CHAPTER THREE

DOMINION IN COMMUNITY: THE LAW OF LOVE

Following the inner logic of Wyclif’s discourse and his dissent with Fitzralph and Bradwardine has helped us to find more integrity in Wyclif’s logic of the scriptures, metaphysics, theology and natural philosophy than many of his modern readers have. Moreover, now we may be in the position to be able to reconstruct the design of his project, which he outlined in the opening passages of De dominio divino. The consequences of Wyclif’s correction of Fitzralph’s voluntarism (in Wyclif’s formulation praxis) and Bradwardine’s illuminationism (speculatio), representing the two main trends of post-Augustinian theology in Wyclif’s Oxford, were far-reaching. By tilting the slanted axis of the light of the intellect back to its straight position, to use the proto-scientific terms of light metaphysics and speculative geometry, he returned to the orthodoxy of faith in the resurrection of Jesus, the man, the promise of salvation and eternal life for mankind, and the literal sense of the scriptures.

The first question, that of the nature of divine will and its relationship with human will, was demonstrated in three tracts; its other aspect can also be seen as explicated in three tracts, which have been hidden in what is known as De mandatis divinis and as De civili dominio. In the forthcoming chapters, we shall reconstruct Wyclif’s tracts on God’s giving to men, his donation and testament of his will, in the form of three laws: those of nature, scripture and grace, before Wyclif’s discourse on dominion by grace found in his most controversial tract on civil dominion is reconstructed.

Lahey, in his recent reading of De dominio divino, summarized his understanding of its content as if the whole tract were about the de-

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1 “Premissa sentencia de dominio in communi ac speculative de spiritu qui est homo et per consequens subiectum humani dominii restat parumper preparatoria ad dicenda discutere de quiditate iuris in genere atque iusticie que est huius dominii fundamentum,” MD, 1. Wyclif defines the subject of human dominion as the spirit, which is integrated with the soul, or otherwise, common humanity.

2 See earlier references to Trevelyen, Poole, Hudson, Leff, etc.

3 See DD, 158; and also footnote 108 in Chapter Two.
monstration of divine dominion as a universal. This conclusion gave
him a guideline for the reading of Wyclif’s works on civil dominion,
and ultimately to a ‘model’ of universal and particular, as if human
(civil) dominion were a particular case of divine dominion. While, in
some respects, this interpretation can be maintained, it limits the scope
of interpretation of Wyclif’s texts on dominion, because it does not
take notice of the importance of Wyclif’s ‘second nest,’ nature, in his
thoughts.

Wyclif presented his ‘notion of man and nature,’ which can also
be understood as a solution to the ontological and epistemological
question of what Tachau called ‘existential certitude,’ in the second
tract on divine dominion. On the basis of what we have learnt from De
Universalibus about the trinity of ‘predicated being,’ which was reiterated
in De dominio divino and led to the climax of the first tract, where he
placed Christ at the focus of his attention as a wholly natural man,
whose divine nature was created by the impeccable identity of his being
with the adequacy of the creative (predicative) verb that was incarnated
in him, it is reasonable to conclude that the existential evidence for
Wyclif was to be found in the triangulation of being by causation
(fathering), formation (assuming the universal form of human genus),
and representation (the ‘saying’ of his being in words and deeds). This
kind of three value logic offered a solution to the problems he set
out to enlighten his audience’s mind about: to regain control of their
will, which is the divine moving force behind being human through
the ordered love of universals, as he distinguished them in the second
tract of De divino dominio—in the logical-rational understanding of
the universe. But this logical understanding is always tested and corrected
by natural being, and scriptural adequacy, as the representation of the
divine will in the testaments. The third tract of De dominio divino was
found to be a treatise on how God’s free gift of dominion to the human
race worked through the three laws given both to the individual and to
the communal soul: the law of nature, the law of scripture, and the law
of grace.

This ‘triad’ should also serve to broaden the field of interpretation
offered by Gellrich. In Gellrich’s reconstruction of Wyclif’s insistence
on the reality of the incarnation of the word, and, as a consequence, the
absolute authority of the (written) text of the scripture seems to under-
line his ultra-realism, moreover, his determinist outlook. Lahey also dis-
covers a problem here as concerns free will, and possibly because of
his own guideline for the reading of Wyclif’s texts, he seems to think of