ORTHODOX REFORM IN ENGLAND AND ON THE CONTINENT IN THE EARLY FIFTEENTH CENTURY

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INTRODUCTION

The historiography of renaissance and reform in Europe is one fraught with problems and ambiguities which reveal even to the most optimistic of historians the limitations of periodisation, categorisation and classification. It is perhaps the case that when we compare the movements for reform within the Church in England and the Church on the Continent we need to make an adjustment: fifteenth century Europe equals sixteenth century England. This much was clear – or so I thought... In fact, what I want to suggest in this article is the need to readjust our perspective on English reform and to see it in terms of an urgent, yet creative response to abuses and defects in the Church. Urgent because of the threat (real or imagined) of Lollardy, creative because it was a response not afraid to take on board and utilise a new methodology and a more rigorous approach to theological argument. This approach I am only too aware is also one fraught with difficulties: we know so little about English theology in the early fifteenth century because the challenge issued by Kantik Ghosh to examine the works of authors such as Nicholas Radcliffe, Robert Allington or John Devereux has largely gone unheeded and only Jeremy Catto’s masterly essay in the late medieval volume of the History of the University of Oxford is a notable exception to this. We badly need also to re-evaluate the contribution of the hierarchical Church to its own reform: new biographies of archbishops Arundel and Chichele are needed to move us on from the essentially negative view of the mysticum interruptum of the Watsonian analysis. However,

1 H. HILLERBRAND, "Was there a reformation in the 16th century?", Church History 72 (2003).
I want to propose here that in the case of the Carmelite theologian Thomas Netter we can see at least one example of how orthodox reform in England could be much more creative and imaginative than its continental counterpart.

Netter was undoubtedly a figure of some importance and stature in his own time: provincial superior, royal confessor, diplomat, theologian, patron, a man of letters and a man of state affairs. Netter stands on the cusp of the medieval and modern worlds and some have even seen in him the first glimmerings of Renaissance style theology. David Knowles calls Netter the only substantial theologian of the fifteenth century to have had some impact on later generations, while Jeremy Catto judges that: 'The Doctrinale ... was perhaps the last work of Oxford scholarship before the seventeenth century to influence European thinking.'

Those who followed Netter tended to use him as a source for apologetic material in the struggle against initially against 'late Lollardy' and subsequently against Protestantism. Not to be forgotten however is Netter's support for and promotion of key Carmelite values, such as an emphasis on the Bible, the need to integrate the active and contemplative dimensions of the religious life, the cell, silence and so on. Netter seems to demonstrate an attachment to Carmelite spirituality in a period which is often characterised as one of decline and when the Order seems to be losing its way. In this context, conventional wisdom claims that it is only with the election of Jean Soreth as prior general in 1451 that the Order begins to recover a sense of identity and that the observance of its members began to improve. This is a view which perhaps does less than full justice to Netter as a superior who was actively committed to improving religious life and practices, as well as writing about it. From this point of view, part of

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Netter’s importance may well lie in his preservation and promotion of Carmelite values in a subtle, but nonetheless real, way at a crucial point in the Order’s history. I would like, therefore, to divide my treatment of Netter between on the one hand his work and attitudes as a provincial superior and on the other his theological contribution to ‘orthodox’ reform as evidenced in the Doctrinale and the use made of it by his contemporaries and successors which testifies to a clear appreciation of its importance.

1. **Netter as Provincial Superior**

It is one of the great fortunes of Carmelite history that some of Netter’s letters survive from his period as provincial superior, from 1414 to 1430. These letters are preserved principally in John Bale’s Notebook, now in Bodley Ms. 73, and contain precious information, given the paucity of records of English medieval Carmelites. It seems probable that Bale copied these letters in the early 1520s, when he was still a Carmelite himself. There are also several letters between Netter and Martin V published in the various printed editions of the Doctrinale. They were written on the occasion of the consignment of the three volumes of Netter’s work to the pope in 1426, 1427 and 1429 respectively. Netter’s correspondence reflects a wide range of contacts and activities and shows well the cares and responsibilities of a medieval religious superior. Knowles observes that this body of letters shows a ‘sincere, earnest and estimable man. He is always on the side of reason and moderation...’

