

Thomas Netter of Walden: Carmelite, Diplomat and Theologian (c. 1372-1430)

CARMEL IN BRITAIN  
STUDIES ON THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE CARMELITE ORDER  
VOLUME 4

Edited by Johan Bergström-Allen & Richard Copsey



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# THOMAS NETTER OF WALDEN

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The sacrament of Ordination depicted in a manuscript of Netter's *Doctrinale*.  
Oxford, Lincoln College, MS. Lat 106, fol. 248v (detail).

## THE PLACE OF THE *DOCTRINALE* OF THOMAS NETTER OF WALDEN IN THE HISTORY OF ECCLESIOLOGY

Santiago Madrigal

*Decreverunt Decanus et Facultas Theologiae Scholae Parisiensis Librum hunc a praeclarissimo Doctore Thoma Walden, studiose compositum, utile admodum esse, dignumque ut edatur; quandoquidem ad enervandas luteranas calumnias atque haereses reipublicae christianae perniciosissimas plurimum conducit. Quod notarii ejusdem Facultatis signo manifestum est satis, his suscribendo, anno christiano millesimo quingentesimo vicesimo tertio idibus Decembris.*

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The *Doctrinale antiquitatum fidei ecclesiae catholicae* represents the most wide-ranging and significant publication of controversies produced by Catholic theology in response to the ideas of Wyclif. Hence, it has entered into the annals of the history of theology as an apologetic and notably controversial work. The *Doctrinale's* reputation was such that it was used as an antidote to resist the Protestant Reform, as witnessed by the words (reproduced above) of the Registrar of the Faculty of Theology in Paris, dated 1523. This generic characterisation of Thomas Netter of Walden's work as seminal was further clarified in a relatively recent study which referred to an 'ecclesiology of controversy'.<sup>2</sup> Going further, there are those who claim that the *Doctrinale* should be considered the first *De Ecclesia* tract on the nature of the Church.<sup>3</sup> In this context, the present study

- <sup>1</sup> This paper was first delivered in Spanish; the editors express their thanks to Fr. Tony Lester, O.Carm., for his assistance in revising the translation originally received.
- <sup>2</sup> K. S. Smith, *The Ecclesiology of Controversy: Scripture, Tradition and Church in the Theology of Thomas Netter of Walden, 1372-1430*, (Ph.D. Thesis, Cornell University, 1983).
- <sup>3</sup> Cf. Fr. Ramón de la Inmaculada, O.C.D., 'La doctrina de la incorporación a Cristo según Tomás Netter "el Waldense"', Carmelita, *El Monte Carmelo*, 52, (1948), 56-83.

seeks to provide an answer to the following question: What place can this English Carmelite be given in the history of ecclesiology?

This objective delineates what sections of the lengthy *Doctrinale* can be submitted for analysis. The *Doctrinale's* subtitle already offers a global overview: *opus in tres tomes digestum*. In the current consideration we can leave out the second and third volumes which deal with *De sacramentis* and *De sacramentalibus* respectively. The remaining first volume deals with the subjects of *Deo Christo, Petro, Ecclesia, ac Religiosis* in four books. Its content can broadly be described in this way: the first book deals with God, philosophical principles, anthropology and Christology; the second book is dedicated to the Church; the third and fourth to religious orders. Therefore, in a study of Netter's ecclesiology our field of study is limited to the *Liber secundus* of the first book.

This investigation will proceed in three parts: I will begin by placing Netter's work in the context of his time (part 1); to do this I will deal with its very first reception and the way the *Doctrinale* was used in the Council of Basel (1431-45/49). This synod represents the scenario for a debate between Roman and Hussite theology, which was decisive for the elaboration of initial Catholic ecclesiology. Secondly, I will explain through an analysis of the structure of the *Liber secundus* the principles of systematisation of this work about controversies (part 2). Thirdly, I will compare and contrast this ecclesiological reflection with the newly separate treatise *De Ecclesia* of John of Ragusa (a.k.a. Johannes Stojkovic de Ragusa or John of Arragusio). The comparison of themes and structural lines will ultimately allow a judgement to be made on the place of the *Doctrinale* in the history of Catholic ecclesiology and, subsequently, in the history of theology (part 3).

## 1. The Presence of *Thomas Anglicus* at the Council of Basel

The participation of Netter at the Councils of Pisa and Constance has already been analysed and assessed.<sup>4</sup> This Carmelite was also present in the ecclesial assembly in Basel, although not physically as he was already dead (1430), but through his *Doctrinale*. This way of being present can be described with the solemn words of that anonymous epitaph: *nunc libris multis sic sine voce loquens*. The Basel meeting, the longest assembly in the history of the Church, worked like a 'book fair' where rare editions could be copied or traded.<sup>5</sup> Margaret Harvey has

underlined that the use of Netter's *Doctrinale* at the heart of the Council of Basel had notable repercussions in the work's future distribution.<sup>6</sup>

The reason for its use was the participation of a delegation from Bohemia in the Council of Basel. Constance and Basel trace this curious paradox: the execution of Hus as a heretic and the first confessional dialogue. The unity of ecclesial hierarchy was obtained in Constance, but the condemnation of Hus and Wyclif caused the first confessional division by one part of Christianity – the Church of Bohemia – that polemically proclaimed itself *vera ecclesia* in the face of the Roman Church.<sup>7</sup> The Hussite movement came together around the four articles of Prague: communion under both kinds (Utraquism), the free preaching of the Word of God, the punishment of public sins, and the return of the Church to evangelical poverty. The war of religion gave way to theological debate. It is true that Hussite armies had shown themselves to be unyielding to arms. As matters stood, the *via concilii* appeared to be the most opportune way to regain peace. The accords signed by representatives of the Council and by the Bohemians in Eger, on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1432, regulated those negotiations; the four Prague articles provided the matter for discussion and both parties accepted the following regulating principle: *lex divina, praxis Christi, apostolica et ecclesia primitiva pro veracissimo et indifferente iudice in hoc Basiliensi concilio*.<sup>8</sup>

Thus everything was arranged so that, between 4<sup>th</sup> January and 14<sup>th</sup> April 1433, the debate between the Roman and Hussite theses could take place. This debate helped to bring about the first systematic formulation of Catholic ecclesiology.<sup>9</sup> On the Bohemian side, John Rokyzana defended the distribution of communion from the chalice; Taborite bishop Nicholas of Pelhřimov supported the article which referred to the condemnation of public sins; Ulrich of Znojmo defended the free preaching of the Word; finally, Peter Payne carried out the defence of the article against the clergy's temporal property. The Council had chosen John of Ragusa, Egidio Carlier, Henry Kalteisen and John of Palomar, to respond and outline Catholic doctrine.

What was the role of Netter's *Doctrinale* in the midst of that *audientia* granted by the Council to the Hussites of Bohemia? We can begin from the anecdotal

4 K. S. Smith, 'An English conciliarist? Thomas Netter of Walden at the Councils of Pisa and Constance', in J. R. Sweeney & S. Chodorow (ed.), *Popes, Teachers and Canon Law in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 290-299.

5 J. Helmuth, *Das Basler Konzil 1431-1449. Forschungsstand und Probleme* (Böhlau, Köln-Wien, 1987), p. 173.

6 Margaret Harvey, 'The Diffusion of the *Doctrinale* of Thomas Netter in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', in L. Smith & B. Ward (eds.), *Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages: Essays presented to Margaret Gibson*, (London-Rio Grande, 1992), pp. 281-294, reprinted and revised in this current book.

7 Netter writes in the Praefatio of the *Doctrinale*: 'Scripturus, iuvante Deo, contra novos haereticos Witcleuistas, qui his novissimis diebus Anglicanas repluerunt ecclesias, et hodie totam inuasere Bohemiam' (p. 1). I quote according to the Venice edition, 1571.

8 H. J. Sieben, 'Ferrara/Florenz und vier weitere konziliare Reunionsversuche', *Theologie und Philosophie*, 64, (1989), 518-556 (especially 524-535).

9 W. Krämer, *Konzens und Rezeption. Verfassungsprinzipien der Kirche im Basler Konziliarismus* (Aschendorf, Münster, 1980), pp. 69-124.



placing of Netter in Basel. Recalling other times and moments of debate with the Lollards, our Carmelite wrote in his work's *Praefatio*:

Ego stimulos istos sensi, ego ab uno illorum audacissimo dicto Petro clerico cum confratre meo Vvilhemo in universitate Oxoniae ad certandum, de Peregrinationibus, de Eucharistia, de Religione, et de Mendicitate votiva, per quendam nobilem virum ad hoc electus, repente prouocabar ad bellum. Venimus, affuimus, sed ut sciunt et huc usque declarant, qui intererant, priusquam conferuimus manus, defecit Petrus ille vocatus clericus uecordia suffocatus (Praef. p. 2).

