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Grace and Predestination in the Early Wyclif

The Emergence of Soteriological Views in the *De scientia Dei* and Other Writings Composed around the Time of His *Inceptio* in Theology

ABSTRACT: Wyclif's doctrine of predestination has often been examined primarily for its political implications. This article aligns with studies that treat Wyclif's soteriology as subject in its own right, focusing on his earlier theological writings. It concentrates in particular on the *De scientia Dei*, where Wyclif addresses predestination, grace and merit, free will, and divine reward or punishment from a distinctive theoretical perspective, asking whether an object of divine knowledge can cause that knowledge by existing in time. This enquiry gives rise to a set of characteristic positions, including the claim that rational agents can gain merit before God only *de congruo*, and a concurrentist model according to which *meritum de congruo* is the undivided effect of two total causes: divine grace and human free will. The article concludes by tracing the development of these ideas in the slightly later *De dominio divino*. Overall, Wyclif's doctrine proves more nuanced than is commonly assumed.

SOMMARIO: La dottrina della predestinazione di Wyclif è stata spesso studiata per le sue implicazioni politiche. Il presente contributo considera invece la soteriologia di Wyclif come un oggetto di indagine a sé stante, concentrandosi sui suoi primi scritti teologici. In particolare, ripercorre l'analisi offerta nel *De scientia Dei* circa la predestinazione, la grazia e il merito, il libero arbitrio e la ricompensa o la punizione divine. Da tale indagine emergono una serie di posizioni caratteristiche, tra cui l'affermazione secondo cui l'agente razionale può ottenere merito presso Dio solo *de congruo*, e un modello concorrentista secondo il quale il *meritum de congruo* è l'effetto indiviso di due cause totali: la grazia divina e il libero arbitrio umano. Il contributo si conclude tracciando lo sviluppo di queste idee nel successivo *De dominio divino*. La dottrina che emerge risulta molto più sfumata di quanto ci si potrebbe aspettare da un autore spesso presentato come un rigido determinista.

KEYWORDS: John Wyclif; God's Knowledge; Concurrentism; Causality; *de congruo* Merit

1. INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of predestination profoundly shaped many of Wyclif's ideas, notably his theory of *dominium* and his belief that the true Church consists solely of the elect. This has attracted considerable scholarly attention to his soteriology, particularly its political and ecclesiological implications.¹ Building on Richard FitzRalph's *De pauperie*

1. See Daly 1962: 65-73; Farr 1974: 22-41; Wilks 1965; Simonetta 1999; Lahey 2003: 97-105.



Salvatoris,² Wyclif argued from 1373 onward that divine grace is an essential prerequisite for the rightful exercise of human dominion over worldly goods.³ Accordingly, *dominium* is a loan from God,⁴ who retains ultimate ownership (*dominium capitale*) of the world while granting authority over temporal goods to a select few.⁵ Initially, Wyclif maintained that only those predestined for salvation were entitled to exercise secular dominion, though he later moderated this stance to some extent.

Wyclif's theory of lordship is grounded in his belief that all forms of authority originate from – and should strive towards – the ideal of natural dominion enjoyed by humanity before the Fall. In the state of innocence, human beings did not possess exclusive ownership but exercised collective dominion over all creatures in a condition of equality.⁶ The catastrophic disruption of human nature caused by original sin had far-reaching consequences, among which the breakdown of peaceful coexistence between individuals. This necessitated measures such as the institution of positive law, the introduction of private property and the establishment of coercive authority. However, Wyclif maintained that the infusion of divine grace restores the conditions of *iustitia originalis* – the original justice enjoyed by humanity before the Fall. Grace enables the elect to legitimately manage the world's goods, using them for the glory of God and the service of His Church.⁷

The ecclesiological dimension of Wyclif's view lies in the recognition that the true Church is composed of the *convocatio praedestinatorum*⁸ – the assembly of those predestined for salvation – who together form the Mystical Body of Christ. This is, in essence, an *ecclesia invisibilis*, fully present and united in its eternal dimension before the eyes of God. Membership in this true Church (*esse de ecclesia*) is not guaranteed

2. Cf. FitzRalph 1890; Brock 1954.

3. See Wyclif 1885: 1: “Intendo itaque pro dicendis ostendere duas veritates quibus utar tamquam principiis ad dicenda: prima, quod nemo ut est in peccato mortali habet iusticiam simpliciter ad donum Dei; secunda, quod quilibet existens in gracia gratificante finaliter nedum habet ius, sed in re habet omnia bona Dei”; Wyclif 1922a: 508; and 1909d: 172. Cf. FitzRalph 1890: 340.

4. See Wyclif 1885: 8-9: “Non est possibile hominem iuste simpliciter habere aliquod bonum sibi adiacens, nisi Deus donando id sibi prestiterit [...]; sed Deus non prestat alicui, dum est in mortali peccato, aliquod donum suum: ergo nullus existens in mortali peccato habet pro tunc iuste simpliciter aliquod bonum”; cf. Wyclif 1890: 218.

5. See Wyclif 1890: 225: “quadam excellenti differencia a prestito creature, non abdicat [deus] a se usum prestiti pro tempore quo prestat: quin potius ex vehemencia sui domini sibi vendicat omnem usum, non ad impedicionem vel dampnum prestarii, sed ad eius utilitatem multiplicem”.

6. See Wyclif 1885: 47: “sufficit ad verum et naturale dominium coexistencia extremorum naturalis prefeccio dominative potencie et caritas in eadem; sed hec omnia insunt cuilibet iusto, quoad totum mundum sensibilem et verum dominium in eodem”. Cf. FitzRalph 1890: 334; Wyclif 1922b: 505-506.

7. See Wyclif 1922a: 508; and 1890: 255.

8. See e.g. Wyclif 1885: 358: “necesse est supponere unam veritatem metaphysicam [...] quod ecclesia catholica sive apostolica sit universitas praedestinatorum, quorum aliqui sunt mortui, aliqui vivi, et aliqui generandi”. See Patschovsky 1989.

by mere participation in the visible Church (*esse in ecclesia*), but is granted through the infusion of divine grace.⁹ Wyclif increasingly wielded this doctrine as a polemical tool amid escalating conflicts with English ecclesiastical authorities and the papacy. It became one of the most enduring legacies of his thought, influencing not only English Lollard circles but also the Hussite movement in Bohemia.

The soteriological foundations of Wyclif's views can be traced back to his earlier academic works, particularly the *Summa de ente*. While he had already touched upon the nature of sin in the first tract of the first book (*De ente in communi*) and again in the first two tracts of the second book (the two *Purgans errores*) of the *Summa*,¹⁰ it was in his writings from 1372 onward that he significantly expanded on themes such as predestination, grace and merit, free will, and divine reward and punishment. As Robson has noted,¹¹ this discussion begins in the *De scientia Dei*, where Wyclif explores the broader question of whether an object of divine knowledge can cause that knowledge by virtue of its existence in time.¹²

Given the significant attention already devoted to later political implications of Wyclif's theory of predestination, as well as recent throughout analysis of his soteriology,¹³ I will focus here on Wyclif's generally overlooked earlier treatment of the subject, situated around his *inceptio magistri* in Theology. The doctrine arising from this investigation is more nuanced than one might expect from an author like Wyclif, who has often been portrayed as a rigid determinist.

2. OUTLINES OF A THEORY OF PREDESTINATION IN THE *DE SCIENTIA DEI*

The *De scientia Dei* addresses grace and merit by exploring the question of whether known objects can have causal efficacy on God's knowledge according to their existence *ad extra*. Wyclif distinguishes between divine knowledge, which is essentially identical with God Himself, and relative knowledge, through which God knows entities formally distinct from Himself. As relative, this latter kind of knowledge depends on both extremes: the *sciens* (God) and the *scitum* (the known entity).¹⁴ Furthermore, the object of divine knowledge may either be an intelligible entity or an entity existing in time *ad extra*. While the former is the proper object of *scientia simplicis intelligentiae* and absolutely necessary, the latter is the object of *scientia visionis*, existing contingently and known by God as such:

9. Simonetta 1996: 230-231; and 1999: 123; Robson 1961: 156-161; Leff 1967: 516-521; Farr 1974: 22-32.

10. Wyclif 1909a: 8-24; and 1909b: 29-31, 36; and 1930a: 16-17, 41.

11. Robson 1961: 207-208.

12. Wyclif 2017: 51: "si veritas creata secundum esse existere causat scienciam dei relativam eternam terminatam ad ipsam, sicut scitum secundum esse intelligibile causat scienciam relativam ad ipsam terminatam".

13. Levy 2005. More recently, Lenzi 2023.

14. Wyclif 2017: 1-2. Cf. Wyclif 1909d: 147: "volucio que est relacio rationis eterna et contingens, terminata ad creaturam volitam, causatur ab illa, ut dictum est de divina sciencia". Cf. Campi 2018b: 86-91.

Et sic est dare tres gradus. Primus est [sciencia] que est deus, ad quam consequitur omne intelligibile. In secundo gradu est sciencia dei relativa absolute necessaria terminata ad ydeas, ad quam contingenter sequitur existencia scibilis. Et tercio est sciencia dei contingens – ad quam contingenter consequitur sciencia dei creature – et posterior scito.¹⁵

Whereas intelligible entities – though formally distinct from God – are eternal, necessary and essentially identical to God in the ontological level in which they are known (i.e. in the *esse intelligibile*), *ad extra* entities are contingent, exist only for a certain period of time, and are identical to God in their *esse intelligibile*, but not in the ontological level in which they are known as such (the *esse existere*). On the one hand, it could be argued that if such knowledge – like all divine knowledge – were perfectly determinate, it would undermine the contingency of the known entities, risking a drift toward determinism. On the other hand, allowing for contingent knowledge of entities existing *ad extra* could imply the possibility of mutability and accidentality in God. In discussing these issues, Wyclif rejects the claim that God’s relative knowledge is caused by contingent beings.

The first argument asserts that a temporal entity, such as a contingent *scitum*, cannot be the cause of something eternal, like divine knowledge.¹⁶ For causality implies a priority of being, meaning that a cause must first exist before it can produce any effect. In other words, something must begin to exist before it can begin to cause. Therefore, if one were to claim that a created being, existing within time, could cause God’s eternal knowledge, this would imply that the creature’s existence precedes its causal influence on divine knowledge. This, however, leads to an absurd conclusion, as God’s knowledge is eternal and cannot be temporally conditioned.¹⁷ Specifically, God’s knowledge of a living being, for instance, does not commence with the birth of that being – such a view would imply that God’s knowledge is subject to change, thereby contradicting its immutable nature.

The second argument, by contrast, builds on the principle that a cause must naturally precede its effect, and thus rejects the idea that the causal action of a temporal and contingent being can precede God’s eternal knowledge. This is because such causality would violate the required proportionality between cause and effect, which is absent in the relationship between creature and Creator.¹⁸ As a result, any form of priority – whether natural, temporal or axiological – of the known creature over God’s corresponding act of knowledge is ruled out. The creature cannot precede or condition the eternal cognitive act of God in any meaningful sense.¹⁹

Finally, building on the first two arguments, Wyclif formulates a third objection: if one were to concede that a creature, by virtue of its own *esse existere*, causes the divine

15. Wyclif 2017: 9. Cf. Wyclif 1985: 335: “quamvis Deus potest contingentissime velle et non velle datum volubile, non tamen potest incipere vel desinere ipsum velle et sic non potest mutari de volutione in non-volutionem vel econtra”; Wyclif 1890: 137; and 1909d: 196.

16. Wyclif 2017: 51: “Nam nullum temporale causat eternum; quelibet creatura est temporalis, cum incipit esse; ergo non causat eternum; quelibet sciencia dei est eterna, ergo et cetera”.

17. *Ibid.* Cf. *ibid.*: 24.

18. Cf. Thomas Aquinas 1889, I, q. 105, a. 1, ad 1, 471^{a-b}; and 1884, II, lect. 4, pp. 65^a-67^b.

19. Wyclif 2017: 51-52.

knowledge of which it is the object, one would also have to assert that this causality is eternal, since God's knowledge is eternally determined. From this, it would follow that the creature's existence is likewise eternal. However, this is clearly impossible. On the other hand, if the creature's existence were not eternal, then God's corresponding knowledge would remain uncaused until the creature came into existence – an equally absurd conclusion. Therefore, the only tenable position is to deny that divine knowledge is caused by the creature's *esse existere*.²⁰

In support of this last conclusion, Wyclif presents three additional arguments, which he would revisit in later writings. The first argument is connected with a theme, dear to Bradwardine,²¹ pertaining to the necessity of divine concausality for the efficacy of secondary causes. Every causal action of a creature presupposes prior divine causality; therefore, even if the created object of God's relative knowledge were to exert some causal influence on divine knowledge, God would remain the primary cause of that knowledge.²² Moreover, it seems that God's knowledge of a contingent being relies on a set of causes on God's part (*ex parte Dei*), which are found solely in the acts of the divine faculties. In other words, for God to know a creature existing *ad extra*, the concordance between the divine will and practical knowledge (*scientia practica*) suffices for that creature to exist, and thus to be known by God.²³ Finally, Wyclif introduces a third argument, raising for the first time the concepts of grace and merit:

Tercio, sic: si scientia dei relativa causatur a scito ad quod terminatur, per idem quelibet preordinacio vel predestinacio dei causatur a termino ad quem, et sic homo posset mereri primam gratiam, ymo facere deum ipsum inscribere libro vite, quod communitas doctorum clamat esse impossibile. Et consequencia patet ex hoc quod omnium talium, cum sint relaciones, est par ratio.²⁴

20. *Ibid.*: 52: “quelibet causancia est natura prior sua causacione correlativa; set causacio sciencie divine est eterna; ergo causancia creature secundum suum esse existere est eterna. Et cum nichil potest extensius quoad duracionem causare quam ipsum est, sequitur quod quelibet sit secundum esse existere a parte ante eterna, quod est impossibile.

21. Bradwardine 1618: II, 20, 540-554.

22. Wyclif 2017: 52-53: “nulla creatura quicquam causat, nisi deo previe concausante, ergo nichil creatum causat scienciam in deo, nisi deus preminencius et prius concurrat causando eadem scienciam; set deus nichil causat temporaliter, nisi quod prius naturaliter scit et vult se causare; ergo deus prius naturaliter scit et vult se causare cum creatura suam scienciam quam creatura causat eandem; set deus prius naturaliter scit quodcumque scibile adextra quam reflexe scit se concausare suam scienciam cum creatura; ergo cum longe prius scit quodcumque quam creatura causat scienciam terminatam ad illud scibile, non igitur videtur concedendum quod quelibet creatura causat infinitas sciencias in deo”.

23. Wyclif 2017: 53: “aliqua respectiva causant effectus subiecti huiusmodi respectivi; set hoc potissime haberet evidenciam de divina sciencia et volicione producendi creaturas; ergo ille nate sunt esse cause rerum respectu quarum sunt; ergo, non econtra, res ad quas terminatur causant illas. [...] Et minor patet ex hoc quod sciencia divina ordinatur ad opus, et volucio efficax complet. Nam sciencia dei simplicis noticie est indubie prius natura quam scitum actualiter existit; et cum illa non sufficit, requiritur volucio pro causa completa”.

24. *Ibid.* See McGrath 1986: 176: “The rejection of any [...] *ratio iustificacionis ex parte creature* is usually taken as evidence of a theologian's ‘Augustinianism’”. Cf. McGrath 1981.

The risk could not be clearer: what is at stake is the immutability and stability of the eternal decree by which God has freely chosen to predestine certain individuals to salvation. The notion that creatures, through their *esse existere*, could cause divine knowledge seems to lead directly to a form of Pelagianism, where the creature is seen as playing an effective role in determining, through its merits, God's purpose in electing it for salvation.

The remainder of the sixth chapter – the longest in *De scientia Dei* – is devoted to challenging the arguments outlined so far. Wyclif argues that God's eternal relative knowledge is, in some sense, caused by the created beings to which it is directed. This section is developed with great clarity through the presentation of seven "truths", which form much of the soteriological framework to which Wyclif would return in subsequent years.

3. PRELIMINARY CLARIFICATIONS

Wyclif is convinced that, in all respects, God possesses an eternal, relative knowledge of contingent entities, and that this knowledge, analogous to that which is directed towards intelligible entities, is caused by its own objects. The two forms of relative knowledge differ in their causation. The *scientia simplicis intelligentiae* has, as its cause, an absolutely necessary aggregate of causes, and is therefore also absolutely necessary. In contrast, the *scientia visionis* is contingent, as its complete cause is contingent. This implies that the relative knowledge God has of a contingent being is caused by that being itself through its existence. However, if the being in question does not come into existence *ad extra*, there will be no divine knowledge of that being "insofar as it exists":²⁵ "Non enim deficit quod scientia qua deus noscit unum possibile non existens non sit scientia visionis, nisi quia ipsum non existit, cum ipso existente deus videt illud".²⁶ On the other hand, what distinctly separates contingent entities or events from necessary ones is that the former come into existence when nothing has occurred to prevent them, i.e. when their total cause is present, fulfilling all the conditions required for their realisation. This total cause is itself contingent, and the failure to meet even one of the conditions for the existence of the contingent entity or event is enough to prevent it from coming into existence. However, given the total cause, as previously

25. Wyclif 2017: 53-54: "sicut scientia dei simplicis noticiae se habet ad suum obiectum in esse intelligibili, sic scientia visionis creature se habet ad creaturam obiectivam in esse existere; set quelibet scientia dei relativa primi modi causatur a suo obiecto, ut patet ex dictis; ergo per idem, cum par sit ratio, sequitur quod scientia dei practica vel intuicionis causatur ab existencia creature. Item quelibet talis scientia est contingens, quod non esset nisi dependeret a causa contingenti; [...] ergo si causatum sit non necessarium, sequitur quod aut sua completa causa vel aggregatum ex omnibus suis causis sit contingens".

