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Philosophy's Resurrection: Richard Fishacre on Theology, Light, and the Stars

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Abstract

This article explores Richard Fishacre's (1200–1248) thinking on the relationship between theology and philosophy. It shows how, despite constructing what, on the surface at least, appears to be a traditional understanding of theology's relationship to philosophy, Fishacre in practice offers a very creative interpretation of how the two sciences interact. For Fishacre, theology does not simply illumine philosophy by guiding it away from error. Instead, it steps into the fray of ordinary philosophical dispute so as to uncover novel ways of reading natural phenomena, ones which philosophy, by itself at least, is blind to. To demonstrate how this is so, the article explores how Fishacre appeals to Christ's resurrected body to justify some of his most controversial arguments in the field of natural philosophy. Two specific areas are considered: Fishacre's claim that light *in medio* is a body and his assertion that the stars and planets are made from the terrestrial elements as opposed to the celestial quintessence, as Aristotle claims. Each of these aspects of Fishacre's physics show how, for the Dominican, theology can, when appropriate, step onto the philosophical plane and help the natural philosopher to discover truths that go against the philosophical consensus.

Keywords: celestial bodies; Christ; Fishacre; light; resurrection

1. Introduction

Amongst the Dominicans of the thirteenth century, it is Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas who are regularly identified – and for good reason – as the chief examples of the brilliance and originality of the early Dominican intellectual movement.¹ Indeed, Albert and Thomas are often viewed – despite the important differences between their thinking – as having laid the foundations, and, in many respects, set the direction of, the nascent Dominican theological and philosophical traditions. While their centrality ought never to be downplayed, it is nonetheless important to note that they were not the only – nor, indeed, the first – Dominicans to teach theology and philosophy and to

¹All translations are my own. I wish to acknowledge the support of the Leverhulme Trust in funding my research. I would also like to thank Prof Rik Van Nieuwenhove for commenting on the early drafts of this article.

establish a name for themselves. Indeed, during the 1240s and early 1250s – especially at Oxford – the names of other Dominicans preceded theirs, or were seen as being of equal standing, especially when it came to advancing theological and philosophical boundaries. One such name was that of the Englishman Richard Fishacre (1200–1248). The first to compose a *Sententiae* commentary at Oxford, and the first Dominican to incept as a *magister* of theology at the English university, Fishacre was one of the most revered and authoritative thinkers of his day.² An indication of the respect in which the Oxford Dominican was held by his contemporaries is provided by an anonymous letter from the papal curia addressed to Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, in whose diocese Oxford was then included. Seeking to curtail what he regarded as dangerous novelties at Oxford during the 1240s – specifically the decision of several theology masters at Oxford to take Peter Lombard’s *Sententiae*, as opposed to the Bible or Peter Comestor’s *Historiae*, as the basis of their lectures – Grosseteste had repeatedly sought to discourage the Oxford theologians from lecturing on Lombard’s *Sententiae*, including, so it would seem, Fishacre.³ However, upon hearing of Grosseteste’s attempts to regulate Fishacre’s activities, a member of the papal curia issued an *epistola secreta* to the bishop, demanding that he not only allow Fishacre to resume his *Sententiae* lectures, but provide him with the resources needed to complete this task.⁴

Despite his celebrity during his own day, Fishacre’s writings go largely ignored in contemporary studies. This, as we will see, is especially surprising given the fact that Fishacre was not only one of the most creative thinkers of the 1240s but also one of the most controversial. To demonstrate how this is so, this article explores his thinking on the relationship between theology and philosophy. It shows how, despite constructing what, on the surface at least, appears to be a traditional interpretation of the relationship between *theologia* and *philosophia*, Fishacre, in fact, offers a novel reading of how the two *scientiae* interact with one another; one which sees him not only placing the data of revelation at the heart of ordinary philosophical enquiry, but using it to justify counterintuitive ways of viewing the natural world. To do this, the article will focus on two particular aspects of Fishacre’s natural philosophy or physics – namely, his understanding of light and his thinking on the composition of the celestial bodies, i.e., the stars and planets. As we will see, in both of these areas, Fishacre, by means of invoking revelation, advances highly contentious positions, ones which not only set him at odds with the teaching of Aristotle but earned him the ire of several of his contemporaries, including, most notably, Bonaventure. In each of these cases, Fishacre appeals to what scripture reveals about the risen Christ’s body to demonstrate that the standard philosophical positions concerning the composition of light and the celestial bodies are defective. For Fishacre, in short, it is the risen Christ, not Aristotle, who reveals the truth about the ontology of light and the stars and planets.

²For an overview of Fishacre’s life and works see R. James Long and Maura O’Carroll, *The Life and Works of Richard Fishacre OP: Prolegomena to the Edition of his Commentary on the Sentences* (Munich: Verlag Der Bayerischen Akademie Der Wissenschaften, 1999). For a recent study on Fishacre’s *Sententiae* see R. James Long, ‘The Beginning of a Tradition: The *Sentences* Commentary of Richard Fishacre OP’, in *Medieval Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, ed. by G. R. Evans, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 345–57.

³For a discussion and translation of Grosseteste’s letter see James McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste*, Great Medieval Thinkers Series (Oxford: OUP, 2000), pp. 163–64.

⁴*Ibid.*

In order to demonstrate how this is so, this article divides as follows. First, it outlines Fishacre's account of theology and its relationship to philosophy as found in the prologue to book one of his *Sententiae*. Attention turns then to his discussion of the nature of light in his much neglected *Quaestio de luce* and, following this, his account of the stars and planets in book two of his *Sententiae*. As we will see, in both of these texts, Fishacre adopts the following pattern of logic. First he shows how the controversial position which he wishes to establish finds grounding in numerous arguments *ex ratione*, then, at the critical moment, he invokes what scripture teaches about Christ's risen body so as to deliver what he sees as the definitive blow against his opponents. Following this, the article then sketches out the basic contours of what it suggests is the noetic basis of Fishacre's belief that appeals to Christ's risen body constitute legitimate moves within the context of his philosophical speculation – namely, his distinctive understanding of *ratio incarnationis* and, in particular, his belief that Christ's incarnation and resurrection represent the culmination of material being. As part of this discussion, the article argues that Fishacre's use of the *lumen revelationis* within the context of his discussion of light and the celestial bodies, despite its novelty, does not represent a confusion of the relationship between theology and philosophy but rather is an outworking of Fishacre's own distinctive understanding of how faith perfects reason. To be clear, this article does not claim to offer an exhaustive account of Fishacre's understanding of theology's relationship with philosophy; nor does it break new ground on his natural philosophy. Instead, its aim is simply to point out some of the unique features of Fishacre's account of theology's relationship with philosophy and to illustrate how these unique features are tied to, and only come into focus, when viewed in light of some of his most controversial philosophical positions.