So, it appears that *Petrus vocatus clericus*, with whom Netter was to hold a debate at Oxford University, is the same Peter Payne who took part in the Council of Basel as one of the leaders of the Hussite delegation.<sup>10</sup> *Petrus Anglicus*, as he is referred to in the acts of the Basel Council, joined the Hussite movement of Bohemia. The argument recounted by Netter must have taken place before 1414, as that was the year that Payne left England. Between 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> January 1433, while he defended the article against the worldly property of the clergy, *Petrus Anglicus* referred to Wyclif and Hus as *doctores evangelici*. At that precise moment, the council members proceeded to read the condemnation of both figures made by the Council of Constance.<sup>11</sup> From this stems the evaluation of Netter made by the Dominican and Council theologian John of Ragusa: *magister Thomas Anglicus, qui doctrinam Wickliff plenissime legit, optime intellexit, et fortissimo atque acerrime, ut verus ecclesiae catholicae filius et doctor catholicus, impugnavit*.<sup>12</sup>

The Dominican was the first theologian to respond to the Hussite thesis. His *positio* refuted the notion that *communio sub utraque specie* was a precept necessary for salvation. This provoked the ire of the Bohemians, whom he repeatedly called "heretics". Additionally, he introduced in his speech subjects other than those agreed in Eger, such as the Roman Church and its infallibility. If Wyclif's doctrine of the Eucharist was central to the discussion, then the question of the authority of the Church was being directly affected. On 10<sup>th</sup> February, due

to a brawl between John of Ragusa and Peter Payne, the President of the Council, Cardinal Cesarini, sent the Bohemians a copy of Netter's work via their leader Procopio, which was received with much joy by the former Oxford student:

Eodem die xxiiii hora legatus volumen unum domino Procopio per duos suos servitores transmisit, ut conspiceret continens dictum cuiusdam fratris Carmelitarum, Thomae Walden Anglici, contra libros Wicleph compositum ipsi Martino quinto; qui scilicet Procopius grate volumen suscipiens, transmisit hora eadem Petro magistro Anglico, qui multum gaudebat viso volumine.<sup>13</sup>

From this moment Hussite theologians had available to them the arguments made by *Thomas Anglicus* (Thomas the Englishman). As the debate unfolded, the Basel members proposed that the Hussites join the Council. John of Rokyzana rejected the invitation with harsh words: *nos scimus, quid nobis fecit concilium Constantiense ... Etiam scitote, quod nullum concilium est nobis evangelium*.<sup>14</sup> He professed no trust in the authority of general councils of the Church. Faced with this proposal to join the Council, to return and to unite with the wider Church, the Master of Prague proclaimed: *revertamini ad primam ecclesiam, uniernini nobiscum in evangelio*. On 6<sup>th</sup> April the discussion concerning the reception of the chalice focused on the interpretation of John 6:53 ('Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you..."'). On the preceding days the names of Wyclif and Hus had been invoked again. Peter Zatec, chronicler of the Bohemians' actions in Basel, notes Ragusa's rebuke of Rokyzana: *Vos negastis Thomam Walden honorabilem virum*. The reaction from the defender of the chalice was immediate and conclusive:

Ego scio, quod ipse est novellus, ante 6 vel 7 annos mortuus, et scripsit manifestum falsum de Bohemis, scilicet quod ponerent buccellam panis super baculum, et dicerent "Si filius dei es, descende deorsum", quod numquam aliquis audivit nec vidit.<sup>15</sup>

This angry riposte is all the more meaningful because in it Rokyzana draws on Chapter 21 of the *Liber secundus* of Netter's *Doctrinale*, entitled *quod auctoritas ecclesiae universalis subdita est auctoritati scripturarum Novi tam Veteris Testamenti*, to develop the doctrine of the authority of Scripture above any other form of Church teaching. In this way he could dismiss those theologians who

10 M. E. Poskitt, 'Thomas Netter of Walden', in Patrick Fitzgerald-Lombard, (ed.), *Carmel in Britain: Essays on the Medieval English Carmelite Province – Volume 1: People and Places*, (Rome: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1992), 166-170 (at 167). J. Novotny, 'Peter Payne, ein englischer Flüchtling in Böhmen im XV. Jhd. Ein Beitrag zu dem Problem der theologischen Abhängigkeit Jan Hus' von Wyclif', *Zeitschrift für Slavische Philologie*, 20, (1950), 365-368. W. R. Cook, *Peter Payne, Theologian and Diplomat of the Hussite revolution* (Diss. Philadelphia, 1971).

11 F. Palacky (ed.), *Monumenta Conciliorum Generalium I*, (Vienna, 1857), p. 294, henceforth abbreviated as MCG. See: E. C. Tatnall, 'Die Verurteilung John Wyclifs auf dem Konzil zu Konstanz', in R. Bäumer (ed.), *Das Konstanzer Konzil*, (Darmstadt, 1977), pp. 284-294, and in the same volume, A. Molnár, 'Die Antworten von Johann Hus auf die fünfundvierzig Artikel', pp. 275-283.

12 John of Ragusa, *Oratio de communione sub utraque specie* [D. Mansi, *Sanctorum conciliorum et decretorum nova et amplissima collectio...* 29 (Florence & Venice, 1757) col. 848D]. On these trials see S. Madrigal, 'Eucaristia e Iglesia en la *Oratio de communione sub utraque specie* de Juan de Ragusa', *Revista Española de Teología*, 53, (1993), 145-208; 285-340.

13 MCG I, 307

14 MCG I, 327.

15 MCG I, 344, cf. I, 327: 'Etiam omnes doctores in Bohemia vidimus per vestros allegatos, praeter Walden et Visccher'.

credited the Pope and the Magisterium with an authority greater than that of the Bible.

John of Ragusa echoes this charge in the last chapter of his *Tractatus de Ecclesia*; there he denies undermining the supreme authority of the Scriptures; he too places the authority of the Bible before any other human authority. The Dominican theologian wrote:

Inducit et ultimo unum capitulum ex dictis Thomae Anglici Valdensis, in quo dictus doctor extollit auctoritatem Scripturarum supra omnem aliam in hoc mundo auctoritatem, quod capitulum tamquam omni veritate plenum et catholicum et nos credimus, sed ex quo eum pro auctoritate adversarius inducit, cur ei non assentit in omnibus, saltem in hoc capitulo, quod hic inducit. Profecto si huic capitulo ex integro crederet, non haereticus, sed verus catholicus haberetur ... Ecce quam aperte hic doctor, licet postponat auctoritatem Ecclesiae auctoritati Scripturarum, non tamen auctoritatem Ecclesiae negat aut deprimit.<sup>16</sup>

With recourse to the *Doctrinale*, the Prague theologian intended to demonstrate to the Council that his approach followed precisely the orthodox doctrine of those who appeared to be – in the words of John of Ragusa – *fortissimus malleus modernorum haereticorum wiclephistarum et hussitarum*. The traces of Netter's *Doctrinale* in John of Ragusa's *Tractatus de Ecclesia* reflect the confrontation between Wycliffite-inspired Hussite theology and Catholic theology with respect to the question of Scripture and the Church.

The debate held in Basel on the four Prague articles had various implications for the notion of the Church. That is how it was seen by Payne who, in the midst of those heated discussions, put his finger on the ecclesiological matter at the heart of the debate: *conveniamus in quidditate ecclesiae*.<sup>17</sup> Our Carmelite, Thomas Anglicus, asked himself the same question regarding the substance of the Church. We now consider this by analysing the *Liber secundus* of his *Doctrinale*. Let me anticipate here that in the last section of this study I will use Ragusa's *Tractatus de Ecclesia* as a counterpoint to evaluate the ecclesiological doctrine formulated between 1421 and 1426 in the *Doctrinale antiquitatum fidei ecclesiae catholicae adversus wyclefistas et hussitas*.<sup>18</sup>

16 John of Ragusa, *Tractatus de Ecclesia* (ed. by F. Sanjek, Zagreb, 1983) p. 310; p. 298. Cf. Krämer, o.c. pp. 120–121.

17 MCG I, 297.

18 On the dating of the various books, see Anee Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard history* (Oxford, 1988), 50–52.

## 2. The ecclesiological doctrine of the *Doctrinale*: principles of systematisation

The *Doctrinale*'s form of argumentation consists in the presentation and rejection of Wyclif's doctrines selected from his various writings. I have already indicated that our specific object of study is limited to the *Liber secundus*, and particularly, as I will go on to clarify, the *articulus secundus*. It seems opportune, nonetheless, to contextualise these sections within the overall plan of the work.<sup>19</sup> The prologue of the first volume states its aim thus:

Volo igitur in presenti volumine, iuvante Christo, totius corporis ejus mystici, tam quo ad caput quam quo ad corpus implere ruinas, quas Wiclef insaniendo effecit: In principio tamen libri de ipso libro vitae, ita ut dicere possit Salvator. In ipso capite libri scriptum est de me. Tractabitur enim primo de Deo, quid non sit... De esse Dei (.) et haec in primo articulo. In secundo autem de compositione hominis. In tertio vero de Deo et homine conjunctim: et quid sit Jesus-Christus. (p. 14).

The three *articuli* of the *Liber primus* deal with God, man, and the God-man successively. Jesus Christ is the central theme. Inspired by the ultimate aim of his work – to salve the wounds inflicted by Wyclif on the *corpus mysticum* – Netter begins by offering a reflection on He who is the *caput* of the mystical body. In his words: *Prologus in primum librum, qui est de capite Ecclesiae Jesu Christo in suis naturis disparibus* (I, Lib I, p. 13). These Christological premises prepare the ecclesiological theme of the *Liber secundus*: *Prologus eiusdem in secundum librum, qui est de corpore Christi, quod est ecclesia et de membris ejus*

19 Note the description offered in the title of the work: *Doctrinale antiquitatum fidel ecclesiae catholicae: opus sane divinum, in tres tomos digestum; in quorum primo de Deo Christo, Petro, Ecclesia ae Religiosis; in secundo de sacramentis; in tertio vero de sacramentalibus, adversus Vuitcleuistas, Hussitas*. The first books of the *tomus primus* present a thematic structure of *articuli* which group the different chapters:

Lib. I. De capite ecclesiae Jesu Christo:

Articulus primus: De Deo (chapters 1–30)

Articulus secundus: De compositione hominis (chapters 31–38)

Articulus tertius: De Christo, qui est Deus et homo (chapters 39–44)

Lib. II. De corpore Christo quod est ecclesia:

Articulus primus: De capite ecclesiae et Petri episcopatu (chapters 1–7)

Articulus secundus: De corpore ecclesiae, quae est fides in Symbolo (chapters 8–27)

Articulus tertius: De membris, secundum professiones et officia (chapters 28–82)

Lib. III. De religiosis perfectis in lege Christi:

Articulus primus: De foundatione religionis perfectorum (chapters 1–10)

Articulus secundus: De perfectione religionis (chapters 11–26)

Articulus tertius: De signis et ritibus (chapters 27–31)

Lib. IV. Quomodo religiosi in ecclesia Dei possunt licite exigere victum suum:

Articulus primus: De vita religiosorum ex mendicitate (chapters 1–20)

Articulus secundus: De vita religiosorum in monasteriis (chapters 21–32)

Articulus tertius: De possessionibus reddituum et praediorum (chapters 33–47).