26. *Ibid.*: 54. Again, *ibid.*: "Ideo videri potest probabiliter quod omnis talis scientia dei que est relacio dependet ab utroque suorum extremorum correlativorum, ut patet de vi vocis". Cf. Wyclif 1909d: 130: "aggregatum ex deo et isto mundo est completa causa huius volucionis, sic quod claudit contradiccionem illud aggregatum esse, nisi sit volucio divina, cum volucio dei relativa non dicit nisi deum et illam creaturam bonam".

mentioned, the contingent entity comes into existence *ad extra*, and there is a corresponding contingent knowledge in God:

Supposito quod loquamur de sciencia dei practica contingenti terminata ad existenciam creature, conceditur quod illa causatur ab existencia creature; non autem sciencia qua deus scit se, nec sciencia simplicis noticie creature, quia quelibet talis est absolute necessaria; nec sciencia que est habitus vel actus in deo, quia nulla talis sciencia sibi inest.²⁷

While addressing the aforementioned difficulties, Wyclif develops some themes already introduced in his work. First, how is a temporal entity to be understood as the cause of something eternal, such as divine knowledge? One way Wyclif approaches this is by distinguishing between the eternal present, which characterises the timelessness in which God exists, and the flowing dimension of time that is intrinsic to created entities. Any confusion between these concepts, as Wyclif often observes, is at the root of fallacious arguments. In this context, Wyclif emphasises the chiasmic structure, so to speak, of the causal relationship between that which is eternal, belonging exclusively to God, and that which is temporal, belonging exclusively to creatures. If the agent is eternal, then his causal action is also eternal, while the effect on the temporal recipient occurs within time. Conversely, if the agent is temporal, his causal action is temporal, but the effect on the eternal recipient is also eternal:

conceditur quamlibet creaturam incipere causare scienciam dei quando incipit esse veram; tamen causacio dei quecumque divine sciencie est eterna; unde sicut *preordinancia* dei est eterna et *preordinacio* creature est temporalis, cum incipit esse cum creatura, sic *causancia* creature respectu divine sciencie est temporalis et *causacio* sciencie est eterna. Nec pocius sequitur ‘illa sciencia *nunc* causatur ab illa creatura, ergo *nunc* illa creatura causat illam’, quam sequitur ‘deus *nunc* scit illam creaturam existere, ergo illa *nunc* existit’.²⁸

God predestines every being from eternity, and His causal action is undoubtedly eternal; however, the effect on each individual being occurs in time, that is, when it exists. On the other hand, if we consider the relationship *ex parte rei* – for instance, between the *scitum temporale* and the *sciens* – the created being exerts its causal effect on the corresponding divine knowledge only when it exists, yet the divine knowledge is caused eternally. In this way, Wyclif seeks to ensure that the determination of God’s contingent knowledge remains unaffected by the temporal changes of created entities, without rendering it either caused or uncaused with respect to its own objects, depending on the circumstances. To claim that an entity, insofar as it now exists, causes God’s relative eternal knowledge is not the same as claiming that this eternal knowledge is now caused by it – unless, of course, one accepts arguments based on the *fallacia accidentis* as true.²⁹

27. Wyclif 2017: 55.

28. *Ibid.* (emphasis mine). Cf. Wyclif 1909d: 201; and 1890: 161 and 165.

29. Cf. Spruyt 2008: 36-39.

God's knowledge, therefore, is not caused in the present. Similarly, Wyclif notes that the argument claiming that a creature, by causing divine knowledge through its own *esse existere*, would thereby exert an eternal *causancia* over it – an argument that may be valid in relation to the *esse intelligibile* of such a creature – is equally unconvincing. The *causancia* of divine contingent knowledge by the creature, as previously mentioned, is only temporal, whereas the effect of this causality is eternal. Since God, in His eternal present, encompasses all events, moments and individuals – whether past, present or future – Wyclif concludes that His knowledge is always completely caused:

sciencia eternaliter habet plenum esse ab existencia creature, cum eternitas sit immediata cuilibet instanti temporis et cuilibet creature existenti in quacunque parte temporis sempiterni. Ideo sciencia dei numquam caret causa, cum *semper habet causam causantem tempore suo*. [...] Ex isto patet quod sciencia dei non est primo incausata et post causata, set *manet eternaliter plene causata*, cum numquam caret causa, quia tunc ante non haberet causam.³⁰

Finally, Wyclif highlights the equivocality of the term *sciencia*. If we consider *scientia quae est Deus*, it is undoubtedly the uncaused cause of the existence of creatures. However, when viewed as relative, God's contingent knowledge depends on both extremes and is thus caused by the existence of the known object:

Ideo, ut supra dixi, illa non repugnant, set consequuntur se ad sensus equivocos 'quia deus scit hoc esse, hoc est', et 'quia hoc est, ideo deus scit hoc esse'. Actus enim sciendi, cum sit divina essentia, est causa existencie creature, set relatio rationis que est scientis ad scitum causatur ab obiecto scito, et utrumque illorum denotatur verbo sciendi.³¹

In no case, however, is divine knowledge subject to change, as illustrated by the example concerning the term *dominus* in relation to God.³² On the one hand, God can be said to be *eternaliter dominus*, as He eternally causes creatures (according to their intelligible being) and thus has eternal dominion over them. On the other hand, God is lord over each creature only when it exists. Yet, this does not imply any real change in God, since what is at stake here is a *relatio rationis*, and consequently, the term *dominus*

30. Wyclif 2017: 56 (emphasis mine). In the light of this, the distance in the past or future of a temporal moment from the present one in no way affects the relationship between that moment and the science of God. Cf. *ibid.*: 54-55: "Si enim deus infinitum anterioraret *a* instans, ponendo quotlibet annos mixtim cum istis inter *a* et *b*, adhuc foret *b* causa prioritatis *a* ad *b*; ergo quelibet distancia successiva vel eternitatis est inperitens ad imponendum temporale ne causet relacionem eternam".

31. *Ibid.*: 57. See also, *ibid.*: 63: "sciencia et volucio relativa, que est prius naturaliter quam datum scitum, eo quod terminatur ad aliud scitum naturaliter prius dato scito, est causa talis sciti; set nulla sciencia relativa terminata principaliter ad scitum est causa illius sciti, set econtra".

32. *Ibid.*: 56-57: "Et si arguitur ex isto quod deus sit eternaliter dominus, cum eternaliter causat creaturam, et sic homo foret pater filii antequam filius ille esset, fateor quod homo posset intelligere huiusmodi dicta ad sensum verum – scilicet si dominus vel pater pro aliqua mensura habet servum vel filium, tunc est dominus vel pater, vel aliter restringendo quod solum pro illa mensura est dominus pro qua mensura habet servum existentem pro eadem mensura". Cf. Wyclif 1909d: 169; and 1891: 70. Cf. Augustine 1955: XII, 16, 370-372.

is predicated *secundum habitudinem*.³³ Similarly, the claim that divine knowledge of a given object is ‘caused’ by that object can be true if the object exists, or false if it does not, without causing any real change in God.

In continuing his critique, Wyclif again refers to the concepts of grace and merit to challenge the thesis that denies the possibility of an entity, by virtue of its existence *ad extra*, having any priority over divine knowledge. Just as beatitude, though following merit in time, precedes it by nature and according to the order of final causality, so too does the existence of the creature precede, by nature and purpose, the relative knowledge God has of it:

nichil enim repugnat quantumlibet posterius tempore esse suo priori tempore naturaliter prius, ut beatitudo gracia cuius viator meretur est naturaliter prior merito, cum sit finis gracia cuius deus ordinat mereri intendentes beatitudinem principaliter, et meritum tamquam medium ad dictam beatitudinem. Et certum est quod quicquid deus principaliter intendit est naturaliter prius: cum ergo deus principaliter intendit creaturam ad extra quam illam relacionem sui ad creaturam, sequitur quod creatura naturaliter sit prior relacione illa.³⁴

The reference to this example is not incidental: as previously noted, Wyclif is aware that his assertion of a causal relationship between the *scitum* and divine knowledge could be viewed as a potential charge of Pelagianism. As we will see, Wyclif takes significant care to distance himself from this interpretation. Similarly, to underscore that the creature, in terms of *esse existere*, does not ‘eternally’ cause divine knowledge, Wyclif once again employs the inverted relationship between eternity and temporality in the interactions between agent and patient, which depend on God and a creature. This time, he draws notably from the soteriological context:

Sequitur enim ‘si deus predestinat me, ergo sum predestinatus’, set non oportet, si antecedens sit eternum, quod suum consequens sit eternum: solum enim tunc sum predestinatus, quando sum. [...] Sicut ergo non sequitur ‘per totum illud tempus non est illa creatura predestinata a deo, ergo per totum illud tempus deus non predestinat illam creaturam’, ita non sequitur ‘per totum illud tempus non est illa creatura causans scienciam divinam, ergo per totum illud tempus non est sciencia divina causata ab illa creatura’.³⁵

33. On predication *secundum habitudinem*, see Conti 2006: 101-102; Spade 1985: xxxv. Cf. Cesalli 2005: 136-137. See Wyclif 1985: 34; and 1891: 120; and 1909b: 35.

34. Wyclif 2017: 57-58. Divine knowledge is caused by the act of the creature’s existence, not by the relation in which the *causancia* of the creature consists; and thus the existence of the creature by its very nature precedes the divine *causancia* of its own science in relation to that creature, just as the *causancia* of divine science by the creature precedes the *causancia* of divine science in relation to that creature; cf. Wyclif 1930a: 104: “Nec oportet omne prius naturaliter esse prius vel eque primo temporaliter, set sufficit quod natura cui omnia sunt presencia prius intendat illud”.

35. Wyclif 2017: 61.

A reference to beatitude and merit is made once more when Wyclif, while addressing the challenges involved in examining the relations of priority according to nature and the order of efficient and final causality, observes that the divine will regarding a creature's beatitude precedes His will concerning the creature's acquisition of merit for salvation. However, the latter should be regarded as the cause of the former, since "ille voliciones reciproce se causant, una ut agens, alia ut finis".³⁶

In the *De scientia Dei* itself, as well as in several subsequent writings, Wyclif grounded a substantial part of his argumentation in the concept of causal reciprocity – not only between divine acts *ad intra*, but also more broadly between the intrinsic or extrinsic actions of creatures and the corresponding cognitive and volitional acts of God. This was aimed at ensuring individuals a certain degree of agency in determining the divine will concerning their own eschatological destiny. It is a narrow path, teetering on the brink of the abyss of Pelagian error and threatened by the encroaching deterministic heresy. Nevertheless, this endeavour was undertaken by many scholars of the time, engaged in the paradoxical task of "prendere in esame, attraverso categorie inevitabilmente antropomorfe, un evento (quello appunto della grazia) che rappresenta di per sé il massimo dislocamento della centralità dell'uomo",³⁷ and – at the same time – of reflecting on the freedom and responsibility to be attributed to created agents, especially with regard to their sinful behaviour.

4. GRACE AND MERIT IN THE *DE SCIENTIA DEI*

"Non est possibile mereri hominem sibi primam gratiam vel predestinacionem".³⁸ Wyclif reacts with unequivocal clarity to those who deny that divine knowledge of a creature depends on both terms. As previously noted, this line of reasoning leads to the perilous conclusion that it is within an individual's power to have her or his name inscribed in the *liber vitae* based on merits earned with God. Consequently, Wyclif devotes the extensive sixth chapter of his *De scientia Dei* to developing this reply. Here, for the first time in his writings, he undertakes a taxonomic exposition of grace, which finds a more comprehensive formulation in the *De dominio divino*. Thus, Wyclif's focus shifts from the relative knowledge of God to His relative will – the former serving as a presupposition of the latter, in which grace is rooted.

Wyclif identifies three main meanings of the term 'gracia'. Firstly, it refers to that which makes creatures pleasing to God in relation to the goods that God Himself has willed for them. Understood in this way, grace embodies the goodwill that constitutes the absolutely gratuitous and eternal *dilectio* for the beloved creature. According to this interpretation, no individual can be pleasing to God without a corresponding eternal grace in God; similarly, no creature can 'become' *grata*, as grace is without beginning or end, reflecting the immutability of the divine will.³⁹ Considered in these terms, grace can be said in three ways:

36. Cf. *ibid.*: 65.

37. Porro 1997: 277.

38. Wyclif 2017: 66.

39. *Ibid.*: 67.

Ex parte dei potest accipi [1.] essentialiter pro natura divina, [2.] personaliter pro Spiritu sancto, vel [3.] formaliter pro bona volicione, dileccione, vel amore respectivo terminato ad creaturam gratam. Et hec omnia sunt eterna, set duo prima sunt absolute necessaria; tertium autem est contingens secundum omnes eius partes.⁴⁰

In this subdivision of the meanings of eternal grace, the distinction between what belongs to God alone by absolute necessity and what pertains to Him contingently – through His relationship with a finite being – becomes evident once more. As *bona voluntas* [3.], grace is, in fact, only rationally distinct from the divine nature [1.], but it is essentially identical to it, while it stands *personaliter* for the third person of the Trinity [2.]; formally, grace is a relation grounded in God's will and in an individual existing *ad extra* [3.]. As such, grace is both eternal and contingent with respect to God and the individual existing *ad extra* – as Wyclif had already pointed out in his commentary on the Aristotelian category of relation, which was collected in his *De ente praedicamentali*:

Tercia maneries relacionum in Deo est fundata in eius actu intrinseco et in existencia creature, ut sciencia, volucio, intendencia, propositum, consilium, predestinancia et similia. Ille enim relaciones sunt eterne, et contingentes in deo. Eterne quidem, quia deus nichil potest incipere scire vel ordinare; et contingentes, quia, si non est effectus, non est talis sciencia et econtra; antecedens est contingens; ergo et consequens.⁴¹

This is an approach that Wyclif adopts, as we shall see, to safeguard the possibility of individuals freely exercising their own will. In its second meaning, grace is regarded *ex parte creaturae* as a gift freely bestowed by God.⁴² Here, a tripartite division is also possible; for grace can be understood as follows:⁴³

1. "Personaliter in predicacione secundum essenciam pro creatura grata";
2. "Materialiter pro illo dono creato gratis dato creature";
3. "Formaliter pro illa gratificacione qua creatura est formaliter grata deo".

It is evident that the third subdivision of grace *ex parte creaturae gratificatae* corresponds to the third *ex parte Dei* and denotes a relationship – specifically that of *gratificatio* – which involves a created and contingent being receiving the gift, and God, who freely and voluntarily bestows it.

The third and final meaning of 'grace,' the one occurring most frequently in the Scriptures according to Wyclif, refers to the gratitude expressed by the faithful in offering praise to God, who grants the reward of eternal salvation to the creatures He loves.⁴⁴

40. *Ibid.*: 68.

41. Wyclif 1891: 69-70. See also 1985: 343-344: "Et ita existencia creaturae, licet sit temporalis, causat in Deo relationem rationis aeternam, quae semper causatur et semper est complete causata. Nec sequitur ex isto quod Deus sit mobilis cum ad talem habitudinem est motus [...] nec sequitur ex isto quod homo potest perficere Deum, cogere eum, vel causare volutionem, scientiam vel aliquod absolutum".

42. Wyclif 2017: 67-68: "pro quocunque dono creature rationali gratis dato, sive sit virtus, sive quocunque aliud bonum".

43. *Ibid.*: 68.

44. *Ibid.*: "Ultimo, accipitur gracia pro laude repensa premianti, et illo modo agimus gracias deo, ut creberrime loquitur Scriptura".

Based on these premises, Wyclif outlines seven *veritates* concerning the bestowal of grace by God and the merit that pertains to the individual. Firstly, Wyclif observes that, without the prior divine volition embodied in *gratia praeveniens*, it would be impossible for a rational creature not only to perform any action – regardless of its intention – but even to achieve actual existence:

inpossibile est aliquam creaturam rationalem esse, vel quicquam agere, sine gracia dei preveniente; patet ex hoc, quod bona volucio, qua deus vult creaturam rationalem in communi existere, est causa cuiuslibet rationalis creature; ergo est prius natura quacunque tali creatura, et per consequens multo magis est causa cuiuslibet operis vel accidentis positivi huius creature.⁴⁵

At least in this first sense, claiming that human beings have the power to merit their own salvation from God seems rather injudicious. Without the prior infusion of God's *gratia praeveniens* – or *gratia gratis data* – even the created extreme of God's relative volition (and, a fortiori, knowledge) cannot be established; in other words, the created subject of any merit does not exist. Wyclif describes this grace as the volitional act through which God fulfils all the conditions necessary for the existence of a particular individual. In this sense, *gratia praeveniens* is primarily directed towards universal entities that exist in her or his *esse intelligibile* and of which creatures are instantiations *ad extra*. Since the divine volition concerning *homo in communi* naturally precedes the volition directed towards *homo individuum*, *gratia praeveniens* is a prerequisite for the existence of the created entity and for each of its subsequent accidents.

