Robert Holcot's Trinitarian Theology and Medieval Historiography

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Abstract

This paper argues that the Dominican, Robert Holcot's, Trinitarian theology is methodologically consistent with what one finds in the Franciscan theologian, William of Ockham's, *Summa logicae*. Both theologians, it is argued, develop a form of Trinitarian minimalism that rejects many of the developments in thirteenth-century Trinitarian theology. Further, it is argued that the traditional two-model approach to medieval Trinitarian theology, as found in Théodore de Regnon, Michael Schmaus, and Russell Friedman must be re-evaluated in light of current research.

Keywords

Trinitarian, Holcot, Ockham, Historiography, de Régnon

Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars of medieval Christian thought often understood there to be two basic philosophical systems at play in the long middle ages:[1] an Aristotelian philosophy traced back to the works of Aristotle and his introduction/re-introduction to Christian thought through Boethius, the great Arabic thinkers, and certain academic developments in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; and a Platonic/Neo-Platonic tradition that originated with the

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[1] Unlike books, journal articles rarely require a preface; this may be an exception. This paper began after I re-read sections of Russell Friedman's magisterial *Intellectual Traditions* (see fn. 7 below), having recently completed a study on Ockham's theological method in the *Summa logicae* (see below). What struck me in returning to Friedman's account of Holcot (and to Holcot himself), was just how closely Holcot followed the thought of Ockham in the *Summa*, particularly with respect to questions of theological method and the use of language. While I had studied Holcot previously (see fn. 8 below), it was the particular quotations that Friedman selected that stood out — as such, this paper engages with many of the passages from Holcot that Friedman discussed in detail. Finally, this essay uses, with permission, some material previously published in: John T. Slotemaker, 'William of Ockham and Theological Method', in Ueli Zahnd, ed., *Language and Method. Historical and Historiographical Reflections on Medieval Thought* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 2017), pp. 121–42.

Greek patristic theologians, and worked its way through Augustine, the Pseudo-Dionysius, and certain streams of 'non-Aristotelian' philosophy.[2] This narrative was often presented, or made manifest, through basic genealogies that traced Christian Platonism through Augustine, Anselm, Richard of St. Victor, Bonaventure, Henry of Ghent, et al., and Christian Aristotelianism through Boethius, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Boethius of Dacia, et al. Further, it sometimes proved tempting to locate the two great 'rivaling' mendicant orders—i.e., the Franciscans and Dominicans—within these competing philosophical traditions. Afterall, is it not the case that Bonaventure is basically 'Platonic' and Thomas is an unapologetic 'Aristotelian'? The present paper will focus on the theology of the Dominican theologian Robert Holcot, and the ways in which his Trinitarian theology complicates one such narrative.

The late nineteenth-century French Jesuit, Théodore de Régnon, argued in the second volume of his *Études* that there are two traditions of medieval Trinitarian theology that are grounded in two opposed metaphysical theories: a Neo-Platonic position that is *dynamic* and an Aristotelian position that is *static*.[3] This thesis is explored primarily through an analysis of the writings of Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas, and de Régnon interprets the theology of Bonaventure as grounded in the Platonic and Neo-Platonic tradition transmitted through the theology of Pseudo-Dionysius. According to de Régnon, Bonaventure inherited this Dionysian metaphysics—*D'une métaphysicque 'dynamique'*—from Alexander of Hales.[4] The theology of Thomas Aquinas, by contrast, is understood to be grounded in the works of Aristotle: a philosophy that, according to de Régnon, is fundamentally 'static' (*statique*).[5] In particular, the theory of the categories—so central to Thomas' (and Augustine's) account of the divine relations—he defines as static and, by definition, *consiste dans l'immobilité*.[6] The result is that de Régnon develops a genetic account according to which Pseudo-Dionysius, Richard of St. Victor, William of Auverre, William of Auxerre, Alexander of Hales, and Bonaventure supported a dynamic account of the Trinity as grounded in a Platonic

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[2] See, e.g., the conclusion of Armand Mauer, *Medieval Philosophy* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1982), pp. 373–374, where he summarizes the entire tradition as a complex interplay of Platonic, Aristotelian, and Neo-Platonic reception. The current paper will consider the reception of this type of narrative in Théodore de Régnon, *Études de théologie positive sur la sainté Trinité*, 4 vols. (Paris: Victor Retaux et Fils, 1892–1898).

[3] Michael Schmaus, 'Das Fortwirken der Augustinischen Trinitätspsychologie bis zur karoligischen Zeit', in *Vitae et veritati: Festgabe für Karl Adam* (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1956), 44–56, here 44–45, traces the origins of this narrative back to the Tübingen theologian Johannes von Kuhn and Théodore de Régnon.

[4] de Régnon, *Études*, II, pp. 450–57.

[5] de Régnon, *Études*, II, pp. 449–50.

[6] de Régnon, *Études*, II, p. 449.

or Neo-Platonic philosophy, while Augustine, Anselm of Canterbury, Peter Lombard, Albert the Great, and Thomas Aquinas developed a Trinitarian theology grounded in a fundamentally 'static' Aristotelian philosophy. The work of de Régnon would go on to have a substantial influence on how medieval Trinitarian theology was understood in the twentieth century.[7]

There is much one could unpack here by way of criticism: what does de Régnon mean by dynamic and static? How does he justify such a genealogy, when, e.g., Richard of St. Victor, William of Auvergne, and William of Auxerre support fundamentally opposed Trinitarian theologies? For the time being we will have to set aside such questions. Our focus in the present paper will be on how this two-model approach to the material fails to capture the developments of Trinitarian theology in the first half of the fourteenth century, and the ways in which an emphasis on a 'Franciscan model' and a 'Dominican model' fails to grasp the theology of the Dominican Robert Holcot. In what follows I will argue that Holcot's Trinitarian theology is grounded in the Franciscan theologian William of Ockham's *Summa logicae*, a work that also influenced Ockham's Franciscan colleague, Walter Chatton.[8]

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[7] See, e.g., the two model theories of Michael Schmaus, *Der 'Liber propugnatorius' des Thomas Anglicus und die Lehrunterschiede zwischen Thomas von Aquin und Duns Scotus, II Teil: Die trinitarischen Lehrdifferenzen* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1930), id. 'Das Fortwirken', and Russell L. Friedman, 'Divergent Traditions in Later-Medieval Trinitarian Theology: Relations, Emanations, and the Use of Philosophical Psychology, 1250–1325', *Studia Theologica* 53 (1999), pp. 13–25; id., *Medieval Trinitarian Thought from Aquinas to Ockham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), and id., *Intellectual Traditions at the Medieval University: The Use of Philosophical Psychology in Trinitarian Theology among the Franciscans and Dominicans, 1250–1350*, 2 vols. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2013). It is important to note that in his later works (most significantly, *Intellectual Traditions*), Friedman begins problematizing the two-model narrative.