*variis* (p. 138). The three *articuli* of this book deal with the ecclesial body and its members as distinguished from Christ the head. For their part, the other two *libri* (III-IV), which complete the first volume of the *Doctrinale*, focus their attention on the condition of the members of the body of Christ proper to the religious life (*de religiosis*) which had been radically challenged by Wyclif. As things stand, we can say that the same image of *corpus mysticum* graphically anticipates the basic structure of the *Liber secundus: caput – corpus – membra*. In summation: the *Liber secundus* should be considered as a tract on the Church seen as the mystical body of Christ, whose three *articuli* follow this basic content:

- (1) Peter, prince of the apostles, is *caput ecclesiae* (*articulus I*: chapters 1-7)
- (2) The Church, which we confess in the Creed, *corpus mysticum*, is the Church Catholic and militant (*articulus II*: chapters 8-27)
- (3) The different *membra* of the visible Church have an order of precedence from the Pope to the lower orders of the ecclesial hierarchy (*articulus III*: chapters 28-82)

The central section is most important; the first section outlines its foundations; I will leave out the third. We will continue seeking those principles of systematisation which are implied from the very distribution of the subjects dealt with.

## 2.1 *Articulus primus: De Petri episcopatu et eius eminentia inter Apostolos*

This section or *articulus* consists of seven chapters whose running theme can be expressed – in thesis form – with the title of the first chapter: *Petrus Apostolus fuit omnium Apostolorum princeps et caput ecclesiae*. Starting from this dual formulation these chapters can be separated in two large blocks:

(A) Chapters 2-4 seek to show the excellence of Peter with respect to the other Apostles: the equality in honour and power which reigns among the Apostles does not prevent Peter having precedence in matters of authority, power and honour as leader of all of them (chapter 2). Confronted by Wyclif's interpretation of those passages of Scripture in which Paul does not appear to be inferior to Peter, Netter argues Peter's superiority (chapter 3); in this same sense, chapter 4 ratifies the preference of Peter over Saint James, the leader of the Jerusalem community.

(B) Chapters 5-7 present the figure of Peter with respect to Christ to explain that he is *magister universalis* and *caput ecclesiae post Christum* (chapter 5) and *fundamentum ecclesiae post Christum* (chapter 6). Finally, the consideration of Peter as *primus Romae episcopus* rejects those opinions which denied Peter's residence in Rome. This is the theme which chapter seven develops and which closes this *articulus primus*. Starting from this structure we can summarily describe its content or theological reflection as being about the primacy of Peter with respect to the Apostles and as foundation of the Church.

Netter derives from Matthew 16:18 Peter's primacy or *primatus* within the group of the Apostles. The confession of the divinity of Jesus gives Peter a special standing. Our Carmelite makes Peter *caput ecclesiae* resorting to the *Etymologies* (VII, IX, 3) of St. Isidore, where the name *Cephas* – given by Christ to Simon (John 1:42) – has been approximated phonetically to the Greek *Cephalé* (meaning 'head'). If Peter was to be the head of the Church, *caput ecclesiae*, it was not strange then that he was called *Cephas* by the Lord; from here comes the final consideration of Simon Peter as *cephas/caput* of the Church.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, Wyclif argued against the primacy of Peter resorting to texts such as Matthew 18:18 and John 20:20, which present Christ giving to the other Apostles *plenitudinem postestatis ad ligandum et solvendum*. This position is supported by St. Cyprian, who claims that all the Apostles are equal in honour and power. Netter, for his part, establishes that the apostolic ministry and membership of the college effectively grant an equality among the Apostles; however, Peter, because of his confession at Caesarea Philippi, has been granted first place: *ut supra omnes coapostolos primus a petra primatum teneat in congregatione, qui primus fuit in cognitione*. This *privilegium confessionis* brings about something new. According to Ephesians 2:20 all the Apostles are the foundations of the Church; but this does not, however, question the specific role of Peter. Simon's faith becomes a foundation of the Church; that faith establishes a special link between Christ and Peter; by his faith, Peter is founded in Christ. Peter personifies the faith which is the foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ; it is from this faith that Peter receives primacy over the other Apostles. Paul, who searches for communion with Peter in the unity of faith has recognised this primacy of Peter (cf. Galatians 1:18, 2:1ff.). This primatial ministry has not been reduced nor repealed by the

20 Cf. Yves Congar, 'Kephas-Céphalè-Caput', *Revue du Moyen Âge latin*, 8, (1952), 5-42. This sequence of ideas go back to Optato of Mileto. That cephas-caput association appears in a text attributed to Pseudo-Anacleto and has been incorporated in the *Decretum Gratiani* (dist. 22, c. 2). Against this association Luther argued using the true etymological explanation of cephas given by St. Jerome: *syrum vocabulum significat soliditatem* – *Patrologia Latina* [henceforth *PL*] (ed.) J. P. Migne (Paris, 1841-) 26, 366.

Antiochian incident (Galatians 2:11). So, Netter responds with fiery rhetoric: *Quid facis Witcleff, si tollis ordinem, tollis ecclesiam*.

The primacy of Peter is extended to the college of the Twelve and to the Church as a whole. This primatial power is a continuation of that salvific action exercised on earth by God made man: *hanc tripartitam etiam Christus super Ecclesiam universam et Apostolos Petro contulit potentiam magistralem, docendi, puniendi, indulgendi*. The need for this Petrine ministry consists, therefore, in the continuation of the ministry of Christ. Peter is the guarantor of the unity of the Church, as from him – who acted *in persona Ecclesiae* (Matthew 16:18) – emanates the unity and firmness of the Church in faith, in pastoral government and in sacramental worship. Netter's argument culminates in a demonstration that Jesus Christ is *caput primum* of the Church, rendering Peter and his successors *caput secundarium*. The Pope is subordinate to Christ.

Concluding this journey through the chapters of the *articulus primus*, dedicated to the Apostle Peter as *caput ecclesiae*, we can underline two aspects that are important from the point of view of an ecclesiological systematisation. The ultimate purpose of this section is to consider the question of the origin of the Church or of the Church in its origin. Netter's radical starting point is Saint Peter and his confession. In contrast to other mediaeval theologians, Netter's silence is notable with respect to a Church which has its roots in the Old Testament or, more radically and in the Augustinian view, a Church in which the first man (Adam) or the first righteous man (Abel) are the first members. Other mediaeval theologians place the origins of the Church in the creation of the Angels.<sup>21</sup> Thus Netter avoids Wyclif's objections with respect to the figure of the pope. This notwithstanding, the point Netter is making concerns the beginnings of the Church. A second essential aspect in Netter's conception of the Church can be perceived. His starting point is the existence of a Church that begins with Jesus Christ and his Apostles, and in a special way, with Peter; in this way he immediately highlights the hierarchical and visible nature of the Church. Therefore, from the start Netter excludes any approach which could concede a Wycliffite notion of the Church as "an invisible congregation of the predestined or the elect". This opens the door to the problem that is addressed in the second article.

## 2.2 *Articulus secundus: De ecclesia in comuni, de qua est fides in Symbolo*

This second section or *articulus*, which covers chapters 8-27, establishes its purpose with the following question: *quid sit ecclesia catholica iam praesens*. The

affirmation of Peter's primatial episcopacy is the response to Wycliffite objections regarding the existence of the papal ministry since the very origins of the Church as a visible congregation. The ministry of Peter guarantees the continuing existence of the salvific action of the Founder in the ecclesial institution. This second article leaves behind the situation of the *ecclesia primitiva* and moves on to consider the Church *iam praesens*, that is, militant and actual. As previously, and now in more detail, I propose first to analyse the structure and secondly to outline its theological content. The twenty chapters can be grouped, in the first place, as follows:

- (A) Chapters 8-16, elaborated in light of the Pauline image of the body of Christ, can be grouped under the theme of *ecclesia catholica militans*;
- (B) Chapters 17-27 focus on the notion of *ecclesia catholica symbolica*, to show the Church's prerogatives of age, authority, indefectibility.

Each one of these two sections has other sub-sections which clarify the different themes dealt with. For this reason I will analyse them separately.

### A) *Ecclesia catholica militans (chapters 8-16)*

This first series of chapters offers an answer to the question posed in chapter 8: *quid sit ecclesia catholica iam praesens*. The definition of Church proposed by Wyclif, *praedestinatorum universitas*, dared to penetrate pretentiously into the mysteries of wisdom and divine predestination, mysteries reserved to the Holy Trinity. We cannot speak of the Church in her eschatological consummation. It is licit and possible to speak about a Church that is *non electorum tantum, nec etiam reproborum, sed ecclesia mixtim collecta ex reprobis cum electis*.<sup>22</sup> Basing ourselves on what St. Augustine would call *ecclesia permixta*, chapters 8-16 are seen under the motto of the *militans* Catholic Church, which serves as a framework for a parallel consideration of the unity and variety of the members of the mystical body of Christ. The starting point is the definition of militant Catholic Church proposed in chapter 9: *ecclesiam militantem esse congregationem omnium vocatorum catholica societate iunctorum*.<sup>23</sup> From this definition, the Wycliffite thesis is rejected according to which only the predestined are members of the Church, so that the sinner is excluded from such membership. That is how the title of chapter nine is phrased: *quod universi electi non sunt intra ecclesiam, nec omnes reprobi extra eam*. In other words: the formal tie to the Church is not

21 See S. Madrigal, *El proyecto eclesiológico de John of Segovia (1393-1458)*. Study of the "Liber de substantia ecclesiae" (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas Madrid, 2000), p. 53ff.

22 *Doctrinale*, Vol. I, Lib. II, art. 11, c. 8, p. 158, col. a. (Hereafter, I will quote page and column).

23 *Doctrinale*, p. 160, col. b.

predestination or election, but the incorporation into the body of Christ by baptismal regeneration. Wyclif erroneously defined the Church of Jesus Christ: just as predestination does not necessarily incorporate one into the Church, for the same reason condemnation does not exclude one from her.<sup>24</sup>

The key to the treatment of the subject outlined in chapters 10-16 is laid out at the start of chapter 10 in these terms: *De ecclesia in communi iam diximus, de eius partibus iam dicamus*. Faced with the division or parts of the Church established by Wyclif, Netter extracts from 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 three criteria which will allow him to determine the *partes* of the militant Church. *Divisiones gratiarum sunt, idem autem Spiritus, divisiones ministracionum sunt, idem autem Dominus, et divisiones operationum sunt, idem vero Deus, qui operatur omnia in omnibus*.<sup>25</sup> With these three criteria of "diversity of gifts", "diversity of ministries", "diversity of works", the reality of the militant Church is examined. The criteria of *divisiones gratiarum* dominates chapter 10; as laid out by its title: *Quod tres partes sunt catholicae militantis ecclesiae, secundum divisionem gratiarum*. This reflection extends into chapter 11. The criteria of *divisiones ministracionum* is applied in chapter 12: *De tribus ordinibus velpartibus tam communis quam electorum ecclesiae secundum divisionem ministrantium*. Chapter 13 serves as corollary. The third criteria governs and organises chapter 14: *De divisionibus operantium in ecclesia, per quam dividuntur perfecti viri ab imperfectis*; this section closes with chapters 15 and 16; the first, in perfect structural parallelism with those before, is again a complement to the preceding chapter (14), while chapter 16 serves as a colophon to the section which was begun in chapter 10, and whose basis is the Pauline doctrine of the charisms and gifts, that is, the unity and variety of the Church as body of Christ. It has a very eloquent title: *De vera unitate corporis Christi et individuatione ecclesiae iam currentis*. Having considered the structure of this section, we can analyse its content.