The letters can be conveniently divided into four groups. It is the first two groups that interest us in the context of reform and renewal. First, there is correspondence with the local priors of Carmelite houses in the English province, with the superiors of other provinces and with the head of the whole Order, the prior general. These letters deal with a number of personnel transfers and with disciplinary

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matters. It seems clear from this material that Netter had a certain keenness for religious observance and while his approach is not without humour or humanity, he was probably a thorn in the side of a number of his less enthusiastic conferees. Of particular interest is the correspondence between Netter and the Prior General of the order, John Grossi (d. 1430).8

The second category of Netter’s correspondence is that with leading churchmen in England, such as Thomas Rudborne, and the bishop of Winchester, Henry Beaufort. Rudborne was a royal advisor and at the time of Netter’s letter to him was archdeacon of Sudbury.9 Another of the letters here is of interest in the history of the connection between the Carmelites and the royal foundation of Sheen, in the person of one of Netter’s addressees, the first prior, John Widrington.10 It is possible that Netter was also an advisor to the commission of censors set up in Oxford in 1411 under the terms of Arundel’s Constitutions.11 Netter had dealings with another Thomas Rudborne, who was one of the twelve commissioners appointed to examine Wyclif’s works, and Netter’s acquaintance with him may date from this period.12

Netter was well informed about the spread and development of heresy in continental Europe and his participation in the councils of Pisa (1409) and Constance (1414) is almost certainly one of the sources of his knowledge.13 He was invited by the prior general John Grossi to attend the council of Pavia-Siena in 1423, but declined on the grounds of ill health and the damage that would be caused to the Carmelite order in England by his absence.14 Netter’s role in the two councils he

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12 Schoeck, ‘Rodebourne’. In 1411 he was a fellow of Merton College; he later became chancellor of the University and eventually bishop of St. David’s, in succession to the Carmelite Partrington. Rudborne was a royal chaplain and accompanied Henry V to France from 1417 to 1419.
13 Bulle also mentions a letter that Netter wrote to John Luke one of the representatives from the university of Oxford at Pisa. Ms. Bod. 73, f. 95.
14 See the letter from Netter to Grossi in Alban, ‘Letters’, n. 41.
did attend was varied.\textsuperscript{15} It seems that his part in Pisa was as a regius orator and although his contribution was probably not extensive, it was significant enough for John Bale to mention that Netter addressed the council on two occasions.\textsuperscript{16} Although Bale records the sermon’s incipit, he does not give the name of the Carmelite who delivered it.\textsuperscript{17}

Netter’s attitude towards general councils has been the subject of no little debate and discussion. In a thought-provoking article, Kirk Stevan Smith maintains that Netter was what might be described as a pragmatic conciliarist.\textsuperscript{18} He argues that the Carmelite provincial did not advocate government of the Church by general councils, but saw them as a teaching organ. He did not wholeheartedly support lay participation in councils, rather he believed that the essential members of these assemblies were bishops and priests. Above all, Smith suggested that Netter wants to defend general councils from Wycliffite attacks that such institutions in no way represented a continuity with the practice of the early Church. Netter argues that in the convocation and work of councils there is a precise connection with the apostolic Church in that it is the nearest representation to the totality of the universal Church that is achievable in contemporary terms. Netter does not develop a systematic approach to general councils and his views, according to Smith, are sometimes contradictory. However, Smith also believes that Netter deserves the label ‘conciliarist’ because he understood the Church as essentially the \textit{congregatio fidelium}.

