University of Southampton

The Rhetoric of Spirituality in *Ancrene Wisse*

Catherine Elizabeth Gunn

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English, Faculty of Arts

October 2003

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS

ENGLISH

Doctor of Philosophy

THE RHETORIC OF SPIRITUALITY IN *ANCRENE WISSE*

by Catherine Elizabeth Gunn

This thesis looks at *Ancrene Wisse*, a guide written for anchoresses in the first half of the thirteenth century, not as a work exclusively for anchoresses but within the context of lay piety and vernacular spirituality. It explores the spirituality of *Ancrene Wisse*, placing it within a movement of democratisation of a previously monastic spirituality and seeing this work as a forerunner of the fourteenth-century English works characterised by Watson as 'vernacular theology'. More specifically, this thesis explores the rhetoric of *Ancrene Wisse* – that is, how the spirituality is expressed, examining the influences of contemporary pastoral rhetoric and the use of rhetorical techniques. *Ancrene Wisse* was written shortly after the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, at a time of concern about pastoral care which is evident in the proliferation of pastoral literature. Much of this *pastoralia – artes praedicandi, summae* on confession, treatises on the Vices and Virtues – was written in Latin but we find some of the earliest vernacular adaptions of this material in *Ancrene Wisse*. Comparisons are made with sermons and, in particular, sermons preached to beguines. The anchoritism described in *Ancrene Wisse* has been compared with the institutions of beguines, but no comparison has previously been made between the literature written for these two groups of quasi-regular religious women. While acknowledging the influence of monastic and patristic literature on the composition of *Ancrene Wisse*, this thesis is original in its systematic exploration of the influence of the rhetoric found in the literature of pastoral care on *Ancrene Wisse*.

Contents

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

CCCM: Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis (Turnhout 1966 -)
EETS: Early English Text Society
PL: *Patrologia cursus completus series Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1841-64)

Preface

'Recti diligunt te.' In Canticis: sponsa ad sponsum. Est rectum gramaticum, rectum geometricum, rectum theologicum; et sunt differencie totidem regularum.[1]

'Thou shalt not write thy doctor's thesis
    On education'
(W. H. Auden)

There are theses on literature, there are theses on history and there are theses on religion. And each of these is a different kind of thesis; but this thesis crosses the disciplines. It places *Ancrene Wisse* – a work of literature – in an historical and religious context.

The title, *The rhetoric of spirituality in* Ancrene Wisse, contains three terms. The terms *rhetoric* and *spirituality* will be examined in the course of the thesis, but what is meant by *Ancrene Wisse* also needs to be considered. *Ancrene Wisse*, meaning a guide for anchoresses, is the medieval title of the text in MS Corpus Christi College Cambridge 402, which dates from the first half of the thirteenth century, and it is this version that will form the basis of the discussion in this thesis.[2] Corpus Christi 402 is not the original version, however, although it contains corrections and additions that may be authorial. *Ancrene Wisse* was always a work in progress, adapting to the needs of a changing audience; Bella Millett suggests that 'The key to the textual instability of *Ancrene Wisse* lies in its functionality'.[3] That *Ancrene Wisse* was written in the vernacular in the first half of the thirteenth century, originally for three sisters who were following a religious life as lay-anchoresses rather than as nuns, invites us to read it in the context of the literature of lay piety as much as (if not more than) a traditional institutional product. The spirituality evinced by *Ancrene Wisse* – a spirituality that is incarnational and affective – although itself a product of monasticism, is also the spirituality that motivated the growth in lay piety. The rhetoric used in parts of *Ancrene Wisse* at least is that associated with a growing body of pastoral literature; this literature was designed to enable priests and preachers to fulfil their duties towards their lay congregations and parishioners.

---

[1] *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwle* : Ancrene Wisse, *edited from MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge 402*, by J. R. R. Tolkien, EETS 249 (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), f. 1ª 1-6. References to *Ancrene Wisse* in this thesis will be to this diplomatic edition, noted as 'Corpus 402' with folio numbers but I will be using the punctuation and expansion of abbreviations as provided by Bella Millett in her forthcoming edition of *Ancrene Wisse*; the translations are also those of Bella Millett, to whom I am profoundly grateful for permission to use her edition with its extensive notes before its publication.
[2] I am grateful to the librarian of the Parker Library at Corpus Christi College for permission to consult MS Corpus Christi 402.
[3] Bella Millett *'Mouvance* and the Medieval Author: Re-Editing *Ancrene Wisse'* in *Late-Medieval Religious Texts and their Transmission*, ed. by A. J. Minnis (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 9-20 (p. 13).

This thesis maintains that to appreciate and understand *Ancrene Wisse* fully, it needs to be read not only as the product of a history of the literature of anchoritism, but also within the context of the contemporary religious sensibility which included a developing lay piety and the pastoral literature which arose to control and construct that piety.

The division of this thesis is into four distinctions, each dealing with its own particular topic but admitting of some overlap. Each follows on from the one before and is linked to that which comes after so that the four parts constitute a whole.

The first chapter is about spirituality. It discusses what is meant by *spirituality* and how the concept of spirituality is relevant to *Ancrene Wisse* and the rule of life it contains.

The second chapter is about the spirituality of *Ancrene Wisse*; this is a spirituality that is incarnational and affective; *Ancrene Wisse* should be read in the context of its contemporary spiritual movement.

The third chapter is on pastoral rhetoric in the early thirteenth century and discusses the influence of this rhetoric on *Ancrene Wisse*.

The fourth chapter is about the rhetoric of *Ancrene Wisse*. The author adopted and adapted rhetorical techniques available to him, including those associated with the *pastoralia* and vernacular pastoral literature of the thirteenth century.

Finally, it is about how you should teach different people different things, or at least in a different way.

Chapter One

Spirituality

What is meant by *spirituality*? In order to discuss the spirituality of *Ancrene Wisse*, we need to consider both how the term *spirituality* is used by modern commentators and historians of spirituality, and how the concept of spirituality is relevant to *Ancrene Wisse* and the rule of life it contains. How the word *spirituality*, or, rather, *spiritualitas*, was used in the Middle Ages needs to be taken into account. Peter Biller, in an article on the use of the word *religio* in the Middle Ages, gives Bossy's prescription for historians, 'A historian writing about an earlier period should not use a key word, such as *religio*, except in the sense it had in the period about which he is writing'.[1] Biller sees the development and the use of the term *religio* as more complex than Bossy seems prepared to admit and shows how tracing the history of the use of a term can illuminate the development of the idea or concept; he also suggests that by the thirteenth century people had the <u>thing</u>, that is the concept of religion as a system, but that the words *lex* or *secta*, not *religio*, were used to signify it. Similar problems of historical and cultural relativity arise in dealing with the terms *spirituality* and *spiritualitas*: how were the terms used in the Middle Ages? and does it make sense to use *spirituality* in the same way here?

André Vauchez claims that, as it was used in the high Middle Ages, the word *spiritualitas* did not have the meaning that *spiritualité* acquired during the nineteenth century of 'la dimension religieuse de la vie intérieure';[2] rather, the word *spiritualitas* was used as a philosophical term which 'désigne la qualité de ce qui est spirituel, c'est-a-dire indépendant de la matière'.[3] Michel Dupuy points out that the usage of the term *spiritualitas* became more common in the twelfth century[4] and argues that, although there is a common belief that 'son contenu spécifique n'a été perçu que recemment', the authors of the period, even if they did not feel the need to analyse the term, 'ont su ce qu'ils mettaient sous ce mot'.[5] The definition Dupuy gives for the word as either

---

[1] Peter Biller, 'Words and the Medieval Notion of "Religion"', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 36 (1985), pp. 351-69, (p. 353); in particular, according to Biller, Bossy insists that we should not attribute to medieval man the use of the term *religio* in the sense of a system or systems of faith, since this is a modern concept.
[2] André Vauchez, *La Spiritualité du Moyen Age Occidental VIIIe-XIIe Siècles*, Collection S. U. P. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975)p. 5.; trans. as *The Spirituality of the Medieval West from the Eighth to the Twelfth Century* by Colette Friedlander, Cistercian Studies No. 145 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1993). Caroline Walker Bynum writes, with reference to this passage, ' "Spirituality," as André Vauchez has pointed out, is not a medieval word at all', *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982; pbk. ed., 1984), but this is not an accurate comment on what he says.
[3] Vauchez, *La Spiritualité du Moyen Age*, p. 5.
[4] Michel Dupuy, 'Spiritualité' in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité Ascétique et Mystique, Doctrine et Histoire*, fondé par M. Viller et al., continué par A. Derville et al., Tome 14 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1990), cols. 1142-73, col. 1144.
[5] Dupuy, 'Spiritualité', p. 1150.

a way of life or way of knowing ('mode de connaître') that is opposed to materiality or corporality[6] is similar to the way Vauchez suggests the word was used in the Middle Ages. Giles Constable also points out that 'In the Middle Ages *spiritualitas* meant spiritual as opposed to bodily, carnal, material and mortal',[7] while the entry for *spirituality* in *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* suggests that the meaning of the word *spiritualitas* and related terms narrowed from the high Middle Ages onwards as it came to be associated with specific religious practices: the word *spiritualitas* occurs 'in a variety of senses' during the Middle Ages, but 'a narrowing of its application and of related expressions such as "spiritual life" and "spiritual exercises" is discernible from the twelfth century onwards, so that a "spiritual life" came to be regarded as more or less identical with interior religion and the explicitly devotional practices used to foster it'.[8]

It is with this definition of a spiritual life that I believe we need to concern ourselves in an examination of the spirituality of *Ancrene Wisse*; it is to be found in the intersection between interior faith and the outward expression of that faith in devotional practices and a way of life. Constable suggests that spirituality 'refers not just to piety and devotion but to the point where faith and action intersect: how a faith is lived and what people do about their religious beliefs' and he continues, 'Spirituality in this sense cuts across the distinction between written and oral and between learned (or elite) and popular and includes attitudes and practices that were shared by most Christians at the time'.[9] This connexion between spirituality and religious beliefs and practices, if it was not made explicitly in the Middle Ages, certainly seems to be taken for granted by modern historians of spirituality.[10] *Spirituality* cannot be identified solely with public religious practices or with the personal, inner experience of the recluse; it is to be understood as a way of living based on a relationship with the divine. Nor can it be limited to the elite spirituality of those leading dedicated religious lives; emphasis needs to be placed on the beliefs and practices of devout lay people, as Vauchez explains:

> Cette définition de la spiritualité, comme l'unité dynamique du contenu d'une foi et de la façon dont celle-ci est vécue par des hommes historiquement déterminés, nous conduira à faire une large place aux laïcs.

---

[6] Dupuy, 'Spiritualité', p. 1143. Dupuy does, however, see this contrast between materiality and corporality in a religious rather than a philosophical sense.

[7] Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; pbk. ed., 1998), p. 14, fn. 63.

[8] *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. ed. F. L. Cross, 3rd ed. by E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 1532-1533.

[9] Constable, *Reformation*, pp. 14 and 15.

[10] In a talk on Radio 4, Saturday 18th March 2000, Professor Ursula King made an implicit distinction between spirituality and religion: she allied spirituality to personal experience and faith while talking about religion as institutional, especially when she referred to different religions, such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism.

> This definition of spirituality as the dynamic unity between the content of a faith and the
> way in which it is lived by historically determined human beings, will lead us to devote a
> good deal of space to the laity.[11]

For the anchoresses, spirituality is the cultivation of the heart in its relationship with God; all the
misery and physical hardship, 'al þet wa ant al þet heard' they endure are to be thought of as tools
to cultivate the heart with, 'Iomen to tilie wið þe heorte'.[12] The spirituality of *Ancrene Wisse* is not,
however, identical with that of the anchoresses; it is the spirituality of a text that was always
intended for a wider, more general lay readership. The function of *Ancrene Wisse* – as a guide to
anchoresses and as a work of vernacular pastoralia – allows connexions to be made with other
works within the same context of spiritual history. *Ancrene Wisse* has never been precisely dated,[13]
but internal evidence 'point[s] towards a thirteenth-century date, and probably composition after
the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215'.[14] The revised version found in MS Corpus Christi 402
refers favourably to both Dominican and Franciscan friars, which places this version, which is
considered to be chronologically close to the original, after both of these orders had arrived in
England, that is, no earlier than 1224.[15] Three of the early manuscripts of *Ancrene Wisse* – Corpus
Christi, Cotton Cleopatra and Cotton Nero – have been dated to the first half of the thirteenth
century.[16]

This was a period of spiritual enthusiasm, of which the turn to anchoritism and the rise of
mendicant orders can be seen as manifestations. Changes are evident in this period of the
Middle Ages, both in the varieties of religious life and devotional practices engaged in and in the
imagery and language used to express a relationship with God. In the twelfth century, the idea of
imitating the physical, earthly life of Jesus developed; for Cistercians in particular, 'the imitation
of Christ's humanity, while not identical with salvation, was an essential part of a full Christian
life'.[17] This ideal – worked out as a preaching mission rather than behind the walls of a
monastery – was also the driving force behind the rise of the mendicant orders at the beginning
of the thirteenth century.

---

[11] Vauchez, *La Spiritualite du Moyen Age*, p. 7; trans. Friedlander, p.9.
[12] *AW*, Part 7, f. 104ᵃ, 17.
[13] 'Its exact date, localization, authorship, and audience have not been conclusively established', Bella
Millett, '*Ancrene Wisse* and the Life of Perfection', *Leeds Studies in English*, 33 (2002), 53-76 (p. 53).
[14] Bella Millett, Ancrene Wisse, *The Katherine Group, and the Wooing Group*, Annotated Bibliographies of Old
and Middle English Literature, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996), p. 12.
[15] The Dominicans came in 1221, the Franciscans in 1224; see Millett, *Annotated Bibliography*, p. 12.
[16] Millett, *Annotated Bibliography*, pp. 49-52.
[17] Constable, Giles, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 1995; pbk. ed., 1998), p. 190.

The religious movement that led to the formation of the mendicant orders cannot be seen only as a manifestation of reform within the institutional church; it was part of a wider movement of social change among an increasingly articulate and literate middle class. Writing of the rise of the mendicant movement at the beginning of the thirteenth century, C. H. Lawrence states that

> [the confrontation] between traditional assumptions about the nature of the Christian life and the religious needs of a newly arisen urban and secular culture . . . had been engendered by profound economic and social changes that had transformed Western Europe in the course of the twelfth century.[18]

The previous hundred and fifty years had seen a proliferation in new orders, notably the Cistercian and Carthusian orders (both founded in the last years of the eleventh century) and the orders of Augustinian canons, including the Premonstratensians and Arrouaisians. By the end of the twelfth century the movement for change and renewal outside the traditional institutions of the church was gaining momentum: reform was occurring outside the cloister and affecting the laity. An increasing number of people who would not have traditionally entered a monastery now wanted to pursue a religious vocation in response to the growth in popular piety. This placed pressure on the institutions of the church and there was concern to keep such people under the authority of the church. It was this concern that led to the passing of the thirteenth decree of the Fourth Lateran Council, which prohibited the invention of new orders, 'ne nimia religionum diversitas gravem in ecclesia Dei confusionem inducat'[19] ('lest too much diversity of religious forms should bring about troublesome confusion in the church of God'). Anyone wanting to enter a religious house 'regulam et institutionem accipiat de religionibus approbatis'[20] ('should accept the rules and practices of an approved order'). The decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council were responding to the movement for reform, but the Council also set the tone, and the limits, for the developments that were to take place in the thirteenth century – especially the rise of the mendicant orders, the importance of preaching beyond the cloister, and the response to religious women.

---

[18] C. H. Lawrence, *The Friars: The Impact of the Mendicant Movement on Western Society* (London: Longman, 1994), p. 1.

[19] Concilium Lateranense IV in *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, ed. J. Alberigo et al., 3rd ed. (Bologna: Istituto per le Scienze Religiose, 1973), p. 242.

[20] Con. Lat. IV, p. 242. Giles Constable sees this as an issue of control and authority, but points out that what constituted an order was not clear cut since 'in the twelfth century there were no recognized orders based on rules. The only two indisputable examples, upon which both contemporaries and later scholars agree, were the Cluniacs and the Cistercians, and even their character is less clear than might be wished'. Constable, *Reformation*, p. 174. What constituted an order had more to do with custom than constitution. The twelfth decree of the Fourth Lateran Council, *De communibus capitulis monachorum*, states that those orders which do not have a general chapter should hold chapter meetings on the pattern of the Cistercians. Con. Lat. IV, p. 241.

Brenda Bolton has suggested that the religious fervour of the early thirteenth century 'could be satisfied neither by the new orders nor by the secular clergy'.[21] The church struggled to keep the laity under control and to define their role 'within the divine economy' as the relationship between clergy and laity shifted.[22] Colin Morris argues that 'This became more urgent as the ranks of the laity became more diverse, more skilled, and also more inclined to demand religious provision, if necessary by joining heretical groups'.[23] Grundmann has pointed out that the heretics of the twelfth century can be seen as part of the same religious movement that led to the establishment of the new mendicant orders: 'The driving idea of the heretical movement of the twelfth century was to live according to the model of the apostles'.[24] This was also the driving idea of the mendicant orders and others who wished to remain within the church.[25] Even when groups such as the Waldensians were struggling to remain within the church and requested permission from the curia to preach and pursue their mission, they were denied the status of approved orders after the Fourth Lateran Council and so were in danger of being found heretical, since unlicensed preaching was heresy.[26] Innocent III had attempted a compromise 'between the drive for apostolic itinerant preaching and the ecclesiastical ban on preaching by the unordained' by allowing groups such as the Waldensians and Humiliati to preach 'within certain limits' but the Council 'prevented the rise of preaching associations' by banning the invention of new orders'.[27] Dominic was too late approaching the curia to have his group recognized as an order and the Order of Preachers, known as Dominicans, became a branch of the Augustinian canons.[28] It is not entirely clear how the Franciscans obtained official recognition as an approved order, since by 1215 they seem to have had only an oral promise from the Pope, Innocent III.[29] These two

---

[21] Brenda M. Bolton, 'Mulieres Sanctae', in *Women in Medieval Society*, ed. by Susan Mosher Stuard (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976), pp. 141-158 (p. 141).

[22] Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy : The Western Church from 1050 to 1250* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989; pbk. ed., 1991), p. 178.

[23] Morris, *Papal Monarchy*, p. 178.

[24] Grundmann, Herbert, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: The Historical Links between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Women's Religious Movement in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century, with the Historical Foundations of German Mysticism* (2nd. ed., 1961), trans. by Steven Rowan (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), p. 13.

[25] See, for example, Grundmann, *Religious Movements*, Introduction, p.1 where he suggests the religious movement could either adopt ecclesiastical forms or develop into a sect: this argument, that the same movement is manifested on both sides of the dividing line between heresy and orthodoxy, underlies Grundmann's treatment of the religious movement in the twelfth century and the rise of new types of orders, pp. 7-67.

[26] The third decree of the Fourth Lateran Council, following the decree of Pope Lucius III at the council of Verona in 1184, states that no-one should claim the authority to preach for himself, unless his authority has been acknowledged by the apostolic see or the bishop of that place, since as Paul asks in his epistle to the Romans, 'How can they preach if they are not sent?'; those who usurped the office of preaching would be excommunicated, Con. Lat. IV, pp. 234-5.

[27] Grundmann, *Religious Movements*, p. 60.

[28] Grundmann, *Religious Movements*, p. 61.

[29] Grundmann, *Religious Movements*, pp. 62-3.

mendicant orders that arose in the early thirteenth century can be seen as a 'providential response to a spiritual crisis', and as such were welcomed by Innocent III.[30]

The mendicant orders also, however, presented a challenge to the hierarchical authority of the church that the Fourth Lateran Council found it difficult to accept. The Dominicans and the Franciscans, the 'Freres Prechurs' and 'Freres Meonurs'[31] recommended as confessors in *Ancrene Wisse*, were a major force in the changing piety of the Middle Ages. They represented a significant shift in focus and purpose for those pursuing a religious life, away from monastic spirituality. Instead of attempting to achieve salvation through personal perfection, to be found by withdrawing from the world as monks had done, the friars saw it as their duty to preach to the people, to hear their confessions and to bring them to repentance. In this they were a part of the 'sustained effort to instruct and discipline the faithful' which Colin Morris sees as an essential element of the reform within as well as outside the church. This reform involved a 'shift in pastoral perspectives' as the church became more aware of the needs of the laity and theologians began to show an interest in 'the fairly good and the fairly bad, the *mediocriter boni et mali*'.[32]

The religious movement of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that was manifested in the ideals of the mendicant orders and in heresy is also evident in the upsurge in female piety. Bynum suggests that similar themes were found in the heterodox movements (which were 'often initially labeled heresies for reasons of ecclesiastical politics, not doctrine') and the orthodox women's religious movement:

> a concern for affective religious response, an extreme form of penitential asceticism, an emphasis both on Christ's humanity and on the inspiration of the spirit, and a bypassing of clerical authority.[33]

There was a problem for women who wanted to follow a religious life, no matter how orthodox their beliefs and conduct might be, which Herbert Grundmann outlines: the curia was convinced that 'religious life can only realize its true value, can only have security and endurance, when placed within the universal, proper *ordo* of the Christian world through stable rules',[34] and those were the rules established by the church. After the Lateran Council of 1215, 'a religious movement could only find ecclesiastical recognition if it could be fitted into an existing form of life'; for the sake of order and control, religious women needed to be incorporated into the male

---

[30] Lawrence, *Friars*, p. 1.
[31] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402. f.16ᵛ; this addition is found only in the Corpus Christi MS and the French version in Cotton Vitellius F.vii.
[32] Morris, *Papal Monarchy*, pp. 489-90.
[33] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987; pbk. ed., 1988), p. 17.
[34] Grundmann, *Religious Movements*, p. 89.

religious orders, but 'No order actually existed which was suited to receive a larger women's religious movement' and despite the efforts of the curia, the existing orders tried to avoid taking any responsibility for women's communities.[35]

The story of the women's religious movement is not a simple one; nor, indeed, is it the story of a single movement. Rosalynn Voaden discerns, in the development of female religious communities at this time, a pattern of initial enthusiasm on the part of the women thwarted by blatant misogyny, but the situation seems to have been much more complex.[36] As Sally Thompson points out, women in religious houses always required the presence of men, as lay brothers for practical help and, more importantly, as clerics for pastoral support and the administration of the sacraments;[37] and in the twelfth century a number of double monasteries had been founded, notably at Fontevrault, Sempringham, Prémontré and Arrouaise. The necessary proximity between men and women always led to anxiety and, inevitably, the double foundations changed, often to the disadvantage of the women. The double houses of the Premonstratensian order were suppressed in the middle of the twelfth century;[38] the female communities attached to the Flemish abbey of Augustinian canons at Arrouaise were also limited and eventually discarded in the thirteenth century.[39] The Cistercians were at first 'remarkable for their hostility to women',[40] but a number of nunneries claimed allegiance to the Cistercian order and individual Cistercian abbots did take responsibility for some of them, especially in Spain,[41] while in the Low Countries, the abbot of Villers 'eagerly accepted the direction of women's convents'[42] and, according to Dennis Devlin, 'Cistercian foundations at Cologne, Villers-en-Brabant, Aulne, St. Bernard on the Scheldt, Herkenrode and Parc-les-Dames, among others, provided the beguines with protection, spiritual guidance, and material sustenance through land grants and pensions'.[43] The Cistercian Order itself was reluctant to recognise a female branch

---

[35] Grundmann, *Religious Movements*, p. 90.

[36] Rosalynn Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices : The Discernment of Spirits in the Writing of Late-Medieval Women Visionaries* (York: York Medieval Press, 1999), pp. 27-34.

[37] Sally Thompson, *Women Religious: The Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 63.

[38] Thompson highlights the difficulty of sorting out exactly what happened in the suppression of double monasteries; sometimes when women were housed separately they were still regarded as members of the same community. In 1270, more decisive measures were taken for the suppression of nuns. Thompson, *Women Religious*, pp. 138-9.

[39] C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism* (London: Longman, 1984), p. 181.

[40] Thompson, *Women Religious*, p. 94.

[41] R. W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970), p. 315.

[42] Ernest W. McDonnell, *The Beguines and Beghards in Medieval Culture with Special Emphasis on the Belgian Scene* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1954), p. 113.

[43] Dennis Devlin, 'Feminine Lay Piety in the High Middle Ages: The Beguines', in *Distant Echoes: Medieval Religious Women*, Vol. 1, ed. by John A. Nicholls and Lillian Thomas Shank (Kalamazoo, Mich: Cistercian Publications, 1984), pp. 183-196, p. 185.

and 'vacillated between encouraging the acceptance of women into the order (until 1226) and limiting the activities of monks engaged in the *cura monialium*.[44] The vacillation between acceptance and rejection, enthusiasm and caution, is typical of male response to women's desire to enter the religious life at this time – both Grundmann and McDonnell try to trace the narrative. The Gilbertine order was established in England in the twelfth century for 'the care of women seeking to lead a religious vocation',[45] but the proximity of lay brothers caused problems, as evinced in the scandal of the nun of Watton.[46] The fear of scandal was a real problem; the nuns felt that their collective virginity had been assailed.[47] By the end of the twelfth century, any new foundations for women tended to be single sex.

Women were often seen as a distraction if not a threat to the orderliness of the religious life, but individual men continued to support them, including James of Vitry who championed the cause of the beguines. Beguines appeared in the Low Countries and northern France in the early thirteenth century – the same period in which the number of women becoming anchorites in England increased dramatically. Ann Warren places this increase within the context of the women's religious movement on the continent: 'The increase in female anchoritism in the thirteenth century in England was a means of containing the explosion of spiritual enthusiasm observable throughout Catholic Europe'.[48] Beguines and anchoresses were seeking a religious life that was relevant to them. In the later Middle Ages, women were less likely to seek power as abbesses or play quasi-clerical roles, but they were seeking a peculiarly female spirituality, one that involved renunciation of wealth and marriage and saw virginity as a positive value.[49]

I believe that to comprehend the growth of anchoritism in this period, precedence should usually be given to the spiritual reasons for choosing a reclusive rather than cenobitic life, however the reason the anchoresses for whom *Ancrene Wisse* was written did not enter a convent may have been purely pragmatic: there were not many places in convents in the part of England,

---

[44] Devlin, 'Feminine Lay Piety', p. 190. It is particularly difficult to sort out the history of Cistercian nuns as affiliation tended to be fluid and variable This is apparently borne out by primary documents; Elizabeth Freeman says that her research so far 'indicates that papal documents were more likely to describe a house as Cistercian whereas the same house would generally just be called 'nuns' by episcopal documents' and that 'leading up to the Dissolution, more houses are likely to come under the Cistercian umbrella' in personal communication with me.

[45] Thompson, *Women Religious,* p. 76.

[46] See Giles Constable, 'Aelred of Rievaulx and the Nun of Watton : An Episode in the Early History of the Gilbertine Order', in *Medieval Women,* ed. by Derek Baker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), pp. 205-226.

[47] Sharon K. Elkins, *Holy Women of Twelfth Century England* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 1988), p. 107.

[48] Ann K. Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons in Medieval England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 22.

[49] Bynum, *Holy Feast,* pp. 20-22; though Elkins holds that the significance of virginity for religious women lay in its pragmatic value, as a 'guarantee of freedom' rather than its 'spiritual qualities', Elkins, *Holy Women,* p. 29.

Herefordshire and Shropshire, in which the dialect of *Ancrene Wisse* would place the sisters in the early thirteenth century.[50] Sharon Elkins claims that, by the end of the twelfth century, 'The pressing needs of religious women had been met, and so existing houses were sufficient';[51] but this is a position others would disagree with. Bruce Venarde states bluntly, of the situation in England and France between 890 and 1215, 'There were in the time and space considered here, more women desirous of entry into the religious life than there were places for them'.[52] The map Janet Burton gives of 'Religious houses for women by c.1300' shows this quite clearly, and she comments on the uneven distribution of nunneries in medieval Britain: 'it is striking that there were far fewer in Wales, in the marcher counties, in the west country . . . and in the South';[53] while the map of English Nunneries founded after the Norman Conquest at the front of Sally Thompson's *Women Religious* shows only Limebrook and Aconbury in Herefordshire and Brewood White Ladies in Shropshire, with Brewood Black Ladies just over the border in Staffordshire.[54] These houses may have been very small; Brewood Black Ladies, for example, was a community of Augustinian canonesses established before the end of Henry II's reign, whose surviving ruins are characteristic of the late twelfth century. Little is known of this house; it was small, its usual quota being a prioress and five nuns, and it relied on 'small gifts from local families of modest wealth'.[55] The thirteenth century was a period of growth in the West Midlands, and there were wealthy lay and ecclesiastical landowners, but the wealthy ecclesiastical landowners tended to be the old Benedictine communities and there is no mention of female religious sharing in this wealth.[56]

Social and economic factors also need to be taken into account in explaining the rise of the beguine movement. Bynum points out that these women 'tended to be drawn from the new bourgeoisie or from a lower nobility associated with the towns',[57] and the closing of 'Cistercian

---

[50] Dobson follows Tolkien in using linguistic evidence to place the author of *Ancrene Wisse* on the Herefordshire/Shropshire borders. E. J. Dobson, 'The Date and Composition of *Ancrene Wisse*', in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 52, 1966 (London: pub. for the British Academy by the Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 181-208.

[51] Elkins, *Holy Women*, p. 123.

[52] Bruce Venarde, *Women's Monasticism and Medieval Society: Nunneries in France and England, 890-1215* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. xiii.

[53] Janet Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain, 1000-1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 103 and pp. 105-6.

[54] Thompson, *Women Religious*. Thompson questions Dobson's hypothesis that *Ancrene Wisse* was originally composed for a small community at the Deerfold (E. J. Dobson, *The Origins of* Ancrene Wisse (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 238); the charter Dobson relies upon 'has been cited as revealing the existence of an earlier community of women at la Derefaud, but this appears to be an error, as the passage refers only to brothers', p. 34.

[55] *Victoria County History: Shropshire*, Vol. 2, ed. by A. T. Gaydon, Institute of Historical Research (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 83.

[56] R. H. Hilton, *A Medieval Society: The West Midlands at the End of the Thirteenth Century* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), p. 26.

[57] Bynum, *Holy Feast*, p.18.

and Premonstratensian doors' must have led many women to seek an alternative religious life, but, Bynum asserts, 'it seems wrong to interpret the beguines, tertiaries and female heretics of the later Middle Ages as surplus women, settling for quasi-religious roles because neither husbands nor monasteries could be found'.[58] R. Hoornaert also argues that it is time to abandon the romantic notion that these women were widows or young waifs and strays seeking a refuge from the world :

> Rien n'est plus faux. La charte de 1245 nous montre au contraire, à la *Vinea* de Bruges, des âmes s'orientant nettement vers une vie de haute contemplation et désireuses de mener une vie d'oraison méthodique à l'abri du monde.[59]

> The contrary is true. In the charter of the *Vinea* of Bruges of 1245, we see souls clearly seeking the path to a life of lofty contemplation and systematic prayer in seclusion from the world.

Brenda Bolton specifically compares anchoresses in England with the beguines on the continent, suggesting that *Ancrene Wisse* is evidence for 'some sort of religious enthusiasm' at the same time that the beguines were 'provoking so much comment from Grosseteste and Matthew Paris'.[60] The English chronicler, Matthew Paris, claimed in his account for 1243 that two thousand beguines were found in Cologne;[61] such numbers may seem exaggerated,[62] but clearly enough women were joining beguine communities for it to be considered worthy of comment by contemporary chroniclers. Robert Grosseteste, comparing the life of Franciscans with that of beguines, claimed that that of the women was superior since they lived by their own labour and were not a burden on anyone.[63] Anchoresses were dependent on patronage for their livelihood; but in *Ancrene Wisse* it is claimed that their form of religious life was superior to others. A verse from the Epistle of St. James is taken as a definition of the religious life and the second part of this, 'immaculatum se custodire ab hoc seculo', is taken to apply specifically to recluses: they, 'more than other religious' must keep themselves 'pure and unspotted from the world'.[64]

The anchoresses in England, like the beguines on the continent, were striving to follow a religious life outside the bounds of a traditional nunnery. The anchoresses at whose request

---

[58] Bynum, *Holy Feast*, p. 19.

[59] R. Hoornaert, 'La plus ancienne Règle de Béguinage de Bruges', *Annales de la société d'émulation de Bruges*, 72 (1929), 1-79, (p. 5).

[60] Brenda M. Bolton, 'Some Thirteenth Century Women in the Low Countries: A Special Case?', *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*, 61 (1981), 7-29, (p. 9).

[61] Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora* Vol. 4, ed. Henry Richards Luard, Rolls Series, 1877 (Wiesbaden: Kraus reprint, 1964), p. 278. A very similar entry in Paris' *Historia Anglorum* for 1243 suggests 'plura milia' (many thousands) of beguines were found in Cologne, *Historia Anglorum* Vol. 2, ed. by Sir Frederic Madden, Rolls Series, 1866 (Wiesbaden: Kraus Reprint, 1971), p. 476.

[62] McDonell, *Beguines and Beghards*, p. 64 and W. Simons, 'The Beguine Movement in the Southern Low Countries; A Reassessment', *Bulletin De L'Institute Historique Belge de Rome*, 59 (1989), 63-101, (p. 78).

[63] Thomas of Eccleston, *Tractatus de Adventu Fratrum Minorum in Angliam*, ed. by A. G. Little (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1951), p. 99.

[64] *AW* Preface, Corpus 402 f. 3ᵃ 7-27.

Ancrene Wisse was originally written were well-born and literate but they were lay rather than nun anchoresses; that is, they entered the anchorhold without first entering a convent and taking the vows of a religious.[65] The author was aware of the particular state of education of the three anchoresses: they were women who were educated sufficiently well to be able to read their native language, English, and had some understanding of Latin and French and, as such, 'they occupy the intermediate territory between illiteracy and *litteratura*'.[66] These were women who chose to lead a religious life, but for some reason did not enter a convent; while economic and social reasons may have played a part in their choice of the anchoritic life, however, it can also be interpreted as part of the shift in the conception of what constituted the religious life at this time.

A new conception of what constituted a Christian life is common to all the new movements of this period:

> The success of the two mendicant orders, and the heresies they were founded to combat, show how the new conception of Christianity as a way of life rather than a collection of dogmas, and the understanding that the gospel's demands were relevant, not only to those ordained by the Church but to everyone including women, inspired many to change their way of life. The growth of the Beguine movement is another example of the same phenomenon.[67]

The reclusive life was another way in which those not belonging to a religious order could lead a Christian way of life but such groups could be seen as a threat to the authority of the church; Ernest McDonnell comments on the caution expressed about the excess of the beguines and the need of the church to preserve 'the integrity of the ecclesiastical fabric', that is its material possessions and hierarchical power, in the face of semi-religious movements. The willingness of these women to trust their own emotional response rather than the teaching of the church was seen as dangerous.[68] Many beguines were themselves aware of the danger and McDonnell notes that Christine of Stommeln, who 'faced with the prospect of marriage, deserted home and patrimony at the age of thirteen without her parents' knowledge in order to associate with the poor of Cologne and resort to alms for a livelihood', was 'coolly received by the beguines with whom she hoped to live'.[69] In the twelfth century, Christina of Markyate had attracted disapproval for her friendships with men; while staying with the hermit Roger she was hidden in

---

[65] The lay status of the anchoresses will be discussed later in Chapter Two.