The main element of these chapters, which deal with *Ecclesia in communi*, is the definition of *ecclesia (catholica) militans*. This definition – a congregation of all those called, united in Catholic fraternity or society – has two parts: the first affirms the nature of *congregatio vocatorum* of the Church, a condition which is inscribed in the very word *ecclesia*, which means *vocatio*: it is the traditional idea which mediaeval authors usually assign to the Venerable Bede. In this sense *congregatio vocatorum* moves away from the Wycliffite definition of Church as

*congregatio praedestinationum* or *electorum*.<sup>26</sup> The Church is a congregation of the condemned and the elect. We cannot define the Church as a congregation of only the predestined. So the second part of the definition underlines the *catholica societas* aspect. This dimension insists on the visible aspects of the ecclesiastic society. From here baptismal regeneration takes on special relevance. It underlines that the Church of Christ is not as defined by Wyclif, universality of all the elected, seeing as how before the baptismal regeneration many elected do not belong to it. Predestination or election, Netter underlines, do not make a member of Christ, but baptismal regeneration does: *regnum Filii incipit a regeneratione*.

As has already been indicated, Netter established a triple division inside the ecclesial body with regard to these three criteria: diversity of gifts, ministries and works (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6). The first division is based on the charismatic gifts spoken about by the Apostle; in a special way, faith, hope and charity. Wyclif, for his part, subdivided the members of the body of Christ into *militantes, gaudentes et dormitione detentos*. This variety of gifts and spiritual graces allows three gradually different parts to be distinguished in the Church: the first and highest is made up of the elected free from faults; the second is made up of sinners who can do penance; the third is the one of the dissolute or heretics and others directed towards the eternal fire. The first possess grace in the present; the second have it in hope; the third, although they have the grace of faith, lack hope, and even when they have faith and hope, they lack the grace of charity. From this three-way division he concludes: *Idcirco horum trium una praesens ecclesia*.<sup>27</sup> The pilgrim Church can be compared with the three areas of the moon: the one constantly lit by the sun, the one that receives indirect light, and the one which is condemned to darkness. This means that the Church welcomes the baptised, damned and elected, good and evil: *ecce non tantum electus, sed omnis fidelis particeps, et renatus, est filius dei patris et matris ecclesiae*.<sup>28</sup>

Chapter 12 divides the universal Church into three parts or *status* in agreement with the criteria of the *diversity of ministries* or duties: priests, celibate and married. These criteria go back to Augustine and Gregory the Great. Netter expressly takes on their reflections on the three righteous men of the Old Testament, Noah, Daniel, and Job (Ezekiel 14:14): in Noah are signified the good prelates who rule and govern the Church in the same way that Noah governed the ark in the time of flood; Daniel represents all the holy celibates; and Job signifies the righteous married people. From this flows a tripartate division of

24 *Doctrinale*, p. 162, col. b: 'Praedestinatio ergo sola, vel electio, non facit Christi corpus ecclesiam, quia electi, et praedestinati hoc aeternaliter erant, sed congregatio Christi per regenerationem baptismalem consequentem.'

25 *Doctrinale*, p. 163, col. b: 'Sunt divisiones gratiarum in ecclesia, divisiones ministracionum, et divisiones operationum.'

26 On the mediaeval notions of the Church advocated by Catholic authors in the face of Wycliffite and Hussite positions, see S. Madrigal, '¿Puede definirse la Iglesia? Nociones básicas de Juan de Segovia (1393-1458); *Miscellanea Comillas*, 56, (1998), 41-72, especially p. 46.

27 *Doctrinale*, p. 164, col. a.

28 *Doctrinale*, p. 166, col. b.

the members of the Christian community or *ecclesia* into three *ordines*, leaders, celibate and married. This is what the mediaevalist G. Duby called *the three orders or the imagery of feudalism*.<sup>29</sup> In the mediaeval West, at the height of the eleventh century, a scheme of society's organisation is upheld which gives its proper place to the lay people strictly subordinating them to the dominating classes. This is the tripartite function presented and outlined between 1027-30 by bishop Adalberón of Laon. Its formulation provided a starting point for the research of G. Duby. Adalberón stated the following principles: the city here below (the world) consists of three orders (*ordines*): clerics (*oratores*) whose function is to pray; warriors or nobility (*bellatores*) who must fight so that order and justice will reign; finally, workers (*laboratores*), that is, all those (especially farmers) who assure human sustenance. Some pray, others fight, others work. The triple division by Adalberón is based on a hierarchical perspective marked by its theological roots, inspired by Augustine, Gregory the Great and Pseudo-Dionysius.

In light of this brief *excursus* we perceive how Netter distances himself from the tripartite social division made by Wyclif. While the English reformer reproduces the scheme of Adalberón (*clericos-milites-operantes*), Netter returns to the original Augustinian scheme; with it he claims a specific place for the *celibate* and reintegrates into the ecclesial body the different forms of religious life, that regime of life radically challenged in the Wycliffite writings. On the other hand, he insists on the fact that in all these states the damned and predestined are mixed together:

*Ecce tres status ecclesiae, non in clericos, milites, et operantes distinctae, sicut Witleff scindit ecclesiam, sed in rectores, continentines, et operantes coniuges, divisiones apostolica ministrantes. Ubi nota quod sententia Christi est cum sententia Augustini, non tantum electos et praedestinos in his ecclesiae statibus esse, sed in omni statu miscetur reprobis cum electo.*<sup>30</sup>

The adoption of the Augustinian scheme prepares the ground for the subject of the chapter immediately following (chapter 13): *quod monachi, et caeteri professi claustrales, tenent in ecclesiis Christi statum continentium*. This concern must be placed into the context of the last of the 45 Wycliffite errors condemned by the Council of Constance: *Omnes religiones indifferenter introductae sunt a diabolo*.<sup>31</sup> Our Carmelite dedicated to this theme of *religiosis* the third and fourth *libri* of

the first volume of the *Doctrinale*, parts of the work which remain outside our consideration.

The triple division with which mediaeval theology contemplates the social and ecclesial structure depends, in the final analysis, on the differences which give rise to the *ordo*, because there exist those who are priests and those who are not, and the celibate regime of life in religion. This is after all the logic that underlies the third criteria taken from 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, the *diversity of works*. Because if this diversity of works generates the different forms of religious life, which Wyclif fights with so much anger, from the anchorites to the monks, then the Church of Christ can be considered in binary form: the Church of the beginners and of the imperfect on the one side, and the Church of the perfect on the other. This is the theme developed in chapter 14 (*de divisione operantium in ecclesia, et quod penes hanc, dividuntur perfecti viri ab imperfectis*). Netter places the monks and religious among the perfect. He also shows that the different 'rules' (of St. Augustine or St. Benedict) which lay down the discipline within the different religious congregations do not suppose a deviation from the only common Christian rule, but are harmonised under it in the heart of the only spouse of Christ.

These disquisitions find their conclusion in the affirmation of the true unity of the body of Christ and in the search for the principle of the individuation of the Church (chapter 16). By the sacrament of baptism and by receiving the Eucharist individual Christians "are transubstantiated" in the mystical body of Christ.<sup>32</sup> The Apostle says that we are all baptised in the same Spirit to form a single body. Therefore we must consider that unity in a common nature does not impede or exclude that members can be distinguished by their different actions. And, glossing the Pauline metaphor, Netter will say that if the eye is of the same nature as the foot, both can be distinguished very clearly by their function and their actions. The body of Christ is not formed by beings of different nature, but is made up of many and numerous members of the same nature, but with different functions, which produce a harmonious unity. Following the analogy of the body, our Carmelite puts into context the three regions of the human anatomy – animal members, spiritual members, and feeding members – with the three operations or functions corresponding to the three "evangelical states" described earlier: the priests occupy the place of the senses from the head to the shoulders; the monks, who meditate upon spiritual things occupy the region of the chest; the lay people, who feed and support the mass of the body down to the heels. And

29 Cf. G. Duby, *Los tres órdenes o lo imaginario del feudalismo* (Madrid, 1992). Cf. A. Vauchez, *Les laics au Moyen Age. Pratiques et expériences religieuses* (Paris, 1987), especially in chapter II: "Le Moyen Age du peuple" (pp. 37-47). M. Grandjean, *Laics dans l'Eglise. Regards de Pierre Damien, Anselme de Cantorbéry, Ives de Chartres* (Paris, 1994).

30 *Doctrinale*, p. 172 col. b.

31 H. Denzinger & P. Hünerman [henceforth DH], (eds.), *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, (Fribourg, 37th edition, 1991), 1195. Along this same line we find the errors 21.22.23 (DH 1171.1172.1172). For example he says in n. 22: 'Sancti, instituentes religiones

privatas, sic instituendo peccaverunt'; and in n. 23: 'Religiosi viventes in religionibus privatis non sunt de religione christiana.'