2. **Prior Provincial, Royal Confessor and Diplomat**

a. **Prior Provincial**

One of the most striking aspects of Netter’s correspondence is his fidelity to the nature of religious life and his insistence that the brothers must be given the right opportunities and environment in

\textsuperscript{15} See N. Minnich, ‘The Voice of Theologians in General Councils from Pisa to Trent’ \textit{Theological Studies} 59 (1998) 420-441 for an overview of the various ways theologians participated in councils.

\textsuperscript{16} John Bale, in Ms. Bod. 73, f. 204v.

\textsuperscript{17} The incipit is: ‘


which to pray and meditate. This view reflects, at least in part, a vision of the religious life which sees the ideal friar devoted to the recitation of the Office and the common observance of the vows. It would be anachronistic in fact to see even a mendicant order, such as the Carmelites, predominantly in terms of an active apostolate outside the immediate environs of the friary church. An illustration of this can be seen when Netter promises Henry V that he will send to Caen enough men to staff this French Carmelite house, which was perhaps partially abandoned when Henry V’s troops captured the town in 1417-1418. The house in question was part of the Carmelite province of France and had been founded in 1278. He writes to the King:

‘About thirteen of our brothers, your servants, are coming to you, most clement prince, including some who already live in the area. We are sending to you a brother who for ten years was prior of Sandwich and made a good job of it; a graduate in theology and a third who was Sub-prior in London for a long time; all are well-known preachers. There are also other junior priests to celebrate the office, whose names I have inserted in the commission of the superior. A Master of Theology will follow these men, all of whom in my honest opinion are of good report both in their way of life and behaviour.’

The two graduates in theology mentioned by Netter would have given classes to the novices and young friars in initial formation, as it would be termed today. These lectors would also have been licensed by the local bishop to preach and hear confessions. The ‘junior priests’,

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19 See C. Allemand, Lancastrian Normandy 1415-1450, The History of a Medieval Occupation, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), especially chapter four, ‘Caen: An “English” Town’, pp. 81-122. Allemand does not deal with the fate of religious houses directly, but he notes on p. 84 the wide divergence of opinion on how many people left the town when it fell to the English: from as many as 25,000 to as few as 500.


21 Alban, ‘Letters’, n 11. To the King [Henry V], ‘Venient autem a nobis prior quondam conventus nostri Sandwici bene per decem annos, inceptor quidam in theologia, et tercius qui dudum fuit suprior Londoniensis, predicatores famosi, alii quoque sacerdotes juniores ad obsequium chori, quorum nominam commissioni presidentis inscriui. Subsequentur istos quidam in theologia magister, omnes ut estimo in consciencia mea viri et moribus et actione probi.

22 Research into the structure and organisation of Carmelite education and formation programmes in the Middle Ages is hampered by the loss of many sources. However, see E. Boaga, 'L'organizzazione dello studio e degli studia presso i carmelitani tra il XIII e il XIV secolo, in Studio e 'studia': le scuole degli ordini mendicanti tra il XIII e il XIV secolo, (Spoleto: Centro Italiano degli Studi sull’Alto Medioevo, 2002).
both in the sense of the younger ones whose training was not complete and non-graduates were to devote themselves to the Divine Office. Netter, for all his own involvement in the affairs of state as a loyal servant and confessor to Henry V, does not expect his community in Caen to be similarly occupied:

'I beg of you to provide such help and protection to the prior of the convent that he and his brothers may live in perfect peace and to this end: that they may not be employed outside the house in the service of lords and court officials and thus withdrawn from the service owed to God.'

In addition to the friars' duty of singing the Office and some study, Netter also held that there was a smaller group who were dedicated in a special way to prayer. In a slightly earlier exchange with the King, Henry asks for prayers and Netter writes to his brothers to

'... give thanks also for all that our benign God has done for our lord the king, and even more pray for what he might do. I say these things to each and every one of my brothers, but not to all equally. I appeal to those particularly who know the secret of holy contemplation and exercise it more frequently. You, my dear fathers, my brothers, do I beg urgently and exhort earnestly, without ambiguity, to remember the lord our king from the bottom of your hearts.'