2. Fishacre and the Remaking of the relationship between theology and philosophy

As the first to comment on Lombard's *Sententiae* at Oxford, Fishacre's discussion of theology in *I Sent.*, prol. is critical when it comes to understanding the transition which was at work at Oxford during the 1240s concerning the sacred science's nature and purpose.⁵ As indicated above, where earlier theologians at Oxford, typified by the likes of Grosseteste and Robert Bacon OP, had understood theology to consist primarily of scriptural exegesis and had, in turn, regarded doctrinal speculation – which often took the form of scholastic *quaestiones* – as something which was to be woven into the moral and spiritual excursus characteristic of biblical reflection, the new way of doing theology, typified by Lombard's *Sententiae*, adopted a different approach, one which Fishacre argues lays the basis for a clarification of the relationship between theology and philosophy, yet is still faithful to the primacy of scripture.⁶ In short, Fishacre argues that

⁵An edition of this text is to be found in R. James Long, 'The Science of Theology according to Richard Fishacre: Edition of the Prologue to his Commentary on the Sentences', *Medieval Studies*, 34 (1972), 71–98. For a detailed study of Fishacre's understanding of theology see Christian Trottmann, *Théologie et noétique au XIII^e Siècle: A la recherche d'un statut* (Paris: Vrin, 1999), pp. 107–14. Particularly useful is Trottmann's placing of Fishacre's thinking on theology in relation to Grosseteste's thought and how Fishacre's description of theology's scientific character differs from the position of figures like Odo Rigaldus.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 97.

there are two different branches of theology. These correspond to the division between the soul's faculties of will and intellect – or what he terms the '*virtus motiva*' and the '*virtus apprehensiva*'.⁷ The first, so he notes, has a practical orientation. This is that branch of theology which leads the soul to God by promoting the will's desire for piety and goodness – this, of course, is that strand of theology which is associated with biblical exegesis.⁸ By contrast, the second strand of theology – the doctrinal speculation associated with lecturing on Lombard's *Sententiae* – aids the soul's return to God by means of perfecting the intellect through the use of illuminated reasoning to elucidate the doctrine communicated in scripture.⁹ Theology, in Fishacre's judgement, thus perfects the whole of the human soul: both the will and the intellect. It is for this reason that it is the noblest science.

Having established that theology *in se* possesses different modes of operating, Fishacre turns to its relationship with philosophy. He notes that there are three books available to the soul as it seeks to ascend to God. The first, and 'the most noble' (*nobilissima*), is the '*liber vitae*' – this is the eternal knowledge which God has of Himself and of all created reality.¹⁰ However, given that the ability to read this book is the privilege of the blessed in heaven, Fishacre judges that the *liber vitae* is '*inaccessibilis*' to us *in via*.¹¹ The second book is the '*liber scripturae*'.¹² This contains the infallible revelation revealed to the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles. In this book, God communicates all that is necessary for salvation. Conversely, the third book is the '*liber creaturae*'.¹³ This is the natural world in which vestiges of God's wisdom are found in creatures in the same way that an artist's skill is known through her works. Crucially, both the *liber scripturae* and the *liber creaturae* form are an integral part of Christian noetic as each reflects something of the eternal knowledge found in the *liber vitae*: 'and each of these is necessary for the manifestation of that which is in the *libro vitae*'.¹⁴ Fishacre notes, however, that, in the current order at least, the *liber scripturae* takes precedence over the *liber creaturae*. This is so because the disfiguring effects which the fall has had upon the soul mean that it cannot read the *liber creaturae* fully without the *liber scripturae*'s assistance. Prior to the fall, however, this was not the case. The innocent mind could read the *liber creaturae* with ease, as its rectitude meant that it could retrace all creatures back to God without any need of scriptural illumination.¹⁵ *In isto statu*, however, this is not the case. As a result, the *liber scripturae* is the 'most perfect, the most orderly, and the most certain' source of noetic which we have, both with respect to God and, crucially, the natural world.¹⁶

Fishacre contends that if theology, both in its biblical and speculative dimensions, corresponds to the study of the *liber scripturae*, then philosophy, at least when properly

⁷Ibid., p. 96. Important here is the fact Fishacre uses the Grossetestian distinction between *affectus* and *aspectus* to explain the distinction between will and intellect.

⁸Ibid., p. 97.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 82.

¹¹Ibid., p. 80.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 80.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 89.

construed, takes as its focus the *liber creaturae*.¹⁷ Philosophy, so Fishacre argues, has the task of revealing the secrets of nature. Critically, however, its purpose is not only to uncover how the *machina mundi* works – i.e., to describe it at the level of physics – but also to show how the truths found within creatures serve to support those revealed in scripture. Fishacre qualifies this claim, however, by noting that we assent to the truths of scripture on account of its authority and infallibility, not because of any demonstrations which philosophy provides.¹⁸ At this level, while it may be a distinct *scientia* in its own right, philosophy's chief identity is as the 'handmaid' (*ancilla*) of theology.¹⁹ '[I]t is at once known', Fishacre writes, 'that all the other sciences are the attendants (*pedisequae*) and handmaids of this one science [*sc. theology*]'.²⁰ On the surface at least, Fishacre thus posits what looks like a strictly hierarchical, classically 'Augustinian' relationship between theology and philosophy; that is to say, one in which the sacred science not only takes precedence over all the other sciences but draws upon them as supporting aids.²¹ In turn, philosophy's ancillary role would seem to be confirmed by Fishacre's claim that the *liber creaturae* cannot be read correctly without the *liber scripturae*'s guidance. Philosophy, at one level, thus appears to be both subservient to, as well as, dependent upon, theology. Crucially, however, Fishacre counterbalances this hierarchical outlook by introducing three important corollaries – ones which, as we will see, are, critical to his creative reading of theology's relationship to philosophy.

First, theology – and therefore the theologian herself – ought not to exist in isolation from the lower philosophical sciences. Instead, theology has a duty to be versed in the learning of all its ancillary disciplines, for these have much to teach the sacred science.²² As an analogy of this truth, Fishacre notes the story of Abraham in Genesis 16:1-4. As the Patriarch was unable to conceive a son with Sarah, his wife, until he had first 'known' his servant Hagar, so the theologian cannot bear fruit in his own discipline unless he first 'knows' the learning of the lower sciences.²³ 'For no one approaches the mistress, especially in the privacy of her chamber', Fishacre contends, 'unless he first becomes familiar (*nisi prius familiaris*) with the host of maids who will introduce him'.²⁴ At this level, therefore, while theology may be superior to philosophy, it is nonetheless dependent, at a certain level, upon the learning of its lower counterpart in order

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 82–83.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 90.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 85.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Such is the interpretation of Fishacre's understanding of theology and philosophy articulated by R. James Long. See Long's, *Hagar's Vocation: Philosophy's Role in the Theology of Richard Fishacre OP* (Washington: Catholic University Press, 2015). For an overview of Augustine's understanding of how theology relates to the lower philosophical disciplines see: Étienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. by L. E. M. Lynch (London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd), pp. 240–246. Indeed, according to Gilson, Augustine – unlike his medieval disciples – 'never imagined a philosophy apart from theology and consequently could have no idea ... of making one the servant of the other'. Ibid., p. 241. For a more recent treatment of Augustine's understanding of how theology relates to *ratio* and *philosophia* see John Peter Kenney, 'Faith and reason', in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. by David Vincent Meconi and Eleonore Stump, 2nd edn (Cambridge: CUP, 2014), pp. 275–91. See also Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* II, xxxi 49–xl 61, CCSL, vol. XXXII (Turnhout: Brepols, 1962).