[8] There is no doubt that Holcot was familiar with the *Summa logicae*. See, e.g., his use of the *Summa* in quodlibetal questions edited in *Exploring the Boundaries of Reason: Three Questions on the Nature of God by Robert Holcot, OP*, ed. Hester Goodenough Gelber (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1983), pp. 70, 79, 83, 85, and 86, and those edited in *Seeing the Future Clearly: Questions on Future Contingents by Robert Holcot*, ed. Paul A. Streveler, Katherine H. Tachau, Hester Goodenough Gelber, and William J. Courtenay (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1995), pp. 84 and 158. Of course, as more of Holcot's quodlibetal collection (and other questions) are edited, one would expect further engagement with the *Summa*. See also John T. Slotemaker and Jeffrey C. Witt, *Robert Holcot* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 261–74. Further, Hester Gelber and Fritz Hoffmann have noted the relationship between Ockham's *Summa logicae* and aspects of Holcot's Trinitarian theology (particularly regarding the definition of the syllogism and the definition of terms). See Hester Goodenough Gelber, 'Logic and the Trinity: A Clash of Values in Scholastic Thought, 1300–1335', Ph.D Dissertation: University of Wisconsin, 1974, pp. 302–03; and Fritz Hoffmann, *Die theologische Methode des Oxforder Dominikanerlehrers Robert Holcot* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1972), pp. 180–81: *In Ockhams Tninitätsspekulation kündigt sich eine solche ausdrückliche Abhebung der Glaubenswirklichkeit vom menschlichen Denken an. Der Glaube lasse bestimmte Sätze über Gott zu, denen die natürliche Vernunft nicht zu folgen vermag. Noch auffallender wird die Ähnlichkeit*

What emerges, we will see, is a form of Trinitarian theology that is neither 'Franciscan' nor 'Dominican'—as these categories are traditionally understood—and forces us to abandon, I think, a two model or two narrative approach to the development of medieval Trinitarian theology.[9] I begin with Ockham's *Summa logicae* and a discussion of the various competing models of Trinitarian theology in the early fourteenth century, before examining the reception of Ockham's thought in Holcot.

I. The *Summa Logicae*: A Theological Textbook

William of Ockham's most systematic or thorough presentation of Trinitarian theology is found in his commentary on the Lombard's *Sentences* and in his quodlibetal questions.[10] However, Ockham also treats Trinitarian questions in his *Summa logicae*. The present discussion examines where Ockham's Trinitarian theology fits within the development of fourteenth-century theology as presented in the *Summa logicae*.

Ockham and Trinitarian Minimalism

In his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, Ockham argues that there are four opinions regarding the distinction of persons: (1) they are distinguished in and of themselves; (2) they are distinguished by real relations; (3) they are distinguished by absolute properties and quasi secondarily through relations; and (4) they are distinguished by absolute properties.[11] The first opinion, sometimes referred to as Praeposi-

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zwischen Holcot und Ockham in einer Bemerkung in der Summa logicae, *in der die theologische Bezeichnungsweise bestimmter Begriffe von der aristotelischen Bezeichnungsweise abgehoben wird.*

[9] For a critique of the two-model approach, see John T. Slotemaker, *Trinitarian Theology in Medieval and Reformation Thought* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. 100–7.

[10] On Ockham's Trinitarian theology, see: Marilyn McCord Adams, *William Ockham*, 2 vols. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), pp. 999–1007; ead., 'The Metaphysics of the Trinity in some Fourteenth Century Franciscans', *Franciscan Studies* 66 (2008), pp. 101–68; Friedman, *Medieval Trinitarian Thought*, pp. 124–32; id., *Intellectual Traditions*, II, pp. 601–62; JT Paasch, *Divine Production in Late Medieval Trinitarian Theology: Henry of Ghent, Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Michae Schank, '*Unless You Believe, You Shall Not Understand'. Logic, University, and Society in Late Medieval Vienna* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); and Slotemaker, 'William of Ockham and Theological Method'; id., *Trinitarian Theology*, pp. 100–8.

[11] Ockham, *Ordinatio* I, d.26, q.1, in *Opera Theologica*, vol. IV, ed. Girardus I. Etzkorn and Fraciscus E. Kelley (St. Bonaventure: New York, 2000), pp. 143, ll. 12–17: *Circa istam quaestionem sunt multae opiniones. Una est quod personae se ipsis distinguuntur. Secunda*

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tinianism, or Trinitarian minimalism, is the view that the persons are distinct in and of themselves (*se ipsis*), and that no explanatory model is necessary to account for personal distinction.[12] The second opinion encapsulates both models of the 'two-model' approach— i.e., the Franciscan model and the Dominican model— and argues that the persons are distinct by means of real relations, such that each person has a unique personal property by means of which it is distinct from the other two divine persons (e.g., the Father has paternity, and the Son does not). Now, this view is divided into two sub-species of the relations account, in that: (2a) the 'Franciscans' tended to argue that only disparate relations are necessary to distinguish the persons; and (2b) the 'Dominicans' tended to argue that opposed relations are required to sufficiently distinguish the persons.[13] The third opinion holds that the persons are distinguished by means of absolute properties and secondarily by means of relation. This view was held, I would argue, by William of Auvergne, who maintained that relations are not sufficient to distinguish anything (as relations are never primary, but require or assume an absolute thing that is in relation). William, as such, held that there is some absolute thing prior to the divine relations, and that the relations are supervenient (*istae relationes supervenerint*) on this absolute thing.[14] Finally, the fourth view, which was at times supported by John Duns Scotus, holds that the persons are distinct by individual personal properties, albeit non-relational personal properties. Scotus, it seems, supported an account of the absolute persons view, though he would ultimately reject it for reasons of authority.[15]

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quod praecise per relationes reales distinguuntur. Tertia quod primo distinguuntur per proprietates absolutas et quasi secundario per relationes. Quarta posset esse opinio quod praecise distinguuntur per proprietates absolutas. This typology, with variations, was common and is found in thinkers thinkers such as John Duns Scotus, Pierre d'Ailly, and Gabriel Biel. For a discussion of this typology and the relevant references to primary and secondary literature, see Slotemaker, *Trinitarian Theology*, pp. 100–7.

[12] On Praepositinus of Cremona see Georges Lacombe, *Prepositini Cancellarii Parisiensis (1206–1210), Opera Omnia. I. —La vie et les oeuvres de Prévostin* (Kain, 1927); Angelini Guiseppe, *L'ortodossia e la grammatica. Analisi di struttura e deduzione storica della Teologia Trinitaria di Prepositino* (Rome, 1972); and Luisa Valentel *Logique et théologie. Les écoles parisiennes entre 1150 et 1220* (Paris, 2008). On the reception of Praepositinus's Trinitarian theology, see Friedman, *Intellectual Traditions*, II, pp. 678–83, as well as his discussions of Holcot and Chatton. Friedman uses the term 'Praepositinianism' to refer to those who hold a position in line with Praepositinus; I have used the term 'Trinitarian minimalism' to indicate this view (indicating, of course, that such theologians give a 'minimalist' account of the distinction of persons).