There is a definite sense in which Netter appreciates that the state of contemplation belongs to the Carmelite vocation, but it is not necessarily a calling for all.

Some brothers, not content with the rigours of Carmelite life, sought greater mortification in monastic orders. One such Carmelite, John Boxhole discussed in the Carthusians at Henry V's foundation of Sheen because, claimed Boxhole, the Carmelites did not obey the Rule perfectly. Henry V founded a house for men at Sheen,
which followed the Carthusian rule, and one for women at Syon, which was the first Brigitine foundation in England. There is a Carmelite connection with this royal project: Stephen Patrington, prior provincial from 1399 to 1414 and then successively Bishop of St. David’s (1414-1415) and Chichester (1415-1416), chaired the committee that met in 1415 to draw up the Additiones to the Rule, known as the Articuli extracti, that was followed at Syon. Netter seems to have had some involvement with Syon: he wrote a letter to Thomas Fishbourne, confessor-general at Syon in the 1420s on the question of obedience owed by recluses.

Netter’s letter to the Carthusian prior about Boxhole perhaps sheds some light on his view of Carmelite life and on his ‘working philosophy’ when dealing with these cases. First, the essence of the religious life does not consist in keeping the Rule to the letter:

‘About this last item Saint Bernard explains. He says that those who decide to live in accordance with a Rule do not deviate in any way from their regular profession even if they do not observe the whole Rule punctiliously and for the sake of their cloistered life they change or omit some things, as long as they do not stop living a sober, just and pious life to the best of their ability. [...] Therefore, he who thinks that he is a perjurer because he does not keep the Rule to the letter seems to show inadequately what he has vowed."

The Church, and the orders within it are a mixture of good and bad, observant and lax, but Christ does not condemn this, rather it is a lesson for all:

‘For from among the weak and the strong, Christ has assembled the church, and the strong do things that the weak cannot do. And this

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26 See J. Catto, ‘Patrington’, ODNB.
experience will show something about our brother as regards the obedience of the Rule: that the strong and those already perfect will observe points of your Rule which Brother John cannot yet attain.\(^9\)

The fault lies not with the system, concludes Netter, but with the man and his own will-power and all the angels in heaven are not going to make any difference. In the *Doctrinale*, Netter also gives his view of the Church as inevitably composed of both sinners and the just, in opposition to Wyclif's view that it is made up only of the saved.\(^0\)

Finally, having set out his views and made his comments on Boxhole, Netter, like many superiors before and after, recognises the value of not pushing too hard, and indeed the value of a sense of humour when dealing with the brethren:

'...I give you thanks, for you may be able to make him good who, and I use his own words, 'could not be good among us'. As for the rest, if you give your assent and lighten our burden, I shall send you forty brothers that you may make them better, none of whom is inferior to our John, none is worse.'\(^1\)

Evidently, John Boxhole was not the only 'difficult' case to cross Netter's path as provincial. The type of spirituality and the character of the man himself that emerge from this brief survey of his correspondence speak of a person who values and promotes the ideals of the order, that is, prayer and community. Observance is strict, but not fanatical: pragmatism, good humour and a sense of proportion are the human qualities Netter brings to his office. His Carmelite formation and reading have convinced him of the supreme value of prayer and contemplation. This aspect of Netter's life is easily overlooked, if his activities and writings are described solely in terms of a response to Lollardy, and especially to the composition of the Doctrinale. In this sense, it is therefore significant to note that Netter's style of government reflects his spiritual concerns, as much as his practical ones.

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\(^9\) *ALBAN, 'Letters',* n. 34: ‘Ex infirmis enim et fortibus congregavit Christus ecclesiam et fortis facit quod infirmi non possunt. Et hoc forsae de fratre nostro quo ad regule vestre observantes, experiencia comprobabit, quod fortis et iam perfecti quae dam de vestra regula observavisset, que frater Johannes adhuc non attingit.’