[66] Bella Millett, 'Women in No Man's Land: English Recluses and the Development of Vernacular Literature in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993; 2nd ed., 1996), pp. 86-103 (p. 94). Millett reminds us that to be *litteratus* meant to be able to read and write in Latin and that, 'In the earlier Middle Ages, *litteratura* in this sense was normally (but not invariably) confined to those who had entered the religious life', ibid. p. 86.

[67] Saskia Murk-Jansen, *Brides in the Desert: The Spirituality of the Beguines* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998), p. 23.

[68] McDonnell, *The Beguines and Beghards*, pp. 440-442.

[69] McDonnell, *Beguines and Beghards*, p. 445.

a tiny space so that no-one else knew of her presence,[70] but her later friendship with Abbot Geoffrey led to the abbot being 'slandered as a seducer and the maiden as a loose woman'.[71] Her biographer blamed this on the devil, but the author of *Ancrene Wisse*, writing in the century after the *Life of Christina of Markyate*, would not allow such a situation to arise – the anchoresses were to receive no male visitors[72] and throughout *Ancrene Wisse* there is an insistence that the anchoresses do nothing that could attract suspicion or disapproval.

The spirituality of *Ancrene Wisse* and the devotional practices advocated are throughout orthodox. They are also in keeping with the piety of the age and the democratization of spirituality that was an adjunct of affective piety. The spiritual enthusiasm and religious movements of the period did not only affect those living dedicated religious lives. From the twelfth century affective piety – emotional response to religious images and ideas – was expressed as devotion to the suffering Christ and to the Virgin Mary and was manifest in lay practices. Giles Constable quotes Bernard of Clairvaux: 'Consideration of the incarnation of Christ and His entire existence in the flesh and most greatly of the passion most powerfully promotes this affective love of the heart'.[73] As lay people, following the monastic model promoted by Cistercians, turned to images of a human Christ suffering on the cross and a human virgin Mary suckling her baby, a theology of humanism[74] developed in the monasteries and theology emerged as an academic subject in the cathedral schools. The theological working out of the incarnation developed in parallel to the increased affective response that is discerned in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries and it may not be possible to assign cause and effect to these two aspects of the same spiritual history. Caroline Walker Bynum places affective piety in history as an accompaniment to the 'basic changes in ideas about church, clergy, and the apostolic life' and the corresponding shifting relationships between clergy and laity. She explains that, 'eleventh- and twelfth-century writers begin to stress Christ's humanity, both in affective and sentimentalised responses to the gospel story . . . and in a new compulsion to build into the Christian life a literal imitation of the details of Jesus' ministry. The fundamental religious drama is now located within the self, and it is less a

---

[70] *The Life of Christina of Markyate, A Twelfth Century Recluse* ed. and trans. by C. H. Talbot (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959; rep. with additional material, 1987), pp. 102-5.

[71] 'Subversor abbas peccatrix virgo diffamabatur', *Christina of Markyate* ed. by Talbot, p. 174, trans., p. 175.

[72] In what is a later addition found only in Corpus Christi 402 and Cotton Vitellius F. vii, *AW* mentions with approval the story of the anchoress who refused to let St Martin look at her, Pt. 2, Corpus f. 15ᵃ 25-27. Aelred of Rievaulx mentions this story, 'De Institutione Inclusarum' in *Opera Omnia*, ed. by A. Hoste and C.H. Talbot C.C.C.M. Vol. 1 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1971), §6; translated as 'A Rule of Life for a Recluse' in *Treatises, The Pastoral Prayer* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1971; pbk. reprint, 1995), p. 51.

[73] Constable, *Reformation*, p. 284; having quoted Jesus' injunction to love God with all your heart, all your mind and all your strength, Bernard continues, 'Sane ad affectuosum, quem dicimus, cordis amorem plurimum valet cogitatio incarnationis Christi, sed et totius dispensationis quam gessit in carne, et maxime passionis', Sermo 29, De Diversis, in *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, Vol. 6.i, ed. J. Leclercq & H. Rochais (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1970), p. 211.

[74] The term is Colin Morris' in *Papal Monarchy*, p. 366.

battle than a journey – a journey toward God'.[75] The identification with God through his incarnation in Christ, a man who suffered and died, enabled people aware of their own humanity to start on the journey towards God through an imitation of the passion of Christ. *Ancrene Wisse* was a guidebook for this journey.

Incarnational spirituality, expressed in devotion to the Passion of Christ and in eucharistic piety centring on the presence of Christ in the consecrated Host, is at the heart of *Ancrene Wisse* but it was also the motivation for the lay devotions of the period and penetrated all areas of devotional life:

> This devotion to the humanity of Christ penetrated every aspect of the life of the church at that time. It can be seen in the liturgy, in the cult of the eucharist and the elevation of the host, in the new hymns to the Sacred Heart ... It can be seen in the devotion to the cross, the holy lance, and the five wounds of Christ.[76]

Central to the daily devotions prescribed in *Ancrene Wisse* was the Eucharist and the devotional practice most familiar to lay people at the same time would have been attendance at Mass. Even if the congregation did not take communion regularly – they were obliged by the Fourth Lateran Council to take it at least once a year at Easter – the re-enactment of the consecration of the Last Supper in the canon of the Mass was a highly significant element of the religious life of any community. The Eucharist was 'the one point of contact with Christ physically present on earth';[77] it was during the Canon of the Mass that even the most humble of lay Christians could believe him or herself in the presence of God. The regular enactment of the sacrifice of the Mass was a re-enactment of the passion and sacrifice of Jesus Christ; those who received the Eucharist were partaking in his death, and so in his resurrection: as Christ's words were believed to constitute the action of consecration, so, by repeating the words, the priest repeated the consecration.[78] Belief in the real presence of Christ in the Host was a dominant feature of Eucharistic theology by the twelfth century and at the same time, devotion to the real presence developed; such devotion does not appear before the twelfth century, 'yet by the middle of the thirteenth century, most of the liturgical, devotional, and even superstitious forms which this attitude would take had been established'.[79] At the same time, consecration, rather than the reception of communion, became the focal point of devotion for the devout congregation.[80] Caroline Walker Bynum explains in her work on the religious significance of food to medieval

---

[75] Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, p. 16.
[76] Constable, *Reformation*, p. 280.
[77] Gary Macy, *The Theologies of the Eucharist in the Early Scholastic Period: A Study of the Salvific Function of the Sacrament according to the Theologians c.1080-c.1220* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 92.
[78] Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development*, trans. Francis A. Brunner, 2 vols (1955; Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1986), vol. 2, p. 201.
[79] Macy, *Theologies of the Eucharist*, p. 89.
[80] See Cate Gunn, "'Efter the Measse-Coss, Hwen the Preost Sacreð": When is the Moment of Ecstasy in *Ancrene Wisse*', *Notes And Queries*, 246, N.S., 48 (2001), 105-108 (p. 106).

women: 'By the thirteenth century the eucharist, once a communal meal that bound Christians together and fed them with the comfort of heaven, had become an object of adoration'.[81] Consequently, the elevation of the consecrated host became the high point of the Mass. The canon of the Mass, the part of the service in which the consecration and elevation took place, was silent, or whispered inaudibly,[82] and anyway was in Latin; the consequent alienation of the congregation from the liturgy of the Mass led to the development of practices of lay piety separate from those of the priest. [83]

While the form that devotional practices took did undoubtedly depend on the decisions of councils and synods,[84] eucharistic piety among the laity was an affective and emotional response to the belief in the presence of God in the consecrated host. Pierre-Marie Gy places the development of the eucharistic cult in the twelfth century in the context of devotion to the humanity of Christ, and claims that:

> the devotion to the humanity of Christ undoubtedly played a stronger role than the theological debate in the development of eucharistic cult. Eucharistic piety addressed itself to Jesus on the cross, whereas eucharistic theology concentrated on the consecration and presence of Christ in the Eucharist rather than on the memorial of his passion'.[85]

The people were involved with the ceremony of the elevation: they could see the elevation and hear the ringing of the bell. Miri Rubin writes of the elevation:

> So by the early thirteenth century a focus for eucharistic awareness, a moment designed to encompass and communicate every aspect of the message which the church wished to convey, one which provided space for participation and for submergence in a ritual-communal moment, was in place. Taught, illuminated, heralded by the peal of bells, striking in its special lights and effects, it was attractive as a moment of encounter with the very Christ, from which some very real physical and spiritual benefits flowed.[86]

---

[81] Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, p. 53.

[82] 'Earlier the canon was declaimed or, perhaps, intoned, but in France by at least the ninth century it had come to be recited in a voice that was inaudible to the congregation and soon this practice was universal', Daniel Sheerin, 'The Liturgy' in *Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide*, ed. by F. A. C. Mantello and A. G. Rigg (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996) pp. 157-182 (p. 167); and see Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, 2, p. 214..

[83] see Introduction to *Lay-Folks Mass-Book*, ed. by Thomas Frederick Simmons, E.E.T.S., O.S. 71 (London: Trubner, 1879), p. xviii. The *Lay-Folks Mass-Book* is a volume compiled from English manuscripts dating from about 1375 but purporting to be translations. The editor assumes the original was in French (pp. xxxii-xxxiii) and uses internal evidence to suggest a date for the original of mid-twelfth century (p. xxxvi). Having been translated from one vernacular language into another, it is apparent that the intended readership of this work would have been the educated, pious laity.

[84] See, for example, V. L. Kennedy, 'The Moment of Consecration and the Elevation of the Host', *Mediaeval Studies* 6 (1944), 121-50 (pp. 148-150).

[85] Pierre-Marie Gy, 'Liturgy and Spirituality ii: Sacraments and Liturgy in Latin Christianity', trans. by Craig McKee, in *Christian Spirituality I: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff, *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, Vol. 16 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), pp. 365-382 (p. 379).

[86] Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 62-3.

Christ crucified on the cross was at the heart of affective lay piety in the High Middle Ages; through his sacrifice it was believed he redeemed mankind and that sacrifice was re-enacted in the Mass.

Christ had redeemed humanity through his suffering and it was through suffering that sinners could redeem themselves and obtain forgiveness. Suffering and tribulation were necessary parts of the Christian life, as is suggested in the sermon for the beginning of Lent, one of the Lambeth Homilies, English sermons designed for a lay audience:

> ah ic eow segge to soðe þes þu hefdest mare deruenesse on þisse liue of þine licome ſ þes þu scoldest hersumian þe bet þine leofe drihten and halden his bibode.

> but I say unto you for truth, the more tribulation thou hast in this life of thy body, the better thou shouldest obey thy dear Lord and keep his behests. [87]

The Fourth Lateran Council required everyone over the age of discretion to confess their sins to their own priest at least once a year and undergo penance;[88] the requirement to make one's confession was not new – but attitudes towards confession and penitence were changing. There was a new emphasis on the inner life rather than outward acts; Morris refers to this as a 'colonization of inner space'. Theologians, especially Cistercians, became interested in the workings of the human spirit, putting a new emphasis on intention; these ideas 'were directed in the first place to an audience of monks and scholars, but they show a kinship with developments in wider strata of society: pilgrimage and the cults of the cross, the Blessed Virgin, and Mary Magdalen echo Cistercian meditations on the heavenly Jerusalem, the passion, the incarnation, and penitence'.[89] Constable also sees the concern with confession as linked with the interiorization of religion and the consequent emphasis on intentions rather than actions: 'This concentration on the inner life of monks paralleled the tendency in moral theology to emphasize

---

[87] *Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises*, First Series, ed. Richard Morris (London: Early English Text Society, 1868), p. 21; trans, p. 20. There is still some dispute about the dating of the compilation. Thomas Hahn gives a date of c. 1180 in 'Early Middle English' in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, pp. 61-91 (p. 83), but a reference to saying confession during Lent, prior to communion at Easter – and the apparent acceptance of this as a regular custom – in the sermon for the first Sunday in Lent would seem to place it after the Fourth Lateran Council, p. 25. Although annual confession and communion were requirements prior to 1215, Colin Morris points out that 'The publication of the decree implies that annual confession and communion were not universal, and the requirement to publish it frequently and to enforce it upon pain of suspension from entry to the Church and prohibition of Christian burial strengthens the impression that a new requirement was being imposed', Morris, *Papal Monarchy*, pp. 371 & 436-7.

[88] 'Omnis utriusque sexus fidelis, postquam ad annos discretionis pervenerit, omnia sua solus peccata confiteatur fideliter, saltem semel in anno proprio sacerdoti,' 'All the faithful of either sex, after they have reached the age of discernment, should individually confess all their sins in a faithful manner to their own priest, at least once a year', Con. Lat. IV, p. 245; trans in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman P. Tanner (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990), Vol. 1, p. 245.

[88] Constable *Reformation*, p. 269.

[89] Morris, *Papal Monarchy*, p. 178.

the importance of intention in the doctrine of sin and of repentance in the doctrine of confession and penance'.[90]

According to the author of *Ancrene Wisse*, it is consent that dictates whether or not an action is sinful; there are three stages to sin: 'Þe forme is cogitatiun; þe oþer is affectiun; þe þridde is cunsence', 'The first is cogitation; the second is affection; the third is consent'.[91] This schema is taken from a sermon of St. Bernard[92] but the theology here owes more to Abelard than Bernard, since it is Abelard who places the committing of sin at the moment of consent, that consent having to be informed by knowledge: 'Sin lies neither in being tempted to do nor in doing what is wrong; it lies between these two moments, in consenting to the initial temptation'.[93] If, as Michael Haren explains in a synopsis of Abelard's *Ethics*, 'It is the intention that determines the morality of action and it is consent to what is known to be evil that, from the point of view of the agent, constitutes sin',[94] then the penitent has to accept accountability for actions known to be sinful and confession has to cover not the action itself so much as the intention and consent.

In the section of *Ancrene Wisse* dealing with confession, the anchoresses are reminded that the devil cannot force them to sin, what matters is their own will: 'Þe feond ne mei neden na mon to na sunne, þah he eggi þer-to', 'The devil cannot force anyone to sin, although he may give encouragement towards it'.[95] Hubert of Sorbonne, in a sermon to beguines, reminded his audience of the impotence of the devil unless they consent: 'Sed non propter hoc tales excusantur, quia diabolus non potest decipere nisi uolentem. Beati erunt illi et ille qui et non [consentient] set istum thesaurum tam preciosum custodient'[96] ('But these people are not excused because of this [i.e. the great temptations of the devil], since the devil cannot ensnare them unless they are willing. Those men and women who do not consent but guard this very precious treasure will be blessed'); Robert of Sorbon, in a sermon from a different collection, gives a nice little comparison to illustrate this point: 'Vna musca uel pulex afligit hominem uelit nolit, sed dyabolus non potest nisi uolentem, ergo dyabolus debilior est pulice' ('A fly or a flea afflicts a

---

[90] Constable *Reformation*, p. 269.

[91] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402, f. 78ᵇ 5-7.

[92] Bernard of Clairvaux, Sermones de diversis, Sermo 32 § 3, *Opera*, 6. 1, p. 220.

[93] D. E. Luscombe, 'Peter Abelard' in *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, ed. by Peter Dronke, pp. 279-307 (p. 305)

[94] Michael Haren, *Medieval Thought: The Western Intellectual Tradition from Antiquity to the Thirteenth Century* Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), p. 107; and see D. E. Luscombe, 'Peter Abelard', in *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, ed. by Peter Dronke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 279-307: 'Only the intention to conform to the law of God can win merit for man, and only the knowing consent to committing a deliberate contempt of God incurs guilt', p. 305.

[95] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402, f. 82ᵇ 15-16.

[96] Hubert of Sorbonne, Sermon 15, 'Ad beginas in festo beati Iohannis in mane', in Nicole Bériou, 'La Prédication au béguinage de Paris pendant l'année liturgique 1272-73' *Recherches Augustiniennes*, 13 (1978) 105-229 (pp. 206-7).

man whether he likes it or not, but the devil cannot do so unless the man is willing. The devil is therefore weaker than a flea').[97] Although not peculiar to the thirteenth century, consent was an important issue in this material addressed to lay audiences. There is also a sense that lay people had to take some responsibility for their own confession.

Leonard Boyle points out that 'the act of confessing becomes more personal, more aware of self' as genuine contrition, rather than outward acts of penance, was required.[98] These attitudes were not confined to the monastery; the development of a literature dealing with confession and penance in the thirteenth century was to enable priests to help their parishioners to examine their consciences and make a full confession. Bloomfield claims that the Fourth Lateran Council 'set its seal' on a movement producing penitential literature in response to developments in moral theology which emphasised penance as a central sacrament in the lives of Christians.[99] The penitential sermons of the *Lambeth Homilies* emphasise the importance of personal repentance leading to full confession and penitence;[100] the same emphasis is found in the sermons of James of Vitry. In his second sermon for the beginning of Lent, James of Vitry divides the theme taken from Joel in order to give an account of what penitence should be: 'Conuertimini ad me in toto corde vestro, in ieiunio et fletu et planctu: et scindite corda vestra et non vestimenta vestra', 'Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments' (Joel 2:12-13). The fasting is expanded and explained as making satisfaction; weeping signifies contrition and the rending of the heart is understood to mean making confession. These three together constitute a full penitence:

> Perfecta autem poenitentia in tribus consistit, in fletu et planctu contritionis, in apertione cordis per virtutem confessionis, quod signat Propheta cum ait: Scindite corda vestra, in labore satisfactionis, propter quod Propheta dicit: In ieiunio, non solum a cibis carnalibus, sed a vitiis quoque et abomnium illicitis. [101]

> Perfect penitence consists of three things: in weeping and lamenting with contrition, in opening of the heart through the power of confession, which the Prophet signified when he said, 'Rend your hearts' and in the effort of making satisfaction, about which the

---

[97] Robert of Sorbon, 'Sermo in dominica secunda post Epiphaniam' in N. Bériou and D. L. d'Avray, 'The Image of the Ideal Husband in Thirteenth-Century France' in *Modern Questions about Medieval Sermons: Essays on Marriage, Death, History and Sanctity*, by N. Bériou, D. L. d'Avray et al. (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi Sull'Alto Medioevo, 1994), pp. 31-69 (p. 59, trans. p. 34).
[98] Leonard E. Boyle, 'The Fourth Lateran Council and Manuals of Popular Theology' in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. by Thomas J. Heffernan, Tennessee Studies in Literature, vol. 28 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), pp. 30-43 (pp. 33 & 34).
[99] F. Bloomfield, Introduction to Thomas of Chobham, *Summa Confessorum*, Analecta Mediaevalia Namurcensia, 25 (Louvain: Éditions Nauwelaerts, 1968), p. xxi.
[100] See p. 21, n. 87 above and further discussion of penitence in Chapter Two.
[101] James of Vitry, 2nd sermon In Capite Ieiunii, *Sermones in Epistolas et Euangelia Dominicalia totius anni* (Antwerp: Ionnais Stelsii, 1575), p. 230. I have silently expanded contractions and substituted 'et' for '&'.

Prophet said, 'In fasting, not only from carnal food, but also from vices and horrid crimes'.

The physical corollary of the emotional state of penitence is important: the tears of contrition are no more a metaphor than is the blood of Christ but, like that blood, can act as a powerful symbol. In *Ancrene* Wisse the very life of the anchoress, enclosed in a cell, is an 'objective correlative' for the penitential state but expressed in reality, not art.[102] The spirituality of *Ancrene Wisse* is penitential; it is an affective response to the Passion of Christ expressed in a life of suffering and self-denial. It becomes a means of imitating Christ, and parallels are drawn between the suffering of the anchoresses in the cell and that of Christ on the cross, but the reward for their suffering will be granted to them as brides of Christ in heaven. These aspects of the spirituality of *Ancrene Wisse* will be examined in some detail in Chapter Two.

Bynum has pointed out that recently the history of spirituality in the Middle Ages has concentrated on the increase in lay spirituality and popular religion in this period and that it has emphasised the sociological and anthropological aspects of spirituality. Historians have turned to prosopographical work[103] rather than the 'mystical treatises, sermons, biblical commentaries, works of advice for novices, collections of visions, saints' lives'[104] which was the matter studied by scholars of religion a century ago. The history of spirituality has come to mean 'the study of how basic religious attitudes and values are conditioned by the society in which they occur'.[105] Bynum believes that we need a middle ground and it is this middle ground that this thesis is exploring. In constructing a spirituality that was incarnational and penitential, *Ancrene Wisse* drew on a monastic and, specifically, Cistercian tradition of spirituality, making use of mystical treatises and sermons; but it also drew from its contemporary social and religious context and we need to acknowledge how far the spiritual attitudes of the work were conditioned by the society in which, and for which, it was written. Radical religious groups such as the beguines; the pastoral mission of mendicant friars; affective piety expressed in Eucharist devotion and devotion to the Virgin Mary and the desire to imitate the human, suffering Christ through a life of penitence: these all fed the soil out of which the complex work that is *Ancrene Wisse* grew and in which the heart could be cultivated in its relationship with God.

---

[102] The phrase is, of course, T. S. Eliot's, in 'Hamlet' (1919) rep. in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot* ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber, 1975) pp. 45-49 (p. 48).
[103] In this context, *prosopography* can be taken to mean the study of collected lives, of groups of people relating to one another, rather than isolated biography.
[104] Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, p. 5.
[105] Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, p. 3.

Chapter Two:

The Spirituality of *Ancrene Wisse*

Mary Baldwin suggests that '[a] study of the spirituality of *AW* must begin with the text itself'.[1] The fact that *Ancrene Wisse* was written in the vernacular, in the first half of the thirteenth century and for lay anchoresses means that it can be seen as a part of the history of the literature of lay piety as much as (if not more than) a traditional institutional product. The spirituality evinced by *Ancrene Wisse* – a spirituality that is incarnational and affective – although itself a product of monasticism, is also the spirituality that motivated the growth in lay piety. In a number of ways – in the devotions prescribed, in the liminal status of the anchoresses for whom it was originally written and in its spirituality – *Ancrene Wisse* occupies a transitional position: its roots are in monasticism but it anticipates the developing lay piety and vernacular theology of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

We need to read *Ancrene Wisse* in the context of its particular history and of other comparable texts. The authorship of *Ancrene Wisse* is still a matter of conjecture,[2] but we can take into account its function, the conditions of its production and its readership. Although there is evidence that *Ancrene Wisse* was always intended for a larger (and, it would seem, lay) audience it was originally written at the request of three sisters who were following a reclusive life as anchoresses. These anchoresses can be considered the original readership of *Ancrene Wisse* and attention needs to be given to them, their status and lifestyle. The anchoresses are usually referred to as 'lay-anchoresses'; by calling these anchoresses 'lay' we are placing them in a significant religious movement. While in former centuries anchoresses were usually professed nuns, by the thirteenth century most anchoresses were 'lay'.[3] The term *lay* is used here to indicate that these anchoresses entered the anchorhold from the world rather than being nuns seeking a harsher life, as was the case with the sister of Aelred and Eve of Wilton.[4] Aelred wrote a guide to the anchoritic life for his sister, *De Institutione Inclusarum*, which is an acknowledged influence on

---

[1] Mary Baldwin, '*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background in the Christian Tradition of Religious Instruction and Spirituality' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, 1974), p. 44.
[2] See Dobson, *The Origins of* Ancrene Wisse and Bella Millett, 'The Origins of *Ancrene Wisse*: New Answers, New Questions', *Medium Aevum*, 61 (1992), 206-228.
[3] 'Only two of the one hundred and twenty three female anchorites known for the thirteenth century can with confidence be counted as former nuns', Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*, p. 25.
[4] Patricia J. F. Rosof also gives the examples of Humilitas and Iustina, 'The Anchoress in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries' in *Peaceweavers: Medieval Religious Women*, Vol. 2, ed. by Lillian Thomas Shank and John A. Nichols (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1987), pp. 123-44 (pp. 126-7).

Ancrene Wisse,[5] but it is arguable that the spirituality of lay women who entered an anchorhold, and the prescriptions laid down for them, would differ from the spirituality of nuns who were already trained in the religious life but found it 'lacking'.[6] To understand the spirituality of *Ancrene Wisse* we need to look at not only influences on it but also the contemporary context and the lay piety that was developing at the time it was written; the very liminality of the status of the anchoresses for whom it was written is an important factor in understanding the spirituality of the work. We need to be cautious about how we understand the term *lay*, however; it should not be understood to mean the antithesis of *religious*. Although not members of a religious order, the anchoresses were religious in that they had taken vows and followed a religious life under ecclesiastical authority. To call the anchoresses for whom *Ancrene Wisse* was written 'lay' may be useful in drawing attention to the fact that they had not entered a convent and that, while able to read, they were not greatly learned,[7] but otherwise, terms such as 'quasi-religious' or 'semi-regular' are more useful in suggesting their liminal and rather anomalous status, and may allow comparisons to be made with other quasi-religious women, such as the beguines of northern Europe – groups of women seeking to lead a religious life but not confined within a traditional nunnery.

Ancrene Wisse itself refers to the anxiety the three sisters for whom it was originally written felt over their own status. The author advises them that, if anyone ask them, they should reply that they belong to the order of St. James, referring to the epistle of St. James in which he defines religion as, 'iseon ant helpen widewen ant federlese children, ant from þe world witen him cleane ant unwemmet', 'to visit and help widows and fatherless children, and keep oneself pure and unspotted from the world'.[8] It is the second part of this – keeping oneself pure and unspotted from the world – that is to apply to the anchoresses. In the Latin, the word *religio* is used, which is given in the Middle English as *religiun*. Given the context, it is clear that what is intended here, by the author of *Ancrene Wisse* if not by St. James, is a definition of the religious life; the author of *Ancrene Wisse* sees in this short passage a distinction between active and contemplative forms of

---

[5] The editors of the Middle English versions of Aelred's work reminds us that 'By his own admission ... the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* knew and used *De Institutione Inclusarum*', *Aelred of Rievaulx's De Institutione Inclusarum: Two English Versions*, ed. by John Ayto and Alexandra Barratt E.E.T.S. (London: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. xlii. The author of *Ancrene Wisse* would have known Aelred's original Latin treatise since the Middle English translation is later than *Ancrene Wisse*.

[6] Rosof, 'The Anchoress', p. 126.

[7] In the Middle Ages, the term *lai* indicated unlearned or uneducated or non-clerical; see *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. Hans Kurath (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1954 -). In his Chronicle written towards the end of the twelfth century, Jocelin of Brakelond refers to the Abbot banishing from his private counsels 'all the great men of the Abbey, both lay and literate [tam laicos quam literatos]' as though these two terms are mutually exclusive, *The Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond*, trans. H. E. Butler (London: Thomas Nelson, 1949), p. 26; and see Cate Gunn, '*Ancrene Wisse*: A Modern Lay Person's Guide to a Medieval Religious Text', *Magistra*, 8 (2002), 3-25 (pp. 14-17).

[8] *AW* Preface, Corpus 402 f.3ᵃ 11-13.

religious life. The anchoresses are identified with the religious who are withdrawn from the world and, indeed, they should keep themselves pure and unspotted 'ouer oþer religiuse'.[9] *Ancrene Wisse* insists that 'religion' is not a matter of clothing, or even the vows taken; the implication of much of *Ancrene Wisse* is that, as anchoresses enduring solitude and strict enclosure, they partake of a spiritual life that is superior, being harsher, to that of nuns. For them, the anchorhold was an alternative to the nunnery but they did not enjoy the security and authority of a recognised religious order.

While the anchoresses were leading an enclosed, contemplative life, much of the advice given was applicable to the wider community of pious laity living in the world. That there would be a wider audience seems to have been part of the author's intention from the outset.[10] The greater part of Part Five on confession, for example, is addressed to this larger audience, only the final short section being specifically for the use of the anchoresses:

> Mine leoue sustren, þis fifte dale, þe is of schrift, limpeð to alle men iliche; for-þi ne wundri ȝe ow nawt þet Ich toward ow nomeliche nabbe nawt ispeken i þis dale. Habbeð þah to ower bihoue þis lutle leaste ende.

> My dear sisters, this fifth part, which is about confession, is relevant to everybody alike; so do not be surprised that I have not spoken to you in particular in this part. But here is a short final section for your use.[11]

Even the sexual practices that are forbidden are ones that need not concern the anchoresses. In the Corpus Christi manuscript, whose revisions may well be authorial,[12] the author directly addresses the anchoresses he knows, and of whose chastity he seems confident:

> Ȝe þe of swucches nute nawt, ne þurue ȝe nawt wundrin ow ne þenchen hwet Ich meane, ah ȝeldeð graces Godd þet ȝe swuch uncleannesse nabbeð ifondet, ant habbeð reowðe of ham þe i swuch beoð ifallen.

> Those of you who know nothing about such things need not wonder or speculate on what I mean, but give thanks to God that you have not experimented with such filthy practices, and feel sorry for those who have fallen into them.[13]

The author seems always to keep separate the two audiences – the anchoresses and the wider lay or secular audience. Dobson points out that there are also references in *Ancrene Wisse* to a single, hypothetical anchoress[14] and suggests that the revisions tend to omit personal details and that the revisions in the Corpus version 'strengthen the impression that the author is writing for a fair

---

[9] 'More than other religious', *AW* Preface, Corpus 402 f.3ª17-18.

[10] Dobson, *The Origins of* Ancrene Wisse, p. 251.

[11] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402, f. 93ª 2-6.

[12] Dobson, *Origins*, p. 11.

[13] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402, f. 55ᵇ 20-24.

[14] Dobson, *Origins of* Ancrene Wisse, p. 252-3.

number of women in more than one place'.[15] Nevertheless, despite the anticipated wider readership, there is a strong personal element to *Ancrene Wisse*, especially when 'mine leoue sustren' are referred to. Something similar happens with the texts by the fourteenth-century 'English mystics', some of which were written for known individuals, and Barry Windeatt's comment on these texts could apply equally to the advice of the author of *Ancrene Wisse*: 'The mystics' counselling directed to particular cases becomes more widely available without losing the immediacy of its address'.[16]

Ancrene Wisse is not primarily about the institution of anchoritism, but, rather, about how the individual negotiates the world, with its fleshly desires, in the quest for heavenly bliss. Anchoritism is one way – possibly the best – for this endeavour and *Ancrene Wisse* both describes the life of the anchoress and gives spiritual advice to support those living this life. As in the text the Inner Rule, which rules the heart, is framed by the Outer Rule, expounded in the first and last parts, so the anchoresses' spiritual lives are framed – and contained – by the anchorhold. The anchorhold is a place of penitence and a prison; Ann Warren explains,

> The cell of enclosure . . . was equated with a prison into which the anchorite propelled himself for fear of hell and for love of Christ. The eternal punishment of hell might be escaped by the lifetime refusal of escape from the anchorhold.[17]

The physical hardships the anchoresses endure are for the sake of purifying the heart, they have no intrinsic value:

> Alswa as na mon ne luueð lomen for ham seolf, ah deð for þe þinges þet me wurcheð wið ham, alswa na flesches derf nis to luuien bute for-þi, þet Godd te reaðere þiderward lokeð mid his grace, ant makeð þe heorte schir ant of briht sihðe.

> Just as tools are not valued for their own sake, but only for the things that are done with them, so no physical hardship is to be valued except for this reason, that God looks towards it sooner with his grace, and purifies the heart and gives it clear sight.[18]

The anchorhold is also a haven, allowing refuge from the temptations of the world and giving the anchoress the opportunity of spending time in prayer and meditation. The anchorhold provided the physical conditions – the protection and the privations – for the practice of a spirituality based on a personal relationship with Christ as God made man. This spirituality can be defined as incarnational and can be seen more widely manifest in the affective piety that developed in the twelfth century; it was expressed in the new religious movements of the thirteenth century and in new patterns of devotion. In *Ancrene Wisse*, incarnational spirituality is expressed in popular

---

[15] Dobson, *Origins of* Ancrene Wisse, pp. 260 and 264.
[16] *English Mystics of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Barry Windeatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 5.
[17] Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*, p. 93.
[18] *AW* Pt. 7, Corpus 402 f. 104ª 19-23.

forms of affective piety – identification with the suffering humanity of Christ, Eucharistic piety and devotion to Mary – as well as seeing oneself as the bride of Christ. For the anchoresses, incarnational spirituality is intimately related to their way of life: its enclosure, stability and privations are ways in which they are able to express their relationship to God and to imitate Christ.

Enclosure had both symbolic and material meaning. While the privations of asceticism allowed the anchoresses to identify with the suffering of Christ, their strict enclosure removed them from the world and meant that they were dead to the world. Their enclosure and the burial service said when they were enclosed were symbolic, but it would not do justice to the anchoresses, or medieval imagination, to dismiss how they experienced the symbolic as mere rhetoric or empty ritual. Such symbolic acts allowed the anchoress to interact with a spiritual dimension. Jacques le Goff points out that, 'Indo-European tradition had evolved a way of interpreting space symbolically' and argues for the importance of spatial orientation:

> In the Middle Ages the most important oppositions were up/down and inside/outside
> .... In medieval Christian ideology positive value was ascribed to high and inside.
> Ascent and internalisation constituted an ideal. Here the narrative unfolds entirely in the
> other world, a new other world that held out a prospect of hope, of enhanced likelihood
> of salvation thanks to a purgative and punitive ideal.[19]

Enclosure within the anchorhold made real the commitment of the anchoresses to the life of the spirit and their death to the material world. Their incarceration in the anchorhold is likened to the enclosure Jesus experienced in his earthly life and death and allows them to share in his life:

> Ʒef ʒe þenne i nearow stude þolieð bitternesse, ʒe beoð his feolahes, reclus as he wes i
> Marie wombe. Beo ʒe ibunden inwið fowr large wahes? Ant he, in a nearow cader,
> ineilet o rode, i stanene þruh bicluset hetefeste. Marie wombe ant þis þruh weren his
> ancre-huses.

> If, then, you endure bitterness in a narrow place, you are his companions, enclosed as he
> was in Mary's womb. Are you confined inside four spacious walls? *He* was in a narrow
> cradle, nailed on the cross, closely confined in a tomb of stone. Mary's womb and this
> tomb were his anchor-houses.[20]

Throughout *Ancrene Wisse*, the anchoritic life is presented as an imitation of Christ's passion and death on the cross. In Part Three, reasons for maintaining solitude are given and the anchoresses are reminded that 'ʒe beoð wið Iesu Crist bitund as i sepulcre, bibarret as he wes o þe deore Rode', 'you are enclosed with Jesus Christ as if in a sepulchre, pinned down as he was on the precious Cross'.[21] The anchoresses share the suffering and shame Christ endured on the cross:

---

[19] Jacques le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988; pbk. ed., 1992), pp. 85 and 91.

[20] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402, f. 102ᵃ 28-f. 102ᵇ 5.

[21] *AW* Pt. 3, Corpus 402, f. 45ᵇ 21-23.