²²See Fishacre, *I Sent.*, prol., p. 85.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

to succeed in its own noetic field. Fishacre's second point, or so it seems, stems from this truth. Theology's role in supporting philosophy's efforts to read the *liber creaturae* extends beyond simply guiding it away from heterodox positions or showing how its truths harmonise with those of faith. Instead, theology itself, as the curative medium between the two extremes of the *liber vitae* and the stained *liber creaturae*, is called to support philosophy by speaking on points of philosophical dispute and, where necessary, opening up new philosophical horizons, ones which unaided reason cannot discover. Thus, to return to the analogy of Genesis, for Fishacre, Hagar does not simply lie prostrate before Sarah and offer her services to her mistress. Instead, both the handmaiden and her mistress walk alongside one another, akin to sisters, with each supporting the others efforts to elucidate how God communicates Himself to them in their own respective disciplines.

Although this second correlative point is not explicitly stated by Fishacre in his use of Sarah and Hagar to explain theology's and philosophy's relationship in *I Sent.*, prol., it is, nonetheless, I suggest, hidden within it. Its presence, however, only becomes clear when Fishacre's thinking in *I Sent.* prol. is read in the light of how theology and philosophy relate to one another in practice within the rest of his *Sententiae* commentary, and indeed, his broader theological and philosophical oeuvre. Key examples of theology's ability to aid its *ancilla* in her daily chores are, I suggest, provided by Fishacre's invocation of the risen Christ's body to support his controversial claims concerning the nature of light and the celestial bodies. As we will see, when considered from the perspective of these two examples, we discover that for Fishacre theology's role in illuminating philosophy extends to entering into the fray of everyday points of philosophical dispute and helping the philosopher resolve these through the assistance of its supernatural knowledge. Thus, although she is Hagar's mistress, Sarah is not averse to stepping down from her privileged position so as to help her servant perform her daily chores and, crucially, helping her to find better ways of doing these. In part, this mutually enriching relationship between theology and philosophy is grounded in the fact that, ultimately, both the *liber scripturae* and the *liber creaturae*, despite their differing noetic value, are revelatory handmaids of a superior noetic – namely, the divine noetic of the *liber vitae*.²⁵ As we will see, this model of theology's relationship to philosophy leads to a situation where the boundaries between theological and philosophical learning run very close to one another, and, depending on how one views it, potentially risks the *lumen fidei* overly intruding into the *lumen rationis* and displacing *ratio* as the foundation of natural philosophy.

Theology's ability to illumine philosophical debate points to Fishacre's third corollary. As indicated already, while the sacred science may take the *liber scripturae* as its chief focus the *liber creaturae* does nonetheless still fall within the scope of its study. Crucially, however, it reads the *liber creaturae* in a manner different to natural philosophy. Where the latter studies the creature at the level of motion and its material identity, theology, by contrast, views it as a mirror (*speculum*) in which something of the Trinitarian mystery is reflected. Thus, as Fishacre explains in *II Sent.*, prol., while it is most proper for 'the theologian to know God rather than creatures', the creature nonetheless functions as a theophany of the divine mystery and thus has an intrinsic

²⁵Ibid., p. 83.

theological value and identity.²⁶ As such, each creature, like each passage of scripture, is a reflection of the bright and inaccessible light that is God's infinite wisdom. Thus, in the same way that we cannot gaze at the sun directly, but we can look at it as it is reflected in a mirror, 'so these creatures are the mirror through which the sun of intelligence (*sol intelligentiae*) is seen by our weak eyes'.²⁷ Critically, Fishacre warns against the theologian forgetting this truth and succumbing to the temptation of *curiositas* – i.e., becoming overly concerned with what is most properly the object of natural philosophy.²⁸ Thus, to return to the analogy of Hagar and Sarah, Fishacre notes that when the mind of the theologian which has become 'dimmed by worldly knowledge' is 'plucked from the bosom of handmaids' (*a sinu ancillarum avelluntur*) and 'offered to the embraces of the mistress' he is unable to impregnate her and his theology fails to bear fruit.²⁹

3. Fishacre on Christ's resurrected body and the physics of light

While we may assume that the study of light was something which did not arise until the Enlightenment, in reality discourse about light and its behavioural properties was something which was central to medieval natural philosophy, both in its Christian and Islamicate forms. In particular what exercised the mind of the medieval physicist was the question of whether light (*lumen*) – at least insofar as it exists in a transparent medium, such as air, water, or the celestial spheres – is a body or not. Perhaps unsurprisingly, most writers of the thirteenth century looked to Aristotle for instruction on this question. In his *De anima*, the Greek Philosopher states that light is not 'any kind whatsoever of body nor an efflux from any kind of body'.³⁰ As a result, the general consensus amongst medieval thinkers was that light *in medio* is not a corpuscular reality, but rather a 'form' or an 'intentional likeness'. It is, in other words, something which is emitted into a transparent medium by a luminous body (i.e., fire, the sun, etc.) as a representational likeness of that body's substantial identity *qua* luminous. As a result, light inheres within a medium as an accidental quality of it. Such was the position articulated by the likes of Albert and Aquinas, as well as Fishacre's Oxford confrères Richard Rufus of Cornwall and Roger Bacon.³¹ One of the chief reasons why Aristotle and, in turn, his Latin disciples, rejected the claim that light is a body is that were this the case then it would prohibit it from passing through transparent mediums.³² After all, it is an irrefutable fact, so the Aristotelian position states, that no two bodies, irrespective of how small or rarefied they may be, can occupy the same place at the same time. It is clear, however, that both air and water are bodies, and yet light passes

²⁶Fishacre, *II Sent.*, prol. *In secundum librum Sententiarum*, vol. 1, dist. 1-20, ed. by R. James Long (Munich: Verlag Der Bayerischen Akademie Der Wissenschaften, 2008), p. 2.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., p. 3.