\(^0\) *See Doctrinale* 2. 2. 9.

\(^1\) *ALBAN, 'Letters',* n. 34: ‘... pro illo enim vobis gracias ago, nam bonum fortasse faciesis, qui (ut suis utar vocabulis) nobiscum bonus esse non potuit. Ceterum in alleviacionem oneris nostri si prehueritis assensum, quadraginta frater vos vobis destinabo, ut meliores hos faciatis, quorum nullus nostro Johanne deterior, nullus peior.’
2. **THE “DOCTRINALE”**

I would like to turn now to the Doctrinale, Netter’s only surviving theological work.

a. **Applications During Netter’s Life**

The original title of Netter’s work shows that he envisaged a possible application to a wider audience than the English Church: *Doctrinale antiquitatum ecclesiae Catholicae ... adversus Viticlevistas Hussitas eorumque recentiores*. and clearly that Netter wrote in response not only to the local threat of Lollardy (real or apparent), but also to the danger of the Hussites from Bohemia. Martin V appreciated this very readily and encouraged Netter in his endeavours. At the same time, he used the occasion of Netter’s work to remind the English bishops of their duty to implement the Council of Constance’s decrees.

Around the time of Netter’s death other authors were already beginning to adapt Netter’s work for their own purposes, such as John Barath, (fl. 1426) who composed a work entitled, *Abbreviaciones Walden - De Sacramentis et De Sacramentalibus, ac De Corpore Christi*, incipit: “Beatissimi principis apostolorum Petri.”32 Within the Carmelite Order too there are the first signs of Netter’s impact as a major author: John Bale records that Roger Alban compiled several large volumes of extracts from the *Doctrinale*.33 The fact that Martin V had commissioned volumes two and three of the *Doctrinale* must have carried some weight with Barath and Alban, and their works perhaps represent some of the earliest examples of the exploitation of the Doctrinale by other theologians.

Even a cursory examination of the text of the *Doctrinale*, reveals immediately that Netter supports his arguments by drawing on key biblical, patristic and other theological texts. It is clear that Netter’s knowledge and use of such texts verges on the prodigious. He was not

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32 This work is referred to by Bale in his notebook: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. 73, fo. 198v.
33 R. Copsey, ‘Alban, Roger (d. after 1461), Carmelite and genealogist’ *ODNB* 1: 567. J. Bale, *Scriptorium illustrium maioris Britanniae, quam nunc Angliam et Scotiae vocant*, 2 vols, (Basel: Johann Oppinus, 1557), vol. 2, 94: ‘Ex Thome Waldensi operibus pulcherrima volumina fecit, multa et magna’. Alban was a member of the London house in the middle of the fifteenth century and also compiled a genealogy of English kings from Brutus to Henry VI which survives as Winchester College (Warden and Fellows’ Library) Ms. 13A.
however, the only theologian of his time to demonstrate such proficiency. In Italy Giovanni Dominici (1357-1419) and Agostino Favaroni (1360-1443) both had frequent recourse to the Latin and Greek fathers. In the Low Countries, Jean de Schoonhoven (1356/57-1432), for example, in his theological writings and sermons adopted a method of linking quotations from Scripture and the Fathers which is similar to Netter's. There is nonetheless an important difference between Netter and de Schoonhoven: the physical layout of Netter's text shows a large number of citations which are marked off in red at the beginning of the quote with the author and work and at the end with the words 'Haec ille'. Netter's own comments are introduced by the word 'author'. This arrangement is a good example of a growing preoccupation in late medieval theology with the accurate identification of sources. It is important for Netter to quote not the opinions of the Fathers, but the actual words that they used. In some cases, Netter argues that Wycliff's position is a result of having misunderstood his source text. For example, in discussing transubstantiation, Netter claims that Wyclif has misunderstood Aristotle's terminology of 'substance' and 'accidents'. Even Wyclif himself, for all his emphasis on the absolute authority of Scripture, recognized the need for an authentic interpretation of Biblical texts on the part of the Church.