'al hare blisse is forte beon ahonget sariliche ant scheomeliche wið Iesu on his rode', 'all their joy

is in being hanged painfully and shamefully with Jesus on his cross'.[22] Jocelyn Wogan-Browne

quotes a variation of this comparison with the enclosure of Christ from Clemence of Barking's

Anglo-Norman *St Catherine*:

> Christ placed himself in a narrow dungeon when he took our humanity. He whom the
> whole world cannot contain lay for a long time in a womb. But he encompasses the
> entire world and all creatures within it .... For love of him, I shall gladly accept the
> darkness of this dungeon which I see here, for he did much more for me. I must tell you
> that in return for this darkness such sight will be given to me that no tempest of chill
> wind will ever dim it.

Wogan-Browne comments that 'This is very different from the topos as deployed by the *Guide*

[i.e. *Ancrene Wisse*]', but here, as in *Ancrene Wisse*, there is a desire to participate in the experience

of Christ.[23] The editors of the English versions of Aelred's *De Institutione Inclusarum* suggest that,

in contrast to Aelred's work, *Ancrene Wisse* presents 'the idea of the glad and willing, almost gay

and chivalrous acceptance of suffering';[24] through imitating Christ's suffering, the anchoresses

will share in his bliss:

> ȝef we libbeð i scheome ant i pine for his luue, i hwucche twa he deide, we schulen beon
> liche his blisful ariste, ure bodi briht as his is, world buten ende.

> if we live for his sake in shame and in pain, in both of which he died, we shall imitate his
> joyful resurrection, our bodies as bright as his, world without end.[25]

The bright bodies recall the morning-gifts, 'swiftnesse ant leome of a briht sihðe', 'swiftness and

the illumination of clear sight',[26] promised to the anchoresses as brides of Christ.

The passion of Christ also offers a refuge for the anchoresses; towards the end of Part Four an

image from the Song of Songs, of a dove hiding in the clefts of a rock, is interpreted as the

anchoress taking refuge and shelter from the temptations of the world in the wounds of Christ.

The identification of the clefts in the rock with the wounds in the body of Christ is a traditional

one; it 'can be found as early as Gregory's *In Cantica*'[27] and the image of the wounds of Christ as

'holes in the rock where we may take refuge'[28] is found in the writings of both Bernard of

Clairvaux and his follower, Guerric of Igny. In his *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum*, Bernard

associates the image of the wounds as clefts in the rock with that of Christ as the rock,

---

[22] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402 f. 95b 24-26.

[23] Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture* c. *1150-1300: Virginity and its Authorizations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 130-131.

[24] *Aelred of Rievaulx's De Institutione Inclusarum*, ed. Ayto and Barratt, p. xxxix.

[25] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402 f. 97b 2-4.

[26] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402 f. 24b 18.

[27] *Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works*, trans. by Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), n. 127, p. 385.

[28] John Morson, *Christ the Way: The Christology of Guerric of Igny*, Cistercian Studies, 25 (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1978), p. 129.

suggesting security and safety;[29] while Guerric of Igny suggests that the dove finds in the wounds of Christ not only a refuge, but also union with God.[30] The incarnation and humanity of Christ were important elements in Cistercian spirituality, itself a major influence on the spirituality of *Ancrene Wisse* but, as Savage and Watson point out, the passage from Part Four is also 'one of the earliest English expressions of the devotion to the wound in the side, which was to become popular in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries'.[31] Here we can see *Ancrene Wisse* occupying a position on the cusp between traditional monastic ideas and images and their adaptation for late-medieval popular devotion.

As the relationship with Christ is emphasised in the lives of the anchoresses, so they are distanced from the world outside the anchorhold. Through the virtue of their virginity, which symbolises their dedication to God rather than man, they are as exiles, strangers in a strange land: 'as in uncuð lond ant in uncuð eard bituhhen unþeode', 'as if in a strange land and in a strange country among foreigners'.[32] The same idea is present in *Hali Meiðhad*, also written for anchoresses: the virtue of virginity, which foreshadows the immortal bliss of heaven, is outlawed in this earthly 'lond of unlicnesse'.[33] James of Vitry writes in his *vita* of Mary of Oignies, written two years after her death in 1215, and so a work contemporary with *Ancrene Wisse*, that she 'languished in exile' in this world.[34] These virgins, exiled in this world, are journeying towards their heavenly home; two dynamics can be discerned in this journey – aspiration to union with God and the resistance of worldly temptations. There is a suggestion that they can experience a foretaste of heavenly bliss, union with God as their heavenly bridegroom, in this world. In *Hali Meiðhad*, for example, the virginal life itself foreshadows heavenly life:

> Þis mihte is þet an þet i þis deadliche lif schaweð in hire an estat of þe blisse undeadlich i þet eadi lond as brude ne nimeð gume ne brudgume brude; ant teacheð her on eorðe in hire liflade þe liflade of heouene.

---

[29] Bernard of Clairvaux, 'Sermones in Cantica' 61.3, in *Opera*, Vol. 1, pp. 149-50; *On the Song of Songs*, 3, trans. by Kilian Walsh and Irene M. Edmonds, Cistercian Fathers Series, 31 (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1979), p. 142.

[30] Guerric of Igny, *Liturgical Sermons* Vol. 2, trans by monks of Mount St. Bernard Abbey, Cistercian Fathers Series, 32 (Spencer, Mass.: Cistercian Publications, 1971), pp. 73-78. Thanks to Sheryl Frances Chen, who gave a paper on 'Guerric's Sermons for Palm Sunday: *Imitatio Christi* and Entrance into the Wounds' at 36th International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 5 May 2001, for this reference.

[31] Savage and Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, n. 127, p. 385.

[32] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402, f. 97ª 3-4.

[33] *Medieval English Prose for Women: Selections from the Katherine Group and Ancrene Wisse*, ed. by Bella Millett and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, rev. pbk. ed., 1992), pp. 10 and 11.

[34] James of Vitry, 'Vita Mariae Oigniacensis' in *Acta Sanctorum* June, Vol. 4, ed. by D. Papebrochius (Antwerp, 1707), p. 661; and Jacques de Vitry, *The Life of Marie d'Oignies*, trans. by Margot H. King, Peregrina Papers Series, 3 (Toronto: Peregrina, 1993), p. 42.

This virtue [i.e. virginity] is the only one that in this mortal life foreshadows in itself a state of the immortal bliss in that blessed land where bride does not take groom nor bridegroom bride; and teaches here on earth by its way of life the way of life in heaven.[35]

Ancrene Wisse suggests that the virginal life is a preparation for the heavenly life, when the anchoresses will be the brides of Christ. The anchoritic life was a solitary one, and the anchoress is likened to a solitary sparrow, 'passer solitarius'.[36] The solitary life is also a silent one, and through silence the anchoress guards her heart – the five senses being the guards of the heart[37] – and prepares herself to sing in heaven:

> For hwa-se is muche stille, ant halt silence longe, ha mei hopien sikerliche þet, hwen ha spekeð toward Godd, þet he hire ihere; ha mei ec hopien þet ha schal singen, þurh hire silence, sweteliche in heouene.

> For anyone who is often quiet, and keeps silence for long periods, can certainly hope that when she speaks to God, he will listen to her; she can also hope that, because of her silence, she will sing sweetly in heaven.[38]

For Aelred, silence was not just not speaking, but being open to the presence of Christ:

> sola sedeat et taceat ore, ut spiritu loquatur, et credat se non esse solam, quando sola est. Tunc enim cum Christo est, qui non dignatur in turbis esse cum ea.

> she must sit alone, imposing silence on her tongue that her spirit may speak; believing that when alone she is never alone, for then she is with Christ, and he would not care to be with her in a crowd.[39]

Aelred stressed that the anchoress 'ponat custodiam ori suo', 'should put a curb on her lips',[40] and it is in this sense of curbing, or controlling, the senses that silence is so important in *Ancrene Wisse*. Silence is another form of the privations and mortifications the anchoresses endure that prepare them for the bliss of heaven.

The life described in *Ancrene Wisse* is both ascetic and contemplative and as such prepares the anchoresses for the heavenly life. Ann Warren suggests that English rules for the anchoritic life, including *Ancrene Wisse*, are largely about penitence and purgation, but that these provide the conditions for contemplation: 'The contemplation of God is fundamentally the purpose of the solitary life, the penitential aspects of such a life being the preparation for a journey toward a heightened consciousness'.[41] Asceticism had long been considered a necessary preparation for contemplation; Cuthbert Butler points out that this was the case for both Augustine and Gregory

---

[35] *Medeival English Prose for Women*, p. 10; trans. p. 11.
[36] *AW* Pt. 3, Corpus 402, f. 41b 15-17.
[37] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402, f. 12b 4-5.
[38] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402, f. 20a 16-20.
[39] Aelred, 'De Institutione Inclusarum' [hereafter, DII], p. 641; 'Rule of Life', p. 50.
[40] Aelred, DII, p. 641; 'Rule of Life', p. 51.
[41] Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*, p. 100.

— both acknowledged influences on *Ancrene Wisse*. Butler defines Christian asceticism as 'a prolonged and serious exercise in self-discipline, self-control, self-denial, and the cultivation and practice of the virtues'.[42]

The idea that asceticism was a necessary condition for the contemplative life continued through the medieval period. Hugh of St. Victor in the early twelfth century, for example, 'points the way for all the Victorines in the soul's preparation for contemplative experience. There must be a long, hard apprenticeship of moral purification from the vices and inculcation of the virtues'.[43] Two fourteenth-century works, *The Cloud of Unknowing* and Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, both assume that the life of the solitary provides the physical conditions, through the complete renunciation of the world, which are necessary for true contemplation. According to Rosof, the anchoritic life was 'a life attractive only to the truly contemplative';[44] Baldwin also writes that, 'traditionally regarded as the highest calling in the religious life, the goals of the solitary life are always understood to be contemplation and union with God in constant prayer'.[45] It is this association between asceticism and contemplation which leads Eric Colledge to declare his belief that *Ancrene Wisse* 'remains a text essential to the study of English mysticism because in it we have an account ... of the enclosed, solitary life in which mysticism could and did flourish'.[46] The entry on *The Ancrene Riwle* in *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* also sees *Ancrene Wisse* as occupying a place in the history of English Mysticism:

> There is indication that the *Riwle* may represent the English manifestation of a European women's movement of affective spirituality. The *Riwle* is not a mystical treatise but sets down principles of guidance for the solitary life in which mysticism would flower.[47]

If the life described is contemplative, can *Ancrene Wisse* then be considered a work of mysticism? There is an assumed connexion between contemplation and mysticism; Wolfgang Riehle addresses the continuing debate about *Ancrene Wisse* and mysticism, and makes a similar point to that of Colledge:

> Against the widespread view which Shepherd reiterates in his edition of the *Ancrene Wisse* that it is pointless to try to link this text with mysticism since it is not concerned with the experience of the *unio* of God and man, it has to be argued that the author of this text assumed that the women he was addressing were leading a contemplative life and that he certainly expected them occasionally to achieve the stage of contemplative prayer.

---

[42] Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism* (1922; London: Arrow Books, 1960), p. 127.
[43] *Late Medieval Mysticism*, ed. by Ray C. Petry (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957), p. 82.
[44] Rosof, 'The Anchoress in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', p. 130.
[45] Baldwin, '*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background', p. 316.
[46] Eric Colledge, *The Medieval Mystics of England* (London: Murray, 1962), p. 32.
[47] *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. by Gordon S. Wakefield (London: SCM Press, 1983), p. 11. Entry signed editor.

> Basically what the *Ancrene Wisse* does is to create the precondition for an intimate, mystical experience of God.[48]

The passage in Part Two beginning 'Zelatus sum syon zelo magno',[49] in which imagery from the Song of Songs is used to present God as a jealous lover, is described by the editors of *Anchoritic Spirituality* as both 'an account of contemplation itself' and 'the most sustained passage of mystical writing in the work',[50] which suggests *contemplation* and *mysticism* to be almost synonymous.

Mary Baldwin refers to the author's use of the traditional language of contemplation[51] but also claims in her Introduction that 'it is now practically a commonplace that *Ancrene Wisse* is not a mystical work'.[52] Warren, while writing of rules such as *Ancrene Wisse* that their purpose 'is to aid in effecting that transformation of self that, with God's grace, will take the recluse up the ladder that reaches to Him', plays down the suggestion of mysticism:

> In such works as Goscelin's *Liber*, Aelred's *Letter*, and the *Ancrene Riwle*, the achievement of the mystical moment is mentioned only in passing ... At most Aelred, *Ancrene Riwle*, and Goscelin offer the barest suggestion of a chaste happening. They do not proclaim an ecstasy.[53]

Bella Millett points out that 'Although [*Ancrene Wisse*] was written for women leading a contemplative life, it contains hardly any reference to mystical experience', and gives a brief outline of the debate about this 'apparent paradox'.[54]

The two terms are closely related, though *contemplation* has a broader definition than *mysticism*: it can mean the contemplative life as well as a state of deep, prayerful meditation.[55] Warren warns that, 'The word *contemplative* has many meanings'; the contemplative life is distinguished from the active life in the world and Warren suggests that it 'is usually identified with the monastery',[56] but, in many ways, the solitary life of the anchorite was the contemplative life *par excellence*. The first recorded use of the English term *contemplation* is found in *Ancrene Wisse*: 'alswa schal ancre fleon wið contemplatiun (þet is wið heh þoht) ant wið hali bonen bi niht toward heouene'.[57] Here,

---

[48] Wolfgang Riehle, *The Middle English Mystics*, trans. by Bernard Standing (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 173, n. 56.
[49] *AW* Pt. 2, ed. Millett, p. 12; Corpus 402, f. 23ᵇ 3.
[50] Savage and Ward, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, p. 356.
[51] Baldwin, '*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background', p. 267.
[52] Baldwin, '*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background', p. 10.
[53] Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*, p. 114.
[54] Millett, *Annotated Bibliography*, p. 24.
[55] See *Middle English Dictionary* where the definition of *contemplation* is given as 'religious meditation, contemplation of the Divinity and the divine order ... the contemplative life ... to have a vision through ecstatic contemplation'.
[56] Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*, p. 100.
[57] AW Pt. 3, Corpus 402, f. 39ᵃ 14-15.

contemplation is elevated thoughts and holy prayers, by means of which the anchoress flies

towards heaven. The goal of both the contemplative life and contemplation itself is union with

God, an experience now often called *mysticism*, the term used in the Middle Ages for this

experience, however, was, in Latin, *contemplatio*. In the late twelfth century, Richard of St. Victor

defined *contemplatio* as

> libera mentis perspecacia in sapientiae spectacula cum admiratione suspensa, vel certe
> sicut praecipuo illi nostri temporis theologo placuit, qui eam in haec verba definivit.
> Contemplatio est perspicax et liber animi contuitus in res perspiciendas usquequaque
> diffusus.

> Contemplation is the free, more penetrating gaze of a mind, suspended with wonder
> concerning manifestations of wisdom; or certainly as it was determined by a
> distinguished theologian of our time who defined it in these words: Contemplation is a
> penetrating and free gaze of a soul extended everywhere in perceiving things.[58]

Richard refers to is his predecessor at the Abbey of St. Victor, Hugh, who is now often called a

mystic, as a 'theologus', a theologian. In the passage which Richard quotes from the first of

Hugh's sermons on Ecclesiastes, Hugh distinguishes contemplation from meditation. Meditation

is always limited by the thing meditated upon and the capacity of the one meditating;

contemplation is the very life-force of understanding which is able to grasp and comprehend the

whole completely and clearly: 'Contemplatio est vivacitas illa intelligentiae quae cuncta in palam

habens, manifesta visione comprehendit', 'Contemplation is that acumen of intelligence which,

keeping all things open to view, comprehends all with clear vision', 'Contemplation is that

acumen of intelligence which, keeping all things open to view, comprehends all with clear

vision'.[59] He suggests there are two grades of contemplation, the lower contemplating creatures,

the higher, the Creator. A lively extended metaphor of a fire describes this higher contemplation

which consumes everything and transforms everything into its own likeness;[60] contemplation of

God becomes union with God, the mystical experience.

The Latin term *mysticus* was not used in the Middle Ages for this experience; the *Dictionnaire de*

Spiritualité suggests that there is a 'certaine confusion terminologique' about the term *mystique*.[61]

The adjective *mysticus*, derived from the Greek μυστικός, had the sense of mysterious or secret, as

Abelard, in the early twelfth century, suggests in his commentary on the epistle of St. Paul,

referring to the revelation of the message of Christ: 'Mysterium dicitur 'secretum' et 'occultum'.

---

[58] Richard of St. Victor, 'De Gratia Contemplationis' in PL 196, col. 67. Translated as 'The Mystical Ark'
in Richard of St. Victor, *The Twelve Patriarchs; The Mystical Ark; Book Three of the Trinity*, trans. by Grover A.
Zinn, Classics of Western Spirituality (London: S.P.C.K., 1979), p. 157.
[59] Hugh of St. Victor, *In Salomonis Ecclesiasten Homiliae xix*, Homilia Prima, PL 175, col. 117A, translated as
'The Grades of Knowledge' in *Late Medieval Mysticism*, ed. by Ray C. Petry, The Library of Christian Classics
(Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), p. 90.
[60] Hugh of St. Victor, *In Salomonis*, 117C-D; trans. in *Late Medieval Mysticism*, p. 91.
[61] *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Vol. 10, col. 1902.

Vnde et mystica locutio dicitur figuratiua, quae non est aperta'[62] ('The mystery is said to be secret

or hidden. Hence the 'mystic' discourse, which is not revealed, is said to be figurative'). It is in

this sense of secret knowledge that it was used in the title of the translation of the work of

Dionysius the Areopagite, *Mystica Theologia,* in English it was translated as 'Denis Hid Divinity'.[63]

The English use of the term *mystic* to mean 'the distinctive epithet of that branch of theology

which relates to the direct communion of the soul with God' is first recorded in 1639.[64]

The use of *mystic* as a noun to refer to a person also dates to the seventeenth century but is now

often used to describe a group of writers from the fourteenth century. The *Oxford Dictionary of the

Christian Church* admonishes those who thus use the term:

> The attempt to identify Christian 'mystics' in earlier periods is anachronistic, and
> conventional phrases such as 'the German mystics' ... or 'the English mystics' (especially
> Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton, and the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*) can be
> misleading, since the writers concerned were not necessarily interested in the kinds of
> experiences now regarded as constituting mysticism.[65]

Watson, in his entry on 'Middle English mystics' in the *Cambridge History of Middle English Literature*

is equally insistent on the anachronism of the term *mystic* when applied to these fourteenth

century writers, and takes his argument further, concluding, 'From any historical point of view

the field of medieval mystics studies has always been on shaky ground'.[66] There is an additional

problem in discussing mysticism when the modern critic has himself an involvement and a

particular agenda; Knowles refers to himself as a 'mystical theologian'[67] and Nicholas Watson

writes of him, 'because mystics scholarship has never adequately distinguished itself from

religious practice, the field's priorities tend to be devotional, not historical; indeed, it tends to

assume, like mystical theology itself, that mystical experience is a transhistorical and transcultural

phenomenon'.[68]

The use of the terms *mystic* and *mysticism* is further confused by the modern association with

visions, especially, it would seem, with reference to medieval female 'mystics'. Monica Furlong,

in a book on medieval women mystics titled *Visions and Longings,* defines mysticism as the

---

[62] Peter Abelard, 'Commentaria in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos' in *Opera Theologica,* ed. E.M. Buytaert
C.C.C.M. 11 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1969), pp. 338-9.
[63] David Knowles, *The English Mystical Tradition* (London: Burns and Oates, 1961), p. 2.
[64] O.E.D., and see Nicholas Watson, 'The Middle English Mystics', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval
English Literature* ed. by David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) [hereafter
CHMEL], pp. 539-565, p. 544.
[65] *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church,* ed. by F. L. Cross, 3rd ed. by E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford
University Press, 1997), p. 1128.
[66] Watson, 'Middle English Mystics', p. 544.
[67] Knowles, *English Mystical Tradition,* p. 10.
[68] Watson, 'Middle English Mystics' *CHMEL,* p. 543.

perception of a reality beyond the world of appearances.[69] Elizabeth Alvida Petroff, in the introduction to *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* claims that 'the environment recommended for women, a relatively closed community devoted to daily prayer, composed almost entirely of women, is exactly the environment in which religious impulses will surface in psychic phenomena and ecstatic states of consciousness'.[70] It is these 'ecstatic states of consciousness', with their accompanying visions, which are often considered to constitute mysticism. Susan Clark, in her introduction to the writings of the thirteenth century Mechthild of Magdeburg, also seems to assume that a mystic is one who has visions:

> There exists a fine line between 'visions' and craziness/madness, and it is a line walked by mystics and those who interpret their revelations, whether they are literary critics, religious believers, or the members of the societies in which the mystics find themselves – or any combination of the above.[71]

Such a definition of mysticism could play no part in an interpretation of *Ancrene Wisse*; indeed, the anchoresses are warned against visions. Meditations on the joys of the Virgin Mary and on the passion of Christ are prescribed for the anchoresses in Part One of *Ancrene Wisse* but there is no suggestion that these meditations could be used to induce visionary experiences.[72] When the anchoresses are advised to meditate on the passion of Christ, it is as a comparison with their own, lesser suffering so that they may identify with Christ and endure their own sufferings. All visions, they are warned, are the trickery of the devil: 'Na sihðe þet ȝe seoð, ne i swefne ne waken, ne telle ȝe bute dweole, for nis bute his gile', 'You should not regard any vision that you see, whether in a dream or a waking state, as anything but a delusion, because it is nothing but his trickery'.[73] Windeatt points out that the fourteenth-century writers he deals with in *English Mystics of the Middle Ages* warned against trusting visions or mistaking corporeal sensations for spiritual ones.[74] When Margery Kempe visited Julian of Norwich, for example, she told the anchoress of her 'wondirful revelacyons ... to wetyn yf ther wer any deceyte in hem'. Julian replied that Margery could accept whatever was put into her soul, 'yf it wer not ageyn the worshep of God and profyte of hir evyn-Cristen, for, yf it wer, than it wer nowt the mevyng of a good spyryte but rathar of an evyl spyrit'.[75]

---

[69] Monica Furlong, *Visions and Longings: Medieval Women Mystics* (London: Mowbray, 1996), p. 1.

[70] Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 6.

[71] Susan Clark, Introduction to Mechthild von Magdeburg, *Flowing Light of the Divinity*, trans. by Christiane Mesch Galvani, Garland Library of Medieval Literature, Series B, Vol. 72 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991), xvii.

[72] See Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*; Petroff describes the visionary progress as a learned one, where mystical experiences come about through the spiritual exercises of visualizing the lives of Mary and Christ, p. 6. Petroff does not seem to distinguish between 'mystical' and 'visionary'.

[73] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402, f. 60ᵇ 24-26.

[74] *English Mystics*, ed. Windeatt, p. 11.

[75] *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Barry Windeatt (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000), p. 120.

The fourteenth-century English 'mystics', like those in France in the twelfth century, wrote not of visions or of mysticism, but of contemplation. Walter Hilton uses the term *contemplatioun* to mean both the contemplative life and the possibility of union with God, which is the third degree of contemplation:

> The thridde partie of contemplatioun, whiche is perfite as it may be here, lieth bothe in cognicion and in affeccion: that is for to seie, in knowyng and in perfight lovynge of God.

> The third degree of contemplation, which is the highest attainable in this life, consists of both knowledge and love; that is, in knowing God and loving him perfectly.[76]

Similarly, the twelfth chapter, 'Of contemplacioun', of the Middle English version of Richard Rolle's *Emendatio Vitae* begins, 'Contemplacioun or contemplatyf lyf has thre partes'. Rolle claims it is difficult to say what contemplation is, but continues, 'Soothly me thinketh that contemplacioun is a wunderful joye of Goddes love, conceyved in the soule with swetnesse of aungeles lovinge'.[77] In both *The Ladder of Perfection* and *The Cloud of Unknowing* a distinction is made between the active and the contemplative life; in *The Cloud of Unknowing* the higher part of the active life is identified with the lower part of the contemplative life:

> Þe lower party of actiue liif stondeþ in good & honeste bodily werkes of mercy & of charite. Þe hier party of contemplatiue liif & þe lower party of contemplatiue liif liþ in goodly goostly meditacions, & besy beholding vnto a mans own wrechidnes, wiþ sorow & contricion, vnto þe Passion of Crist & of his seruantes wiþ pite & compassion, & vnto þe wonderful ʒiftes, kyndnes, & werkes of God in alle his creatures, bodili & goostly, wiþ þankyng & preising.

> The lower part of the active life consists of good, straightforward acts of mercy and charity. The higher part (which is the lower part of contemplative living) is made up of various things, for example, spiritual meditation, and awareness of one's own wretched state, sorrow and contrition, a sympathetic and understanding consideration of Christ's passion and that of his servants, a gratitude which praises God for his wonderful gifts, his kindness and works in all parts of his creation, physical and spiritual.[78]

In the Preface of *Ancrene Wisse* a distinction is made between active and contemplative forms of religious life; the anchoresses are to follow the contemplative life and are told 'witeð ow from þe worlt ouer oþer religiuse cleane ant unwemmet', 'keep yourselves pure and unspotted from the world more than other religious'.[79] The elements described by Hilton, spiritual meditation,

---

[76] Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, ed. by Thomas H. Bestul (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, for TEAMS, 2000), pp. 37-8; Walter Hilton, *The Ladder of Perfection* trans. by Leo Sherley-Price (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957), p. 7.

[77] Richard Rolle, 'The Mendynge of Lyfe' in *English Mystics*, ed. Windeatt, pp. 18-19.

[78] *The Cloud of Unknowing and The Book of Privy Counselling*, ed. from MS by Phyllis Hodgson, E.E.T.S., O.S. 218 (London: Oxford University Press, 1944; rep. 1958), f. 33ᵃ pp. 31-2; *Cloud of Unknowing* trans. by Clifton Wolters (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), pp. 63-4.

[79] *AW* Preface, ed. Millett, p. 3; Corpus 402, f. 3ᵃ 26-7.

awareness of one's own wretched state, consideration of Christ's passion, are central to the spiritual life advocated in *Ancrene Wisse*.

We may be able to dismiss the question of whether or not *Ancrene Wisse* is mystical as anachronistic but we still need to ask whether, as it describes a contemplative life, it occupies a place in the history of the literature of contemplation. *Ancrene Wisse* was written in the thirteenth century: in between the twelfth-century Bernard of Clairvaux and the Victorines on the one hand and the fourteenth-century English contemplative writers on the other. Richard of St. Victor, an acknowledged influence on these fourteenth-century writers,[80] wrote of a progress through personal discipline to the goal of contemplation.[81] 'The Mystical Ark', or 'De Gratia Contemplationis', Richard's mature work on the contemplative experience, lists six degrees or kinds of contemplation, the sixth one being 'supra rationem, et videtur esse praeter rationem', 'above reason and seemingly beyond reason'.[82] Richard understood contemplation as a looking or gazing towards God, through which God may be comprehended; it did not have to involve ecstasy. He suggested that the height of contemplation could be reached by hard work as well as being rapt up by grace:

> Eorum autem qui in suis contemplationibus supra semetipsos ducuntur et usque ad mentis excessum rapiuntur, alii hoc exspectant et accipiunt usque adhuc ex sola vocante gratia, alii vero et hoc possunt sibi comparant (cum gratiae tamen cooperatione) ex magna animi industria. Et illi quidem hoc donum quasi fortuitum habent, isti vero jam velut ex virtute possident.

> Among those who are led above themselves in their contemplations and are carried up to ecstasy of mind, some await and receive this even now only from the summons of grace. On the other hand, others can acquire this for themselves by great activity of soul, yet with the cooperation of grace. The former have this gift fortuitously, as it were; but the latter already possess it as though from virtue.[83]

Bernard of Clairvaux, like Richard of St. Victor, understood contemplation as the goal of the discipline of the contemplative life. R. W. Southern comments on the schematic nature of Bernard's understanding of the ascent of the soul to God, which was 'an interior movement beginning with self-love and continuing through self-knowledge to union with God', but also points out that 'it was not simply the doctrine of one man but the starting point of a whole generation of spiritual writers'.[84] In Part Six of *Ancrene Wisse* an image of progression in the Christian life – from pilgrim, to dead, to crucified on the cross with Christ – is taken from

---

[80] '*The Cloud of Unknowing* has Richard's writings as one of the major sources . . . Walter Hilton also appears to have known the works of Richard', G. A. Zinn, Introduction to Richard of St. Victor, *The Twelve Patriarchs*, p. 5.
[81] Zinn, Introduction to Richard of St. Victor, *The Twelve Patriarchs*, p. 7.
[82] Richard of St. Victor, 'De Gratia Contemplationis', PL 196, col. 70; trans. in *The Twelve Patriarchs*, p. 161.
[83] Richard of St. Victor, 'De Gratia Contemplationis', PL 196, col. 166; trans. in *The Twelve Patriarchs*, p. 305.
[84] R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (London: Hutchinson, 1953), p. 219.

Bernard's sixth Sermon for Lent. In *Ancrene Wisse* the three stages represent different forms of Christian life, the highest, represented by those crucified on the cross with Christ, being the life of the anchoress:

> Þus, lo, rihte ancres ne beoð nawt ane pilegrimes, ne ȝet nawt ane deade, ah beoð of þeos þridde; for al hare blisse is forte beon ahonget sariliche ant scheomeliche wið Iesu on his rode.

> And so, you see, true anchoresses are not just pilgrims, or even the dead, but belong to this third group; because all their joy is in being hanged painfully and shamefully with Jesus on his cross.[85]

Within the anchoritic life itself there was no progression. Bernard, however, was addressing a monastic audience and for him the three stages, *gradūs*, represented stages of the contemplative life. In Bernard's exposition of the third stage, when one is not only dead to the world but 'crucifixus, quod est ignominiosum genus mortis', 'crucified – which is a shameful kind of death',[86] there is a reference to the experience of the vision of heaven St. Paul recounts in his second letter to the Corinthians (II Cor. 12.2): St. Paul was snatched up to the third heaven and granted a vision that few can hope for. The three stages Bernard describes in his Sixth Sermon for Lent are, in fact, stages of renunciation: moving towards contemplation and its goal of union with God, the contemplative moves away from the things of the world. According to Gregory, the 'perception of the sweetness of God', 'agnitionem suauitatis Dei', causes attachment to the world to grow weak.[87] As the contemplative moves away from the world, so he, or she, is able to approach God.

In *De Diligendo Deo*, Bernard of Clairvaux describes the fourth stage of loving God as a total loss of self. This is not possible by human effort, but the soul is 'to be caught up to it' by the power of God.[88] Bernard seems to question whether this is possible in this world, since souls, being 'too much bound to their bodies', cannot 'wholly remove themselves and transport themselves to God'.[89] The word 'wholly', *in toto*, is important: it may be possible to have a vision of and experience a degree of union with God in this world, but it cannot be complete, as Bernard also

---

[85] *AW* Pt. 6, ed. Millett, p. 2; Corpus 402 f. 95b 22-26.
[86] Bernard of Clairvaux, 'In Quadragesima Sermo Sextus', in *Opera* Vol. 4; translated by Geoffrey Shepherd as Appendix to *Ancrene Wisse Parts Six and Seven*, ed. by Geoffrey Shepherd (1959; Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1991), pp. 71-2; following its enumeration in *Patrologia Latina*, 183, he titles it 'St. Bernard's Seventh Sermon in Lent', in the *Opera* of St. Bernard, Vol. 4, it appears as Sermo 6.
[87] Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Hiezechihelem* Book 2, Hom. 2 in Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 142, p. 233. Translated in Butler, *Western Mysticism*, p. 126. *Agnitio* can also mean *recognition* or *acceptance*.
[88] 'Speret se anima quartum apprehendere amotis gradum, vel potius in ipso apprehendi: quippe quod Dei potentiae est dare cui vult, non humanae industriae assequi', Bernard, 'Liber de Diligendo Deo', X.29, PL vol. 182, col. 992; Bernard of Clairvaux, 'On Loving God' in *Selected Works*, trans. by G. R. Evans, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 196.
[89] 'Non possunt ex toto animae seipsas exponere, et transire in Deum, nimirum ligatae corporibus etiam tunc', Bernard, PL 182, col. 993; trans. *Selected Works*, p. 197.

suggested in a letter to Carthusian brothers, written twenty years earlier and appended to the

'Liber de Dilegendo Deo'. Here again it is full attainment of the fourth stage that may not be

possible:

> et sic gustato quam suavis est Dominus, transit ad tertium graduum, ut diligat Deum, non jam propter se, sed propter ipsum. Sane in hoc gradu diu statur: et nescio se a quoquam hominum quartus in hac vita perfecte apprehenditur, ut se scilicet diligat homo tantum propter Deum. Asserant hoc si qui experti sunt: mihi, fateor, impossibile videtur.

> In this way, when he has tasted how sweet the Lord is (Ps. 33.9), he passes to the third stage, where he loves God, not now for himself, but for God's sake. Truly he remains for a long time in that state, and I do not know whether the fourth stage, where a man comes to love himself only for God's sake, is fully attained by anyone in this life. If anyone has experienced it, let him say so. To me it seems impossible.[90]

Richard of St. Victor argued that even if we can see 'beyond the veil' in a state of ecstatic

contemplation, the memory itself cannot be fully recalled:

> Et item cum ab illo sublimitatis statu ad nosmetipsos redimus, illa quae prius super nosmetipsos vidimus in ea veritate vel claritate qua prius perspeximus ad nostram memoriam revocare omnino non possumus.

> And again: when we return to ourselves from that state of sublimity, we are completely unable to recall to our memory, with that truth and clarity we earlier observed, those things which earlier we saw above ourselves.[91]

Nicholas Watson suggests that, in late medieval writings, such as those by Rolle and Hilton,

spirituality is conceived as an ascent or progress, while the Cloud-author 'assumes that his

disciple has passed through various stages of the spiritual life before acquiring the capacity to

contemplate'.[92] Walter Hilton suggested stages or degrees of contemplation; for him the third

was the highest, when the soul is 'ravysschid out of the bodili wittes'.[93] Hilton also claimed,

however, that only the beginning of this contemplation can be experienced in this life, 'the

fulheed of it is kepid in the blisse of hevene'.[94] In the *Cloud of Unknowing*, the higher part of

contemplation – at least as it may be experienced here – is lost in the darkness of the cloud of

unknowing:

> Bot ʒe hiʒer partye of contemplacion (as it may be had here) hongeþ al holy in þis derknes & in þis cloude of vnknowyng, wiþ a louyng steryng & a blinde beholdyng vnto þe nakid beyng of God him-self only.

---

[90] Bernard, 'De Diligendo Deo', XV. 39, PL 182, col. 998; trans. *Selected Works*, p. 204.

[91] Richard of St. Victor, 'De Gratia Contemplationis', IV.23, PL 196, col. 167; trans. *Twelve Patriarchs*, p. 306.

[92] Nicholas Watson, 'The Methods and Objectives of Thirteenth-Century Anchoritic Devotion' in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium 4*, 1987, ed. by Marion Glasscoe (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1987), pp. 132-146 (p. 135).