32 *Doctrinale*, p. 184, col. b.

since the human body has three ligaments between the members, of nerves, veins and arteries, the ecclesial body also has three similar ligaments: faith, hope and charity, which tie the members to Christ and his head and unite them among themselves. The soul of this body is the Holy Spirit; its nourishment the law of Christ.<sup>33</sup>

Reason indicates up to seven causes of identification: form, shape, place, time, name, blood and homeland. What are the things that bring about the identification of the Church? Netter at first responds as follows: the seven sacraments of the universal Church distinguish the orthodox from the heterodox. But a few lines later he is still asking about the *causa prima individuationis*. He will look for an answer in the Gospel: the parable of the wedding of the son of the king, from which the guest who was not wearing wedding attire was expelled. This parable had been used in chapter 8 with the one of the ten virgins, of the fishing net cast into the sea and that of the tares, to state that the Church is not the congregation of only the predestined, but a space which welcomes good and evil; the parable of the wedding presents a guest who was sent away for not wearing wedding attire.<sup>34</sup> What does that wedding attire mean in this other context? That the identifying note of the Church, body of Christ, is the link of harmony and unity. Whoever does not move away from ecclesial unity and harmony, even if he is evil, remains within the Church. The sinner is a member of the Church. The *causa prima individuationis* rests on the visible ecclesial communion; it is an aspect which is present in Netter's definition of Church: *congregatio omnium vocatorum catholica societate iunctorum*. The Church is the assembly of those called by God in faith, in the sacraments and in Catholic unity. Sinners also belong to it, although their membership has less intensity. I conclude this section on the *ecclesia catholica militans* (chapters 8-16) with a call, which Netter makes to his opponent, confronting him with the true unity and variety of the body of Christ:

*Sed suadeo tibi emere ab ecclesia Christi catholica aurum igni probatum, et induere te vestimentis albis, et inungere oculos tuos collirio ut videas, noverisque corpus Christi mysticum esse corpus individuum et singulare, sicut corpus verum etus susceptum de Virgine.*<sup>35</sup>

These are the terms in which Netter transferred the metaphor of the body to the Church. It is worth retaining the idea of incorporation into that body, as the integration into a live organism united to Christ the head and enlivened by the Holy Spirit, which our Carmelite expresses using the word "transubstantiation"

33 *Doctrinale*, p. 185, col. a.

34 *Doctrinale*, p. 157b-158a.

35 *Doctrinale*, p. 184, col. b.

by the two basic sacraments: *corpus Christi mysticum in quo transubstantiantur singuli christiani per sumptionem baptismatis et sacrae eucharistiae*.<sup>36</sup>

### B) *Ecclesia catholica symbolica* (chapters 17-27)

Chapters 17-27 deal with what Netter calls *ecclesia nostra Symbolica*, whose *auctoritas* will be put in a Scriptural context with a view to determining the truth of faith. The most characteristic feature in this section consists of a reflection on the property of the *catholicity / universality* of the Church, which is confessed in the clause of the Creed: *credo sanctam ecclesiam catholicam*. Once again we will reject Wyclif. It is noteworthy that chapter 17, which opens this section on the "symbolic Church", takes up again a passage already cited in chapter 8, that is, the one that opens the first section on the "militant" Church, to raise again the objection inscribed in the notion of *ecclesia praedestinatorum*: in the Apostles' Creed the Church of Christ is an article of faith. However, there is always the doubt about whether a bishop or the pope or any other member of the faithful is really a member predestined to final glory.<sup>37</sup> This section takes this difficulty as its starting point. On the other hand, the basic idea of these reflections is rooted in this conviction: the authentic carrier of the doctrinal authority of the Church is the "symbolic Church".<sup>38</sup> Therefore, we need to determine, the *quidditas huius ecclesiae symbolicae*. I will begin by establishing the logical distribution of these chapters and then outline their theological content.

We must isolate a first group that spans chapters 17 to 19. The first of this series describes the property of "catholicity" and declares in these precise terms *quae sit ecclesia catholica*:

*Omnis scilicet series illa fidelium a Christi prima congregatione in ripa Iordanis usque ad nostra tempora, et deinceps usque ad finem mundi successive descendens, et ad quaslibet terrae partes perveniens quocumque testimonium fidei de Christo capite rutilans est accensum.*<sup>39</sup>

In the face of the novelty that is presented by the sect originating from Wyclif, the Church of Christ goes back to the beginning of the Lord's public life. The title of chapter 17 indicates the apologetic consequence that is derived from this

36 *Doctrinale*, p. 184, col. b.

37 *Doctrinale*, p. 188, col. b (= 158, col. b): 'Difficultas autem eius est ista, lib. de donatione cap. ij. VVITCLEF. Quando credere debemus ecclesiam sanctam catholicam tanquam fidem, et iterum credere debemus, quod quodlibet membrum istius ecclesiae sit praedestinatum ad gloriam: si credere debemus quod iste papa, vel episcopus sit membrum ecclesiae, credere debemus, quod repugnat ipsum in peccatum finalis impenitentia cadere.'

38 F. X. Seibel, 'Die Kirche als Lehrautorität nach dem *Doctrinale antiquitatum fidei catholicae ecclesiae* des Thomas Waldensis (um 1372-1431)', *Carmelus*, 16, (1969), 3-69.

39 *Doctrinale*, p. 189, col. b.

definition: *quod ecclesia nostra Symbolica est ecclesia catholica*. This definition, which contemplates the aspect of geographical universality, highlights the perseverance of that first Church until our days in an uninterrupted temporal continuity. As a consequence of that same notion of catholicity, the “symbolic Church” is necessarily *one and apostolic*. Chapter 18 considers the properties of unity and apostolicity (based on the Nicene Constantinopolitan Creed). Interestingly, the *Doctrinale* does not explain the “symbolic” property of *holiness*, but chapter 19 is focused on the *auctoritas ecclesiae symbolicae*. This chapter breaks this logic of explanation or commentary of the “symbolic” properties to offer in their place – in agreement with its title – this programmatic statement: *quod auctoritate ecclesiae symbolicae sunt omnia dubia definienda*. What does that *auctoritas ecclesiae symbolicae* consist of? The new element which appears in this chapter is the affirmation that the symbolic Church, the Church of Christ, apostolic and Catholic, *fidem habet indefectibilem, secundum promissum Christi ad Petrum, qui tunc figuram gessit ecclesiae. Ego rogavi pro te Petre, ut non deficiat fides tua*.<sup>40</sup>

We must ask ourselves: Who is the subject of that *auctoritas* proper to the “symbolic” Church? Who personifies or “represents” the indefectibility or inerrancy of the Church promised by Christ? The conviction of Netter once again insists on catholicity: the subject of that *auctoritas* is not an individual Church, like the Roman Church, nor is it the general council. The true subject is the *ecclesia universalis*, which is described in these terms:

*Ecclesia Christi catholica per totum mundum dispersa, a baptismo Christi per Apostolos, et ceteros successores eorum ad haec tempora devoluta, quae utique veram fidem continet, et testimonium Christi fidele, sapientiam praestans parvulis, inter extremos errores stabilem retinens veritatem*.<sup>41</sup>

Thus the theme is proposed which runs through a second series of chapters (from 20 to 27), namely the search for the truth of the faith and remaining in the faith. Explained in another way: Who maintains and how is that *potestas definiendi in materia fidei si in ecclesia Dei dubium oriatur* guaranteed? The notion of *universalis ecclesia* represents the quintessence of the position used by our Carmelite with regard to the Wycliffite principle of *sola Scriptura*; therefore, chapters 20-21-22 describe the *auctoritas ecclesiae symbolicae* and propose the relation between Scripture and the Church. The remaining chapters (from 23 to 27) examine the instances of doctrinal authority of the Church.

Chapter 20 begins with a quote from a psalm, which exalts the city of Sion: *Gloriosa dicta sunt de te civitas Dei* (Psalm 87:3). Netter will apply to the Church this testimony from the Old Testament – “Wonderful things will be spoken of you” – to establish two *dicta gloriosa* of the Church which underline the *auctoritas ecclesiae symbolicae*: firstly, the antiquity of that authority, and secondly, to make this assertion concrete, he recalls that this ancient authority of the Church determined the canon of the books of the Bible.<sup>42</sup> The title announces this in brief: *quod auctoritas ecclesiae symbolicae fundatur ab antiquo: et quod secundum ipsam taxatur numerus librorum Scripturae sacrae*. Starting from here the following chapter addresses the theme of the relationship Church-Scripture. Chapter 21 establishes the thesis of the submission of the *auctoritas universalis ecclesiae* to the more eminent authority of the Sacred Scripture. Chapter 22 ratifies the authority of the *ecclesia* in this other direction: the Church has determined the number of the articles which make up the Creed; although, Netter says, it cannot create new articles. The sense of the Latin formulation of the title shows a clear linguistic parallelism with chapter 21: *quod ecclesia taxavit numerum articulorum fidei, nec potest creare novum, et veritas requisitae fidei est recipienda quatuor viis*. We must note that in this case the verb is in the active form (*taxavit*), while the passive form was used to express the determination of the canon by the Church (*taxatur*). It is a way of expressing the authority, the superiority of Scripture over the Church. Secondly, we must indicate that the final section of the title prepares for the theme of the remaining chapters of this section dedicated to the *ecclesia catholica symbolica* (chapters 23-27): the inquisition of the truth of the faith, in a special way, when *dubia* arise, knows various paths: *Ecce quatuor vias veniendi ad indubiam veritatem, sed plus, et minus certas, quarum prima et certissima, est per Scripturas divinas*.<sup>43</sup> The debate continues with Wyclif who, in the search for the truth of faith, is alone prepared to accept the authority of Scripture. *Thomas Anglicus*, for his part, while affirming the priority of Scripture, establishes how, in this process, the traditional authority of the Church, represented by the doctors, the fathers of the Church, represents an unavoidable theological *locus*.

This is the logic behind the section which includes chapters 23 to 27: the first establishes the criteria of consulting and resorting, in addition to Scripture, to the *dicta maiorum* (chapter 23); the second of the series adds to the authority of Scripture and to the authority of the universal Church the *dicta praelatorum et patrum ecclesiae* (chapter 24); the third, which answers to the title *quod adendae sunt concordantes sententiae patrum, et consuetae expositiones, ad cognoscendam fidem catholicam*, presents a very peculiar feature, which puts it into context

40 *Doctrinale*, p. 193, col. a.

41 *Doctrinale*, p. 193, col. a.

42 *Doctrinale*, p. 199, col. a: ‘Et hoc est secundum dictum gloriosum de ecclesia, quod scilicet ipsa sola est cuius testimonium est tantae auctoritatis, et praeconii, ut ipsos libros divinarum scripturarum taxare, et de eorum auctoribus certificare possit fideles: nec fas erit tanto testimonio contraire.’