[13] For a defense of the claim that these two sub-species of the 'reation account' map onto the Franciscan and Dominican orders respectively, see Friedman, 'Divergent Traditions'.

[14] William of Auvergne, *De Trinitate* 28, ed. Bruno Switalski (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval studies, 1976), p. 160. See Slotemaker, *Trinitarian Theology*, p. 105.

[15] See Friedman, *Intellectual Traditions*, I, pp. 341–76. Scotus famously defended an alternative to the 'relational view' that argued for the distinction of persons according to non-relational, absolute, properties. This position is defended at length in both the *Lectura* I and

In the *Ordinatio*, Ockham located himself within the second opinion in support of a modified relations account (though, as argued below, he waffled a bit even here).[16] In particular, Ockham defended the claim that the essence and the personal property of a respective divine person constitute the person, and that there is some kind of formal non-identity, or formal distinction, between the essence and persons/personal properties. For Ockham, things are formally distinct if contradictories can be predicated of one thing, such as the Father — e.g., the Father is both communicable with respect to essence, and incommunicable with respect to the individuation from the Son and Holy Spirit.[17] That said, he is willing to entertain other positions and even writes that 'although the fourth opinion could be seen to be probable' the authority of the Saints seem to expressly favor relations in the divinity.[18] Thus, Ockham seems to think that for reasons of authority one should favor the relations account. However, as the late Marilyn McCord Adams insightfully observed, 'off hand, one would expect … Ockham's nominalistic conceptualism to make him receptive to Praepositinus's proposal that the Divine persons are distinguished in and of themselves' [option 1 above]. Afterall, 'doesn't Praepositinus in effect simply apply Ockham's nominalistic conceptualism to the Divine case'?[19] Here, Adams has—seemingly without knowing it—anticipated what one finds in Ockham's *Summa logicae*.

The theological position Ockham defends in the *Summa logicae* is one that anticipates the development of the renewal of Trinitarian minimalism that one finds in the theology Walter Chatton, Robert Holcot, and Gregory of Rimini.[20] This view, often associated with the theology

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Ordinatio I. According to this view the divine persons are distinct by means of non-relational, absolute, properites—a view that he defends by arguing that relational properties (e.g., fatherhood and sonship) are always posterior or secondary to the things (e.g., the Father, the Son) they relate, and as such are not strictly sufficient to distinguish the things they related (in that they are somehow posterior, but also in the sense that they are presumably repeatable).

[16] The late Marilyn McCord Adams did an excellent job of expressing just how much of an intellectual 'concession' [her term] the relations account proved to be for Ockham. E.g., ead., 'The Metaphysics of the Trinity', pp. 151–66. Cf. ead., *William Ockham*, II, pp. 996–1010.

[17] For an excellent summary of this material, see Friedman, *Intellectual Traditions*, II, pp. 608–28, esp. c. 615. The heart of the discussion, in Ockham, can be found in *Ordinatio* I, d. 26 (OT IV, pp. 142–90).

[18] Ockham, *Ordinatio* I, d.26, q.1 (OT IV, pp. 156, ll. 21– pp. 157, ll. 1): *Quamvis ista quarta opinio posset alicui videri probabilis verumtamen quia auctoritates Sanctorum videntur expresse ponere relationes in divinis…*

[19] Adams, '*The Metaphysics of the Trinity*', pp. 151–52. The brackets are mine.

[20] As research expands, particularly into the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, the list of 'Trinitarian minimalists' has expanded to include numerous members of the Augustinian order, such as John of Rome, Thomas of Fabriano, Facino of Asti, Hugolino of Orvieto, John Klenkok, John Hiltalingen of Basel, Angel of Döbeln, Peter Gracilis, and Berthold of Ratisbon (it goes without saying that further research is needed on almost all of these thinkers). See, Slotemaker, *Trinitarian Theology*, pp. 101–2.

of Praepositinus of Cremona, states that the divine persons are distinct in and of themselves, such that there is no need for further appeal to some distinguishing personal property (e.g., *paternitas*, *filiatio*, *spiratio activa*, or *spiratio passiva*). However, it remains unclear how one should read Ockham, given that his position in the *Summa logicae* indicates a more radical account of Trinitarian minimalism than one finds in his previous writings. That said, there is no doubt that in the *Summa* Ockham develops a Trinitarian grammar that would be systematically employed by those who would deny any kind of explanation for how the divine persons are distinct. This is evident, for example, in Robert Holcot's Trinitarian theology. Here I examine the *Summa logicae* before turning to Holcot.

Amphibolic Propositions and the Divine Essence

William of Ockham lectured on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard in 1317–1318 and held his seven quodlibets at London between 1322 and 1324 (perhaps revising them in Avignon up through 1325).[21] His *Summa logicae*, which was written sometime between 1323 and 1325, is therefore one of his final non-political theological works. In the introductory letter, Ockham states that the work is intended for students of theology who often do not have a proper foundation in logic.[22] The work, therefore, is to provide an introduction to logic for students of theology, as well as other sciences, so that through the proper training in logic they can avoid many errors.

In *Summa logicae* III-4 William Ockham examines amphibolies (*amphiboliae*)— syntactically ambiguous sentences—as a subcategory of the fallacies of diction. Ockham argues that there are three distinct modes of amphibolies and our attention here is on the second mode.[23] Ockham defines the second mode as occurring 'when a proposition is

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[21] On Ockham's life, etc., see William J. Courtenay, *Ockham and Ockhamism: Studies in the Dissemination and Impact of his Thought* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2008), pp. 91–105.

[22] Ockham, *Summa logicae*, epistola prooemialis, in *Opera Philosophica*, vol. 1, ed. Philotheus Boehner, Gedeon Gál, and Stephanus Brown (St. Bonaventure: New York, 1974), p. 6, ll. 21–28: *Et quia plerumque contingit ante magnam experientiam logicae subtilitatibus theologiae aliarumque Facultatum iuniores impendere studium, ac per hoc in difficultates eis inexplicabiles incidunt, quae tamen aliis paruae sunt aut nullae, et in multiplices prolabuntur errores, ueras demonstrationes tamquam sophismata respuentes et sophisticationes pro demonstrationibus recipientes, tractatum hunc duxi scribendum, nonnumquam in processu regulas per exempla tam philosophica quam theologica declarando.*