[93] Hilton, *Scale of Perfection*, Bk. I, chap. 8, p. 38.

[94] Hilton, *Scale of Perfection*, I, 8, p. 38. Leo Sherley-Price translates 'fulheed' as 'consummation', *Ladder of Perfection*, p. 7.

> But the higher part of contemplation – at least as we know it in this life – is wholly
> caught up in darkness, and in this cloud of unknowing, with an outreaching love and a
> blind groping for the naked being of God, himself and him only.[95]

The Cloud continues, 'Bot seker be þou þat cleer siȝt schal neuer man haue in þis liif'; 'Be quite

sure that you will never have the unclouded vision of God here in this life'.[96] For the

contemplative writers of the fourteenth century, as for Bernard, the visions and experiences that

can be achieved in this life can only be foretastes of the bliss of the vision of God in the next.

This basic conception of progress is, Watson claims, common to the fourteenth-century English

writers of spirituality, who democratised the spiritual life, presenting a model of interior ascent

that could be achieved outside the monastery or enclosure thus making it available to a lay

readership. The earlier, anchoritic, works such as *Ancrene Wisse* were more specialised, Watson

argues, making use of the external circumstances of the anchorite in the construction of a

professional spirituality that 'is not organised around a concept of ascent'.[97] Barry Windeatt

writes that while the aim of the 'English mystical writers' was 'to give their reader direction,

charting and signposting a schematic, progressive ascent',[98] the *Cloud*-author 'distrusts metaphors

of progression or movement in contemplation'.[99] I believe one must be careful here not to

confuse the idea of progress through the contemplative life with the idea of ascent in

contemplation; in *Ancrene Wisse* the anchoritic life itself is constructed as the highest step in the

spiritual life, since it is to be not only dead to the world, but crucified with Christ. There is no

suggestion of progress within the anchoritic life; rather it is a process of endurance and a

constant battle against temptation that will be rewarded only after death. Geoffrey Shepherd

argues that omitting 'St. Paul's flight to the third heaven' in Part Six shows the lack of concern in

Ancrene Wisse with 'the experience of union with God';[100] yet union with God is precisely what

Ancrene Wisse presents as the goal of the anchoritic life, even if it cannot be fully experienced in

this world. Shepherd continues, '[the author of *Ancrene Wisse*] does not exalt the life of pure

contemplation. It is a life of penitence he urges throughout'.[101] Part Six of *Ancrene Wisse* begins

'Al is penitence, ant strong penitence, þet ȝe eauer dreheð, mine leoue sustren', 'Everything that

you have to bear, my dear sisters, is penance, and hard penance'.[102] Warren suggests that

penitence was the goal of the anchoritic life in the texts of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries,

---

[95] *Cloud*, ed. Hodgson, f. 33ᵃ, p. 32, trans. Wolters, p. 64.
[96] *Cloud*, ed. Hodgson, f. 34ᵇ, 17-18, p. 34; trans. Wolters, p. 66.
[97] Watson, 'Methods and Objectives', p. 137.
[98] Windeatt, *English Mystics*, p. 1.
[99] Windeatt, *English Mystics*, p. 9.
[100] Shepherd, *AW Pts. 6 and 7*, p. lvii.
[101] Shepherd, *AW Pts. 6 and 7*, p. lviii.
[102] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402 f. 94ʳ 13-15.

the achievement of the mystical moment being 'mentioned only in passing',[103] but she also
suggests that, within the anchorhold, 'union with Christ might be achieved even in this life'.[104]
The life of penitence can form the conditions for contemplation.

In a sermon to the beguines in Paris by Hubert of Sorbonne, contemplation is presented as the
goal and culmination of the penitential life: suffering and privation in this world is, for the
beguines as for the anchoresses, both the route to eternal happiness and the price to be paid for
that reward. This sermon is structured round the theme of prosecuting the battle of life in order
to win the reward of heaven; three battles are presented: against temptations, against troubles
and the third is that which follows from the victory over the first two, that is ascent to
contemplation.[105] In the sermon, as in life, these three must be dealt with in order and the
division of the spiritual life into a series of three battles is reminiscent of Bernard's three stages of
the contemplative life.[106] In this sermon, as in Bernard's sixth sermon for Lent, we find a
comparison between the state of contemplation and Christ crucified upon the cross but here
used in a rather different manner. The soul, the *anima*, has both carnal and spiritual aspects:
through the body it touches the earth, but it desires heaven. In contemplation it is as if
suspended in mid-air between earth and heaven ('si esset suspensa in medio aere')[107] neither
totally on the earth nor in heaven. The good soldier who has triumphed in battle achieves the
state of contemplation by being hanged on the cross with Christ, his feet raised above the earth;
this means of death is contrasted with that of robbers and murderers who, for their crimes, are
buried up to their eyes in the earth – those whose affections and intellect and all their desires are
fixed on earthly things will never be able to escape the earth and rise to heavenly things. To rise
from the earth, one must cast off all earthly things, and all desire for earthly things and be
crucified with Christ. This is the import of the whole sermon: that to rise to God one must
reject all things of the earth, fighting against temptation and tribulation in order to be elevated in
contemplation. Much of this sermon is applicable to the spiritual life of any devout lay person,
but at the end of the sermon, the experience of contemplation is specifically linked to the
religious life and here we see the imagery familiar from anchoritic literature:

> Ego ducam eam in solitario loco, et ibi familariter loquar ad cor eius ad consilium, et
> replebo eam, et *lactabo* de dulcedinibus meis ei ostendendo. Et hoc fit specialiter hiis qui

---

[103] Warren, p. 114. Warren is contrasting high-medieval texts with those from the later Middle Ages which,
she claims, have a greater emphasis on mystical union (p. 115); Mari Hughes-Edwards suggests that the
difference between high- and late-medieval anchoritic texts has been over-emphasised, 'Hedgehog Skins
and Hairshirts: The Changing Role of Asceticism in the Anchoritic Ideal', *Mystics Quarterly* 28 (2002), 6-25.
[104] Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*, p. 93.
[105] Hubert, Sermon 15, p. 204.
[106] Bernard, 'In Quadragesima Sermo Sextus', p. 378.
[107] Hubert of Sorbonne, Sermon 15, p. 210.

sincere stant et intrauerunt in religione, et etiam quibuscumque dulciter de eo
meditantibus. Unde dicit sancta anima sponso suo: *Dilectus meus michi, et ego sibi.*[108]

I will lead her in to a solitary place, and there I will speak as a close friend to her heart in
counsel, and I will restore her, and I will lead her on (Hosea 2, 14) by revealing to her my
sweetness. And this applies especially to those who stand faithfully and have entered
into the religious life, and so also enters sweetly into every possible meditation with him.
And so the sanctified soul says to her spouse, 'My beloved is mine and I am his' (Song of
Solomon, 2, 16).

In rejecting the things of the world, the *anima sancta* is no longer tied to the world, and, in serving

God, finds a new freedom.

For the anchoress, union with Christ comes, not through ascent to him, but through his descent

into the heart of the penitent. There are two moments in *Ancrene Wisse* which seem to describe

contemplation; the first is associated with the elevation and reception of the host when the

anchoress contemplates the presence of Christ and embraces him in her heart – and this is a

moment that was available to all devout Christians. In Part Two there is a closer relationship

between contemplation and the anchoritic life; the suggestion that the anchoresses should look

within to the inner light and there embrace their lover comes as part of an exposition of the text,

'Zelatus sum Syon zelo magno', from Chapter 8 of Zechariah.[109] Bridal imagery forms the

background to this passage: the anchoress is reminded that she is the spouse of a jealous God,

but what follows is not a description of an erotic union with the divine but an exhortation to the

anchoress to reject the world of the outer senses and seek the inner light. This passage occurs in

the part concerned with the outer senses and how they should guard the heart; it is a passage that

can be extracted from its context and examined, if not in complete isolation, then as a discussion

of the role of contemplation within the life of anchoritic spirituality. Mary Baldwin gives a

concise description of this passage :

> The author of *Ancrene Wisse* is here using themes and imagery which traditionally referred
> to contemplation: the desire for interior light and for vision of God through the eyes of
> the heart which is present in Augustine and Gregory and the nuptial imagery developed
> by St. Bernard to describe the union of the soul with God in prayer.[110]

The image of the jealous lover who will be embraced only in a secret place is used to introduce

the idea of looking within one's heart to find God:

---

[108] Hubert of Sorbonne, Sermon 15 in Bériou, 'La Prédication', p. 211.
[109] Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson see, in this section, 'allusive references to the theology of
contemplation', Savage and Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, p. 355, n. 58. The passage referred to is found
on p. 82 in Savage and Watson; *AW* Corpus 402 f. 23ᵇ 3ff.
[110] Baldwin, '*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background', p. 267. Baldwin points out that these are 'all three of the
author's principal authorities'.

Bihald me ȝet þu wult habbe briht sihðe wið þine heorte ehnen. Bihalt inward, þer Ich am, any ne sech þu me nawt wiðute þin heorte. Ich am wohere scheomeful, ne nule Ich nohwer bicluppe mi leofmon bute i stude dearne.

Look at me if you want to see clearly with the eyes of your heart. Look inwards, where I am, and do not search for me outside your heart. I am a bashful suitor, and will not embrace my beloved anywhere except in a secret place.[111]

That 'the heart is God's chamber – and thus that in contemplation he is found within, not outside, the soul' is, according to Savage and Watson, a commonplace, but an 'important commonplace'.[112] In Bernard's Sermon 35 on the Song of Songs, contemplation of divine things is interior:

Quae enim anima semel a Domino didicit et accepit intrare ad seipsam, et in intimis suis Dei praesentiam suspirare, et quaerere faciem eius semper, – spiritus est enim Deus, et qui requirunt eum oportet eos in spiriut ambulare, et non in carne.

The soul has been taught by the Lord and received the power to enter into itself, to long for the presence of God in its inmost depths, to seek his face continually – for God is a spirit (John 4, 24), and those who seek him ought to walk by the promptings of the Spirit rather than of the Flesh (Galatians 5, 16; Romans 8, 12).[113]

This is from Bernard's sermon on verse 1, 7, 'Si te ignoras, egredere', 'If you do not know yourself, go forth': those who live in the flesh rather than in the spirit are sent out with the goats. The contemplation of divine things is only possible for those who have rejected the sensual world: 'Terribilis proinde et nimis formidolosa comminatio: Egredere et pasce haedos tuos. Quod est: Indignam te noveris illa tua familiari et suavi rerum contemplatione coelestium, intelligibilium divinarum'; 'It is a terrible, an awe-inspiring threat. As much as to say: know yourself unworthy of things heavenly, things of the spirit, divine things'.[114] The same verses are used in Part Two of *Ancrene Wisse*: she who does not know herself, does not know whose bride she is, will be sent out to follow the goats which are the desires of the flesh, 'flesches lustes'.[115]

The idea of looking within to see God reflected in the mirror of the soul is an ancient one; Andrew Louth traces the image of the soul as a mirror reflecting God to Athanasius in the fourth century.[116] This looking within, and rejecting the outer senses, is at the heart of the contemplation advocated in *Ancrene Wisse*. If the anchoresses are blind outwardly and reject the world of the flesh, God will give them, 'liht wiðinnen him to seon and cnawen, ant þurh þe

---

[111] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 23ᵛ 17-21.

[112] Savage and Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, p. 355.

[113] Bernard, *Sermones in Cantica* 35 *Opera*, 1, p. 249; trans. Walsh, *On the Song of Songs* 2, *Works*, vol. 3, p, 165.

[114] Bernard, *Sermones in Cantica* 35 *Opera*, 1, p. 249; trans. Walsh, *On the Song of Songs* 2, *Works*, vol. 3, p. 166.

[115] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402 f.26ᵛ 6.

[116] Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition from Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 79.

cnawlechunge ouer alle þing him luuien', 'inward light to see and know him, and through that

knowledge to love him above all things'.[117] The sisters are promised:

> ʒe schulen as i schawere iseon ure leafdi wið hire meidnes, al þe englene weoret, al þe
> halhene hird, ant him ouer ham alle þe blisseð ham alle, ant is hare alre crune.

> You will, as if in a mirror, see our Lady with her virgins, all the host of angels, all the
> assembly of saints, and above them him who makes them all rejoice, and is the crown of
> all of them.[118]

There is a possibility that a foretaste of the bliss of heaven may be experienced in this world,

though only as through a mirror, darkly. The quotation from St. Paul's first letter to the

Corinthians, 'Videmus enim quasi per speculum in enigmate', appears in different places in some

manuscripts, and is missing from others, indicating 'that it was originally a marginal

annotation'.[119] It was, nevertheless, a quotation commonly used in this period of the Middle

Ages, and that one can only see God 'as in a glass, darkly' might be considered a

commonplace.[120] The sight of heaven the anchoresses can enjoy while still on earth may be

obscured, but they are assured that they will enjoy the clear view of the face of God in the bliss

of heaven 'muche biuore þe oþre'.[121] This is to support the anchoresses in their choice of a

penitential and ascetic life and a comfort to them in their privations; it is a promise of future bliss

in heaven. 'Hali men'[122] have experienced this joy, but there is no suggestion that the

anchoresses will have such joy in this world.

There is no clear ascent to a vision of God set out in *Ancrene Wisse*; we have here neither the

intellectual rigour of Richard of St. Victor nor the exaltation of Bernard of Clairvaux.

Nevertheless, the asceticism prescribed in *Ancrene Wisse* is seen as a necessary part of the

contemplative life and a preparation for contemplation; the anchoress needs to make herself

open to the presence of God through discipline and devotion. In *De Institutione Inclusarum* the

Cistercian abbot Aelred described two forms of knowledge of God:

> Iam nunc exulta, uirgo, accede proprius, et aliquam tibi huius dulcedinis portionem
> uendicare non differas. Si ad potiora non potes, dimitte Ioanni pectus, ubi uinum
> laetitiae in diuinitatis cognitione inebriet, tu currens ad ubera humanitatis, lac exprime
> quo nutriaris.

---

[117] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402 f. 24ᵃ 14-15.

[118] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402, f. 24ᵃ 23-26.

[119] It occurs in the Corpus Christi 402 MS at f. 24ᵇ 9-10; comment by Bella Millett.

[120] It is used, for example, by Anselm in 'De Custodia Interioris Hominis' in *Memorials of St.* Anselm, ed. by R. W. Southern and F. S. Schmitt, Auctores Britannica Medii Aevi, 1 (London: Oxford University Press, for the British Academy, 1969), 354-360 (p. 354). The editors note that this was a work which 'had an extensive circulation throughout the Middle Ages', p. 354; see, for example, the version of this image in the Middle English version of Richard Rolle's *Emendatio Vitae*, 'The Mendynge of Lyfe' in Windeatt, *English Mystics*, p. 20.

[121] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402, f. 24ᵇ 12-13.

[122] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402, f. 24ᵇ 28.

> Exult now, virgin, draw near and do not delay to claim for yourself some portion of this sweetness. If you are not capable of greater things, leave John to cheer himself with the wine of gladness in the knowledge of the Godhead while you run to feed on the milk which flows from Christ's humanity.[123]

These metaphors – drinking the wine of gladness, or the milk flowing from the breast of Christ's humanity – express two ways of knowing God. The note to this passage points out, 'The Cistercian Fathers frequently contrast these two forms of the knowledge of God. One through the humanity of Christ and the other through some experience of God as he is in himself'.[124] Like Aelred's sister, the anchoresses should be content with knowledge of – and so union with – God through His descent in the humanity of Christ, rather than through ascent to Him and direct knowledge of Him; in this, *Ancrene Wisse* can be seen as a fore-runner of the laicisation of spirituality that was to develop over the next two centuries. The affective response to the presence of God in the Eucharist and devotions to the human Christ, as child of Mary and in his Passion, allowed an acquaintance with God – He descends and is embraced in the heart.

All Christians could identify with the humanity of Christ through suffering. This element of affective spirituality can be traced back to meditations such as those of St. Anselm, who 'dwelt with passionate intensity on the details of Christ's sufferings'[125] in the middle of the eleventh century.[126] Constable also marks the 'growing sense of personal participation in the passion of Christ' in the twelfth century, and comments that 'The emergence of the desire to imitate Christ's body literally must be seen in the context of the emphasis in the eleventh and twelfth centuries on the imitation of Christ's humanity and the growing concern with Christ's human body and suffering'.[127] The role of suffering is addressed in Part Six of *Ancrene Wisse* in a rhetorical question that is inclusive, being asked by many people: 'ȝet seið moni mon, "Hweat is Godd þe betere þah Ich pini me for his luue?"', 'Yet again, many people say, "What good does it do God if I inflict suffering on myself for his love?"'. The answer is equally inclusive, being addressed not to anchoresses but to men and women: 'Leoue mon ant wummon, Godd þuncheð god of ure god. Vre god is ȝef we doð þet tet we ahen', 'Dear man and woman, God is pleased by our good. Our good is if we do what we ought'.[128] In a sermon for Passion Sunday, James of Vitry preached the importance of following the example of Christ in taking up the cross and following

---

[123] Aelred *DII* § 31, p. 668; trans 'Rule of Life', p. 87. The reference to 'Ioanni pectus' is to the image, mentioned earlier in the text, of John resting his head on Christ's breast.
[124] Aelred, 'Rule of Life', p. 87, n. 54.
[125] Southern, *Making of the Middle Ages*, p. 221.
[126] Watson argues for a challenge to this narrative of Latin spiritual writing, suggesting that it is 'perhaps suspiciously straightforward'; *Ancrene Wisse*, for example, 'is more intricate that it seems when looked at from within this dominant model', 'Middle English Mystics', p. 547.
[127] Constable, *Three Studies*, pp. 197 and 201.
[128] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402, f. 99ᵃ 28-f. 99ᵇ 3.

Him;[129] James of Vitry also wrote of Mary of Oignies that she 'took up the cross by chastising her body through abstinence and imitated Christ by casting herself down through humility', 'Crucem tollebat, corpus suum per abstinentiam castigando; Christum imitabatur, seipsam per humilitatem abjiciendo'.[130]

The emphasis on asceticism and the absence of images of ascent in *Ancrene Wisse* could be seen as a manifestation of the 'ontological gulf' posited by Athanasius; Andrew Louth shows that it was belief in this gulf between the created and the Creator which could only be crossed by God coming down to man which led to asceticism and an 'anti-mystical strand' in early monasticism.[131] In *The Cloud of Unknowing*, there is a reference to the gulf between the sinner, Mary Magdalene, and God; the only way Mary could bridge this gulf is through longing for the love of God. She gazes at God in the person of Christ in an attempt to reach beyond his humanity to God himself:

> sche beheeld ... to þe souereynest wisdom of his Godheed lappid in þe derk wordes of his Manheed: þeder beheeld sche wiþ al þe loue of hir hert. For fro þens list hir not remowe for noþing þat sche saw ne herde spoken ne done aboute hir; bot sat ful stille in hir body, wiþ many a swete priue & a lysty loue put upon þat hiȝe cloude of vnknowyng bitwix hir & hir God.

> But what she was looking at was the supreme wisdom of his Godhead shrouded by the words of his humanity. And on this she gazed with all the love of her heart. Nothing she saw or heard could budge her, but there she sat, completely still, with deep delight, and an urgent love eagerly reaching out into that high cloud of unknowing that was between her and God.[132]

Mary Magdalene is conflated with Mary the sister of Martha and presented as the model of the contemplative life.[133] In *Ancrene Wisse*, the anchoresses are reminded that they have chosen the way of Mary:

> ȝe ancren beoð inumen ow to Marie dale, ... Marie dale is stilnesse ant reste of alle worldes noise, þet na þing ne lette hire to heren Godes steuene.

> You recluses have followed Mary's way, ... Mary's part is silence and peace from all the noise of the world, so that nothing may prevent her from hearing God's voice.

This may not be of the same order as the description of Mary Magdalene's rapture in *The Cloud of Unknowing*, but it is by virtue of this desire to hear God's voice and to know Him that the spirituality of *Ancrene Wisse* can be considered contemplative. *Ancrene Wisse* describes a life of

---

[129] James of Vitry, 2nd sermon for Dominica in Passione, in *Sermones in Epistolas*, p. 309, ref. to Matt. 16:24.
[130] James of Vitry, *Vita Mariae Ogniacensis*, p. 641; trans. by King p. 54.
[131] Louth, *Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, pp. 99-100.
[132] *Cloud of Unknowing*, f. 42ᵃ, 6-16; trans. Wolters, p. 75.
[133] See Giles Constable, 'The Interpretation of Mary and Martha' in *Three Studies*, pp. 3-141. The identification of the two Marys is mentioned on p. 6.

contemplation and asceticism grounded in the humanity of Christ and expressed in the willingness of the anchoresses to share his suffering.

Bernard of Clairvaux and Richard of St. Victor understood contemplation within the context of the monastic life, but the appeal of the contemplative life spread outside the bounds of the monastery. The anchoresses, while not being professed nuns, nevertheless pursued a life of contemplation; Barry Windeatt shows that by the fourteenth century there is evidence of 'the appeal of writings about contemplation ... both to lay and religious readers'.[134] Margery Kempe, wife and mother as well as pilgrim and visionary, recorded in her *Book* the books read to her by a priest, 'many a good boke of hy contemplacyon and other bokys, as the Bybyl wyth doctowrys therupon, Seynt Brydys boke, Hyltons boke, Boneventur, *Stimulus Amoris*, *Incendium Amoris*, and swech other'.[135] Thomas Bestul refers to the broad readership of Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* which 'certainly extended beyond the female anchorites who were its putative first audience'.[136] It is this expansion of the audience of contemplative works that Watson refers to as the 'democratisation of devotional literature'.[137] He suggests that the anchoritic literature, including *Ancrene Wisse*, is more 'specialised', but *Ancrene Wisse* can be placed in the history of what Watson in a later essay refers to as 'vernacular theology'.[138] Watson defends his use of the term *vernacular theology*, using it as a 'catchall' that will draw attention to the 'intellectual content' of religious texts in the vernacular which 'are often treated with condescension'.[139] His interest, in this article, is with a fifteenth-century 'innovative tradition' of 'vernacular theology', but this does not preclude the main tradition of vernacular theology from stretching back into the fourteenth or, indeed, to *Ancrene Wisse* in the early thirteenth century. Nevertheless, the term *theology* can draw attention away from the personal and devotional nature of texts such as *Ancrene Wisse* which are concerned, not with the theory of theology, but with its practical application in devotional practices and daily life. It would be more appropriate to consider *Ancrene Wisse* a work of vernacular spirituality, and a comparison with other works of English vernacular spirituality, such as the fourteenth century contemplative works mentioned above, allows us to contextualise the spirituality of *Ancrene Wisse*; it should be read, not in opposition to the literature of the fourteenth century, but as a transitional work, on the cusp between monastic and lay spirituality. Another contextualisation is offered by comparison with the contemporary continental religious movement, especially as it

---

[134] *English Mystics*, p. 10.
[135] *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 280.
[136] Thomas H. Bestul, Introduction to Hilton, *Scale of Perfection*, p. 7.
[137] Watson, 'Methods and Objectives', p. 137.
[138] Watson, 'Middle English Mystics', *CHMEL*, pp. 557 ff.
[139] Nicholas Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409', *Speculum* 70, 1995, 822-864 (n. 4, p. 823).

involved women leading a quasi-regular life, with its emphasis on affective spirituality seen in the focus on the suffering Christ and devotion to the Virgin Mary.

The spirituality of *Ancrene Wisse* as manifest in both the Inner and Outer Rules is one based on a personal engagement in daily life with God. While God is judge and creator, it is in his aspect as the Son – God in incarnate form – that this relationship is forged. Prayers to the Cross and to the Virgin are set at the heart of Part One of *Ancrene Wisse*, which deals with the daily devotions of the anchoresses. The anchoresses' day was organised around reciting the Hours of the Virgin, with listening to Mass as a central part in that day. Meditations on the five joys of Mary[140] were included and multiple repetitions of the *Ave Maria*. Such devotions complemented the emphasis on the incarnation and passion of Christ; they dwelt on Mary's purity and emphasised her status as mother of Christ. These meditations and devotions can be seen as occupying an important place in the development of lay and semi-religious piety. Bella Millett has shown that the use of the Hours of the Virgin, rather than the full canonical Hours, was a feature of the devotional life in extra-monastic religious communities from the thirteenth century and that statutes for beguine communities and penitent confraternities recommending the use of the Hours of the Virgin, 'demonstrate a common recognition of the devotional needs of those members occupying an intermediate position between *litterati* and the illiterate'.[141] According to *Ancrene Wisse*, a *Pater Noster* and *Ave Maria* were to be said before and after each hour;[142] the same prescription is found in a thirteenth-century French manuscript, probably written for a community of religious, or semi-religious women:[143]

> Devant cascune eure dites une pater nostre et vn aue maria ... apres cascune eure. dites pater noster. et aue maria por les ames ki sunt en purgatoire.[144]

> Before each hour, say one *Pater Noster* and one *Ave Maria* ... after each hour, say *Pater Noster* and *Ave Maria* for the souls who are in purgatory.

This text also contains extended meditations on the nativity and passion of Christ. The illustrations for the little Office in a Book of Hours are usually 'drawn from the Christmas story or ... from the story of Christ's Passion',[145] which suggests the popularity of these stories in lay piety, illustrating as they do the humanity of Christ. It was the Hours of the Virgin that usually

---

[140] Rosemary Woolf claims that it is in *Ancrene Wisse* that the 'fully developed form of the five joys' is first found in England, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 135.
[141] Bella Millett, '*Ancrene Wisse* and the Book of Hours', in *Writing Religious Women: Female Spiritual and Textual Practices in Late Medieval England*, ed. Denis Renevey and Christiania Whitehead, (University of Wales Press, 2000), pp. 21-40 (p. 31).
[142] See Roger Dahood, 'Design in Part 1 of *Ancrene Wisse*', *Medium Aevum*, 56 (1987), 1-22 (esp. pp. 5-6) for clarification of the daily routine prescribed for the anchoresses.
[143] See M. Zink, *La Prédication en langue romane avant 1300* (Paris, 1976), p. 161 for the 'problème particulier' of this text.
[144] MS. Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris, 2058, f. 60ʳ col. a, 9-11 and 18-21.
[145] Janet Backhouse, *Books of Hours* (London: The British Library, 1985), p. 4.

formed the basis of the Books of Hours which were produced for lay use from the thirteenth century; Millett concludes that '[*Ancrene Wisse*] anticipates in some detail the devotional routine of the later Books of Hours produced for a lay readership'.[146]

Another feature of the devotions to Mary in *Ancrene Wisse* is the multiple repetitions of the *Ave Maria*. Many of the prayers to Mary in *Ancrene Wisse* belong to an established tradition;[147] devotional use of the *Ave* goes back to the eleventh century but its repetition developed into the Rosary. The Rosary became a series of oral prayers, *Ave Marias* and *Pater Nosters*, with meditations of the life of Christ; *Vita Christi* meditations may have been incorporated by the fourteenth century[148] but in *Ancrene Wisse* the repetition of the *Ave* is associated only with meditations on the Virgin Mary. Nevertheless, this passage in Part One of *Ancrene Wisse*[149] can be seen as fitting in with what Winston-Allen writes about the development of the rosary as a meditative practice:

> [the rosary] has always been evolving in a lively way. It is not one text but many: actually multiple versions embedded in a constellation of texts that described, interpreted and marketed forms of the devotion to users who collectively shaped and selected the ultimate version of choice.[150]

The rosary was used by nuns, but was also important in lay piety since it could be used in private, both as a 'meditative exercise to supplement the mass', and as a prayer to be said during Mass for those unable to follow the Latin of the service.[151] There is evidence of the 'Psalter of the Virgin', that is, the repetition of the *Ave Maria* 150 times, being used by beguines in the thirteenth century; the rule for Sainte-Elisabeth de Gand, drawn up around 1236, prescribes the recitation of the Psalter of the Virgin each day under the direction of one of the beguines who would also state a Mystery of the life of Christ or of the Virgin for each set.[152] In the use of the Hours of the Virgin, and the repetitions of the *Ave Maria*, the devotions set down in *Ancrene Wisse* can be compared with the devotional practices of other extra-monastic religious; these practices, which were adapted from monastic practices for eventual use in the wider lay community also demonstrate the transitional position of *Ancrene Wisse* between monastic and lay piety.

---

[146] Millett, '*Ancrene Wisse* and the Book of Hours', p. 13.

[147] Barbara Raw, 'Prayers and Devotions in the *Ancrene Wisse*' in *Chaucer and Middle English Studies in Honour of Rossell Hope Robbins*, ed. by Beryl Rowland (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1974), pp. 260-71 (p. 268).

[148] Anne Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose: The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), p. 7.

[149] *AW* Pt. 1, Corpus 402, f. 10^b 9-19. The Five Joys of Mary are at f. 9^b 11-f. 10^a 14.

[150] Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, p. 8.

[151] Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, p. 4.

[152] Bériou, 'La prédication', p. 121, with reference to M.D. Chapotin, *Histoire des Dominicains de la Province de France: le siècle des fondations* (Paris-Rouen, 1898), p. 521.

Eucharistic piety was an important feature of the devotions of quasi-regular women such as the beguines, as it was also a central part of the devotions described in *Ancrene Wisse*: 'Central to [the anchoress's] existence was the cross and the eucharist, the symbols of the human and suffering Jesus, with whom the recluse could identify'.[153] The anchoress' cell would have been attached to a church, allowing them to follow the services, the offices of the day and the mass, which the priest said daily. It is clear from *Ancrene Wisse* that they could see the altar, and the reserved host above it, through a window, probably to the chancel;[154] through this same window they would have been able to receive communion. Hearing Mass was central to their devotional day and occupies an important place in Part One of *Ancrene Wisse*, but the anchoresses only took communion fifteen times a year since, they are warned, 'Me let leasse of þe þing þet me haueð ofte', 'People care less about what they have often'.[155]

We have seen in Chapter One that Eucharistic piety among the laity was a product, not so much of the theology of transubstantiation, as of the affective response to the belief in the presence of God in the consecrated host. Emotional response to the humanity of Christ, crucified for the redemption of the sins of mankind and encountered in the Eucharist, is at the heart of affective spirituality. Denise Nowakowski Baker writes of the vision of Christ on the crucifix received by Julian of Norwich, another of the fourteenth century writers known as mystics: 'This concentration on the suffering of Christ's humanity situates Julian of Norwich within the culture of affective spirituality that pervaded popular religious life during the late Middle Ages'.[156] Julian gave a description of the Christ on the cross as she saw him in the vision she received during a severe illness:

> And in this sodenly I saw the reed bloud rynnyng downe from vnder the garlande, hote and freyshely, plentuously and louely, right as it was in the tyme that the garland of thornes was pressed on his blessed head. Right so, both god and man, the same that sufferd for me, I conceived truly and mightly that it was him selfe that shewed it me without anie meane.

> suddenly I saw the red blood running down from under the crown, hot and flowing freely and copiously, a living stream, just as it was at the time when the crown of thorns was pressed on his blessed head. I perceived, truly and powerfully, that it was he who

---

[153] Rosof, 'The Anchoress', p. 141.

[154] References to the anchoresses looking through the church window to the high altar and seeing the reserved sacrament above it are found at *AW* Pt. 1, Corpus 402 f. 5ᵃ 2-3 and *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402 f. 17ᵃ 18-21.

[155] *AW* Pt. 8, Corpus 402, f. 111ᵃ 23; and see Gary Macy, writing of the increase in eucharist devotion from the thirteenth century: 'The sacrament was so revered that frequent reception was discouraged', *Theologies of the Eucharist*, p. 89.

[156] Denise Nowakowski Baker, *Julian of Norwich's* Showings: *From Vision to Book* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 15.

just so, both God and man, himself suffered for me, who showed it to me without any intermediary.[157]

There is no suggestion that that the anchoresses had visions – as we have seen, visions are explicitly warned against – but it is this 'emotive concentration on the passion of the Redeemer and the compassion of the redeemed'[158] which is at the heart of the spirituality of *Ancrene Wisse*.

An image of Christ on the cross dominated the anchorhold, and Christ crucified is a haunting presence throughout *Ancrene Wisse*. When the anchoresses first rose in the morning, they knelt before the crucifix, saying salutations in commemoration of Christ's five wounds,[159] and they also prostrated themselves towards the reserved host – the flesh and blood of Christ.[160] In a sequence of prayers before the cross to be said at midday, the hour of Christ's crucifixion, the anchoresses meditate on God's cross and his cruel suffering, 'o Godes Rode, ... ant of his derue pine'.[161] In *Ancrene Wisse*, devotion to the crucifix and to the consecrated host are linked; the body of Christ present in the host and represented in the crucifix are both worthy of devotion as reminders of his sacrifice. In Julian of Norwich's *Showings*, God descends to earth and is present in visible form; Watson writes of the Short Text of the *Showings*, 'The work disagrees with those who think that life must move beyond the carnal exercise of meditation on Christ's humanity to more abstract exercises, and insists that the deepest truths can be understood by continuing to focus on the humanity (S, chapters 10-13)'.[162] In *Ancrene Wisse*, the incarnate God is present as the image on the crucifix and in the consecrated host which is the very body and blood of Christ. At the moment of the priest's communion, the anchoress embraces Christ: her union with God is through His descent to earth in incarnate form rather than through ascent to Him.[163] The connexion between consuming the body of Christ in the consecrated host and embracing him is found in the *Libellus de Diversis Ordinibus*: 'Tale corpus Christi credo, teneo, amplector, sumo, in uisceribus interioris mei traicio', 'Such is the body of Christ I believe in, hold, embrace, consume, absorb into my innermost entrails'.[164]

---

[157] *A Book of Showings to the Anchoress Julian of Norwich*, ed. by Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978), Fourth Chapter of the Long Text, p. 294; Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, trans. by Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (London: S.P.C.K., 1978), p. 181.

[158] Baker, *Julian of Norwich's* Showings, p. 20.

[159] *AW* Pt. 1, Corpus 402, f. 5ª 13-14.

[160] *AW* Pt. 1, Corpus 402, f. 5ª 1-3.

[161] *AW* Pt. 1, Corpus 402, f. 8ᵇ 25-27.

[162] Watson, 'Middle English Mystics', *CHMEL*, p. 558.

[163] Wogan-Browne sees this moment as the climax of *Ancrene Wisse*, referring to 'the nuptial embrace of the mass', *Saints' Lives*, p. 37.

[164] *Libellus de Diversis Ordinibus et Professionibus qui sunt in Aecclesia*, ed. and trans. by G.Constable and B. Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 70 & 71; the editors comment on the attitude of the author to the body of Christ being of special interest 'because the feast of Corpus Christi originated a century later in the diocese of Liège', which is where *Libellus* was probably written, p. xxvi.