²⁹Fishacre, *I Sent.*, prol., p. 86.

³⁰Aristotle, *De anima*, lib. 2, 418^b15-16, ed. Jonathan Barnes, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 1 (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 666.

³¹Cf. Aquinas, *II Sent.*, dist. 13, q. 1, art. 3, ed. P. Mandonnet (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1929), pp. 333-337; Albert the Great, *II Sent.*, dist. 13, c, art. 2, resp. ed. A. Borgnet (Paris: Vivés, 1894), pp. 245-248; Richard Rufus of Cornwall, *Sententiae cum quaestionibus in libros De anima Aristotelis*, 2.11, q. 2, ed. by J. Ottoman et al. (Oxford: OUP, 2018), p. 357.

³²Aristotle, *De anima*, lib. 2, 418^b 17-18, p. 666.

through them. Indeed, it does so with great ease and speed. As a result, light cannot be a body but must instead be a form.³³

Given that light's ontological identity was a subject which exercised many of Fishacre's contemporaries, most famously Grosseteste – who it is important to note, Fishacre held in high regard irrespective of the bishop's efforts to curtail his theological endeavours – it is not surprising to find that the Oxford Dominican also devoted much attention to the subject. Indeed, during his time as *magister regens* at Oxford, Fishacre conducted a public disputation specifically devoted to light – his *Quaestio de luce*.³⁴ In this text, Fishacre goes against the prevailing scholarly consensus by arguing that light *in medio* is not a form, or some quasi-spiritual reality – as the Islamicate scholar Averroes had argued – but instead is a true body. In adopting this position Fishacre not only set himself at odds with Aristotle and the majority of his contemporaries, but he came surprisingly close to articulating something akin to the corpuscular theory of light advocated by Newton several hundred years later. To support his novel position, Fishacre advances several highly innovative arguments based on reason and experience. One such argument is that the corporeal nature of light is demanded by the perfection of the universe. Fishacre's logic here is striking. He notes that, on the one hand, God creates some creatures which consist of form and matter – such is the case with the angels; and on the other hand, He also creates creatures which have only form – i.e., the soul. This would suggest, so Fishacre contends, that God must also create a third genus of creature, one 'consisting of matter alone'.³⁵ After all, were this not the case, then God's creative fecundity would not be exhausted – thus meaning some form of imperfection could be attributed to God – but the universe itself would be incomplete. Given its unique properties, Fishacre contends that the only creature which fits the bill for this third genus of creatures is light. He writes:

For if some things are created by God having both matter and form, such as is the case with the angels, and some as having only form, namely, the soul, such as is the case in a man, then why is there not a third creature created by God consisting of matter alone, namely light? Otherwise, the universe is not complete. Or it can be put thus: Given that there is something which has neither form nor matter from a creature, such as an angel; and there is something which has matter only from a creature, as a man does from another man – for the soul is created by God – why then should there not be a third type of creature which has only form from creatures, namely light?³⁶

While Fishacre's logic here reveals the ingenuity of his arguments *ex ratione*, it is his response to Aristotle's chief argument against the corporeal nature of light – i.e., that no two bodies can occupy the same place at the same time – which elicits his most

³³Ibid.

³⁴For the critical edition of Fishacre's *Quaestio de luce*, see R. James Long and Timothy B. Noone, 'Fishacre and Rufus on the Metaphysics of Light: Two Unedited Texts', in *Roma, Magister mundi, Itineraria culturae mediævalis: Mélanges offerts au Père L.E. Boyle*, ed. by R. James Long and Timothy B. Noone, vol. 1 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Fédération Internationale des Instituts Médiévalés, 1998), pp. 517–48.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 535–36.

³⁶Ibid.

creative reasoning, and it is here that his novel understanding of theology's ability to speak into philosophical debate comes into play. Fishacre's response to Aristotle's objection is simply to deny outright his claim that no two bodies can occupy the same place at the same time.³⁷ He notes that, while Aristotle's thesis does indeed hold true according to the ordinary workings of nature, there are nonetheless exceptions to this rule – exceptions which scripture alone reveals. Thus, Fishacre notes that the New Testament provides clear, indeed irrefutable, evidence of how two bodies can simultaneously occupy the same place and pass through one another – namely, the example of the risen Christ. John 20:19-21 describes how the risen Christ entered into a room by passing through a locked door.³⁸ Crucially, the resurrected Christ – just like all other glorious bodies – was no ghost. Instead, he possessed the same body which he had prior to his resurrection. Fishacre contends that the explanation of how Christ passed through the locked door is that the matter of his resurrected body had been transfigured in such a way that it was of a glorified and highly rarefied nature.³⁹ This meant that, while it was still a truly a corporeal reality, it could do what most other bodies cannot – i.e., occupy the same place as another other body and pass through it.⁴⁰ What all this means, so Fishacre insists, is that Aristotle's claim that no two bodies can simultaneously occupy the same place is emphatically incorrect. Proving that which reason judges to be incredulous, scripture shows that certain bodies can indeed occupy the same space as other bodies, and, when required, pass through them. Light, so Fishacre notes, is one such body. He summarises his thinking thus:

And there is nothing inconvenient to me, [*about saying*] that many subtle or spiritual bodies should be in the same place (*esse in eodem loco*) and also in the same place as a more substantial body (*corpore grossiori*), as is evident from the body of Christ and the other glorified bodies, which could enter [*a room*] through a closed door.⁴¹

Perhaps not surprisingly, Fishacre's thesis provoked sharp criticism. Thus, Richard Rufus of Cornwall was quick to point out that several nonsensical consequences follow on from Fishacre's corpuscular theory of light. For example, were light a body then this would suggest that the matter of the luminous object which emits it – i.e., the sun – would diminish over time.⁴² It is clear, however, that this is not the case. The sun's brightness never changes nor does the sun itself ever appear to get smaller. It is, Bonaventure, however, who gives the firmest rebuttal of Fishacre's thesis.⁴³ Like Rufus,

³⁷Ibid., p. 534.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²An edition of Rufus' discussion of light in his *Sententiae Oxoniensis II*, dist. 13 is to be found in R. James Long and Timothy B. Noone, 'Fishacre and Rufus on the Metaphysics of Light: Two Unedited Texts', *op. cit.*, pp. 537–48, at pp. 540 and 543.