In addition to what has been illustrated here, the 'prevenient' intervention of divine grace also encompasses the infusion of the *habitus caritatis*, which enables individuals to perform meritorious works before God. If the very existence of each individual and their actions relies on the prior *gratia praeveniens*, it follows that every form of merit can be acquired by the rational agent solely through the disposition to goodness that arises from the infusion of divine grace. Conversely, Pelagius and some theologians assert that human agents can fulfil divine commandments *ex puris naturalibus* and be pleasing to God without divine assistance. This misunderstanding primarily stems from metaphysical ignorance and a lack of comprehension regarding the nature of this grace.⁴⁶ It is, in fact, a relation of reason (the *bona volutio*), as the two extremes – God and the creature that is dear to Him – are not really distinct but only formally so; thus, the foundation of the relation resides solely in God.⁴⁷ In contrast, Pelagius and his followers appear to view it as a real relationship, established *ex parte creaturae*, dependent

45. Wyclif 2017: 68-69. See 1909d: 146-147: "prima volucio contingens in deo, que est relacio rationis, est volucio qua deus vult in communi creaturam esse".

46. Wyclif 2017: 69: "Unde patet quod Pelagius et alii negantes gratiam requiri ad meritum creature errant in noticia quidditatis illius gracie, sicut maior pars theologorum [...] vel errant vel difficultant dispendiose tractando".

47. Wyclif 1891: 63: "[...] vocantur relativa secundum dici vel relativa rationis, quod contingit tripliciter. Primo, quando unum extremum est substantia, habens fundamentum, et reliquum non, ut gracia, qua creatura rationalis est grata Deo, fundatur in virtute, a qua dependet; ideo est adquiribilis et deperdibilis tamquam accidens temporale. Sed econtra gracia vel caritas, qua

on an ‘absolute accident’ that may or may not inform it: “Putavit enim Pelagius quod gracia qua homo est gratus deo formaliter sit una res que potest per se esse et poni in lapide, vel ubicumque homo voluerit; et indubie verum dixit quod potest homo mereri sine aliqua tali gracia”.⁴⁸

According to Wyclif, the ‘modern Pelagians’ have maintained that, even if divine grace is a condition for performing meritorious acts in the present world order, it is nonetheless *de lege*, not *de potentia absoluta*.⁴⁹ This conviction has sometimes been defended through a kind of contractualist conception, according to which the actions and dispositions of individuals are indeed the cause of justification – not by virtue of their inherent nature (*ex natura rei*), but by virtue of the value assigned to them by God, in accordance with a covenant made with humanity (*ex pacto divino*).⁵⁰ In contrast to this view, Wyclif seeks to emphasise that *gratia praeveniens* represents every divine will that concerns creatures, which, prior to their individual existence, cannot be caused by human merit. Through this grace, creatures are already pleasing to God before they have had the opportunity to acquire any merit.

The second conclusion Wyclif draws on soteriological matters concerns the nature of the merit a person can have before God: “impossibile est creaturam mereri a deo vel creatura premium quodcunque, nisi a deo mereatur illud premium de congruo, non de condigno”.⁵¹ Aware of the risk of misunderstanding or censure,⁵² Wyclif undoubtedly presented his doctrine of *meritum de congruo* with the aim of dialectically opposing Bradwardine. In his *De causa Dei*, Bradwardine had argued that rational creatures deserved the reward of salvation *de condigno*, and in a significant chapter, he firmly

deus habet rationalem creaturam gratam sibi, nec habet substantiam pro suo subiecto, nec accidens in Deo pro suo fundamento; ideo utraque est relatio rationis”.

48. Wyclif 2017: 69. Cf. 1890: 240.

49. See Wyclif 1909d: 195: “Hoc tamen esset hereticum, et sine colore prophane dictum, quod deo cooperante cum homine per gratiam suam, prius naturaliter et principaliter operatur homo quam deus per gratiam; et hoc oportuit pelagianos illos modernos dicere, qui ponunt esse possibile quod homo operetur, cum hoc quod deus non cooperetur cum eo. 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” (emphasis mine).

50. Wyclif 2017: 69: “Unde multi moderni ad tantum desipiunt quod ponunt requiri talem gratiam de lege, set non de potencia dei absoluta. Set, si non fallor, in toto corpore Scripture non potest fundari talem gratiam esse dandam [...]. Ideo certum est quod preter tale possibile ponere oportet acceptionem dei et eius informacionem, si deberet esse gratus deo, sicut oportet preter signum plumbeum ponere acceptionem hostiarum ad hoc quod ipsum deserviat”. Cf. Courtenay 1971: 99; and 1972a; and 1972b; McGrath 1986: 88.

51. Wyclif 2017: 69.

52. In 1314, the General Chapter of the Dominican Order, meeting in Metz, censured in various ways certain theses expressed by Durandus of St. Pourçain, including two contained in the commentary on d. 20 of the third book of the Lombard, which denied the possibility of individuals deserving anything *de condigno*, but only *de congruo*. See Koch 1973: 72-118: 100-101. Cf. *ibid.*: 53-72: 64. The pronouncement of the Order was not one of condemnation or prohibition, but of censure; as such, the Dominican document was limited in scope and internal to the Order. Cf. Iribarren 2005: 182-186. For a presentation of Durandus’s soteriological doctrine, see Leff 1957: 165-187.

rejected the possibility of *de congruo* merit – at least before the infusion of the grace of predestination.⁵³

The distinction between *de condigno* and *de congruo* merit received particular attention in theological debates of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In his commentary on the *Sentences*, Thomas Aquinas, among others, presents the two types of merit as follows: “Dicitur aliquis mereri ex condigno quando invenitur aequalitas inter praemium et meritum, secundum rectam aestimationem; ex congruo autem tantum, quando talis aequalitas non invenitur, sed solum secundum liberalitatem dantis munus tributur quod dantem decet”.⁵⁴

De condigno merit, as understood by Aquinas, refers to the objective worth of an action that justifies the agent’s claim to a corresponding reward. This holds true between equals, but not between the creature and God, since the disparity between the giver and the recipient is infinite, and the *inequalitas* is maximal. Thus, what God grants to humankind is not bestowed as something owed but is given purely as a gift.⁵⁵ Moreover, every meritorious *de condigno* human act can only be such by virtue of a supernatural quality ensured by the divine infusion of sanctifying grace.

De congruo merit, on the other hand, pertains to an action performed by a free agent with a natural disposition towards good, though not in a state of grace. This concept is contentious, as various figures in the late medieval and early modern theological debates perceived it as a potential threat to the doctrine of the absolute gratuitousness of grace. A meritorious act *de congruo* is viewed as a suitable condition for the infusion of *gratia gratum faciens* – a form of adequate preparation for God’s favour and his decision to show mercy to the individual.⁵⁶

Many authors, therefore, emphasise that *de congruo* merit does not precede the infusion of *gratia praeveniens* but follows it.⁵⁷ Having received from God the *caritas*

53. Bradwardine 1618: I, 39, 325-364. Cf. Oberman 1958: 155-159; Leff 1957: 74-79.

54. Thomas Aquinas 1929: II, d. 27, q. 1, a. 3, 702.

55. Thomas Aquinas 1892: I-II, q. 114, a. 3, 347^b.

56. Cf. McGrath 1986: 110-111; Oberman 1958: 149-151.

57. This is the approach taken, for example, by Aquinas and Bonaventure, who emphasise that a rational creature, by cooperating with the divine will through his own free will, prepares to receive sanctifying grace solely by virtue of the *gratia gratis data* that God has freely granted beforehand. In essence, they strive to affirm the indispensability of the divine initiative in the process of justification while still recognising the role of human free will – which, however, is itself already a gift of divine grace. See Thomas Aquinas 1892: I-II, q. 114, a. 3, 347^b; Bonaventure 1891: 5, 3, 255. Wawrykow has finely demonstrated how the position adopted by Aquinas in the *Summa Theologiae* and other mature writings entails significant differences compared to his earlier views on the theme of merit, as developed in his commentary on the *Sentences*; cf. Wawrykow 1995. A problematic position is that of Ockham, whose list of fifty-one articles was condemned at Avignon in 1326, the first four of which were accused of Pelagianism; the first can be seen in Pelzer 1922: 250: “Reprobando communem modum, quod 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”. In fact, Ockham had argued that individuals

that enables him to perform meritorious acts *de congruo*, a person finds himself in a state that is the culmination of divine action, the result of the infusion of *gratia gratis data*. Among the Oxonian theologians of the generation before Wyclif, however, Bradwardine argued that individuals could merit *de congruo* only through the *prima gratia* – that is, the grace of predestination. In his view, only those whom God has chosen to save receive the *habitus infusus* enabling them to merit with God. This radical conception of *de congruo* merit sought to counter the ‘modern Pelagians’ who,⁵⁸ as noted, argued for the rational agent’s capacity to become dear to God through good works performed *ex puris naturalibus*.⁵⁹

However, in broad agreement with the *Doctor Profundus* on this point, Wyclif considers it entirely inadmissible for human actions to be meritorious *de condigno*, primarily on the grounds that such a reward would then be granted *de pura iustitia*. In other words, the created agent could, by his actions, secure a proportionate reward owed to him by God, independently of divine grace. According to Wyclif, the only merit admissible is *de congruo*, as the reward granted by God is given *de pura gratia praemiantis* – that is, based on the utterly gratuitous choice to accept as fitting the actions of certain individuals who are already experiencing the effects of *gratia praeveniens*. This doctrine, which would recur throughout Wyclif’s works, first appears in *De scientia Dei*:

can perform acts *ex puris naturalibus* that are deemed by God to be worthy of the infusion of sanctifying grace, thereby effectively recognising the ability of individuals to earn merit *de congruo*, which prepares the subsequent divine infusion of grace necessary to perform meritorious acts *de condigno*. However, Ockham does not admit that individuals can merit their own salvation, but that they can prepare themselves to accept saving grace; see William of Ockham 1984: q. 6, a. 11, 320. Cf. Vignaux 1934: 118-127; and 1931: 774-775; Wood 1999.

58. Authors such as Ockham, Holcot, and Wodeham argued that the *viatores*, based on their own natural faculties and without the support of grace, could love God and perform good actions (*facere quod in se est*) capable of ‘eliciting’ the infusion of divine grace, in line with the adage “*facientibus quod in se est, Deus non denegat gratiam*”. See William of Ockham 1967: d. 1, q. 2, 307: “*Dico primo quod obiecto fruibili ostenso voluntati per intellectum sive clare sive obscure sive in particulari sive in universali, potest voluntas active elicere actum fruitionis, et hoc ex puris naturalibus, circa illud obiectum*”; Adam Wodeham, *Lectura Oxoniensis*, I, d. 1, q. 10, a. 1, concl. 1, quoted from Courtenay 1984: 296 n. 124): “*Quod in via, stante cognitione viatoris aenigmatica in universali vel in particulari, voluntas potest causare in se active dilectionem Dei super omnia et propter se sive fruitionem Dei, quia voluntas potest se conformare recto dictamini intellectus [...]. Mihi videtur quod etiam sine infusione doni supernaturalis posset voluntas viatoris mediante dictamine possibili haberi de Deo in via libere in se causare dilectionem Dei super omnia*”.

59. Note that Leff misunderstood Bradwardine’s view, attributing to him the opinion that individuals can never deserve *de congruo*; see Leff 1957: 74. Rather, Bradwardine wants to deny any possibility that individuals can be pleasing to God *ex puris naturalibus*, or, in other words, that a rational agent has the capacity to merit *de congruo ante gratiam*; see Oberman 1958: 150-151: “*What matters here is that according to Bradwardine the priority of human nature is taught again in the meriting de congruo. Before the reception of the gratia prima, however, there is no trace of love in human beings, and outside love no good intention is possibile. Without grace, the creature can no more proceed towards God actualiter than habitualiter; he can only oppose Him*” (emphasis mine). See Bradwardine 1618: I, 39, 325.

notandum quod ‘mereri’ restrictum ad bonum est creaturam rationalem facere aliquod premiabile, et antonomastice dicitur de premio vite eterne, sicut et illa antonomastice dicitur ‘premium’. Quando autem aliquis ex culpa reddit se dignum pena temporali vel eterna, tunc dicitur ‘demereri’. Et est duplex meritum, scilicet de congruo et de condigno. De congruo, quando aliquis meretur de pura gracia premiantis – ut puta, quando premians prevenit cooperando omne meritum merentis ut bene sibi sit, et non ut illi premianti aliquid bonitatis inde accrescat, cum nullo tali labore indigeat. [...] De condigno autem dicitur quis mereri, quando meretur de pura iusticia ab aliquo premiante, quod fit quando premians non graciose coagit cum illo, iuvans ad sic merendum, vel quando fit meritum ad indigenciam premiantis.⁶⁰

If human good works were to fulfil some need of God, they would place Him in humanity’s debt, thereby rendering their merit *de condigno* – akin to the merit a vine-dresser earns from the vineyard owner, who, upon the work’s completion, provides the agreed reward *de rigore iustitiae sine titulo gratiae*. This, however, is not the case with the reward of eternal life, which is freely given and unregulated by any pact between God and His creatures. The corresponding merit, therefore, can only be *de congruo*, as when a king chooses to acknowledge the labour of certain workers, despite having no need for their efforts. Having resolved to reward them, he further elects to bestow upon them a perpetual inheritance. In this instance, the labour performed does not place the king in a position of obligation; rather, it provides an occasion, deemed fitting by the sovereign, for a magnanimous bequest.

In the concise treatment of the second soteriological truth outlined in the *De scientia Dei*, a concept emerges that would later be more extensively developed in the *De dominio divino*: no individual can merit anything from another without first meriting it before God. Therefore, even if one were to receive a good from another person that is owed *de pura iustitia* – that is, in accordance with a retributive logic – such a reward would, in truth, be primarily granted as a gift from God:⁶¹ “patet ex hoc quod

60. Wyclif 2017: 66. The only other evidence for the distinction between *de congruo* and *de condigno* merit in the treatises of the *Summa de ente* available in critical edition is found in the *De volutione Dei*. There, the issue of merit is addressed in several places; however, explicit reference to the concepts of *meritum de condigno* and *praemium de pura gratia* appears in only one passage; see Wyclif 1909d: 131.

61. In the *De dominio divino*, Wyclif examines three *accidencia dominii* (*praestatio*, *accomodatio*, and *mutuatio*), or ways in which a dominion holder permits others to use certain goods. For the *summus Dominus*, such grants do not transfer full dominion (*dominium capitale*) over the lent goods. In his analysis of loans, Wyclif interprets the divine loan to humanity as a gift: a completely free act, where the divine reward is a good given on loan. See Wyclif 1890: 235-236: “Deus, si dat aliquid creature, tunc donat et prestat idem, ablatis circumstanciis prestandi que imperfectionem sapiunt”. Thus, when a temporal lord grants jurisdiction over property to an individual, he cedes part of his dominion (unlike God). However, he can only do so because he has received the property as a gift from God *de pura gratia*; see *ibid.*: 16: “dominium Dei mensurat, ut prius et presuppositum, omnia alia assignanda: si enim creatura habet dominium super quidquam, Deus prius habet dominium super idem; ideo ad quodlibet creature dominium sequitur dominium divinum, et non econtra”. Cf. Simonetta 2007: 51 n. 12, 94-97.

claudit contradiccionem creaturam mereri premium ab altera creatura, nisi mereatur a deo".⁶² In the same way, an act may be deemed meritorious *de condigno* or *de congruo* depending on the individual; however, the relationship between human actions and their rewards – whatever its nature – ultimately aligns with the concept of *congruitas*. This principle holds that every human act is accompanied by corresponding rewards, granted primarily *de pura gratia* through supreme divine *liberalitas*.⁶³ In summary, Wyclif asserts that the only merit a created being can possess before God is *de congruo*. Since the recognition of this merit in relation to salvation depends entirely on divine grace, it is impossible for a human to cause their own inscription in the *liber vitae*.

The third *veritas* Wyclif addresses concerns the criterion by which God judges, rewards or punishes individuals. As noted, no *condignitas* exists between humanity and God, and no human action can be rewarded or punished by Him according to the purely retributive standards of human courts:⁶⁴

Tercio, patet quomodo intelligitur illa communis sententia doctorum quod non potest premiari nisi premiaverit ultra condignum, nec punire nisi puniat citra condignum. Illud enim condignum est in sententia, ac si dicatur deum non posse premiari nisi premiaverit graciosae, nec punire nisi misericorditer puniat, quod est necessarium.⁶⁵

God does not punish the sinner *iuxta condignum*, as strict justice would require. Were He to do so, the offence against the *summus Dominus* – infinitely surpassing the creature in perfection – would merit a punishment beyond human comprehension. Instead, God imposes a merciful penalty, far gentler than what humanity's transgressions might strictly deserve.⁶⁶ Regarding the reward of the righteous, Wyclif aligns with those who argue that God rewards *ultra condignum* – again, solely due to the Judge's superabundant goodness, *de pura gratia praemiantis*, with no merit on humanity's part except that of *de congruo*.⁶⁷ This doctrine was one Wyclif consistently upheld, with

62. Wyclif 2017: 69; cf. *ibid.*: 70: "sicut nemo potest bene servire nisi serviat deo, sic non potest premiari nisi premiatur a deo".

63. *Ibid.*: 71-77: "Ex quo patet quod meritum de congruo et de condigno se invicem consequuntur respectu diversorum premiancium, vel etiam premiorum. Nam servus domini civilis laborans ad indigentiam domini sui sine hoc quod continue accipiat ab eo regimen essentiale quoad vitam et motum, meretur ab eo premium de condigno; et illud premium meretur a deo de congruo, cum de tanto servit deo qui non indiget dicto servicio, set semper prevenit dando continue homini plus mercedis quam meretur vel mereri poterit de condigno. [...] Gubernacio hominis, qua preservatur homo a periculo anime et corporis, est prestancior quam omnes divicie mundi, vel quicquid mercedis creatura potest sibi vel alteri conferre".

64. This idea would remain unchanged throughout Wyclif's writings; cf. Wyclif 1869: 376-377.

65. Wyclif 2017: 70. See also 72: "Ex quo patet quod deus non potest premiari cum creatura mercedem tribuendo de condigno, nisi premiaverit mercede ultra condignum – qua mercede creatura non potest conpremiari cum deo".

