1370s, we find that, while he had a great deal of respect for Bradwardine, he would diverge sharply from his mentor when it came to protecting genuine freedom and contingency. In 1344 Bradwardine had issued his massive *De causa Dei contra Pelagium* in which he attacked those (unnamed) theologians who seemed far too enamored of innate human capabilities. In his defense of divine power and prerogative, however, Bradwardine ended up looking quite deterministic. Normore succinctly presents his theory of contingency: God's power cannot be affected by the passage of time for the very fact that God is himself immutable. The past, present, and future are all contingent upon the divine will. And yet, because God's antecedent will is prior to God's foreknowledge, everything that happens in the world is determined. For all that happens is necessary relevant to the first cause, which is God's will.³⁵ Oberman has pointed out that, while Bradwardine was keen on trying to uphold human free will against sheer fatalism, and thus saw himself in keeping with the anti-Averroistic condemnations of 1277, he still diverged from the tradition, inasmuch as divine foreknowledge and predestination become, in his view, almost interchangeable. In fact, Bradwardine reckoned God's knowledge to be a creative or generative action of his own will.³⁶ In a more recent study, Dolnikowski has also concluded that, when compared to his contemporaries, Bradwardine does indeed emerge as

³² Ibid. (p. 192): "Ideo possum facere quod deus nunquam voluit dampnationem meam vel aliam quacunq[ue] penam ego demerior pro peccato existente in libertate mee potencie; set non impedire deum ne hoc velit, set cavere possum ne deus hoc velit."

³³ Ibid., 8 (pp. 197–98).

³⁴ *Opus evangelicum* 4.2 (2:292).

³⁵ Calvin Normore, "Future Contingents," in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, and Jan Pinborg (Cambridge, 1982), 374–75. See Bradwardine, *De causa Dei contra Pelagium*, ed. Henry Saville (London, 1618; repr. Frankfurt, 1964), 1.14 (p. 209); 3.27 (pp. 704–5).

³⁶ Heiko Oberman, *Archbishop Thomas Bradwardine: A Fourteenth Century Augustinian* (Utrecht, 1958), 60–76.

a determinist for whom past and future depend equally upon God's eternal immutable will.³⁷

As mentioned, Bradwardine's theories met with resistance from Buckingham, who was troubled by his refusal to distinguish between antecedent and consequent necessity, and his equation of it all with God's will. Thus, while Buckingham maintained the traditional distinction between God's volition and permission, Bradwardine was arguing that God actively wills everything, even human sin.³⁸ As Robson sees it, both Wyclif and Bradwardine were determinists, but whereas Bradwardine proceeds from God's "ineluctable will," Wyclif begins with the "presence of indestructible being" within God's knowledge.³⁹ While Robson is correct in noting the different starting points — Bradwardine from the divine will and Wyclif from the divine intellect — I believe that he is incorrect when labeling Wyclif a determinist, whatever one may think of Bradwardine.

In his 1374 *De dominio divino*, Wyclif sees that he cannot escape the sharp differences between two of his favorite theologians on the question of future contingency. He notes that FitzRalph and Bradwardine do seem to disagree, and so he looks for a path of reconciliation. Thus, while his sympathies are with FitzRalph, he does try to save Bradwardine where he can from the perils of determinism by putting his ideas in the best light. He will agree with his mentor that all things that happen do so by necessity, and that God in his foreknowledge coacts with any secondary agent by necessitating its actions. But Wyclif immediately notes that necessity may be either hypothetical or absolute (a distinction Bradwardine could not accept). As he explains it, hypothetical necessity (*ex suppositione*) means that every such temporal truth has an eternal cause from which it follows formally. For instance, my running follows formally from the fact that God wills me to run; so it is with any supremely contingent truth. Absolute necessity, on the other hand, describes a truth that cannot not exist. These are the truths which are within the divine essence, even while remaining formally distinct from it.⁴⁰

From the soteriological perspective, Wyclif holds that, just as God necessitates himself to produce an effect, not absolutely, but rather hypotheti-

³⁷ Edith Wilks Dolinkowski, *A View of Time and a Vision of Eternity in Fourteenth Century Thought* (Leiden, 1995), 200–205.

³⁸ Robson, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools* (n. 2 above), 54–64. Cf. *De causa Dei* 1.32 (p. 282c): "Iam restat ostendere omnia prouenire a prouidentia actuali praeceptiua, seu etiam positiva, quae scilicet ponit actualem voluntatem Dei."

³⁹ Robson, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools*, 201.

⁴⁰ *De dominio divino* 1.14 (ed. R. L. Poole [London, 1890], 115–16). Here Wyclif appealed to Aristotle and Aquinas. Cf. Aristotle, *Physics* 2.9; 200a–200b and Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1.19.3.

cally (*ex suppositione*), so he necessitates himself to reward the predestined and punish the foreknown. Because God can freely obligate himself by his own gracious promise, he eternally obliges himself through an ordinance by which he eternally knew that he would do good for the creature, even though this obligation does not require that the creature be coeternal with God. That God eternally necessitates a creature to an action does not mean the creature is unfree, however. For just as absolute necessity abides with the highest uncreated freedom in God, so then does hypothetical necessity abide with created freedom. None of this is to say that the creature can change God's volition by generating it or corrupting it, for not even God can do that; but the creature can cause it, inasmuch as it is the object of that volition. Hence in the case of a hypothetical proposition where the inference is valid and the antecedent is not in my power, one should not assume that the consequent is not in my power either. Consider the proposition: "If God wills that I love him, therefore I love him." In this instance the consequent is in my power, although the antecedent, since it is eternal, is neither in my power nor even in God's power, says Wyclif. And yet both God and I play a role in bringing this event about.⁴¹ Here the antecedent is eternal, but still contingent: I did not have to love God, and thus God did not have to know that I would do so, nor then will that I would do so. Hence, while it is not in my power to alter the antecedent and thus "change" the eternal will of God, that eternal will could have been otherwise, depending upon God's foreknowledge of my free decision. And in this sense, it is not in God's power to change the antecedent either, precisely because God's will is determined by his intellect. God wills what he does from all eternity based upon what God knows from all eternity; and in his eternal perfection he knows and wills with an utterly immutable constancy. Of course, the creature could neither will nor accomplish anything if not for God, the first cause. So there can never be any question of my operating independently of God and then forcing him to comply.

Wyclif wants to make it very clear that conditional, or hypothetical, necessity is consistent with the utmost contingency. But he is not talking about purely hypothetical necessity, such as: "If you happened to be a donkey, then you would be inclined to bray." That is an absolutely necessary truth about the connection between the two extremes: being a donkey and the inclination to bray always go together. Wyclif is instead referring to an eternally contingent truth that entails some truth occurring at a particular

⁴¹ *De volucione* 3 (p. 148–49, at 149): "Set particularis exemplatur de ista consequencia reali, *deus vult me diligere ipsum: igitur ego diligo ipsum*. Consequens est in potestate mea, at antecedens, cum sit eternum, nec est in potestate mea nec in potestate dei. Uterque tamen nostrum habet potenciam ipsum causandi, et causat modo suo."

time, and in such a way that the truth about the connection is absolutely necessary, while the truth of the causal antecedent is contingent. Wyclif can thereby affirm that some event that is thoroughly contingent can still be considered necessary. Thus one cannot say that if a given truth is necessary then it cannot not be, for that only applies to absolute necessity, not hypothetical necessity.⁴²

There is no doubt that Scripture asserts that many things will come to pass, and it cannot be wrong; nor can Christ or the blessed be wrong either. Indeed, says Wyclif, all these future things will come to pass necessarily, but by hypothetical, rather than absolute, necessity and thus will do so most contingently.⁴³ In fact, it is contrary to Scripture to say that all things occur by absolute necessity, for if sin occurred in this way then God would be the author of sin, necessitating particular evils to happen by absolute necessity.⁴⁴ Moreover, if everything occurred by absolute necessity, as with the inward trinitarian production of the Word, there would be no moral virtue, since, morally speaking, we are neither praised nor blamed for things that are not in our power.⁴⁵ But just because events happen by necessity does not mean it is not expedient to pray. For to pray with moderation is fitting, since it disposes people to merit and spend their time well. The wayfarer lives the just life so that he can merit under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, while God teaches him how much, and in what manner, he ought to pray.⁴⁶

Freedom and Moral Goodness

As we have seen, St. Augustine stressed that the mere fact that God foreknew a person would sin does not make him sin. It is the person himself who sins, even if God had infallible foreknowledge that he would do so. Augustine insists upon maintaining human free will, therefore, no matter how bound up with sin it might be. Sin is an act of the will. No one sins unless he wills to sin; and if he had not willed to sin then God would likewise have foreseen that refusal.⁴⁷ For Augustine, as for the later tradition,

⁴² *De universalibus* 14 (n. 13 above, p. 334; trans. Kenny, 157). Note that the Latin reads: "si tu es asinus, tu es rudibilis." In fact, *rudibilis* means "inclined to bray," from *rudo*. Hence I would not follow Kenny's translation: capable of being "thwacked," presumably from *rudis*. After all, to bray is characteristic of a donkey, while anyone can be thwacked.

⁴³ *Ibid.* (p. 346; trans. Kenny, 163). On this point see also Kenny, "Realism and Determinism," 170–71.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* (p. 349; trans. Kenny, 165).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* (p. 348–49; trans. Kenny, 164).

⁴⁶ *Opus evangelicum* 2.7 (n. 14 above, 1:267).

⁴⁷ *De civitate Dei* 5.10 (CCL 47:140–41).

one could never lose sight of the inherent fairness and justice of God, whereby righteous behavior is rewarded and sin punished, all of which hinges on human freedom. Indeed, Augustine sets the tone for the later tradition when arguing that God does not damn the innocent; God is not a punisher before human beings are sinners.⁴⁸

No Christian theologian could ever allow the inherent righteousness of God to be obscured in the course of exalting his omnipotence and omniscience. All are agreed that reward and punishment mean nothing where human beings are not free. For St. Anselm, to whom Wyclif often appealed, God does not predetermine that anyone shall be just out of necessity, seeing as those who do not preserve their rectitude by free choice will lose it. As we have seen, while things foreknown and predestined are bound to happen, it is also true that some things foreknown and predestined do not happen by antecedent causal necessity, but instead by a subsequent necessity. Even though God predestines a person's actions, he does not cause these actions by compelling or constraining the will, says Anselm, but by leaving it to its own devices.⁴⁹ If there were no free choice, then there would be no reason why a just God would reward and punish. Free choice, therefore, must always coexist with grace and cooperate with it.⁵⁰ In so protecting human freedom in the midst of divine foreknowledge, Anselm also makes the point that the ability to sin cannot be equated simply with free will, since neither God nor the good angels can sin. A will that cannot fall from rectitude is freer than one that can desert it. The freedom to sin, therefore, is not liberty.⁵¹ But even after a person becomes a slave to sin he still has natural free will; the problem is that he cannot exercise that freedom without grace. Free will exists for the sake of justice, which is defined as the preservation of rectitude for its own sake. But even when rectitude of the will is absent, the rational nature still maintains its innate freedom, even though it can no longer will the good.⁵² And, as the power of preserving rectitude of will for its own sake is the perfect definition of free will,⁵³ so slavery is nothing other than the powerlessness not to sin, which is the case when rectitude is

⁴⁸ *De Genesi ad litteram* 11.17 (PL 34:438): "Numquid ille prius ultor, quam iste peccator? Absit: neque enim Deus damnat innocentes." Here Augustine refers to the devil.

⁴⁹ *De concordia* 2.3 (pp. 261–62, at 262): "Quaedam tamen praeserta et praedestinata non eveniunt ea necessitate quae praecedat rem et facit, sed ea quae rem sequitur."

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.1 (pp. 263–64, at 264): "ut liberum arbitrium simul esse cum gratia et cum ea operari in multis monstremus."

⁵¹ *De libertate arbitrii* 1 (*Opera Omnia*, ed. Schmitt [n. 16 above], 1:207–9).

⁵² *Ibid.*, 3–4 (pp. 210–14, at 212): "quoniam constat iustitiam esse rectitudinem voluntatis propter se servatam."

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 13 (p. 225).

absent.⁵⁴ But no one is deprived of rectitude unless by his own will. Nor can anyone will unwillingly, for every willing person wills by his own willing. Temptation, therefore, cannot conquer the will; the will can be conquered only by itself.⁵⁵

Wyclif often sticks close to Anselm, and he is bold in his efforts to avoid the trap of determinism, always laboring to uphold human free choice. He defines free choice (*liberum arbitrium*) as the power of judging what is just and following it, as well as putting away what is unjust. Like Anselm, he sees free will as the power of a rational nature to preserve rectitude or justice voluntarily. Given that the rational creature is obliged by God to preserve rectitude, it must be in its power to do so, since God cannot oblige someone to do the impossible. Yet, whereas God has the power both to discern and to do the good without possibility of obstruction, a creature can be prevented from doing so under certain circumstances.⁵⁶ Nor can anyone serve God meritoriously, unless through the supreme power of the interior person, namely the will. Yet it is not just a matter of naturally willing the good *simpliciter*, says Wyclif; it must be a deliberate volition that freely adheres to justice for its own sake. After all, every created substance, even a stone, naturally desires its own being and thus to be good. But this sort of affection, since it is purely natural, is neither morally laudable nor culpable. By an act of the will, however, a free creature may ascend to the level of higher justice by delighting in it; and from there follows merit and moral goodness.⁵⁷ As for sin, Wyclif (like Anselm) finds that the disposition by which a person is prone to sin is not freedom, but rather bondage. Christ, therefore, is the standard of true freedom, for he was able to walk through this world without the possibility of falling away from the highest good through sin. Nevertheless, human beings must retain the ability to sin, says Wyclif, because the power to sin is itself a good, even though the action itself is born of bondage. God never takes away free choice; even the blessed retain it, though they are in a state where it is impossible for them to experience demerit. For, while they could sin if they so chose, their union with God and their desire to please him makes it effectively impossible for them to choose sin.⁵⁸

Despite the debilitating effects of original sin, Wyclif remains confident that people always maintain the natural ability to avoid evil, albeit with the help of God's grace, the influence of which cannot fail. Not even the devil,

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 12 (pp. 223–24).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 5 (pp. 214–17).

⁵⁶ *De volucione* 3 (n. 12 above, pp. 136–37).

⁵⁷ *De dominio divino* 3.4 (n. 40 above, p. 234).

⁵⁸ *De volucione* 3 (p. 150).

says Wyclif, can tempt someone to sin to the extent that he could not resist. For no creature can overcome a spirit that is united to God unless God has forsaken his creature, and that would occur only if the creature had first abandoned God. The divine nature dwells within the creature's free will, where it may remain without possibility of expulsion by the enemy, unless the free will itself first decides to reject the divine nature. Anyone, therefore, who has been overcome by the devil must first have abandoned God, meaning that his own guilt had preceded the punishment.⁵⁹ Thus, while secondary causes can incline the will to its proper action, neither they nor God can compel it to do something. This is because the proper act of the will (*voluntas*) is to will (*volutio*), meaning that it would involve a contradiction for someone to perform such an act unwillingly. Nevertheless, God does necessitate a person to will the good, while he simply permits him to subject himself to inferior creatures. Once someone has withdrawn from God and subjected himself to these inferior forces, he then necessarily wills evil. But again, there is nothing corporeal or spiritual that can drive a created will to that state unless it is willing. And what is more, this adopted servitude does not remove freedom absolutely, though as the origin of sin is in the sinner, he does undercut his own exercise of freedom.⁶⁰

Here we have to remember that necessity and compulsion are two different things. Compulsion (*cogere*), says Wyclif, stems from an external or internal activity when the will is in some way reluctant, as in mixed acts like throwing merchandise overboard during a storm. In these instances the will sins even while partly contradicted by conscience. Necessity (*necessitare*), on the other hand, does not remove the merit of the will any more than it removes the freedom of the act itself. Wyclif offers the example of the child who walks freely even though he is necessitated to walk by his tutor who leads him by the hand. Likewise, the created will can be led by the Spirit of God even though it still has the feet to walk away from this saving guidance. Here then, says Wyclif, there is contingent freedom with respect to the inner act of the will and conditional necessity with respect to the outward deed. The human will is no more coerced by God to perform some action than the child is forced to walk by the tutor; these are willing acts that nonetheless require assistance.⁶¹ One must always bear in mind, though, that no creature is as free as God, who is himself the superior cause that

⁵⁹ Ibid. (pp. 144–46, at 145): “Ut sic: impossibile est creaturam superare spiritum unitum deo, nisi deo ipsum deserente; set impossibile est deserere talem spiritum, nisi ipse prius naturaliter deserat deum suum.”

⁶⁰ *De universalibus* 14 (n. 12 above, pp. 340–41; trans. Kenny, 160).