Although Netter was a product of the educational system of his age, the impact of his university training needs to be considered with other influences which came into play once he left Oxford and returned to London. First, when dealing with the subject of the Eucharist, for example, Netter announces that it is not his intention to follow the reasoning of ancient philosophers; indeed, this is the path

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35 A. Grūs, 'Jean de Schoonhoven', Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, 8: 724-735.
36 See A. Minnis, Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages, (Aldershot: The Scholar Press, second ed. 1988), pp. 26 and 157, who prefers the term 'actor' to indicate the author, in contrast to 'author', which he reserves for an 'authority'.
37 W. Courtenay, Schools and Scholars, pp. 307-324.
39 The same point is made in another context by J. Clark, 'Monachi and Magister: The Context and Culture of Learning at Late Medieval St. Alban's' in J. Greatrex (ed.), The Vocation of Service to God and Neighbour: Essays on the Interests, Involvements and Problems of Religious Communities and their Members in Medieval Society, (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998).
that led Wyclif astray.\footnote{Doctrinale 5.17: Netter makes this claim with unconscious irony: he draws on ancient philosophers whenever it suits him.} In this respect Netter's attitude is not unlike that of his French contemporary, Jean Gerson, who advocated abandoning speculation based on philosophy and a return to a study of the patristic interpretation of Scripture\footnote{For a recent account of Gerson, see B. McGuire, 'In search of Jean Gerson: Chronology of his life and works' in B. McGuire (ed.), A Companion to Jean Gerson, (Leiden: Brill, 2006).}. It is interesting to note that while William Woodford may have influenced Netter in the use of historical precedent and in his view of Scripture, from a methodological perspective, Netter does not follow Woodford in adopting the scholastic style of disputation which perhaps placed more emphasis on scoring points than it did on establishing the truth of the matter.\footnote{K. Ghosh, The Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and Interpretation of Texts, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 83.} Indeed, it is precisely this sort of linguistic logic chopping which by his own admission attracted the young Netter to Wyclif's ideas whilst a student at Oxford.\footnote{See Doctrinale, Letter to Martin V: '...stupebam ultra modum assertiones eius praegrandes, et authoritatum loca taxata, cum vehementiis rationum.'} Netter is not to be trapped a second time and he deliberately abandons the seemingly even-handed, dispassionate and objective scholastic method. It is important to note that even some of Netter's own contemporaries, such as Walter Hunt, recognized what he was doing and produced their own gloss on some articles of the Doctrinale to recast them in a more familiar scholastic mould.\footnote{See M. Harvey, 'Harley Manuscript 3049 and two Questions of Walter Hunt O. Carm.', Transactions of the Architectural and Archeological Society of Durham and Northumberland, new series, 6 (1982) 45-47. See below in chapter eight.}

Secondly, the influences on Netter were from not only Oxford or Cambridge theologians. Too often medieval English church writers can be seen through the lens of an ideologically and theologically divided Europe which belongs to a later era. Despite the running war with France, of which Netter was very well aware, his scholarship was not limited to the Dover side of the English Channel.