Although they did not interact in any way with the priest and the action of the mass, the anchoresses were given prayers to say 'hwen þe preost heueð up Godes licome', 'when the priest raises up God's body'.[165] The prayers the anchoresses said were in Latin,[166] but they are here partaking in a devotional act similar to that participated in by lay congregations. God incarnate was visibly present in the consecrated Host and devotions centring on the elevation, when the consecrated Host was raised for the adoration of the people, became an important feature of lay piety. The same piety is present in *Ancrene Wisse* where the prayers and meditations prescribed for the anchoresses build up to an intensity of feeling during the Eucharist. The anchoresses were advised,

> Efter þe measse cos, hwen þe preost sacreð - þer forȝeoteð al þe world, þer beoð al ut of bodi, þer i sperclinde luue bicluppeð ower leofmon, þe into ower breostes bur is iliht of heouene, ant haldeð him heteueste aþet he habbe iȝettet ow al þet ȝe eauer easkið.

> After the kiss of peace in the Mass, when the priest is taking Communion, - there forget all the world, there be quite out of the body, there in burning love embrace your lover, who has descended from heaven into the chamber of your breast, and hold him tightly until he has granted you everything that you ask.[167]

This is the most explicit expression in *Ancrene Wisse* of the quest for union with God but it does not occur when they themselves receive communion; the devotions of the anchoresses were centred not on the consumption of the body of Christ, but on his presence to them.[168] This moment of ecstasy is at the heart of the spirituality of *Ancrene Wisse*, a spirituality that is orthodox and sacramental but also deeply personal. Christ sacrificed on the cross is also the lover of the anchoress.

These elements of eucharistic devotion and bridal mysticism are important in the literature of the thirteenth-century beguines and other religious women of this period. The sentiment in *Ancrene Wisse* recalls a verse from the 'Song of Songs': 'I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him and would not let him go' (Song 3, 4) and James of Vitry used language from the 'Song of Songs' when writing of the eucharistic piety of religious women in the diocese of Liège: 'Quaedam autem tanto desiderio post odorem tanti sacramenti currebant, quod nullo modo eo diu carere sustinebant', 'Some of them ran with such desire after the fragrance (cf. Song 1.3) of such a great

---

[165] *AW* Pt. 1, Corpus 402, f. 8ᵃ 19.
[166] C.H. Talbot, 'Some Notes on the Dating of the *Ancrene Riwle*', *Neophilologus*, 40 (1956), 38-50 (pp. 48-9) identifies this with an invocation recommended c.1208 for use by the congregation at the small elevation; Millett suggests a closer match can be found in a Latin elegy on the death of Maurice of Sully, Bishop of Paris, d. 1196; see PL 205.895.
[167] *AW* Pt. 1, Corpus 402, f. 8ᵇ 18-23.
[168] For my argument that this occurs not at the consecration, but at the priest's communion, see Gunn, 'Efter the Measse-Cos', pp. 107-8.

sacrament that in no way could they endure to be deprived of it'.[169] As their only desire was for their heavenly bridegroom, 'solum caelestem sponsum desiderarent',[170] there is a clear connexion between receiving communion and receiving Christ as bridegroom. The combination of bridal imagery and eucharistic devotion is found in the work of Gertrude of Helfta, *The Herald of Divine Love*, where Christ appears, during Mass, as a lover to prepare Gertrude for the heavenly banquet which was holy communion.[171] The notion of *desire* is missing in modern spirituality[172] but it was a prevalent idea in medieval spirituality, resounding through the literature. At the end of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, St. Augustine is quoted: 'Of þis holy desire spekið Seint Augustyne & seiþ þat 'al þe liif of a good Cristen man is not elles bot holy desire'.[173] Mechthild of Magdeburg, who had been a beguine in Magdeburg, joined the convent at Helfta, where eucharistic devotion was an important feature, as an older woman.[174] She received visions, recounted in *Flowing Light of the Divinity*,[175] which suggest an erotic relationship between the soul and God. The language of consumption is used with reference to Christ as bridegroom: 'The Bride has become drunk at the sight of his [the bridegroom's] noble countenance. ...The more he gives her, the more she consumes, the more she has'.[176] In *Ancrene Wisse*, the anchoresses are aware that they are unworthy of the majesty of God,[177] but they can consume Christ in the Host, embrace him as a lover and, in their imagination, enter the wounds of his body: 'Creop in ham wið þi þoht – ne beoð ha al opene? – ant wið his deorewurðe blod biblodge þin heorte', 'Creep into them [the wounds] with your thought – are they not all open? – and drench your heart with his precious blood'.[178] The physicality of the description of blood, in both this passage from *Ancrene Wisse*, and one in *Flowing Light*,[179] may seem shocking to a modern reader, but was in keeping with the spirituality of the period as seen in both devotion to the passion of Christ and the belief in

---

[169] James of Vitry, Prologue to *Vita Mariae Oigniacensis*, sec. 8, p. 638; trans., p. 41.

[170] *Vita Mariae Ogniacensis*, sec. 3, p. 636.

[171] Gertrude of Helfta, *Oeuvres Spirituelles*, Vol. 3, *Le Herault, Book 3*, ed. and trans by Pierre Doyere, Sources Chrétiennes No. 143 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1968), p. 80. Translated into English in Gertrude of Helfta, *The Herald of Divine Love*, trans. by Margaret Winkworth, Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1993), p. 175.

[172] Professor Elizabeth Stuart pointed this out in a paper on 'The Body and the Ecclesial Person: Sexuality from a Different Orientation' given at the Centre for the Study of Theology at Essex University, 11 May 2000.

[173] *Cloud*, ed. Hodgson, f. 91ᵇ, p. 133.

[174] See Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Women Mystics of the 13ᵗʰ Century' in *Jesus as Mother*, pp. 171-265.

[175] This was written in the vernacular, in Mechthild's native low-German; this text has not survived but has been preserved in a high-German version made in the fourteenth century and a Latin translation made not long after her death, see Murk-Jansen, *Brides in the Desert*, p. 66.

[176] Mechthild von Magdeburg, *Flowing Light*, p. 14.

[177] During preparation for communion, the anchoresses were to meditate on the majesty of God confined on earth, using words from St. Augustine's *Confessions*: 'Angusta est tibi domus anime mee', 'The house of my soul is too narrow for you', *AW* Pt. 1, Corpus 402, f. 8ᵇ 3.

[178] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402 f. 79ᵇ 12-14.

[179] The wafer of the communion is transformed into a bleeding lamb, Mechthild von Magdeburg, 'Concerning the Poor Servant Girl, John the Baptist's Mass, the Transubstantiation of the Wafers into the lamb, Beautiful Angels, Four Kinds of Sanctified People, and Golden Pennies', *Flowing Light*, pp. 33-36.

transubstantiation. The blood of Christ spilt on the cross was also the wine drunk at the Eucharist.[180]

The ecstasies some women experienced during the Eucharist were not always considered a sign of grace; Ernest McDonnell, writing about religious women in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, comments, 'Since the eucharist was often accompanied by ecstatic experiences, the chapter of Cîteaux had to forbid communion to those who could not retain their senses during the ceremony'.[181] We are not told that the anchoresses did experience rapture, only that at that moment during the Mass they should embrace Christ. Interest often does focus on the extraordinary but, as Penny Galloway has argued, 'The spirituality expressed by these exceptional women [the first generation of 'mulieres sanctae'] was, almost by definition, atypical'.[182] Excessive behaviour often won as much blame as praise.[183] The religious practices of the later, 'ordinary' beguines are seen in the 'devotional life the women created themselves'.[184] Similarly, in *Ancrene Wisse*, a work which treated excessive emotional responses with caution, the religious practices and spirituality of the women are found in their daily devotions and asceticism; we are not told that the anchoresses did experience rapture, only that at the moment during the Mass when they were in the presence of Christ they should embrace Him in their hearts. In *Ancrene Wisse*, there is none of the extreme emotionalism found in the writings of Mechthild of Magdeburg or Gertrude of Helfta; it should also be remembered that while Mechthild and Gertrude were writing accounts of their own visionary experiences, and the *vita* of Mary of Oignies is hagiographical, *Ancrene Wisse* was written as a guidebook for women.

If we take into account the difference due to genre between *Ancrene Wisse* and the visionary writings or hagiographical accounts of the 'mulieres sanctae' on the continent, the similarities in the spirituality of beguines and anchoresses become more apparent. This is particularly true of sermons preached to beguines in Paris in the late thirteenth century which deal with daily devotions and the penitential nature of their lives.[185] Their devotions included daily recitations of the Psalter of the Virgin, that is, 150 repetitions of the Ave Maria; and though not all the feasts of

---

[180] In a vision, Hildegard of Bingen saw the female figure of Ecclesia collecting in a chalice the blood flowing from the side of Christ hanging on the cross, Pars Secunda, Visio Sexta of *Scivias*, , ed. by Adelgundis Führkötter and Angela Carlevaris, CCCM 43 (Turnhold: Brepols, 1978), pp. 229-230, ill. opp. p. 228.

[181] McDonnell, *Beguines and Beghards*, p. 315.

[182] Penny Galloway, 'Neither Miraculous nor Astonishing: The Devotional Practice of Beguine Communities in French Flanders', in *New Trends in Feminine Spirituality: The Holy Women of Liège and their Impact*, ed. by Juliette Dor, Lesley Johnson and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts, 2 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1999), pp. 107-27 (p. 107).

[183] McDonnell, *Beguines and Beghards*, p. 445.

[184] Galloway, 'Neither Miraculous nor Astonishing', p. 123.

[185] These are the sermons edited by Bériou in 'La Prédication'.

the year are represented in the sermon collection, there are sermons for the four feasts of the virgin, 'modèle par excellence des béguines'.[186] Devotion to the Virgin was an important feature of the spiritual lives of these beguines as it was of the lives of the anchoresses; they would pray before an image of the crucifix or of the Virgin in church or, if they could not go to church, they should prostrate themselves on the floor, close to their bed, speaking to God as though to a great king:

> Quando tu oras, tu loqueris cum summo rege. Ideo bene decet te multum inclinare, et corde et etiam corpore.[187]

> When you pray, you talk with a great king. Therefore, it is most fitting if you bend right down, both with the heart and also the body.

Nicole Bériou points out that, in sermons preached to these beguines, the two objects characteristic of devotion in Flemish beguinages are also present: 'la passion du Christ d'une part, l'eucharistie de l'autre';[188] the passion of Christ and devotion to the Eucharist also provide a focus for the spirituality of the anchoresses for whom *Ancrene Wisse* was written. God tests the beguine by withdrawing from her for a while to make her desire him more; the relationship is likened to a marriage. In preparation for receiving her spouse, the soul must be transformed, like a moulting bird growing new feathers, through the contemplation of her spouse, suffering on the cross or present in the Eucharist. The preachers in this beguinage did not, however, promote the extreme emotionalism and mysticism found in the writings of some of the beguines of the Low Countries; Bériou points out that the preachers 'préfèrent d'ailleurs insister sur la préparation de l'âme à la vie mystique, plutôt que sur l'union mystique elle-même',[189] ('moreover, would rather insist on the preparation of the soul for the mystic life, rather than on the mystic union itself'). For the beguines, as for the anchoresses, the life of penitence on this earth was a preparation for the bliss of union with God after death.

The spirituality of *Ancrene Wisse* can only be fully understood within the context of its historical and cultural period. The main feature of popular spirituality in the high Middle Ages was affective piety. At the root of affective piety – expressed in the focus on the elevation of the transubstantiated host at Mass, devotion to the cross and to Mary as the mother of God – is a spirituality founded on belief and faith in a God present to humanity in the person of Jesus. The spirituality of *Ancrene Wisse* is essentially incarnational: within the anchorhold the anchoresses could share the suffering of Christ. According to James of Vitry, Mary of Oignies, 'Crucem tollebat, corpus suum per abstinentiam castigando; Christum imitabatur, seipsam per humilitatem

---

[186] Bériou, 'La Prédication', p. 122
[187] Bériou, 'La Prédication', p. 191; Sermon 35, fol. 264vb-265ra, n.288.
[188] Bériou, 'La Prédication, p. 192 n.294.
[189] Bériou, 'La Prédication', p. 196.

abjiciendo', 'took up the cross by chastising her body through abstinence and imitated Christ by casting herself down through humility'.[190] This could also read a description of the life of the anchoresses, who, through their lives of humility and penance, were to share the pain and shame suffered by Christ on the cross.[191]

They could also draw close to Him as their lover, who promised them the bliss of heaven as their marriage-gift and as a reward for their suffering on this earth:

> 3e schulen habben þruppe þe brihte sihðe of Godes neb, þet alle gleadunge is of, i þe blisse of heouene, muche biuore þe oþre. For þe rihtwise Godd hit haueð swa idemet þet euchanes mede þer ondswerie a3ein þe swinc ant a3eines þe ennu þet ha her for his luue eadmodliche þolieð. For-þi hit is semlich þet ancren þeos twa marheouen habben biuoren oþre, swiftnesse ant leome of a briht sihðe a3eines þet ha her þeostrið nu ham seoluen, ne nulleð nowðer iseo mon ne of mon beon isehene.

> you will have in the next the clear view of the face of God, the source of all joy, in the bliss of heaven, much before the others. For a just God has decreed that each person's reward in the next world should correspond to the labour and the trouble that they patiently suffer in this world for his love. That is why it is proper that anchoresses more than others should have these two marriage-gifts, swiftness and the illumination of clear sight: swiftness in return for their being so closely confined now, the illumination of clear sight in return for making themselves obscure now in this world, and refusing either to see anyone or to be seen by them.[192]

---

[190] *Vita Mariae Oigniacensis*, sec. 21, p. 641; trans., p. 54.

[191] *AW* Pt. 6, ed. Millett, pp. 2-3; Corpus 402 f. 95ᵇ 22-f. 96ᵇ 23.

[192] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402 f. 11-22.

Chapter Three
Pastoral rhetoric in the early thirteenth century

I have suggested in the previous chapter that the spirituality of *Ancrene Wisse* is best understood in the context of lay piety that was developing in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries; this leads to the question of whether its rhetoric bears comparison with that of any of the literature associated with lay piety. We need to be clear what sort of material we are dealing with: on the one hand there is the literature designed for use by clerics preaching to and hearing the confessions of the laity; and on the other there is literature, mostly vernacular, read by an increasingly literate lay public. Devotional literature in the vernacular intended for non-clerical audiences can be termed 'pastoral literature' and distinguished from the academic, Latin *pastoralia*, but this distinction is neither absolute not always clear. Herbert Grundmann draws a distinct line between religious literature written in Latin for reading by clerics and the vernacular literature that developed in response to the religious movement – and specifically the women's religious movement – of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries;[1] he is discussing the situation on the continent, however. In England a tradition of religious literature in the vernacular had long existed: Bennett points out that 'Old English homilies (including those of Ælfric, which have sometimes been thought to influence later religious writing) were in fact being copied up to and during the twelfth century, the time at which the first collections of Early Middle English homilies begin to appear'.[2] An interesting question may be at what point such literature came to be read not only by clerics but also by members of the laity and what effect this new readership had on how such material was written. *Ancrene Wisse* can itself be considered a work of pastoral literature written to be read by anchoresses and other members of the laity and we can see in its rhetoric the traces of the influence of the *pastoralia* that flourished in the thirteenth century. Bella Millett has suggested that *Ancrene Wisse* and the works associated with it represent an important stage in the development of vernacular literature.[3] The influences on *Ancrene Wisse* were not so much those of a popular oral culture as those of a clerical tradition that was being adapted for lay education.

Ancrene Wisse is one of a group of religious prose works written in the vernacular, including lyrical meditations and lives of saints intended to be read by a general lay audience, as well as by

---

[1] Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages*, pp. 192-195.
[2] J. A. W. Bennett, *Middle English Literature*, ed. by Douglas Gray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 263.
[3] Millett, 'Women in No Man's Land', p. 93 et passim .

anchorites, for devotional and practical purposes.[4] *Hali Meiðhad* deals specifically with the

vocation of a virginal life but *Sawles Warde* 'deals with a theme which is equally relevant to all

Christians' and the saints' lives 'were apparently intended in the first instance for public delivery

to a general audience'.[5] In their edition and translation of selections from *Ancrene Wisse* and the

Katherine Group, Bella Millett and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne comment that they 'seem to have been

written mainly to make material already available in Latin accessible to an audience whose first –

and, in some cases, only – language was English'.[6] The fact that, where Aelred's letter to his

sister who was a recluse, *De Institutione Inclusarum*, is used in *Ancrene Wisse*, it is translated into

English, should not be overlooked. Alexandra Barratt has suggested that the use of the

vernacular in *Ancrene Wisse* probably has more to do with the lay status of the anchoresses and

their lack of opportunity to learn Latin than with any decline of learning among nuns after the

Anglo-Saxon period;[7] in other words, while Latin was still being learnt by nuns, English was the

appropriate language for a religious work aimed at a lay, middle-class audience in the first half of

the thirteenth century.

In this chapter, I want to look at the development of *pastoralia* and pastoral literature in the early

thirteenth century, the rhetoric associated with that literature and some specific examples –

particularly sermons – that bear comparison with *Ancrene Wisse*. Joseph Goering notes that it was

Leonard Boyle who coined the term *pastoralia*, 'to encompass the many and diverse works

produced in the thirteenth and subsequent centuries to educate clerics (and, gradually, the laity) in

those things pertaining to the care of souls'[8] and elsewhere gives this definition of the term:

> As a literary genre, *pastoralia* is somewhat amorphous. … Its content ranges widely to
> include discussions of the seven deadly sins, the techniques of hearing confessions, the
> art of preaching, and the disciplinary teachings of canon law and of Church councils.

> What these texts all have in common is a desire to convey in writing … the basic
> knowledge and skills necessary for exercising the pastoral care of souls in the parishes of
> Latin Christendom.[9]

[4] For a summary of these works and their relationship, see Millett, Introduction to *Annotated Bibliography*, pp. 5-6.
[5] Millett and Wogan-Browne, Introduction to *Medieval English Prose for Women: Selections from the Katherine Group and* Ancrene Wisse, ed. by Bella Millett and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, rev. ed., 1992), p. xliii.
[6] *Medieval English Prose for* Women, p. xiii.
[7] Alexandra Barratt, 'Small Latin? The Post-Conquest Learning of English Religious Women', in *Anglo-Latin and its Heritage*, ed. by Sîan Echard and Gernot R. Wieland, Publications of the Journal of Medieval Latin, 4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), pp. 51-65 (p. 65).
[8] Joseph Goering, *William de Montibus: The Schools and the Literature of Pastoral Care* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1992), p. 59.
[9] Joseph Goering, 'Pastoralia: The Popular Literature of the Care of Souls' in *Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide*, ed. by F. A. C. Mantello and A. G. Rigg (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), pp. 670-676 (p. 670).

These definitions concentrate not on the formal qualities of *pastoralia*, but on its content and audience. At this point, it is worth keeping in mind Richard Newhauser's insistence that medieval genre is more to do with content than form: 'the attempt to describe medieval genres without recourse to the element of content, in a merely structural process, is an historical anachronism'; he continues, 'In the Middle Ages ... one cannot speak of an emancipation of literary forms from their ties to extra-literary objectives.'[10] D'Avray also claims that genre is as much about content as form, and that the content is affected by the audience: 'A genre in this sense is not a literary abstraction but a social force'.[11] D'Avray is writing of marriage sermons, Newhauser of the treatises on Vices and Virtues which proliferated in the thirteenth century and are defined by their treatment of the seven capital sins and remedies for them.[12] Both these forms can be considered a sub-genre of *pastoralia* defined by their subject matter. The marriage sermons were a form of sermons designed not only to be preached to lay audiences but to compete with other forms of popular literature such as romances and fabliaux in their promotion of marriage.[13] Treatises on the Vices share the methodological treatment, audience and general function of other *pastoralia*, being treatises aimed at clerics and designed for the moral education of the laity in their care; *Ancrene Wisse* shares both some material and structural features with Peraldus' *Summa de Vitiis*.[14] In order to discuss the rhetoric of pastoral literature, one needs to consider the content, function and audience of that literature.

The major event of the first half of the thirteenth century for an understanding of changes in pastoral care and the consequent development of pastoral rhetoric was the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. Boyle links the rise of *pastoralia* to the 'new awareness of the *cura animarum*' which led up to, and was affirmed by, the Fourth Lateran Council.[15] Greater awareness of the pastoral needs of people and duties of the church preceded the Fourth Lateran Council, and one should not credit the Council with too much innovation in this area;[16] rather, as Boyle claims, the Council put 'its stamp on a century or so of innovation and practice' and so 'changed the face of

---

[10] Richard Newhauser, *The Treatise on Vices and Virtues in Latin and the Vernacular*, Typologie des Sources du Moyen Age Occidental, Fasc. 68 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1993), pp. 59 and 60.

[11] D. L. d'Avray, *Medieval Marriage Sermons: Mass Communication in a Culture without Print* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 8.

[12] Particularly influential were Pennaforte's *Summa casuum poenitentiae*, Peraldus' *Summa seu tractatus de virtutibus et vitiis* and Friar Laurent's *Somme le Roy*, see Morton Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins: An Introduction to the History of a Religious Concept, with Special Reference to Medieval English Literature* (Michigan State College Press, 1952), pp. 123-4.

[13] D'Avray, *Medieval Marriage Sermons*, pp. 10-11.

[14] In *Ancrene Wisse* the list of seven sins are in a different order from that given by Peraldus; Peraldus, *Summa virtutum ac vitiorum*, 2 vols bound in 1 (Moguntia, 1618), col. 2; and see 'The Peraldus Project' at www.english.upenn/~swenzel/survey.html.

[15] Boyle, 'Fourth Lateran Council', p. 31.

[16] Richard Newhauser advocates maintaining a 'healthy skepticism' about its novelty; a point raised in personal correspondence.

the pastoral care'. [17] Mary O'Carroll has suggested that the Fourth Lateran Council was in part a

response to the preaching revival which started in the twelfth century. [18] While some of the

decrees were made in response to the religious movements of the twelfth century, the Council

also made demands of the priests and officers of the church in their duties towards lay Christians.

The tenth decree, 'De praedicatoribus instituendis', 'On appointing preachers', insisted on the

importance of preaching to the people, since man lives not by bread alone but 'in omni verbo

quod procedit de ore Dei', 'by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God' (Mat. 4.4);

and the twenty-first decree, 'De confessione facienda et non revelanda a sacerdote et saltem in

pascha communicando' required that 'omnis utriusque sexus fidelis, postquam ad annos

discretionis pervenerit', 'all the faithful of either sex, after they have reached the age of

discernment'[19] should take communion at least once a year, this annual communion being

preceded by confession and penance. This was not a new requirement,[20] but there was a

renewed insistence that all parishioners should confess privately to their own parish priests,

'proprio sacerdoti',[21] who had to be 'discerners of souls and not simply dispensers of absolution

and penance'.[22] It became necessary for the priest to be aware of theological developments as he

instructed the penitent and administered penance; *pastoralia*, is, in large part, the literature

designed to enable him to do this and to fulfil his duties towards his congregation and

parishioners. *Artes praedicandi* are one branch of the *pastoralia* that flourished in the thirteenth

century; there were also confessional treatises and *summae* on the seven sins as mentioned above,

as well as collections of *distinctiones* and *exempla*, model sermons, and other material useful to

priests and preachers in the execution of their duty.[23]

There was 'rapid development' in the schools of Paris in the second half of the twelfth century[24]

as more secular priests were being trained there, and it was to Paris that members of the newly-

formed mendicant orders came in the thirteenth century to study theology and develop their

preaching skills. It was becoming vital to the church that it was able to maintain the orthodoxy

[17] Boyle, 'Fourth Lateran Council', p. 31.
[18] Mary O'Carroll, *A Thirteenth-Century Preacher's Handbook: Studies in MS Laud Misc. 511* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1997), p. 8.
[19] Con. Lat IV, constitutio 10, p. 239, constitutio 21, p. 245; trans in *Decrees*, Vol. 1, pp. *239 & *245.
[20] see Bloomfield, Introduction to Thomas of Chobham, *Summa Confessorum*, pp. xli-xlii.
[21] Con. Lat. IV, p. 245. It was already the case, prior to 1215, that special permission was required if a priest other than one's own were to impose penance; see the *Summa* of Robert of Courson, Cap. 12.c, in V. L. Kennedy, 'Robert Courson on Penance', *Mediaeval Studies*, 7 (1945) 291-336 (p. 326). The *Summa* was probably composed between 1204-08 while Courson was teaching at Paris, and Kennedy comments on the role he played in the reforms culminating in the Fourth Lateran Council, p. 292.
[22] Boyle, 'Fourth Lateran Council', p. 32.
[23] D'Avray also includes legends of saints, *distinctio* collections, bible concordances, treatises of vices and virtues and *florilegia* among the tools available for preachers to use, D. d'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons diffused from Paris before 1300* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), pp. 66-77
[24] G. R. Evans, *Alan of Lille: The Frontiers of Theology in the Later Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 5; and see d'Avray, *Preaching of the Friars*, pp. 132-203 passim.

of an increasingly educated and sophisticated public; David d'Avray suggests that 'the period around 1200 was a critical point in the history of the relations between popular religion and the institutional church'.[25] Thomas of Chobham maintained in his inaugural sermon when he was licensed to teach theology at Paris that 'the Albigensian heretics would not have succeeded if there had been an active faculty of theology in the Languedoc', a suggestion taken, as is much of the advice in this sermon, from Peter the Chanter.[26] Peter the Chanter was at the centre of an important circle of theologians and preachers in Paris in the second half of the twelfth century. This circle included Thomas of Chobham, who was influenced by the Chanter's attempt to apply the developing academic study of theology to issues of practical morality[27] and James of Vitry, who was an advocate of the Dominicans and Franciscans as well as a supporter of the quasi-regular beguines and who left collections of sermons and of *exempla*.[28] Odo of Cheriton, whose style has been compared to that of the author of *Ancrene Wisse*,[29] was also educated at Paris. At the same time as the Church recognised the importance of pastoral care,[30] the Universities were in a position to provide the academic tools to enable priests, preachers and confessors to fulfil their duties in dispensing that care:

> It was precisely in this period that the parochial clergy were beginning to make themselves heard as a body and were, as Robert Courson put it in 1207, 'hammering at the gates of theology for solid food'.[31]

The author of *Ancrene Wisse* is unknown, though he may have been a Dominican,[32] and I cannot prove that he had any direct connexion with the schools of Paris, but many of the pastoral ideas and rhetorical methods that were developing in Paris in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries are found in *Ancrene Wisse*. Like a parish priest using a Latin sermon to preach in the vernacular, or using a Latin confessional manual or treatise on the Sins to help him in the directing of the confession of penitents, the author of *Ancrene Wisse* took the clerical Latin *pastoralia* and translated and adapted it for the education and direction of a vernacular audience. *Ancrene Wisse* is particularly significant in that this advice was written down for the anchoresses – and others – to read for themselves. *Ancrene Wisse* either quotes from or uses the same sources as Thomas of Chobham, Odo of Cheriton, James of Vitry and Alan of Lille and in its use of

---

[25] D'Avray, *Preaching of the Friars*, p. 25.

[26] J. W. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes and Merchants: The Social Views of Peter the Chanter and His Circle*, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970), vol. 1, pp. 115-6.

[27] Baldwin, *Masters, Princes and Merchants*, vol. 1, pp. 17-18.

[28] see Carolyn Muessig, *The Faces of Women in the Sermons of Jacques de Vitry* (Toronto: Peregrina, 1999), p. 8.

[29] H. Leith Spencer points out that *Ancrene Wisse* had 'many affinities' with the sermons of Odo of Cheriton, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 86.

[30] 'The Council asserted that the most important of all the arts was the pastoral care of souls', Goering, *William de Montibus*, p. 58 (ref. to IV Lat. Con., p. 248).

[31] Boyle, 'Fourth Lateran Council', p. 33, who notes 'See V.L. Kennedy, "Robert Courson on Penance", *Mediaeval Studies*, 7 (1945), 294', n.2, p. 37.

[32] See Millett, 'The Origins of *Ancrene Wisse*'.

modern rhetorical devices and neologisms adapted from Latin or French this thirteenth-century English text was innovative and at the cutting edge of pastoral literature.

The parish priest's roles of confessor and preacher developed in significance and importance during the course of the thirteenth century, but it was only gradually that the Latin, academic *pastoralia* percolated down to be used by parish priests as they administered to their lay congregations. In *pastoralia* dealing with confession after the Fourth Lateran Council, we see a new emphasis on the circumstances of the sin and, following Peter Abelard, the place of interior penitence. As penitence was internalised, so was the responsibility for sin. Guilt became linked with intention and sinfulness was located not in the act but in the interior consent to the act that was known to be wrong. For Abelard, the man who looks in such a way as to fall into consent to lust has already committed the sin of adultery, but someone who is tricked into sleeping with someone he believes to be his wife is not guilty of sin; it is the consent to lust that is sinful.[33] In *Ancrene Wisse*, the surrender to the sin of lechery is itself described as a lecherous act.[34] Christopher Holdsworth claims that Christina of Markyate's concern, as recorded in her twelfth-century Life, that, although she never submitted to her lustful desires, she may have sinned in her will, was due to the debate on intention going on in the schools:

> Her awareness of the importance of the will in consenting to sin shows that she and her counsellors were aware of some of the discussion on *intention* which was going on in the schools, notably, of course, stimulated by Abelard'.[35]

The author of *Ancrene Wisse* also places emphasis on the role of consent in falling prey to temptation and committing mortal sin; the anchorites are themselves advised to take some responsibility for how they make their confession to a priest and to understand the nature of the temptations facing them. Linked with the emphasis placed on confession was the understanding of the nature of sin. Newhauser suggests that the development of treatises on Vices and Virtues was to do with 'the growth of a doctrine of penance and auricular confession;[36] and similarly Mary Baldwin, writing with particular reference to *Ancrene Wisse* states:

> The popularization of the notion of the capital vices in the Church as a whole, and the shift in emphasis from temptation to sin, were largely due to the growth of private penance and the production of penitential books that accompanied it.[37]

Schematic elaboration of the Sins – such as is found in English for the first time in Part Four of *Ancrene Wisse* – can be seen as part of the thirteenth-century movement to instruct the laity in

[33] *Peter Abelard's Ethics* ed. & trans. by D. E. Luscombe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 24, trans. p. 25.
[34] *AW*, Pt. 4,Corpus 402, f. 78^b 20-26.
[35] C. J. Holdsworth, 'Christina of Markyate' in *Medieval Women*, ed. by Derek Baker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), pp. 185-204 (p. 198), n.71; and see comments in Chap. 1 on role of consent in ethics of Abelard.
[36] Newhauser, *The Treatise on Vices and Virtues*, p. 58.
[37] Baldwin, '*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background', p. 200.

their faith since such schemes were used by priests, following the Fourth Lateran Council, to ask

the penitent about the sins committed and by any literate Christian to examine his or her

conscience.[38]

The Fourth Lateran Council placed a great emphasis on confession and preaching as the prime

responsibilities of priests with a duty of pastoral care, but we cannot be sure of the ability of

parish clergy in this period to teach and preach to their congregations; Colin Morris comments 'It

is inconceivable that a regular preaching programme was taking place in country churches in the

twelfth century'.[39] It seems clear that parish clergy in the early Middle Ages tended to be

themselves poorly educated and so unable to teach their parishioners adequately about the

Christian faith; David d'Avray has pointed out that 'we cannot even be sure whether or not the

overwhelming majority of the population could have known the basic doctrines of their

religion'.[40] That this was a problem was recognised and the desire to tackle it and to help the

parish clergy in their pastoral duties, now defined as primarily consisting of preaching and

penance, led to a 'rush of activity'.[41] Miri Rubin suggests that this activity proceeded from the

head down: 'Once central theological and liturgical notions were clarified and determined in the

schools, they were soon translated into simple compilations, guide-books, lists and indices for the

use of parochial clergy and preachers'.[42] There is a question, however, about how much of the

pastoralia of the thirteenth century was intended for the use of parish priests since, although the

parish priest would have to be able to read the Latin of the liturgy, he may well not have been

able to cope with the pastoral texts produced in universities and schools. Goering argues that it

was not necessary for parish priests to be educated and suggests that, at a time when many more

people were obtaining a scholastic education, it was 'students in the schools' who became the

earliest audience for the practical literature of pastoral care.[43]

Sermons were one of the most important elements in the delivery of pastoral care; they were an

important method not only of disseminating knowledge and instructions on faith to both the laity

and to religious communities, but also a means of asserting the control of the church over both

communities. Prominent in this mission were the mendicant orders of friars, especially the

---

[38] Siegfried Wenzel, 'The Seven Deadly Sins: Some Problems of Research', *Speculum*, 43 (1968), 1-22 (p. 13).

[39] Morris, *Papal Monarchy*, p. 309.

[40] D'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars*, p. 20.

[41] Miri Rubin, 'What did the Eucharist mean to Thirteenth-Century Villagers?' in *Thirteenth-Century England, IV*, Proceedings of the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Conference, 1991, ed. by P. R. Coss and S. D. Lloyd (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1992), pp. 47-57 (p. 49).

[42] Rubin, 'What did the Eucharist mean?', p. 49.

[43] Goering, *William de Montibus*, p. 65, and see pp. 61-3. Goering comments on the 'different connotations' of the term *clericus*, which could be used as a 'designation for students in the schools', *William de Montibus*, p. 64.

Dominicans and Franciscans, which grew rapidly after the Fourth Lateran Council. Jessalyn Bird remarks that, for James of Vitry, 'the Franciscans and Dominicans were part of the answer to the thirteenth-century crisis in pastoral care'.[44] Mary O'Carroll, who has edited some of the sermons compiled by a Dominican, possibly a member of the Oxford Blackfriars, points out that the use of the services of friars was recommended in English diocesan statutes, and that Robert Grosseteste begged for the help of friars with the 'heavy burden of pastoral care', although this opened up the possibility of conflict with parochial clergy.[45] D'Avray has recently argued that the number of manuscripts containing sermon collections by mendicant friars – that is, written, copied and disseminated by them – has been grossly underestimated and that the influence of these sermons would be comparable to the influence of newspapers today.[46] These sermons would have been model sermons designed to be used by preachers, although the ultimate audience would have been lay. A collection of sermons preached in various chapels and churches in Paris in the liturgical year 1272-73, however, were recorded fully, although in Latin.[47] This collection includes sermons preached at the chapel of the beguinage where both Dominicans and Franciscans were among the preachers; mendicant friars clearly played an important role in the education and spiritual instruction of these beguines as they did for beguines in the Low Countries. These preachers were working within the thirteenth-century tradition of sermon production for lay audiences and some of the sermons to the beguines bear comparison with *Ancrene Wisse*.

While it cannot be assumed that the theory of preaching taught in the theology schools of Paris led directly to changes in pastoral practice in the parishes, it is likely that the 'new genres of scholastic literature', such as *Summae* and collections of *distinctiones*, as well as the collections of model sermons, had a gradual effect upon parish clergy; Goering concludes that, 'By the end of the thirteenth century such collections were in common use among preachers and pastors'.[48] Bloomfield argues that the *Summa confessorum* of Thomas of Chobham was directed not at theology students but at priests in the administration of their office;[49] gradually the moral theology of Paris did percolate down to those administering pastoral care. In the thirteenth century, those returning to England from studies in Paris seem to have concentrated on the practical application of their learning:

[44] Jessalyn Bird, 'The Religious's Role in a Post-Fourth-Lateran World: Jacques de Vitry's *Sermones ad Status* and *Historia Occidentalis*' in *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. by Carolyn Muessig (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 209-229 (p. 222).