⁶¹ Ibid. (p. 341; trans. Kenny, 160–61). Kenny does not like Wyclif's example of the child and the tutor, inasmuch as the tutor can only guide the child, not make him walk. Human beings, as he notes, have the sort of independence of one another that they do not

necessitates all creatures. This means that, even as created volitional power is free in some sense (*quodammodo*), since it can do at will what it wants, it is still necessitated by God with respect to the end of its actions. Human freedom must still work within the parameters of divine providence. Hence Wyclif can say that, even as God necessitates a person to do a work, it is still within that person's power, since God has not compelled him to do it, but rather has freely given him the power by which he is able to produce such a work or not produce it. For the sake of justice and merit, Wyclif insists that there must always be a real choice between good and evil.⁶²

THE PROBLEM OF SIN

Source and Types of Sin

When defining original sin, Wyclif argued that the *fomes peccati*, or proclivity to sin, is not original sin in the formal sense, since it remains after baptism. Rather, original sin is the lack of original justice, when the son of Adam, on account of his origin, continually falls away from God's law, thereby leading to many subsequent evils.⁶³ Everyone who contracts original sin makes it his own sin at the first instant of his existence, not by committing some accidental deformed act at that moment, but insofar as he lacks the rectitude of justice owing to his descent from an infected lineage. Specifically targeting the nominalists, who reject real universals, Wyclif argues that the human race is united, for all people share a common nature, in such a way that every descendant exists causally in its principle in which it can merit or demerit.⁶⁴ On the basis of the classic text Ecclesiastes 7:30, Wyclif argues that God created man righteous in a state of innocence, so that he was immune from sin, pain, sorrow, and death.⁶⁵ While he does not

have of God. Thus he finds that the distinction between necessitating and permitting breaks down in divine-human relations. See Kenny, "Realism and Determinism," 173.

⁶² *De statu innocencie* 9 (*Tractatus de divinis mandatis accedit Tractatus de statu innocencie*, ed. Johann Loserth and F. D. Matthew [London, 1922], 517): "Et sic concedi debet quod opus hominis ad quod Deus ipsum necessitat in potestate sua est, cum Deus non cogit ipsum ad opus illud violente producendum sed libere dat sibi potestatem secundum quam potest illud producere vel non producere, ut dicitur Ecclesiastici: Posuit ante hominem bonum et malum [Eccles. 15:18], et sic non Dei providencia est potestate nostra sed multa que ad Dei providenciam consequuntur."

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 9 (p. 504). Aquinas also held that the formal element of original sin is the lack of original justice, while concupiscence is the material element (*Summa Theologiae* 1:2.82.3). See also Bonaventure, *Breviloquium* 3.5.

⁶⁴ *De volucione* 4 (pp. 160–61).

⁶⁵ *Sermones* 4.54 (n. 27 above, p. 423). For the medieval discussion of original righteousness see Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1998), 158–62.

specifically address the question of the *donum superadditum*, it would be in keeping with his overall view that the gift was initially present, inasmuch as he sees no possibility for merit apart from grace (as we shall see). At any rate, the soul exercised influence over the body's members prior to the fall, just as the soul itself was regulated by God. When the soul failed to regulate the body following the fall, however, the body then ceased to serve it. The result is that the excessive desire accompanying the act of procreation is a venial sin after the fall, even in marriage, though it would have been a mortal sin if not for the satisfaction of Christ the Mediator.⁶⁶

Beyond his rather standard treatment of original sin, Wyclif will offer a more idiosyncratic reading of venial and mortal sin. He argues that the common distinction made between the two is addressed only by prelates in their quest for indulgence money, and thus is not born of any real concern with the cleansing of sin itself. Given that the terminology finds no clear expression in Scripture, the best one can say is that mortal sin is the sin worthy of the second death upon the Judgment Day. Hence only the sin of final impenitence, itself the sin against the Holy Spirit, may properly be called mortal sin. Since all other sins can be pardoned, they should be reckoned venial. But in light of the fact that the wayfarer cannot distinguish with any certainty which sins are venial and which are mortal, precisely because he cannot know whether or not he will die unrepentant, we are better off fleeing from sin altogether.⁶⁷ For no sin can be reckoned mortal if God has decreed that he will forgive it, following a fruitful final repentance. Of course, every sin, no matter how light, is only pardonable depending upon God's willingness to show mercy. Apart from God's mercy, it is by definition worthy of perpetual punishment, since it is a sin against an infinitely great Lord. Wyclif's point is that mortal and venial sin are finally determined by one's status on the Judgment Day — or, more precisely, by whether one finds pardon then or not. In this sense, his understanding of the distinction is wholly proleptic. He can thus admit that there are many among those whose damnation is foreknown who are in a present state of righteousness, while many among those predestined to glory have sinned gravely in their present unrighteousness. Yet the foreknown are never in a state of final persevering grace, nor the predestined in a state of final obstinacy. By this standard, the foreknown always sin far more gravely than the predestined, despite their present state of righteousness. Because God never newly begins to love or hate, one's final status, which is known to God alone, is ultimately determinative of God's attitude throughout.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ *De statu innocencie* 5 (p. 504).

⁶⁷ *Triologus cum Supplemento Triologi* 3.5 (ed. Gotthard Lechler [Oxford, 1869], 144–45).

⁶⁸ *Triologus* 3.6 (pp. 149–50).

Yet, as we have seen, God's attitude is itself conditioned by his eternal knowledge of the free human response to grace and righteousness.

God's Will and Human Sin

Here we reach the related question of God's participation in human sinful acts. We might again offer a bit of background. For Anselm, God is active in good works with his own goodness alone as their source. It is the fault of human beings when their actions are evil, for God created the will and endowed it with freedom of choice, bestowing uprightness upon it, so that it might will justice only. Hence God is involved in good works, both because their existence is good and their righteousness is good, while he is involved in evil works only to the extent that they have goodness simply through their being. Yet God is not responsible for the evil of those works, for their evil amounts to the lack of requisite justice, and as a mere privation it is thus non-existent.⁶⁹ Hugh of Saint Victor argued that evil people are judged according to their will, because what they will is contrary to the will of God; they are evil not because they can frustrate God's will, but in willing to resist it. Hence, even when they will what God wills they are not good, because they do not will it for the right reason. Their evil stems not from doing something contrary to his will, but rather from their loving something contrary to his love.⁷⁰

Thomas Bradwardine had adopted a line that troubled his contemporaries, a line that Wyclif took pains to avoid. For Bradwardine, all actions do in fact proceed from God, but only human intention can make them evil. God never wills sin simply (*simpliciter*), but only in a relative fashion (*secundum quid*). Yet there can be no talk of even passive permission, since God performs the substance of the sinful act. God does not wait passively, therefore, to see how a person will make use his freedom. And, while Oberman concludes that Bradwardine had not made God the author of evil, he admits that Bradwardine's opponents will find scant reason to trust his orthodoxy in light of his reinterpretation of God's permitting will.⁷¹ Dolnikowski has similarly found that Bradwardine's understanding of God, as the cause of all that exists and does not exist, leads him to conclude that God must also be the cause of sin, thus leaving him open to the charge of heterodoxy.⁷²

⁶⁹ *De concordia* 3.14 (n. 16 above, pp. 287–88, at 288): "Deus igitur habet in bonis quidem quod bona sunt per essentiam, et quod bona sunt per iustitiam; in malis vero solummodo quod bona sunt per essentiam, non quod mala sunt per absentiam debitae iustitiae, quae non est aliquid."

⁷⁰ *De sacramentis* 1.4.15 (PL 176:240–41).

⁷¹ Oberman, *Archbishop Thomas Bradwardine* (n. 36 above), 129–33.

⁷² Dolnikowski, *A View of Time and a Vision of Eternity* (n. 37 above), 201.

In his preservation of human freedom, Wyclif must emphasize the intentional, and thus free, aspect of sinful actions. In fact, he takes great pains to avoid what he too regards as Bradwardine's tendency to portray God as compelling men to sin.⁷³ Every sinner apostatizes first because of his own pride. As with leprosy, says Wyclif, the soul swells with pride and becomes dislocated from its proper place, thus falling away from the natural influence of the first light. And just as when some medium is indisposed by opacity, so that it does not receive the influx of light and thus grows dark, it is only natural that the soul, which stands in need of God in order to reign over the body, would lose control of the body when it recedes from God through pride.⁷⁴ Actual sin on the part of a rational creature is due to a deformity of the created will with respect to the divine will. Thus someone sins actually when he wills something with no regard to whether it pleases God. It is the deformity of the will (*deformitas voluntatis*), therefore, and not the extrinsic act, that is the principle of actual sin. Indeed, there is no sin in such acts unless there is a deformity of the will, which is itself the supreme power of the soul, and the principle by which rectitude is preserved. Intention is the key: just because a creature wills what God wills does not mean that the creature wills meritoriously, or vice versa. God may issue a command to someone in such a way that, in seeking to carry out the command, the person wills to do what God does not in fact will to occur. When Abraham set out to sacrifice Isaac, he fully intended to do what God did not really want, though he did so meritoriously. Conversely, Judas willed that Christ should die, which was also the will of the Trinity. Thus God attends more to the rectitude of the intention and the manner of procedure than to the substance of the work itself. In this vein, Wyclif points out how it is said in common parlance that God is a rewarder of adverbs, more concerned that things be done well than that an objectively good thing be done — *bene agatur* rather than *bonum de genere*.⁷⁵

Some otherwise heinous acts, such as homicide, may be justifiable or excusable on account of ignorance. In fact, most acts are neither just nor unjust unless they correspond to the justice or injustice that abides in the supreme power of the rational creature, namely his will.⁷⁶ To will X may be good in one case and not in another. For instance, willing to be equal with God was fitting for Christ (Phil. 2:7) and yet not for Lucifer.⁷⁷ In every unjust act there is a certain deformity or sin over and above the very act

⁷³ *De veritate sacrae scripturae* 2.16 (ed. Rudolf Boddensieg, 3 vols. [London, 1905–7], 8).

⁷⁴ *De statu innocencie* 2 (n. 62 above, p. 488).

⁷⁵ *De volucione* 1 (n. 12 above, pp. 120–21).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 8 (p. 204).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* (p. 205).

itself. And so, while God necessitates all such acts inasmuch as they are good in themselves, he does not make the sin, nor does he necessitate anyone to sin. This means that extrinsic acts such as killing and illicit sexual intercourse are only morally evil on account of the evil will of the human agent; take away the malice and there is no moral evil. That is because human free choice pertains to the intellectual aspect of the act, rather than the merely corporeal. In this sense, the human being is always responsible for the sinful character of the action, seeing as its character is determined by his own attitude when performing it.⁷⁸

As for the nature of sin itself, Wyclif states that God creates only beings whose eternal exemplars he has within his own essence. But as sin is a defect, he does not make it; hence sin has no eternal being in God.⁷⁹ Although God wills what follows from sin, he does not will that someone would sin; this, despite the fact that he wills the act itself, though not insofar as it is sinful. Wyclif bases his own position on Grosseteste's, namely that sin has a double being, broadly speaking. The first is simply the aspect of privation, the *deesse*, such that the sinful act cannot be derived from the principle of the good. In this sense, a good God cannot will sin. Yet the being of sin is a good insofar as something good proceeds from it. A good God could not permit sin to occur unless something good would come from it, and no sin can occur unless it be punished by a just Lord. And so it is necessary that punishment is good, since it is just, thereby beautifying the universe.⁸⁰ While God may allow sin, therefore, he does not necessitate anyone to sin. Even though he knows that a person will sin, he does not ordain it. For God cannot will that a person sin, or approve someone's sin, unless that sin has a being of the second sort, namely that it yields some advantage. Thus, while God neither wills nor necessitates someone's sin, it is true that God wills that person's action with respect to sin's second mode of being, in such a way that it profits the created universe by its just punishment.⁸¹ Wyclif recalls how he had come under suspicion of heresy for apparently making God the author of sin;⁸² but he declares that he would never

⁷⁸ *De dominio divino* 1.14 (n. 40 above, p. 117): "ut omnes actus extrinseci, sicut occidere, procreare, et actus ceteri sunt solum mali moraliter propter maliciam voluntatis; quia, ablata illa malicia, non restat quid moraliter foret malum; cum libertas arbitrii non primo residet in natura corporea, sed solum in natura intellectuali."

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* (p. 125).

⁸⁰ *Opus evangelicum* 2.11 (n. 14 above, 1:280–83). Cf. Grosseteste, *Deus est* (*De confessione* 2.2).

⁸¹ *De statu innocencie* 9 (pp. 518–20).

⁸² Among the forty-five Wycliffite errors condemned at the Council of Constance was that all things happen by absolute necessity (no. 27: "Omnia de necessitate absoluta eveniunt"). Cf. *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, ed. Heinrich Denzinger, 36th ed. (Rome, 1976), 1177. In fact, Wyclif specifically denied that all things happen by absolute necessity and was

dare say that just because God eternally knows that some person will sin, God eternally ordains that the person sin. The evil of punishment was ordained by God before the creation of the world, but its cause, the evil of guilt that originates with the peccable creature. Wyclif can say that, while the evil of punishment does subsist as an eternal idea in God, the evil of guilt (as pure privation) does not.⁸³

No one ever does God's will by sinning, therefore, inasmuch as they act contrary to the divine precept. Yet, in keeping with God's magnificence, it is fitting that he see his own eternal will fulfilled; and it is indeed fulfilled, so long as he punishes a person mercifully. That is why we do not say a person fulfills the will of God insofar as he sins, but rather that he resists God's will, even though, by God's own omnipotence, God's will is done. Nor is a person any less culpable if his own sin leads to the fulfillment of God's will. God, who is by definition just, wills only what is just when he wills that punishment follow upon injustice. Thus, when speaking of the first reality of sin, namely guilt, Wyclif insists that it is contrary to God's good pleasure, since God does not will it, even though God wills the rational truths that follow from that sin.⁸⁴ Because God can be said to authorize evil acts only with regard to their substance or nature but not with regard to their deformity, he remains inculpable.⁸⁵ He does not ordain evil directly, therefore, but only indirectly. And he rectifies evil through the punishment he metes out in the beauty of his justice.⁸⁶ It is in this way that sin brings about many good things *per accidens* and thereby profits people by the Savior's grace.⁸⁷

As to why God did not prohibit sin, since he was capable of doing so, Wyclif argues that it is a greater good for the human race that a rational creature be permitted to sin. Nor is it fitting for divine goodness entirely to prevent a rational creature from sinning. As noted, God created humankind righteous, with free will, and never compels the will to do anything. Wyclif

adamant in maintaining the distinction between the absolute and the hypothetical. See above: *De universalibus* 14 (n. 12 above, p. 349).

⁸³ *Opus evangelicum* 2.54 (1:445–46, at 446): “et ita malum pene habet ideam eternam in Deo sed non taliter malum culpe. . . . Et patet quodammodo unde est malum, qua malum pene est a Deo et malum culpe est a creatura peccabili, licet ordinancia Dei eterna de illo malo precesserit.”

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.56 (1:451–52, at 451): “Et ita non dicimus quod homo in quantum peccat facit vel implet Domini voluntatem sed Dei voluntati resistit, non sic tamen quin ex Dei omnipotencia voluntas Domini impleatur.” *Ibid.* (p. 452): “ideo loquendo de esse primo peccati vel falsitatis contra Dei beneplacitum ipsum non est a Deo volitum, licet Deus velit veritates racionales que sequuntur.”

⁸⁵ *De volucione* 18 (p. 278).

⁸⁶ *Opus evangelicum* 4.4 (2:297).

⁸⁷ *De statu innocencie* 9 (n. 62 above, p. 521).

likens the situation to a pious lord saying to his subject: "I will protect you from all evils and dangers that might befall you, and will advise you that, under penalty of damnation, you must commit no such crimes. What is more, I will give you my gracious assistance so that your adversaries cannot harm you, unless you first will to consent. By the condition of your freedom I am making you so noble and excellent that you will have in your free power whatever you want, be it good or evil. And I will cooperate with you in what is positive, but never force you to do anything."⁸⁸ God leaves people free to sin and does not withdraw his conserving grace, thereby placing it in their free power to do what they like. No one, therefore, may object that he is unable to abstain from sin, for that is impossible.⁸⁹ Appealing to Augustine's refutation of the Pelagian bishop, Julian of Eclanum, Wyclif argues that, as God is just, so he does not damn anyone except on account of his or her own evil deeds. In fact, it is impossible for God to damn the innocent.⁹⁰ God never acts against his own good and just nature.

THE MEANS TO DIVINE ACCEPTANCE

The Medieval Debates

The medieval debates about the role of the habit of grace and the means to achieve divine acceptance take as their starting point Distinction 17 in the first book of Peter Lombard's *Sententiae*. Here the Lombard had said that the Holy Spirit, who is the mutual love of the Father and the Son, is himself the charity within us by which we love God and neighbor. That most intimate connection he drew between divine and human love actually proved to be quite controversial.⁹¹ The question for later theologians, as they commented upon the *Sentences*, concerned the role of the habit of grace and whether or not possession of the habit is necessary if a person is to become acceptable in God's sight. As one might expect, the issue of the habit is also integrally connected to the whole issue of merit. To get a better

⁸⁸ *De dominio divino* 1.14 (pp. 121–22).