43 *Doctrinale*, p. 205, col. a.



with chapter 20 which established those *duos dicta gloriosa* of the Church. This is shown by its opening words:

*Est adhuc tertia huius universalis ecclesiae praeerogativa singularis, quod infallibiliter tradit, et docet omnes articulos fidei, et cuncta credenda de necessitate salutis, vel agenda intra scripturam, vel citra, aut detexit iam explicite, vel implicate continet in fide membrorum.*<sup>44</sup>

This third prerogative addresses, therefore, the infallible transmission of the teaching of the articles of faith, of the doctrine of faith, or of the precepts which affect salvation, as well as the opportune developments of what is implicitly laid out in Scripture or in the articles of faith. Netter refers to the ancient or original authority of the Church, which continues to be valid and continues to assist the present Church. Therefore, it is a transferred authority: from the ecclesial sees of apostolic origin, passing through the succession of the bishops, together with the consensus of the peoples. The authority of the spouse of Christ and the consensus of the fathers transmits and makes actual the treasure of faith. Netter's reflections end as follows:

*Vere enim ad omnes haereses compescendas, et omnes tractatus et definitiones terminandas in materia fidei sola via est in qua errare non contingit, concors patrum sententia ab ipsis apostolorum sedibus usque ad nostra tempora fideliter compilata.*<sup>45</sup>

Chapters 26-27 are dedicated to the topic of general councils; they bring to a close the *articulus secundus*. Its connection with the section that we have been considering can be expressed as follows: it is one of the forms or ways to verify that joint and agreed judgment by the *patres ecclesiae*; in addition, the very nature of the synod or council makes it an image close to the *ecclesia catholica*. In this context Netter offers a most appetising definition of a council:

*Adhuc tamen ascendant quidam patres gradum unum in auctoritate ecclesiasticae scalae, ponentes in vertice eius auctoritatem Romani praesulis ex concilio generali, eo quod ipsa convocatio synodi est tam conformis ecclesiae universalis, non tamen est universalis ecclesia, nec eius decretum, ut fides symbolica, sed ecclesia catholicae imago propinquior, et de omnibus ecclesiis catholicis ex sacris antistibus, et Christi sacerdotibus, quantum in hac vita uno tempore, et uno loco convenire possunt simillima genitura, et ideo est universali ecclesiae in auctoritate multum consimilis, quamvis secundi rei veritatem disparis ponderis.*<sup>46</sup>

Netter is not a conciliarist. That is indicated in his assessment of the conciliar institution; he does not attribute to it the status of "representing" the Church in terms of near-identification; however, his consideration involves the same notion of Church and its agreement and proximity to the *ecclesia catholica*. It is therefore a good close and colophon to all this development. We finally ask ourselves: what are the theological nuclei present in these chapters? Basically, they are the following themes: the "symbolic properties" of catholicity, apostolicity and unity; the notion *ecclesia symbolica*; the authority or infallibility of the *ecclesia universalis*; the relationship between Scripture, the Church and the ecclesial tradition; the hierarchy of authorities (doctors, prelates, Roman Church, council). Let us reconstruct this systematic reflection, which we indicated in the description of the chapters.

The starting point was the clause of the Creed: *credo sanctam ecclesiam catholicam*. The property of "catholicity" is appropriate to the Church in this fourfold perspective: (1) from the point of view of its geographical expansion throughout the world; (2) for its doctrine which teaches about the visible and invisible, the earthly and celestial; (3) for its call of salvation addressed to all people; (4) for its potential to cure all sin.<sup>47</sup> All in all, in his definition of *ecclesia catholica* Netter underlines in a special way the "temporal" aspect of catholicity: the Church begins with the baptism of Christ and with his public life and extends its existence until the end of time. It embraces in its womb all this succession of generations of believers until the present time. The essential aspect of catholicity is not its geographical nature, but its antiquity and succession in time. There is a clear interest in showing the essential identity between the present Church and the Church that begins on the shores of the Jordan. And the Church of the present is the Catholic Church, which we profess in the Creed of faith. Consequently, sacramental baptism is necessary to be a member of the body of Christ. In this way a basic continuity is established with the origin (the baptism of Jesus) of sacramental nature. The basic content of catholicity is the uninterrupted succession of the Church since its establishment until the present Church, and until its consummation as eschatological community of salvation. In other words: the "spatial" catholicity, which has a rather apologetic appearance, cedes its place to "temporal" catholicity, so that "the temporal dimension of catholicity is the essence of Netter's ecclesiology".<sup>48</sup> Consequently, this vision of catholicity claims the other two properties of the true Church: the Church of the Creed is necessarily one and apostolic.

44 *Doctrinale*, p. 213, col. b.

45 *Doctrinale*, p. 216, col. b.

46 *Doctrinale*, p. 217, col. a.

47 This vision of catholicity goes back to St. Isidore – cf. *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, I, 1: PL, 83, 740 – and to Cyril of Alexandria – cf. *Catechesis* 18, 23: *Patrologia Graeca* (ed.) J. P. Migne (Paris, 1857-66), 33, 1044.

48 M. Hurley, 'A Pre-tridentine Theology of Tradition. Thomas Netter of Walden (+ 1430)', *The Heythrop Journal*, 4, (1963), 348-366 [at p. 351].

The criteria of catholicity marks the distance between the testimony or faith of the true Church with respect to the teachings of heretics like Wyclif. This unanimous testimony of faith of the *ecclesia catholica* plays a decisive role in Netter's ecclesiology. The Church preserves in its integrity and transmits with accuracy the Gospel of Christ; the *ecclesia symbolica* is indefectible in its faith. Christ has promised her his assistance until the end of time. The authority of this universal Church is founded on the prerogative of its indefectibility. We have already indicated its interpretation of the faith confessed by Peter (Matthew 16:16) in his role of "representative" of the universal Church. Christ prayed for him not to falter in his faith (Luke 22:32). Certainly we can obtain from the *Doctrinale* clear statements concerning the excellence of the Roman Church along the lines that it will always maintain the true faith; it also characterises the doctrine of the Pope as *infallibilis regula fidei*.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, no individual Church – not even the one of Rome – no council, no individual, enjoys the privilege of being free from error: only the *ecclesia catholica* holds the prerogative of infallibility. In comparison with contemporary theologians, there are various aspects which draw our attention. On the one hand, the affirmation of the indefectibility of the Church (*ecclesia catholica errare non potest*) often coincides with the affirmation of the symbolic property of "holiness", which Netter did not systematically address as a theme. This is a constant in conciliar authors such as John of Ragusa and John of Segovia. Therefore the conciliarists – following St. Augustine – interpret with pleasure the figure and promises made to Peter in the sense of acting as "representative" of the universal Church (*in persona Ecclesiae*), prerogatives which immediately follow the universal council. Thus – and in the face of questions like: Who is the subject of that *auctoritas* proper of the "symbolic" Church? Who personifies or "represents" the indefectibility or inerrancy of the Church promised by Christ? – the specifics of Netter's position evolve with greater clarity: the subject of that *auctoritas* is not an individual Church, like the Roman Church, nor is it the general council. The true subject is the *ecclesia universalis*. The text below outlines it as follows:

*Non est ergo specialis ecclesia, non Africana, ut Donatus dixit. Nec utique particulars illa Romana, sed universalis ecclesia, non quidem in generali concilio congregata, quam aliquotiens errasse percepimus, velut illa Ariminensis congregata sub Tauro praefecto, et illa Constantinopolitana sub Iustiniano minore, tempore Segii papae*

49 The defence of the primacy in the face of Wycliffite criticism was developed in the *articulus primus*, as we have seen already, and appears again in the *tertius*, chapters 28–53. On this theme, see chapter 47: 'Quod papa habet ab antiquo potestatem ad determinandum fidei veritates, ad debellandum et cancellandum omnes falsitates haereticas'; chapter 48: 'De praeerogativa perpetuae immunitatis Romanae ecclesiae in fide Christi, et ab omni contagione haeresis illibata.' Cf. A. Antón, *El misterio de la Iglesia. Evolución histórica de las ideas eclesiológicas*, 1 (Madrid-Toledo, 1986), pp. 415–416.

*secundum Bedam, et quaedam aliae; sed est ecclesia catholica per totum mundum dispersa, a baptismo Christi per Apostolos et caeteros successores eorum ad haec tempora devoluta, quae utique veram fidem continet.*<sup>50</sup>

We must study further this property of the universal Church. The infallible path at the moment of taking a decision on matters of faith or to reject heretical positions consists in appealing to the testimony of the Catholic Church. In this framework of the infallible Church is raised (chapter 21) the relationship between the Church and Scripture. Netter's position shows how the controversy on the principle of *sola Scriptura* must not lead irretrievably to the other extreme, that is, the submission of Scripture to the authority of the Church. We already had the opportunity to refer to the evaluation that Netter makes of Scripture to the extent that his chapter 21 was argued in his favour by Hussite theologians in Basel. This aspect is explained in these comments by M. Hurley: 'In no place in the *Doctrinale* does Netter give any account of, much less criticise, Wyclif's theory of Scripture as the supreme rule of Christian behaviour and belief. The omission is highly significant and may surely be interpreted as evidence that on this point there was between Netter and Wyclif a large measure of agreement. There is no doubt in Netter's mind about "the most sacred excellence of Holy Scripture."<sup>51</sup> To what extent does he manage a coherent summary of Catholic doctrine on Scripture and the Church?

Wyclif raises the principle of Scripture as the final decisive tribunal. Netter underlines the authority of the Catholic Church which established the canon of the sacred books. The Augustinian sentence, *evangelio non crederem, nisi me Catholicae Ecclesiae commoveret*, serves as a starting point for the debate.<sup>52</sup> Netter reproaches his opponent for having overlooked the "bipartite" character of Christian faith: the faith given to canonical writings and, subject to these, the faith in definitions and customs established by the authority of the *ecclesia symbolica*.<sup>53</sup> We are not dealing with two watertight compartments, but the testimony of the Catholic Church

50 *Doctrinale*, p. 193, col. a. The same idea under another perspective: 'Quae est illa ecclesia quam docemus in materia fidei definire? Numquid clerus, aut praelati ecclesiae, vel ipsorum ecclesiae in congragatis conciliis? Sed hos omnes frequenter errasse cognoscimus. Quae est ergo ecclesia quae non potest deficere? Quod si sit haec universalis ecclesia, quis ipsam totam simul adire potest, ut interroget quam a baptismo Christi usque ad haec tempora nostra durasse praediximus, et per totam terram ad omnes gentes esse diffusam?' (*Ibid.* p. 195, col. a).