66. Wyclif 1909e: 311.

67. The *communis sententia doctorum* to which Wyclif refers includes Aquinas, who, in his commentary on Lombard's fourth book, expressed similar views; see Thomas Aquinas 1858:

traces found not only in various treatises within the *Summa de ente*,⁶⁸ but also in his later, more mature works, such as the *De ecclesia*:

Sed (rogo) ad quid limitantur tunc merita supererogata ultra mensuram debitorum suorum vel superhabundanciam meritorum, cum merita stricte ad beatitudinem requisita eque sufficerent ad distributionem huius faciendam, aut quomodo est necessarium ponere nunc tantam copiam talium meritorum? Videtur multis fidelibus quod non est modo numerus talium meritorum, vel aliter omnia illa et longe plura si fierent non sufficerent ad aliquem gradum beatitudinis promerentis, nisi quod Deus ex infinitate gracie sue acceptat merita illa de congruo.⁶⁹

There is no true commensurability between human effort and divine reward, only a certain *aequalitas proportionis*. As Wyclif notes in a sermon contemporary with *De scientia Dei*, the well-known verse from *Luke 6:38* (“mensuram bonam, confertam, coagitatam, supereffluentem dabunt in sinum vestrum”) illustrates God’s recompense for the righteous. This verse reaffirms that divine reward reflects only the infinite mercy Giver:

Inmensitas retribucionis patet in quadruplici gradu mesure [*scil.* bone, conferte, coagitate, supereffluentis] et ydemptitas respicit magnificenciam largitoris; satis quidem est quod utrobique sit opus misericordie et porporcionabilitas largientis. Deus enim cum sit infinitum magnus dominus et donacio secundum philosophos debet secundum magnitudinem domini mensurari, patet quod decet ipsum pro parvo munere infinitum magis retribuere.⁷⁰

Upon reaching his fourth conclusion, Wyclif recapitulates certain earlier points while adding further details. As noted in the first *veritas*, Wyclif rejects the idea that individuals, by virtue of their own *esse existere*, could influence God’s decision to save them from eternal damnation. Human existence itself – even before any actions are taken – is an effect of the divine will, of which *gratia praeveniens* consists. Wyclif then expands on this concept of grace even further:

Quarto, patet quod deus per graciā specialem prevenit omnem creaturam cooperatione gracie in agendo. Patet sic: impossibile est creaturam procedere in esse creature, nisi ex gracia dei eterna qua vult totum genus creaturarum ad extra procedere tempore suo et ex gracia speciali creat istam creaturam, ut Apostolum addit +++ gubernacionem continuam et alia dona sequencia ex quibus potest mereri in tantum quod, si homo vel alia creatura foret puncto temporis a divino regimine destituta, subito verterentur in nichilum.⁷¹

IV, d. 46, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 3, 1145^b. See Campi 2013: 134-137.

68. See e.g. Wyclif 1909d: 223: “omnis pena est micior et minor <quam> malum pro quo infligitur, cum deus punit citra condignum”; and 1909e: 298: “deus non potest punire, nisi misericorditer puniat; quod vocatur ab aliquibus punire citra condignum. Set si puniret sine demerito creature, tunc nec puniret ad condignum nec citra condignum, quia deficeret ratio puniendi: igitur sic non potest punire, igitur non adnihilare”.

69. Wyclif 1886a: 565.

70. Wyclif 1888: 199.

71. Wyclif 2017: 70-71.

In this passage, *gratia praeveniens* can be understood, in one sense, as the divine will directed toward the set of individual beings whom God has eternally determined will come to *esse existere* in due time.⁷² Furthermore, the prevenient action of grace can also be described in terms of the ‘special’ volition that both initiates an individual’s existence and sustains it – for the time decreed by God – preserving the individual from falling into non-existence and providentially guiding them towards the good.⁷³

Notably, in this second sense, Wyclif attributes three functions to *gratia specialis*, which he typically distinguishes through reason and links with divine wills *ad extra*. First, he identifies the divine choice to bring an individual creature to *esse existere* at the appointed time, a function he elsewhere terms *administratio*. Secondly, he refers to the divine will that sustains a created being in existence, called *conservatio*. Lastly, he highlights *gubernatio*, the providential guidance that directs a creature toward the good.

Before composing the *De scientia Dei*, Wyclif briefly addressed this topic in a concise tract commenting on Aristotle’s category of action. In this earlier work, he drew upon the Neoplatonic-Avicennian notion of the divine principle’s physical concurrence in the subsistence of every created being, arguing that contingent powers cannot act independently but depend on the sustained efficacy of the First Cause. In his *De ente praedicamentali*, Wyclif attributes this form of *ad extra* operation to what he terms *conservatio*:

Et tercius modus producendi vocatur a doctoribus opus condicionis. Sed iste quartus modus vocatur opus administracionis. Omnes enim creaturas condidit Deus in primo instanti mundi ad minimum in suis causis secundis, vel materialibus, vel specialibus, vel universalibus, et post administrat individua tempore congruo suo genere. [...] Unde quinto modo accipitur agencia Dei ad extra pro sustentanda vel conservanda eius essentiali; sicut enim luminosum sustentat lumen et mobile motum, sic Deus modo ineffabili sustentat sustentacione essentiali omnem creaturam tamquam agens extrinsecum quo ad essenciam et tamquam sustentans intrinsecum quo ad intimum illapsum.⁷⁴

The ternary structure of God’s productive activity outlined here includes *condicio* – creation proper,⁷⁵ described in *De scientia Dei* as the work of eternal grace – but ex-

72. The *gratia eterna*, described in the quoted passage as distinct from *gratia specialis* (which is also eternal *ex parte Dei*), does not seem to be directed at the *esse intelligibile* of creatures, nor merely at *esse existere*. Instead, it appears oriented towards a specific ontological level that occasionally appears in Wyclif’s classifications of being, the *esse intentionale*. See Campi 2014: 133-142.

73. Thus, insofar as it is directed toward the existence of creatures, *gratia specialis* represents a form of God’s practical will. See Wyclif 1909d: 123: “Concedendum tamen est quod deus habet volucionem terminatam ad creaturam in *esse intelligibili* absolute necessariam, quam quidam vocant volucionem speculativam, quidam volucionem simplicem, quidam volucionem ydealem; et aliam terminatam ad existenciam creature contingentem vocant practicam, vel quocunque alio nomine. Certum namque est quod tales voluciones distinguntur, tamquam absolute necessarium et contingens”.

74. Wyclif 1891: 146-147.

75. On the distinction between *opus condicionis* and *opus administracionis*, see Kaluza 2003.

cludes *gubernatio*. Conversely, the same tripartite framework for God's *agencia ad extra* under special grace, as presented in the tract on divine science, is reformulated with the language of production in the slightly later *De dominio divino*:⁷⁶

In istis ergo tribus non est distincio penes subiectum nec essentialis, sed distincio rationis; ut creatio est productio creature de nichilo, conservacio est creati servacio ne redeat in nichilum, et sic presupponit dupliciter creacionem; gubernacio autem est conservate direccio in perfeccionem secundam. [...] Nam ex infinitate sue potencie producit opus ex puro esse intelligibili, ut ex fine remotissimo, ad esse existere creature: quod ex hoc conservat in esse creato, quod est finis secundus infinitum distans a priori; et tercio, actu gubernacionis, suaviter et misericorditer conservatum gubernat.⁷⁷

The harmony between *De scientia Dei* and *De dominio divino* becomes even clearer with the appearance in the former of a term from economic language that Wyclif later develops in his first treatise on dominion, where the infusion of grace is likened to a loan extended by God to humanity.⁷⁸ To illustrate how this form of *gratia praeveniens*, known as *specialis*, influences the individual – ensuring that every action arises from cooperation between created and divine wills – Wyclif compares God to a *spiritualis fenerator* (spiritual lender). Any good a creature performs is possible only because God has first endowed it with natural goods (such as existence and subsistence), enabling it to merit with God – merit that exceeds what is owed *de condigno*.⁷⁹

Drawing on *Romans* 11:35 (“quis prior dedit ei et retribuetur illi?”), Wyclif affirms that all human merit originates from the cooperation between human will and prevenient grace, as nothing is offered to God before it is first received from Him. He writes: “Et sic intelligenda sunt dicta doctorum qui dicunt deum nichil aliud facere premiando merita hominum quam facta propria cooperari”.⁸⁰ This view, attributed to the *doctores*, is rooted in Augustine's assertion that individuals meriting are ultimately divine *munera*.⁸¹ Traditionally, those who upheld the possibility of humans meriting *de*

76. In this work, Wyclif acknowledges his debt to FitzRalph for this ternary scansion of divine will terminated *ad extra*; see Wyclif 1890: 12.

77. *Ibid.*: 13. The triad *creatio – conservatio – gubernatio* is modelled on the ternary articulation of the divine persons, as Wyclif expressly recognises; cf. *ibid.*: 14. This triad, of course, also recalls that of *Wisdom*, 11:21 (*mensura – numerus – pondus*), which Wyclif often quotes; the implicit reference to the Book of *Wisdom* in the passage from *De dominio divino* can also be deduced from the appearance of the adverb ‘suaviter’ in the quoted passage, depending on *Wisdom*, 8:1 (*Disposuit omnia suaviter*). Cf. Campi 2013.

78. Wyclif 1890: 224-235. Cf. Simonetta 2007: 49-56.

79. Wyclif 2017: 71: “Ymo si homo aliquid boni facit, pulsatur a deo ad taliter operandum. Ideo deus, tamquam spiritualis fenerator, prevenit omnem hominem, dans sibi pre manibus bona naturalia quibus meretur, et plus premii quam de condigno meretur”.

80. *Ibid.*

81. Augustine 1911: 190-191. Cf. Wyclif 1896: 263: “eo quod quicquid Deus dat homini dat sibi ex pura gracia, cum coronat gratiam priorem et opera que antea illi dedit; de condigno autem quis meretur quando meritum est ex quo dignum cum premio vel mercede vel cum equalitate temporis sine precedente titulo graciae sic dignificantis, qualiter unus homo meretur

condigno after the infusion of *gratia gratum faciens* maintained that God, in rewarding merit, primarily rewards His own work. Wyclif, however, reinterprets this, proposing instead that it is the divine ‘loan’ of goods, sustained by *gratia praeveniens* – not *gratia gratum faciens* – that forms the foundation for a rational creature’s ability to attain *de congruo* merit.⁸²

At times, Wyclif even describes this cooperation between human will and divine grace as a form of instrumental use of the creature by the divine Providence:

Nam omnis creatura in agendo non est nisi instrumentum dei, cum quo deus ex gracia operatur. Ideo nulla creatura potest plus sibi ascribere simpliciter laudes ad premium sine titulo graciae quam potest laus artificii serre vel alteri instrumento artificis per artem regulantis ipsum ad opus, cum deus arte sua eterna movet creaturam ut suum organum, prout vult et quando vult ad quodlibet opus suum. Unde considerans *Ysaïas* divinitus sic scribit, 10°, contra inaniter gloriantes de seipsis: “Numquid gloriabitur securis contra eum, qui secat in ea? Aut exaltabitur serra contra eum, a quo trahitur?”⁸³

This reflects one possible theological application of the principle that a secondary cause acts solely through the efficacy of the First Cause. As Alfred Freddoso has noted,⁸⁴ theologians from the early medieval period to the modern era proposed three main models of God’s causal influence in the natural order. Emphasising divine concurrence with creatures, some theologians developed a proto-occasionalist view: if specific divine concurrence is required for every act of a created being, true causal agency seems to belong exclusively to God, with secondary causes acting only as *causae sine qua non*. In this framework, the causal properties of secondary causes are not directly linked to their effects, which depend entirely on God’s action. Secondary causes thus serve merely as occasions for divine intervention. This perspective, traditionally associated with Pierre d’Ailly and Gabriel Biel, minimises – if not entirely eliminates – human freedom to shape one’s will and moral responsibility for actions by insisting on this strict view of divine cooperation.⁸⁵

The second model for understanding divine causal influence, termed ‘mere conservationism’ by Freddoso, limits God’s role in the post-creation natural order to preserving substances. Secondary causes are granted genuine causal efficacy, with divine cooperation confined to sustaining their existence.⁸⁶ This view, associated with Du-

ab altero, licet meritum precedat mercedem suam causaliter; non sic autem de Deo, cum Deus prius dat homini maius quam meruit et continue prevenit premiando”.

82. Wyclif 1890: 226: “Ipse [*scil.* 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”; and 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”.

83. Wyclif 2017: 71.

84. Freddoso 1991.

85. Freddoso 1988: 81.

86. Freddoso 1991: 554.

randus of St. Pourçain, asserts that each fundamental action has a single cause. Thus, safeguarding the potentialities, dispositions and active powers of created beings – along with the self-determination of human will – requires acknowledging their direct causality over effects, with God’s involvement being remote or indirect at most.⁸⁷ In this model, divine intervention is minimised to the point of suggesting a reduction in God’s causal role, as His post-creation efficacy would, at least *de potentia ordinata*, become secondary. While Wyclif refers to divine *agencia ad extra* in terms of *conservatio*, he does not seem to adopt Durandus’s reasoning.

Freddoso identifies a third approach, ‘concurrentism’, developed in late Aristotelian scholasticism and later refined in early modern thought, such as the Molinist distinction between extraordinary and ordinary concurrence. This model mediates between the extremes of occasionalism and mere conservationism, recognising both the created agent and God as possessing genuine causal efficacy:

According to concurrentism, a natural effect is produced immediately by both God and created substances, so that (pace occasionalism) the latter make a genuine causal contribution to the effect and indeed determine its specific character, but (pace mere conservationism) they do so only if God cooperates with them contemporaneously as an immediate cause in a certain ‘general’ way which goes beyond conservation and which makes the resulting cooperative *transeunt* action to be in all relevant respects the action of both God and the secondary causes.⁸⁸

To highlight a key aspect of Wyclif’s doctrine, it is worth noting that one historical expression of his perspective is the concept of God’s influence on human behaviour through instrumental causality. This appears to be Wyclif’s approach, as suggested in the above excerpt from *De scientia Dei*, where God is likened to a craftsman using a created agent as a tool – such as an axe or saw – to perform a specific action. Instrumental causality, however, differs from occasional causality: in the former, the instrument serves as a genuine, albeit partial, efficient cause of the effect (e.g. the axe actually contributes to cutting the tree trunk, though it is not the sole cause). In occasionalism, by contrast, no causal link exists between the axe and the cutting; the action is attributed entirely to divine intervention.⁸⁹

87. Koch 1973: 60 n. 32: “D. 37 a. primo dicit, quod ‘deus non est causa actionum liberi arbitrii, nisi quia ab ipso est liberum arbitrium et conservatur’. Nec est causa talium actionum nisi secundum indifferentiam quam habent et ad bonum et ad malum, non autem secundum determinationem quam habent ad alterum istorum; et addit quod nisi sic dicatur, deus ‘necessario esset causa deformitatis peccati, ista quod sic ei attribueretur defectus sicut et actus’. *Error*”. Cf. *ibid.*: 92 n. 103. It is worth noting that Durandus’s dual claim – that divine causality in the natural order is limited to mere preservation, and that individuals cannot merit *de condigno* – earned him the label of ‘Pelagian’; cf. *ibid.*: 55-56 n. 7: “D. 17 q. prima in secundo articulo posicionis dicit quod, si homo non meretur apud deum aliquid de condigno, non est necessarius aliquis habitus caritatis in voluntate; et si non est talis habitus in voluntate, omnis actus eius est pure naturalis, quantumcumque moveatur a spiritu sancto; et quarto libro d. 15 a. 3 dicit sic: “Videtur quod oportet dicere quod nullus potest ex condigno mereri”, e probat dupliciter; et hoc idem dicit et probat in suo secundo antiquo d. 27 a. 2. *Ex primo sequitur quod per actum rectum nichil meremur, quod est contra fidem, vel quod ex purs naturalibus, quod est heresis Pelagiana*”.

88. Freddoso 1991: 554.

89. Freddoso 1988: 84-85.

Wyclif's use of the image of the axe – drawn from *Isaiah* 10:15 – to illustrate God's cooperation with the creature, both antecedently and concurrently, in every action does not fully shield his doctrine from the risk of deterministic interpretations.⁹⁰ While the concurrentist solution, particularly in the form of instrumental causality inspired by *Isaiah*'s imagery, was adopted by thinkers like Thomas Aquinas,⁹¹ who are not seen as proponents of theological necessitarianism, it is also prominent in the work of more determinist-inclined authors, such as Thomas Bradwardine. Despite more recent charitable interpretations,⁹² Bradwardine argues extensively in *De causa Dei* for the – at least⁹³ – practical impossibility of human agents escaping God's determinations and His antecedent and concurrent causality.⁹⁴ This, however, does not seem to be Wyclif's position. As we shall see, Wyclif employs the concept of instrumental causality for two main purposes: first, to deny that individuals can, by their own merits, influence God's voluntary decisions concerning their eschatological fate; and second, to affirm that the only merit for created beings is *de congruo*, whereby God graciously accepts human effort as a fitting instrument for the fulfilment of His divine plan.