⁸⁹ *De volucione* 18 (n. 12 above, p. 285): "tam liber tamen est, et tam graciosus quod a volente peccare non subtrahit gratiam conservandi, ponens in sua potestate libera non sic agere, quando velit. Et si obiciunt quod non possunt abstinere, certum est quod hoc est impossibile."

⁹⁰ *De statu innocencie* 2 (p. 480): "non igitur possibile quod Deus dampnet innocentem, sicut dicit Augustinus III contra Iulianum." Cf. Augustine, *Contra Iulianum* 3.18 (PL 44:721): "Bonus est Deus, justus est Deus: potest aliquos sine bonis meritis liberare, quia bonus est; non potest quemquam sine malis meritis damnare, quia justus est."

⁹¹ *Sententiae* 1.17.1 (p. 142). For a thorough study see Aage Rydstrom-Poulsen, *The Gracious God: Gratia in Augustine and the Twelfth Century* (Copenhagen, 2002), 380–466; and also Philipp W. Rosemann, *Peter Lombard* (Oxford, 2004), 85–90.

picture of Wyclif's position, it will be useful to look at the central points of controversy in the fourteenth century.

By the beginning of the fourteenth century, the question of the habit of grace was tied up with the discussion of God's absolute and ordained power, the *potentia Dei absoluta* and *potentia Dei ordinata*. Thus when Scotus commented upon Distinction 17 he concluded that, while it is true *de potentia Dei ordinata* that the human will cannot perform a meritorious act unless informed by charity, this is not necessary *de potentia Dei absoluta*. This is true, says Scotus, because God first predestined the soul before he willed it to have the habit of charity. He likens the situation to a physician first willing the health of the patient before giving him the medicine that will induce health. But just as the physician can cure the patient by some other means, so God could accept the soul unto beatitude without the habit of charity. Hence, while the habit is needed for a human act of the will to be meritorious, this is only the case *de potentia Dei ordinata*, not *de potentia Dei absoluta*.⁹²

In 1324 William of Ockham was called to Avignon to defend a list of censured articles drawn up by a papal commission, the first of which states that the habit of charity is not required to perform a meritorious act, since God by his grace can accept a good movement of the will elicited from a human being's natural capacities, and such an act would thus be reckoned meritorious through God's free act of acceptance.⁹³ Article four censures the proposition that through his absolute power God can forgive guilt and punishment apart from the infusion of grace.⁹⁴ In point of fact, Ockham does say that human beings can act upon their own natural faculties (*ex puris naturalibus*) apart from grace and so perform works that God will deem suit-

⁹² *Lectura in librum primum Sententiarum* 1.17.1 (*Opera Omnia* 17, ed. C. Balic [Vatican City, 1966], 212): "Ulterius est sciendum quod, licet de potentia ordinata voluntas non habeat actum meritorium nisi informatur caritate, potest tamen de potentia Dei absoluta, quia prius praedestinavit ipsam animam quam ipsam habere habitum caritatis."

⁹³ Article 1 (Auguste Pelzer, "Les 51 articles de Guillaume Occam censurés, en Avignon, en 1326," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 18 [1922]: 240–70, at 250): "Reprobando communem modum, quo ponuntur quod habitus caritatis requiritur ad actum meritorium dicit sic: Istud reputo falsum simpliciter, quia bonum motum voluntatis ex puris naturalibus elicatum potest deus acceptare de gratia sua, et per consequens talis actus gratuita dei acceptatione erit meritorius. Ergo ad hoc quod talis actus sit meritorius, non requiritur talis habitus."

⁹⁴ Article 4 (Pelzer, "Les 51 articles," 253): "Item mouendo dubium vtrum deus potest remittere culpam sine collacione gratie *Respondet* sic: dico intendo per gratiam caritatem, quia pono quod sint idem omnino, licet sint hic diuersa nomina et diuersi conceptus. Deus de sua potentia absoluta potest remittere culpam sine collatione gratie. Cuius ratio est, quia quemcumque potest acceptare tanquam dignum vita eterna sine omni gratia inherente. Quare potest remittere culpam et penam sine omni infusione gratie."

able enough to reward with the infusion of the grace. In other words, human beings are naturally capable of earning a half-merit (*meritum de congruo*), which is then followed by the infusion of grace necessary to perform the fully meritorious acts that lead to salvation (*meritum de condigno*). Ockham never claims, however, that a human being could earn his own salvation apart from the grace of God, only that he could do his best (*facere quod in se*), and in that way prepare himself to accept God's saving grace when offered. While the human being can love God above all things by relying upon his own right reason, he still cannot earn condign merit apart from charity.⁹⁵ By his absolute power, God is under no obligation to reward these acts of human effort, but he has pledged to do so within the presently constituted order. As such, the natural act of detesting sin is reckoned sufficient to expel guilt and so merit the infusion of grace. Indeed, *de potentia Dei ordinata*, God cannot refuse man this grace.⁹⁶ When charged with Pelagianism, Ockham rightly pointed out that Pelagius's error was in thinking that a human being can eradicate all sin, and thereby merit eternal life by relying solely upon his own natural capacities, thus apart from infused grace.⁹⁷ This was never Ockham's position; he only claimed that *de potentia Dei absoluta*, a human being could be saved without created charity, for the very good reason that God can accomplish immediately whatever he chooses to accomplish through secondary causes, and so is free to dispense with the secondary cause of created charity.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, Ockham affirms the orthodox teaching, as he argues that no one will ever be saved, according to the laws presently ordained by God, without created grace.⁹⁹ Hence he points out

⁹⁵ *Quaestiones Varias* 6.11 (*Opera Theologica* 8, ed. G. Etzkorn, F. Kelley, and J. Wey [St. Bonaventure NY, 1984], 320): "Ad argumentum dico aliquis de congruo potest mereri gratiam ex puris naturalibus sicut aliquis diligens Deum super omnia naturaliter secundum rectam rationem, at alias circumstantias requistas ad actum meritorium, meretur primam infusionem caritas. Sed de condigno non potest aliquis mereri gratiam et gloriam sine caritate."

⁹⁶ *Reportatio* 4.10–11 (*Opera Theologica* 7, ed. R. Wood and G. Gál [St. Bonaventure NY, 1984], 233): "Si quaeras an ille actus detestandi sufficiat ad expulsionem culpae et infusionem gratie, respondeo quod iste actus solus est sufficiens [ad] meritum de congruo. Nam habito isto actu Deus statim infundit gratiam, et forte de potentia dei ordinata non potest non infundere."

⁹⁷ *Quaestio* 6.11 (p. 320): "Ad errorem Pelagii dico quod ipse posuit quod aliquis ex puris naturalibus potest vitare omne peccatum, et actuale et originale, mereri vitam aeternam de condigno, et in hoc erravit."

⁹⁸ *Quodlibeta Septem* 6.1 (*Opera Theologica* 9, ed. J. Wey [St. Bonaventure NY, 1980], 587): "Circa secundum articulum dico primo quod homo potest salvari sine caritate creata de potentia Dei absoluta. Haec conclusio probatur primo sic: quidquid Deus potest facere mediante causa secunda in genere causae efficientis vel finis, potest immediate per se."

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* (p. 588): "Secundo dico quod numquam salvabitur homo nec salvari poterit, nec umquam eliciet vel elicere poterit actum meritorium secundum leges a Deo nunc ordinatas sine gratia creata. Et hoc teneo propter Scripturam Sacram et dicta Sanctorum."

that Pelagius was a heretic precisely because he claimed that the infusion of grace is not required to attain eternal life *de facto*, that is, according to the presently constituted order. Ockham simply says that this could have been the case had God so established it through his absolute power.¹⁰⁰ Thus, like Scotus before him, Ockham argued that God could have chosen to save human beings apart from the *habitus gratiae*, even as he maintained that God has not chosen this course. It is noteworthy, though, that Durandus of St. Pourçain, who was on that Avignon commission, held a position much like Scotus's and Ockham's in denying the absolute necessity of the habit of grace.¹⁰¹ We should also remember that the ensuing controversy turned not on the absolute/ordained power dialectic as such, but on its specific application to the soteriological process. To speak about the habit of grace was to speak about the most intimate aspect of the relationship between God and man, about the love and friendship that would arise out of divine forgiveness and human repentance.

One need not have held an Ockhamist position on merit and innate human capacities to believe that the habit of grace could be dispensed with, at least in principle. Even the staunch anti-Pelagian, Gregory of Rimini, argued that since God can do immediately, via his absolute power, what he does by way of secondary causes under his ordained law, he can, therefore, save people without created grace. Indeed, the gift of grace is separable from the Holy Spirit, which God is free to give. And, as the Spirit and the habit are separable, there is no reason why the Spirit, who is uncreated grace, cannot come on his own apart from created grace.¹⁰² For Gregory thought grace could be understood either as an intrinsic mode (i.e., as a created habit informing the soul) or as something extrinsic by which the divine will accepts the soul unto eternal life. The first mode is contingent and is a secondary cause of divine acceptance, which God is free to forego,

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. (pp. 588–89): “Respondeo quod non, quia Pelagius posuit quod de facto non requiritur gratia ad vitam aeternam habendam sed quod actus ex puris naturalibus elicited est meritorius vitae aeternae de condigno. Ego autem pono quod solum est meritorius per potentiam Dei absolutam acceptantem.”

¹⁰¹ Girard Etzkorn, “Walter Chatton and the Controversy on the Absolute Necessity of Grace,” *Franciscan Studies* 37 (1977): 32–65, at 32 n. 2: “Ad esse Deo gratum vel charum non sequitur necessario necessitate absoluta quod homo sit quandoque habiturus gratiam vel charitatem habitualement sibi formaliter inherentem, quia amare vel diligere aliquem nihil aliud est quam velle ei bonum.”

¹⁰² *Sententiae* 1.17.1.2, as quoted in Gordon Leff, *Gregory of Rimini: Tradition and Innovation in Fourteenth Century Thought* (Manchester, 1961), 190: “Antecedens probatur, quia cum deus possit immediate in omnem effectum cuiuscumque agentis secundi, potuerit deus concurrens cum voluntate ad producendum omnino similem dilectionem ei que elicitur mediante charitate; immo eandem numero que fuisset elicita mediante charitate, si voluntas fuisset informata charitate.”

while the second refers to the Holy Spirit, who is an uncreated gift sufficient for salvation apart from the created habit.¹⁰³ All of this leads Oberman to observe that Gregory's denial of the ontological necessity of the habit of grace *de potentia Dei absoluta* marked a significant departure from earlier medieval Augustinianism, although Gregory does place great emphasis on the *auxilium speciale*.¹⁰⁴

As early as 1317, the Franciscan Peter Aureol had argued that the habit of grace is necessary for divine acceptance and salvation, since one cannot simultaneously be a sinner and acceptable to God. And this is true, says Aureol, even *de potentia Dei absoluta*. By the very nature of things (*ex natura rei*), the habit is necessary for making man acceptable to God. Since God cannot change, the change must take place in the creature; the created form must be the object of divine acceptance. Thus the soul must be made pleasing (*gratificatur*) if it is to become beloved or acceptable.¹⁰⁵ In this vein, Aureol makes his case based upon the principle of denomination, whereby adjectives are derived from the presence of accidental qualities.¹⁰⁶ It is the quality of whiteness that makes a thing white, and blackness black. So then, if it is the nature of things that iniquity is hateful to God, and that the iniquitous person is hated, it only stands to reason that the created form of charity makes the person lovable. Thus to be *carus Deo* one must have *caritas*.¹⁰⁷ For as God is supremely rational, he would not love someone for no reason, and as a loving God he seeks to return the love he finds in his crea-

¹⁰³ *Sententiae* 1.17.1.2, as quoted in Alister McGrath, "'Augustinianism?' A Critical Assessment of the So-called 'Medieval Augustinian Tradition' on Justification," *Augustiniana* 31 (1981): 260: "dico quod aliquis potest dici gratus dupliciter; uno modo denominatio intrinseca, ab habitu scilicet gratiae informantem animam eius; alio modo denominatio extrinseca, a voluntate divina acceptante ipsam ad vitam aeternam nisi postea ipse peccaverit."

¹⁰⁴ Heiko Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology* (Durham NC, 1983), 203–5.

¹⁰⁵ Ockham recounts Aureol's position in his own *Ordinatio* 1.17.1 (*Opera Theologica* 3, ed. G. Etzkorn [St. Bonaventure NY, 1977], 441): "Ad istam quaestionem est una opinio quod ad hoc quod anima sit grata Deo, cara et accepta, necessario requiritur aliqua talis forma creata et absoluta, ita quod de potentia Dei absoluta sine tali forma non potest esse Deo cara. . . . 'Prima est quod est aliqua forma creata ex natura rei et de necessitate cadit sub Dei complacentia, et per cuius existentiam in anima, ipsa gratificatur et fit Deo accepta et dilecta ac cara, quod quidem potest multipliciter declarari.'" See also Etzkorn, "Walter Chatton," 36–37; and William Courtenay, *Capacity and Volition: A History of the Distinction of Absolute and Ordained Power* (Bergamo, 1990), 123.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Aristotle, *Categoriae* 1:1a

¹⁰⁷ Ockham, *Ordinatio* 1.17.1 (p. 442): "Sicut si albedo dat esse album ex natura rei, nigredo ex natura rei dat esse nigrum. Igitur si iniquitas ex natura rei est odibilis Deo et dat esse oditum, non apparet cur non sit possibilis aliqua forma creata sibi opposita quae det formaliter ex natura rei esse dilectum vel acceptum."

tures.¹⁰⁸ Aureol's formulation would clearly conflict with Ockham's argument that God is not dependent upon any intervening form in the salvific process. For as God can annihilate whatever he creates, and so annihilate the soul, he can annihilate all accidental forms inhering in the soul, including grace and charity.¹⁰⁹ We have just seen how Aureol argued that God's love and acceptance cannot precede the infused form, since it is the form itself that makes the person lovable. And yet Ockham actually found Aureol's position to be the one that rings of Pelagianism, inasmuch as this position seems to imply that some supernatural created form could determine God's act of salvation, while in fact it is a wholly gracious and free act.¹¹⁰

Fellow Franciscan Walter Chatton also rejected Ockham's position, but not because he objected to the dialectic of God's absolute and ordained power. He was more concerned with the implications of Ockham's position *de facto* than *de potentia absoluta*. For he thinks that his position leads to a *de facto* denial of the need for grace, thereby causing him to lapse into Pelagianism. In that sense, Chatton's position is very similar to that of the Avignon commission.¹¹¹ In his *Reportatio*, Chatton argues that, as no one can merit by his own natural faculties (*ex puris naturalibus*), so charity must be necessary. For he reckons it a contradiction to assert that sin could be removed, or that a sinner become a non-sinner, apart from the reception of some habit. This is because sin formally includes the privation of an infused habit, and so cannot be removed except through the infusion of that habit.¹¹² In his *Lectura*, Chatton sums up the Ockhamist position to the effect that infused charity is not in itself laudable; that the act elicited by one's own natural faculties would be *de facto* more laudable than the one infused with charity; and that an act of the will need not proceed from an infused habit to be meritorious, for it need only be accepted immediately by

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. (p. 443): "Praeterea, Deus rationabilissimus dilector est, qui non amat absque rationali inductivo. Sed dilectio et amor, secundum rectam rationem, merentur redamtionem."

¹⁰⁹ Etzkorn, "Walter Chatton," 36–37.

¹¹⁰ Ockham, *Ordinatio* 1.17.1 (p. 456): "Et ita ista opinio maxime recidit ab errore Pelagii, qui ponit Deum sic posse necessitari et non gratuitam et liberalem Dei acceptionem esse necessariam cuicumque." See also Rega Wood, "Ockham's Repudiation of Pelagianism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham* ed. Paul Vincent Spade (Cambridge, 1999), 355–58.

¹¹¹ Etzkorn, "Walter Chatton," 37.

¹¹² *Reportatio* 1.17.1 (ed. Joseph C. Wey and Girard J. Etzkorn [Toronto, 2002], 43): "Et hoc probo, videlicet quod sit contradictio quod peccatum auferatur et quod de peccatore fiat non-peccator sine hoc quod detur habitus aliquis. Peccatum formaliter includit privationem habitus infusi, ergo non tollitur sine infusione habitus. Consequentia patet, quia privatio non tollitur nisi per-habitu."