51 M. Hurley, 'A Pre-tridentine Theology of Tradition', p. 355, and by the same author 'Scriptura sola: Wyclif and his Critics', *Traditio*, 16, (1960), 275–352 (especially p. 330).

52 *Doctrinale*, c. 21, p. 201, col. a.

53 *Doctrinale*, c. 23, p. 210, col. b: 'Respondeamus ergo et dicamus latitudinem Christianae credentiae sic esse dispositam, ut primam fidem tribuamus scripturis canonicis. Secundam sub ista definitionibus et consuetudinibus ecclesiae catholicae, iuxta illum articulum in Symbolo: Credo unam sanctam ecclesiam catholicam et apostolicam ... Optima Augustini sancti doctrina prima beatitudo est ipsi credere veritati, ipsi scilicet fidei bipartitae canonicae, et symbolicae de ecclesia, utraque enim fidem vindicat, et ideo nomen veritatis meruit absolute.'

depends on the content of Scripture; on the other hand, it has the authority to render explicit the content of Scripture. H. Schüssler indicated where the main difficulty lies in Netter's synthesis: the obscurity in some ecclesiological issues.<sup>54</sup> The reflection by *Thomas Anglicus* searches for a middle term between these two tendencies: on the one hand, from the declaration of superiority of Scripture, an effort exists to take a distance from the Wycliffite doctrine in its tendency to interpret Scripture in agreement to its own meaning;<sup>55</sup> on the other hand, it tries to strengthen the objective norm of Scripture given the insecurities, ambiguities and difficulties which accompany ecclesial authority. Consequently, we can say it maintains the theological primacy and the adequacy of Scripture. Conformity with Scripture is the fundamental criterion for authenticity in Christian life. However, at the moment of searching for its integration in the system of the ecclesial authority or of the different doctrinal bodies "the weight moves to the interpretation of Scripture by the Fathers and to the universal consensus of believers."<sup>56</sup>

Netter clearly states the superiority of Scripture above the authority of the Doctors of the Church and even of the whole Catholic Church, even if she is the one that gives testimony of the authority of Scripture.<sup>57</sup> This submission depends on the fact that the Church has the task of testifying to the Gospel of Christ and the laws of Christ.<sup>58</sup> Against the English reformer he declares the existence of *traditiones* which claim for themselves a binding character. Therefore, he is not prepared to grant full powers to a sort of uncontrolled magisterium. In this sense we should interpret his opposition to the Church being able to define a new article of faith.<sup>59</sup> From this stance we note the basic characteristics of his concept of tradition. When he is searching for the truth, 'Netter propose la méthode empirique des apôtres: la recherche de la vérité par l'étude de la tradition.'<sup>60</sup>

When a difficulty of faith is presented, the example of the Apostles indicated in the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:28) must be followed. The apostolic praxis, of Simon Peter and Saint James, consisted in a consultation of Scripture to examine *prophetarum oracula, et antiquitatis historias, quae valebant ad dubii*

*solutionem*.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, Netter concludes: in the face of doubts which affect the faith we must investigate what the Apostles thought, the successors of the Apostles, the proven men, and the doctors of our days. With greater precision he fixes a ranking in the testimony: the apostles, the fathers, the holy bishops.<sup>62</sup> In the interpretation of Scripture a fundamental role is played by the unanimous testimony of the *patres*. It is difficult to explain this notion used in the *Doctrinale* in a flexible definition which would cover the writings of the holy fathers from the time of the Apostles to our days. The concept does not correspond to the present technical sense. It is normally connotated with epithets like "saint", "venerable", "ancient". This designating notion – according to M. Hurley – has recognised notable theologians of the past, cultivators of patristic and scriptural theology, in the best Augustinian tradition; Rabanus Maurus, Anselm and Lanfranc are considered "more recent fathers"; the concept would also include bishops of the Church considered individually or gathered in council.<sup>63</sup> In this context our Carmelite inserts this interesting reflection: *Certus sum tamen quod fides ecclesiae symbolicae testimonium laicorum fidelium non excludit, immo includit*.<sup>64</sup> In this way priests and people, bishops and laity appear as subjects of the testimony and tradition of the apostolic faith.

This position brings him closer in the end to the notion of the tradition of Vincent of Lérins: Scripture, the Fathers and the universal consensus constitute a normative and organic whole. The *ecclesia universalis* herself carries out all the effort to maintain her unwavering faith in the Gospel preached by Christ and the Apostles, written in the heart of the first apostolic Church and kept by the successive generations. A constant effort by all under the action of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, none of the requests in the ranking of the ecclesial authorities, that is, not Catholic doctors, nor holy bishops (*antistites*), nor the apostolic Churches – Rome included – nor the general council, can claim in matters of faith an obedience which only belongs to the proper authority of Scripture and of the *ecclesia symbolica*.<sup>65</sup> That distrust by Netter towards the inerrancy of the council

54 Cf. H. Schüssler, *Der Primat der Hl. Schrift als theologisches und kanonistisches Problem*, (Wiesbaden, 1977), pp. 150-54.

55 Cf. M. Hurley, 'Scriptura sola: Wyclif and his Critics', p. 330.

56 *Ibid.* p. 352.

57 *Doctrinale*, p. 201, col. b: 'Longe ergo distat auctoritas Scripturarum, et eminent auctoritati cunctorum doctorum etiam totius ecclesiae catholicae: quamvis super eius auctoritate catholica attestetur Ecclesia.'

58 *Doctrinale*, p. 201, col. A: 'Omnis ergo ecclesiastica auctoritas cum sit ad testificandum de Christo, et legibus eius: vilior est Christi legibus, et scripturis sanctis necessario postponenda.'

59 *Doctrinale*, 203 col. a: 'Hic tamen quaerunt aliqui, Numquid ecclesia catholica posset modernis diebus creare in fide sua, et Christi, novum articulum. Col. b: Item quomodo posset talis articulus post tot annos suscitatus esse catholicus, id est universalis, cum patribus nostris iam lapsis annis mille et quadrigentis supersit ignotus, non creditus, quia inauditus, dicente Apostolo, quod fides est ex auditu? Talis ergo articulus, etsi posset esse fidelis, non tamen esset catholicus.'

60 P. De Vooght, 'Equisse d'une enquête sur le mot «infaillibilité» durant la période scolastique', in P. Rousseau (ed.), *L'infaillibilité de l'Eglise* (Chevetogne, 1962), pp. 99-146 (at p. 136).

61 *Doctrinale*, p. 195, col. a.

62 *Doctrinale*, p. 196, col. a: 'Auctoritas totius sanctae catholicae et apostolicae ecclesiae erit rimanda in definitione fidei eius, scilicet quae duravit in patribus, a tempore legislatoris Christi et apostolorum eius, usque pene ad tempora nostra, maxime autem per sanctos antistites qui sacram fidem corde arctius tenuerunt, et per quos hanc populi crediderunt et qui sinceris terminis in scriptis libris detulerunt ad posterum.'

63 M. Hurley, 'A Pre-tridentine Theology of Tradition', p. 356-357. On these different doctrinal requests (*patres, doctores*), see also F. X. Seibel, 'Die Kirche als Lehrautorität', pp. 27-33.

64 *Doctrinale*, p. 196, col. a. Cf. F. X. Seibel, 'Die Kirche als Lehrautorität', pp. 54-55.

65 *Doctrinale*, p. 221 col. b: 'Iam ut ad definitionem ecclesiae catholicae redeamus, videtis sequendum esse in ecclesia catholica gradatim auctoritatem multiplicem doctorum, scilicet catholicorum omnium: antistitum sanctorum magis, ecclesiarum Apostolicarum potius, et ex eis amplius Romanae ecclesiae: et abundantius his omnibus auctoritatem concilii generalis. Nec tamen alicui iam dictae ita oboediendum censeo et tam prona fide sicut primae fidei scripturae vel ecclesiae Christi symbolicae, sed sicut institutionibus seniorum et monitioni paternae.'

or the Pope and, in the end, to consider the authority of the Church infallible in bodies or concrete requests certainly has to do with the situation of crisis, insecurity and concern suffered by the ecclesial authorities. It is the result of the ecclesial crisis caused by the papal schism of 1378 and the successive attempts to regain unity at the head through the Councils of Pisa (1409) and Constance (1414-18). Our Carmelite took part in them as an English delegate.<sup>66</sup> He was able to experience life as it occurred in the great conflict between the Pope and the council. That would be explained by the recourse to Scripture and tradition in this framework: we access the truth along the most secure path offered to us by the most trustworthy testimonies, that is, that of the apostles, of their successors, of the Fathers of the Church and the *doctores catholici*, or theologians of past centuries. In a special way – the first chapter says on the councils – *in definitionibus fidei via tutissima est adire scripturas canonicas per itinera sanctorum patrum, et concors testimonium catholicae disciplinae*.<sup>67</sup> Netter attributes to the doctrine or testimony of the Fathers of the Church special importance (*concors professio patrum*). The councils must follow their judgement in agreement and unanimity.

Let us, therefore, close this systematic exposition of the ecclesiology of Netter with his reflections on the conciliar institution; they are of great interest. The heart of the matter has to do with the doctrine of Wyclif and Hus who clearly denied the doctrine of infallibility of the councils. In this debate conciliarist theologians flatly laid out the infallibility of the council; on this ‘architectural’ truth they wanted to prop up the superiority of the council over the Pope. Also some theologians of Prague, spokespeople of the Bohemian ‘Counter-reform’, like Esteban de Palec, rejected the devaluation of the authority of the councils. Facing Wyclif, who opposed the authority of Scripture and conciliar authority, Netter looks for a balance. His answer knows these two moments: while it concedes to councils the highest rank on the scale of Catholic authorities, he does not recognize their prerogative of infallibility. As counterproof he indicates the case of some councils which made errors (Rimini, *Quinisextum* and others). However, the basic reason needs to be found in the description he gave of the council: the general council does not enjoy the prerogative of infallibility because it is not identical to the *ecclesia universalis*, the final criteria of truth; the council is – in agreement with the definition above *imago propinquior*.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, Netter links Tradition with the *ecclesia symbolica*, that is, with the consensus of the *ecclesia universalis*. In other words: the *ecclesia universalis* states Netter’s primary interest inscribed in his definition of Church as “temporal” catholicity, that is, the diachronic or

vertical consensus with the Church of the past; while the council, an expression of the synchronic or horizontal consensus of the present Church takes second place.