On this basis, Wyclif presents his fifth conclusion, introducing clarifications designed to dispel the shadow of determinism from his soteriological analysis. After reiterating that the contribution of divine grace to human merit is provided in accordance with the various goods God has granted to His creatures,⁹⁵ he criticises those who, on these grounds, deny all human merit. As in the *De dominio divino*, Wyclif attributes

90. As widely maintained by Wyclif in his works: see i.a. Wyclif 1890: 72-74; 72: “Tercio principaliter videtur inferri quod impossibile est creaturam quidquam producere nisi Deus prius creaverit illud idem: nam si creatura quidquam produxerit, Deus prius et principalius illud efficit, cum concurrat in accione qualibet creature; et cum pro illo priori non coeffectit vel concausat aliqua creatura, sequitur conclusio. Deus enim concurrat cum qualibet creatura communicative concausando cum illa, et preter hoc habet propriam causanciam in qua non communicat creatura”; Wyclif 1922a: 517: “oportet supponere quod quelibet accio creature sive extrinseca sive intrinseca sit in manu Dei, sic quod Deus [...] illa creatura utitur tamquam serra”. Cf. Wyclif 1930b: 99; and 1891: 120.

91. See Thomas Aquinas 1891: I-II, q. 21, a. 4, arg. 2, 167^a. Cf. *ibid.*: q. 21, a. 4, ad. 2, 167^b.

92. See Genest 1992: 9-13; Levy 2005: 287-288.

93. Hoenen 2003: 82.

94. See at least the following sections in Bradwardine's masterpiece, where references to *Isaiah* 10:15 can be found: Bradwardine 1618: I, 32, 282-289: 283 (*Quod omnia proveniant a Dei providentia actualiter disponente, non solummodo permittente*); *ibid.*: II, 20, 540-554: 553 (*Quod cuiuslibet actus voluntatis creatae Deus est necessarius coeffector*); *ibid.*: II, 30, 578-597: 589 (*Quod in omni actione communi voluntatum increate et create, increata creatam naturaliter antecedit*); *ibid.*: III, 1, 637-646: 641 (*Quod Deus potest necessitare quodammodo omnem voluntatem creatam ac liberum actum suum, et ad liberam cessationem et vacationem ab actu*).

95. Wyclif 2017: 72: “Quinto, patet quod impossibile est creaturam mereri aliquid nisi haberit gratiam prevenientem, gratiam concomitantem et gratiam consequentem. Nam tot sunt graciae eterne in deo respectu cuiuscunque hominis vel angeli, quot bona nature vel graciae a deo receperat; et per consequens gracia creacionis et gracia gubernacionis preveniunt quodcunque opus meritorium creature. Gracia enim qua deus coasat homini, previe coagendo cum illo opus meritorium, vocatur ‘gracia concomitans’. Gracia autem qua deus vult graciose et effectualiter hominem perseveranter consummare meritum vocatur ‘gracia consummans’”.

this error to a misreading of Paul's dictum in *Romans* 11:6 ("Si autem gratia, iam non ex operibus; alioquin gratia iam non est gratia"). Many have interpreted this verse as proof that rational creatures can acquire no merit with God. However, Wyclif contends that Paul intended only to reject claims of *de condigno* merit, without denying the possibility of *de congruo* merit.⁹⁶ Misinterpreting Paul's message, Wyclif argues, has significant doctrinal consequences: while it is heretical to claim that individuals can merit without the prior action of grace, it is equally contrary to Scripture and the teachings of the saints to assert that human beings can earn no eternal reward at all.⁹⁷

Wyclif reiterates that every human action originates with God; thus, any praise directed at the righteous individual – merely an instrument of divine action – ultimately belongs to God alone. Divine grace, understood as relative will, is effectual in the object to which it is directed, manifesting itself as the good bestowed on the creature and rendering it pleasing to God. Therefore, while human merit is acknowledged as a gift of divine grace, it remains undeniable that such merit exists *subiective in ipsa*.⁹⁸

To address critics who reject both *de condigno* and *de congruo* merit – dismissing the latter as mere semantics – Wyclif confronts their objections. They question how one can speak of merit when the good in question is granted *de pura gratia*. The first objection arises from a concurrence-based perspective: if each agent contributing to an effect can, in theory, be attributed some degree of causal efficacy then in the case of eternal life as a reward, it would appear that human merit contributes nothing, since, as Wyclif asserts, it is conferred *de pura gratia*.⁹⁹ This hypothesis offers two alternatives. The most radical, contrary to Durandus, denies all human efficacy to preserve divine grace's causal primacy, abandoning the concept of concurrence. The more moderate view rejects *de congruo* merit, maintaining instead that humanity can merit eternal life *de condigno* through its own actions – thereby denying that the reward is granted *ex pura gratia*. Wyclif, however, rejects both approaches:

Claudit enim contradiccionem aliquem mereri premium, nisi de pura gracia mereatur; non de gracia cuiuscunque premiantis, set de gracia dei principaliter premiantis. Congruum namque est valde quod deus, habens plenum dominium

96. *Ibid.*: 72-73: "Unde propter involuciones tam multiplicatas humani meriti in gracia dei, videtur multis quod homo nichil meretur in deo, set totum habet de gracia. Unde Apostolus, *Ad Romanos*, 11° [...]. Si autem intelligitur quod nemo potest mereri ex propriis quoad deum de condigno, sensus est proprius, et illum intendit Apostolus. Quin tamen homo potest mereri de congruo – scilicet de gracia premiantis – non negat Scriptura, set concedit".

97. *Ibid.*: 73: "aliter non esset beatitudo eterna merces vel premium hominis, cum merces vel premium dicitur comparative ad meritum vel laborem, cuius oppositum dicit Scriptura et doctores concorditer".

98. *Ibid.*: 74: "Numquam autem sonat textus Scripture quod gracia qua deus habet creaturam sibi gratam sit qualitas vel deus, formaliter loquendo, set est amor vel volicio eterna qua deus vult bonum creature rationali; et illa est in creatura effectualiter, cum sit in deo formaliter, et sic ubique. Gracia autem qua creatura est formaliter deo grata est subiective in ipsa".

99. *Ibid.*: "Primo, si quis habeat datum quodcunque partim de gracia dantis et partim de meritis propriis, quanto plus habet de gracia, tanto minus meretur; ergo, si pure de gracia, sub nullo gradu meretur".

creature, de gracia sua ordinet creaturam libero arbitrio ut propter observanciam liberam rectitudinis mereatur premium, quia aliter, ut dicit Lincolniensis, non esset liberum arbitrium in homine. Ideo, ut dicit, “sicut herba germinat quadam vi intrinseca germinandi et solis calore ac terre humore” in tantum quod, si influxus celi desineret, totus motus sublunaris eo ipso cessaret, sic homo meretur simul ex vi intrinseca naturalium a deo datorum ex pura gracia, ex virtutibus et ex caro amore dei cooperantis.¹⁰⁰

This passage is striking, given Wyclif’s reputation for determinism – a reputation not entirely undeserved. He first reminds us that every good possessed by a person, even if received from another, ultimately comes from God, who retains a *plenum dominium* over all creation. Thus, all human merit – even *de condigno* merit earned from another individual – is, ultimately, merit before God and can only be *de congruo*, as God gains no benefit from human actions.¹⁰¹ However, divine *acceptatio* does not diminish the role of free will in salvation. On the contrary, it is precisely the free human effort – already a good freely granted by God – to align one’s will with divine law that is recognised as meritorious *de congruo*. By excluding the possibility of *condignitas* in human works, Wyclif shifts the focus from the action itself – which, under a strictly retributive logic, deserves no reward – to the intention behind it and the generosity of the merciful divine judge. In some works, such as his *De volutione Dei*, Wyclif describes God as a *remunerator adverbiorum*: “Et hic vulgariter dicitur, quod Deus est remunerator adverbiorum, plus apprecians quod bene agatur, quam bonum de genere”.¹⁰²

The agricultural metaphor in the passage above, closely aligned with Isaiah’s imagery of tools, introduces the role of human free will, which had long remained unexplored.¹⁰³ Borrowed from Grosseteste and later reused in the *De dominio divino*,¹⁰⁴ this metaphor implies a causal contribution of the creature to its own justification. Just as the soil’s properties, sunlight and the plant’s vegetative power all contribute to the growth of grass, so too does the merit of salvation result from the combined concurrence of causes: “homo meretur simul ex vi intrinseca naturalium a Deo datorum ex pura gratia, ex virtutibus et ex caro amore Dei cooperantis”. While the metaphor is evocative, it remains underdeveloped in the *De scientia Dei*, as Wyclif had not yet fully clarified the distinction between uncreated and created grace. This distinction would later be articulated more precisely in the *De dominio divino*, where he comments on Grosseteste’s example with greater clarity:

100. Wyclif 2017: 75.

101. *Ibid.*: 68: “Nec quelibet bona voluntas est gracia, set bona voluntas qua quis vult efficaciter bonum alteri sine indigencia alterius vel merito precedente, ut deus nulla creatura indiget. Nec est possibile quod meritum creature sit temporaliter vel naturaliter prius quam bona voluntas dei respectu creature; ideo bona voluntas, quam deus habet ad creaturam rationalem, dicitur potissime gracia”.

102. Wyclif 1909d: 121. Cf. Campi 2018a.

103. Wyclif acknowledges that the same concern – to affirm the specific contribution of free will to the *processus iustificationis* of the individual – had inspired Grosseteste to use such a metaphor; see Grosseteste: dictum 134, ff. 108^r^b-108^v^a, quoted in Campi 2023: 525 n. 31.

104. See Grosseteste: dictum 134, ff. 108^r^b, quoted in Campi 2023: 526 n. 34.

Ymaginatur quidem quod gracia eterna coadiuvans sit quasi calor solis excitans germinare; sed creatam gratiam infusam ponit in similitudine humori terreo respondere; vim autem germinativa intrinsecam vult correspondere libero arbitrio promeritis.¹⁰⁵

The merit of salvation arises from a threefold concurrence: first, eternal grace – the divine love influencing the creature, akin to the heavens’ effect on earthly beings; second, created prevenient grace, comprising the conditions freely granted by God to guide the creature towards the good, varying in degree like the differing qualities of soil; and third, free will, defined as the capacity to make deliberate choices within the framework set by God. While the instrumental image of the axe might suggest a deterministic reading, the agricultural metaphor avoids such constraints,¹⁰⁶ presenting both divine grace and human free will as integral causes of the reward granted by God:

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; sed sicut Deus facit totum opus creature ipsa[m]que facit ex integro idem opus, sic concipiendum est de concursu graciae et nature. [...] Non enim predicta gracia agens huiusmodi, sed sicut qualitates elementares equivoce sunt active, quia sunt dispositiones naturales in elementis, sic quod elementa, in quantum huiusmodi, proprie sunt activa; sic habitus graciae sunt dispositiones supernaturales quoad totale efficiens et naturales quoad subiectum quod, ut sic qualificatum, est dispositum ad merendum.¹⁰⁷

Wyclif’s second objection to reconciling merit with a reward of *pura gratia* is based on the idea that if a person can freely give a good to another without merit, then surely God’s reward – being even more generous – must be entirely gratuitous. Wyclif argues that human generosity is not comparable to divine generosity, as any gift from a created being involves some form of sacrifice or fulfils a need, such as personal virtue, social recognition or praise.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, human gifts are never given *de pura gratia* but always *de condigno*, with each merit receiving an appropriate return. While Wyclif’s reply does not add to the soteriological discussion in the *De scientia Dei*, it signals his renewed use of political language to examine the relationship between divine reward and human merit – a lexicon he would develop in the *De dominio divino*:

Nam si homo iuste est, vere habet donum humanum vere dignum, et iustum est quod habeat, cum sit de gracia et voluntate summi domini quod sic habeat, et sic accipitur ‘meretur sibi et donanti ministerialiter’, ut ballivus. Unde dans homini nondum nato donum aliquod, dat sibi illud quod meretur post nativitatem, cum habuerit iustum usum donati.¹⁰⁹

105. Wyclif 1890: 241. Cf. 1909d: 144.

106. For the use of the vegetable (or animal) generation metaphor – as an alternative to the axe image – by thinkers such as Molina and Fonseca, who developed the doctrine of grace’s general concurrence with free will, see Campi 2023: 527 n. 36.

107. Wyclif 1890: 241.

108. Wyclif 2017: 75-76. Cf. 1890: 225: “ipse [*scil.* deus] gratissime sine retributionis expectatione communicat bonum suum, et per consequens vere prestat”.

109. Wyclif 2017: 76. Note the use of terms like ‘iustum’, ‘dominus’, ‘ministerialiter’, ‘ballivus’ and ‘usus’.

The third objection concerns the idea that if individuals can acquire merit from God, then merit and reward would become mutually causal, implying that something imperfect and temporal could cause something perfect and eternal.¹¹⁰ Wyclif, however, counters that the causal reciprocity between merit and reward – where the former serves as the efficient cause of the latter, its final cause – need not conflict with the temporal priority of one over the other,¹¹¹ or with their differing values. Here, the scholastic tradition of examples from Aristotle's *Physics* II (194b32-33) proves helpful: just as strenuous exercise efficiently causes the resulting state of physical health – its final cause – which follows in time and represents a more imperfect state, so too does merit act as the efficient cause of reward and is, in turn, oriented towards it as its end.¹¹² The causal efficacy of merit arises from the concurrence of divine prevenient grace with human faculties – God's merciful decision to accept human works as congruent.¹¹³ Yet here, as in all preceding cases, the objections raised against Wyclif's doctrine ultimately serve to reinforce it: "patet quod argumenta non probant quod nemo potest mereri beatitudinem, set quod non potest ipsam mereri de condigno, quod est verum, cum solum a deo potest mereri illam qui non potest premiari nisi titulo gratie premiaverit".¹¹⁴

In the sixth *veritas*, Wyclif asserts that God's decree to save the elect (*praedestinati*) and leave the reprobate to damnation (*praesciti*) is immutable and unaffected by any state of grace or sin in which individuals may find themselves.¹¹⁵ An elect person may live in sin *secundum praesentem iustitiam* without jeopardising their salvation, which

110. *Ibid.* Doubts regarding the causal influence of the temporal on the eternal – or of the later upon the earlier – had been raised at Oxford by Bradwardine in his anti-Pelagian arguments; see Wyclif 1909d: 153: "Et 2° libro, ca. 30°, multiplicat quasi innumerabilia argumenta contra Pelagianos ad probandum quod nichil posterius deo est causa volucionis divine". Cf. Bradwardine 1618: II, 30, 578-597 (*Quod in omni actione communi voluntatum increatae et creatae, increata creatam naturaliter antecedit*).

111. Cf. Wyclif 1930a: 13-14.

112. Wyclif 2017: 76: "dicitur quod meritum causat efficienter premium, et econtra premium causat finaliter meritum, sicut in assimili dicunt philosophi: sic enim labor efficit sanitatem, privacio suum generatum [...] Cum sit possibile hominem mereri usquam ad premium sue beatitudinis, nec obstat inperfeccius in virtute causare sive efficere suum perfectius ut labor facit sanitatem, motus calorem, et ita de quotlibet similibus". Cf. Wyclif 1890: 160-161.

113. Wyclif 2017: 76: "Quare igitur non decet summe magnificum ordinare creaturam rationalem ut ex suis naturalibus adiutis divina gracia efficiat beatitudinem?"

114. *Ibid.*

115. The distinction between the *praedestinati* and *praesciti*, common in medieval theology, is a recurring theme in Wyclif's work, emphasising his belief that God's initiative in determining eschatological fate is directed solely towards salvation, not damnation. From the entirety of humanity, justly condemned due to original sin, God eternally predestines some to salvation. Predestination, therefore, is a positive act, involving – as Aquinas describes – the *preparatio ad gloriam* of the elect, who would otherwise lack the means to be saved. God is thus solely responsible for the salvific initiative and central to justification. In contrast, the condemnation of the reprobate arises entirely from human actions. God's punishment is an act of justice, not a predetermined fate, and there is no concept of double predestination or *praeparatio ad poenam*. This distinction is significant, particularly given Wyclif's reputation as an extreme predestinarian.

is eternally determined by God; likewise, a reprobate whose conduct *in via* appears faultless cannot evade damnation.¹¹⁶ This challenges a semi-Pelagian view that assumes either a person in grace can avoid all sin – whether venial or mortal –¹¹⁷ or that predestination follows *post praevisa merita*, whereby merits – though effects of prior grace – are deemed causes of predestination. In this regard, Wyclif cites the doctrine set out by Aquinas in the *Summa Theologiae: ex parte Dei* the reason for salvation or condemnation lies solely in divine goodness – for mercy grants the elect a reward *ultra condignum*, while justice punishes the reprobate *citra condignum*.¹¹⁸ Just as a building’s design reflects the architect’s will, Wyclif concludes – recalling Aquinas – that the election to salvation or reprobation depends entirely on God’s will, expressed in His eternal decree.¹¹⁹

Unlike Aquinas, Wyclif places greater emphasis on identifying, *ex parte creaturae*, a basis for justification: this lies in the *congruitas* of human actions, which results from the cooperation of divine grace and human free will. While free will itself is a gift of grace (*iuvans ad merendum*), its proper exercise depends partly on the individual and acts as a contributory cause of the reward. Wyclif may have drawn this idea from Henry of Ghent, although Henry is not mentioned in *De scientia Dei*. As Pasquale Porro notes, Henry denies any efficient cause behind the divine will: *ex parte Dei*, all actions have God as their ultimate end, and the end, by definition, has no efficient cause. However, *ex parte volitorum*, intentional human actions may be viewed as means ordained by God to fulfil His purposes. Thus, human actions are ‘congruent’ with the ultimate goal of God’s saving work.¹²⁰ In this sense, Wyclif’s view aligns with Henry’s

116. *Ibid.*: “Sexto, probabiliter poterit videri ex dictis quod sicut nemo prescitus, in quantumlibet magna gracia existens secundum presentem iusticiam, meretur beatitudinem, sic nemo predestinatus, in quantumlibet gravi peccato positus, meretur penam perpetuam”. Cf. Wyclif 1909a: 23: “Nam in quantumcunque sanctitate vite existens fuerit prescitus secundum presentem iusticiam, adhuc deficit sibi gracia predestinacionis et per consequens amor Dei ad beatitudinem”; 1909d: 125: “Nam prescitus existens in gracia meritorie vult beatitudinem suam, et vult suam perseveranciam; deus tamen utrobique vult oppositum”.