God.¹¹³ As far as Chatton is concerned, however, charity (itself the *gratia gratum faciens*) is a habitual love for God. It is a gift received from God alone, which is created and infused into the soul and inhering therein as its form. This position, he says, is based on the determination of the Church and the authority of Scripture and the saints.¹¹⁴ The wayfarer needs to possess the form of charity, so that he might be made habitually just and thus merit eternal life according to the divine promise.¹¹⁵ Of course, Ockham's position was totally unacceptable to Bradwardine, who maintained that the habit of grace is necessary, not only for a meritorious deed, but even for one that is simply good. The efficient cause of every good work is the freely infused habit of grace.¹¹⁶

Wyclif on Divine Acceptance

When Wyclif defines grace in his 1374 *De dominio divino*, he breaks it down into the two main categories of uncreated and created. The former can be taken in three ways: essentially, for the divine essence itself; personally, for the Holy Spirit; and relationally, for any divine volition by which God wills to do good for the creature. These are all infinite and coeternal with God. Created grace can also be taken in three ways: materially, for whatever gift from God is freely given; more strictly, for the supernatural habits, such as the theological and moral virtues; and lastly, for that good quality by which the creature is formally acceptable to God. This last segment of created grace can itself be broken down into three subsections. The first is the prevenient grace by which every creature is caused and conserved in its existence by God; hence this grace can coexist with mortal sin,

¹¹³ *Lectura* 1.17.1 (ed. Etzkorn, "Walter Chatton" [n. 101 above], 40): "Probatio: quia ponere videntur quod caritas infusa non sit de se laudibilis. . . . Secundo, quia ponere videntur quod actus elicited ex puris naturalibus est de facto laudibilior quam caritas infusa. . . . Tertio, quia aliqua argumenta eorum videntur mihi probare quod actus voluntatis non habeat ab habitu infuso quocumque modo quod sit meritorius, sed solum ex hoc quod ipse actus immediate acceptatur a Deo."

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* (Etzkorn, "Walter Chatton," 44): "scilicet [quod] caritas, quae est gratia gratum faciens, est quoddam amor habitualis Dei et est quoddam donum a solo Deo creatum et infusam animae sibi inhaerens sicut forma eius."

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* (Etzkorn, "Walter Chatton," 47–48): "Dicendum igitur quod homo viator indiget caritate infusa sibi inhaerente. Primo ut sit iustus habitualiter per formam suam iustitia supernaturali propter quam ex divina promissione sibi debeatur vita aeterna, si in ea finaliter perseveret."

¹¹⁶ Oberman, *Archbishop Thomas Bradwardine* (n. 36 above), 142–43, 178. Cf. *De causa Dei* 1.40 (n. 35 above, p. 364b): "Post haec autem gratia Dei mecum ostendet, vt spero, quod ipsa est causa efficiens proprie cuiuslibet actus boni; gratia scilicet gratis data, quae est habitus animae a Deo gratis infusus."

as it does among the damned whom God accepts and loves insofar as he conserves them in existence. The second is the sanctifying grace (*gratia gratum faciens*), which is strictly opposed to mortal sin. It can increase and decrease, and even be lost and recovered. And the third is the grace of predestination, which divides the sons of heaven and hell. Although it can never be lost, it can abide with mortal sin, since it does not formally justify the wayfarer.¹¹⁷

Divine grace and the eternal divine will coincide in God's acceptance of human beings. Just as the Word of God is full of all the rational principles of created things, so it is full of every eternal volition by which God wills to do the good for his creatures in due time. Such divine volitions are themselves graces, says Wyclif, drawing upon Grosseteste.¹¹⁸ And since none of God's volitions can be frustrated, it follows that each volition of God has one correlative created grace. Christ the Word is filled with grace, and from his fullness we receive grace. He is the one through whom all things were made (John 1:14), and so must be full of that third category of uncreated grace, precisely because he is filled with that eternal good volition that benefits creatures. As it is from the fullness of that uncreated grace that we receive created grace, so a person is formally acceptable to God because God eternally willed such a great good for that person. And it is because uncreated grace issues forth in a correlative created grace that Wyclif concludes that even by his absolute power God cannot accept a creature into glory, unless eternal grace inheres within him contingently and unless created grace is infused into him so that he might become formally pleasing to God.¹¹⁹

Here Wyclif will make it clear that the habit of grace is necessary for divine acceptance even *de potentia Dei absoluta*. In fact, he makes a case for the necessity of the habit that is quite similar to Peter Aureol's position: as charity is an absolute quality, no one can be dear to God (*carus Deo*) without charity (*sine caritate*), any more than something can be white without whiteness.¹²⁰ As we have noted, this is an instance of denomination, whereby

¹¹⁷ *De dominio divino* 3.5 (n. 40 above, pp. 236–37).

¹¹⁸ Wyclif's discussion of grace here in *De dominio divino* is deeply indebted to Robert Grosseteste's *Dictum* 134 (*De gracia et iustificatione hominis*) (MS Bodley 798 [SC 2656], fols. 108^r–108^v). This text is transcribed in *The Electronic Grosseteste* (www.grosseteste.com). Cf. fol. 108^v^a: "Omne autem bonum quod in nobis operatur Dei bona voluntas, ut dictum est, dicitur gracia data."

¹¹⁹ *De dominio divino* 3.5 (p. 238): "ut, si quaeritur causa qua nunc sum formaliter sic gratus Deo, dicitur quod eterna Dei volicio est in causa, qua eternaliter michi voluit tantum bonum. . . . Ex quibus formaliter sequitur quod Deus de potencia absoluta non potest acceptare creaturam ad gloriam, nisi sibi insit eterna gracia contingenter, et infundatur in creatura beata creata gracia secundum quam formaliter sit sic grata."

¹²⁰ Ockham had recounted Aureol's position succinctly in his own *Ordinatio* 1.17.1 (n. 105 above, p. 440).

the applicable adjective is derived from the presence of an inherent accident, as someone is white from whiteness or wise from wisdom. For Wyclif, a person is said to be pleasing (*gratificatus*) because the accident of created grace is present; that is the very thing that makes the person pleasing to God (*gratus Deo*). It makes no sense, therefore, to say that someone can be acceptable to God apart from grace. What is more, this created grace cannot exist on its own (*per se*). Precisely because it is an accident, Wyclif believes it to be inseparable from the subject in which it inheres (consider his metaphysical objections to transubstantiation¹²¹). To separate the accidental quality of grace from its subject — the very grace that transforms the person from hated to loved — is to destroy the relationship forged by God's eternal grace of good will. Such defective metaphysics, Wyclif laments, led Pelagius and his followers into error. For they claim that a person can merit without created grace, such that, while one would receive grace in order to make meriting easier, it is still not required absolutely. But Wyclif insists that no one can merit anything unless God, by his eternal grace, makes him acceptable; and this grace naturally precedes any merit on the part of the creature.¹²² Wyclif's point is clear: people cannot be made pleasing by God (*gratificari*) except by means of grace inhering within them accidentally. Only by means of this accidentally inherent disposition does the creature become formally acceptable to God.¹²³

¹²¹ Wyclif rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation on the metaphysical grounds that it is impossible for accidents (i.e., those of the bread) to subsist apart from their proper subject. Cf. Sermones 3.25 (p. 193): "Et hec ignorancia est radix tocius erroris in materia de quiditate eukaristie, ut dicunt quod ipsa est accidens vel accidentia sine subiecto et sic vere virtute sue benedicionis panis quem consecrant in nichil convertitur."

¹²² *De dominio divino* 3.5 (p. 239): "Et secunda pars patet ex hoc quod omnis talis [creata] gracia cum veritati correspondeat in effectu, oportet quod gratificatus sit denominatus accidentaliter gratus Deo; et illa denominacio accidentalis est gracia quam rectiloqui posuerunt. Et patet quam monstruose sapiunt qui ponunt gratiam huiusmodi rem tante substance quod poterit per se esse; quia idem esset hoc ponere et ponere quod creatura gratificabilis aliquando non sit, cum hoc tamen quod tunc sit grata accidentaliter Deo; hoc enim est gracia subiectiva. Et in istum errorem grossum propter defectum metaphisice credo Pelagium cum suis complicitibus incidisse: posuit enim hominem posse mereri sine creata gracia. . . . Sed sententia apostoli est luculenter fundabilis, quod nemo potest mereri aliquid nisi Deus ex eterna gracia faciat gratum, ex qua gratitudine vel gracia naturaliter previe requisita precedit quodcunque meritum creature."

¹²³ *Ibid.* (p. 240): "Quocontra apostolus, Augustinus, at alii viderunt quod nec potest creatura inherens substance per se esse, nec homo vel angelus gratificari a Deo, nisi mediante gracia eis accidentaliter inherente; cum non possunt nisi accidentaliter a Deo acceptari; nec talis res, quam fingunt superadditam, per se sufficeret, nisi ponendo dispositionem accidentaliter inherentem ex Dei gracia secundum quam creatura est formaliter sic accepta."

In his 1382/83 *Dialogus*, Wyclif continues to equate grace with divine acceptance, remaining adamant that one cannot be acceptable to God without grace. For grace, as he again points out, has to do with being pleasing (*gratus*) to God. Once more, he attacks the theologians who think that grace is a spiritual quality that can exist on its own and in that way be separated from the act of divine acceptance, as though it were not absolutely necessary. Rather, says Wyclif, on God's part his acceptance is called grace, while on the creature's part grace is received passively. Thus it is by divine acceptance that all the predestined receive the grace by which they are finally pleasing to God. That is the grace of predestination, or the charity of final perseverance, which cannot be lost. Hence the predestined will not ultimately fall away from such grace or charity, while the foreknown are unable to abide in it perpetually. By equating the grace of final perseverance with God's ultimate acceptance, Wyclif can only reject the opinion of those who say that such grace is not absolutely necessary for salvation. Here again, he says that they have reduced grace to something that merely facilitates merit, and so have fallen into the error of Pelagius. Their other errors, he tells us, include the notion that by God's absolute power the grace of final perseverance can be preserved among the damned right up until the Judgment Day, or even that it could inform a stone, or that its act of informing a person who is disposed to grace could be suspended. Moreover, he attacks the notion that God can induce grace and expel sin in such a way that the two would exist simultaneously. Wyclif is clear that either the grace of predestination or the judgment of final reprobation must fully inhere in someone at any given instant, thereby excluding the other form, and so it is with the grace of present righteousness or unrighteousness. Such forms are mutually exclusive.¹²⁴ Because grace and sin are immediate opposites, it is impossible for a person to exist unless he is either acceptable unto beatitude or has fallen away from it. There is no middle ground; people are in one state or the other. That being said, it is still possible for someone to abide in a state of damnation while fulfilling God's ordinances, since eternal damnation can exist alongside present charity.¹²⁵

Wyclif had actually been arguing against the Pelagians since his 1372/73 *De volucione Dei*, and it seems that his position remained consistent over the

¹²⁴ *Dialogus* 3.7 (n. 67 above, pp. 152–54, at 152): “Ex parte autem Dei est acceptancia, quae potest etiam dici gratia, ex parte creaturae est passiva acceptatio. . . . Nam acceptantia divina et specialiter in humanitate Christi nos omnes praedestinati accepimus gratiam, qua sumus finaliter grati Deo.”

¹²⁵ *De statu innocencie* 2 (n. 62 above, p. 480). Note that Thomas Buckingham had argued ca. 1335 that there is a middle state between sin and grace, a state of natural justice such as the first parents would have had prior to the fall. On this see Robson, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools* (n. 2 above), 43.

years. It would be heretical, he insists here, to claim that, when God does cooperate with the human being, the person's own operation takes the lead, ahead of grace. But this is exactly what contemporary Pelagians were claiming, when they argued that a person can perform good works without needing God's grace. For they held that grace is an absolute quality, which can exist *per se*, such that by God's absolute power, even if not by his ordained law, a person could merit without it.¹²⁶ Wyclif is adamant, however, that even *de potentia Dei absoluta*, God could not permit man to merit eternal life apart from sanctifying grace, namely the *gratia* that makes the wayfarer *gratus Deo*. The fact is that God's grace is indispensable for any meritorious action, inasmuch as God maintains a priority in causality, dignity, and supereminence.¹²⁷

JUSTIFICATION

Wyclif will also speak of the three sorts of grace by which God specifically justifies the impious. The first is prevenient grace; this is the eternal will by which he wills to turn the impious man from evil. The second is the justifying grace by which he wills to convert him to the good. And the third is perfecting grace, as God wills to preserve the will of the converted person in the good. Following Grosseteste, Wyclif argues that the will of God, by which he wills to convert the impious from evil, is indeed a certain kind of grace, but it is not yet justifying. The infusion of the first grace is causally prior to the remission of sins, while the remission of sins is causally prior to the infusion of justifying grace. And while it is true that there can be no remission of sins without the infusion of grace, the remission of sins causally precedes the infusion of the justifying grace that converts the sinner to the good, since he must first turn away from evil before he can be converted. Clearly, therefore, Wyclif does not think that the wayfarer can initiate this process based upon his own natural faculties (*contra* Ockham), for it is prevenient grace that causes the person to turn away from sin, just as the

¹²⁶ *De volucione* 7 (n. 12 above, p. 195): "Et super hoc ponunt quod gracia dei sit qualitas absoluta, potens per se esse, sic quod de dei potencia absoluta, set non de lege, homo posset mereri sine tali."

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* (pp. 195–96): "Set absit a me ista sententia, deus enim de potencia absoluta non posset servare hominem sine speciali gracia nec permittere ipsum mereri vitam eternam sine speciali gracia gratum faciente: et ad omnem talem operationem deus de gracia sua principalis et prius concurrat quam homo, non prioritare quoad consequenciam, set prioritare causalitatis, dignitatis, vel supereminencie." Robson (*Wyclif and the Oxford Schools*, 211) reads this an affirmation of God's ability to save apart from the habit of grace, but it is more likely that the *sententia* Wyclif is rejecting is the position of the Pelagians he has previously outlined. I am grateful for Dr. Jeremy Catto's help with this passage.

removal of coldness is brought about by the induction of heat.¹²⁸ Wyclif continues that, although any of the created graces can be infused by any one of the Divine Persons, there is a certain personal propriety by which they are appropriated according to an order abiding among the Three Persons. The first grace by which a man is converted from sinfulness to justice corresponds to God the Father, from whom are all things. The second grace by which the converted man is formally pleasing to God corresponds to the Son, through whom are all things. And the third, which is the grace of perseverance, corresponds to the Holy Spirit; that is why the sin of final impenitence is called the sin against the Holy Spirit.¹²⁹

Wyclif is consistent throughout his career in affirming the role of human free will in the salvific process, even while safeguarding the superior and indispensable effects of divine power. This should become evident as we discuss his understanding of grace, and then later when we look at his views on predestination. In the 1372/73 *De volucione Dei*, where Wyclif so vigorously supports the divine initiative and the necessity of grace, he insists that God *cannot damn anyone* except on account of his own demerit; he goes on to argue that nobody's nature is so bad that it cannot be prepared by grace and begin to merit beatitude, provided that the person is sufficiently diligent. Again we see that Wyclif is careful to point out the need for the grace of preparation. But, "if a man does his part by not placing an obstacle of resistance," then he can be sure that God will not fail to direct him to his end. People not only can dispose themselves to devotion, he says, but must pray that God will draw them nigh. Do that first, Wyclif counsels in a pastoral vein, and then muses on why God's grace works in its various ways. It is enough, he concludes, to know that God does nothing without proper cause, so that it might work for the good of the whole universe.¹³⁰ Here the talk about disposing oneself means only that people must be open to grace

¹²⁸ *De dominio divino* 3.5 (p. 246–47, at 247): "Primum quidem gracia preveniens est causa declinationis peccati, sicut edducio frigiditatis causatur ex induccione caliditatis." See Grosseteste, *Dictum* 134, fol. 108v^a. Cf. the four-step process found in Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae* 1:2.113.6): infusion of grace, movement of the free will towards God, movement of the free will in recoil from sin, and the resulting remission of guilt.

¹²⁹ *De dominio divino* 3.5 (n. 40 above, p. 248).

¹³⁰ *De volucione* 2 (pp. 131–32): "Sufficitur igitur in talibus, quod credamus deum neminem posse dampnare sine suo demerito exigente; 2°, quod nemo est in materialibus tam incompositus, quin habet ab ipsis et de gracia semper parata, unde possit beatitudinem promereri, si apponat sufficientem diligenciam, sic possibilem; et 3°, si homo faciat quod ad eum pertinet, non ponendo obicem resistendo, non est compossibile deum sibi deficere illustrando, et ad suum [finem] expediencius diregendo. Ideo si sentis te a deo non tractum aut allectum, noscas pro certo te ipsum in causa negacionis. Ideo dispone te ad devocionem, et ora ut traharis; et illud est prius faciendum, quam mustitandum cur deus tam varie seminat gratiam suam. Quia satis est quoad hoc scire quod deus nullum tale facit

and ready to let God work through them, not resisting when he draws them to himself. Divine grace remains a mystery, but it never excludes human free will.