[23] The second mode is defined in the following footnote. For the first and third modes, see Ockham, *Summa*, III-4, cap.5 & 7 (OP 1, pp. 764, ll. 8–10, and p. 783, ll. 2–4): *Secundo sciendum est quod sicut aequivocationis sunt tres modi, ita amphiboliae sunt tres modi. Primus modus est quando aliqua oratio aeque primo et aeque proprie per se posita potest habere multos sensus. … Tertius modus amphiboliae est quando oratio per se prolata tantum habet unum sensum et ex hoc quod coniungitur alteri orationi potest habere plures sensus.*

taken only in one way in its proper (*proprie*) sense and according to its primary meaning or imposition but can be understood differently and can have another meaning when understood improperly (*improprie*) and in a secondary sense'.[24] To clarify, Ockham provides the following proposition as an example: 'he sells oil' (*iste vendit oleum*). This proposition means primarily and properly that a person is a seller of a certain type of viscous liquid. However, in its secondary and improper sense—when speaking colloquially, as the case may be—this proposition means that a person is a swindler.[25] And, as Ockham notes, the meaning of such propositions is established 'by the usage of the speakers (*ex usu loquientium*) who substitute one proposition for another'.[26]

While the second mode of amphiboly occurs regularly in everyday speech, Ockham is focused on theological examples, beginning with a discussion of the divine attributes and transitioning into Trinitarian theology. First, he lists the follow propositions as examples of problematic amphibolies that one finds in the writings of the theologians[27]:

God has justice	*Deus habet iustitiam*
God has wisdom	*Deus habet sapientiam*
God has intellect and will	*Deus habet intellectum et voluntatem*
God has an essence	*Deus habet essentiam*

He states that 'in these propositions an expression is used that points to a distinction between that for which the subject supposits and that for which the predicate supposits'.[28] In the first premise, for example, there is an implied distinction between that for which the subject (i.e., *Deus*) supposits and that for which the predicate (i.e., *iustitiam*) supposits, such that the premise seems to indicate that there is a distinction

[24] Ockham, *Summa*, III-4, cap.6 (OP 1, p. 771, ll. 2–6): *Circa secundum modum amphiboliae est sciendum quod tunc est aliqua oratio multiplex penes secundum modum amphiboliae quando aliqua oratio proprie et ex sua primaria significatione seu impositione tantum uno modo accipitur, sed improprie et secundario potest aliter accipi et alium sensum habere.*

[25] Ockham, *Summa*, III-4, cap.6 (OP 1, p. 771, ll. 8–10): *Similiter ista oratio 'iste vendit oleum' primo et proprie significat quod iste vendit talem liquorem, sed improprie et secundario significat quod iste adulatur.* This colloquial use in Latin is not unlike the English to be a seller of snake oil—i.e., one who sells products of questionable value, often claimed to have magical powers, and in the process swindels the buyer.

[26] Ockham, *Summa*, III-4, cap.6 (OP 1, p. 771, ll. 13–14): *Et talis sensus non contingit nisi ex usu loquentium, ponentium unam orationem pro alia.*

[27] Ockham, *Summa*, III-4, cap.6 (OP 1, p. 777, ll. 168–70): *Unde dico quod omnes tales: Deus habet iustitiam; Deus habet sapientiam; Deus habet intellectum et voluntatem; Deus habet essentiam; et omnes consimiles…*

[28] Ockham, *Summa*, III-4, cap.6 (OP 1, p. 777, ll. 170–72): *…in quibus ponitur aliqua dictio notans distinctionem inter illud pro quo supponit subiectum et pro quo supponit praedicatum…*

between God and His justice (as if justice is something God *has* that is distinct from Himself).

Ockham's answer to this problem is that such amphibolies need to be distinguished, since they can be taken both properly (*proprie*) and improperly (*improprie*). If understood *proprie*, these propositions are false because they imply a distinction where, in fact, there is none. However, if such propositions are understood *improprie*, they are true. Understood *improprie*, Ockham argues, the propositions are true and are understood as[29]:

God is justice	*Deus est iustitiam*
God is wisdom	*Deus est sapientiam*
God is intellect and will	*Deus est intellectum et voluntatem*
God is an essence	*Deus est essentiam*

In the writings of the theologians, therefore, one must distinguish between the *proprie* and *improprie* understanding of such amphibolies. Theologically the problem is that such propositions understood *proprie* violate the absolute simplicity of the divine nature by predicating (*Deus habet X*) some kind of distinction between the divine essence and the divine attributes. Ockham supports his interpretation by observing a similar passage in Anselm's *Monologion*, where the Archbishop of Canterbury writes that one should not say that the highest nature has justice (*habet iustitiam*) but rather is justice (*exsistit iustitia*).[30]

Amphibolic Propositions and the Divine Trinity

Having discussed amphibolic propositions with respect to the divine essence, Ockham turns his attention to Trinitarian propositions. We begin, accordingly, with a lengthy passage examining Trinitarian amphibolies. Ockham writes:

> Likewise, according to one opinion which holds that the divine persons are totally indistinct from the divine essence and from the relations, these propositions need to be distinguished: 'The Father has Paternity', 'Pater-

[29] Ockham, *Summa*, III-4, cap.6 (OP 1, p. 777, ll. 172–74): *…distinguendae sunt, eo quod possunt accipi proprie, et tunc sunt falsae; vel possunt accipi improprie, ut ponantur loco talium 'Deus est iustitia', 'Deus est sapientia' et huiusmodi, et tunc sunt verae.*

[30] Ockham, *Summa*, III-4, cap.6 (OP 1, p. 777, ll. 174–78): *Et distinctionem talium innuit Anselmus, Monologio, cap. 16, ubi vult quod non proprie dicitur quod 'summa natura habet iustitiam', sed 'exsistit iustitia'. Et ita cum tales propositiones frequenter inveniantur in libris authenticis, oportet quod accipiantur improprie.* Cf. Anselm, *Monologion*, cap.16, in *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi opera Omnia*, 6 volumes, edited by F.S. Schmitt (Rome, 1938–1961), I, p. 30.

nity is constitutive of the Father', 'Filiation is a property of the Son', 'Essence and passive spiration constitute the Holy Spirit', and innumerable similar propositions: insofar as they can be taken properly, they are false according to this opinion, insofar as it is denoted from this first meaning that the Father is distinct from paternity and from the divine essence and the Son is distinct from filiation. This is the case, since if this were not denoted, then it could be properly said that the Father has paternity and that the Father is constitutive of the Father just as paternity is constitutive of the Father. Strictly speaking, such propositions seem false to many who think this way. Otherwise, these propositions can be understood improperly, that is, in the way that follows: 'The Father is paternity', 'The Father is the divine essence', 'The Son is filiation', and so for the others, and so they are true. In short, then, according to this opinion, every proposition by which, strictly speaking, it is denoted that the Father is to be distinguished from deity or filiation, or the Holy Spirit is to be distinguished from the divine essence or spiration, this is strictly speaking false, although it can be true, if taken improperly.[31]

Here Ockham states that if one holds that the divine persons are totally indistinct from the divine essence and the divine persons, there are various propositions that must be examined and treated with special care. The propositions he identifies as problematic are as follows[32]:

The Father has Paternity	*Pater habet paternitatem*
Paternity is constitutive of the Father	*paternitas est constitutiva Patris*
Filiation is a property of the Son	*filiatio est proprietas Filii*
Essence and passive spiration constitute the Holy Spirit	*essentia et spiratio passiva constituunt Spiritum Sanctum.*