⁴³Bonaventure lists Fishacre's corpuscular theory of light amongst other, more ancient, arguments which purport to establish that light is a body. See Bonaventure, *II Sent.*, dist. 13, art. 3, q. 1, resp. (Firenze: Quaracchi, 1938), pp. 324–26. One of the chief reasons why Bonaventure and Rufus are so useful when it comes to underscoring the novel dimensions of Fishacre's philosophical methodology and thinking on

he seeks to undermine the veracity of Fishacre's various 'proofs'. Thus, he notes that Fishacre's argument that the corporeal nature of light is demanded by universal perfection is nonsensical. This is so because matter, by its very nature, cannot exist without form.⁴⁴ As a result, not only would it be impossible for God to create matter independent of form but even if God were to do this it would undermine, rather than perfect, the universal order.⁴⁵ Particularly striking, however, is Bonaventure's response, or lack thereof, to Fishacre's invocation of Christ's resurrected body to prove that light is corporeal. Where Rufus at least acknowledges this aspect of Fishacre's thesis, though skirts round it by simply stating that, along with all of Fishacre's other arguments, it fails to convince, Bonaventure, by contrast, passes over it in complete silence. This is surprising given the amount of space which he invests into demolishing Fishacre's claim, and indeed that of other, more ancient, writers, that light is a body. One possible reason for Bonaventure's silence is that he feels uncomfortable with Fishacre's invocation of scripture to help form the basis of a controversial philosophical thesis. After all, while Bonaventure himself uses various scriptural and theological sources in his own discussion of whether light *in medio* is a body, he employs these in a different manner – i.e., he uses them in an ancillary way to support or contradict the arguments *pro* and *contra* for light's non-corporeal nature. He does not use them as the basis of for advancing a novel philosophical position which sits ill with reason and experience.⁴⁶

An alternative reading, of course, is that Bonaventure's silence on Fishacre's invocation of the *liber scripturae* to help found his novel claims concerning light's ontology is that he regarded the Dominican's argument as intellectually weak, rather than methodologically flawed, and thus not worth addressing. This is certainly a legitimate suggestion. Moreover, it perhaps finds some support in the fact that Bonaventure

light is that they – unlike Albert the Great or Aquinas – demonstrate a close knowledge of the Oxford Dominican's teaching in the *Quaestio de luce*. Albert and Aquinas, at least in their respective *Sententiae*, show no awareness of Fishacre's novel arguments to defend his corpuscular theory of light. In turn, as we will see, they also show no signs of any direct knowledge of Fishacre's controversial thinking on the material identity of the stars and planets.

⁴⁴See Bonaventure, *II Sent.*, dist. 12, art. 1, q. 1, resp., pp. 296–297. Also relevant here are the *Quaestiones de materia rerum* found in Assisi Bibl. Comm. MS. 186, f. 105ra–va. This text, attributed to Bonaventure by some scholars, is currently being edited by this author, along with several other works from Assisi Bibl. Comm. MS. 186. Rufus also articulates something similar to Bonaventure concerning the inability of matter to exist without form. See Rufus, *Sententiae Oxoniensis II*, dist. 13, p. 543. For literature linking Bonaventure to Assisi Bibl. Comm. MS. 186 see: François Marie Henquinet, 'Un Brouillon Autographe de Saint Bonaventure sur le Commentaire des Sentences', *Études Franciscaines*, 44 (1932), pp. 633–55; 45 (1933), pp. 59–85. See also: François Marie Henquinet, 'Trois Petits Écrits Théologiques de Saint Bonaventure à la Luminère d' un Quadrième inédit', in *Mélanges Auguste Pelzer: Études d'histoire littéraire et doctrinale de la Scolastique médiévale offertes à Monseigneur August Pelzer à l'occasion de son soixante-dixième anniversaire* (Louvain: University of Louvain Press, 1947), pp. 195–216.

⁴⁵See Bonaventure, *II Sent.*, dist. 12, art. 1, q. 1, resp., pp. 296–97. On Fishacre's logic, Bonaventure remarks: '*Sed illud non non videtur probabile, cum Deus nunquam creet materiam praeter formam aliquam*'.

⁴⁶It is important to stress that the use of scriptural passages or theological authorities to support philosophical claims was by no means unusual within thirteenth century texts, specifically ones such as commentaries on Lombard's *Sententiae*. A fuller comparison of how Fishacre's use of the scriptural witness within the context of his philosophical speculation compares to how the likes of Bonaventure, Aquinas, and Albert the Great use scripture within their philosophical reasoning is beyond the limits of this short article, yet it would undoubtedly yield much fruit.

does not – as Rufus himself does – address the majority of the *argumenta* which Fishacre lists in his *Quaestio de luce* to defend his controversial thesis. However, the fact that Bonaventure – as we will see momentarily – adopts the same silent response to Fishacre’s use of the very same elements of the scriptural witness to support his controversial claims concerning the material identity of the celestial bodies suggests that the *silentium Bonaventurae* here is indeed more to do with Fishacre’s methodology than the perceived weakness of his argument.

4. Fishacre on the resurrected body and the nature of the stars

If Fishacre’s thinking on light reveals his willingness to challenge Aristotle’s authority and advance controversial philosophical positions, then it is fair to say that his views on the nature of the celestial bodies – i.e., the sun, moon, stars, etc. – were positively iconoclastic. In his *De caelo*, Aristotle teaches that the heavens – that is to say the celestial spheres and the luminous bodies nested within them – are made from the ‘quintessence’, the so-called ‘fifth element’, or as it was also known during the medieval period, the ‘ether’.⁴⁷ This celestial element, so the Greek philosopher contends, is possessed of perfect actuality and motion. Moreover, it is eternal – and, in sharp, contrast to the four terrestrial elements (earth, air, fire, and water) it is not prone to change or decay.⁴⁸ As such, those bodies composed of it are, by their very nature, of a superior quality to those found here on earth.⁴⁹ That this is so, Aristotle contends, is proved by the fact that the stars and planets, unlike terrestrial bodies, never change or decay. Moreover, they possess perfect circular motion – something which terrestrial bodies never possess.⁵⁰ In advancing this position, Aristotle adopts a stance which is sharply at odds with the one favoured by Plato and several of the early church fathers, including Augustine, John Damascene, and Bede, all of whom argued that the celestial bodies were made from the same elements found on earth.⁵¹

Despite reservations about Aristotle’s claims about the eternal nature of the celestial bodies, almost all of Fishacre’s contemporaries accepted his claim that the stars and planets were composed of the quintessence.⁵² Thus, both Albert the Great and

⁴⁷Aristotle, *De caelo*, lib.1, cap. 2, 269^a 2-7; 269^b 1-16, pp. 448, 449, respectively.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, lib. 2, cap. 1, 283^b 27-31, p. 470.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, lib. 1, cap. 2, 269^b 1-16, p. 449.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, lib.1, cap. 2, 269^a 2-7, p. 448.

⁵¹See Plato *Timeus*, 40a-b, *Corpus Medii Aevi*, ed. by J. H. Waszink (Leiden: Warburg Institute-Brill, 1975), p. 33.