In 1374 Wyclif prioritizes grace even more dramatically, arguing that no one can merit anything without a special grace previously concurring. He quotes Grosseteste to the effect that every good that is in us, whether gratuitous or natural, is there by the grace of God, since no good thing exists unless God wills it. And since, for God, to will is to do, there is no good that he does not bring about. Indeed, it is God who brings about aversion from evil and conversion to good, as well as perseverance in the good. And yet Wyclif insists that God has made sure that the human will is free to respond to grace, like a seed that sprouts by means of the heat of the sun, the moisture of the earth, and its own intrinsic germinative power. Following Grosseteste's analogy, eternal grace assists just as the heat of the sun excites a seed to grow, while infused created grace is like the moisture of the soil, and the intrinsic germinative power corresponds to the free will of the person who merits. And just as no sublunar entity is free to move itself but must be excited to move by the influence of the heavens, so a free creature can accomplish nothing unless previously excited by the divine volition.¹³¹ While Wyclif will not compromise human free will, he is keen to preserve the divine initiative on all fronts, insisting that God's grace, rather than human nature, plays the principal role in the whole action of meriting. We must always consider this action in its entirety, not imagining that one part of merit can be attributed to grace and another to nature alone. God never permits a creature to merit without the concurrence of assisting created grace. For the grace of God not only takes the chief role in any meritorious action, but the creature is even disposed to merit by the grace of God, in a way that it could not achieve by its own natural disposition.¹³²

In a sermon dated ca. 1378–82, Wyclif states that grace can be called the time that God gives to human beings that they might merit salvation; to the extent that this time is wasted, the grace is given in vain. Since people can refuse or reject grace, one may say that grace is given in vain whenever it is not employed to its proper end, as with baptismal grace that is squandered when people do not work for the honor of God and the good of the

sine causa evidenti, ut pulcherimo ordine universitatis sue integrando, et quotlibet aliis causis, de quibus non oportet nos sillogizari.”

¹³¹ *De dominio divino* 3.5 (pp. 240–41). Cf. Grosseteste, *Dictum* 134, fol. 108r^b.

¹³² *De dominio divino* 3.5 (p. 241): “Ex istis secundo patet quod Dei gracia ex integro principalius facit meritum quam natura: *ex integro* dico, quia non est intelligendum quod una pars meriti appropriate attribui potest graciae et altera nature exclusae gracia. . . . Quod autem Dei gracia sit principalior in agendo, patet ex hoc quod creatura principalius disponitur ex Dei gracia ad merendum quam quacunque dispositione alia naturalia.”

Church. Of greater import is Wyclif's further definition of grace here, as the good will of God by which he antecedently wills that all people be saved. God's primary will, or desire, is to save all; so he extends grace to all. Wyclif paints a picture of God knocking on the door of people's hearts, even as some resist and refuse to let him in. Others let him in, only to cast him out later. Thus, on the one hand, no one can be excused, since all people do have the capacity to receive God's grace. On the other hand, one can be sure that Christ does assist those wayfarers who efficaciously will to be saved.¹³³ It is very interesting that Wyclif does not hesitate to employ the image of God knocking at the door (*Deo pulsanti ad hostium*), for it is precisely that image (also used by Robert Holcot) that Thomas Bradwardine had reviled as Pelagian thirty years earlier.¹³⁴

THE QUESTION OF MERIT

Some Medieval Theories of Merit

In our consideration of divine acceptance we discussed Ockham's theory of merit: how he believed that a person could merit (*de congruo*) the infusion of grace by using his own natural faculties apart from grace. This was not in keeping with the traditional medieval understanding of merit, which was generally dominated by Augustine. In the late eleventh century, Anselm was arguing that no one can will uprightly unless he is already upright, and no one who is not upright is equipped to acquire rectitude by an act of will alone. Rectitude of the will can be had only by the grace of God. In this vein, Anselm insists that no one acquires merit except through prevenient grace, and no one retains it except through subsequent grace. Nor does God give grace to anyone on account of preceding merit. Grace follows upon the gift and keeps giving unless one freely chooses to reject it.¹³⁵

¹³³ *Sermones* 3.19 (n. 27 above, pp. 145–46): “Sed e contra michi tamen videtur quod satis pertinenter potest tempus idoneum datum homini ad merendum vocari ista Dei gracia, et sic qui preterit tempus illud non laborat proporcionaliter illi tempori *in vacuum recipit* illam gratiam . . . gracia enim est bona voluntas Dei qua antecederet vult omnes homines salvos fieri. Primo ergo talis obsistit Deo pulsanti ad hostium mentis et ingredi volenti, secundo admissum aut receptum abicit. . . . Nec sunt excusandi qui dicunt quod non est in potestate sue gratiam Dei recipere, quia Isaie XLIX^o, 8. . . . Christus enim assistit sic viantibus qui volunt efficaciter se salvari; ideo sequitur: *Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile, ecce nunc dies salutis* [2 Cor. 6:2].”

¹³⁴ For Bradwardine's reaction see Karlfried Froehlich, “Justification Language and Grace: The Charge of Pelagianism in the Middle Ages,” in *Probing the Reformed Tradition: Historical Studies in Honor of Edward A. Dowey, Jr.*, ed. Elsie Anne McKee and Brian G. Armstrong (Louisville KY, 1989), 21–47, at 34. Cf. Bradwardine, *De causa Dei* 1.38 (p. 319): “Dicunt enim eum sicut mercatorem pauperulum clamare et pulsare ad ianuas et ad ostia singulorum; aperienti vero pro sua apertione gratiam suam dare.”

¹³⁵ *De concordia* 3.4 (n. 16 above, pp. 276–78).

By the middle of the thirteenth century, the divisions between *meritum de congruo* and *meritum de condigno* were in place. Thomas Aquinas held that meritorious works can proceed either from human free will or from the grace of the Holy Spirit. If they proceed from the former, there is no condignity, on account of the degree of inequality between the deed and the reward; still, there is some congruity, or fittingness, owing to a certain proportional equality. In order to earn a condign merit, however, such that one becomes worthy of eternal life, the work must proceed from the grace of the Holy Spirit.¹³⁶ Still, there remains a crucial difference between Aquinas and Ockham. Aquinas reckons that all the good that man does is itself from God, inasmuch as the very means and measure of human power to do the good are entirely dependent upon God. As such, all human merit is the result of divine ordination.¹³⁷ For Aquinas, the good movement of the free will, by which man is prepared to receive the gift of grace, is itself a gift of God.¹³⁸ And St. Bonaventure maintains that a person must first receive the gift of grace freely given (*gratia gratis data*), in order to prepare himself to receive heavenly grace. Thus if anyone is to receive the sanctifying grace that produces works of condign merit, namely the *gratia gratum faciens*, his or her free will must dispose itself with the help of prevenient grace (*gratia gratis data*).¹³⁹ For Aquinas and Bonaventure, therefore, grace is essential to the entire salvific process, but never at the expense of human free will. That will is always a free will, acted upon by divine grace, with which it then cooperates.

¹³⁶ *Summa Theologiae* 1:2.114.3 (pp. 567–68): “Si consideratur secundum substantiam operis, et secundum quod procedit ex libero arbitrio, sic non potest ibi esse condignitas, propter maximam inaequalitatem. Sed ibi congruitas, propter quandam aequalitatem proportionis. . . . Si autem loquamur de opere meritorio secundum quod procedit ex gratia Spiritus Sancti, sic est meritorium vitae aeternae ex condigno.”

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:2.114.1 (pp. 565–66): “Manifestum est autem quod inter Deum et hominem est maxima inaequalitas: in infinitum enim distant, et totum quod est hominis bonum, est a Deo. Unde non potest hominis ad Deum esse iustitia secundum absolutam aequalitatem, sed secundum proportionem quandam: in quantum scilicet uterque operatur secundum modum suum. Modus autem et mensura humanae virtutis homini est a Deo. Et ideo meritum hominis apud Deum esse non potest nisi secundum praesuppositionem divinae ordinationis.”

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:2.112.2 (p. 551): “Et secundum hoc, ipse bonus motus liberi arbitrii quo quis praeparatur ad donum gratiae suscipiendum, est actus liberi arbitrii moti a Deo: et quantum ad hoc, dicitur homo se praeparare, secundum illud Prov. 16 [1]: Hominis est praeparare animum. Et est principaliter a Deo movente liberum arbitrium.”

¹³⁹ *Breviloquium* 5.2 (Paris, 1866, p. 298): “Hinc est etiam, quod ad hoc ut se praeparet ad donum supernae gratiae, cum sit in se recurvus, indiget dono alterius gratiae gratis data, maxime post naturam lapsam.” *Ibid.*, 5.3 (p. 299): “Postremo, quia praedispositio ad formam completivam debet esse ei conformis; ad hoc quod liberum arbitrium se disponat ad gratiam gratum facientem, indiget adminiculo gratiae gratis datae.”

In opposition to what he reckoned the new Pelagianism, exemplified by Ockham and others, Bradwardine had argued that God will save whomever he will, so that the faithful, by virtue of their predestination, gain final perseverance through the grace of God alone, apart from any human acts of preparation. Good works can only follow justification and in no way contribute to it.¹⁴⁰ Bradwardine, therefore, rejects the notion that any human work could be meritorious before God in the absence of grace. While Ockham insisted on our present need for grace in order to merit condignly, Bradwardine even discounts the notion that a person can be said to earn eternal life *de condigno*, inasmuch as no work is really so good or meritorious in God's sight that it deserves to be rewarded.¹⁴¹ Moreover, he insists that grace is present even before the will starts to work, and while coefficient in every meritorious act, it retains a natural priority. This is why the sort of *meritum de congruo* proposed by Ockham is impossible. In fact, *meritum de condigno* must itself be reckoned as a gift, given to achieve an end that God has decided upon before creation; and, in that sense, such merit cannot be earned.¹⁴²

Wyclif on Merit

Wyclif regards the whole system of merit as indispensable. The invariable law of God dictates that no one is rewarded with beatitude who does not merit worthily. Reward, he says, is spoken of in relation to merit. And, as beatitude is the natural goal of the movement of merit, so to be beatified one must first merit. Indeed, it would be a contradiction for God (whose will is always just) to beatify a creature, unless that creature becomes worthy of such beatitude. Thus a created spirit cannot remain purely passive in this process, but must be active in making itself worthy, cooperating with grace.¹⁴³ Wyclif is clear, therefore, that every beatified creature must first

¹⁴⁰ *De causa Dei* 1.43 (n. 35 above, p. 394): "Hominem iustificari per fidem sine operibus legis; non quin credens, post per dilectionem debeat operari, ut et Abraham voluit filium immolare; Sequentur enim opera iustificatum, non praecedunt iustificandum, sed sola fide sine operibus praecedentibus fit homo iustus."

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1.39 (p. 360): "Dicitur autem quod nullus meretur condigne vitam aeternam, quia nullus opus est tam bonum aut tam meritorium apud Deum."

¹⁴² Oberman, *Archbishop Thomas Bradwardine* (n. 36 above), 158.

¹⁴³ *De dominio divino* 3.4 (n. 40 above, pp. 229–30): "Est ergo lex Dei invariabilis quod nemo beatifice premietur nisi prius debite mereatur. Patet primo ex hoc quod premium, ut huiusmodi, dicitur relative ad meritum. Secundo per hoc quod beatitudo est terminus per se motus meriti disparis rationis; sed impossibile est per se terminum motus acquiri subiecto, nisi ipsum proporcionabiliter moveatur; ergo, eo ipso quo quis beatificatur, oportet quod prius proporcionabiliter mereatur. . . . Tercio videtur idem ex hoc quod Deus non potest beatificare creaturam suam nisi talis beatudinis fiat digna, cum contradicionem claudit vel

will to be beatified; blessedness will not force itself on anyone. In that sense, one could say that it is within the free power of the creature to be beatified, for no creature can receive blessedness who is not first willing to receive it. Thus the wayfarer must labor on as a good soldier and strive to be crowned (2 Tim. 2:3–5). And God, who is more prone to reward than to punish, will, by his justice, crown those who have genuinely exerted themselves. But this justice always goes hand in hand with God's grace and love.¹⁴⁴ That God rewards human effort is proved from Scripture, says Wyclif (Gen. 22:16, 1 Kings 3:11, and Jer. 7). For as God is the most just Lord, it is only right that he would reward the labor of his servants.¹⁴⁵ Wyclif is quick to point out, however, that there could be no merit on the part of human beings if not for Christ's own holy life and passion. In an Anselmian manner, Wyclif states that no sin against God could be taken away except through the merit of the one who is both God and man, for his life was supremely meritorious, and as such, makes possible all merit for all time.¹⁴⁶ Hence, while the person who does not possess Christ in grace may perform an objectively good work, that work is neither meritorious nor even virtuous.¹⁴⁷

As Wyclif describes merit more precisely, one sees that, despite the requisite human effort, the glory always remains with God. When it comes to the two basic categories of merit, Wyclif defines *meritum de congruo* as that instance when a lord in his greatness deems it fitting to reward the faithfulness of a servant, which he does graciously, under no obligation. *Meritum de condigno*, on the other hand, pertains to a relationship between one wayfarer and another, when some good is exchanged based purely upon justice and apart from all grace. It is noteworthy that Wyclif specifically rejects the notion that nobody can be said to merit beatitude, inasmuch as it is a gift from God given purely by grace. In fact, he reckons such a position heretical, arguing instead that human beings do indeed merit, only not *de con-*

invitum beatificari vel Deum, cuius omnis volicionem sapit iusticiam, habere beatum quem non dignificat ut sit talis; cum ergo spiritus creatus non potest esse pure materia prima vel passive in tali dignificacione, sequitur oportere quod in dignificacione huiusmodi sit activa, et per consequens se ipsam dignificans promeretur.”

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. (pp. 230–31, at 231): “Ecce quod Deus de sua iusticia tenetur militem suum qui legitime certaverit coronare. . . . Nec ex tali iusticia credendum est excludi titulum purissime caritatis. . . . sic titulus gracie et titulus iusticie quoad singula dona que Deus distribuit creature.”

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. (p. 232): “Sed summus Dominus maxime communicativus, accipiendo servicium ad hoc, obligat hominem sibi servire ut retribucionem exinde recipiat; ergo debet proportionaliter ad suam magnificenciam amplius premiare.”

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. (pp. 232–33, at 233): “Eius quidem conversacio summe meritoria in plenitudine temporis ordinata est principium vivificans quodlibet aliud meritum subsequens vel precedens.”

¹⁴⁷ *Opus evangelicum* 3.73 (n. 14 above, 2:277).

digno; no one should give to anyone, unless there be some worthiness on the receiver's part, albeit only *de congruo*.¹⁴⁸ Even as people merit, though, Wyclif insists that God furnishes both the merit and the means to merit, first exciting and even necessitating the person to merit. Yet when God necessitates merit, it is by way of hypothetical, not absolute, necessity, thereby preserving the person's free will. As merit generally refers to a proper work freely carried out by a servant, in the hope of being found worthy by his lord, so a rational creature can merit when it performs a work worthy of beatitude, just as he loses merit when abusing a gift in such a way as to be worthy of eternal punishment. In any case, a rational creature can only merit *de congruo*, which is to say that he makes himself worthy of a reward by following the law of God, aided by God's gracious help. There is no other way for the creature to merit than by God's supreme grace. To merit *de condigno* would require that the servant make himself worthy of God's reward by his own effort, which is how creatures merit from one another. God, on the other hand, in his great lordship, gives his servants all they need to merit and then later graciously rewards them. Hence, as it is impossible for a creature to offer anything to God unless God already bestows the grace, so there can be no merit for a creature before God *de condigno*. For there is nothing that human beings have that they have not first received by God's grace (1 Cor. 4:7).¹⁴⁹ Like Augustine, therefore, Wyclif maintains that whatever God gives people he gives by pure grace, thereby crowning the grace and works he had given them beforehand. Because *meritum de condigno* pertains to those cases when the merit causally precedes the reward, it cannot apply to the relationship between God and humanity, since it is God who first bestows upon a person more than he merits and then continually anticipates him by rewarding him further.¹⁵⁰

Wyclif is not discounting the role of works, but he places the emphasis squarely on the initiative of grace, even as that grace is freely responded to by the wayfarer. Referring to Romans 11:6, "If by the grace of God then not by works (*ex operibus*)," he argues that this does not mean that no one

¹⁴⁸ *Sermones* 3.38 (n. 27 above, pp. 315–16).

¹⁴⁹ *De dominio divino* 3.4 (pp. 226–28, at 226): "Ipse [Deus] enim prestat omnino meritum et instrumentum merendi, ac preveniendo excitat et necessitat ad merendum: necessitat, dico, non necessitate absoluta, sed ex suppositione, salva libertate arbitrii promerentis." Ibid. (p. 228): "Ergo impossibile est creaturam Deo vel in minimo ministrare nisi magnam gratiam faciat quidquam dando; et per consequens creatura penitus nichil a Deo meribitur ex condigno."