As with the amphibolies regarding the divine essence, Ockham argues that these propositions are false if understood properly (*proprie*). That is, if one understands by the proposition 'the Father has pater-

[31] Ockham, *Summa*, III-4, cap.6 (OP I, p. 779, ll. 188–206): *Et similiter, secundum unam opinionem quae ponit quod personae divinae sunt penitus indistinctae ab essentia et a relationibus, istae sunt distinguendae 'Pater habet paternitatem', 'paternitas est constitutiva Patris', 'filiatio est proprietas Filii', 'essentia et spiratio passiva constituunt Spiritum Sanctum', et innumerabiles tales, eo quod possunt accipi proprie, et tunc sunt falsae secundum illam opinionem, eo quod denotatur ex prima significatione earum Patrem distingui a paternitate et ab essentia et Filium distinui a filiatione. Quia si hoc non denotaretur, ita proprie posset dici quod Pater habet paternitatem et quod Pater est constitutivus Patris sicut quod paternitas est constitutiva Patris. De virtute igitur sermonis tales propositiones videntur falsae multis sic opinantibus. Aliter possunt tales accipi improprie, puta pro talibus 'Pater est paternitas', 'Pater est essentia', 'Filius est filiatio', et sic de aliis, et sic sunt verae. Unde breviter, secundum opinionem illam, omnis propositio per quam secundum proprietatem sermonis denotatur Patrem distingui ab essentia et intellectione et volitione vel sapientia vel paternitate, vel Filium distingui a deitate vel filiatione, vel Spiritum Sanctum distingui ab essentia vel spiratione, falsa est de virtute sermonis, quamvis possit esse vera si accipiatur improprie.*

[32] See the previous fn.

nity' that the Father is distinct from paternity or the divine essence, it is false. If this were not the case, he argues, one could denote by such propositions that the Father has something distinct called paternity.

The problem, Ockham argues, is that Trinitarian propositions that include verbs such as 'to have' (*habere*) or 'is constitutive [of]' (*est constitutiva*) often imply a distinction—understood *proprie* and in the primary sense—that is not appropriate to the divine nature. In the proposition 'the Father has paternity' (*Pater habet paternitatem*) there is an implied distinction between that for which the subject (i.e., *Pater*) supposits and that for which the predicate (i.e., *paternitatem*) supposits. However, if there is no distinction between the divine persons and the divine essence and the relations, it is not proper to imply a distinction between the Father and paternity.

The Trinitarian amphibolies discussed above can be understood improperly (*improprie*) and in a secondary sense, however, such that they are understood as not containing theological errors. For example:

The Father is paternity	*Pater est paternitas*
The Father is the essence	*Pater est essentia*
The Son is filiation	*Filius est filiatio*

In these examples there is a strict identity between the persons and their respective personal properties, as well as between the Father and the essence. For Ockham, therefore, the original propositions can be understood as true theological statements if they are interpreted as not positing unnecessary distinctions within the one God.

The conclusion, here, is that in the *Summa logicae* Ockham explores a variant of Trinitarian minimalism that is entirely consistent with his broader philosophical agenda (as Marilyn McCord Adams pointed out). Further, it is a position that Ockham supports as a faithful reading of Augustine and Anselm, even if it goes against the prevailing traditions of Trinitarian theology in the early decades of the fourteenth century. It what follows, I turn to Robert Holcot's Trinitarian theology and his defense of Trinitarian minimalism.

II. Robert Holcot and the *Summa logicae*

Robert Holcot's Trinitarian theology has received little direct attention by modern scholars.[33] Unfortunately, part of the problem has been

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[33] See Gelber, 'Logic and the Trinity', pp. 271–91; Friedman, *Medieval Trinitarian Thought*, pp. 155–58; id., *Intellectual Traditions*, II, 733–42; and Slotemaker-Witt, *Robert Holcot*, pp. 73–84.

that Holcot's texts have not been accessible outside of manuscripts, incunabula, and early modern editions.[34] However, like Ockham, there are other reasons why Holcot's Trinitarian theology has been neglected: first and foremost has been the general assumption that Holcot, following Ockham, defends a strict break between theology and philosophy (faith and reason) such that he presents a fideistic account of the divine Trinity. In fact, many authors have argued that the break between faith and reason that Ockham brings about is brought to its logical conclusion in the writings of Holcot. Thus, before examining Holcot's Trinitarian theology, I begin here with Philotheus Boehner's argument that Holcot's Trinitarian theology diverges radically from the theology of William of Ockham.

Philotheus Boehner, the Summa logicae, and Robert Holcot

The Franciscan, Philotheus Boehner, published an article in 1944 arguing —based on a comparison between Ockham's known theological works and the, at the time anonymous, *Centiloquium*—that the Venerable Inceptor was not the author of the latter.[35] The *Centiloquium* is an anonymous work of the early fourteenth century that, for many authors such as Etienne Gilson,[36] epitomized the bifurcation of faith and reason initiated by Duns Scotus and William of Ockham. Throughout the course of the article, Boehner argued that Ockham employed John Duns Scotus's formal distinction (*distinctio formalis*) in Trinitarian theology to 'safeguard the principle of contradiction'.[37] In the concluding

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[34] The Trinitarian theology of Holcot is found his commentary on the *Sentences* and select quodlibetal questions. See, in particular, the edited questions in *Exploring the Boundaries of Reason*, and, Robert Holcot, *In quatuor libros Sententiarum quaestiones* (Lyons, 1518; reprint: Frankfurt: Minerva, 1967), q. 5 (unfoliated). That said, much remains only in manuscripts or early printed editions.

[35] Philotheus Boehner, 'The Medieval Crisis of Logic and the Author of the Centiloquium attributed to Ockhkam', *Franciscan Studies* 4 (1944), pp. 151–70 [reprinted and cited here from: *Collected Articles on Ockham*, ed. Eligius M. Buytaert (St. Bonaventure: New York, 1992), pp. 351–72. Further, Philotheus Boehner edited and published a partial edition of Ockham's *Summa logicae*, as *Summa logicae, Pars Prima* (St. Bonaventure: New York, 1951) and *Summa logicae, Pars Secunda et Tertiae Prima* (St. Bonaventure: New York, 1962). Boehner provided an edition of part I, II, and III.1, thus conluding with a discussion of syllogisms simpliciter. In short, Boehner never published an edition of Ockham's discussion of fallacies in Part III-4.

[36] See Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1955), and the chapter entitled 'Disintegration of Scholastic Theology' (pp. 471–85), and 'The Spirit of Ockhamism' (pp. 498–99).

