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Takashi Shogimen

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LATE MIDDLE AGES

The English Franciscan William of Ockham (c. 1285–1347) was one of the most influential philosophers and theologians in late medieval Europe. Recent scholarship has shown his profound impact on logic, metaphysics, epistemology and the philosophy of language in the late Middle Ages and beyond. Following a dispute between the papacy and his Order, Ockham abandoned his academic career and devoted himself to anti-papal polemics. Twentieth-century scholars have produced divergent and often contradictory interpretations of Ockham as a political thinker: a destructive critic of the medieval Church, a medieval Catholic traditionalist, a Franciscan ideologue and a constitutional liberal. This book offers a fresh reappraisal of Ockham's political thought by approaching his anti-papal writings as a series of polemical responses. His aggressive and persistent attack on the papacy emerges in this study as an attempt to rescue the ethical foundations of Christian society from the political influences of heretical popes.

TAKASHI SHOGIMEN is Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

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For Danièle

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## PREFACE

History can only be written in the context in which a historian is situated, and it continues to be revised as we seek to understand the past as well as the present in the context of our own times. This book was born out of a conviction that William of Ockham's polemical activities in response to the ecclesiastical and political issues of his day are germane to our times. The main question that runs through this book is: how and why did this fourteenth-century Franciscan theologian come to the view that contemporary papal government was tyrannical, and what did he endeavour to achieve through a series of anti-papal polemical responses? The world in which Ockham lived and the problem that he tackled may appear totally alien to us, but I do not think that they are entirely dissimilar to ours. In our globalised world, the forces of states, markets and international corporations dominate our public and private lives, and some commentators have perceived a very real threat to the fabric of our social and moral life. Restoring civil society is seen as imperative by political, social and moral commentators from across the political spectrum. To this contemporary problem, Ockham's polemical concerns form an intriguing parallel. At the root of what he perceived as the problem of papal heresy, Ockham identified a serious social and moral problem: the dissolution of Christian fellowship. For Ockham, excessive politicisation of medieval ecclesiastical government undermined the moral foundations and social solidarity of the Christian collective life. Hopefully, the voice of Ockham's conscience that I have endeavoured to re-create here will not only interest specialist readers concerned with the modern historiography of European political thought, but also prompt general readers to reconsider our own perspectives on the moral and social dimension of our collective life.

Re-creating the past, however, is a daunting task. David Knowles wrote: 'the historian is not a judge, still less a hanging judge'. More recently, Quentin Skinner has added that the historian should serve as

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‘a recording angel’. I think this addition is redundant, since it is probably impossible to serve as ‘a recording angel’. In Ockham’s words, it is naturally impossible to obtain an intuitive (and therefore evident) knowledge of the past. Describing past events is difficult enough; recovering past ideas is even more problematic. Friedrich Schiller wrote: ‘as soon as a soul *speaks*, ah . . . *the soul* no longer speaks! (*Spricht die Seele, ach, spricht die Seele nicht mehr!*).’ An idea, as soon as it is written or spoken, becomes independent of the author, and enjoys its own fate. The estrangement of an idea’s impact on the readers, present and future, from its authorial intention is indeed a paradox in the history of ideas. William of Ockham died in 1347. Some six hundred and fifty years later, has this study successfully made his soul, which ‘no longer speaks’, speak once again?

This book has grown from my Sheffield University doctoral dissertation, for which I received a PhD in 1998. The completion of the book owes much to generous support and assistance from a number of individuals and institutions. David Luscombe supervised my doctoral dissertation and has acted as the academic editor for this book. His calm and scholarly judgements on my work have always been incisive and inspiring. Stephen Conway has kindly read and commented on the entire draft of the dissertation and of the book at various stages and helped me patiently to improve my prose. David and Megan Luscombe’s and Stephen Conway’s unfailing support in my personal life I shall never forget. Seiichi Sumi first introduced me to the study of Ockham’s political thought at the initial stage of my research career. Since the inception of my academic career, I have been greatly inspired by Michiko Arima, Constantin Fasolt and Katsumi Nakamura. And I am heavily indebted to Janet Coleman, Barrie and Narda Dobson and Cary Nederman for encouragement they have offered me in good times and bad.