¹⁵⁰ *Opus evangelicum* 3.70 (2:263): "eo quod quicquid Deus dat homini dat sibi ex pura gracia, cum coronat gratiam priorem et opera que antea illi dedit . . . cum Deus prius dat homini maius quam meruit et continue prevenit premiando." Cf. Augustine, *Epist.* 194 (CSEL 57:190).

can merit through works, *per opera*. The difference here is that the former (merit *ex operibus*) would imply that the works are self-generated, while the latter (merit *per opera*) means that the works are the result of grace working through someone. For Wyclif, good works are essential to the whole system of merit and reward, but grace is always the source of all meritorious acts. That is why Scripture says that no one can merit by works, *ex operibus*, but rather by the grace of the one who rewards good works. Although that uncreated grace, from which created grace formally follows, is not within a human being's power, he still has the ability to augment, decrease, or lose the created grace he has received. Along these lines, the question arises as to whether a person who has fallen into sin could merit for himself the grace that he has lost. Wyclif concedes that a sinner who attains the stage of attrition and blames himself for his own sin does in some sense make himself worthy of God's forgiveness and the infusion of grace. Yet here he distinguishes between two sorts of meriting: one that is antecedent and incomplete, and another that is consequent and complete. The first pertains to the sinner who achieves attrition; it is still incomplete, since he remains unworthy before reaching the level of contrition, and that only comes with the infusion of grace. But the second sort — i.e., complete meriting — presupposes grace and then adds a meritorious act through which the person simultaneously becomes worthy of reward. In this sense, therefore, it remains true that no act can be meritorious while one is still in a state of sin.¹⁵¹

Of interest is Wyclif's belief that every human spirit probably has one moment before death in which it can finally merit or demerit. As we have seen, he maintains that no one can be beatified without previously meriting, and yet it must be admitted that infants killed for Christ's sake, as well as those people who die immediately after baptism, are blessed. Hence even they must have had some interval in which to merit. And what better time than when the soul's powers are not weighed down by the burden of the body as, for example, in those last two or three instants before death. Wyclif asserts this opinion in all modesty, however, conceding that not everyone thinks this position can be elicited from the plain sense of Scripture.¹⁵² We should not confuse Wyclif's position here with Uthred of Boldon's very controversial claim that at the instant of death every person is granted a clear vision of God and the freedom to choose between good and evil.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 3.5 (pp. 244–46, at 244): “Cum ergo prima origo premii sit gracia et non meritum premiati, non mirum si Scriptura dicat ad hunc sensum quod nemo meretur ex opere sed ex gracia premiantis.”

¹⁵² *De dominio divino* 3.4 (p. 235): “Tercio videtur probabiliter posse dici quod quilibet spiritus humanus citra Christum habet unum momentum ante mortem in quo finaliter mereri poterit vel demereri.”

¹⁵³ Cf. W. A. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* (Toronto, 1980), 168–69.

FAITH

In light of what we have just said above about grace and merit, a few words should be added about the place of faith in Wyclif's soteriology. Whatever reputation Wyclif may have had as a pre-Reformer, Lechler was surely right, over a century ago, in observing that Wyclif adhered to the traditional medieval notion of faith formed by love. To Lechler's mind Wyclif "mixes up conversion and sanctification, faith and works," all of which is to say that Wyclif cannot be counted as holding to the Reformation principle of justification by faith alone.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, as what follows should demonstrate, one cannot even accept Stacey's mild claim that Wyclif had an "appreciable anticipation" of this Reformation principle.¹⁵⁵ What we do find is that Wyclif fully accepts the traditional medieval understanding of faith as the foundation upon which the salvific edifice is built. Faith is the foundation of the soul's spiritual house, he says, and humility is the cement. The walls are the four cardinal virtues of justice, prudence, fortitude, and temperance, while charity and hope make up the roof.¹⁵⁶ Along these lines, he makes the classic distinction between formed and unformed faith. As no one can be a member of the body of Christ unless he is a living member (John 6:54), so no one can be connected to the head of the body unless he believes in the head with a fully formed faith, a *fides formata*.¹⁵⁷ A Catholic with the habit of faith explicitly believes in the Catholic Church with a general faith, such that he implicitly believes any particular article of faith subsumed under Holy Mother Church. Thus if any Christian has a faith formed by love (*fides caritate formata*), albeit in general terms, that will suffice for salvation, along with the virtue of perseverance. And so long as the faithful Christian presents no obstacle, then God, who bestowed the first faith, will grant him a clearer faith.¹⁵⁸ Wyclif argues that any person may have at least an unformed faith, if he knows, even if in a confused manner, that there is a God and that every article of faith is true. And yet, while it was quite traditional to say that an unformed faith was insufficient for salvation, and can coexist with mortal sin, Wyclif goes so far as to say that an unformed faith does not even suffice to reckon a person part of the Church. For to be a genuine member of the Church means that all final unfaithful-

¹⁵⁴ Lechler, *John Wyclif* (n. 1 above), 304.

¹⁵⁵ John Stacey, *John Wyclif and Reform* (Philadelphia, 1964), 121. Stacey provides a neat summary of previous scholarly opinion on this issue (*ibid.*, 119–21).

¹⁵⁶ *Opus evangelicum* 3.60 (2:221).

¹⁵⁷ *De ecclesia* 1 (ed. Johann Loserth [London, 1886], 4).

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 2 (p. 42): "Sic (ut sepe dixi) si quicumque christianus habuerit fidem caritate formatam in quantumcunque communi, sufficit cum virtute perseverancie ad salutem. Deus enim qui dedit primam fidem dabit clariorem, nisi fidelis ponat obicem."

ness must be excluded. Here we find that Wyclif adopts the traditional Augustinian reading of the different levels of belief, the highest of which is alone sufficient for salvation, inasmuch as the person who believes in Christ finally inheres in Christ through love.¹⁵⁹

While it is true, then, that wicked Christians have the same faith as the good, this does not mean that the wicked have an equally perfect and whole faith. For here one must distinguish between the faith by which one believes (*qua*) and the faith that is believed (*quae*); even the demons have an equally perfect form of the latter.¹⁶⁰ Faith in a salvific sense is to be equated with the act of believing, or the disposition to believe, while the faith that is believed remains true even apart from those who believe it. Although the infidel, or even the devil, believes the truth of the Catholic faith, his mortal sin renders it a corrupt or unformed faith.¹⁶¹ All of this runs along traditional medieval lines. But even this faith that believes is still not the trusting faith or confidence (*fiducia*) of the Reformers, which relies solely upon God's gracious promise in Christ to save sinners without regard to works.¹⁶² For this is always a faith that must be built up, actualized, and formed by the love that is borne out in good works. Wyclif is quite clear that, as God ordained that people should pray not only in mind and voice, but also with just works, so God demands a life led according to his justice. This realization prompts Wyclif to quote the Apostle James: "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:17).¹⁶³ This is what it means to live by the *Lex Christi*: to serve Christ in humility and charity, but still to adhere to a law. Needless to say, God's grace is an essential part of the life lived righteously, and Wyclif is confident that God in his wisdom prepares what is useful for the wayfarer. Always, though, the righteous life is a cooperative effort, never resting on the *sola gratia* of the Reformers. For, as Wyclif says, the just God will

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 3 (pp. 63–64). On faith see Wyclif's appeal to John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa* 4.11 (PG 94:1127–28). On belief see Augustine, *Tractatus in Iohannem* 39.6–7 (CCL 36:287).

¹⁶⁰ *De ecclesia* 17 (p. 407).

¹⁶¹ Ibid. (p. 408).

¹⁶² Cf. Philip Melancthon, *Loci Communes in Melancthon's Werke* 2:1 (ed. Hans Engeland [Gütersloh, 1952], 92): "Est itaque fides non aliud nisi fiducia misericordiae divinae promissae in Christo adeoque quocunque signo." Ibid. (pp. 93–94): "Habes, in quam partem fidei nomen usurpet scriptura, nempe pro eo quod est fidere gratuita dei misericordia sine ullo operum nostrorum sive bonorum sive malorum respectu, quia de Christi plenitudine omnes accipimus."

¹⁶³ *De oratione et ecclesie purgatione* 1 (*Polemical Works in Latin*, ed. Rudolf Biddensieg, 2 vols. [London, 1883], 1:343): "sic ordinavit auctor nature, quod homo non solum oret in mente et voce, sed omnino in iusto opere sive vita, quia deus est auctor realis, qui non requirit cogitationem vel vocem, sed omnino vitam suae iusticie complacentem; et hinc Iac. 2° capitulo sic subiungit."

reward the person who lives justly.¹⁶⁴ But justice does not come through faith alone; rather it is the product of a life lived in conformity with divine law, albeit with the indispensable help of grace, apart from which all merit is impossible.

GOD'S WILL FOR HUMAN SALVATION

Later Medieval Views of God's Saving Will

Earlier we quoted 1 Timothy 2:4, "[Deus] omnes homines vult salvos fieri." This verse raised serious questions for theologians concerned to reconcile divine omnipotence with human free will, and God's mercy with God's justice. We have already discussed the divine will in general. Here we do so within a strictly soteriological context. As to whether God's will is always fulfilled, Aquinas argued that something can occur that is out of order with regard to one particular efficient cause, but not with respect to the universal cause that encompasses all particular causes. No effect can escape from the order of the universal cause, for God's will is the universal cause of all things and thus cannot fail to achieve its effect. Aquinas then runs through the different readings of 1 Timothy 2:4, first noting Augustine's classic interpretations, that no one is saved whom God does not will to be saved, or again that the reference is to different classes of individuals, not each individual of every class.¹⁶⁵ Finally there is John Damascene's reading, to which Aquinas gives the most attention. Damascene had contended that by his primary and antecedent will, God does will that all people be saved. This is because he is good; but he also wills to punish sinners because he is just.¹⁶⁶ Aquinas too draws on the distinction between God's antecedent and consequent will. He observes that we can speak of a judge antecedently wishing every person to live, while consequently willing that a particular man be hanged for his crime. In this sense, God antecedently wills that all be saved, but consequently that some be condemned according to the dictates of his justice. To will antecedently is not to will simply (*simpliciter*), but relatively (*secundum quid*). Thus the judge wills simply for the murderer to be hanged, though in a relative manner he wills him to live, inasmuch as he is a human being. Aquinas concludes that this will to save is more fittingly called a sort of wishfulness (*velleitas*) than an absolute will (*voluntas absoluta*).¹⁶⁷ Antecedently, therefore, God wills that all people be saved. But God does not will this consequently, for that would be to will it absolutely.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ *De oracione* 1 (pp. 343–44).

¹⁶⁵ Augustine, *Enchiridion* 103 (PL 40:280).

¹⁶⁶ John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa* 2.29 (PG 94:967–70).

¹⁶⁷ *Summa Theologiae* 1.19.6.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.23.4.

Ockham also divides the will of God's good pleasure (*voluntas beneplaciti*) into the categories of antecedent and consequent will. But he applies those categories so as to give human beings more freedom in the salvific process. There is nothing that occurs contrary to the consequent will of God's good pleasure, since the will of God is omnipotent and cannot be impeded, though things do happen against God's antecedent will of good pleasure, as well as against his signified will. Yet if Peter's reception of blessedness on the Judgment Day is both future and contingent, it is not settled by anything actual in the past or present, which means that the consequent will of God about that state of affairs also remains undecided by anything past or present. There are, however, some determinations of the divine will regarding future contingents that are settled from eternity, namely those belonging to God's antecedent will.¹⁶⁹ For it is the antecedent will that gives people the natural properties, or antecedent conditions, that they can make use of, and with which God is prepared to coact. This means that God antecedently wills that all people be saved, and thus antecedently wills that everyone act in such a way that they would persevere to the end. But when God antecedently wills that a creature act in some way, he does not determine that the creature do so. God gives everyone the natural powers that they can use to perform a meritorious action and he will coact with them towards that end. God also gives his precepts and counsels, so that a person can follow through with that deed. Of course, not everyone chooses to perform a meritorious action, for people often act demeritoriously, and thus contrary to the antecedent divine will.¹⁷⁰ What we find here is that Ockham's emphasis on the contingency of the salvific process made human efforts much more determinative of the outcome.

The Dominican Robert Holcot, whose thinking is not far removed from Ockham's, read 1 Timothy 2:4 as referring to God's general will for salvation, inasmuch as God wants only those people to be saved who live by the law he has established. God gave this law freely, under no obligation, but if a person does abide by it God will grant grace to those who do their best (*facere quod in se*). What is more, Holcot rejects the potter and clay simile of

¹⁶⁹ *Ordinatio* 1.46 (*Opera Theologica* 4, ed. G. Etzkorn and F. Kelley [St. Bonaventure NY, 1979], 670–76). See also the enlightening discussion in *William Ockham, Predestination, God's Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents*, 2nd ed., trans. with intro. and notes by Marilyn McCord Adams and Norman Kretzmann (New York, 1983), 13–15.

¹⁷⁰ *Ordinatio* 1.46 (p. 674): "Nam manifestum est quod Deus dat cuilibet naturalia quibus potest consequi actum meritorium, et Deus paratus est coagere cuilibet ad actum meritorium. . . . Et tamen non quilibet elicit actum meritorium, sed multi eliciunt actus demeritorios. Igitur tales faciunt contra voluntatem Dei antecedentem." Ibid. (p. 676): "Ad tertium dico quod Deus vult antecedenter omnes homines salvos fieri, qua scilicet dat eis antecedentia quibus possunt consequi salutem cum praecepta dat consilio exsequendi."

Romans 9:21 that Bradwardine had made so much of, on the grounds that there is no covenant between the potter and clay, while there is such between God and man.¹⁷¹

Peter Aureol offers an interesting, and perhaps more subtle, reading of 1 Timothy 2:4, one that pertains to God's universal will to save all people and is conditioned by the presence or absence of an obstacle to grace. God wills that all people be saved, provided that they place no obstacle to grace at the moment of death. If God foreknows that a given person places no such obstacle, then God wills grace and glory for that person. As for the damned, reprobation is not just the lack of predestination, but the decree of eternal punishment. God foreknows that Judas will place an obstacle and die in a state of sin, and on that basis an eternal volition of reprobation arises for Judas.¹⁷² Essential to Aureol's system is the principle that human beings have the freedom to reject God's general offer of grace. But unlike Holcot, who spoke of man actively disposing himself to grace, Aureol holds that preparation for God's grace is itself the work of prevenient grace (*gratia gratis data*) and, as such, is not meritorious. Meritorious acts proceed only from a state of sanctifying grace (*gratia gratum faciens*). Thus at the beginning of the process the human being does not perform a positive action; the offer of grace is accepted passively, insofar as the recipient merely places no obstacle. Only resistance to grace is a positive action on man's part.¹⁷³ Bear in mind, however, that Aureol's doctrine of predestination was subject to a good deal of criticism from both within and without the Franciscan order, though such a reaction is also a testament to the seriousness with which his work was taken by his fellow schoolmen.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Heiko Oberman, "*Facientibus Quod in se est Deus non Denegat Gratiam*: Robert Holcot O.P. and the Beginnings of Luther's Theology," in *The Dawn of the Reformation: Essays in Late Medieval and Early Reformation Thought* (Grand Rapids, 1986), 90–93.

¹⁷² James L. Halverson, *Peter Aureol on Predestination: A Challenge to Late Medieval Thought* (Leiden, 1998), 83–84.

¹⁷³ Halverson, *Peter Aureol*, 94, 104–7, 127–28. Cf. Aureol, MS Borghese 329, fol. 439r^b (Halverson, *Peter Aureol*, 107): "Unde ex puris naturalibus non sumus sufficientes cogitare aliquid aliquid ex nobis, quasi ex nobis, sed omnis sufficientia nostra ex Deo est. Licet enim sine gratia gratum faciente, possit homo aliquos motus habere disponentes ad gratiam, nihilominus tales motus sunt ex gratia gratis data. . . . Potest autem homo ex puris naturalibus non-ponere obicem, quia in hoc nullus est actus positivus, sed mera negatio. Unde hac negatione reperta Deus, qui ad miserandum pronus est, gratiam confert, ex quo oritur omnis bonus usus liberi arbitrii et omnis bona dispositio positiva."

¹⁷⁴ See Chris Schabel, "Parisian Commentaries from Peter Auriol to Gregory of Rimini, and the Problem of Predestination," in *Mediaeval Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* 1, ed. G. R. Evans (Leiden, 2002), 221–65.

Wyclif on God's Saving Will

In his *De volucione Dei*, Wyclif lists six different interpretations of 1 Timothy 2:4, all of which he considers acceptable. It may refer to all the predestined; or all types of people; or that God provides the means that all might be saved; or that it is the desire of his saints as an expression of God's will. Furthermore, there is John Damascene's position that it refers to God's antecedent will. God, like a good lawgiver, wills that his people flee from evil and thus gives them a universal law prohibiting evil. In this case, therefore, God's antecedent will is a sign, like a prohibition or precept, by which the lawgiver ordains a law that is a sufficient remedy for the avoidance of evil. The sixth reading that Wyclif recounts sounds quite similar to Aureol's position, namely that God conditionally wills that all people be saved. Because God is good, he wills that all people be saved, provided that they too will this by placing no obstacle to his grace. While he sees positive aspects to all six explanations, some of which allow for a good deal of human freedom, Wyclif still wishes to safeguard the prerogative of the divine will. To that end, he points out that it would be a contradiction to say that the will of God's good pleasure ever goes unfulfilled. For that would mean either that his willing is insufficient to fulfill what he does will; or that the resistance impeding it could be so strong as to thwart it; or again, that God is himself mutable, meaning that something could change his will, such that he would now will one thing and then another. Such notions are impossible, however, since they would imply either impotence, imperfection, mutability, or ignorance on God's part.¹⁷⁵

In his 1377/78 *De veritate sacrae scripturae*, Wyclif gave ample consideration to Origen's position that all human beings, and even the demons, will be saved.¹⁷⁶ In this context, he takes up 1 Timothy 2:4 again, in order to rebut Origen's claim that, since nothing can resist the will of God, it is necessary that all people be saved. Wyclif notes here that this verse can be read in two ways: either that God wills that all people *will* be saved, or that God wills that all people *would* be saved. The first reading Wyclif dismisses as untrue, while the second accords with the Apostle's meaning. He then rehearses the Augustinian readings we have already recounted: that God wills all types of people to be saved, though not all individuals, or that no one is saved unless God wills his or her salvation. Wyclif goes on to say that God has ordained that every rational creature be beatified in him and has given them the law and freedom of will so that whoever wishes may repent

¹⁷⁵ *De volucione* 1 (n. 12 above, pp. 118–19).