[37] Boehner, 'The Medieval Crisis', p. 368. On the formal distinction, see Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus on God* (Aldershot: Routledge, 2005), pp. 107–11; id., 'Scotus's Parisian Teaching on Divine Simplicity', in Olivier Boulnois et al., ed., *Duns Scot à Paris: Actes de colloque de Paris, 2-4 septembre 2002*, Textes et Études du Moyen Âge, 26 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004),

section of the paper Boehner considers the question of the authorship of the *Centiloquium* and argues that:

> Holkot represents the furthest point of development from the Scotistic and Ockhamistic solution. For this so-called Ockhamist…denies the *distinctio formalis* in any sense, and also denies the formal character of Logic…it follows that the historical position of the author of the *Centiloquium* is not in the neighborhood of Ockham, but rather in the neighborhood of Holkot.[38]

Boehner maintains, therefore, that Ockham and Holcot develop radically distinct accounts of the divine Trinity given their acceptance and rejection of the *distinctio formalis* respectively. On this reading, Ockham's Trinitarian theology is rather closer to that of the Subtle Doctor than to Robert Holcot or the author of the much-maligned *Centiloquium*.

The present argument diverges from the thesis of Boehner and argues that Ockham's *Summa logicae* is evidence that Ockham, at least in this final philosophical/theological work, defended a Trinitarian theology that in many ways anticipated the minimalist theories of thinkers such as Walter Chatton, Robert Holcot, and Gregory of Rimini. This is evident in Ockham's account of Trinitarian amphibolies in the *Summa logicae*, where he avoids any discussion of a *distinctio formalis* between the persons and their respective personal properties, or between the persons and the divine essence.[39] Thus, instead of looking at Ockham in comparison to Duns Scotus, the present argument will defend the thesis that Ockham's later Trinitarian theology—particularly as developed in the *Summa logicae*—should be understood as a return, among several fourteenth-century theologians, to the minimalist theology of Praepositinus of Cremona. In what follows we will consider two themes that were central to the development of Trinitarian minimalism: the distinction of persons, and the constitution of persons.

The Divine Essence and the Distinction of Persons

Holcot's Trinitarian theology is consistent with the position Ockham defends in *Summa logicae*, III-4, cap.6. Ockham had argued, as we have seen, that statements such as *Pater est paternitas* or *Pater est essentia* should never be understood as indicating a distinction (of any

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pp. 519–62; and Stephen D. Dumont, 'Duns Scotus's Parisian Question on the Formal Distinction', *Vivarium* 43 (2005), pp. 7–62.

[38] Boehner, 'the medieval crisis', p. 372. For a similar reading of this tradition, see Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy*, pp. 500–3.

[39] See fn. 15 above.

kind) between the *Pater* and the personal property *paternitas*. Such propositions, he reminds us, are found in the writings of the Fathers, but should be avoided. The implications of this view are such that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not understood to be distinct by means of some individuating personal property (e.g., *paternitas* or *filiatio*) that is, even minimally, distinct from the persons themselves. However, this means that according to the view defended in *the Summa logicae*, the persons are their respective personal properties and are simply distinct in and of themselves. This is the position developed by Walter Chatton and Robert Holcot in the decade following the completion of the *Summa logicae*.

Robert Holcot argues that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct in and of themselves (*se ipsis*). Thus, it is not the case that the Father is distinct from the Son because the Father has some minimally distinct personal property (*paternitas*) that distinguishes him from the Son, who has Sonship (*filiatio*). Because *Pater est paternitas* and *Filius est filiatio*, it logically follows that—barring the predication of another minimally distinct property—the Father and Son, if distinct, are distinct in and of themselves. This, as we shall see, is Holcot's position.

The previous scholastic tradition had developed various strategies for analyzing the distinction between the divine essence and the individual divine persons. The Fourth Lateran Council had argued that there was not a real distinction between the divine essence and the divine relations or divine persons.[40] This conciliar decision was necessary, of course, to guard against the idea that there could be some 'fourth thing' in the Trinity (the divine essence, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). In response, theologians posited various types of distinction between the divine essence and the relations (the individuating personal properties) that conceptually were somewhere between a real distinction and a merely conceptual distinction; a conceptual distinction being a logical distinction imposed by the mind that does not exist in the object *per se*. Holcot famously rejects all such distinctions, arguing that 'essence and relation in God cannot be distinguished re-

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[40] *Decretalium D. Gregorii Papae IX*, lib. I, tit. I, c. 2, in Emil L. Richter and Emil Friedberg, ed., *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1881), col. 7: *Et ideo in Deo solummodo trinitas est, non quaternitas, quia quaelibet trium personarum est illa res, videlicet substantia, essentia seu natura divina, quae sola est universorum principium, praeter quod aliud inveniri non potest. Et illa res non est generans, neque genita, nec procedens; sed est Pater, qui generat, et Filius, qui gignitur, et Spiritus sanctus, qui procedit, ut distinctiones sint personis, et unitas in natura*. This passage from the second chapter is directed against Joachim of Fiore. See earlier in the same paragraph: *Damnamus ergo et reprobamus libellum seu tractatum, quem Abbas Ioachim edidit contra magistrum Petrum Lombardum de unitate seu essentia trinitatis, appellans ipsum haereticum et insanum pro eo, quod in suis dixit sententiis: 'Quoniam quaedam summa res est Pater, et Filius et Spiritus sanctus, et illa non est generans, neque genita, neque procedens'*.

ally, modally, formally, rationally, convertibly, nor in any other way'.[41] However, his arguments for such a position are instructive and worth examining in detail.

Holcot argues that the following statements should not be conceded if read literally (*de virtute sermonis*):

Essence and relation are identical	essentia et relatio sunt idem
Essence and relation are not identical	essentia et relatio sunt non idem

The reason he gives is that the verb *sunt* is plural in number and as such consignifies (*consignifcat*) that there are two distinct things, i.e., an essence distinct from a relation.[42] Similarly, Holcot writes that with respect to Marcus Tullius Cicero it is false to state that 'Marcus and Tullius are' (*Marcus et Tullius sunt*) because, again, the verb *sunt* is plural in number and falsely consignifies that there are two distinct things (Marcus and Tullius) when in fact there is one thing. The point here is not just that Holcot rejects any distinction between the essence and the personal properties (the relations), but that methodologically his argument is almost identical to that of Ockham. His point is that the use of a plural verb to speak about *essentia* and *relatio* is problematic because when read *de virtute sermonis* (*proprie*, in Ockham's terms) the word *sunt* indicates two distinct things, when in fact there is a strict identity between *essentia* and *relatio*.

Methodologically, therefore, Holcot agrees with Ockham that much confusion arises when Trinitarian propositions are not formulated precisely. Thus, while it seems appropriate to say 'the Father has paternity' or 'the divine essence and paternity are identical'—such statements are in fact problematic. The problem is that such propositions taken *proprie* or *de virtute sermonis* signify some kind of distinction or plurality that is inappropriate to the divine nature.