In the first place, Netter would almost certainly have known of the works of his contemporaries Jean Gerson (1363-1429) and Pierre D'Ailly (1350-1420). Both men were graduates of the College of Navarre at the University of Paris, both held the position of Chancellor of that university, both, like Netter were academics with a strong
interest in the life of the Church at a practical level. D’Ailly attended the councils of Pisa and Constance; Gerson that of Constance.45

It is not possible to establish a direct connection between D’Ailly, Gerson and Netter. It does seem probable, however, that he knew of them and what they had written. The essential point here is that Netter was part of a Europe-wide community of scholars and this must be taken into account when assessing the background against which he wrote. The writings of Gerson and D’Ailly on the church and the place of the laity in it, for example, reflect a concern that Netter also shares.46

However, the way Gerson and D’Ailly expressed their concerns was very different from that of Netter. Although both were conscious of the threat posed by Wyclifite theology and the continued advocacy of it by Jan Hus, neither, I feel, was subject to the same direct pressure that Netter felt in England. Indeed, Gerson famously remarked that perhaps Wyclif’s approach could ultimately have been reconciled with mainstream Christian theology: the luxury of this opinion was not available to Netter. Instead Gerson confines his proposals for reform to the idea that the root of the Church’s problems was a confusion between God’s law and human law, with politicians interfering in areas proper to the Church. His solution is to have theologians make a study of which laws should be classified as divine and which as human and enforce a rigid separation between the two. Gerson’s approach is both conservative, allowing laws to be applied in their own proper sphere, and parochial in that he envisaged a central role for the university of Paris as a centre for theology for the whole of Christendom.47

b. Applications After Netter’s Death

In the period immediately after Netter’s death, various parts of the Doctrinale were used both in England and in Continental Europe to combat heterodox opinions. Richard Fleming, bishop of Lincoln, presented an illuminated copy of the Doctrinale to Lincoln College, Oxford, as part of its foundation library.48 Later one of his successors

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45 It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that Netter met D’Ailly and Gerson at Pisa and Constance, but there is no documentary evidence to support this view.
in that see, John Russell, had a paraphrase made of book six of the *Doctrinale*, which deals with the sacraments of the Church, and this survives in the library of University College, Oxford. A work by the Carmelite anchorite, and later bishop, Thomas Scrope of Bradley written in the middle of the fifteenth century which described the early history of the Carmelite Order, contains several quotations from the sixth book of the *Doctrinale*. Margaret Harvey suggests that this material was drawn from lectures on Netter's text given in Oxford when Scrope was a student. Similarly, the possession of copies of the *Doctrinale* by the Benedictines of Gloucester College, Oxford, indicates to Harvey that Netter's work was the object of study outside the Carmelite order. The way in which Russell culled sections from Netter's work for use in his own struggle against heresy, is but a prelude to the extensive mining of the *Doctrinale* in the early sixteenth century as its potential for combating Lutheranism also became clear.

Following the schedule laid out the conciliar decree *Frequens*, Martin V called for a council to meet in April 1431 in Basel which, given the failure of Orsini's mission in Bohemia, was bound to include a discussion of the Hussite problem. The friar who succeeded Netter on his death in 1430 as Carmelite provincial superior in England, John Keninghale, and who had brought copies of the *Doctrinale* to Rome for the Pope and Curia, was present in Basel for the council from the autumn of 1432 to 1435.

In January 1433, the pope's representative, Cesarini, asked the Hussite delegation which of the twenty eight articles of Wycliff that Constance had condemned they agreed with. The leader of the Hussite party, Prokop provided the information that Cesarini needed and in return for his help, Cesarini gave Prokop a copy of Netter's *Doctrinale*.

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50 R. COPSEY, 'Scrope [Bradley], Thomas, d. 1492, bishop of Dromore', *ODNB* 49:566. The work in question is *Tractatus de fundacione ...ordinis*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Ms. Lat. 5615, fols. 92-106.
51 HARVEY, 'Netter Manuscripts', *Thomass Netter* p. 176.
who passed it on to Peter Payne, the English Lollard. The Hussite leaders were apparently well pleased with this gift and, somewhat ironically, found Netter's summary of Wyclif's and Huss's teaching most helpful for outlining their case.