¹⁷⁶ *De veritate* 3.30 (n. 73 above, p. 198). Cf. Origen, *Commentarii in Epistulam ad Romanos* 4–5 (PG 14:988–1035).

(Sirach 15:14–17). He likens the situation to a temporal lord who wills that his servant act faithfully, since he commands him to do so and even gives him the assistance to do so. This, says Wyclif, is what John Damascene and others mean when they speak of the antecedent will of God. Hence it does not follow that if God wills that you *would* act rightly and consequently *would* be blessed, therefore God wills that you *will* act rightly and *will* be blessed. Through all of this, though, God's will is always accomplished. For if it is not true that Judas *will* be saved, then God does not will that he be saved. But God does will that Judas *would* be saved, and it is God's volition that he ought to be saved. In fact, God gives Judas the law and many other gifts to help him so that this might happen, but his own sin is the reason why it will not.¹⁷⁷ Even as Wyclif makes a place for human freedom here, he must also acknowledge the reality of human failure. And so, he concludes that Origen's effort to prove universal salvation from Scripture is unsuccessful; for in fact, Scripture teaches the very opposite.¹⁷⁸

Origen's universalism presented a rare exception in the Christian tradition, and so Wyclif was hardly alone in rejecting it. And yet, while all people might not be saved, those who are saved come to God through Christ, the great physician. The whole human race would surely have passed into hell, had not Christ redeemed fallen nature from the judgment of damnation and reconciled humanity to God. But the medicine of Christ's redemption does a person no good, says Wyclif, unless that person first accepts it and humbly cooperates with it. Grace and free will work together; there is no compulsion. The Christian thus becomes a new person only when he puts away the deformity of sin and puts on the three theological virtues by which his pristine image is reformed and then conformed to the Trinity. One must never lose sight of the fact, however, that it is by God's inspiration that this human renovation begins.¹⁷⁹ Wyclif's insistence on the consent of human free will in a process initiated by divine grace is completely in keeping with the tradition. No one, from Augustine to Aquinas, believed that people were saved against their will. The debate turned on the role that

¹⁷⁷ *De veritate* 3.30 (pp. 198–200, at 200): “Unde non sequitur, deus vlt, quod sic facias et per consequens sis beatus, igitur deus vlt, quod sic facies et eris beatus. voluntas enim dei semper impletur et per consequens terminatur utrobique ad veritatem. ideo, si non sit veritas, quod Judas salvabitur, deus non vlt, quod ipse salvabitur, sed vlt, quod ipse salvetur, et volucio dei illa terminatur ad ipsum debere salvari. quod est verum, cum deus dat sibi legem et dona multa cum promptitudine adiutorii, ut sic fiat, sed peccatum suum est in causa, quare non sic fiet.” Cf. Augustine, *Enchiridion* 103 (PL 40:280) and John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa* 2.29 (PG 94:967–70).

¹⁷⁸ *De veritate* 3.30 (p. 230): “Sic igitur discurrendo per totam scripturam non inuenietur textus sonans, quod omnes homines salvabuntur, sed omnino oppositum.”

¹⁷⁹ *Sermones* 4, 54 (n. 27 above, 4. 423): “eo quod medicina redempcionis Christi non proderit nisi voluntarie ipsam acceptanti et humiliter cooperanti.”

grace plays in relation to that human free decision.¹⁸⁰ Indeed, even to say that human beings must exert effort in the redemptive process is not to denigrate the inherent power of Christ's saving work. Wyclif argues that the remedy of Christ's medicine is wholly sufficient, in the sense that there is no possibility of defect on its part, though this does not rule out the need for concurrent causes. While it is surely capable of healing every infirmity, no medicine is said to be insufficient just because it does not cure the dead or the incurable when their own natural heat fails to cooperate. In the same way, the medicine designed to cure sin only cooperates for full healing if the heat of charity and the humidity of contrition assist. For it is the nature of merit that it be voluntary, and thus cooperative, otherwise there would be no meriting at all. If someone is not saved, the fault lies with himself, not with God; for if an angel or a human being were to cooperate with the divine physician, he would surely find salvation.¹⁸¹ And so, even as the medicine of Christ's passion suffices to redeem many worlds, some never accept this offer and thus always remain infidels. They are members of the Church in potency, although this potential membership is never actualized. For while the sufficiency of Christ's passion provides the potential, along with the power of their own free choice, such people never attain to the mystical body of Christ, on account of their unformed faith. Others accept the medicine at first and then finally fall away; these are the foreknown, the people who at least belonged to the outward institutional Church but lacked final perseverance. There are other people who receive the medicine, and then, after a lapse, return to Holy Mother Church. These are the predestined sinners, those who may in fact abide in mortal sin for a time. Finally, there are the people who are healed by virtue of Christ's merits and never fall into mortal sin. Thus when Paul says that Christ is "the savior of all and chiefly of the faithful" (1 Tim. 4:10), he is referring to those of the third and fourth categories. In fact, Wyclif believes that this amounts to the literal meaning of 1 Timothy 2:4 (*directe ad literam*).¹⁸²

PREDESTINATION

Medieval Views of Predestination

The whole question of grace and free will is naturally connected to the matter of predestination, insofar as the freedom of a sinful, temporal creature must be reconciled with the salvific will of an eternally just, omnipo-

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1:2.113.3 and Bonaventure, *Breviloquium* 5.3.

¹⁸¹ *De veritate* 3.30 (pp. 214–15, at 215): "Satis est, quod nullibi stat defectus in deo quoad hominem vel angelum, quin salvabitur, si plene cooperatur cum medico, sicut debet."

¹⁸² *De ecclesia* 3 (n. 54 above, pp. 59–60).

tent, and omniscient creator. For Hugh of Saint Victor, predestination is the preparation for grace. It is God's design, by which he arranged to give grace to his elect, and that is itself predestination. Hugh, moreover, draws the classic distinction between God's active and permissive will. God can be said to have predestined from eternity whatever he was to make, while not to have predestined, but only to have foreknown, what he would permit.¹⁸³ Peter Lombard also says that predestination is the preparation for grace, and is thus the divine election by which God eternally elected whomever he so willed, while reprobation consists in the foreknowledge of iniquity and the subsequent preparation of the sinner's condemnation. God compels no one to sin, however; he simply decides to withhold the offer of grace.¹⁸⁴ The Lombard consistently upholds the freedom of God: just as God is under no compulsion to extend or deny mercy, predestination is not based upon foreknowledge of future merits, which would amount to a denial of grace. Indeed, God's election is not even based upon foreknowledge of future faith, for faith itself is the result of election.¹⁸⁵

Aquinas defines predestination as the ordering of something to an end, presupposing that the end itself is already willed. Hence the predestination of some people to salvation means that God has first willed their salvation. And when God wills the good to those whom he loves, his love is itself the cause of the good in them.¹⁸⁶ The very fact that eternal life exceeds the capacity of created nature means that the reason must preexist in God.¹⁸⁷ It is because predestination pertains to God's will that we cannot assign it any external cause. Thus anything that is due to grace (for example, merit) must itself be the effect of predestination and not the reason for it.¹⁸⁸ Apart from the divine will, there is no reason why some are elected to glory and others rejected. And as God owes no one any debt, there is nothing unjust in his giving unequal blessings to equal states. It is all *gratis*.¹⁸⁹ Rejection amounts to more than foreknowledge, however, precisely because providence (of which it is a part) is also more than this. God's will is always operative, be it actively or permissively. Predestination includes the will to bestow grace and glory on some, just as rejection includes the will to permit others

¹⁸³ *De sacramentis* 1.2.21 (PL 176:213–14): “Praedestinatio est gratiae preparatio. . . . Quod autem facturus non fuit sed permisurus non praedestinasse, sed praecisse solum.”

¹⁸⁴ *Sententiae* 1.40.2 (n. 12 above, pp. 286–88).

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.41.2 (pp. 289–92). Colish notes that Peter was refuting the position of William of Champeaux and Anselm of Laon. See Marcia Colish, *Peter Lombard*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1994), 1:287–89.

¹⁸⁶ *Summa Theologiae* 1.23.4.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.23.1.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.23.5.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

to incur guilt and to impose the penalty of damnation on them because of their guilt.¹⁹⁰

According to Duns Scotus, there can be no prior reason on the part of the predestined for their salvation. God chooses the goal of salvation and then subsequently provides the means of grace and faith and merits, meaning that he does so in a way logically prior to any foreknowledge of someone's merits. That still leaves open the question of the damned. Because Scotus holds that nothing external to God can be the cause of the divine will, he cannot abide the notion that God merely responds to the human free decision to do evil and wills to punish based upon his foreknowledge of that decision, as that would seem to render God passive. At the same time, because God is just, he will not condemn someone unless that person has freely chosen to sin. Damnation would not seem good, says Scotus, unless it is just. But it is surely cruel to punish someone who as yet has no guilt. God does not will to punish before he sees that man is a sinner. In the case of Judas, therefore, God first decides to refrain from willing his salvation. In a sense he chooses to will nothing for Judas; there is merely the negation of any will for glory. While God positively wills grace for Peter, there is no such positive act for Judas, only a negative act.¹⁹¹

Ockham takes a position quite different from that of his predecessors, in keeping with his desire to assure the openness of the future. He argues that just as everyone who is predestinate is contingently predestinate, so God contingently predestines everyone who is predestinate. Although the proposition: "God predestined Peter" is true hypothetically (*ex suppositione*), and will have been true at some point, it is still possible that it is not true and that it will never have been true absolutely (*absolute*). Again, the proposition: "God knows that this person will be saved" is true, but it is possible that God will have never known that this person will be saved. And so, while the proposition is immutable, it is still not necessary, but rather con-

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 1.23.3 (p. 130–31: "Unde, cum per divinam providentiam homines in vitam aeternam ordinetur, pertinet etiam ad divinam providentiam, ut permittat aliquos ab isto fine deficere. Et hoc dicitur reprobare."

¹⁹¹ *Ordinatio* 1.41 (*Opera Omnia* 6, ed. P.C. Balic [Vatican City, 1963], 332): "Potest dici aliter quod praedestinatio nulla est ratio, ex parte etiam praedestinati, aliquo modo prior ipsa praedestinatione; reprobatione tamen est aliqua prior, non quidem propter quam Deus effective reprobatur in quantum est a Deo actio (sicut argutum est in praemissa opinione, quia 'tunc Deus esset passivus')." Ibid. (p. 334): "Dici potest quod in illo instanti nihil vult Iudae, tantum est ibi negatio volitionis gloriae. Et similiter, quasi in secundo instanti naturae, quando vult Petro gratiam, adhuc nullus actus positivus voluntatis divinae est circa Iudam, sed tantum negativus." See also Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus* (Oxford, 1999), 101–3.

tingent.¹⁹² Hence if a person commits the sin of final impenitence he will be reprobate, and if he perseveres to the end he will be predestinate. For as God is not a punisher before man is a sinner, so he is not a rewarder before man is justified by grace. And while divine grace preserved the Virgin Mary from ever sinning and losing eternal life, most people are not ordered to eternal life by a special grace and so must voluntarily merit if they will be saved.¹⁹³ It would seem, therefore, that Ockham never held the position of predestination based on foreseen merits, precisely because the predestination that follows upon a person's merits remains a contingent event until the reward of glory is actually granted.¹⁹⁴

As for Bradwardine, predestination has the twofold effect of grace, merit, and forgiveness of sins now and final glory later. There is nothing outside of God's will that can be the cause of predestination. He insists that the knowledge (*scientia*) of God, just like his will (*voluntas*), is wholly immutable. Hence neither prayers nor merits can change the divine will. More starkly put: God has willed from all eternity to save and to damn, not merely by his conditional will, but by his absolute and determined will. Bradwardine attacks the so-called Pelagians whom he charges with basing predestination on foreseen future merits (*merita futura praescita*). Merits only play a part, to the extent that they are the means to the goal of glory that has been predetermined by God. Grace, too, is an effect of predestination, but predestination is not based on the cooperation of grace and free will. It is also noteworthy that, for Bradwardine, the necessity of grace is not, at root, caused by the fall but rather by natural human impotence.¹⁹⁵ This leads McGrath to reckon Bradwardine's position more Aristotelian than Augustinian, seeing as the human need for grace is ultimately the result of his creaturely status rather than his sinful status.¹⁹⁶ Though, here, we will remember that Augustine had also thought grace necessary for Adam before the fall since, even in that initial stage of rectitude, he was a creature and thus liable to change. Indeed, Adam was in need of that grace by means of which he could persevere in righteousness if he so chose.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² *Tractatus de praedestinatione et praescientiae Dei et futuris contingentibus* q. 1 (ed. Philotheus Boehner [St. Bonaventure NY, 1945], 8–9); Adams and Kretzmann, *William Ockham* (n. 166 above), 41–42.

¹⁹³ *Tractatus de praedestinatione* q. 4 (pp. 36–37); Adams and Kretzmann, *William Ockham*, 77.

¹⁹⁴ Answering this specific charge see Wood, "Ockham's Repudiation" (n. 109 above), 364; and McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (n. 65 above), 137–39.

¹⁹⁵ Heiko Oberman, *Archbishop Thomas Bradwardine* (n. 36 above), 115–16, 178. For the relevant passages see *De causa Dei* 1.23 (n. 35 above, pp. 237b, 240d/e) and 1.45 (p. 424e).

¹⁹⁶ McGrath, "'Augustinianism?' A Critical Assessment" (n. 103 above), 255.

¹⁹⁷ See Augustine's *De correptione et gratia* 1.28–38 (PL 44:933–40).

Wyclif on Predestination

The first thing that should be mentioned when discussing Wyclif's doctrine of predestination is that he speaks of the damned as the "foreknown" (*praesciti*), those whom God foreknew he would punish on account of the sins they freely committed. While all were lost in sin, the predestined are those who have accepted God's grace, and the damned are those who have rejected it. Lechler rightly notes the distinction Wyclif makes between *praedestinatio* and *praescientia*, though he insists that Wyclif does not believe that God simply responds to man's free choice for evil. He finds Wyclif's doctrine to be one of passive predestination to punishment with various concurrent causes: God himself, the intelligible being of the creature, and the actual sin committed.¹⁹⁸ According to Robson, "the heart of Wyclif's position" is that election and reprobation have their eternal being in God, though Robson freely admits that, "his doctrine of grace was impeccably orthodox."¹⁹⁹ Kenny, for his part, has argued that Wyclif's theory of predestination was no stronger than those of many other medieval theologians, and that he does make a genuine attempt to prove its compatibility with free will.²⁰⁰ In keeping with what we have seen so far, we will find that Wyclif is even more accommodating to human free will than some of his orthodox contemporaries; in fact, his doctrine of predestination is the natural corollary to his understanding of the human role in the working of grace. As we shall see, Wyclif did not think that the foreknown were intentionally passed over by God, and thus refused even the possibility of salvation. Instead, he believed that, while all were lost in sin, the elect are those whom God has eternally willed to save, based upon his knowledge that they would accept his universal offer of grace, while the damned are those whom God eternally willed to damn because they freely rejected this offer. Having said that, we must also remember that Wyclif never devotes the sort of sustained and meticulous attention to the actual process of predestination that one finds among the theologians of the earlier part of the fourteenth century. Thus we are often faced with the task of piecing together his position and then drawing conclusions based upon those clearer statements on related topics, such as divine and human volition.

At the outset of his massive 1378/79 *De ecclesia*, Wyclif admits that Scripture speaks of the Church in many ways, but he reckons the best description

¹⁹⁸ Lechler, *John Wyclif* (n. 1 above), 317–18.

¹⁹⁹ Robson, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools* (n. 2 above), 208–9.