117. A view maintained, for example, by Robert Holcot; cf. Courtenay 1978: 101 n. 225. The interpretation of Wodeham’s position, however, remains controversial; cf. Leff 1957: 241-255; Courtenay 1984: 297; and 1978: 101-103.

118. Thomas Aquinas 1888: I, q. 23, a. 5, ad 3, 277^b-278^a.

119. Wyclif 2017: 77: “Racionale namque est quod quelibet pars sue magne domus disponatur secundum eius ordinanciam eternam, et per consequens cum duo contradictoria non sunt simul rationalia, sequitur quod non sit rationale de predestinato peccante mortaliter quod habeat penam eternam”. Cf. Thomas Aquinas 1888: I, q. 23, a. 5, ad 3, 278^{a-b}”.

120. Porro 1997: 270-271: “Ed è qui che ha senso porre la questione del motivo del loro [*scil.* delle creature razionali] ordinamento, del perché, cioè, alcune siano chiamate a concorrere in un certo modo e altre in un modo diverso. Tale ragione non può che risiedere nella *congruentia* dei mezzi al fine: *congruentia* che non è certamente la causa *propter quam sic* dell’azione, ma che tuttavia – proprio perché l’agire divino è libero e intenzionale – dev’essere assunta come *ratio sine qua non*. Non per questo si compromette, secondo Enrico, il primato della grazia [...]. Ora, in base all’insegnamento di Agostino, l’atto umano deriva sempre *ab utroque*, e cioè insieme dalla grazia e dal libero arbitrio: in questa confluenza, il peso maggiore deve essere senz’altro attribuito alla grazia, [...] ma una parte, piccola e limitata finché si vuole, spetta anche, in ogni caso (e perciò si può parlare di condizione *sine qua non*) al libero arbitrio”. Cf.

understanding of the dual order of efficient and final causality in merit and grace: in terms of the end, election to salvation precedes merit, but in the order of efficient causality merit both precedes and contributes to salvation.¹²¹

The *congruitas* of works for salvation is recognised by God *ex pura gratia* and cannot be verified with absolute certainty *secundum praesentem iustitiam*. However sinful the life of a person predestined to salvation may appear *in via*, only God knows her or his true intentions and the nature of her or his sins, whether venial or mortal.¹²² In other words, only God can distinguish between one who resists divine charity to the end, sinning against the Holy Spirit and deserving eternal punishment, and another who sins against the Son and, despite an imperfectly aligned will, will ultimately be saved after purification.¹²³ The good works of the reprobate, however admirable *secundum praesentem iustitiam*, lack the infusion of *gratia finalis perseverantiae*, which ensures merit *usque in finem*.¹²⁴ Without this grace, they remain in mortal sin against the Holy Spirit – a sin which, as Aquinas observes, corrupts and renders mortal all other sins

Wyclif 2017: 83: “cum gracia beatitudinis predestinat deus creaturam rationalem; et illam beatitudinem deus principaliter vult quam meritum vie aut quecunque media ad istam beatitudinem, cum generaliter fines nobiliores sint principaliter voliti a deo quam media ad hos fines. [...] cum beatitudo sit causa finalis predestinancie et opera meritoria sunt causa per accidens efficiens beatitudinis”.

121. Cf. Porro 1997: 271.

122. Wyclif 2017: 77: “In hoc enim differt peccatum veniale a mortali, quod primum obligat ad penam temporalem et secundum ad penam eternam. Nichil autem obligatur ad penam eternam, nisi sit dignum habere penam eternam. Sicut ergo forisfacens regi terre non minus est dignus morte, quamvis rex ille statuerit delinquentem de gracia laborare, sic a maiori videtur de peccante contra deum quod manet condignitas ad penam eternam cum gracia acceptante ad gloriam; aliter enim non esset dare quantum ad maximum meretur predestinatus peccans mortaliter aut prescitus bene operans”.

123. Over time, Wyclif developed a distinctive theory on the distinction between venial and mortal sins, which he used to challenge corrupt, simoniacal and hypocritical priests who falsely promised remission without discerning the true nature of sins. For Wyclif, mortal sin is a sin against the Holy Spirit, which no *praedestinitus* can commit, while even seemingly minor sins of the *praescitus* are, in reality, mortal. See Wyclif 1922b: 530: “licet alia sunt dampnabilia condicionaliter, cum sint gravia peccata pro quibus peccato dampnabitur, nisi penitens respiscat, solum ergo peccatum continuatum in finem est peccatum in Spiritum Sanctum et irremissibile et mortale [...]. Sed iuxta istud videtur quod nullus predestinatus peccat mortaliter et per consequens cum solum mortale extinguit gratiam vel virtutem, sequitur quod nullus predestinatus cadet a gracia vel virtute”; cf. *ibid.*: 532. Cf. also Wyclif 1904: 512-518; and 1889: 176-184; 181-182; Thomson 1983: 87-88. Cf. Wyclif 1869: 145.

124. Wyclif 2017: 15, where Wyclif refers to *Romans* 9:11-13, the *locus classicus* on predestination according to St Paul; see also *ibid.*: 16, where Wyclif pays his debt towards Bradwardine: “Unde Doctor Profundus [...] vere dicit quod ‘deus neminem noviter diligit sive odit, nec una vice magis aut minus quam alia’ [...]. Concedit itaque quod predestinatum existentem in mortali peccato tante diligit deus pro illo tempore sicut cum fueris beatus, quia semper vult quod habeat tantum bonum pro tempore suo. Prescitur vero, etsi fuerit in gracia vel caritate temporali, set non finalis perseverancie, continue tante odit, quia vult sibi eternaliter malum pene et eternaliter vult quod habeat illud bonum graciae temporalis, et sic eternaliter eundem simul diligit et odit, quia semper vult sibi bonum pro una mensura temporis et malum pro alia”. Cf. Bradwardine 1618: I, 23, 241.

that, under the grace of predestination, would otherwise be venial.¹²⁵ Thus, it is solely the merciful manifestation of divine goodness that prevents the elect from persisting in sin and bestows upon them the *ultra condignum* reward.¹²⁶ Accordingly, Wyclif asserts in the *De scientia Dei* and later works that evidence of a person's good conduct *secundum praesentem iustitiam* permits only a conjectural judgment as to whether God's temporal grace – manifested in their love for God and neighbour – is also extended through the grace of predestination:

peccans ergo quantumlibet graviter in Filium nec meretur, nec est dignus pena eterna, sicut nec obligatur ad illam. Est tamen dignus et obligatus, nisi respiscat et nisi deus acceptet eum ad gratiam, et non sic de veniali, cui sufficit purgatio, et non requiritur gratie gratificantis nova generatio, cum peccatum veniale stat cum tali gratia. Unde propter ignoranciam quam habemus de exitu a via, dicit *Ecclesiastes*, 9^o: “Nemo scit utrum amore vel odio sit dignus”; et quilibet viator non propheticè inspiratus ignorat pro tempore vie utrum deus amat eum ad beatitudinem, vel odit eum ad penam perpetuam. Quilibet enim potest habere probabilem coniecturam, quia deus diligit eum secundum presentem iustitiam, eo quod certus est, si iuste vivit diligendo deum et proximum, quod deus eum diligit ad tantum.¹²⁷

The critique of the semi-Pelagian approach prompts a re-evaluation of the *obligatio* between God as rewarder and the individual as recipient. Two models of justice are contrasted: one contractual and retributive, the other merciful. The notion that divine reward, granted *post praevisa merita*, could be ‘due’ implies that human merit might

125. Wyclif 2017: 77-78: “solum peccans in Spiritum sanctum meretur penam eternam, sicut solum merens perseveranter usque in finem meretur beatitudinem eternam [...]; aliter quantumcunque peccaverit graviter in Filium, remittetur ei, set peccanti in Spiritum sanctum non remittetur ei. [...] Peccare autem in Filium [...] est peccare, set non usque in finem; peccare autem in Spiritum sanctum est peccare mortaliter usque in finem vite vianis [...] Unde peccatum in Spiritum sanctum est adeo infectivum quod facit quodcunque peccatum concomitans quodammodo mortale, quod cum peccato in Filium foret veniale”.

126. *Ibid.*: 79: “Quamvis enim deus graciose, et non de condigno, punit dampnatos, ipsi tamen de condigno merentur penam et non de congruo, eo quod deus non ex gratia sua cooperatur cum illis ad taliter demerendum, set utrobique retributio dei stat magis bono vel minus malo compensato pro minus bono vel magis malo. Nam sicut beatitudo est melior quam labor vie quo deus statuit illam mereri, sic pena eterna est minus mala quam culpa ipsam merens. Pena enim habet misericordiam et iustitiam ipsam bonificantes, set culpa caret utraque et habet maliciam malam mortaliter, ex qua procedit malicia maior pene. Deus autem procedit accrescens in bonis, que ipse auctorizat, et diminuens in malis quorum originem creatura deficiens auctorizat”.

127. *Ibid.*: 78. Wyclif later argued that the *probabilis evidencia* of predestining grace, inferred from one's deeds, could be used to challenge the legitimacy of a clergy member's claim to temporal authority if deemed morally unworthy. See Wyclif 1922a: 515; 1900: 250; 1886b: 464-465; 1887: 152; 1896: III, 197, 260. This shift from caution to a heuristic tool aligns with Wyclif's evolving vision for ecclesiastical reform. Amid intensifying conflicts with church authorities, he reshaped his view of lordship, formulating an ‘asymmetrical’ theory: political authority, in line with *Romans* 13:1, derives directly from God and remains valid regardless of the ruler's spiritual state. By contrast, discrepancies between clerical behaviour and the *speculum* or *regula* of Christ's life would warrant rejecting any clerical claim to political power as illegitimate. Cf. Simonetta 1996: 234-244.

obligate God, as if placing Him in debt to a deserving creature. Wyclif rejects this view, arguing instead that the *obligatio* binding God arises solely from His gracious *promissio*,¹²⁸ stemming from His eternal will to accept certain merits as worthy of reward and to impose lighter penalties than strict justice demands. This principle recurs throughout Wyclif's works, including the *De scientia Dei*.

First, God cannot, *de potentia absoluta*, reward a creature without *de congruo* merit, nor punish it without corresponding demerit. Thus, divine *obligatio* to creatures does not override the voluntary self-limitation of divine power that upholds the established order – an order unbreakable by creatures and binding even for God.¹²⁹ Through His eternal decree of *ordinatio*, God has determined to reward certain individuals by providing them with the means to merit salvation *de congruo*. While ‘modern Pelagians’ argue that individuals, through their natural capacities, can earn salvation *de potentia absoluta*, Wyclif counters that no divine order permits salvation without corresponding merit – specifically, *de congruo* merit. Within this framework, rational agents cooperate with God's prevenient grace through free will.¹³⁰ Likewise, no punishment from God is imposed without being based on the individual's demerits, for which they alone are accountable.¹³¹

128. Cf. Wyclif 1909d: 148: “sicut deus necessitat se ad producendum quemlibet effectum suum, non absolute, set ex suppositione, sic necessitat se ad premiandum quemlibet predestinatum, et puniendum quemlibet prescium, sicut in assimili dictum est superius deum obligare se de congruo ex promissione graciosia. Et per idem eternaliter obligat se ex ordinancia qua eternaliter conscivit taliter benefacere creature: ista tamen obligacio non requirit creaturam coevam obliganti”.

129. As Ian Levy observes, Wyclif aligns closely with Peter Aureoli, who argued that the *habitus caritatis* is essential for divine acceptance and salvation. Aureoli rejected the idea that a person could be both a sinner and beloved by God, even *de potentia absoluta*, as God's will is immutable. For someone to be dear to God, the *habitus caritatis* must be present. Aureoli supports this view by referencing Aristotle's definition of paronymous terms, explaining that adjectives like *carus* derive their meaning from the presence of an accidental quality, such as *caritas*, in the subject. See Levy 2005: 304, 307. In his *De dominio divino*, Wyclif revisits the topic, echoing his earlier arguments from the *Summa de ente*, and explicitly references denominative terms; see Wyclif 1890: 238-239: “si queritur 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 posset acceptare creaturam ad gloriam. [...] omnis talis gracia cum veritati respondeat in effectu, oportet quod gratificatus sit denominatus accidentaliter gratus Deo; et illa denominacio accidentalis est gracia quam rectiloqui posuerunt”.

130. Wyclif 1909d: 196: “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 ad consequenciam, set prioritare causalitatis, dignitatis, vel supereminentie. Nec agit talis gracia proprie, set causando facit multa bona, et secundum illam deus cooperatur cum homine”.

131. Wyclif 2017: 80: “[Augustinus] concedit deum facere se debitorem homini ex obligatione sue promissionis graciosae. Secundo, videtur sequi quod deus non potest de potencia absoluta creaturam aliquam premiare, nisi ipsa de congruo mereatur, nec dampnare vel reprobare, nisi suo tempore demereatur. Nam si deus premiat creaturam, eternaliter disposuit de gracia sua

The second corollary, derived from the first, highlights the necessity of assigning a reward to each elect individual, contingent on the eternal disposition of the divine will. This necessity is hypothetical, as the antecedent – the divine will – is itself contingent; God could have willed otherwise.¹³² However, once this decision is made, God no longer acts with absolute power but adheres unerringly to the established order.¹³³ In this context, Wyclif presents a relatively optimistic view of individual salvation. While the division between the righteous and the damned is eternal, immutable and grounded in reasons beyond human comprehension,¹³⁴ God’s unwavering judgement – binding even on Himself – emphasises the responsibility of the created agent. Unable to gain more than conjectural indications of their own or others’ election based on moral conduct, individuals are encouraged to hope for salvation.¹³⁵ This hope mo-

dignitare illam ad tantum premium, et per consequens ipsa numquam actualiter premiatur. [...] Tercio, patet quod sicut voluntas divina non movetur a merito ut premiet, sic nec vendidit gratiam, nec potest de potencia absoluta, supposito merito, subtrahere premium sic merenti”; 1890: 229: “Est ergo lex Dei invariabilis quod nemo beatifice premiatur nisi prius debite mereatur”. Cf. 1909d: 131-132, 176.

132. Wyclif 2017: 140: “De qualibet namque creatura beata potest deus facere quod non sit beata, cum omnis effectus sit contingens ad utrumlibet; set sicut deus non potest facere de beato non beatum, sic nec potest facere predestinatum aut presciturum fore non predestinatum aut non presciturum. Verumptamen quemlibet quem predestinavit vel beatificavit potest contingentissime non predestinasse et non beatificasse. [...] Deus ergo potest facere actum beatificum non esse, set non potest facere ipsum cessare, sicut patet in assimili de tempore eterno”; *ibid.*: “Verumptamen multi peccatores habent dispositiones malas, quibus repugnat ipsos conteri. Et ad talem sensum dicuntur aliqui confirmati et alii indurati, hii necessitati ad beatificam fruicionem et hii necessitati ad perpetuam dampnationem. Omne tamen tale est necessarium ex suppositione, et non absolute necessarium”.

133. *Ibid.*: 80: “veritas ista connexionis est absolute necessaria ‘si deus disposuit eternaliter illam creaturam ad premium, ipsa premiabitur’; ex ante creatur in creatura gracia relativa, qua posita, deus miraretur creature si ipsam nullatenus premiaret”; *ibid.*: 140-141: “Est et alia certitudo beatitudinis per visionem in Verbo, qua beatus videt nedum futuricionem sue beatitudinis, set presenciam eternam. Deus ergo potest facere actum beatificum non esse, set non potest facere ipsum cessare, sicut patet in assimili de tempore eterno [...]. Nam omnem creaturam genitam potest deus semper facere non genitam, set non potest facere genitum esse vel fore non genitum; nec aliquam creaturam potest deus facere esse ingenitam, nec aliquod corruptibile potest facere incorruptibile, in sensu diviso intelligendo. Quilibet namque homo in celo beatus semper potest mori, set non potest mori secundum illam dispositionem, nec illa dispositione privari, quamvis possit illam non habere. Ideo signanter dicit Apostolus quod nichil potest ‘nos separare a caritate’, que est eternus amor quo deus amat predestinatos”. Cf. Wyclif 1985: 334.

134. God’s love for His creation, evident in the granting of rewards and the imposition of just punishments, stems from an act of divine will preceded by knowledge and understanding. While the reasons for the distinction between the elect and the damned lie beyond human comprehension, and the grace enabling the elect *ad bene operandum* is not always evident, it is certain that God neither rewards nor punishes without first fully knowing and understanding human merits and demerits. See Wyclif 1909c.