A rather more predictable use of the Doctrinale was made in one of the debates at Basel, when Netter's name was invoked as a symbol of orthodoxy. One of the leading anti Hussite polemicists, Johannes Stojkovic (Juan) de Ragusa, accused the Hussite delegation of besmirching Netter's name in their refusal to accept his teaching. It is in the writings of Ragusa, that the epithet mallem haceticorum is applied to Netter. De Ragusa and another theologian, Johannes de Rockycana, used the Doctrinale in debates on the Eucharist, when discussing the question of communion under both species. It is also possible that the Polish scholar Nicholas Kozlowski became aware of Netter at the Council and had copies made to take back to Kraków.

c. Printed Versions of the Doctrinale

With the advent and spread of printing in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and given the importance of the work in contemporary eyes, it was only a matter of time before Netter's Doctrinale would be printed. It is a sign of the regard in which this work was held that such a massive manuscript was transferred to the print medium, bearing in mind the technical limitations of the time.

The first printed version was produced in Paris between 1521 and 1532 and seems to have been a Carmelite initiative. The first volume

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56 F. PALACKY, et al. (eds), Monumenta conciliorum generalium seculi decimi quinti, 3 vols, (Basel: Typis C. R. Officinae Typographiae aulae et status, 1862-1886), vol. 1, p. 307, 10 February 1433, 'Procopius grate volumen suscipiens, transmisit hora eadem Petro magistero angelico, qui multum gaudebat viso volumine'.
57 PALACKY, Monumenta, vol. 1, p. 394, 'Vos negatis Thomas Walden honorabili virum'.
59 PALACKY, Monumenta, vol. 1, p. 344.
60 Bibliotheca Jagiellonska Ms. 1759 and 1760 are the complete Doctrinale in two bindings.
61 A rough calculation of the word count of the Doctrinale is illuminating in this context. Each volume of the printed edition has over 500 pages of Netter's text, with about 650 words per page, making around 330,000 words per volume. For the three volumes, the total length cannot be far short of a million words.
of the *Doctrinale* to be produced was book five, on the sacraments. The prior of the Paris house declared in the dedication of this 1521 printing that Netter's work would be useful in fighting errors. In 1523, the sixth book, on sacramentals was printed and in December of that year, the Theology Faculty of the University of Paris gave its *imprimatur* to Netter's work as 'useful and worthy' in the fight against Lutheranism.62

Not until 1532 were the first four books of the *Doctrinale* published. At this time, it may be that the Paris priory was seeking to regain its orthodox credentials after having dabbled in the 'new theology' in the person of the Milanese Carmelite Giacomo Calco. He had been in England in 1530 where he declared himself in favour of Henry VIII's position that his marriage to Catherine of Aragon was invalid. Calco then went to Paris to convince the Faculty of Theology there of the justice of Henry's case. It seems he involved other friars in the Carmelite house, judging by the condemnation of his activities by his superiors in 1531.63

To conclude briefly, Salvatore Camporeale has proposed that the history of ecclesial movements and figures in the late medieval and early modern period be identified using three key concepts: humanism, reform and counter-reform.64 This is a proposal with apparently attractive potential. At least it promised to introduce a certain classification and order into an otherwise confusing picture. However, it is not as simple as Camporeale suggests. In the figure of Netter we

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62 'Decreverunt Decanus et Facultas Theologiae Scholae Parisiensis Librum hunc a praecelerissimo Doctore Thoma Walden, studiose compositum, utile admodum esse, dignumque ut edatur; quandoquidem ad enervandas luteranas calumnias atque haereses reipublicae christianae perniciosissimas plurimum conduct. Quod notari ejusdem Facultatis signo manifestum est satis, his suscibendo, anno christianio millesimo quingentessimo vicetimo tertio idibus Decembris.' This declaration is printed in subsequent editions of the *Doctrinale.*


have seen a humanist, reformer and at least through his literary persona a counter reformer: Humanist and reformist in his dealings with his subjects and confreres; reformist and innovative in his theological method; an important figure in the counter-reform through the enduring influence of the Doctrinale.

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