I have benefited from stimulating conversations with a number of scholars in the field of medieval political and religious thought, including Antony Black, Stephen Lahey, Ian Levy and Stephen McGrade. Brian Tierney gave me generous advice by correspondence. It has always been a pleasure to exchange ideas with the members of *Políticas*: the Society for the Study of Medieval Political Thought, at the International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University and at the International Medieval Congress at the University of Leeds. I have also been encouraged and helped in a variety of ways by friends and colleagues including Shin Chiba, Conal Condren, Fred Dallmayr, Gillian Evans, Hajime Fujiwara, Paul Hayward, Thomas Izbicki, John Kilcullen, Yoshiaki Kobayashi, John Marenbon, Koichiro Matsuda,



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Constant Mews, Jürgen Miethke, Francis Oakley, the late Heiko Oberman, Anthony Parel, Thomas Turley, Morimichi and Kiyomi Watanabe and Stella and the late Michael Wilks. I was fortunate to be introduced to medieval history by the medievalists of the Department of History in the University of Sheffield including R. I. Moore, Edmund King, the late Simon Walker and William Aird.

My research has been conducted in five places: the North Library of the British Museum; the Rare Books Room of Cambridge University Library; the Special Collection Department of the Brotherton Library in the University of Leeds; the Main Library of the University of Sheffield; and the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in the University of Toronto. To all of these institutions I owe a huge debt of gratitude. An Overseas Research Student Award by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom assisted my postgraduate research financially at an important stage; and election into a Research Fellowship at Clare Hall, Cambridge, in 1997–2000 provided me with an ideal environment in which to conduct research beyond the PhD. I am also indebted to Ian Hunter, Peter Cryle and members of the Centre for the History of European Discourses at the University of Queensland for electing me a Research Associate of the Centre. At the final stages, my colleagues at the Department of History in the University of Otago have supported my work in many ways. I am also grateful to Simon Whitmore, Michael Watson and Sarah Parker for their skilful management of the publication process.

The book includes sections of the following previously published articles: ‘Ockham’s Vision of the Primitive Church’, in R. N. Swanson, ed., *Studies in Church History 33: The Church Retrospective* (Woodbridge, 1997); ‘William of Ockham and Guido Terreni’, in *History of Political Thought* 19 (1998); ‘The Relationship between Theology and Canon Law: Another Context of Political Thought in the Early Fourteenth Century’, in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60 (1999); ‘From Disobedience to Toleration: William of Ockham and the Medieval Discourse on Fraternal Correction’, in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 52 (2001); ‘Aquinas, Ockham and the Negative Authority of Conscience’, online publication by Instituto Universitario Virtual Santo Tomás, 2003; ‘William of Ockham and Conceptions of Heresy, c.1250–c.1350’, in Ian Hunter, John Christian Laursen and Cary J. Nederman, eds., *Heresy in Transition: Transforming Ideas of Heresy in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2005); and ‘Defending Christian Fellowship: William of Ockham and the Crisis of the Medieval Church’, in *History of Political Thought* 26 (2005). I am grateful for permission to use them in the present work.

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Finally, my parents, Tadashi and Hiroko Shogimen, have always given me unfailing support throughout the long years far away from my own country. Had it not been for my wife, Danièle, my academic and personal life would have been less fulfilled. This book is, in a sense, the result of our collaborative work. Our twins, Anne-Sophie Miyuki and Dominic Hiroshi, despite their youth, have expressed enthusiastic interest in this book project; without them, it would have been completed in half the time, but its execution would have been less meaningful.

T. S.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>A Letter</i>	William of Ockham, <i>A Letter to the Friars Minor and Other Writings</i>
<i>AP</i>	William of Ockham, <i>An Princeps</i>
Baluze–Mansi	E. Baluze, <i>Miscellanea</i> (ed. J. D. Mansi)
<i>Brev</i>	William of Ockham, <i>Breviloquium de principatu tyrannico super divina et humana, specialiter autem super imperium et subiectos imperio, a quibusdam vocatis Summis Pontificibus usurpato</i>
<i>CB</i>	William of Ockham, <i>Contra Benedictum</i>
<i>CI</i>	William of Ockham, <i>Contra Ioannem</i>
I–III <i>Dialogus</i>	William of Ockham, <i>Dialogus</i> Parts I–III
<i>DP</i>	Marsilius of Padua, <i>Defensor pacis</i>
<i>Epistola</i>	William of Ockham, <i>Epistola ad fratres minores</i>
Gewirth	Marsilius of Padua, <i>Defender of Peace</i> (trans. Alan Gewirth)
<i>IPP</i>	William of Ockham, <i>De imperatorum et pontificum potestate</i>
<i>OND</i>	William of Ockham, <i>Opus nonaginta dierum</i>
<i>OP</i> 1–4	William of Ockham, <i>Opera politica</i> , vols. 1–4
<i>OPh</i> 1–7	William of Ockham, <i>Opera philosophica</i> , vols. 1–7
<i>OQ</i>	William of Ockham, <i>Octo quaestiones de potestate papae</i>
<i>OTh</i> 1–10	William of Ockham, <i>Opera theologica</i> , vols. 1–10
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i>
<i>Short Discourse</i>	William of Ockham, <i>A Short Discourse on Tyrannical Government</i>