To help clarify the position of Ockham and Holcot, it is perhaps useful to consider the following propositions; after all, the reader may rightfully wonder what the difference is between the use of the plural verb in:

[41] Holcot, *Utrum cum unitate essentiae divinae*, in *Exploring the Boundaries of Reason*, pp. 102–3, ll. 1001–1003: … *primo quod essentia et relatio in divinis non distinguuntur realiter nec modalite nec formaliter nec ratione nec convertibiliter nec aliquo alio modo*.

[42] Holcot, *Utrum cum unitate essentiae divinae*, p. 103, ll. 1007–1015: *Secundo dico quod haec non est concedenda: essentia et relatio sunt idem, proprie loquendo de virtute sermonis, quia sequitur: sunt idem, ergo sunt una res, et ultra: sunt una res, ergo sunt, et ultra: sunt, ergo sunt aliqua, et ita non sunt una res. Consequentia patet quia illud verbum 'sunt' est pluralis numeri, et ideo consignificat multas res. Tertia dico quod nec haec et concedenda: essentia et relation sunt non idem, propter eandem causam de verbo pluralis numeri, quia haec est falsa: essentia et relatio non sunt, sicut haec est falsa: Marcus et Tullius sunt.*

> The Father and paternity *are* identical,
>
> The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit *are* wise.

Ockham and Holcot would both agree that the plural verb (are) in the first sentence is problematic while the identical verb in the second sentence is not. The reason is that in the first sentence the verb indicates a plurality or distinction between the Father and paternity when in fact there is no kind of distinction between the Father and paternity. The Father is paternity. However, in the second proposition the plural verb is used to indicate the distinctions between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In this instance, since there is some kind of minimal distinction between the three divine persons, along with essential identity, the plural verb can be accepted.

Holcot does not restrict his linguistic rules to plural verbs and it is useful to consider one further example as related to the divine essence and the personal properties. He writes that the following proposition should not be conceded[43]:

There is some kind of identity between the essence and relation.	Inter essentiam et realtionem est aliqua identitas.

Here it is initially difficult to see what Holcot would object to. He clearly thinks that there is a strict identity between the essence and the relation and the phrase seems harmless enough. The problem, though, is that when one states that *between* the essence and relation there is some kind of identity, it seems to imply that there is some kind of distinction between the essence and relation. As Holcot objects, there is nothing 'between something and itself (*inter aliquid et seipsum*)'. In this case, the term *inter* is objected to on the grounds that it signifies some kind of distinction where in fact there is strict unity.

The Constitution of the Divine Persons

The constitution of the divine persons is a topic that was hotly debated in the second half of the thirteenth century. Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus, for example, argued that a divine person was in fact a 'constitution' of the essence and a unique personal property; further, both Henry and Scotus would provide complex metaphysical accounts to explain precisely how the essence and property combine to 'con-

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[43] Holcot, *Utrum cum unitate essentiae divinae*, p. 103, ll. 1016–1018: *Quarto dico quod haec non est concedenda: inter essentiam et relationem est aliqua identitas, nec aliqua propositio habens tale subiectum, quia nihil est inter aliquid et seipsum.*

stitute' a divine person.[44] Holcot, following Ockham in the *Summa*, rejected any language that speaks about the constitution of a divine person.

Holcot's methodological approach to Trinitarian questions is similar to Ockham's in the *Summa logicae*. Holcot observes that earlier thinkers—he notes Henry of Ghent, Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, *et alii*—spoke improperly when they discussed the constitution of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Such authors often spoke as if 'something constitutes the Father, in the being of the Father (*aliquid constituit Patrem in esse Patris*)'.[45] However, as Ockham had argued, in propositions that contain verbs such as *constituo* there is an ambiguity, given that such sentences indicate a distinction within God that is not proper to God *per se*. The Father, Holcot argues, is not constituted *in esse Patris*, and to speak in such a way is to speak improperly given that the Father is not, strictly speaking, constituted in any way (that is, there is no constitution in the Father).[46]

Holcot, like Ockham, notes that the example given above is not an isolated case. He states that such ways of speaking should not be extended (*extendendus*) but, instead, explained carefully (*exponendus*). In fact, there are numerous types of Trinitarian propositions that include similar problems. The proposition *paternitas constituit Patrem in esse Patris* (fatherhood constitutes the Father in the being of the Father) is almost identical to the example Ockham provides in the *Summa logicae* discussed above: *paternitas est constitutiva Patris* (fatherhood is constitutive of the Father).[47] And, following Ockham, Holcot will reject such propositions.

What is interesting about Holcot's account of constitution— if, indeed, we can call it an account of constitution— is that he is so close methodologically to Ockham's position in the *Summa logicae*. Ockham

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[44] For a brief overview of the broader developments, see Slotemaker, *Trinitarian Theology*, pp. 94–100. For an overview of Scotus, see Cross, *Duns Scotus*, pp. 65–7; for a discussion of Henry, see Scott M. Williams, 'Henry of Ghent on Real Relations and the Trinity: The Case for Numerical Sameness Without Identity', *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* 79 (2012), pp. 109–48.

[45] Holcot, *Utrum cum unitate essentiae divinae*, p. 106, ll. 1089–1096: *Ad secundum, quando arguitur aliquid constituit Patrem in esse Patris, sed non essentia, ergo aliud ab essentia, dicendum quod si maior accipiatur proprie, falsa est, quia Pater non constituitur in esse Patris. Nec est iste modus loquendi extendendus, sed potius exponendus quia est improprius, licet doctores aliqui sic locuti sint, sicut Henricus, Thomas, Scotus, et alii, sed ideo sic dicunt quia si per impossibile paternitas differret ab essentia in Deo, tunc in persona Patris forent duo quorum uno, puta essentia, conveniret cum aliis personis, et alio differret.* Cf. Friedman, *Intellecutal Traditions*, II, p. 736.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Holcot, *Utrum cum unitate essentiae divinae*, p. 106, ll. 1096–1100: *Ideo secundum modum loquendi quem hic habemus, dicunt quod paternitas constituit Patrem in esse Patris, hoc est, ideo est Pater quia genuit Filium, non ideo est Pater quia Deus, quia sic quilibet eorum qui est Deus foret Pater.*

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was concerned, throughout, with the way in which previous theologians had spoken improperly about constitution, the persons and their respective personal properties, or the essence and the personal properties.[48] Further, Ockham linked his argument in the *Summa* with the previous position of Augustine and an earlier tradition of medieval theology.[49] Holcot, of course, expands on Ockham in one important way; while Ockham did not name names, Holcot does, indicting specifically Henry, Thomas, Scotus, *et alii*.[50] Both Ockham and Holcot, therefore, can be read as rejecting much of the thirteenth-century developments in Trinitarian theology, in favor of an earlier, patristic tradition, that did not posit such distinctions.

Here we can note that Holcot's thought is parallel to Ockham's in two respects. Methodologically the argument of Holcot is similar to that of Ockham in that he is focused on the precise way of speaking. The focus is always on the use of language within a given theological proposition, and how that language can obscure the reality. Further, Holcot's Trinitarian theology is consistent with that of Ockham in the *Summa logicae*. Holcot is clear that the persons and personal properties in God are distinguished neither really, modally, formally, rationally, convertibly (*realiter*, *modaliter*, *formaliter*, *ratione*, *convertibiliter*), nor in any other way.[51] The persons are distinct in and of themselves.