[45] O'Carroll, *Thirteenth-Century Preacher's Handbook*, pp. 14 & 17.

[46] D'Avray, *Medieval Marriage Sermons*, pp. 15-30.

[47] see Bériou, 'La Prédication'.

[48] Goering, *William de Montibus*, pp. 71-2.

[49] Bloomfield, Introduction to Chobham, *Summa confessorum*, p. xxv.

Their genius lay not in high speculation, but in the adaption of the masters' teaching to life in the world. No other country has a literature so rich in the application of theology and law to daily affairs, and of that literature the penitential writings are an important part.[50]

Nicholas Watson, however, challenges a too-simplistic narrative of theological development in England, giving *Ancrene Wisse* as an example of a more complex and meditative work.[51] In using and adapting this Latin literature in a vernacular work intended for a lay audience in the first half of the thirteenth century, the author of *Ancrene Wisse* was in the forefront of the dissemination of *pastoralia* but the complex structure of *Ancrene Wisse* allowed practical advice of the sort found in a *summa confessorum* and directions about devotions to be united with a spiritual discourse on the mystical union with God and the ascetic nature of the anchoritic life. In *Ancrene Wisse* we see a working out and reconciling of the tension between academic, Latin-based theology and a vernacular spirituality with a tendency towards personal meditative practices and interior penitence.

The different functions of *Ancrene Wisse* are reflected in the variety of rhetoric employed: the rhetoric in the more pragmatic or didactic sections is likewise practical – clear and orderly, reflecting their scholastic origins, while more meditative parts employ extended similes in a looser style of discourse. *Rhetoric* can be understood as specific stylistic techniques derived from classical treatises or, more generally, as the art of persuasive speech and writing.[52] Persuasion was central to Basevorn's definition of preaching: 'Est autem praedicatio pluribus facta persuasio ad merendum, moderatum tempus retinens', 'Preaching is the persuasion of many, within a moderate length of time, to meritorious conduct'.[53] By this definition, preaching is a persuasive oratorical performance for which the successful employment of the rhetorical art would be essential and rhetoric is often associated with oratory, but its principles can also be found in material intended to be read. Written material can be persuasive; one of the purposes of *Ancrene Wisse* was to persuade – to encourage and confirm the anchoresses in their choice of life. Geoffrey Shepherd expresses its purpose as 'not to prove but to move'.[54]

As it was used in medieval pastoral literature, rhetoric was not a way of disguising the truth but of disclosing what was understood to be true about God and mankind's relationship with him, in as

---

[50] Bloomfield, Introduction to Chobham, *Summa confessorum*, p. xx.

[51] Watson, 'Middle English Mystics', p. 547.

[52] The OED gives what seem to be two meanings of the term *rhetoric* as versions of the same definition: '1 a. The art of using language so as to persuade or influence others; the body of rules to be observed by a speaker or writer in order that he may express himself with eloquence'.

[53] Robert of Basevorn, 'Forma praedicandi' in Th.-M. Charland, *Artes Praedicandi* (Paris & Ottawa: Publications de l'Institut d'Études Médiévales d'Ottawa, 1936), pp. 232-323 (p. 238); trans. by Leopold Krul in *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts* ed. J. Murphy, pp. 114-215 (p. 120).

[54] Shepherd, Introduction to *Ancrene Wisse, Parts Six and Seven*, p. lx.

effective a manner as possible. How material is organised contributes to its effectiveness and is a

fundamental principle of rhetoric; rhetorical devices can also be used to aid the memory and

make material easy to find. Rhetoric is not, therefore, just about the employment of words but

operates at different levels, from the structural to the linguistic, and these different levels are

recognised in classical rhetoric, which includes both *dispositio*, the arrangement of material, and

elocutio, the choice of words.[55] Fundamental to the organisation of written material in the High

Middle Ages, the scholastic age, was the principle of division; Erwin Panofsky has argued that

this principle was fundamental not only to the way in which written works were organised and

classified in this period of the Middle Ages, but to the very way of thinking that defines

scholasticism.[56] According to Panofsky, the mental habit of division that underlay the

organisation of written material can be seen manifesting itself in all forms of cultural pursuits,

especially architecture; a kind of verbal architecture is found in many genres:

> Whether we read a treatise on medicine, a handbook of classical mythology such as
> Ridewall's *Fulgentius Metaforalis*, a political propaganda sheet, the eulogy of a ruler, or a
> biography of Ovid, we always find the same obsession with systematic division and
> subdivision, methodical demonstration, terminology, *parallelismus membrorum*, and
> rhyme.[57]

D'Avray criticises the characterization of new sermons of the thirteenth century as 'scholastic'

and outlines the debate on this,[58] pointing out that sermons do not include some of the essential

features of scholasticism, particularly the use of *quaestiones*;[59] but he does concede that mendicant

preaching and scholastic theology share a 'subdividing mentality' and, indeed, that academic

summae and treatises, produced by scholastics, and sermons, produced by preachers, are both

species of this 'genus'.[60]

---

[55] See for example, James J. Murphy, 'Rhetoric' in *Medieval Latin*, ed. by Mantello and Rigg, pp. 629-638;
'Two Roman works had special influence on medieval rhetoric; the *De inventione* (c. 87 B.C.) of Marcus
Tullius Cicero, and the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (c. 80 B.C.), universally ascribed to Cicero during
the Middle Ages', p. 629.

[56] G. R. Evans suggests it may be wise to avoid terms such as *scholastic* since it has 'been debased into a
vocabulary with connotations of obscurantism, and of preoccupation with minute division of topics into
problems which could be addressed with remorseless methological [sic.] rigor but limited inventiveness',
Introduction to *The Medieval Theologians*, ed. by G. R. Evans (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p. xix. Panofsky,
however, does justice to the mental energy and methodological clarity of the scholastics before the
doctrines of High Scholasticism 'either stiffened into school traditions, or were subjected to vulgarization
in popular treatises', Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (Cleveland: World Publishing,
1957), p. 10.

[57] Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture*, p. 36.

[58] D'Avray, *Preaching of the Friars*, p. 164 ff.

[59] D'Avray, *Preaching of the Friars*, p. 168 ff.

[60] D'Avray, *Preaching of the Friars*, p. 177.

The principle of *divisio* played a particularly important role in the construction of sermons; John of Wales, 'the only obvious example of an Oxford friar who produced material for preachers',[61] described the form of the modern, or university sermon, emphasising the role of division in the construction of that form:

> Predicatio est thematis assumptio, eiusdem quod thematis divisio, thematis divisi subdivisio, concordantiarum congrua co[nsul]tatio et auctoritatum adductarum clara et devota explanatio.

> Preaching means the adoption of a theme, the division of that theme once it has been divided, the appropriate consultation of concordances, and the plain and pious exposition of the *auctoritates* which have been adduced.[62]

Michèle Mulchahey points out that the modern sermon was 'based on the careful elaboration of a single selected *thema*, an individual line from Scripture, analogous to the *lemma* of biblical exegesis'[63] and suggests that 'The new sermon was not only characterized by a new structure but by a structure for which the university and its preachers were seen to be responsible',[64] thus drawing a connexion with scholasticism. Nicole Bériou claims it is the structure which defines the new sermons, as they moved away from the more fluid form of older homilies and she mentions the division of the theme as the main structural device of these sermons.[65] Advice on the construction, function and rhetorical devices for these new sermons was supplied in the *artes praedicandi* which flourished at the turn of the thirteenth century; James Murphy points out that 'within twenty years of 1200 a whole new rhetoric of preaching leaped into prominence, unleashing hundreds of theoretical manuals written all over Europe during the next three centuries'.[66] Murphy's chapter on 'The Art of Preaching' focuses on the *artes praedicandi* which were mostly written by scholars, and here he writes largely of the structure of sermons, showing that in both Alan of Lille's *De arte praedicatoria* and Alexander of Ashby's *De modo praedicandi* the sermon is understood as an explication of a theme from scripture by means of *divisio*. Chobham also insisted on *divisio* as an element in the art of preaching,[67] and his own works of *pastoralia*, the *Summa de arte praedicandi*, *Summa de commendatione virtutum et extirpatione vitiorum* and *Summa confessorum*, are themselves organised by careful division and sub-division to allow easy access and

---

[61] D'Avray, *Preaching of the Friars*, p. 150; Oxford was established as a 'centre of excellence' in theology in the thirteenth century, but there is no evidence of the friars based there producing preaching aids.
[62] John of Wales from Oxford, University College MS. 36 f.127ᵃ, quoted and trans. by H. L. Spencer, 'Middle English Sermon' in *The Sermon*, dir. by Beverly Mayne Kienzle, Typologie des Sources du Moyen Âge occidental, Fasc. 81-83 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), pp. 597-660, (p. 604).
[63] Michèle Mulchahey, *'First the Bow is Bent in Study ...' Dominican Education before 1350*, Studies and Texts, 132 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1998), p. 402.
[64] Mulchahey, *'First the Bow is Bent in Study ...'*, p. 400.
[65] Nicole Bériou, 'Les Sermons Latins après 1200' in *The Sermon*, dir. by Kienzle, pp. 363-447 (p. 370).
[66] James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from St. Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 310.
[67] Murphy quotes Thomas of Chobham: 'Division is necessary in a sermon so that the hearer may understand what is to follow. Besides division is natural', Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, p. 324.

reference to the material. In the *Summa de arte praedicandi*, Chobham lists *divisio* as the third of the 'partes orationis in rethorica'. He also lists 'partes artis rethorice', which are the classical rhetorical devices of *inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria,* and *pronunciatio*. These devices can be applied to each of the 'parts of oration'; so, in what is itself a paradigm of medieval subdivision, section 2.1.3 of Capitulum 7, *De arte predicandi*, is headed 'De inventione in divisionibus'.[68] It is here that Chobham discussed the construction of a sermon, and the development of its theme, by division. *Divisio* can apply to the dividing of the whole sermon into many parts, or it can apply to the division of a word, 'unicum verbum'[69] into different levels of symbolic or figurative meaning.

Division as a method of construction and of organising material is also seen in other forms of *pastoralia*, such as treatises on confession, where it can aid memory and help the recall of important features; nor was its use confined to academic texts, as is seen in this description of a chapter of the *Legenda Aurea* of Jacobus de Voragine:

> The chapter on All Saints is a typical example of Jacobus's way of developing his arguments. One feature of his method meets the reader from the first sentence on: there were four "causes" (reasons, purposes) for the institution of the feast; each of the four will be studied under three, four, five subdivisions, and each subdivision under a number of sub-subdivisions.[70]

The *Legenda Aurea* was a popular thirteenth-century work that would have provided material for sermons; the author was himself a member of the Order of Preachers and also left several volumes of sermons.

Paul Saenger suggests that the division of larger works into parts or chapters was used as a 'new mode of presenting old texts' as well as 'an integral part of the structure of newly composed texts, which were arranged in terms of chapters and chapter subdivisions, termed *distinctiones*.[71] Richard and Mary Rouse point out that:

> Such divisions and subdivisions had to constitute coherent units, so that the process of division would aid the reader to understand the organization of the whole work and the intent of its author; and the units had to be small enough to serve for reference purposes.[72]

---

[68] Thomas of Chobham, *Summa de arte praedicandi*, ed. F. Morenzoni, CCCM, 82 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1988), p. 284.
[69] Chobham, *Summa de arte praedicandi*, p. 285.
[70] Introduction to Jacob de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints* trans. by William Granger Ryan, 2 vols. (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), vol. 1, p. xv.
[71] Paul Saenger, *Space Between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 259.
[72] Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse, 'Statim invenire: Schools, Preachers, and New Attitudes to the Page', in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Robert Benson and Giles Constable with Carol D. Lanham (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 201-225, (p. 223).

It is in this sense that *Ancrene Wisse* is divided into *destinctiuns*, but there is another way in which

the term *distinctiones* is used. Biblical *distinctiones* are a form of scholastic exegesis, using academic

scholarship to give the figurative meanings of a single word supported by Biblical references; the

Rouses give the following example of 'a late twelfth-century *distinctio* on the word *nubes*': 'Tres

sunt nubes: obscuritas in prophetis, profunditas in divinis consiliis occulta et inaudita fecunditas

virginitatis', 'There are three [ways of interpreting] clouds: as the obscurity in the prophets, as the

hidden depth in divine councils and as the strange fertility of virginity'. As the Rouses point out,

'for most of us, this "explanation" of the meaning of *nubes* is no explanation at all'.[73]

Nevertheless, *distinctiones* were used as the basis of the thematic sermons which developed in the

thirteenth century and collections of *distinctiones* such as Alan of Lille's *Liber in Distinctionibus*

Dictionum Theologicalium provided material for sermons. Chobham seems to use the word *divisio* in

this sense of *distinctio* when he writes of the division of *unicum verbum* as mentioned above; this

seems confusing but d'Avray notes that 'On the whole, it is not helpful to distinguish between

divisions and distinctions in our terminology'.[74]

Division was not, however, the only method employed for the organisation of material and

another type of discourse, dependent on an older, monastic tradition, needs to be recognised.

Jean Leclercq distinguishes the difference between monastic and scholastic exegesis of the

scriptures as being due to the difference in purpose: in the monastery, as opposed to the school

room, the concern is not with academic pursuits but with the achievement of salvation.

Immersion in the scriptures allowed monastic discourse to be rich in allusion and allegory.

Reminiscence provided the very method of construction of monastic discourse as certain words

set up 'a kind of chain reaction': 'Each word is like a hook, so to speak; it catches hold of one or

several others which become linked together and make up the fabric of the exposé'.[75] Leclercq

sees this as a specifically monastic, as opposed to scholastic, method of composition:

> It is this deep impregnation with the words of Scripture that explains the extremely
> important phenomenon of reminiscence whereby the verbal echoes so excite the
> memory that a mere allusion will spontaneously evoke whole quotations and, in turn, a
> scriptural phrase will suggest quite naturally allusions elsewhere in the sacred books.[76]

Bernard of Clairvaux's immersion in the Scriptures was exceptional even by the standards of his

time; his near contemporary, John of Salisbury, described him as:

> adeo diuinis exercitatus in litteris ut omnem materiam uerbis propheticis et apostolicis
> decentissime explicaret. Sua namque fecerat uniuersa et uix nisi uerbis autenticis nec in
> sermone communi nec in exhortationibus nec in epistolis conscribendis loqui nouerat.

---

[73] R. H. and M. A. Rouse, '*Statim invenire*', p. 213.

[74] D'Avray, *Preaching of the Friars*, p. 172.

[75] Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, trans. by Catharine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961), pp. 73-4.

[76] Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, p. 73.

> so saturated in the Holy Scriptures that he could fully expound every subject in the
> words of the prophets and apostles. For he had made their speech his own, and could
> hardly converse or preach or write a letter except in the language of scripture.[77]

while, in the fourteenth century, Robert of Basevorn wrote in his *Forma Praedicandi*:

> Modo, de Bernardo. Sciendum quod modus ejus est sine modo excedens et capacitatem
> fere omnium ingeniorum, qui prae omnibus in omnibus dictis Scripturam inculcat ut vix
> sit una sua sententia quae ex auctoritate Biblia vel multis auctoritatibus non dependeat.

> Now, about St. Bernard. It must be realized that his method is 'without method',
> exceeding the style and capability of almost all men of genius. He more than all the rest
> stresses Scripture in all his sayings so that there is hardly one of his sentences that does
> not depend on the authority of the Bible or many [other] authorities.[78]

Leclercq is making a general distinction between two different forms of discourse; Louis-Jacques

Bataillon distinguishes two particular types of sermon construction for the thirteenth century:

one based on *distinctiones* and the other structured around lengthy *similitudines*, giving examples of

a sermon by Thomas Aquinas compared to one by Guillaume de Mailly.[79] In the sermon by de

Mailly, the two main *similitudines*, which themselves contain chains of comparisons, are essential

to the composition of the sermon.[80] The latter, Bataillon claims, are practically never found in

university sermons but are an element in the effort of preachers to reach the people and explain

the scriptures to them. *Similitudines* were not only useful structural devices, as lengthy patterns of

imagery they were particularly appropriate for such audiences; d'Avray writes of 'a passion for

similitudines of all kinds, so pronounced as to bring thirteenth-century preaching nearer to the

conventions of modern poetry than of modern prose'.[81]

The method of sermon construction associated with the universities – the methodical division of

a theme – is also adapted and used for lay preaching and one should not be too dogmatic about

separating monastic and scholastic, or lay and clerical, styles. The same author could employ

different styles depending upon his audience; different styles are found in the sermons of James

of Vitry. In his *Sermones in epistolas* there is a scholastic pattern of division: for example, the

sermon for the beginning of Lent is organised around a methodological list of the reasons for the

observance of Lent;[82] while in one of the *Sermones ad vulgares*, that to be preached to farm- and

---

[77] John of Salisbury *Memoirs of the Papal Court*, trans. by M. Chibnall (London: Thomas Nelson, 1956), pp. 26-27.
[78] Robert of Basevorn, *Forma Praedicandi*, p. 247; 'Form of Preaching', p. 131.
[79] Louis-Jacques Bataillon, '*Similitudines* et *exempla* dans les sermons du XIIIe siècle', in *The Bible in the Medieval World: Essays in Memory of Beryl Smalley*, ed. by Katherine Walsh and Diana Wood, Ecclesiastical History Society (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), pp. 191-205 (p. 193).
[80] Bataillon, '*Similitudines* et *exempla*', p. 195.
[81] D'Avray, *Preaching of the Friars*, p. 9.
[82] James of Vitry, Sermo in Capite Ieiunii, *Sermones in Epistolas et Euangelia Dominicalia totius anni* (Antwerp, 1575), pp. 226-9.

vineyard-workers and other labourers,[83] the style is more discursive. In this sermon, similes and *exempla* move the argument forwards; the image of sowing seed and working the fields is appropriated and developed metaphorically, linking, as by Leclercq's 'hooks',[84] to Scriptural and patristic quotations and even *exempla*.

Sermons preached at the beguinage of Paris are typical of the thematic sermon with Protheme, Theme, Introduction, Division and Development. A sermon by Ranulph of Hombières, a secular canon and master of theology, develops by division of first the protheme from Luke, 'Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum' (Luc. 1.28) and then the theme, which is from the Song of Songs, 'Descendi in ortum meum, etc. in Canticis' (Cant. 6.10).[85] The development of the theme is based on its division into three:

> In hiis uerbis tria notantur: primo descensus modus per *Descendi*; secundo descensionis locus: *In ortum*; tertio, descensionis fructus: *ut uiderem poma conuallium*.[86]
>
> In these words three things are noted: first the manner of descent in 'I went down'; secondly the place of descending: 'in the garden; thirdly, the reward of the descent: 'that I may see the fruits of the valley'.

Similarly, Hubert of Sorbonne takes a theme from the second epistle of St. Timothy, 'Non coronabitur nisi qui legitime certauerit' (II Tim 2.5) for his sermon to the beguines for the Feast of Saint John.[87] The theme is explained in the Latin translation of a French proverb: 'res magna pro nichilo non habetur', that is, 'On n'a nyent pour nyent' – nothing will come of nothing.[88] The Division of the theme is into two parts: 'In hoc verbo duo notantur: bellum quod processit, et premium quod fuit post'[89] ('In this *verbum* [theme] there are two things: the battle which precedes and the prize which follows it'), and it is the theme of prosecuting the battle of life in order to win the reward of heaven which provides not only the imagistic language of the sermon but also its whole structure: the image is not an illustrative metaphor but the structure of the argument. There are three battles to be fought and three levels of defence for a castle and Hubert develops these two inter-linked sets of images in a systematic and orderly way. Hubert employs not only *divisio* but also other rhetorical techniques such as popular proverbs, concrete imagery and *exempla* that relate to everyday life; the sermon would have been preached in the

---

[83] 'Sermo [LX] ad agricolas et vinitores et alios operarios' from B.N., ms. lat. 17509 ff. 122rb-124vb (XIIIe s.) in J.-Th. Welter, *L'Exemplum dans la Littérature Religieuse et Didactique du Moyen Age* (Paris: Occitania, 1927), pp. 457-467.
[84] Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, pp. 73-4.
[85] Arnulphus de Albumeria (Ranulph of Hombières), Sermo 24, 'Ad beginas in Annunciatione' in Bériou, 'La Prédication', pp. 211-218 (pp. 211 & 213).
[86] Ranulph, sermo 24, p. 213.
[87] Hubert of Sorbonne, Sermo 15, 'Ad beginas in festo beati Iohannis in mane', in Bériou, 'La Prédication', pp. 202-211.
[88] Hubert, Sermon 15, p. 203 & n.1.
[89] Hubert, Sermon 15, p. 203.

vernacular and the full *reportatio* of it retains some vernacular terms. Such an eclecticism of rhetoric and material was necessary in the description and promotion of a new form of spirituality for a new audience, and the same eclecticism is at the heart of the rhetoric of *Ancrene Wisse*.

The 'fleshing out' or amplification of the theme was known as *dilatatio*, and Mulchahey lists the methods, or tools, the thirteenth-century preacher had to hand for this process: the chaining of authorities; biblical exegesis; definition or etymology; metaphorical explanation; argumentation and *exemplum*,[90] many of which can also be discerned in the rhetoric of *Ancrene Wisse*. In order to make penitential and contemplative spirituality available to a largely lay audience, and democratise a spirituality that had been the province of monasticism, the author uses the methods of preaching to lay people. Rhetorical innovations are found at all levels of the text of *Ancrene Wisse*, as is evident in the amplificatory techniques employed, in particular the use of *exempla* and argument by analogy and enthymeme: the use in *Ancrene Wisse* of vernacular *exempla* was innovatory.[91] The *exemplum* was a vital feature of pastoral literature; by the thirteenth century, collections of *exempla* were becoming common. They were often produced by Dominican compilers, following on from the Cistercians who, in the twelfth century, had 'catalysed interest in moralizing stories which featured characters other that the fathers and the Saints'.[92] As Beryl Smalley writes, '*Exempla*, proverbs, and other devices are, so to speak, the spices of the spiritual exegesis';[93] the use of *exempla* by Peter the Chanter was connected with the 'revival of popular preaching in which the Paris masters had a great share'.[94] Jacques le Goff associates *exempla* 'with a new kind of preaching that came into vogue at the end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth century to suit the needs of a changed society'[95] and the sermons of James of Vitry are noted for their use of *exempla*. In the sermon to agricultural workers mentioned earlier, the *exempla* used for illustration include the fable of the shepherd removing a thorn from a lion's paw, a story associated with St. Jerome, but also include the contemporary story of the peasant Gocelinus who wore red shoes on feast days.[96] Chaucer's fourteenth-century pardoner may have preached only for his own gains, but his method was that of earlier, possibly more honest, preachers:

---

[90] Mulchahey, '*First the Bow is Bent*, pp. 409-414.
[91] 'Except in the sermons, which were still written in Latin, the exemplum was rarely used during the thirteenth century', Joseph Albert Mosher, *The Exemplum in the Early Religious and Didactic Literature of England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1911), p. 87.
[92] Mulchahey, '*First the Bow is Bent*', p. 458.
[93] Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964; orig. pub. 1952), pp. 256-7.
[94] Smalley, *Study of the Bible*, p. 257.
[95] Le Goff, *Medieval Imagination*, p. 78.
[96] 'Sermo ad agricolas' in Welter, *L'Exemplum*, pp. 457-467

> Thanne telle I hem ensamples many oon
> Of olde stories longe tyme agoon.
> For lewed peple loven tales olde;
> Swiche thynges kan they wel reporte and holde.[97]

The persuasive power of *ensamples* comes from the ability of the preacher – or writer – to relate

the story to the experience of the people listening or reading.

Mulchahey sees the *exemplum* as a 'form of argumentation' adapted to the purposes of the popular

preachers; it is an 'illustrative story, the presumably true or at least plausible tale used to

illuminate a moral concept'.[98] Basevorn also saw the use of *exempla* as a form of amplification 'by

reasoning or argumentation' ('ratiocinando vel argumentando');[99] he gives three ways of

reasoning, the third of which is by example:

> Tertius modus ratiocinari per exempla, quod multum valet laicis, qui gaudet exemplis.
> Apostoli et alii sancti per multas tribulationes transierunt in regnum; igitur et nos.

> The third way of reasoning is by example; this avails much with lay people who are
> pleased with examples. The Apostles and other saints passed to the Kingdom of God
> through many tribulations; therefore we ought to also.[100]

What seems to be meant here by *exempla* is not so much amusing and edifying stories as the

relating of saints' lives to act as models for conduct in life. Exempla are used in this sense in the

Prologue to the *Vita* of Mary of Oignies where it is suggested that the stories of the lives of

saints will have more impact on readers than orders: 'multi enim incitantur exemplis, qui non

moventur praeceptis', 'many who are not moved by commands are stirred to action by

examples'.[101]

The element of story-telling, however, is central to the provisional definition Claude Bremond,

Jacques Le Goff and Jean-Claude Schmitt give of the medieval *exemplum*:

> un récit bref donné comme véridique et destiné a être inséré dans un discours (en général
> un sermon) pour convaincre un auditoire par une leçon salutaire.[102]

> a brief story presented as though true and intended to be inserted in a discourse (usually
> a sermon) to convince the audience of a lesson for their salvation.

What is important about this definition is that it not only covers the sort of thing an *exemplum* is –

a short story – but also its purpose – to persuade the listeners of a moral lesson. The terms in

---

[97] Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Pardoner's Prologue' from *The Canterbury Tales* in *The Complete Geoffrey Chaucer*,
ed. by F. N. Robinson, (2nd ed., 1957, London: Oxford University Press pbk., 1974), p. 149.
[98] Mulchahey, *'First the Bow is Bent'*, pp. 414-415.
[99] Basevorn, *Forma Praedicandi*, Cap. 39, p. 293, 'Form of Preaching', p. 181.
[100] Basevorn, *Forma Praedicandi*, Cap. 39, p. 293; 'Form of Preaching', p. 182.
[101] James of Vitry, Prologue to *Vita Mariae Ogniacensis*, p. 636 D; trans. by King, *Life*, p. 36.
[102] Claude Bremond, Jacques Le Goff and Jean-Claude Schmitt, *L'"Exemplum"*, Typologie des Sources du
Moyen Age Occidental, Fasc. 40 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1982), pp. 37-8.

this definition – *récit*, *discours*, and *auditoire* – imply an oral performance. Some *exempla*, however, are found in forms of *pastoralia* other than sermons designed for oration; there are examples in sections of Chobham's *Summa confessorum* that are of particular relevance to the laity. Capitulum x of Questio IIIa, on the Eucharist, is concerned with the things that are required of the laity and includes the following story from Gregory's *Dialogorum libri* which was also used by James of Vitry:

> Narrat enim beatus Gregorius quod cum quedam mulier esset demoniaca et adiurasset sacerdos demon ut exiret, respondit demon: facis mihi iniuriam, quia ego non introivi in hanc mulierem per me, sed ipsa me immisit in se. Ego enim sedebam in horto super lactucam, et mulier ingressa vidit lactucam illam et accepit illam sine benedictione, et comedit me simul cum lactuca.[103]

> The blessed Gregory tells the story of how, when a certain woman was possessed by a demon and a priest had entreated the demon to leave, the demon replied: you do me an injustice, since I did not enter this woman by myself but rather she introduced me into herself. For I was sitting in the garden on a lettuce, and the woman, having entered, saw the lettuce and took it without a blessing and consumed me at the same time as the lettuce.

This *exemplum* serves as a warning and an illustration of the injunction that, whenever one sits down to a meal, one should bless the food and give thanks to God. The issue of confession also had relevance to the laity and an *exemplum* is given of a woman who was reluctant to confess a crime to her priest and so wrote it down and left it next to the altar, in order to explain the necessity of confession being oral.[104]

Exempla, in the sense of moral stories, were no longer taken just from the Scriptures or Lives of the Saints; they have to appeal to a new audience. The use of *exempla* in *Ancrene Wisse* is similar to that in the sermons preached to beguines; they include short stories of contemporary life from the world outside the cell or beguinage. Stories of a man who was married and who goes on a journey and of a man thrown into prison are found in *Ancrene Wisse* and also the simile of the crew of a ship who will be drowned if a single hole is the ship is not mended.[105] In a sermon by Nicholas de Gorran the steering of a ship towards its final destination is given as an example of always keeping the end of actions in view; if the end is good, so is the action which leads to it. This sermon continues with the example of going to the pub:

---

[103] Chobham, *Summa confessorum*, p. 133; the exemplum is found in St. Gregorius, *Dialogorum libri*, L.1, c.4 (PL 77.168-9); for other authors who used this *exemplum*, see *The Exempla of Jacques de Vitry*, ed. Thomas Frederick Crane, for the Folk-Lore Society (London: David Nutt, 1890), pp. 59 n. cxxx, 189 n. cxxx. It seems Peter Rabbit may have more to worry about than Mr McGregor.

[104] Chobham, *Summa confessorum*, p. 219.

[105] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402 f. 85ᵇ 22-25: 'He is ase men in a schip þe haueð monie þurles þer þe weater þreasteð in, ant heo dutteð alle buten an, þurh hwam ha druncnið alle clane'; this could be called an *exemplum* although it is introduced as an analogy.

Uis ire ad tabernam respice finem! Finis est quod forte espendes ibi una hora quidquid lucratus fuisti tota ebdomada. Sed adhuc peius, quia bibis nimis, et inde occides caput tuum. Et plus, quia inde dices uilloniam alicui qui ti ibi interficiet, et tu es in peccato mortali.[106]

Look to the likely result! You will probably spend in an hour what it has taken a week to earn and, worse, since you drink too much you get a hangover or abuse someone who will kill you on the spot while you are in mortal sin.

In preaching about the battle against tribulations, Hubert of Sorbonne declared that once the beguines have been brought into the care of God, they must accept the beatings of the school master and the bitter medicine of the physician. What is required is not fighting against tribulations, which Hubert glosses with the French, 'les triboiz',[107] but the patient endurance of them. The image of the doctor who recalls his patient to health through medicine as a metaphor for spiritual healing is a familiar one and one found also in *Ancrene Wisse*;[108] the image of the scholar who is beaten by his master, however, may be more appropriate for those who had experienced the Parisian schools and one suspects that these sermons may not only have been preached in the beguinage but have had other audiences in Paris.[109]

Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, writing of *Ancrene Wisse* and *De Institutione Inclusarum*, suggests a distinction between *exempla* and *similitudines*:

> a distinction seems maintainable (and is usually maintained in medieval usage) between the exemplum's self-contained, plot-based narrative, inserted into discourse and used for exemplary purposes, and the narrative articulation of a continuous configuration of circumstances or particular images which constitutes the more intrinsically allegorical mode of the *similitudo*.[110]

While Aelred insists that the anchoress's cell should not be decorated,[111] he does allow her to develop an imaginative inner life; Wogan-Browne suggests that many of the images employed by Aelred 'offer imaginative consolation for, or a perspective on, the restriction and sensory deprivation of the recluse's life: a Cistercian concern with external plainness is complemented by attention to the meditative inner eye'.[112] Wogan-Browne claims that Aelred uses lengthy similitudines, such as the white cloths on the altar and the process by which they have been

---

[106] Nicolas de Gorran, Sermon 31 in Bériou, 'La Prédication', p. 226.

[107] Hubert, Sermon 15, p. 208.

[108] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402 f.98b 17-21.

[109] Later, Hubert addresses his audience as 'dilectissimi', that is, in the masculine, Sermon 15, p. 209, f. 61va.

[110] Jocelyn Price [Wogan-Browne], '"Inner" and "Outer": Conceptualizing the Body in *Ancrene Wisse* and Aelred's *De Institutione Inclusarum*' in *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature: Essays in Honour of G. H. Russell*, ed. by Gregory Kratzmann and James Simpson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1986), pp. 192-208 (p. 197).

[111] 'Sed illam te nolim quasi sub specie devotionis sequi gloriam in picturis uel sculpturis, in pannis auium uel bestiarum, aut diuersorum florum imaginibus uariatis', *DII* §24, p. 657; 'I would not have you pursue, on the pretext of devotion, the glory which expresses itself in painting or carvings, in hangings decorated with birds or animals or flowers of one sort or another', Aelred, 'Rule of Life', p. 71.

[112] Wogan-Browne, 'Inner and Outer', p. 199.

whitened which provide a similitude for cleansing the soul through confession and satisfaction, but that he does not use the kind of *exempla* found in *Ancrene Wisse*, the 'more characteristic rhetorical form' for treatises on the reclusive life being 'the analogy or similitudo'.[113] Although *Ancrene Wisse* does use Cistercian models – and indeed translates and adapts parts of *De Institutione Inclusarum* – the mode of rhetoric is different, as were the spiritual and material experiences of Aelred's sister and the sisters for whom *Ancrene Wisse* was written. In *Ancrene Wisse*, *exempla*, in the sense of popular stories, are used most often in those parts which relate as much to the following of the religious life in the world as to the interior world of the anchoresses.

The 'allegorical mode' which Wogan-Browne defines as fundamental to the construction of *De Insitutitione Inclusarum*, however, is also basic to *Ancrene Wisse*; indeed this mode of thinking was fundamental to how their authors conceived the world. That 'Medieval man thought in terms of symbols' may be an axiomatic commonplace,[114] but it was the resemblance between the spiritual and physical realms that gave significance and meaning to the world. This was a world view that believed the material world corresponded to the spiritual, that the known world in some way represented, and so could reveal, the unknown God: the allegory of the scriptures revealed God but the world itself was sacramental – an expression of the purpose of God.[115] Beryl Smalley claims that, in the twelfth-century revival of popular preaching, 'allegory could be used for instructing the laity, for presenting to them the Church and her sacraments in a concrete and intelligible form';[116] and she writes of how Stephen Langton used allegory 'as illustrating and confirming established theological truth'. Smalley then analyses his method of argument in which he finds the conclusion of an argument by means of allegory 'questionable':

> We hold our breath. Langton is questioning a 'morality' which was commonly used as a political argument by the popes. If he rejects it, as offensive to his common sense, then what standard does he propose to judge by? Surely he must see that he is casting doubt on the whole method; that a trope has no value in argument; that it is purely subjective. No such idea occurs to him.

---

[113] Wogan-Browne, 'Inner and Outer', p. 197; Aelred does offer the narrative of men he has known as examples of behaviour to avoid, see *DII*, §§ 18 & 22; 'Rule of Life', pp. 66-7 & 69-70.

[114] Marcia Colish gives this dictum as one 'usually found on page one of any book on this subject [the medieval mind] and continues: 'Whether cited to attest to the clairvoyance or obscurantism, the subtlety or primitivism, the uniqueness or the universality of the Middle Ages, the symbolic attributes of the medieval mind have by now acquired the unexcogitated and prescriptive status of an *idée recue*.' Marcia L. Colish, *The Mirror of Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p. vii.

[115] See Spencer, *English Preaching*, p. 81.