²⁰⁰ Kenny, *Wyclif* (n. 3 above), 39–41.

to be “the congregation of all the predestined.”²⁰¹ Not only does the Church Triumphant contain none of the *praesciti*, those whose damnation is eternally foreknown by God, but neither does the Church Militant. Wyclif specifically appeals to Augustine’s rebuke of the Donatist Tychonius for claiming that the body of the Lord is bipartite, since Christ’s body can include only what will remain with him for eternity. Rather, said Augustine, one should speak of the true and the simulated body. So too, for Wyclif, those people who are faithful for a time, and yet whose final damnation is eternally foreknown, comprise no more than a fake church, an *ecclesia simulata*.²⁰² Along those lines, Wyclif will admit that one can speak of the Church in two ways, the true and the false. In truth the Church is the body of Christ and his bride; in mere pretense, it pertains to those wayfarers who claim to be the body of Christ, but actually belong to the synagogue of Satan.²⁰³ These eternal divisions abide, even now, in the presently constituted Church on earth, but not so as to tear the visible Church asunder. The predestined and the foreknown function side by side during their temporal sojourn. Thus, while it is true that by mere human ordination clerics are established in ecclesiastical offices from among the ranks of both the predestined and the foreknown, these offices do stand for the present time.²⁰⁴ Indeed, like others among the foreknown, there are clerics who presently exist in a state of grace even while lacking the gift of final perseverance.²⁰⁵ Wyclif thereby avoids the heresy of Donatism, maintaining that foreknown priests in a present state of righteousness do validly confer the sacraments.²⁰⁶

On the other side of the coin, even while the predestined person is in a state of mortal sin he never ceases to be a member of the Church, which also means that no alleged excommunication, issued by human decree, can place him outside of the true Church.²⁰⁷ The question still remains as to how effective the sacraments are for the foreknown. On this point, Wyclif argues that the foreknown never receive baptism rightly, in the sense that original sin would be fully blotted out. Because the foreknown abide perpetually in the lack of final perseverance, which is the gravest of sins and even indel-

²⁰¹ *De ecclesia* 1 (n. 179 above, p. 2): “Quamvis autem ecclesia dicatur multipliciter in scriptura, suppono quod summatur ad propositum pro famosiori, scilicet congregacione omnium predestinatorum.”

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 3 (p. 24). Cf. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 3.32 (CCL 32:104–5).

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 4 (p. 71).

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.* (p. 72).

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.* (p. 75).

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 19 (pp. 448–49): “Videtur autem mihi quod prescitus eciam in mortali peccato actuali ministrat fidelibus, licet sibi dampnabiliter, tamen subiectis utiliter sacramenta.”

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 4 (p. 72).

ible, it is not removed through baptism. All the foreknown bear an original and perpetual defect, even if they may be suspended from their evil for a time by the grace of present righteousness. Baptismal grace, therefore, as well as the grace of the other sacraments, can only assist the foreknown for a time on their earthly sojourn. But, because their original sin is not entirely blotted out, they remain forever tainted and thus incapable of achieving eternal salvation.²⁰⁸ It would be a mistake, however, to judge Wyclif's doctrine of predestination solely based upon his *De ecclesia*. For it is a work of ecclesiology, not soteriology; it constitutes Wyclif's vision of an ideal Church and his prescription to achieve such an ideal. There he uses the categories of predestination and reprobation as broadswords, by which to cut grasping prelates down to size. There is little, if any, discussion of the soteriological process itself, but rather its outcome.

Where Wyclif does discuss the actual workings of predestination, he stresses the divine prerogative. In what is perhaps his most severe statement on the matter, he states that the grace of predestination disposes those called by Christ in an effective way, a disposition not given to the foreknown. In answer as to why there is such a disparity in God's gift of grace, Wyclif falls back on St. Paul's analogy of the potter and the clay (Rom. 9:19); God predestines prior to any worthiness on the part of the creature. From the eternal antecedent follows the temporal effect, so that nobody can be said to merit predestination for himself, nor even the first grace; merit implies that one is worthy of future reward, and merit, as we have seen, is impossible apart from grace.²⁰⁹ None of this should be read as to exclude human free will on the part of the saved or the damned, however, but only to exalt God's initiative and effectiveness against human presumption. Indeed, this should not be understood to exclude the possibility that the foreknown could have been saved, for we have seen Wyclif consistently argue that the possibility of salvation must have been open to all. He concedes that by God's absolute power all people could be saved, but he reckons it contrary to God's ordained power that all will in fact be saved. It is true that the number of the predestined and foreknown cannot be added to or subtracted from, since God has eternally determined both, rendering any change in that determination impossible. And yet, while such numbers are fixed, Wyclif avoids sheer determinism, as he again appeals to the distinction between absolute and hypothetical necessity. Though the numbers of

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 19 (pp. 467–68).

²⁰⁹ *De veritate* 3.30 (n. 73 above, pp. 201–2, at 202): “Et illis positus cum volucione dei efficaci formaliter sequitur ordinatum pro tempore suo esse, et sic ex antecedente eterno formaliter sequitur effectus temporalis, non quod quis meretur sibi predestinacionem vel primam gratiam, cum meritum dicit dignificacionem ad mercedem futuram.”

saved and damned cannot be changed, they still could have been different.²¹⁰

It must be admitted that there presently inheres in the damned an absolute impossibility of desisting from error, which is not to say that this had to be the case, only that it cannot now cease to be the case. Their situation is like that of a perpetual creature whose existence was thoroughly contingent and yet cannot now cease to exist (e.g., the soul). Yet even the damned have, by God's law, one brief stay (*morula*) in which they ought to merit. It is only because they do not that God withdraws himself and will no longer excite them to merit. Because that period of opportunity has passed for all the damned, it is fitting that sin should inhere within them, from which they cannot desist, since they are perpetually rooted in the deficiency of faith, hope, and love. Faith is lacking, owing to the removal of the object of formed faith; hope, because they have failed to acknowledge God's law; and love, because they perpetually hate themselves and others. And so it is by hypothetical necessity, he says, that they perpetually will evil in an evil way. For it is now the case that they cannot desist from that evil volition, although it could have been that they would never have had that volition at all.²¹¹ Thus Wyclif insists that if the damned were in fact able to be contrite for their past sins, they would receive the grace of salvation, but their perpetual obstinacy prevents this. It is their great pride that does not permit them to humble themselves, for they are obstinate people who do not wish to forgive and love others.²¹² Clearly the damned cannot undo their condition, which is eternally fixed, but this need not have been their condition. God's eternal knowledge that they would refuse his grace has made the acquisition of blessedness impossible, for it is on the basis of that eternal knowledge that God has eternally willed their damnation. Here again we should recall Wyclif's contention that a key component in understanding the matter of predestination is the fact that a temporal truth can be the cause of an eternal truth.²¹³

²¹⁰ *Sermones* 1.34 (n. 27 above, 1. 231–32): “Secundo videtur quod omnia futura necessario evenirent, quia Deus non potest frustrari in reprobis et electis. . . . Quantum ad istud, certum videtur quod omnes homines venire possunt ad beatitudinem de Dei potencia absoluta. . . . Quoad secundum conceditur conclusio quod omnia necessario evenient et tum contingentissime et sic non necessario absolute sed necessitate ex suppositione ut hic supponitur.”

²¹¹ *De veritate* 3.30 (p. 219): “Dampnati itaque habent ex lege dei unam morulam, in qua debent mereri. . . . Et quia in omnibus dampnatis tale tempus preterit, ideo oportet, eis inesse peccatum, a quo non possunt desistere, licet possint illud facillime non habere, cum sunt perpetuo radicati in carencia fidei, spei et caritatis. . . . Et sic necessario necessitate ex suppositione volunt perpetuo malum male. . . . Nec possunt ab illa volucione desistere, licet illam potuerunt non habere.”

²¹² *De veritate* 3.30 (pp. 216–17).

²¹³ Cf. *Sermones* 1.29 (n. 27 above, 1. 194).

Wyclif on Human Cognizance of Predestination

For Wyclif, just as the number of the predestined and the foreknown is eternally determined by God, so the certainty of one's predestination is founded upon the steadfastness of the elector. Christ eternally chooses every member of the Church, which is why no one can cease to be predestined; to suggest otherwise is to cast doubt on the elector himself.²¹⁴ Unfortunately, this objective assurance remains beyond the grasp of the believer, thus offering none of the comfort that Christ's certain purpose might grant to the anxious conscience. And yet, while it is true that we do not know our predestination by faith, demonstration, or intuition, we can still attain to probable conjecture based upon our way of life and by the virtues God has graciously given us, especially if we are humble and rejoice in the divine law.²¹⁵ Nor will God reveal to someone his own damnation, since that would only drive him to despair, in such a way that he would cast aside virtue and enter into the devil's service. While it is admitted, therefore, that nobody can know his or her final status, those who live a virtuous life should still do so with the hope of acquiring eternal beatitude.²¹⁶ Indeed, every person, whether among the predestined or among the foreknown, should hope for his own beatitude, seeing as God *could not* damn anyone unless his own demerit were the cause. Such damnation would be a violation of his own nature. The fact remains, however, that while both the predestined and the foreknown should hope for salvation, the foreknown person is hoping for what is false; but then he is the reason for its falsity.²¹⁷

Despite all the uncertainty of election, Wyclif does not want to sow doubt in the minds of pious Christians. Thus, while it is true that no wayfarer can know for certain that he is not of the devil, he should still hope that he is not. And, moreover, when he sees others doing good, he ought to suppose that they are also numbered among the saved. The Christian should believe as a matter of faith that, if he perseveres in God's commandments, he will be saved.²¹⁸ The faithful Christian need not be burdened by nagging doubts regarding his relationship to God. The more steadfastly someone keeps God's law, the more confident he can be that he loves God. For just

²¹⁴ *De ecclesia* 4 (n. 179 above, p. 74). It was generally accepted throughout the Middle Ages, and even affirmed at the Council of Trent, that in this lifetime, short of a special revelation, no one can know whether he or she is among the elect. Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1.23.1.

²¹⁵ *Opus evangelicum* 3.54 (n. 14 above, 2:197).

²¹⁶ *De statu innocencie* 9 (n. 62 above, p. 514).

²¹⁷ *Ibid.* (p. 514): "Hic videtur mihi quod omnis homo sive prescitus sive predestinatus debet sperare suam beatitudinem, cum Deus non possit dampnare hominem nisi suum demeritum sit in causa."

²¹⁸ *De dyabolo et membris eius* 2 (*Polemical Works in Latin*, n. 161 above, 1:2–9).

as the commandments of God are all interconnected, so is their observance connected to one's love for God, who is himself the lovable object of this law.²¹⁹ No one need despair, therefore, unless he freely chooses to distrust God, thereby joining the devil in voluntary obstinacy. No one is condemned if he is willing to be converted to the Lord. And were the person so willing, God would receive him unto his mercy. For God is both fair and merciful, and cannot hate any creature except by reason of sin; and every sin is born of human free will. Hence if the otherwise damned person would willingly turn to God, then, in keeping with the fruits of repentance, God would lovingly accept him unto grace, provided that the person's pride does not get in the way so that he no longer wills it. And yet, even among the damned, God's mercy so extends itself that he punishes them mercifully, since he grants them not only their very being, but many subsequent benefits that exceed their merits.²²⁰

Human beings may not know their eternal status, but Wyclif thinks that they can be reasonably certain whether they are in a present state of sin or grace. If we love anything more than God then we are outside of grace, while if we love him above all creatures then we abide in grace.²²¹ Wyclif sums up the whole Christian religion as being based upon the love of God, so that every faithful Christian must learn the art of love, upon which stands all human salvation and the principle of every good. The more a person knows of the art of love, the wiser he is; and the one who abides by love will never fall from the path, for it is the most secure charter for all those seeking the kingdom of heaven.²²² As nothing is loved unless it is known, so one begins with the knowledge of God that leads to love of God. Here Wyclif's metaphysical realism comes into play; while he admits that one can gain knowledge of God through creation (Rom. 1:20), the better and more certain way comes by ascending to God through the eternal exemplars — that is, by way of creatures as they subsist in their intelligible being within the divine intellect.²²³

Charity must be extolled above all other virtues, therefore, since it exceeds them all in its necessity, usefulness, and stability. It is the foundation of every good, the supreme virtue that makes all the other gifts better, informing them all. At the heart of these virtues is Christ, the Uncreated Charity, whose way of life must always be imitated. Thus to follow Christ's

²¹⁹ *De amore* (Ep. 5) (*Opera Minora*, ed. Johann Losereth [London, 1919], 9).

²²⁰ *De mandatis divinis* 19 (*Tractatus de Divinis Mandatis accedit Tractatus de Statu Innocencie*, ed. Johann Losereth and F. D. Matthew [London, 1922], 245).

²²¹ *Differentia inter peccatum mortale et veniale* (*Tractatus de divinis mandatis*, 528). Cf. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 80.21 (CCL 39:1133–34).

²²² *De mandatis* 11 (p. 93).

²²³ *Ibid.* (p. 96).

law is to be conformed to Christ in love; this is the path to salvation. When Paul speaks of charity in 1 Corinthians 13, Wyclif believes that he is referring to the charity or grace of predestination, from which no one can fall away. There is another sort of charity, however, that can abide with mortal sin and does so among the foreknown. And while it is true that no wayfarer can know whether his is the charity of predestination, there is no surer sign that one really does have the habit of charity than to observe and defend the freedom of Christ's law. Thus, even if the soul's possession of habitual charity still cannot be verified, the acts of the soul are very well known to us; our knowledge of them can form the basis of our hope, helping us to trust that if we ultimately persevere in Christ's law we will be saved.²²⁴ For Wyclif, the whole question of grace and merit, and the mystery of predestination itself, finds its fulfillment only in the human being's ontological transformation. The Christian life is about conformity with the triune God. If our works are conformed to the vestiges of the Holy Trinity, then, on account of that likeness, they must be pleasing to God. If not, then they must be hateful, owing to their deformity. In fact, all works are reducible to these three: the love of the Father, who accomplishes such great deeds; the grace of the Son, who knows the will of the Father; and the perseverance of the Spirit, through whom we may perfectly live.²²⁵

CONCLUSION

Wyclif's doctrine of predestination is an expression of his doctrine of grace, namely that God initially offers all people the grace by which they can merit. The refusal of some, a refusal that God knows from all eternity, is the reason for their damnation, since God then withdraws the assistance they would need to merit beatitude. And this, in turn, is in keeping with his understanding of absolute and hypothetical necessity. God knows from all eternity the human free decision and he wills on that basis: salvation for

²²⁴ *Sermones* 3.18 (n. 27 above, pp. 138–42, at 139): “ideo cum Christus Deus noster est caritas, impossibile videtur quemquam secundum caritatem procedere nisi de quanto imitatus fuerit in modo vivendi ipsam primam caritatem.” Ibid. (p. 141): “Cum actus anime sunt nobis notissimi, debet credi ex fide quod quicumque habuerit ad legem Christi observandam claram intencionem et mundum propositum est in caritate secundum presentem iusticiam, quod si habuerit firmitatem talis propositi perseverandi usque ad mortem debet sperare ex eadem fide quod sit in fide predestinacionis.”

²²⁵ *De mandatis* 10 (p. 83): “Et tunc necesse est ita omnia opera nostra mandata Dei implencia complacent trinitati. . . . Sic enim omnia genera virtutum ac viciorum, genus pacis, oracionis et omnia reducibilia sunt ad tria; si enim habemus *caritatem* Patris, ipsa operatur magna si est, et *graciam* Filii noscentis voluntatem Patris, et *perseveranciam* Spiritus Sancti, perfecte vivimus.”

some and damnation for others, but always based upon their free response to his gracious offer of salvation. To the extent that God wills the damnation of the foreknown, it is precisely because their refusal is always known to God; to the extent that he predestines others to salvation, it is because he foreknew they would accept his grace. None of this is Pelagian, however, for the very good reason that no one can possibly move towards God if not for his prevenient grace. For we have seen how Wyclif upheld a strict anti-Pelagian line in arguing that all meritorious action depends upon grace, and even then is rewarded only from divine munificence.

The scholastic theologians generally agreed on the need for human free will in the process of salvation, inasmuch as no one is saved against his or her own will, and in that sense must freely cooperate with divine grace. For Wyclif, grace is always at the beginning of the redemptive process; but it can be refused and thus is not irresistible. But he did think that grace was offered to all people, in accordance with his understanding of God's essential justice and mercy. So he did not believe that God simply leaves some people to their sin, never offering them the possibility of salvation, while extending the necessary grace to others. That may have been the position of Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Scotus; but Wyclif envisioned a process that entails the passive reception of grace on the part of the predestined and an active refusal on the part of the foreknown (a position similar to that of Peter Aureol). We can now affirm that John Wyclif maintained views of human freedom with respect to God's knowledge and will that were not indebted to Bradwardine, but instead were in keeping with the more moderate voices of Buckingham and FitzRalph. He then sought to extend those views into the soteriological realm. Wyclif always prioritized grace, to be sure, especially in the field of merit, but never at the expense of human dignity and the dictates of justice. Moreover, he expressed a genuine confidence in God's merciful desire to save sinners and, by his grace, to bolster their faltering will, that they might earnestly repent and persevere in love.

Lexington Theological Seminary