III. Conclusion

Robert Holcot's Trinitarian theology is an interesting testcase for rethinking some of the historiographical models employed in the field of medieval intellectual history. Afterall, is the Dominican, Robert Holcot, a 'truly Dominican' theologian? Here we return to the two-model narrative of Théodore de Régnon, as well as the argument of Philotheus Boehner. We begin with the latter.

The Franciscan, Philotheus Boehner, was a student of William of Ockham and sought to defend Ockham not only from his modern critics, but also from the 'taint by association' that hovered over the much-maligned *Centiloquium*.[52] In his fervor to defend Ockham by means of linking the *Centiloquium* with Holcot, and not the Venerable Inceptor, however, it seems that Boehner failed to grasp just how close Ockham

[48]   Slotemaker, 'William of Ockham and Theological Method', pp. 137–38.
[49]   Ibid., pp. 140–42.
[50]   See fn. 43 above.
[51]   Holcot, *Utrum cum unitate essentiae divinae*, p. 102, ll. 1001–1003: *…primo quod essentia et relation in divinis non distinguuntur realiter nec modaliter nec formaliter nec ratione nec convertibiliter nec aliquo alio modo.*
[52]   See, e.g., Philotheus Boehner, *Collected Articles on Ockham,* ed. Eligius Buytaet. (St. Bonaventure: The Franciscan Institute, 1992).

and Holcot were methodologically and historically. More important, for our purposes, is the fact that Boehner was insistent in ascribing to Holcot quite 'radical views'—from his perspective—regarding the non-universality of Aristotelian logic and the denial of the formal distinction. The problem with such an approach is that it attempts to drive a wedge between Ockham and Holcot, when, as was argued above, the two authors shared quite a bit in common. Here one suspects, as well, that there is an attempt to group together Scotus and Ockham as fellow Franciscans who shared a common tradition, from the more 'radical' views of the Dominican Robert Holcot. We will return to this argument below, but first we return to Théodore de Régnon

The two-models approach to medieval Trinitarian theology that one finds in de Régnon is an interesting case of a historiographical narrative that has the potential to obscure more than it enlightens. That said, one has to concede at the outset that for a given period of time — e.g., from about 1270–1320— the two-model approach to medieval Trinitarian theology is informative and instructive. As Russell Friedman has demonstrated, there were heated debates between the Franciscans and Dominicans regarding disparate relations and opposed relations respectively;[53] further, in certain periods it is clear that there was a particular party line that members of the Orders were expected to follow, at some level. That said, the model often obscures other facts, in several important ways: first, the two-model narrative cannot be extended chronologically beyond certain dates, because the historical data does not support adopting this approach in either the long twelfth century (or earlier) or in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; second, the defender of the two-model approach must always concede that between c.1270 and c.1320 there *were* other models that remained operative, and, further, that certain individual Franciscans and Dominicans did not 'toe the party line'. In fact, in the present paper we have a Franciscan and a Dominican developing Trinitarian theologies that are neither 'Franciscan' nor 'Dominican' *per* the two-model narrative, but are in fact a much maligned (*per* the narrative) *tertium quid*. The point, therefore, is that the two-model approach has some explanatory value, but as I argue elsewhere—following Ockham's typology above—there are at least four models of late medieval Trinitarian theology that are operative in the fourteenth century.[54] But, to return to the main question, how does this impact how one reads the Dominican Robert Holcot?

[53] See the work by Friedman cited in fn. 7 above. It should be noted that Friedman's account of medieval Trinitarian theology is not synonymous with the two-model narrative of de Régnon—i.e., the two should not be collapsed. The reference here to Friedman's work is simply because he provides the best textual evidence that indeed the two mendicant orders were sharply divided on Trinitarian theology beween c. 1270 and c. 1320.

[54] Slotemaker, *Trinitarian Theology*, pp. 100–9.

Robert Holcot was a member of the Order of Preachers, who, ironically, often does not 'fit' modern historiographical narratives, such as the two-model theory.[55] One could go down the list of accepted positions within historiographical narratives delineating 'Dominican theology' and Holcot would continually fall outside of what is often understood as normative: e.g., his views on the nature of theology as a science, the proofs for the existence of God, the relationship between faith and reason, the universality of Aristotelian logic, and, of course, Trinitarian theology. Holcot, as we saw above, is clearly not 'Dominican' with respect to his understanding of the Trinity, and one could probably extend that broader to include his understanding of how God is known (theological epistemology) and revealed. Ironically, however, Holcot was a theologian who had profound pastoral sensibilities, and was entirely committed to the original vocation of Dominic and Diego, as evidenced through his sermons, preaching aids, and biblical commentaries.[56] Holcot was a true preacher within an order of preachers — a true Dominican.

What this demonstrates, I think, is that as historians of medieval thought, and the theology of religious orders in particular, we have to exercise extreme caution when implementing historiographical narratives that pit one Order against another. It is often helpful to consider a given thinker's position over and against a contrasting positions, and, as such, thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas are often set in relief with another, e.g., John Duns Scotus, to gain some much needed perspective. That said, such contrasting positions need to be considered with care, and when comparing two 'traditions' or 'orders' or 'schools of thought', the stakes are even higher.

Here, in a jubilee issue of a journal edited by Dominicans, it is imperative that the true breadth of the Order is valued and appreciated. And, as researchers who continue to explore the breadth and depth of the Dominican tradition, I think we must do so with an eye to the narratives we have inherited, continually asking whether or not those narratives are consistent with the facts. Robert Holcot, we have learned, is certainly a Dominican theologian, albeit one that took a page from the great Franciscan logician William of Ockham and developed a

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[55]   The problem, however, is not just Holcot. William of Ockham, of course, sits uncomfortably within the 'Franciscan' model of medieval Trinitarian theology, even in the *Ordinatio*. If one turns to his position in the *Summa logicae*, we see that Ockham seemed to have abandon the 'Franciscan' view *tout court* in favor of a version of Trinitarian minimalism. On the former point, see, e.g., Ockham's minimizing of the *imago Trinitatis*, and Friedman's attempt to shoehorn Ockham into this broader Franciscan tradition. Id., *Intellectual Traditions*, II, pp. 628–52. Of course, Friedman (e.g., p. 645) is aware of the tension and notes places where Ockham's position in the *Ordinatio* 'run counter to the Franciscan tradition'.

[56]   See Slotemaker-Witt, *Robert Holcot*, where we emphasize the pastoral nature of Ockham's theology, as well as explore his preacing aids, sermons, and biblical commentaries.

decidedly 'non-Dominican' (read 'non-Thomistic') and 'non-Franciscan' approach to questions of Trinitarian theology.

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