135. Human beings can only speculate about their ultimate fate, as God discloses it to very few. Were a *praescitus* made aware of their future damnation, they would fall into despair, rendering virtuous action *secundum praesentem iustitiam* impossible. To preserve the possibility of salvation, each person must maintain the hope of being saved, as this hope fosters a meri-

tivates them to use their free will well, aligning themselves with the immutable divine will and contributing to their own *processus iustificationis*.¹³⁶

With the seventh *veritas*, Wyclif concludes his detailed exposition of the soteriological considerations in the *De scientia Dei*. This analysis begins with the question of whether a creature, through its *esse existere*, can influence God's will – and, by extension, His prior knowledge. Wyclif firmly rejects the notion that a creature's affirmative influence on God's will could mean it might, by its own means, merit salvation. He insists that this reward is determined solely by God's free and autonomous decree. Nevertheless, Wyclif maintains that individuals contribute to their justification as instruments of divine action or concurrent causes, cultivating the good that God has graciously and preemptively granted them. His concluding remarks clarify how, and in what sense, it may be permissible to consider a creature capable of causing volition or knowledge in God:

Septimo, patet quod omnis gracia, omnis predestinancia, omnis ordinancia eterna in deo respectu creature formaliter relative intellecta, causatur ab illa creatura ad quam principaliter terminatur. Patet ex hoc quod par est ratio omnium istarum et sciencie relative; set sciencia dei relativa causatur ab obiecto ad quod principaliter terminatur, ut patet ex dictis; ergo per idem omnia alia.¹³⁷

torious life. Even a *praesciti* cling to the – albeit false – hope of salvation, believing it genuine. Their damnation, therefore, stems solely from the willful choices through which they accumulate demerits before God. See Wyclif 1922a: 514-515: “cum Deus non potest, ut tenetur communiter, revelare homini suam dampnationem, quia tunc daret occasionem, ymmo Deus necessitaret hominem ad desperandum et abiectis virtutibus in servicio diaboli conversandum. Homo enim debet credere revelato sicut debet credere Deo, nec viveret virtuose nisi sub spe beatitudinis acquirende, et sic talis cui sic Deus revelaret suam dampnationem foret adeo perplexus, quod esse non poterit. [...] videtur mihi quod quilibet predestinatus vel prescitus debet sperare se salvari, et sic quilibet prescitus debet falsum sperare, cuius falsitatis ipsemet est in causa et sic, ut logici camerant verba sua, falsum est sperandum ab homine, sed nemo debet sperare falsum”. Cf. 2017: 131-132: “Deus enim, ex habundancia gracie dispensacionis sue, ordinavit eternaliter quosdam actus futuros dependentes a voluntate libera creata latere hominis, ut exinde sint vigiles ad continue pulsandum eum precibus et timendum de exitu rigido pene, si male egerint, et sperandum de premiacione gracie, si virtuose se gesserunt – ut spes et timor sunt duo mallei hinc inde titillantes animum ex adverso ad intendendum per medium virtuosum”. This understanding lends itself to a criticism of indulgences – and even of confession itself; in this regard, see Penn 2006: 283-289. No one, not even a priest, can discern the true nature of a sin – whether venial or mortal – based solely on present evidence. Still less, then, can a priest remit sins; only Christ can do so. See i.a. Wyclif 1922b: 530; and 1889: 181-182.

136. Wyclif 2017: 82: “sic potest homo mereri secundam gratiam vel augmentum gracie. Ymo postquam exciderit a gratia gratum faciente, potest mereri gratiam talem, set non sine gratia preveniente. Ymo videtur mihi quod sicut unus potest mereri alteri primam gratiam, sic et predestinacionem, ut patet de primis parentibus qui possunt mereri esse finis”. The passage cited here is highly significant. After advocating a concurrentist view, Wyclif expresses a surprising openness to the idea that human agents can, in fact, merit the *augmentum gratiae*. This position had traditionally been upheld by theologians like Ockham, Holcot and Wodeham, who were accused of Pelagianism by some of their contemporaries, such as Bradwardine and Wyclif himself. Cf. Courtenay 1984: 294-298.

137. Wyclif 2017: 81. Cf. 1909d: 200: “Triplex autem est radix, e qua precipue moventur homines ad credendum quod non est in hominis potestate causare volucionem aut relacionem

In the context of relative volition, as repeatedly emphasised, grace depends on both extremes: God and the contingent creature existing *ad extra*. The latter serves as the objective (or material or final) cause of this volition, without which the relation ceases to exist. In the *De scientia Dei*, the principle of causal reciprocity between the *volens* (the one willing) and the *volitum* (the object of the will) is applied with caution, reflecting the overarching intention of the soteriological treatment – now fully realised:

Et cum relacio eterna in deo non habet causam nisi materialem subiectivam, aut obiectivam vel finalem, que est eternaliter agens, patet quod volicio qua deus vult finem non causaretur a volucione qua deus vult medium nisi aliquo horum trium modorum, quorum nullus potest volicioni dei quoad medium imperfectius conpetere. Ymo, etsi conceditur quod meritum sit causa predestinacionis, non sequitur quod homo meretur istam predestinacionem.¹³⁸

The significance of causal reciprocity as a soteriological strategy becomes clearer when considering Wyclif's broader use of the concept in the *Summa de ente* tracts – composed shortly after the *De scientia Dei* – and in the *De dominio divino*. In these works, Wyclif underscores that while relative divine volition is the efficient cause of its object's existence, it is also caused by that object through final causality. Without the human actions that are the objects of divine volitions, God could not bring about these contingent acts of will.¹³⁹ As previously noted, the relationship between divine will or knowledge and their *ad extra* objects is both eternal – due to divine immutability – and contingent, in the sense that the failure of one entails the failure of the other.¹⁴⁰ For example, in the case of divine volition directed towards an individual's action, it is not sufficient that God merely causes His own volition for the action to be accomplished.

<in> deo: prima et precipua, si non fallor, est variacio in methaphisica, credendo quod voluciones et sciencie sunt essencie absolute”.

138. Wyclif 2017: 84. See also 81: “Ex quo patet quod non sequitur ‘iste homo causat istam gratiam vel predestinacionem, ergo ipse meretur eandem’”. Cf. 1909d: 190-193: 191: “Nec est color quod homo utitur deo vel non indigeat eius regimine, etsi sit causa obiectiva quare deus regit eum. Non enim causat deum, etsi causet relacionem eius ad creaturam; nec est volucio vel ordinancia dei instrumentum cause ipsam causantis, cum non sit in eius potestate ut per ipsam operetur”. Cf. also 1930a: 13-14.

139. Wyclif 1909d: 131: “Ideo verisimiliter dici potest quod volucio dei, quicquid sit de scientia eius, est unum previe requisitum ad existenciam voliti, non solum quia oportet eam eternaliter precedere quodlibet volitum creatum, set quia oportet ipsam efficere volitum. Si enim labor efficit sanitatem, quia infirmus laborando fit sanus, pari evidencia vel maiori videtur quod volucio dei efficiat creaturam, quia deus volendo efficit creaturam; et econtra illa volucio causatur obiective vel finaliter, medio ab ipso volito, ad quod principaliter terminatur”; *ibid.*: 132-133; and 1890: 143: “Omnis intelligencia, sciencia, vel volencia Dei terminata ad creaturam in suo genere est eterna, infrustrabilis, et contingens, et per consequens a suo termino temporali causata”; *ibid.*: 226: “Ideo, ut patet alibi, omne quod eveniet est sic necessarium evenire, et non absolute necessarium, cum voluciones Dei contingentes eterne secundum essenciam suam causant effectus, et secundum relacionem rationis quam dicunt formaliter ab illis effectibus recausantur”.

140. Wyclif 1909d: 135: “Et vocat contingens equaliter actum primum inmanentem agentis rationalis; quo posito, cum omnibus disposicionibus naturaliter previis, cum quibus ipsum producit, non sequitur necessario ipsum produci, set utraque parcium potest stare equaliter”.

Rather, the total cause of that contingent state of affairs must be present. This requires, *ex parte obiecti*, the created agent's contribution to the realisation of her or his action, which occurs through divine grace but also through the partial, limited, yet essential concurrence of human free will.¹⁴¹ Given this human concurrence, the total cause of divine volition is provided according to hypothetical necessity.¹⁴²

The idea that the creature can *partialiter* influence the divine will – as also noted in the *De dominio divino* – can already be traced in Wyclif's earlier works: *in nuce* in the *De scientia Dei*,¹⁴³ more explicitly in the *De volitione Dei*, and most definitively in the *De universalibus*. It is in chapter 14 of the *De universalibus* that Anthony Kenny, in a renowned study, identifies compelling evidence to challenge the common portrayal of Wyclif as an extreme determinist:¹⁴⁴

141. *Ibid.*: 179-180: "Et si queratur de operatione extrinseca producta a volucione hominis, utrum illa sit principalior quam volucio dei, certum est quod volucio dei est principalior quam aliqua creatura, cum sit deus: et si queratur de volucione dei terminata ad actum extrinsecum, dicitur quod ipsa principalior, sufficiens, et prior est quam volucio hominis respectu illius actus, quia nulla volucio hominis est causa sufficiens (respectu actus) extrinseca, set causa partialis et incompleta: volucio autem dei est causa necessitans et completa. [...] nec ex hoc putandum est quod voluntas absoluta causetur ab alia volucione dei relativa, vel a volucione que deus est. Set disputatio nostra limitata est ad voluciones que sunt veritates contingentes formaliter inexistentes naturis volentibus, quarum aliqua in deo est volubile in homine natura posterior. Nec videtur michi inconveniens, set consonum rationi, quod volucio hominis causet datam volucionem dei partialiter, et non econtra; ut volucio qua volo me currere est causa partialis et per accidens cursus mei. Volucio autem qua deus vult illum cursum esse, fit ab illo cursu et partialiter a volucione mea, et non causat illam. Verumptamen respectu cuiuscunque concurrunt voluntas humana et divina: est voluntas divina prior, quia eterna, et ratione sui subiecti perfeccior".

142. *Ibid.*: 175-177: "Tercium argumentum maiorem difficultatem includit, assumens quod voluntas humana voluntatem divinam necessitat. Ad quod dicitur quod ipsum potest bene intelligi et male; ideo, exposito sensu sano, secure concedo conclusionem. [...] Excluso [...] sensu falso de ista necessitacione dei a creaturis, detenendus est sensus verus indubie ex principiis veris doctoris, sicut aliqua causa posita, sequitur suum causatum. Tunc illa est necessitas antecedens respectu sui causati, nedum tota, set pars eius est causa partialiter necessitans; ut deus, eius volucio, et ignis, necessitant combustibile comburi, modo deus et creatura terminans volucionem divinam sunt causa, ex qua posita sequitur formaliter deum velle ipsam esse, ut patet ex sepe dictis. Ideo volubile, cum bonitate sua qualibet a deo, est causa, in virtute dei necessitans ipsum ad illud volendum. [...] sicut deus utitur creatura ex qua posita sequitur eam velle eandem; ita servat veritatem negativam, ex qua posita sequitur ipsum non velle datam negacionem, licet possibilem, et sic necessitate ex suppositione necessitat creatura deum ad non volendum datum actum: non sic tamen quin contingentissime et liberrime potest deus velle oppositum; ut quamvis volucio dei eterna necessitat tam deum quam creaturam, non tamen absolute, set ex suppositione; sic quod tam deus quam creatura potest libere in oppositum".

143. See at least Wyclif 2017: 3: "patet quod quotlibet sciencie dei de actuali existere creature insunt deo contingenter, quamvis nulla talia posset accidentaliter sibi inesse, cum claudit contradiccionem deum quicquam incipere vel desinere cognoscere. Prima pars patet ex hoc quod omnes creaturas contingit non existere, ut nunc supponitur; et si non existunt, deus non cognoscit illas existere, eo quod omne quod non existit non cognoscitur existere; ergo omnem noticiam formaliter dictam qua deus cognoscit creaturam existere contingit non esse, et tamen omnis talis sibi inexistit".

144. Kenny 1987: 174-176. Kenny argued that the distinction between hypothetical and absolute necessity, along with the causal reciprocity between human action and God's rela-

Hic videtur mihi posse dici quod multi effectus sunt in libera potestate contradictionis rationalis creaturae sic quod potest facere ipsos fore et potest facere quod non erunt, quia aliter tolleretur meritum atque demeritum. Et sic est in potestate hominis facere de quotlibet volutionibus aeternis in Deo quod nulla earum erit et sic de non-volutionibus et econtra. Pro quo notandum quod volutio Dei, respectu existentiae creaturae, potest intelligi secundum habitudinem relativam, ut est res rationis fundata in Deo volente rem esse secundum esse intelligibile – quod est absolute necessarium – et terminata ad existentiam creaturae in proprio genere. Et talis habitudo dependet ab utroque extremo, cum ad hoc quod Deus velit Petrum vel aliud factibile esse requiritur ipsum esse. Et ita existentia creaturae, licet sit temporalis, causat in Deo relationem rationis aeternam, quae semper causatur et semper est complete causata.¹⁴⁵

In short, as Paul Vignaux notes,¹⁴⁶ the thesis of reciprocal causality reinforces the idea of two cooperating freedoms – divine and human – each with its own prerogatives and mutual constraints.¹⁴⁷ While human beings cannot cause the *voluntas quae est Deus*, since God’s essence is absolutely necessary and beyond any free will (including His own uncreated will),¹⁴⁸ they are able – in the sense outlined above – to cause the relative divine volition. This will depends on both parties: “Deus vult me diligere ipsum, igitur ego diligo ipsum”. Consequens est in potestate mea, et antecedens, cum sit eternum, nec est in potestate mea nec in potestate dei”.¹⁴⁹

tive volition, allows rational agents – while unable to determine eternal divine decrees – to ‘provoke’ them to some extent. One of the passages cited to support this point is found in Wyclif 1985: 346-347: “omnia futura necessario – necessitate ex suppositione – sunt futura, quae tamen contingentissime sunt futura. Et sic veritates sic necessitantes necessario fuerunt et tamen potest esse quod non fuerunt. Immo, tu potes facere quod non fuerunt et tamen non potes facere illa desinere fuisse vel commutare genitum in ingenitum”.

145. *Ibid.*: 343.

146. Vignaux 1934: 118. See at least Wyclif 1909d: 148: “Videtur enim quod, si deus antecederet necessitat creaturam ad illum actum, quod ipse non sit liber; set non sequitur, cum summa et absoluta necessitas stat cum summa libertate; quare igitur non necessitas ex suppositione cum libertate creata?”

147. See i.a. *ibid.*: 171: “potestas dei non potest esse restricta, set ex causa racionabili ligari potest potesta<ti> cuiuslibet creature”; *ibid.*: 134: “nulla volucio dei relativa est summe libera, set solum natura divina. Nam relacio consequens est equivoce dicta prima libertatis dei. Nec repugnat libertas et necessitas in eodem, set [...] libertas et necessitas ex equo proporcionaliter se invicem consequuntur”.

148. *Ibid.*: 169: “deus non habet potestatem super actum suum intrinsecum, quia non potest aliquem talem temporaliter facere vel corrumpere, et multo magis nemo alius habet potestatem super actus dei”; *ibid.*: 148-149: “Difficultas igitur stat in hoc verbo, *potestas*, utrum concedi debet volucionem dei esse in potestate alicuius. Et videtur michi quod non, cum potestas dicit potenciam dominativam, set deus non est eternaliter dominus, igitur non habet potestatem super volucione sua, set solum super creaturas”; *ibid.*: 148: “Nec sequitur ex isto quod creatura potest mutare volucionem, ipsam generando aut corrumpendo, quia nec hoc potest deus, set creatura potest obiective causare illam”. Cf. Wyclif 2017: 128: “Et eodem modo sequitur quod dicta necessitas stat cum libertate creature, quia conpatitur contingenciam, non ponit coactionem, et hoc sufficit ad libertatem creature”.

149. Wyclif 1909d: 149.

Therefore, it is reasonable to assert that a creature can prevent God from having a particular volition towards them¹⁵⁰ – not by opposing or preventing divine decision, but because it would be unacceptable for God to will something without the individual's free participation.¹⁵¹ In this way, there remains a certain space for the responsible exercise of human will, which is worthy of reward or punishment, in shaping one's conduct, while God is absolved of any direct or indirect involvement in the sin for which He is not the author and which no one is compelled to commit.

If, however, the creature could not influence the relative divine volition of which they are the object,¹⁵² it would be difficult to assert that they sin freely and thus bear sole moral responsibility. While individuals can prevent God from willing their damnation, they cannot stop Him from doing so if they freely contribute to it through their own demerits:

Ideo possum facere quod deus nunquam voluit dampnationem meam vel aliam quancunque penam quam ego demerior pro peccato existente in libertate mee potencie; set non possum impedire deum ne hoc velit, set cavere possum ne deus hoc velit. Aliter enim esset tanta necessitas ad peccandum, quod omne peccatum esset inevitabile peccatori; nec esset deus omnipotencior, set minus omnipotens, si cuncti eventus creaturis racionabilibus vel aliis forent eis inevitabiles. Tunc enim tolleretur libertas creature racionalis, et per consequens libertas dei. Bene sequitur: si deus libere contradictorie potest movere voluntatem creatam ad utramlibet partem contradiccionis, tunc voluntas creata potest libere evitabiliter <moveri> in utramque partem.¹⁵³

150. *Ibid.*: 192-193: “sensus catholicus est extendere *facere* ad omnem causanciam extrinsecam [...] et concedere quod creatura facit deum sic velle, est concedere quod creatura est causa obiectiva, terminans volucionem dei relativam, qua non possita (sic!), deus non sic vellet”.