⁵²For studies on the medieval debate on the material identity of the celestial bodies see: Edward Grant, *Planets, Stars, and Orbs: The Medieval Cosmos, 1200-1687* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), pp. 459–66; Pierre Duhem, *Medieval Cosmology: Theories of Infinity, Place, Time, Void, and the Plurality of Worlds*, trans. by R. Ariew (Chicago, University of Chicago Press: 1985), pp. 479–98. It is important to note that the thirteenth century debate on the material identity of the celestial bodies – and the related question of the unity of matter itself – was heavily influenced by the contributions of the medieval Islamicate tradition, particularly the interventions made by Avicenna and Averroes. For Averroes’ most significant contribution on the material identity of the celestial bodies see: Averroes, *‘De Substantia Orbis’: Critical Edition of the Hebrew Text with English Translation and Commentary*, trans. by Arthur Hyman (Cambridge, MA-Jerusalem: The Medieval Academy of America, 1986). For an introductory overview of Avicenna’s thinking on matter see: Jon McGinnis, *Avicenna* (Oxford: OUP, 2010), pp. 54–59.

Aquinas offer a full-throated endorsement of the Aristotelian claim that the celestial bodies are made of the quintessence, as does Bonaventure.⁵³ Indeed, Albert is highly dismissive of the Platonic claim that the celestial bodies are made from fire, noting that this cannot be the case because fire's motion is always vertical, while that of the planets, sun, and moon, is circular.⁵⁴ Apart from a small treatise entitled *De generatione stellarum* (*On the Generation of the Stars*) which dates to around 1217–1230 and which is attributed, rightly or wrongly, to Grosseteste, the only known example of an early thirteenth century thinker who explicitly upholds the Platonic-cum-Patristic claim that the stars and planets are made 'ex quattuor elementis' is Fishacre.⁵⁵ Fishacre discusses the nature of the celestial bodies in *II Sent.*, dist. 14.⁵⁶ Here, he openly acknowledges that, in advancing the position which he does, he is not only breaking away from the scholarly consensus but inviting serious criticism. 'If we posit this position [*sc. that the celestial bodies are made from the four earthly elements*]', he remarks, 'then they will cry out, that crowd (*turba*) of Aristotelian know-it-alls (*scioli aristoteli*), and stone us (*lapidabunt nos*)'.⁵⁷

Fishacre opens his discussion of the materiality of the celestial bodies by noting that there are three schools of thought on this subject. First, there is the Aristotelian position. Second, there is the thesis articulated by the likes of Basil of Caesarea and John Damascene – namely that the stars and planets are made from the primordial light (*lux*) which God created on the first day.⁵⁸ Third, there is the Platonic belief that they are made from one or more of the four elements found here on earth, with fire appearing to be the chief element involved.⁵⁹ Fishacre dismisses the second position out of hand. While it may make sense to claim that the sun, as the chief luminary in the sky, was made from the primordial *lux*, the size and brightness of the solar body, he notes, means that, following its creation, there would not have been enough of this light left needed to make all the other stars and planets.⁶⁰ As such, all the other celestial bodies must be derived from something other than the primordial light – i.e., one or more of the four terrestrial elements. Perhaps unsurprisingly, however, it is Aristotle's position which Fishacre devotes most of his energy to attacking. Particularly striking is his use of Aristotle's own theory of colour to undermine his claims concerning the ethereal nature of the celestial bodies.⁶¹ Fishacre notes that, according to Aristotle, colour represents the 'limit of the transparent', and, as such, is associated with opaque bodies. However, opaque bodies are always mixed bodies, and mixed bodies, as Aristotle himself acknowledges, are always derived from the four elements.⁶² In turn, Fishacre contends that Aristotle's claims that the quintessence is a transparent reality make little sense. For as everyday observation reveals, not only can we see the stars and

⁵³Aquinas is particularly emphatic about how the Aristotelian position is almost unanimously accepted. See *II Sent.*, dist. 14, q. 1, art. 2, resp., p. 350.

⁵⁴Albert the Great, *II Sent.*, dist. 14, art. 4, arg. 2, p. 262.

⁵⁵The only edition of the *De generatione stellarum* is to be found in Ludwig Baur's, *Die Philosophischen Werke des Robert Grosseteste, Bischofs von Lincoln* (Munster: Aschendorff, 1912), at pp. 32–36.

⁵⁶For Fishacre's discussion of the composition of the celestial bodies see, *II Sent.*, dist.14, pp. 285–89.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 287.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p. 286.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹*Ibid.*, p. 287.

⁶²*Ibid.*

planets but, as solar eclipses confirm, the celestial bodies are opaque.⁶³ Moreover, as the moon proves, they also possess colour. All this is possible, so Fishacre argues, only if the celestial bodies are made ‘*ex quattuor elementis*’.⁶⁴

It is, however, Aristotle’s assertion that it is the corruptible nature of the four elements which precludes them from forming the material basis of the stars and planets which Fishacre finds the most problematic. As with his rebuttal of the Stagirite’s argument that light cannot be a body, his response to this objection, having first outlined numerous arguments from reason to support his position, is to invoke the *lumen revelationis*. Fishacre notes that while, at least according to the ordinary workings of nature, bodies composed of the four elements are indeed prone to change and decay, scripture shows that there are exceptions to this rule – exceptions which physics by itself cannot discover, and which, in turn, unaided reason would judge incredible. The chief example, Fishacre contends, is the resurrected body.⁶⁵ The resurrected body, so scripture assures us, is not prone to decay, but, along with the soul, is gifted with eternal life. Yet crucially, as Christ’s risen body proves, the post-resurrection body is still a corporeal reality, and thus it is still made from the same four terrestrial elements as it was *in isto statu*. Fishacre contends that the reason why the resurrected body, despite its composite nature, does not decay, is that its matter – and thereby the four elements from which it derives – is ‘sublimated’ to the eternal and unchanging nature of the heavenly realm.⁶⁶ Through this process of ‘sublimation’, the terrestrial elements are gifted with the immutability which is associated with the heavenly state, even while retaining their original identity. Fishacre contends that openness to this process of ‘sublimation’ is innate to all bodies made of the four elements, irrespective of their position in the chain of being, but it can only be realised by means of the intervention of supernatural grace. As such, the act of sublimation does not constitute an act of violence against terrestrial matter but rather secures its perfection.⁶⁷

Fishacre argues that it is this ‘sublimated’ nature of the resurrected body which explains why Aristotle’s argument that the stars and planets cannot be made ‘*ex quattuor elementis*’ fails to convince. If the lowly elements involved in the composition of the human body can be ‘sublimated’ to the eternal and unchanging identity of the Trinitarian heaven, which, after all constitutes the outermost celestial sphere, and thus the furthest away from the terrestrial realm, then how much more likely, Fishacre asks, is it that the stars and planets – which, like the blessed and the angels, are gifted with immutability yet are closer to the earth – can assimilate one or more of the four terrestrial elements to themselves. As a result, Fishacre judges that there is no sound