[116] Smalley, *Study of the Bible*, p. 244. *Allegory*, in the medieval sense of biblical exegesis, is helpfully defined as 'a habit of seeking correspondences between different realms of meaning (e.g. physical and spiritual) or between the Old Testament and the New' in Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 5.

For Langton to reject the validity of using allegory as an argument would be to 'criticise a method which is bound up with his whole conception of God and the universe. He is still living in an Augustinian world of mirrors and reflections'.[117]

Preachers were expected to add *exempla*, similitudes and other illustrations and analogies suitable for their particular audiences, although these are often missing from *reportationes*[118] and model sermons.[119] The enthymeme was a device that was not only illustrative but also had argumentative value, relying on analogy as a form of reasoning. An enthymeme is an argument that is based on only probable grounds, rather than the logical certainty of a syllogism, but for Basevorn reasoning by enthymemes was a valid method of amplification in sermons. By asking the audience to draw the conclusion, the preacher was involving them in the process and appealing, if not to their powers of logic, then certainly to their common sense:

> Alius modus est per latentia enthymemata ratiocinari, et hoc postulando judicium ab auditoribus. V.g. Nonne stultus esset qui funem texeret vel faceret per quem ab inimico suspenderetur? Sic est qui peccatum facit quo damnetur. *Funibus peccatorum quisque constringitur.* Prov. 5°

> Another way is to reason with hidden enthymemes and by asking the listeners to draw the conclusion. For example: Would he not be foolish who would weave or make a rope with which his enemy would hang him? Such a one is he who commits sin by which he is damned. Prov. 5: 22: *Each one is fast bound with the ropes of his own sins.*[120]

The use of a scriptural quotation clinches the argument. If the grounds or premise of the argument is taken from the Scriptures, then the truth value of the argument as a whole is of a different, superior, kind, as Shepherd acknowledges with reference to *Ancrene Wisse*:

> Scriptural texts had of course a peculiar character. Other writings were made up of words, but the Scripture, through words, made a direct contact with things. Thus scriptural texts could be used somewhat as nowadays we use mathematical tables. You could abstract from them, rearrange them, but the truth to which any extract gave access remained unchanged in all circumstances'.[121]

---

[117] Smalley, *Study of the Bible*, p. 262.

[118] For explanation and description of *reportationes*, see Smalley, *Study of the Bible*, pp. 200-207. Although Smalley is talking mostly of the transmission of lectures, she does also refer to the *reportationes* of university sermons, p. 204.

[119] Some of the *exempla* from the sermons of James of Vitry have been collected, *The Exempla of Jacques de Vitry*, ed. by Crane; Crane has pointed out the absence of *exempla* in the *sermones de tempore* of James of Vitry collected in *Sermones in Epistolas et Evangelia Dominicalia* – Cranes's explanation, that James probably wanted to reserve such material for the *sermones vulgares* he intended to write, is somehow not convincing (Crane, *Exempla of Jacques de Vitry*, p. xxxix); since the sermons collections of James of Vitry were intended to be used to educate preachers, it is possible that the preachers were expected to add their own *exempla*.

[120] Basevorn, *Forma Praedicandi*, Cap. 39, p. 293; 'Form of Preaching', p. 181.

[121] Shepherd, *Ancrene Wisse, Pts. 6 & 7*, p. lxiii.

The medieval preacher would not have seen the use of the enthymeme as any less valid an argument than logical deduction; they were part of his arsenal of weapons for the persuasion of his audience.

This arsenal included vivid imagery: the importance of painted images, abjured by Aelred, is acknowledged by preachers to the beguines. In the beguine sermons, 'les images qui peuplent l'esprit et le discours des prédicateurs sont aussi quelquefois celles qui figurent sur les murs et sur les vitraux des sanctuaires' ('the images which furnish the preachers' minds and their discourses are sometimes the same as those which appear on the walls and in the stained-glass windows of the sanctuaries').[122] Bériou points out that the sermons use simple, concrete language that is rich in imagery[123] and she comments on references to pictorial representations in a number of the sermons in this collection. In a passage attributed to the mistress of the beguines, the very stones of the church have a symbolic value. The *magistra* explained that one comes to a church, not for the stones or the 'chalos' (which Bériou suggests means 'la chaux' [whitewash] or, perhaps, 'les lampes') but for the holy bodies ('les sainz cors') which dwell within, as one's body is sanctified by the indwelling of the spirit.[124] As the actions of the dedication and blessing of the church, in the sprinkling of holy water, have spiritual significance, so external or bodily mortification is accompanied by inner repentance and tears. The 'external' crosses in the church correspond to the internal one – that is, the memorial of the Passion which the sanctified soul ought always to hold in the heart.[125] Like the author of *Ancrene Wisse* and, indeed, Aelred who used the white altar cloths as the starting point of a lengthy *similitudo*,[126] the *magistra* uses the physical environment of the beguines as a material correlative to their spiritual lives.

The *simililtudines* in *De Insitutione Inclusarum* focus on the world within the cell, and the cell of the anchoresses provides both the physical correlative of their asceticism and the metaphorical expression of their spirituality. However, both *Ancrene Wisse* and the sermons preached to the beguines also looked to the world beyond, as is seen in their use of *exempla*. There are also references to courtly literature; in Part Seven of *Ancrene Wisse* there is the *forbisne* of the Lover Knight who is the paragon of all chivalric virtues, while references to chivalry occur in a number of the sermons. The penitent is as a knight, dubbed by Christ at baptism, who must use the

---

[122] Bériou, 'La Prédication', p. 190.
[123] 'Tout cela est dit dans une langue simple, concrète et imagée', Bériou, 'La Prédication', p. 190.
[124] 'Templum magistra beguinarum de dedicatione ecclesie' in Bériou, 'La Prédication', p. 200.
[125] 'Et hee sunt cruces que fiunt extra. Intra, scilicet memoria Passionis quam in corde anima sancta semper debet habere', 'Templum magistra beguinarum', p. 200.
[126] see the exploration of this *similitudo* in Wogan-Browne, 'Inner and Outer', pp. 200-202.

word of God as both weapon and armour in the daily battle against temptation.[127] Christ himself

is also a knight, and God is 'le seigneur courtois' who treats with mercy those who are faithful to

him and generous with their gifts.[128] The beguines should address God as a great king, saying,

for example:

> Seigneur, je ne veux que vous,
> votre amour et votre acointance.
> Lord, I want only you,
> your love and your friendship.[129]

The use of the vernacular language of romance is relevant. Bériou describes the experience of

conversion as 'son épanouissement dans un dialogue d'amour'[130] ('its flowering into a dialogue of

love').

Since sermon collections tend to be of either model sermons or *reportationes*, these usually give a

more schematic form of the sermon. Charles Baldwin points out that the written text of a

sermon 'was by no means always of the sermon as preached'.[131] It is just these elaborations – the

rich use of language and imagery – that make *Ancrene Wisse* so rich and interesting. The lack of

full sermons as well as their essentially oral and performative nature[132] may seem to preclude the

possibility of making a comparison between their rhetoric and that of *Ancrene Wisse*. Fortunately,

the sermons preached to the beguines of Paris, some of which I have already commented on,

were recorded very fully and provide some interesting comparisons of rhetoric and spirituality

with *Ancrene Wisse*. Sermons were an important form of educating and controlling beguines.

Bolton has pointed out that beguines, 'like most urban audiences', were eager to receive

instruction, 'which usually came in the form of preaching',[133] and she draws an explicit

comparison with *Ancrene Wisse* and other works in the *Katherine Group*. *Ancrene Wisse* is not a

sermon in that, although probably intended to be read out loud, it is not essentially performative

nor does it allow for improvisation; nevertheless I believe valid comparisons can be made. Four

of James of Vitry's *Sermones vulgares* were addressed to beguines[134] and his *Sermones de sanctis* on

virgins and on other holy women would also have been appropriate for an audience of beguines.

---

[127] 'Pour résister aux tentations, le pénitent dispose d'armes puissantes: la Parole de Dieu, comparée à des flèches, à une épée ou à une armure', Bériou, 'La Prédication', p. 186.

[128] Bériou, 'La Prédication', p. 187.

[129] Bériou, 'La Prédication', p. 191; from Sermon 35, fol. 264vb.

[130] Bériou, 'La Prédication', p. 193.

[131] Charles Sears Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic (to 1400) Interpreted from Representative Works* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1959), p. 233.

[132] Carolyn Muessig comments on the difficulties inherent in 'studying a written genre which is supposed to represent an oral event' in 'What is Medieval Monastic Preaching? An Introduction' in *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. by Carolyn Muessig (Leiden: Brill, 1998) pp. 4-5.

[133] Brenda Bolton, 'Thirteenth-Century Religious Women: Further Reflections on the Low Countries "Special Case"' in *New Trends in Feminine Spirituality*, pp. 129-157 (p. 140).

[134] Bolton suggests these were beguines who 'were clearly not yet completely institutionalized', 'Further Reflections', p. 141.

In the 'Second Sermon to Virgins and Young Girls' from the *Sermones ad status* he explicitly

mentions beguines.[135] Penny Galloway has also found evidence of beguines in Flanders listening

to sermons, as mentioned in descriptions of patronal festivities at Champfleury and in the

statutes of the beguinage of St. Elizabeth in Ghent which 'decreed that the women of this

community were obliged to be present at all sermons in their church'.[136]

The literature commonly associated with the beguines – the writings on bridal mysticism and the

ecstatic apprehension of the Host, for example – and their hagiographies[137] tend to highlight their

emotionalism and extreme behaviour and would provide little comparison, in terms of rhetoric,

with *Ancrene Wisse*. However, as Penny Galloway has argued, 'The spirituality expressed by these

exceptional women was, almost by definition, atypical'[138] and sermons preached to beguines

exhibit a concern with the control of the women. Even James of Vitry, while presenting the lives

of Mary of Oignies and other holy women of Liège as 'exempla' also admitted that he could not

commend the excesses that Mary committed in, for example, wearing a rough cord under her

clothing.[139] James handles with care the story of Mary cutting out a large piece of her flesh with a

knife because of her loathing for it: she did this 'Fervore enim spiritus quasi inebriata' and then

buried the piece of flesh in the earth 'prae verecundia'.[140] While James of Vitry admired her

fervour and believed that she was blessed in her ecstasy, this is presented as exceptional

behaviour. In order to negotiate a space where such behaviour can be related with approbation,

while not being presented as a model to imitate, Mary's actions are presented with the

understanding that she was a woman of exceptional spirituality and possessing a particular gift of

grace. The preachers to the Paris beguines, like the author of *Ancrene Wisse*, advocated

moderation rather than the extreme emotionalism expressed in the writings of the early Flemish

---

[135] See Muessig, *Faces of Women* for transcriptions, translations and commentaries on these sermons. The 'Second Sermon to Virgins and Young Girls' from the *Sermones ad status* is found at pages 88-93 and is the 'Second Sermon to the Virgins' [from the *sermones vulgares*] referred to by Bolton, 'Further Reflections', p. 141.

[136] Penny Galloway, ' "Life, Learning and Wisdom": the Forms and Functions of Beguine Education' in *Medieval Monastic Education*, ed. by George Ferzoco and Carolyn Muessig (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), pp. 153-167 (pp. 158-9).

[137] See those discussed by John Coakley, 'Friars as Confidants of Holy Women in Medieval Dominican Haiography' in *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Timea Szell (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 222-46.

[138] Galloway, 'Neither Miraculous not Astonishing' p. 107.

[139] James of Vitry, *Vita Mariae Ogniacensis*, p. 639 F; trans. King, p. 47.

[139] James of Vitry, *Vita Mariae Ogniacensis*, p. 641.

[140] 'From the fervour of her spirit and as if inebriated, she began to loath her flesh . . . and she needlessly cut out a large piece of her flesh with a knife which she then buried in the earth from a sense of reticence. She had been so inflamed by an overwhelming fire of love that she had risen above the pain of her wound and, in this ecstasy of mind, she had seen one of the seraphim standing close by her. After she had died, the women who were washing her corpse were amazed when they found the places of the wounds, but those who had known of this even through confession understood what the scars were', trans. King, p. 54; *verecundia*, translated here by King as *a sense of reticence*, can also mean *shame*.

beguines. The preachers, aware of attacks made on beguines, were anxious that they should

conform.[141] Bériou refers to the 'prudence' of the preachers, 'qui préfèrent d'ailleurs insister sur

la préparation de l'âme à la vie mystique, plutôt que sur l'union mystique elle-même,'[142] ('who,

besides, would rather insist on the preparation of the soul for the mystic life, rather than on the

mystic union itself').

In the sermons to the beguines, the salient point is not just that we find the same kind of imagery

as in *Ancrene Wisse* or that the tone of moderation is similar but that both discourses use a careful

and systematic exposition of these metaphors. *Ancrene Wisse* uses whatever rhetorical methods

seem most effective, and often these are methods shared with thirteenth-century sermons and

other pastoral literature. A closer reading of *Ancrene Wisse* in Chapter Four will show that

similitudines, chains of images and division are employed as principles of organisation: different

parts of *Ancrene Wisse* employ different styles depending on their function, from the elaborate

division and subdivision of the parts on Temptation and Confession to a more allusive, monastic

style in Part Six which interprets the anchoritic life as being crucified on the cross of Christ in

pain and shame.

In many ways, *Ancrene* Wisse and associated works are a new kind of vernacular, devotional

literature; while comparisons can be drawn with sermons directed at a lay audience, here we find

the same kind of material written in full in the vernacular and designed to be read. In *Ancrene

Wisse* we see the influence of *pastoralia* and the moral theology of Paris adapted for a vernacular

readership which allows us to place it at an important juncture not only in the development of

vernacular literature but also of vernacular spirituality. *Ancrene Wisse* is evidence of the wide

applicability of this rhetoric, as it is also evidence of the democratisation of a previously clerical

or monastic spirituality made available to an increasingly literate lay public. In form and matter it

is a valuable work of devotional literature in its own right and a forerunner of the fourteenth

century English works characterised by Watson as 'vernacular theology'.[143]

---

[141] Bériou, 'La Prédication', p. 182.
[142] Bériou, 'La Prédication', p. 196. Bériou notes that, in this moderation and prudence, these sermons are very different from those preached by master Eckhart and his disciple Tauler, p. 196 n.310.
[143] See the definition of 'vernacular spirituality' Nicholas Watson gives in 'Censorship and Cultural Change', p. 823, n. 4 and discussion of this term in Chap. 2.

Chapter Four

The Rhetoric of *Ancrene Wisse*

James Murphy claims that, 'Rhetoric studies the uses of purposeful language, preparing a speaker

or writer for the creation of future discourse'.[1] The purpose of *Ancrene Wisse* was to persuade

and teach both the anchoresses, who were its primary audience, and the wider, more general

audience for whom it was also intended. To fulfil this purpose, the author adopted and adapted

rhetorical techniques available to him, including those associated with the *pastoralia* and

vernacular pastoral literature of the thirteenth century. A 'frank pragmatism, making highly-

selective use of ideas from the past for the needs of the present',[2] is, according to Murphy, the

basic principle of medieval rhetoric and pragmatism is the key to understanding the rhetoric of

Ancrene Wisse. Bernard of Clairvaux acknowledged that different audiences required, not so much

different things to be said, but rather that those things be said in a different way: 'Vobis, fratres,

alia quam aliis de saeculo, aut certe aliter dicenda sunt',[3] ('To you, brothers, different things

should be said than to people in the world, or at any rate, said in a different way'). Gregory the

Great, in his advice to preachers, used a series of images to make a similar point:

> Quia et plerumque herbae, quae haec animalia nutriunt, alia occidunt; et leuis sibilus
> equos mitigat, catulos instigat. Et medicamentum quod hunc morbum imminuit, alteri
> uires iungit; et panis qui uitam fortium roborat, paruulorum necat.[4]

> And so there are many crops which nourish these animals, but kill others; and a soft
> hissing soothes horses but stirs up puppies. And the medicine which diminishes this
> disease, increases the strength of another; and bread which strengthens the life of the
> strong, destroys that of young children.

The same idea – that children cannot eat the bread of adults – is expressed in *Ancrene Wisse*:

> ant all Ich habben tobroken ham ow, mine leoue sustren, as me deð to children þe
> mahten wið unbroke bread deien on hunger. Ah me is, þet wite ȝe, moni crome
> edfallen; secheð ham ant gederið, for ha beoð sawle fode.

> and I have broken them all up for you, my dear sisters, as people do for children who
> might die of hunger with unbroken bread. But be sure that I have let fall many crumbs;
> look for them and gather them up, because they are food for the soul.[5]

Here it is the necessary elements of confession that have been broken up: doctrines of the

church are made palatable for a lay readership and, in a reference to the parable of the Canaanite

---

[1] Murphy, 'Rhetoric' in *Medieval Latin*, p. 629.
[2] Murphy, *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts*, p. xiv.
[3] Bernard of Clairvaux, Sermo 1, 'Sermones super Cantica Canticorum' in *Opera*, Vol. 1, p. 3.
[4] Gregory the Great [Grégoire le Grand], *Règle Pastorale*, Sources Chrétienne, 382 (Paris : Éditions du Cerf, 1992), p. 258.
[5] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402 f. 92[b] 23-6.

woman who was rewarded for her faith and persistence (Matt. 15, 22-28), crumbs fall from the tables of clerics and religious to provide soul food for the anchoresses.

This image of crumbs falling from the table could be extended to the whole of *Ancrene Wisse*: material and rhetoric is used and adapted from different sources as best suits the different parts of the work. In some parts the style owes much to monastic forms of discourse, while other parts, drawing on contemporary pastoral literature, are innovative in their rhetoric. It is in the rhetoric as well as the material of *Ancrene Wisse* (though the two are not strictly separable) that we see the interface between traditional monastic religious writing and thirteenth-century pastoral rhetoric designed to educate a growing audience of devout lay people – and the secular priests and friars in charge of them. *Ancrene Wisse* addressed lay people who were in the world and anchoresses who were withdrawn from it, and the variety of its rhetoric reflects this: it is like a library, offering different material for different readers, and yet the work was clearly conceived as a unity and, despite its length, the author's concern for clarity and orderliness is apparent in its overall unity and design.

A conscious use of rhetoric is evident at all levels – from the construction of the work as a whole to individual words chosen for their emotional impact. The organisation of material – the *dispositio* – is an important aspect of rhetoric and the way in which the varied material of *Ancrene Wisse* is organised needs to be considered. *Ancrene Wisse* is divided into Parts and the themes of the Parts may seem strange to a modern reader. Michel Foucault, in the Preface to his book *The Order of Things*, quotes 'a passage in Borges' which itself quotes a 'certain Chinese encyclopaedia':

> in which it is written that 'animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) *et cetera* (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies.

Foucault comments on this taxonomy,

> the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*.[6]

The system of classification of *Ancrene Wisse* is not as (seemingly) bizarre as that of the Chinese encyclopaedia – the parts it is divided into are 'about Hours and prayers which are good to say', 'about the custody of the heart through the five senses', how anchorites are like birds, 'about many kinds of temptations', about confession, on penance, 'about the love which makes the heart

---

[6] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. from the French (London: Tavistock, 1970; pbk., 1974), p. xv.

pure' and the outer rules which serve the 'Lady Rule'[7] – but we recognise in this division another system of thought. The categories into which *Ancrene Wisse* is divided are not the categories we expect to see and we may struggle to locate, in Foucault's term, 'the very site on which their propinquity would be possible'.[8] The use of metaphors – the senses presented as guardians of the heart, how the anchoresses are like birds, the image of the 'lady Rule' – as the means for categorising and organising a guide for anchoritic life challenges our modern way of thinking as much as the anchoritic way of life itself does.

The incarnational spirituality that is at the heart of *Ancrene Wisse* acts as a unifying theme for the work: the various parts contribute to the whole as they each give advice on how this spirituality may best be lived out. Each part reinforces the others as the author advises readers to look back at what was written earlier; in Part Four the anchoresses are told to 'turn back to where I described how he was tortured in all his five senses', 'turneð þruppe þer Ich spec hu he wes ipinet in all his fif wittes';[9] and at the beginning of Part Eight the anchoresses are reminded of the first part: 'Biuoren on earst Ich seide þet ʒe ne schulden nawiht as i vu bihaten forte halden nan of þe uttre riwlen', 'I said earlier, at the beginning, that you should not commit yourselves to keeping any of the outer rules by a vow'.[10] The relationship of the parts to one another is carefully worked out; at the end of Part Four, the author self-consciously refers to how each individual part leads into the next: 'neomeð ʒeme hu euch an dale falleð into oþer', 'and note how each individual part leads into the next';[11] while at the end of Part Five it is announced: 'Efter schrift falleð to speoken of penitence, þet is deadbote; ant swa we habbeð ingong ut of þis fifte dale into þe seste', 'After confession it is appropriate to talk about penance, that is, satisfaction; and so we have a link which leads us out of this fifth part into the sixth'.[12] Shepherd argues that, despite the apparent fluidity of *Ancrene Wisse*, with its diversions and digressions, it was thought out and 'planned as a whole' and the transitions between the parts were carefully arranged[13] In discussing the composition of *Ancrene Wisse*, Dobson has written:

> *Ancrene Wisse* is a most carefully and explicitly planned work. The division into parts, and their order, is explained in the Preface, and is kept constantly in view throughout, and the individual parts are equally carefully planned internally .... Despite the liveliness of the style and the ease with which the transitions are managed, *Ancrene Wisse* is from first to last an ordered book conceived and written as a unity.[14]

---

[7] *AW*, Pt. 1, Corpus 402 f. 4[b] 15-16; Pt. 2, f. 12[b] 1; Pt. 3, f. 47[b] 14; Pt. 6, f. 103[b] 28; Pt. 7, f. 111[a] 6-7.

[8] Foucault, *Order of Things*, p. xvi.

[9] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402 f. 50[b] 10-11.

[10] *AW* Pt. 8, Corpus 402 f. 111[a] 11-14.

[11] *AW*, Pt. 4, Corpus 402 f. 81[a] 15-16.

[12] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402 f. 94[a] 10-12.

[13] 'Frequently the author, like the pilgrim of Part 6, seems drawn aside by what he sees or hears by the way', Shepherd, *Ancrene Wisse Six and Seven*, p. lxi.

[14] Dobson, 'Date and Composition of *Ancrene Wisse*', p. 193.

At the end of the whole work, the anchoresses are told, 'Of þis boc redeð hwen ȝe beoð eise euche dei leasse oðer mare', 'Read some of this book in your free time every day, whether less or more'.[15] The whole work was intended as a reference work, that could be read in parts. The careful division into parts announced in the Preface, the advertisement of what each part is to contain, even the use of rubrics and capitals, reinforce this aspect of the work. Roger Dahood points out that division markers are present in all the early versions of *Ancrene Wisse* and, if they did not originate with the author, a copyist 'very early in the tradition must have been responsible'. The initials used as division markers allowed the text of *Ancrene Wisse* to be made 'more accessible' and Dahood notes that 'The desire, widespread in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, to facilitate reference and methodical study by attention to layout is attributed to the rise of scholasticism'.[16] While there are shortcomings with the format for marking structural divisions and copyists did not always understand the text sufficiently well to apply the format consistently, the system of graduated initials to mark divisions and subordinated parts found in the earliest manuscripts is further evidence of the author's concern 'to make the structure clear'.[17]

That the author wanted the structure of *Ancrene Wisse* to be clear is evident in the Preface, where he announces its intended division into eight parts, termed *destinctiuns*, a term derived from the Latin *distinctiones*. The author is conscious that he is using a new term, unfamiliar to his readers: 'þis boc Ich todeale on eahte "destinctiuns" þet ȝe cleopieð dalen', 'I am dividing this book into eight "distinctions", which you call parts'.[18] According to Dobson, the Preface 'unmistakably quotes' the prologue of the Prémontré statutes, which 'are divided into parts called *distinctiones* just as *Ancrene Wisse* is divided'.[19] This division of the Prémontré statutes was 'sans doute' in imitation of the Decretum of Gratian which adopted the system around 1140;[20] a division into two *distinctiones* is found in the Dominican constitutions, which are dependent on those of Prémontré. The possible authorship of *Ancrene Wisse* by a Dominican offers a route of

---

[15] *AW* Pt. 8, Corpus 402 f. 117ᵃ 27-8.
[16] Roger Dahood, 'The Use of Coloured Initials and Other Division Markers in Early Versions of *Ancrene Riwle*', in *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*, ed. by Edward Donald Kennedy, Ronald Waldron and Joesph S. Wittig (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1988), pp. 79-97 (p. 81 & n. 11).
[17] Dahood, 'The Use of Coloured Initials', p. 97.
[18] *AW* Preface, Corpus 402 f. 4ᵃ 19-20; *Destinctiun* is not recorded elsewhere in ME, in any sense, before the late fourteenth century.
[19] Dobson, *The Origins of* Ancrene Wisse, p. 84.
[20] Introduction to *Les Statuts de Prémontré au Milieu du XIIᵉ siècle*, ed. by Pl. F. Lefèvre and W. M. Grauwen, Bibliotheca Analectorum, Praemonstratensium Fasc. 12 (Averbode: Praemonstratensia, 1978), p. vi. The editors note that 'Cette ordonnance paraît pour la première fois dans la codification publiée ici même (*Institutiones Praemonstratenses* (milieu du XIIᵉ siècle)), d'après le ms. 7702 de Munich.

transmission for this style of division.[21] The Prologue to the twelfth-century Premonstratensian statutes insists on the accessibility of the work:

> Ea propter, ut et paci et unitati tocius Ordinis provideremus, librum istum, quem librum consuetudinum vocamus, diligenter conscripsimus, in quo quatuor distincciones, tam pro rerum varietate, quam pro legencium utilitate, locis suis adnotamus.[22]

> Because of these things, so that we may provide for both the peace and the unity of the whole Order, we have carefully composed this book, which we call the book of customs, in which we characterise four *distinctiones* in their places, as much for the variety of the contents as for the convenience of the readers.

This prologue was attached to an early revision of the original statutes and stated the purpose for which this book is being written, stressing the importance of outer observances to ensure inner unity and concord. *Distinctiones* are used for the sake of clarity, for ease of access, and to make the reading more interesting: these are aspects of rhetoric which should not be ignored. The author of *Ancrene Wisse* shared this concern for clarity and orderliness in writing as he also insisted upon orderliness and unity among the women for whom he was writing, quoting, as do the prologues of both the Premonstratensian and Dominican constitutions, a verse from the Acts of the Apostles: 'Multitudinis credentium erat cor unum et anima una', 'The multitude of believers had one heart and one soul'.[23] The institutional source for the division of *Ancrene Wisse* into *distinctiones* is twelfth-century but is, as Alexandra Barratt points out, in harmony with the thirteenth-century trend for dividing a work into parts, and announcing that division in a description of the form; she quotes R. H. and M. A. Rouse: 'Other commentators in the thirteenth century reiterate Jordan's observation [*c.* 1220] that a description of the "form" of any work includes mention of the work's division into "books and parts and chapters"'.[24]

Thirteenth-century ideas of division and subdivision are also used in some of the individual parts of *Ancrene Wisse*. It is the Parts that are most relevant to a more general lay audience that show

---

[21] Yoko Wada has added her voice to that of Bella Millett in support of Dominican authorship, arguing 'the short introduction of *Ancrene Wisse* is painted fully with Dominican colours; almost everywhere one can find allusions to some sort of connections with friars or the Order of Preachers', 'Dominican Authorship of *Ancrene Wisse*: the Evidence of the Introduction', in *A Book of Ancrene Wisse*, ed. Y. Wada (Suita, Osaka: Kansai University Press, 2002), pp. 95-107 (p. 107).

[22] *Les Statuts de Prémontré*, p. 1.

[23] Acts 4. 32, quoted at *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402 69ᵃ 11-12 and cf. 'Consuetudines Fratrum Predicatorum', p. 311 and *Statuts de Prémontré*, p. 1. The constitutions of the Dominican order were dependent on the Premonstratensian constitutions, but the Dominican ones are divided into just two *distinctiones*, the contents of which are listed in the prologue, 'Consuetudines Fratrum Predicatorum' in *De oudste Constituties van de Dominicanen: voorgeschiedenis, tekst, bronnen, ontstaan en ontwikkeling (1215-1237) met uitgave van de tekst*, Bibliothèque de la Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique, fasc. 42 (Leuven: Leuvense Universitaire Uitgaven, 1965), p. 312. Millett points out that the closest parallels of the legislative elements of *Ancrene Wisse* are with the 'earliest Dominican constitutions', 'Life of Perfection', p. 58.

[24] Alexandra Barratt, 'The Five Wits and their Structural Significance in Part II of *Ancrene Wisse*', *Medium Aevum*, 56 (1987), 12-24, (p. 13), quoting R. H. and M. A. Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the 'Manipulus Florum' of Thomas of Ireland*, PIMS Studies and Texts, 47 (Toronto, 1979), p. 38.

evidence of the patterns of division and subdivision associated with the rhetoric of *pastoralia*.

Part Five, for example, 'þe is of schrift, limpeð to alle men iliche', 'which is about confession, is relevant to everybody alike', is the Part which shows most evidence of this pattern of hierarchical division.[25] Part Five forms a trilogy with Parts Four and Six, dealing with contrition, confession and penitence. Parts Four and Five in particular show the influence of contemporary pastoral literature in their construction as well as their material, but Part Six deals not with types of penance but with the penitential life as lived out by the anchoresses and its style differs significantly from the style associated with pastoral literature, adapting a more monastic mode. This relationship between the functions of the different parts of *Ancrene Wisse* and their particular rhetorical styles needs to be the focus of an examination of the rhetoric of *Ancrene Wisse*.

The structure of Part Four is one associated with the literature of lay piety since it consists largely of a systematic treatment of the Seven Deadly Sins. Morton Bloomfield treats *Ancrene Wisse* and, in particular, Part Four, as an early English treatise on the sins, pointing out that 'The *Ancren Riwle* provides us with the first elaborate treatment of the Sins in English'.[26] It draws on Latin sources, however, both patristic and more contemporary including the *Summa de arte praedicatoria* of Alan of Lille; it also shares material with popular thirteenth-century Latin treatises on the sins.[27] Newhauser gives an analysis of the structure of a Middle English treatise on the vices which is typical of the genre: for each vice, a description, list of its progeny and remedy is given. Newhauser comments:

> A hierarchic pattern emerges explicitly in the microstructure with the inventory of the vices' progeny and is contained implicitly in the characterizations of the vices by what frequently amounts to their *genera* (...). In the macrostructure a metaphorical organization of the material is supplied by the view of the vices as a broad path to hell.[28]

In Part Four of *Ancrene Wisse*, the macrostructure is provided by the theme of the temptations faced, not only by the anchoresses, but by anyone in the world wishing to lead a pious life. The sins these temptations lead to are allegorised as beasts, each with its own foul offspring, while remedies for the sins are dealt with together under the theme of 'how all the seven deadly sins can be driven away by firm faith', 'hu alle þe seouene deadliche sunnen muhen beon afleiet þurh treowe bileaue'.[29] Although the association of sins with animals is ancient,[30] *Ancrene Wisse* is 'the

---

[25] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402 f. 93ᵃ 3-4.

[26] Bloomfield, *Seven Deadly Sins*, p. 151.

[27] Bloomfield mentions 'three religious works produced in thirteenth-century France' as particularly influential in 'spreading the concept of the cardinal sins'; these were Pennaforte's *Summa casuum poenitentiae*, Peraldus' *Summa seu tractatus de virtutibus et vitiis* and Friar Laurent's *Somme le Roy*, Bloomfield, *Seven Deadly Sins*, pp. 123-4; *Ancrene Wisse* shares both some material and structural features with Peraldus; see *Summa virtutum ac vitiorum*,, col. 2, and 'The Peraldus Project' at www.english.upenn/~swenzel/survey.html.

[28] Newhauser, *Treatise on Vices and Virtues*, p. 64.

[29] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402, f. 67ᵃ 19-21.

first work in English which portrays the Sins as animals'.[31] The very fact that it was in English is

important since it made such a treatment on the sins accessible and not confined only to clerical

readers – a treatment which is also seen in the fourteenth century in Chaucer's 'Parson's Tale'.[32]

Schematic listing of the sins allows a full and complete account of the temptations that must be

resisted; this is achieved through division and subdivision. The author's intention to proceed by

means of division is signalled close to the beginning:

> Understondeð þenne on alre earst, leoue sustren, þet twa cunne temptatiuns, twa cunne
> fondunges beoð, uttre ant inre, ant ba beoð feoleualde.

> Understand then first of all, dear sisters, that there are two kinds of temptation, two
> kinds of trial, external and internal, and both are of many kinds'.[33]

This division into two kinds of temptation is followed by other kinds of division: inner

temptations are divided into two groups, 'fleschlich ant gastelich', 'physical and spiritual' which

together constitute the seven sins; the author explains these two groups:

> fleschlich, as of leccherie, of glutunie, of slawðe; gastelich, as of prude, of onde, ant of
> wreaððe, alswa of ჳiscunge. Þus beoð þe inre fonduges þe seouen heaued-sunnen, ant
> hare fule cundles.

> physical, as from lechery, from gluttony, from sloth; spiritual, as from pride, from envy,
> and from anger, also from avarice. So the internal temptations are the seven capital sins,
> and their foul offspring. [34]

Other divisions include four categories of temptation as found in the Psalter;[35] a list of nine

comforts against temptation;[36] remedies against temptation (a rather muddled list) and remedies

for sins.[37] The remedies against temptation are richly illustrated with short *exempla* and

metaphors but it is these which lead to some confusion; in a series of illustrations (*forbisne*) of the

importance of the constancy of love, the author announces, 'Þe seueðe forbisne is þis, ჳef ჳe riht

telleð', 'The seventh illustration is this, if you are counting correctly,'[38] but careful and correct

counting shows this to be only the fifth. Other divisions are subdivided; for example, the sixth

---

[30] see Bloomfield, *Deadly Sins*, pp. 26, 43 and 150.

[31] Bloomfield, *Seven Deadly Sins*, p. 151.

[32] The influence of both Peraldus and Pennaforte on The Parson's Tale is commonly acknowledged, see, for example the notes to 'The Parson's Tale', *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 956; it cannot be claimed that *Ancrene Wisse* was similarly influenced since it is contemporary with their treatises.

[33] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402 f. 48ᵃ 21-23.

[34] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402 f. 51ᵇ 6-9. Bloomfield refers to these groupings as 'the familiar two groups, carnal and spiritual', *Seven Deadly Sins*, p. 149.

[35] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402 f. 59ᵇ 13.

[36] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402 f. 61ᵇ 10-f. 64ᵃ 5

[37] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402 f. 75ᵇ 2-f. 78ᵃ 27.