151. *Ibid.*: 191-192: “Nec tollitur de omnipotencia dei, etsi non posset velle volucionem meam nisi ego voluero [...]. Ideo, ut sepe dictum est, non est idem resistere volucionem divine, et facere quod non sit volucio divina respectu dati volubilis, ut pulcre declarat dominus Armachanus libro 16°, capitulo 15, *De questionibus armenorum*, ubi ostendit quod omnipotencia voluntatis divine exigit ut *creatura causam poterit impedire et multa que deus vult, vitare; non impediendo, set faciendo quod deus ipsa non velit*. Cum enim deus vult creaturam esse liberam, et multa de facto esse contingencia potentem vitare, resistendo cause ipsam inferenti, patet quod volucio dei exigit pro sua implecione sic esse” (emphasis mine); *ibid.*: 199: “de potencia sua absoluta non potest facere me velle, nisi ego coefficiam cum illo volucionem”. Cf. Wyclif 2017: 114: “Patet consequencia ex hoc quod si consequencia sit cognita esse bona et antecedens sit determinate verum, tunc et consequens. Et minor maximi argumenti patet ex hoc quod nichil potest impedire vel mutare propositum dei, quia si aliquid inpediat aliquod opus ne fiat, deus nunquam ipsum proposuit [...]. Nec est dubium de hoc quod nemo posset impedire divinum propositum, nisi deo iuvante et coagente, ut patet alibi, et per consequens nisi deus eternaliter determinaverit se ut inpediatur; cum ergo deus scienter pro eadem mensura proponeret contradictoria, sequitur quod nichil potest inpedire divinum propositum”.

152. The causal influence of creatures on God's cognitive and volitional acts does not undermine His ontological primacy over the created order. God knows creatures primarily through their intelligible being, and their actual existence and actions are ontologically dependent on the eternal being they have in the divine mind.

153. Wyclif 1909d: 192. Cf. 170: “Nec obest isti firmitati concilii et volucionis dei, quod nemo potest contraire vel resistere, ipsum causari a creatura, potente facere quod non sit con-

5. CONTINUITY AND DEVELOPMENT: THE TAXONOMY OF GRACE IN THE *DE DOMINIO DIVINO*

The presentation of the soteriological content in the *De scientia Dei* has, where appropriate, drawn on related testimonies or supplementary material found in other treatises of the *Summa de ente*, as well as in the *De dominio divino*. The latter work was likely composed soon after Wyclif attained his doctoral degree in theology, probably in the year following the completion of the *De scientia Dei*. In any case, it is undoubtedly a contemporaneous text, in which the exposition of the doctrine of salvation aligns with that found in the later writings of the *Summa* and appears to address the need for a systematic organisation of previously formulated theses. This section aims to present a few examples of these clarifications and developments.

As previously noted, the *De scientia Dei* is the first work in which Wyclif classifies the various types of grace, using distinctions of reason as his method.¹⁵⁴ However, the most successful and clearest exposition of this taxonomy appears in the third book of the *De dominio divino*. Here, the taxonomy is introduced through an objection that Wyclif had already addressed in his earlier tract on divine knowledge:

Videtur enim, 'si quilibet viator nichil meretur ex condigno sed pure ex gracia, quod tollitur omnis actus meritorius viatoris; cum apostolus expresse dicat, Rom. xi. 5, quod *relique* Israhel *secundum electionem graciae* Dei *salve facte sunt*: si autem gracia Dei iam non ex operibus, alioquin gracia iam non est gracia'. Sed ad illud sunt doctores communiter, quod, si quis premiatur pure ex condignitate operum, tunc non ex gracia.¹⁵⁵

In the *De scientia Dei*, Wyclif extensively discusses the interpretation of the Pauline passage – namely, the denial of the human capacity to merit *de condigno* – that he considered correct. In the *De dominio divino*, however, this same interpretation is presented as a widely accepted view among the schools. As a result, instead of analysing the distinction between *condignitas* and *congruitas* of merit, the *De dominio divino* uses the verse from *Romans* 11:6 as a starting point for a systematic enumeration of the various types of grace. The first of these, as Wyclif notes with reference to Grosseteste,¹⁵⁶

silium, sciencia, aut volucio dei". Cf. *ibid.*: 197-198: "Homo igitur potest facere deum velle punire eum demerendo, et potest <facere> deum non velle punire eum, preservando se a peccato, mediante tamen deo gracie preagente [...], ut generaliter peccata sunt cause ultime quare <deus vult> punire peccatores et non vult salvare eos; sicut merita sunt cause quare deus vult salvare eos, ut sonat tam ratio quam scriptura. [...]. Ymmo videtur (mirabilis!) sequi quod est in potestate mea facere deum multa velle, set non est in potestate dei quod ipse se solo faciat se quicquam velle; quia faccio mea potest esse temporalis, generabilis, et corruptibilis ad nutum meum, set faccio dei respectu sue volucionis non potest esse, nisi fuerit eterna: et per consequens nichil potest <habere> potestatem super illam".

154. Wyclif 1890: 247: "Unde licet iste sex graciae distinguantur, non tamen est putandum quod una illarum posset esse cum hoc quod non sit reliqua earundem; et per consequens omnes sex invicem consequuntur".

155. *Ibid.*: 236.

156. Cf. above: 191-192. The formal distinction between created and uncreated grace does not, however, appear in the brief text by Grosseteste.

establishes a distinction between uncreated and created grace. Wyclif then explains that uncreated grace must be understood in three distinct ways:¹⁵⁷

- | | | |
|-----------------|-------|--|
| | [U.1] | “essencialiter pro divina essencia” |
| Uncreated grace | [U.2] | “personaliter pro tercia Persona” |
| | [U.3] | “habitudinaliter pro quacumque volicione divina qua Deus vult benefacere creature” |

The same tripartition appears in the *De scientia Dei*, though without the distinction between uncreated and created grace. There, Wyclif uses formulas almost identical to U.1 and U.2 and similarly argues that, in the sense conveyed by U.3, grace should be understood as a relation grounded both in God and in a contingent creature, making it both eternal in God and contingent.¹⁵⁸

The grace referred to as ‘created’ in the *De dominio divino*, corresponding to the *secunda significatio* of ‘gratia’ in the *De scientia Dei*, is also subject to a tripartite classification, which Wyclif proceeds to elaborate.¹⁵⁹

- | | | |
|---------------|-------|--|
| | [C.1] | “materialiter pro dono quolibet gratis dato” |
| Created grace | [C.2] | “contractius pro quolibet supernaturali gratuito, ut sunt omnes virtutes theologice vel morales” |
| | [C.3] | “magis pertinenter [...] pro bona qualitate qua creatura est formaliter grata deo” |

This distinction, as is evident, closely mirrors that presented in the *De scientia Dei*.¹⁶⁰ In fact, despite appearances, C.1 also aligns with the first subdivision of the second meaning of grace that Wyclif had previously outlined. What had been described as “personaliter in predicacione secundum essenciam pro creatura grata” in the *De dominio divino* is to be understood as “materialiter pro dono quolibet gratis dato; et sic est quelibet creatura gracia, cum sit donum Domini gratis datum”.¹⁶¹

The most compelling aspect of the treatment in the *De dominio divino* lies less in the classifications just outlined and more in the systematic incorporation of other

157. Wyclif 1890: 236.

158. Cf. above: 201-202. See Wyclif 1890: 236: “et sic sunt nobis infinite graciae Deo intrinsece contingentes et omnes Deo simpliciter coeterne, ut dictum est de intelligenciis, scienciis, et volenciis Dei nostri”.

159. *Ibid.*: 236-237.

160. Cf. above: 177.

161. Wyclif 2017: 68; and 1890: 236.

distinctions of grace, which – though already present in the *De scientia Dei* – are presented here as subdivisions of C.3:

	[C.3.a]	<i>gracia praeveniens</i>
C.3	[C.3.b]	<i>gracia gratum faciens</i>
(“bona qualitas qua creatura est formaliter grata Deo”)	[C.3.c]	<i>gracia praedestinationis</i>

Firstly, an individual is pleasing to God through *gratia praeveniens*, the divine intervention that provides the creature with the essential conditions for existence and preservation from death. In this sense, grace is a prerequisite for acquiring merit, but it is not reserved solely for the elect; all individuals, even those receiving only prevenient grace, benefit from its sustaining influence, without which they could not even exist.¹⁶²

The *bona qualitas* that makes a person pleasing to God may also take the form of *gratia gratum faciens*, enabling creatures to advance in their *processus iustificationis*, cooperating with God in performing meritorious deeds. This grace – present in different individuals or in the same individual to varying degrees – allows a person to align with the divine will and attain *gratia secunda* (or *augmentum gratiae*), as previously discussed by Wyclif in the *De scientia Dei*.¹⁶³

Finally, one can be pleasing to God through *gratia praedestinationis*, the divine gift by which God assigns creatures to one of two eschatological realms: the elect, destined for salvation, and the reprobate, consigned to damnation. Unlike *gratia gratum faciens*, *gratia praedestinationis* is compatible with mortal sin. As noted, a *praedestinatus* may be in a state of temporal sin and lack *gratia gratum faciens*. Conversely, a *praesci-tus*, though excluded from *gratia praedestinationis*, may still benefit from *gratia gratum faciens* and cooperate with it by performing good works on the path to salvation. However, no *praedestinatus* will die in mortal sin; all will ultimately be saved.¹⁶⁴ Conversely,

162. *Ibid.*: 237: “Quedam est gracia qua creatura rationalis est grata Deo, ut quamcunque beneficienciam ab ipso recipiat; et talem gratiam oportet omnem creaturam rationalem habere eo ipso quo a Deo causatur vel effectualiter conservatur: et illa gracia dicitur preveniens ad merendum, peccato mortali compossibilis, cum sit perpetuo in dampnatis, quos Deus acceptat et diligit de quanto illos conservat in esse”.

163. *Ibid.*: “Secunda dicitur gracia gratum faciens, peccato mortali opposita, que vel est iusticia vel ipsam concomitans; et illa potest augmentari vel minui, sicut potest excidere et redire”; *ibid.*: 245: “homo potest dignificare se post previam gratiam ut Deus in ipso generet secundam gratiam vel augmentum, et per consequens homo potest mereri generacionem vel augmentum secunde gracie, et per idem demereri potest exstincionem vel diminucionem secunde gracie sed non prime”.

164. Every individual has the potential to avoid sinning at the final moment of life (although, *de necessitate ex suppositione*, only the predestined will persevere *usque in finem* without sinning); see *ibid.*: 235: “Tercio videtur probabiliter posse dici quod quilibet spiritus humanus citra Christum habet unum momentum ante mortem in quo finaliter mereri poterit vel demereri”. Since all truths – past, present and future – are present to God, including the alternatives

no *praescitus* will persevere *usque in finem* without falling into mortal sin, thereby justly meriting eternal punishment.¹⁶⁵

Eternally determined by an unfathomable and immutable decree, *gratia praedestinationis* can neither be withdrawn nor retroactively granted by God: “Deus de potencia absoluta non posset acceptare creaturam ad gloriam, nisi sibi insit eterna gracia contingenter, et infundatur in creatura beata creata gracia secundum quam formaliter sit sic grata”.¹⁶⁶ As is well established, God cannot glorify anyone in violation of the eternally established order. This voluntary self-limitation of divine power requires creatures to actively contribute to their own justification by acquiring merit – a process that, contrary to Pelagius’s view, is impossible without the prior intervention of grace: “nemo potest mereri aliquid nisi Deus ex eterna gracia faciat eum gratum, ex qua gratitudine vel gracia naturaliter previe requisita pr<cedit quodcunque meritum creature”.¹⁶⁷ God’s grace enables individuals to acquire merit far more effectively than human faculties, which, in its absence, cannot make a significant contribution to the process of *gratificatio*. When grace is infused, however, it “ponit completam sufficienciam ad merendum” – not because it completes justification independently of the creature’s cooperation, but because it provides the essential foundation for human faculties to concur effectively in acquiring merit.¹⁶⁸

not chosen by human free will, the created agent always retains, from God’s perspective, the possibility of acting (or having acted) otherwise. On this point, Wyclif, in his *De scientia Dei*, referred to Adam, noting that the preserved possibility of not sinning (and thus the eternal failure to repent) is what renders eternal punishment just; see Wyclif 2017: 139-140: “Tenendum est ergo quod deus omnia que unquam potuit semper potest, et quelibet creatura, quandocunque est, potest omnia que unquam potuit, ut Adam nunc potest non peccasse, quia nunc habet potenciam ex qua potest pro tempore ante temptacionem; in quo tempore est satis declinare peccatum, quia aliter indubie non esset peccans continue culpandus nisi continue posset non peccasse”. This is to be understood, of course, *de potentia absoluta*; see *ibid.*: 137: “omne quod deus potest cum creatura instrumentaliter perficere potest et creatura; set deus omne quod unquam potuit cum creatura instrumentaliter perficere semper potest; ergo omne quod unquam creatura potuit perficere adhuc potest. Maior patet ex hoc quod nichil potest fieri a creatura, nisi quatenus est instrumentum dei; aut ergo nichil potest creatura, aut omne quod deus potest instrumentaliter perficere per illam. Et minor sic ostenditur: nulla potencia divina potest a deo decidere; set quandoque deus potuit in effectum; ergo adhuc potest”; *ibid.*: 138: “Nam aliter sequitur quod deus necessario ex lapsu temporis deperdit quotlibet potencias”.

165. Wyclif 1890: 237: “Sed tercia dicitur gracia predestinacionis, que sola dividit inter filios regni et carceris; que, licet non possit excidere, stat tamen cum peccato mortali, cum non iustificat formaliter viatorem”.

166. *Ibid.*: 238.

167. *Ibid.*: 239. Cf. 245: “Duplex tamen solet esse distincio de mereri, scilicet, anteceden-ter et incomplete, vel consequenter et complete. [...] Sed meritum consequens et completum presupponit gratiam, et addit actum meritorium per quem subiectum sit simul dignum ad premium”.

168. *Ibid.*: 241-242: “Quod autem Dei gracia sit principalior in agendo, patet ex hoc quod creatura principalius disponitur ex Dei gracia ad merendum quam quacunque dispositione alia naturali. Nam nulla alia sufficit si hec desit, sed hec, eo ipso quod inest, ponit completam sufficienciam ad merendum; non quod per se possit agere actione propria qua non commu-

The discussion of grace in the *De dominio divino* concludes with an analysis of a passage from *2 Corinthians* 3:4-5: “Fiduciam autem talem habemus per Christum ad Deum quod non sufficientes sumus cogitare aliquid a nobis quasi ex nobis, sed sufficiencia nostra ex Deo est”. This passage is particularly noteworthy as it allows Wyclif to further clarify – beyond what he had already addressed in the *De scientia Dei* – the legitimate role of human works in the process of salvation. Commenting on these Pauline verses, Wyclif notes that the hope individuals place in receiving a reward *pro labore* is rooted primarily in the mediating work of Christ,¹⁶⁹ who merited not only for Himself but for the entire human race. Building on this, he further explains:

Et quia posset credi apostolum intendere quod meretur a Deo aliquid de condigno, removet illud subtiliter adiciens quod *non sumus sufficientes cogitare aliquid a nobis quasi ex nobis, sed ex Deo*. In quo dicto videtur michi quod apostolus more suo profunde primo innuit nos posse cogitare aliquid a nobis, et per consequens salvatur nobis liberum arbitrium cum potencia merendi de congruo; secundo, per hoc quod negat nos posse *cogitare aliquid ex nobis*, explicat quod non possumus mereri aliquid sine precedente gracia, et sic nichil simpliciter de condigno; tercio, quando dicit *sufficiencia nostra*, et sic cogitandi, *ex Deo est*, patenter innuit quod nulla creatura potest aliquid nisi illud specialiter sit ex Deo.¹⁷⁰

According to Wyclif, the Apostle acknowledges humanity’s ability to exercise free will, thereby contributing personally and responsibly (*a nobis*) to the *processus iustificationis*. However, this contribution is not *ex nobis* but *ex Deo*, as it stems from God’s gratuitous and prevenient gift of grace. Emphasising the importance of precise language, Wyclif examines Paul’s use of the preposition “ex”: “in modis loquendi apostoli *ex* prepositio signat circumstanciam primi principii originantis”.¹⁷¹ He further highlights other key Pauline passages that reaffirm salvation is not obtained *ex operibus* and thus not *de condigno*.¹⁷² While individuals indeed merit salvation *per opera* – through actions and volitions directed towards the good by free will and in conformity with evangelical law – the foundation of this merit lies not in the works themselves but in grace: “Cum ergo prima origo premii sit gracia et non meritum premiati, non mirum si Scriptura dicat

nicet cum subiecto, sed quia subiectum ipsa utitur tamquam dono Dei et dispositione efficacissima ad merendum. Unde idem est gratiam sic facere subiectum, in quantum gratum Deo, sic facere; quod *si esset essencia per se possibilis haberet indubie propria actionem*, nec homo ex illa actione tam extranei hospitis pocius mereretur quam si bonus angelus concomitans sine appositione virium hominis operetur. Gracia itaque increata principalissime facit actum, sicut natura creata secundum redundantem gratiam creatam meretur principalius quam secundum dispositionem aliam naturalem” (emphasis mine).

169. Cf. *ibid.*: 233: “Eius quidem conversacio summe meritoria in plenitudine temporis ordinata est principium vivificans quodlibet aliud meritum subsequens vel precedens”.

170. *Ibid.*: 242 (emphasis mine).

171. *Ibid.*: 243.

172. In addition to the aforementioned verse from *Romans* 11:6, see Titus 3:4-5 (“Apparuit benignitas et humanitas Salvatoris nostri Dei, non ex operibus iusticie que fecimus nos”).

ad hunc sensum quod nemo meretur ex opere sed ex gracia premiantis".¹⁷³ For Wyclif, what is obtained *per opera* and *ex gratia* is to be understood as meritorious *de congruo*.

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173. *Ibid.*: 244. Cf. 1904: 590-591: "Hic sepe dixi quod extendendo mereri ad bonum et malum quod vocatur specialiter demereri homo meretur tam beatitudinem quam dampnationem; beatitudinem preveniente gracia et dampnationem ex propria stulticia; et sic ut dictum communiter homo non meretur ex se sed ex prevenzione graciae beatitudinem [...], sed ex se peccat".

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