⁶³Ibid., p. 286.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 287.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷See Fishacre’s *Quaestio de ascensione*. Here he stresses that the ability of Christ’s resurrected body to ascend into heaven and be fully sublimated to the eternal nature of it was due to supernatural grace. See R. James Long, ‘Richard Fishacre’s *Quaestio* on the Ascension of Christ: An Edition’, *Medieval Studies*, 40 (1978), pp. 30–55, at p. 53. To be clear: while the sublimation of the earthly elements within the resurrected body to the eternal and immutable nature of the beatific state occurs by means of the intervention of supernatural grace, the sublimation involved in the sublimation of the terrestrial elements to the celestial bodies requires no such supernatural assistance. It occurs purely by means of natural causes.

reason for rejecting the belief that the stars and planets are made from the same elements found here on earth. He goes on to explain that, in his opinion, the celestial bodies are made of a 'sublimated' version of fire – one which, on account of its assimilation to the rarefied nature of the celestial realm, behaves in a manner different to terrestrial fire, yet is still made of the same substance as it. Interestingly, Fishacre contends that this igneous nature of the celestial realm is not of a uniform quality.⁶⁸ Instead, the fire found in the uppermost celestial spheres is more rarefied and intense than that found in the lower spheres. As a result, the fixed stars and the superior planets – i.e., those which exist in the higher celestial spheres – possess a more igneous quality than do the lower ones. It is this which explains why the moon, the lowest celestial body, cannot be seen without the sun's illumination, as the light which its igneous nature produces is not very bright.

Unlike his thinking on the corporeal nature of light, Fishacre's denial of the ethereal nature of the celestial bodies appears to have gone relatively unnoticed, particularly at Paris. Thus, while Albert and Thomas – at least in their respective *Sententiae* – reveal themselves to be alert to the Platonic claims about the elemental nature of the stars and planets, they show no awareness that this thesis had found an advocate in a member of their own order.⁶⁹ The same, however, is not true of Bonaventure. As the Franciscan's *Dubia circa litteram magistri* – a text which Bonaventure composed between 1250 and 1252 as part of his preparation for his commentary on Lombard's *Sententiae* – reveals he is not only alert to Fishacre's thesis but recounts several of the highly specific arguments which the Oxford Dominican articulates to justify his logic.⁷⁰ Thus in the third *dubium* question concerning 2 *Sent.*, dist. 14, Bonaventure notes that there are certain 'modern' authors – he does not name them – who argue that the celestial bodies are made 'ex quattuor elementis'.⁷¹ Moreover, these 'modern' authors argue that it is a sublimated form of fire which is the chief element involved in the constitution of the celestial bodies.⁷² Likewise, they appeal to the phenomenon of solar eclipses and the presence of colour within the stars and planets to prove that they are made from one or more of the four elements found here on earth.⁷³ Interestingly, however, Bonaventure does not mention Fishacre's appeal to the risen Christ's body to establish the elemental nature of the celestial bodies. Instead, he focuses purely on Fishacre's arguments *ex ratione*. As with his silence concerning Fishacre's invocation of the risen Christ to support his corpuscular theory of light, one cannot but help wonder if Bonaventure's reserve here communicates a certain degree of concern about Fishacre's use of scripture to found a position in natural philosophy which not only contradicts Aristotle, whom in his *Sententiae* Bonaventure describes as having most 'excelled amongst the philosophers', but which mainstream natural philosophy judges as contrary to reason.⁷⁴

⁶⁸Fishacre, *II Sent.*, dist. 14, p. 288.

⁶⁹See Aquinas, *II Sent.*, dist. 14, q. 1, art. 2, resp., 350; Albert the Great, *II Sent.*, dist. 14, art. 4, resp., 263.

⁷⁰For Bonaventure's discussion of the material identity of the celestial bodies and his critique of Fishacre's position see *II Sent.*, dist. 14, pars. 2, dub. 3, pp. 374–377. Bonaventure's awareness of Fishacre's position has been overlooked until now.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, pp. 374–75.

⁷²*Ibid.*, resp., p. 375.

⁷³*Ibid.*

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, dist. 1, pars. 1, art. 1, q. 2, resp., p. 15.

5. Concluding thoughts – Christ and the resurrection of philosophy

As I alluded to earlier, on the surface, Fishacre's account of theology's relationship to philosophy in *I Sent.*, prol. looks quite conventional, indeed traditional, in many respects. However, when one considers how theology actually relates to philosophy in the rest of his *Sententiae* and broader oeuvre, it becomes clear that his thinking on the sacred science's relationship to philosophy is perhaps not as conventional as it may first appear. As we have seen, for Fishacre, theology's role in illuminating philosophy is by no means confined to guiding it away from heresy, or, as Thomas and the likes of Albert imagine it – albeit in their own unique ways – orienting its horizons towards those of faith. Instead, its relationship to its noetic handmaid possesses a much more involved, hands-on quality, one in which theology not only steps into the fray of philosophical debate but uses its learning to show how creation can exist in a manner which is outside the ordinary and against the dictates of unilluminated reason. Of course, echoes of these ideas can be found in many of Fishacre's contemporaries, including his Franciscan critic, Bonaventure. The crucial difference, however, is that for Fishacre the points of philosophical debate which theology casts the deciding vote on are not just the ones which threaten, or are pertinent to, the core claims of Christian faith but are, in fact, the everyday points of enquiry which natural philosophy considers. No one, for instance, would seriously claim that the questions of whether light is a body, or whether the stars are composed of the same elements found here on earth, are ones which conflict with Christian faith or risk heresy. One could be forgiven for feeling, therefore, that, despite its apparently traditional, non-threatening appearance, when it is placed into the 'wild' – i.e., when theory meets praxis – the Fishacreian understanding of theology's relationship to philosophy starts to behave in an unexpected, perhaps even dangerous, manner, one where the sacred science, and through it the data of the *liber scripturae*, risks becoming overly involved in philosophical speculation and the distinction between *fides* and *ratio*, starts to blur or takes on a somewhat arbitrary quality.