I close here this brief outline of the *Liber secundus* of the *Doctrinale antiquitatum fidei ecclesiae catholicae*. Yves Congar introduced it in his history of ecclesiology with this descriptive evaluation: ‘The second book of this compilation of controversies is ecclesiological (*De corpore Christi quod est Ecclesia et de membris eius variis*).’ He makes a defence of the papacy as it was known in the Middle Ages, an exaltation of the authority of the Church (she is infallible) against Wycliffite biblicism; finally he states that the *damned* are part of the Church.<sup>69</sup> Let us, then, go back to the question that started off these pages: what place must we give to the work of Netter in the development of the separate tract *De Ecclesia*?

### 3. The place of the *Doctrinale* in the history of ecclesiological ideas

The *Doctrinale* shows, as we were able to see, an articulate ecclesiology starting from the Pauline image of the mystical body of Christ, which also works as an explicative image of mediaeval Christian society. The considerations on the primacy of Peter, as *caput et fundamentum ecclesiae post Christum*, present the apostolic Church as a visible institution which eliminates at the root all possibilities which could support the notion of *ecclesia praedestinatorum*. As the more original aspects we have to single out the incorporation into the Church under the key of transubstantiation, and also the importance of the witness of faith of believers in the light of the infallibility of the Church. The notion of *ecclesia symbolica* and the theological development of the property of *catholicity* in its “temporal” dimension serves as a basis to formulate a ‘pre-tridentine notion’ of tradition (Hurley). Finally, of interest is the definition of the council with respect to the definition of the *ecclesia catholica*.

To establish the place of the *Doctrinale* in the history of theology I will use as point of reference the *Tractatus de Ecclesia* (henceforth *TDE*) of a Dominican to whom we already referred, John of Ragusa, comparing his structural lines and thematic contents.<sup>70</sup> The three sections, which provide the backbone of the ‘first dogmatic treatise on the Church and the history of theology’ (W. Krämer), will serve us as guide.

The first part of the *TDE* wants to fix a notion of Church which goes beyond the notion of *ecclesia praedestinatorum*. Netter and Ragusa distance themselves from an understanding of Church whose formal tie and criterion of belonging is established by predestination. *Thomas Anglicus* and John of Ragusa agree on

66 P. Matias del Niño Jesus, ‘El Carmelo frente a la falsa reforma’, *Revista de Espiritualidad*, 5, (1946), 311-313.

67 *Doctrinale*, p. 216, col. a.

68 On this issue see H. J. Sieben, *Traktate und Theorien zum Konzil. Vom Begirum des Grossen Schismas bis zum Vorabend der Reformation (1378-1521)*, (Frankfurt: Josef Knecht, 1983), 156-158.

69 Yves Congar, ‘Eclesiología. Desde San Agustín hasta nuestros días’, in M. Schmaus, A. Grillmeier, & L. Scheffczyk, (eds.), *Historia de los Dogmas*, III, 3c-d (Madrid, 1976), p. 186.

70 Cf. the study and interpretation of the *Tractatus* in S. Madrigal, *La eclesiología de Juan de Ragusa, OP (1390/95-1443)*, (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas Madrid, 1995), pp. 239-266.

this point: before its final eschatological realisation, the Church is *permixta*. Their respective definitions of Church reflect a profound agreement. The English Carmelite defines the Catholic Church Militant as *congregatio omnium vocatorum catholica societate iunctorum*; the Croatian Dominican speaks in similar terms: *congregatio sive universitas fidelium bonorum et malorum utriusque sexus orthodoxam fidem tenentium in sacramentis ecclesiasticis societatem habentium*. From the common assumption of the image of the mystical body of Christ the reflections diverge at the point of explaining ecclesial diversity and unity. Netter expresses the variety of the members of the Church with the scheme drawn from 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 (*divisiones gratiarum, divisiones ministracionum, divisiones operationum*). Ragusa uses the distinction of *triplici gratia* (*gratia praedestinationis, gratia gratum faciens, gratia gratis data*), to establish in a much more detailed manner ecclesial unity and diversity. On this point he follows Saint Thomas. The distinction had been used by Esteban de Palec in the debate over the ecclesiology of Hus.

The second part of the *TDE* develops our knowledge of what the Church is – *de quidditate ecclesiae* – starting from a wide-ranging commentary of the four attributes or properties of the Creed (*Symbolum fidei*): one, holy, Catholic, apostolic, which are designated *conditiones*. In the debate celebrated in Basel, Ragusa had spoken about the *communio sub utraque specie*. There he had invoked the authority of the Church that we profess in the clause of the Creed on the Church. This recourse to the Creed is common, if we pay attention to the strength which the expression *Ecclesia symbolica* has in the *Doctrinale*. Ragusa begins the second part of his treaty as follows:

*Praesupposito igitur quod ecclesia catholica secundum unam sui considerationem est quae constat a bonis et malis in praesenti, restat declarare quod ecclesia non solum secundum alias conditiones perfectivas et ad dignitatem pertinentes, sed etiam prout in se continent fideles bonos et malos sit quae ponitur in articulo fidei cum dicitur, post articulum spiritus sancti, "Credo in spiritum sanctum, sanctam catholicam ecclesiam" in symbolo apostolorum, et in symbolo niceno "et unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam". Et per consequens quod talis ecclesia errare non possit, et ulterius quod tali Christus claves dederit et potestatem earumdem. (TDE II, 1, 59).*

In this way he elaborated an ecclesiology of the four properties or notes of the Church. The background to this position is found in the commentary of Aquinas to the Creed and, later, in a small work which has a special place in the literature *de potestate papae / de potestate ecclesiastica*, as with the *De regimine christiano* by James of Viterbo. Both comment on and explain the four *conditiones ecclesiae*.

In the first separate *De Ecclesia* treatises, in a special way, the *Tractatus de Ecclesia* by John of Ragusa, the *Summa de Ecclesia* by John of Torquemada, or the *Liber de substantia ecclesiae* by John of Segovia, this principle of systematisation played a fundamental role. I have already drawn attention to the lack of a treatment of the property of holiness in the *Liber secundus* of the *Doctrinale*. Comparatively, in view of the systemisation of the *TDE*, we should conclude that in the *Doctrinale* the scheme of the four "symbolic" properties still has not reached the level of systematisation of the separate *De Ecclesia* treatise. With everything, we should place it in that theological current which introduced a consideration of the "symbolic" properties of the Church in the key of the *notae Ecclesiae* with a marked apologetic flavour.<sup>71</sup> For its part, the *TDE* of Ragusa includes in the first and second parts passages polemically addressed *contra Bohemos*, but the apologetic perspective is reserved to the third section of the work.

This final part of the work of Ragusa is introduced with these words: *Tertia pars declarat per quinque signa Augustini ubi sit ecclesia catholica*. Those five signs of the *vera ecclesia* are: integrity of the faith, consensus of the people, authority shown in miracles, the succession in the see of Peter, the very name of *catholica*. In this way the *TDE* is inscribed in the line of the apologetic treatises of *vera ecclesia*. Traces of this are found in the writings of Peter the Venerable, Hugh of Rouen, Bernard of Fontcaude, in the twelfth century, and, more in depth, in the *Adversus catharos* of Moneta of Cremona in the thirteenth century. This position is interesting to situate the *Doctrinale* in the history of theology. The Wycliffite-Hussite current represents for the orthodoxy a re-edition of those highly critical tendencies of the Church institution and, in particular, of the Church of Rome and papal primacy. Netter's ecclesiological reflections begin with the defence of the figure of the Roman Pontiff and of the papacy. This is one of the first systematic bases of Netter's ecclesiology: the *Liber secundus* of the *Doctrinale* opens with the reflections of *episcopatu Petri* (art. I); that ministry guarantees the existence of the salvific action of Christ in the ecclesial institution. The ecclesiological doctrine carries this apologetic and controversial mark reflected in its subtitle: *adversus Vviclevistas et hussitas*. The section that we have analysed is strongly marked by the dispute with Wyclif's biblicism. The theme Scripture-Church, consequently, absorbs a large part of Netter's ecclesiological concerns. This theme takes up the final pages of Ragusa's *TDE*, which are nothing but an echo of the controversy with the principal writings of Wyclif argued by the Hussites in Basel.

The *Doctrinale* is a controversial work which accepted the challenges of a complex era: on the one side, it suffers the consequences of the schism of the West (1378) and, on the other, it saw the birth of the first doctrinal division of Latin

71 Cf. G. Thils, *Les notes de l'Église dans l'Apologetique catholique depuis la Réforme*, (Gembloux, 1937).



Christianity with the philosophical-theological system formulated by Wyclif and which Hus then consequently took to the ecclesiological terrain. This division represents in more than one way an anticipation of the Protestant Reform. Therefore, I think that this 'ecclesiology of controversy' (K. S. Smith) which is the *Doctrinale* must be placed in the genre marked by an *Adversus cataros et valdenses*. Its reassessment in the era of the Protestant Reform makes of it an important antecedant of the *Disputationes de controversiis christianae fidei* by Robert Bellarmine. The meaning given to it by the Jesuit Cardinal appears symptomatic: it is the reference *par excellence* for Wyclif's theology. Thomas Netter of Walden takes the status of pre-tridentine apologist along with the Dominican Torquemada and his *Summa de Ecclesia*.<sup>72</sup> It would deserve more detailed study but we can assume that, from the point of view of the subject distribution and its formal structure and considered as a whole, the six books of the *Doctrinale antiquitatum fidei ecclesiae catholicae* are closer to the *controversiae* of Bellarmine than to the separate *De Ecclesia* treatise.



Detail from the 'Reconstructed Carmelite Missal'  
(British Library MS. Additional 29704-5, fo 136v.) depicting Saint Augustine.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Thomas Dietrich, *Die Theologie der Kirche bei Robert Bellarmin (1542-1621)*, (Paderborn 1999), p. 152.