As alluded to, one possible reason why Bonaventure and Rufus, despite refuting many of Fishacre's arguments *ex ratione*, show caution concerning his arguments based on the risen Christ is that they themselves reached this conclusion. Irrespective of whether this is true or not, what is clear is that from a Bonaventurian or Ricardian understanding of the relationship between theology and philosophy – or indeed a Thomist or an Albertian perspective – Fishacre's position looks a little odd. The fact that he invokes scripture as the basis for highly controversial opinions on what are essentially bread and butter issues in natural philosophy could be interpreted as an overreaching of theology's rights over philosophy. However, when one views Fishacre's thinking against his description of theology's relationship with philosophy in *I Sent. prol.* a more charitable position presents itself. Critical here is Fishacre's analogy of Abraham and his concubines. As will be recalled, for Fishacre, as Sarah could not conceive until Abraham had first 'known' Hagar, so the theologian cannot bear fruit at the level of scriptural or doctrinal exegesis without first embracing philosophy. However, as will also be recalled, it was argued that for Fishacre, while she may be a handmaid, Hagar's (i.e., philosophy's) relationship to Sarah (i.e., theology) is not one of pure servitude. Instead, Sarah, as part of her duties as Hagar's mistress, and on account of her familiarity with Hagar's tasks, walks alongside her handmaid and supports her in her labours. Although Fishacre does not put it quite like this, his distinctive use of the

lumen revelationis within the context of his thinking on light's ontology and that of the celestial bodies suggests that something along these lines is indeed the case. Moreover, it is implied by Fishacre's repeated insistence that the *liber scripturae* helps us to read the *liber creaturae* by revealing truths about the natural order which unaided reason cannot discover. Thus, when he invokes the risen Christ to support his novel philosophical positions, Fishacre does not see himself as confusing the truths of the *liber scripturae* and the *liber creaturae*, or allowing Sarah's voice to drown out Hagar's, but rather as simply expressing the fact that both theology and philosophy are called to help us read the *liber creaturae*, albeit from different perspectives. Moreover, as noted above, both *scientiae* are handmaids of a superior noetic – the *liber vitae* – and as such are united in their service of it.

Perhaps another reason why Fishacre feels able to invoke the risen Christ's body within the context of his philosophical speculation is to be found in his distinctive understanding of the incarnation itself, and, in particular, its relationship to the material order. Where his fellow Dominicans, Albert and Thomas, had remained unsure about the revisionist claims concerning the *ratio incarnationis* advanced by the likes of Grosseteste and Alexander of Hales – namely, that the primary motivation behind the incarnation was the fecundity of divine goodness and the completion of creation, as opposed to the need for redemption from sin – Fishacre offered a full-throated endorsement of this revisionist position.⁷⁵ Indeed, alongside Grosseteste and Hales, Fishacre is one of the earliest, and most important, advocates of this position, and the first within the Dominican tradition to publically promote it. Echoing Grosseteste's logic in his *De cessatione legalium*, Fishacre argues that Christ's incarnation represented not only the most perfect diffusion of God's goodness in time and space but that it served as the crowning of creation itself. Through the union of Christ's humanity with his divinity, the natural order was completed and brought to perfect rest. This is so because, through it, the *egressus* and *regressus* pattern of creation itself was realised fully. '[A]nd so the circle of the universe is complete', Fishacre writes, 'and therefore perfect'.⁷⁶ Indeed, creation's completion through the incarnation is so perfect that 'no addition is possible'.⁷⁷ It is worth noting, by way of an aside, that Fishacre's Oxford opponent in the field of light studies, Richard Rufus of Cornwall, is especially scathing of his claims regarding the *ratio incarnationis*, and, in turn, Grosseteste's. According to Rufus, the logic which Fishacre, and the likes of Grosseteste and Alexander of Hales, articulate renders the incarnation a product of necessity rather than gratuitous divine volition, and, as such, devalues its salvific and miraculous nature.⁷⁸

⁷⁵For Grosseteste's arguments concerning the predestination of Christ's incarnation and its necessity for the perfection of the universe see *De cessatione legalium*, ed. by Richard C. Dales and Edward B. King, *Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi*, vol. 7 (Oxford: OUP, 1986), esp. pars 3, pp. 119–55. For Alexander of Hales' endorsement of the same thesis see Alexander of Hales, *Quaestiones disputatae antequam esset frater*, *Bibliotheca Franciscana Scholasatica Medii Aevi*, vol. 19 (Florence: Quaracchi, 1960), pp. 207–09. For Fishacre's reasoning as to why the incarnation is necessary for the perfection of the universe see: Richard Fishacre, *In tertium librum Sententiarum, dist. 1–22*, ed. by Alexander Eichinger, Hans Kraml, and Gerhard Leibold (Munich: Bayerische Akademie Der Wissenschaften, 2011), dist. 1, pp. 16–20.

⁷⁶Fishacre, *III Sent.*, dist. 1, p. 16.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Rufus, *Sententiae Oxoniensis*, Oxford Balliol College, MS. 62, fol. 196, vb.

If the natural order finds its perfection in the person of the incarnate Christ, then this suggests, so it would seem, that Christ himself is integral to understanding the *liber creaturae*, not just at a theological level, but also at the level of natural philosophy. After all, since Christ's resurrection represents the final, and therefore definitive, word in the hypostatic union's transformative effect upon Christ's humanity – and, by extension, the natural order itself – then it is in the resurrected Christ's body that matter (the object of natural philosophy) achieves its fullest identity, and the world itself *qua* material becomes most fully intelligible.⁷⁹ This, of course, is not to say that Christ is the proper object of natural philosophy, or that the natural philosopher should read the *liber creaturae* chiefly through the medium of the *liber scripturae*, as the theologian is called to do – for if this were the case then Fishacre would indeed be guilty of collapsing theology into philosophy. Rather what the Oxford Dominican is articulating – as his use of Christ's resurrected body to support his thinking on light and the stars implies – is something more subtle. The *liber scripturae*, as the chief source of our noetic about the risen Christ, aids the natural philosopher as she seeks to read the *liber creaturae* by expanding her noetic horizons. It does so not by making revealed data about matter's perfect state in the risen Christ the subject of philosophy, but rather by allowing the illumination of this data to communicate to the natural philosopher that matter can exist and behave in ways which her reason, *prima facie* at least, judges impossible. Thus, by way of analogy, in the same way that in a game of curling, the players use brooms to sweep the ice so that the curling stone may travel further, and thus achieve its true potential, so at the level of natural philosophy the *liber scripturae* seeks not to dictate the content of the philosophical science but rather to allow natural philosophy to reach its true potential by discovering all the different ways in which matter can exist. At this level, we thus see that, while Fishacre's use of Christ's resurrected body to support his novel claims concerning the nature of light and the material composition of the stars may not conform to the descriptions of theology's relationship to philosophy as articulated – albeit in varying ways – by the likes of Bonaventure, Rufus, Thomas, etc., the spirit with which he makes this move is perhaps not as far removed from theirs as it may first appear. In the Fishacreian synthesis, theology and philosophy are very tightly woven together – and, on occasion, produce novel patterns – yet, crucially, the distinction between the two *scientiae* remains intact.

⁷⁹Fishacre suggests that this is the case in his comments on how, through the hypostatic union, all aspects of creation – from the elements to the human soul – are brought to their most perfect ordering and state. See Fishacre, *III Sent.*, dist. 1, p. 29.

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