[38] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402 f.68ᵇ 8-9; Millett confirms that 'the reading is confirmed by the majority of the MSS running' and that it is not clear whether 'the two missing *exempla* were never included, or were accidentally omitted from the text at an early stage', Notes to forthcoming edition.

of the nine comforts includes 'six acheisuns ... hwi Godd for ure god wiðdraheð him oðerhwiles', 'six reasons why God sometimes withdraws himself for our good'.[39]

Imposed on the basic structure of Part Four, that is, the allegorical representations of the temptations faced by anyone in the world, is the more personal story of the battle between the anchoress and the devil: the systematic organisation frequently breaks down, or is diverted, as the author turns his attention to the anchoresses. The opening theme of Part Four refers to the exalted life of the anchoress: 'Ne wene nan of heh lif þet ha ne beo itemptet', 'No-one who leads an exalted life should imagine that she will not be tempted'.[40] Later, having given a list of the seven sins, characterising them as animals, and after the further metaphor of the retinue of the devil's court, the author directly addresses the anchoresses, assuring them that they are far removed from such sins;[41] he then diverts from the overall plan to discuss the specific temptations of the anchoritic life, which are explained by means of a *forbisne*, an analogy. Jesus Christ is as a husband to the anchoress: he will treat her gently at first but, when he is certain of her love for him, will act harshly towards her, to reprove her and test her, finally rewarding her with great happiness. The comment on this analogy – '3ef Iesu Crist, ower spus, deð alswa bi ow, mine leoue sustren, ne þunche ow neauer wunder', 'If Jesus Christ, your husband, does this kind of thing to you, my dear sisters, do not be at all surprised'[42] – is addressed specifically to the anchoresses. This analogy is supported by a scriptural one, that of God leading his people out of Egypt, but the text then returns to the methodical use of division by listing categories of temptation based on a verse from Psalm 90.

The digressions are at times quite clumsily inserted; when a theme seems particularly relevant to the anchoresses, the author will address them directly so that the pattern and order of the treatise is disrupted. The importance of constancy of love and unity of heart as a remedy against temptation leads to a discussion of unity in the lives of the sisters themselves. In MS Corpus Christi 402 a lengthy passage concerning the extended group of anchoresses is inserted;[43] it is this section that is prefaced by the quotation found also in the Preface to the Dominican constitutions, 'Multitudinis credentium erat cor unam et anima una'[44] which enforces the impression that this section is addressed specifically to women leading a semi-religious life, possibly under the aegis of the Dominican rule. The personal involvement of the author is also hinted at:

---

[39] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402 f. 62ᵇ 19-21.
[40] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402, f. 47ᵇ 21-2.
[41] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402 f. 58ᵇ 16.
[42] *AW* pt. 4, Corpus 402 f. 59ᵃ 18-19.
[43] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402 f.69ᵃ 12-f.69ᵇ 11.
[44] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402 f.69ᵃ 11-12.

ʒe beoð as þe moder-hus þet heo beoð of istreonet. ʒe beoð ase wealle; ʒef þe wealle woreð, þe strunden worið alswa. A weila, ʒef ʒe worið ne bide Ich hit neauer.

You are like the mother-house from which they are generated. You are like a spring; if the spring grows muddy, the streams grow muddy too. Oh, if you grow muddy I could not bear it.[45]

The insistence on unity among the sisters, however, is common to the other manuscripts running at this point and having discussed the theme of unity, the author continues his list, obviously aware of the digression and struggling to regain control of his material and assert an order on it:

Þus prude ant onde ant wreaððe beoð ihwer afleiet hwer-se soð luue is ant treowe bileaue to Godes milde werkes any luuefule wordes. Ga we nu forðre to þe oþre on a reawe.

So pride and envy and anger are driven away everywhere that there is true love and firm faith in God's merciful works and loving words. Let us now go on to the others in order.[46]

In Part Five, which is on confession, the order and structure are more controlled. The author acknowledges that, since this Part is relevant to everyone alike, he has not addressed his dear sisters in particular; instead, he adds a 'short final section', 'lutle leaste ende'[47] for their special use in which he deals with how, and what, a recluse should confess. The main part of Part Five, prior to this final section, is closely related to pastoral works designed for a lay audience, and its schematic structure is obvious; it uses the formalized theme of the 'conditions of confession' which was a popular tool for preachers and confessors to the laity in their efforts to educate and reform. Millett points out that examples of confession dealt with in this manner begin to appear in the twelfth century, 'at first mainly in sermons, later in other works with a primarily pastoral orientation'[48] and that the use of the formalized theme of conditions of confession 'spread rapidly after the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215'.[49] The adaptation of this material from Latin *pastoralia* is seen in the self-conscious use of technical Latinate terms, introduced into English for the first time: 'are ahne conscience' is glossed as 'þet is, ure inwit', 'our own conscience (that is, our sense of right and wrong)'[50] while "circumstances" is referred to as a Latin word, 'on Englisch "totagges" mahe beon icleopede', 'in English they can be called "accessories"'.[51] These are specific concepts to do with the nature of confession as it was understood by contemporary theologians; the fact that they have been translated into English, together with the emphasis

---

[45] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402 f.69ᵃ 28-f.69ᵇ 2.

[46] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402 f.70ᵃ 26-8

[47] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402 f.93ᵃ 2-6.

[48] Bella Millett, '*Ancrene Wisse* and the Conditions of Confession', *English Studies*, 80 (1999), 193-215 (p. 194).

[49] Millett, 'Conditions of Confession', p. 204.

[50] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402 f.83ᵃ 17; this is the first recorded use of the word in English.

[51] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402 f.86ᵇ 5-6.

placed on one's own conscience, suggests those reading it were expected to take some

responsibility for their own confession. This is information taken from the domain of clerical

readers and adapted for lay readers of the vernacular.

Much of Part Five is taken up with the exposition of sixteen 'conditions of confession' which are

each dealt with in order:

> Schrift schal beo wreiful, bitter mid sorhe, ihal, naket, ofte imaket, hihful, eadmod,
> scheomeful, dredful ant hopeful, wis, soð, ant willes, ahne ant studeuest, biþoht biuore
> longe. Her beoð nu as þah hit weren sixtene stuchen þe beoð ifeiet to schrift, ant we of
> euchan sum word schulen sunderliche seggen.
>
> Confession must be accusatory, bitter with regret, complete, naked, frequently made,
> prompt, humble, made with shame, fear, and hope, discreet, truthful, and voluntary,
> one's own, resolute and well thought out beforehand. Now these are, as it were, sixteen
> sections which are linked with confession, and we will say something separately about
> each one.[52]

There is thus a clear indication of how this Part is to proceed, while the careful division ensures

that everything that should be confessed is covered, so allowing confession to be complete and

thorough. The initial **S** of 'Schrift' as it introduces each condition is enlarged and decorated,[53]

emphasizing the divisions and making the section particularly easy to use and refer to; the

sections have indeed been broken up like bread for children.[54]

Under the heading that confession should be naked, six 'circumstances'[55] are given which could

conceal the sin; these circumstances are person, place, time, manner, number and cause. Each

one is dealt with separately, an explanation and example of each circumstance being given. This

use of structured subdivision ensured that all aspects of confession were covered as well as

making the text itself accessible, easily followed, and easily remembered.[56] Advice is given as to

how this part is to be used: 'Bigin earst ed prude ant sech alle þe bohes þrof as ha beoð þruppe

iwritene, hwuch falle to þe', 'Begin first at pride and go through all its branches as they are listed

above, to see which might apply to you'.[57] The 'you' addressed, however, is not necessarily the

anchoress; when being advised on the 'person' subsection of how confession should be naked,

the person confessing is advised to say, 'Ich am an ancre; a nunne; a wif iweddet; a meiden; a

wummon ...', 'I am an anchoress; a nun; a married woman; an unmarried girl; a woman ...';[58]

---

[52] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402 f.82ᵇ 6-11.
[53] See MS Corpus Christi 402 in the Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, folios 82-92.
[54] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402 f.92ᵇ 23-4.
[55] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402 f. 86ᵇ 4-6.
[56] Millett has pointed out that, in the thirteenth-century, the mnemonic verse started to be used as a 'practical method of organization' for these lists, 'Conditions of Confession', p. 199.
[57] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402 f.91ᵃ 21-23.
[58] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402 f.86ᵇ 12-13.

and later the text notes that 'Euch efter þet he is segge his totagges, mon as limpeð to him, wummon þet hire rineð', 'Each individual should give an account of his circumstances according to his condition, a man as it applies to him, a woman as it concerns her'.[59] After the section dealing specifically with the confession of an anchoress, a link is made with the next Part: 'Efter schrift falleð to speoken of penitence, þet is deadbote; ant swa we habbeð inʒong ut of þis fifte dale into þe seste', 'After confession it is appropriate to talk about penance, that is, satisfaction; and so we have a link which leads us out of this fifth part into the sixth'.[60]

Part Six opens with a direct address to the anchoresses, the beloved sisters: 'Al is penitence, ant strong penitence, þet ʒe eauer dreheð, mine leoue sustren', 'Everything that you have to bear, my dear sisters, is penance, and hard penance'.[61] Although Part Six is a member of the 'confessional trilogy' its theme of penance is directed more towards the anchoresses. That this is a new *destinctiun* is very marked in the Corpus manuscript and the first two lines are shortened so that each ends with the word 'penitence'.[62] Nevertheless, the alternative audience is not neglected; it is accepted in Part Six that suffering is an essential element in the life of penance, and that this is not only the privilege of religious women. The question of what good does it do to inflict suffering on oneself is answered, 'Leoue mon ant wummon, Godd þuncheð god of ure god. Vre god is ʒef we doð þet tet we ahen', 'Dear man and woman, God is pleased by our good. Our good is if we do what we ought'.[63] Although the abstract 'man and woman' are addressed here, the author's more specialised audience, 'mine leoue sustren' are frequently invoked and the awareness of the specifically anchoritic audience is reflected in the rhetoric of this part as well as in the material adapted and directly quoted.

While Parts Four and Five of *Ancrene Wisse* use the strict structures based on division and subdivision which were becoming popular with the increase in *artes praedicandi* at the beginning of the thirteenth century, the argument of Part Six is presented, not through hierarchical structures of division, but through a web of images of suffering and shame which both illustrate the theme of penance and constitute the argument through analogy. Like some other Parts of *Ancrene Wisse*, this Part uses a looser method of construction, based on association and reminiscence and rich with scriptural allusion; it is a method that one could characterise as monastic. There is a conscious allusion to monastic models; the use of Bernard's Sixth *Sermo in Quadragesima*, a sermon

---

[59] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402 f.87ᵃ 18-19.
[60] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402 f.94ᵃ 10-12.
[61] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402 f.94ᵃ 13-15.
[62] MS Corpus Christi 402, f. 94ᵃ.
[63] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402, f. 99ᵇ 1-3; see chap. 2 for further discussion.

delivered to a monastic audience, has been much discussed.[64] Bernard's tripartite division of

monastic life is here adapted and used to apply, not only to religious, but to devout people in the

world, religious, and anchorites. It should be noted, however, that the adaptation of this sermon

in the Corpus Christi version of *Ancrene Wisse* occupies only the first two folios of a part that

continues over nineteen folio sides. There are a number of references to other writings by, or

attributed to, St. Bernard,[65] and a possible reference to another contemplative writer, Adam of

Dryburgh.[66] Aelred's *De Institutione Inclusarum* is used as an authority when insisting on the

importance of purity and chastity;[67] the author acknowledges his debt to Aelred of Rievaulx's *De*

Institutione Inclusarum, noting, 'as seint ailred þe abbat wrat to his suster'.[68] The use of the spousal

imagery of the Song of Songs,[69] together with references to contemplative writers and to a Latin

treatise for an anchoress, suggests something of the specialised spirituality to be encountered in

this part. The clear division and numbering of a short section listing the 'three bitternesses'

represented by the three Marys[70] may owe something to the scholastic habit of division, but the

main rhetorical feature of this Part is the extended metaphors for the anchoritic life and

spirituality which form the material and structure of this Part and evoke the peculiar state and

circumstances of the anchoresses.

The structure of Part Six owes much to the discursive method of monastic sermons, while Parts

Four and Five are directed at a general lay audience and show clear evidence of the influence of

the rhetoric associated with *pastoralia* in their structure. Structural organisation is important in

Ancrene Wisse, but each part is organised differently, depending on the kind of material and the

intention of the Part. A number of scholars have tried to discern structural patterns for various

parts of *Ancrene Wisse*, with varying degrees of success.[71] The structure of Parts One and Eight is

largely dictated by the pragmatic nature of those Parts; Dahood suggests that, although there is

---

[64] Notably by Geoffrey Shepherd in his edition of *Ancrene Wisse Parts Six and Seven.*

[65] There is a quotation from the *Declamations from St. Bernard's Sermons*, usually ascribed to Geoffrey of Auxerre at Corpus 402, f. 96ᵃ 6 [see *AW* pts. 6 and 7, ed. Shepherd, p. 34]; a reference to Bernard's *Sermo 4 in uigilia natiuitatis Domini* at f. 96ᵇ 13 and there is a quotation from the *Declamations* at f. 97ᵃ 13-14.

[66] at f. 96ᵇ 8-9; Adam of Dryburgh started out as a Premonstratensian canon but became a Carthusian in 1189.

[67] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402 f. 99ᵇ 13-27.

[68] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402, f. 99ᵇ 16.

[69] There are three references to the Song of Songs in this Part; Part Four of *Ancrene Wisse* also contains three citations of the Song of Songs while only one Part Two, contains more.

[70] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402 f. 101ᵃ 5-f. 101ᵇ 4.

[71] Outlines showing the pattern of construction, based on division and subdivision, have been drawn up for Part One by Roger Dahood, 'Design in Part 1 of *Ancrene Riwle*', and for Part Seven by Dennis Rygiel, 'Structure and Style in Part Seven of *Ancrene Wisse*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 81 (1980), 47-56 (pp. 48-9). Catherine Innes-Parker gives an outline of 'the structure of the section concerning why God ought to be loved' from Part Seven in her analysis of the parable of the Royal Wooing, Catherine Innes-Parker, 'The Lady and the King: *Ancrene Wisse*'s Parable of the Royal Wooing Re-examined', *English Studies*, 75 (1994), 509-22 (pp. 513-14).

an 'impression of looseness' this is partly due to the lack of clear signalling of subordination in the manuscripts[72] and that there are 'logical divisions in the text'.[73] The list of material that is to be covered in Part Eight that is provided in the Preface also offers a plan of the order in which these topics are to be covered.[74] It is more difficult to discern structural patterning in those Parts, like Part Six, that deal specifically with the nature of anchoritic spirituality. Parts Three and Seven both have a loose structure, that may be compared to monastic discourse, but in Part Two there is a clear pattern of organisation which, while not using a hierarchical structure, does employ division as a way of organising material.

Part Two offers a theme in Latin from the Scriptures, 'Omni custodia serua cor tuum, quia ex ipso uita procedit', 'Guard your heart with every precaution, because life issues from it'[75] but the theme is not divided; instead the five senses provide the structural form of the Part, forming the five chapters, 'chapitres fiue', announced in the Preface.[76] Each of the senses is dealt with in order[77] and the importance of guarding them enforced by the use of similes and *exempla* and by reference to authorities. Alexandra Barratt comments that the structure of Part Two is 'complex and marked by a divergence between the author's stated plan and the actual text'; she suggests that this confusion arises 'directly from the ambiguity of his terminology'.[78] Some of the complexity is due to an important diversion from the stated plan when the author addresses the anchoresses and the nature of their spirituality directly.

Much of Part Two would be relevant to anyone wishing to follow a devout Christian life; any woman could be considered guilty of tempting a man into the pit of sin with 'hire feire neb, hire hwite swire, hire lichte echnen', 'her fair complexion, her white neck, her roving eyes',[79] and the indictment of backbiting and flattery with its strong language[80] is not particularly relevant to the situation of anchoresses, although they are warned against gossip as a form of sinful talk,[81] and the author acknowledges that 'Of eare is al þis leaste to ancre bihoue', 'All this last part about the ear is relevant to the anchoress'.[82] Listening to such talk comes under the heading of the sense of

[72] Dahood, ' Design in Part 1', pp. 1 & 2. Dahood also claims that the author was concerned to make the structure clear by means of coloured initials and other division markers; unreliable copying led to the inconsistent manuscript divisions in the various surviving versions of the text, 'The Use of Coloured Initials', pp. 79-97.

[73] Dahood, 'Design in Part 1', p. 5.

[74] *AW* Preface, ed. Millett, p. 4; Corpus 402, f.4ᵇ 9-15.

[75] *AW* Pt. 2, ed. Millett, p. 1; Corpus 402 12ᵇ 1-2 (Prov. 4, 23).

[76] *AW* Preface, ed. Millett p. 4; Corpus 402 f.4ᵃ 26.

[77] see Barratt, 'Five Wits'.

[78] Barratt, 'Five Wits', p. 14.

[79] *AW* Pt. 2, Cleopatra f. 24ʳ [two folios of Coprus 402 have been lost at this point].

[80] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402 f.21ᵇ 5-f.23ᵃ 12.

[81] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402 f.23ᵃ 14-22.

[82] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402 f.23ᵃ 25.

the ear; and so far the author has made the distinctions, and the way in which he intends to proceed, very clear. The first sense discussed is that of the eye; he then proceeds to the mouth, commenting,

> Spellunge and smechunge beoð i muð baðe, as sihðe is i þe ehe; ah we schulen leten smechunge aþet we speoken of ower mete, ant speoken nu of spellunge, ant þrefter of herunge – of ba imeane sumchearre, as ha gað togederes.

> Speech and taste both belong to the mouth, as sight does to the eye; but we will leave taste until we discuss your food, and talk now about speech, and later about hearing – sometimes about both combined, since they go together.[83]

And later he ensures that the reader is following his method: 'Hiderto is iseid of ower silence, ...Nu we schulen sumhwet speoken of ower herunge', 'So far your silence has been discussed, ...Now I shall say something about your hearing'.[84] And having discussed these three organs separately, he signals his intention to talk about them all together: 'Of sihðe, of speche, of hercnunge is iseid sunderlepes of euchan o rawe. Cume we nu eft aȝein ant speoken of alle imeane', 'Sight, speech, and haring have been discussed separately in turn; let us now turn back and talk about them all together'.[85] At this point, the orderly progression of the argument, sense by sense, is blown apart by the irruption into the text of a passage, not concerned with how a pious person should behave, but with the contemplative life of the anchoress, beloved by a jealous God.

The theme of this passage is presented at the beginning, 'Zelatus sum Syon zelo magno',[86] and is itself divided and developed with references to the Scriptures and Fathers. Much use is made of imagery from the Song of Songs; in inspiration and style this passage owes more to Bernard's sermons on the Song of Songs than thirteenth-century sermons to the laity. It is the dear sisters, beloved of Christ, that the author is addressing; but he then abruptly returns to the original plan for this Part announcing, 'Þis beoð nu þe þreo wittes þet Ich habbe ispeken of; speoke we nu scheortliche of þe twa oþre', 'Now I have discussed three of the senses; let us now briefly discuss the two others'.[87] The conclusion of this part is brisk: a severe warning is addressed to the sisters to avoid sin,[88] but then the author announces, 'Þis is nu inoh iseid of þe fif wittes', 'Enough has been said now about the five senses',[89] and with a reminder of the theme, 'Omni custodia custodi cor tuam', the author moves on to the third Part.

---

[83] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402 f.15b 14-18.

[84] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402 f.20b 15-21.

[85] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402 f.23a 28-f.23b 2.

[86] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402 f.23b 3 (Zech. 8, 2).

[87] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402 f.27b 7-9.

[88] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402 f.31b 14-18.

[89] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402 f.32a 6.

In Parts Three and Seven the composition is largely determined, not by *divisiones* but by patterns of imagery and lengthy *similitudines* and *forbisnes* which play a constructive as well as illustrative role. The Preface claims that:

> Þe þridde dale is of anes cunnes fuheles þe Dauið i þe Sawter eueneð him seolf to as he were ancre, ant hu þe cunde of þe ilke fuheles beoð ancren iliche

> The third part is about birds of a particular kind which David compares himself to in the Psalter as if he were a recluse, and how recluses are similar in nature to those birds.[90]

This may seem to be a rather bizarre subject, but Part Three takes as its *thema* verses from Ps. 101:

> 7. Similis factus sum sicut pellicano solitudinis;
> Factus sum sicut nycticorax in domicilio.
> 8. Vigilavi, et factus sum sicut passer solitarius in tecto.

> I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert.
> I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top. (Ps. 102, 6-7)

and the Part develops by means of a series of comparisons between the anchoress and the three birds, the qualities of the pelican, night-bird and sparrow being taken to describe the ideal of the anchoritic life.[91] Digressions and diversions, *exempla* and authorities abound, but the author keeps coming back to his theme of the ways in which the anchoress is like a bird: structural form and unity is achieved by the comparison of the anchoress with birds. There is also a sub-theme using verses from the Gospels that also refer to birds: 'Vulpes foueas habent et uolucres celi nidos', 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests' (Matt. 8, 20).[92] The description of Part Three of *Ancrene Wisse* given by Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson is very like that of a 'modern', that is, thirteenth-century, sermon:

> '[P]art III has as its point of departure and return a single key text, in this case two verses of Psalm 101; ... the whole part is dedicated to stage-by-stage exposition of this text, with the assistance of other texts and biblical *exempla*. ... The transitions between one section and another are all marked by a return to it and the introduction of a new topic derived from it. There are five main sections ... each based on characteristics of one of the birds mentioned in the text – the pelican, the *nycticorax* and the sparrow – which are seen as representing both good and bad kinds of anchoritic behavior. [93]

---

[90] *AW* Preface, Corpus 402 f. 4ᵇ 1-3.

[91] There is evidence that the verses from Psalm 101 taken as a theme in this Part were used as the themes of two sermons addressed to religious in the high Middle Ages; the one, taking verse seven, 'Similis factus sum pellicano' as its theme, was directed to 'claustrales', while the other, with the theme 'Factus sum sicut nycticorax', was directed to 'eremitas'; the sermons, to be preached either on the first Sunday 'in passione Domini' or on the Sunday 'resurrectionis Domini' are to be found in a collection of anonymous sermons at Troyes, J. B. Schneyer, *Repertorium der Lateinischen Sermones des Mittelalters für die Zeit von 1150-1350*, 9 vols. (Munster, 1969) vol. 9, p. 637. The verses are also used in the sermons of Aelred of Rievaulx, *Sermones de Oneribus*, in PL vol. 195, col. 481 and Absalon Sprinckirsbacensis, *Sermones* in PL vol. 211, Col. 38.

[92] *AW* Pt. 3, Corpus 402 f. 35ᵃ 5-6; Matt. 8.20 and Luke 9.58.

[93] Savage & Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, pp. 359-60.

But in Part Three of *Ancrene Wisse* the theme is not divided by means of the *distinctiones* found in university sermons but is elaborated through the use of extended metaphors developed from the similes provided by the *thema*. The lengthy *similitudines* consisting of chains of comparisons – how the anchoresses are like birds – is similar to the description Bataillon gives of a sermon directed at a lay audience.[94]

There is also some of the orderliness that is a feature of *Ancrene Wisse*: the necessary solitariness of the anchoritic life is supported by a very orderly list of the eight reasons why you should be attached to the solitary life.[95] From the third reason onwards, these are introduced, in the Corpus Christi 402 Manuscript, in similar fashion with an enlarged capital: 'Þe þridde reisun', 'Þe foerðe reisun', 'Þe fifte reisun' and so on.[96] These 'reisuns' are listed after the 'forbisnes' that have been given of why you should be attached to the solitary life. The author, clearly aware of the different devices for persuasion at his disposal, appeals both to the reason and the imagination. The imagination is appealed to in the rich pattern of images from the New Testament and figures – including Judith and Esther – from the Old that are interwoven to provide an ideal of the anchoritic life;[97] the plan is like that described by Leclercq, as it 'follows a psychological development, determined by the plan of associations, and one digression may lead to another or even to several others'. Such a plan may not be 'fixed upon in advance';[98] and yet even this Part of *Ancrene Wisse* reveals a strong sense of control. The author is always able to bring his text back to his theme, concluding with a reference to Esther, who is not only hidden but also elevated,[99] and a further attribute of the sparrow which has the falling sickness.[100]

The same kind of control is exerted on the rich imagery of Part Seven. Dennis Rygiel suggests that the three things that the Preface says Part Seven is about, 'schir heorte, hwi me ah ant hwi me schal Iesu Crist luuien, ant hwet binimeð us is luue ant let us him to luuien', 'purity of heart, why Jesus Christ should and must be loved, and what deprives us of his love and prevents us from loving him',[101] can provide a plan for the organization of the Part itself. However, this is a plan imposed by the reader, rather than provided by the author; no outline or indication of the

---

[94] Bataillon, '*Similitudines* et *exempla*', p. 195.

[95] *AW* Pt. 3, Corpus 402 f.44ᵃ 27-f.45ᵇ 25.

[96] These initials, with their flowing tails, occupy the whole of the left-hand side of the text on f.45ᵃ, making what is one of the most notable pages in the manuscript, MS Corpus Christi 402.

[97] For a discussion of some of this imagery, and in particular the use of figures of Old Testament women, see Cate Gunn, 'Beyond the Tomb: *Ancrene Wisse* and Lay Piety' in *Anchorites, Wombs and Tombs: Intersections of Gender and Enclosure in the Middle Ages*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy and Mari Hughes-Edwards (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, forthcoming).

[98] Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, p. 74.

[99] *AW* Pt. 3, Corpus 402 f.46ᵇ 26-f.47ᵃ 5

[100] *AW* Pt. 3, Corpus 402 f. 47ᵃ 23-4.

[101] *AW* Preface, Corpus 402 f.4ᵇ 6-8 and see Rygiel, 'Structure and Style in Part Seven', p. 48.

structure of this Part is given. There is some division: three reasons are given for why Christ ought to be loved, though only the first and third reasons are sign-posted;[102] and 'Fowr heaued-luuen', 'Four main kinds of love'[103] are given in order, in a manner reminiscent of the careful ordering of Part Four. The author is keeping to his intentions as stated in the Preface, however, reiterating the subject of Part Seven at the conclusion of Part Six, 'luue þe makeð schir heorte', 'the love which makes the heart pure'.[104] Rygiel claims it is the reiteration of this subject that provides Part Seven with its structure; there is a patterning of recall and recapitulation: 'the primary organization is in terms of the repetition, in varying forms and with varying emphases, of the central Christian mystery: God so loved the world'.[105] To claim, as Rygiel does, that 'the key to the structure of the whole work is the structure of Part Seven'[106] is to ignore the important and innovatory role the use of *divisio* plays in the structure of *Ancrene Wisse* – both in the overall work and in many of the individual parts.

The important role of *divisio* as a method in the organisation and structure of *Ancrene Wisse* is evidence of the influence of contemporary pastoral rhetoric. The influence of this rhetoric is also apparent at the level of *dilatatio*; that is amplification, argumentation and illustration. Methods of *dilatatio* used in *Ancrene Wisse* include those of the thirteenth-century preacher;[107] however, the use of different techniques varies between the Parts. How far does the use of different rhetorical techniques for illustration and explanation reflect the varying spiritual purposes of the different Parts? For example, Part Seven, which is about Love, includes the *forbisne* of the Lover Knight, while Part Four, about fighting temptations, is full of metaphors about fighting and warfare. The use of the contemporary rhetorical devices such as *exemplum* as well as the more traditional forms of allegory and analogy and figures of speech, including metaphors and similes, need to be examined in turn in relation to the Parts in which they occur.

The author of *Ancrene Wisse* is very conscious of his use of contemporary rhetorical theory and innovatory techniques. There is a self-consciousness in *Ancrene Wisse*, not just about the use of these rhetorical devices, but about the technical terms for them; this self-consciousness is particularly apparent in the use of innovatory techniques. Even in the Preface, which is largely concerned with the practical details of how the work is organised, a rhetorical turn of phrase is

---

[102] 'Earst, as a mon þe woheð, ...', *AW* Pt. 7, Corpus 402 f. 105ª 11; 'Eft þe þridde reisun: efter kene cnihtes dead ...', *AW* Pt. 7, Corpus 402 f. 106ª 22-3.
[103] *AW* Pt. 7, Corpus 402 f.106ᵇ 2.
[104] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402 f.103ᵇ 28.
[105] Rygiel, 'Structure and Style', p. 54.
[106] Rygiel, 'Structure and Style', p. 56.
[107] See discussion in Chap. 3 of the 'tools' of the preacher.

pointed out with the term 'antonomastice',[108] and in Part Two the term 'y[p]allage' is inserted as a comment on the use of this figure of speech.[109] As the author pointed out his use of the term *destinctiuns*, so the word *essample*, another English neologism from the Latin *exemplum*, is highlighted in Part Two by its position in the sentence, following the exclamation, 'lo': 'Þet his flesch wes cwic ouer alle flesches, lo, hwuc an essample', 'To illustrate how his flesh was more alive than any other, here is a similitude'.[110] *Essample* is used four times in *Ancrene Wisse*, once each in Parts Two, Three, Four and Six,[111] and each time it introduces a short story about a man in some circumstance that would have been recognised by a contemporary audience. It is not only innovative rhetorical devices that are high-lighted; as if in an effort to appeal to a more popular audience in his use of sources, at the beginning of Part Three the author also makes an allusion to folk-tales: 'Wreaððe is a forschuppilt, as me teleð i spelles', 'Anger is a shape-changer, the kind they tell of in stories'.[112]

The Middle English term *forbisne* (or the plural *forbisnes*) occurs fifteen times in the redaction of *Ancrene Wisse* found in Corpus Christi[113] and its use should be discussed before we turn to *exempla*. A primary meaning of *forbisne* is as an example of conduct, a model or pattern of virtue;[114] it is used in this sense in Part Two – the anchoress should avoid setting a bad example,[115] and take care to set a good one.[116] The Virgin Mary and Christ are also set forward as *forbisnes* – examples.[117] In Part Three, although there is one example of the anchoress being told that she must give strength to others 'þurh hire forbisne ant þurh hire hali beoden', 'through her example and through her holy prayers',[118] the term is mostly used for the example set by Christ in the wilderness – as a model of solitude to be followed by the anchoress – and for stories from the Scriptures which illustrate the importance of solitude and withdrawal from the world.[119] The repetitions of the term *forbisne* cluster together as a list of examples is given, achieving a

---

[108] *AW* Preface, Corpus 402 1ᵃ 25-6. The Latin passage in which this term occurs is not present in every version of *AW* and may have originated as a marginal note, (Millett, Note to forthcoming edition).

[109] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402 f.20ᵃ 6; this word, found in the Corpus Christi manuscript, is not present in all manuscripts; Millett believes it may have originated as a marginal annotation.

[110] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402 f. 30ᵇ 22-3.

[111] See *Concordance to* Ancrene Wisse *MS Corpus Christi College Cambridge 402*, ed. by Jennifer Potts, Lorna Stevenson and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), p. 200.

[112] *AW* Pt. 3, Corpus 402 f. 32ᵇ 24.

[113] See *Concordance*, pp. 233-4.

[114] See *Middle English Dictionary*.

[115] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402 f.13ᵃ 26.

[116] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402 f.17ᵃ 17.

[117] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402 f.19ᵇ 6 & f.31ᵃ 16.

[118] *AW* Pt. 3, Corpus 402 f.38ᵇ 20.

[119] *AW* Pt. 3, Corpus 402 f. 42ᵃ 6, f. 43ᵇ20, f.44ᵃ 7, f.44ᵃ 23, f.44ᵃ 25.

cumulative effect before the deliberate switch to a different kind of persuasive technique in the ordered list of 'reisuns', 'reasons', why one ought to flee the world mentioned earlier.[120]

In Part Four the term *forbisne* is used more in the sense of an analogy or illustration;[121] this method is commented on after a series of short illustrations of 'anrednesse of luue ant annesse of heorte', 'constancy of love and unity of love'[122] that are proverbial in tone:

> Þus in þinges utweið neomeð forbisne hu god is annesse of luue ant sometreadnesse, þet halt þe gode somet þet nan ne mei forwurðen.
>
> In this way, draw illustrations from outward things of the importance of unity of love and concord, which holds the good together so that none of them can be lost.[123]

Forbisne can also mean allegory, the sense in which it is used in Part Seven where it is used to indicate a story with a hidden meaning: the 'wrihe forbisne', 'hidden allegory', of Christ 'as a mon þe woheð', 'like a suitor'.[124] Shepherd comments, 'The allegory of God (or Christ) as a king wooing the individual soul as bride is ancient, and indeed a natural enough analogy',[125] while Catherine Innes-Parker refers to this section as a parable.[126] The parable of the Royal Wooing slides into a metaphor of Christ as the ideal husband, which will be considered later[127]. The different ways in which *forbisne* can be translated suggests something of the difficulty of characterising and distinguishing the various rhetorical techniques employed in *Ancrene Wisse*.

What constitutes an *exemplum* can be particularly difficult to establish. Where the term *essample* is used, it usually appears as an illustration of the spiritual or moral life; in Part Six the reader is instructed to 'Nim ȝeme of þis essample', 'Pay attention to this illustration', the illustration being the story of a much-loved wife who missed her husband when he was travelling. Here the author draws the moral:

> Alswa ure Lauerd, þet is þe sawle spus, þet sið al þet ha deð þah hehe sitte, he is ful wel ipaiet þet ha murneð efter him, ant wule hihin toward hire mucheles þe swiðere wið ȝeoue of his grace, oðer fecchen hire allunge to him, to gloire ant to blisse þurhwuniende'.
>
> In the same way our Lord, who is the soul's husband, who sees everything that she does although he sits on high, is very pleased that she misses him, and will hurry towards her

---

[120] *AW* Pt. 3, Corpus 402 f.44ᵃ 25.
[121] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402 f. 59ᵃ 2, f. 68ᵃ 5, f. 68ᵇ 8; the last example claims to be 'þe seoueðe forbisne ... ȝef ȝe riht telleð', the seventh illustration ... if you are counting correctly', but is one of a couple of occasions when the author's normal careful counting appears to have gone haywire.
[122] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402 f. 68ᵃ 5-6.
[123] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402 f. 68ᵇ 16-18.
[124] *AW* Pt. 7, Corpus 402 f.105ᵃ 18 & 11-12.
[125] Shepherd, *Ancrene Wisse, Pts. 6 & 7*, p. 55
[126] Innes-Parker, 'The Lady and the King'.
[127] See pp. 110-11 below.

much faster with the gift of his grace, or fetch her altogether to himself, to everlasting glory and bliss.[128]

Exempla like this, while having a self-contained narrative, also rely on the 'allegorical mode' to function: the reader accepts the resemblance between the soul's relationship with God and a wife's with her husband. In Part Three the *essample* is given of a man who is in prison and owed a huge ransom, and the reader is advised to learn from it – 'cunneð þis essample':

> nalde he cunne god þonc a mon þe duste uppon him of peonehes a bigurdel forte reimin him wið ant lesen him of pine? Þah he wurpe hit ful hearde aʒeines his heorte, al þe hurt were forʒeten for þe gleadnesse. O þis ilke wise, we beoð alle i prisun her, ant ahen Godd greate deattes of sunne. ...Woh þet me deð us, oðer of word oðer of werc, þet is ure rancun

> wouldn't he feel very grateful to someone who threw a bag of money at him to ransom him with and release him from confinement? Even if he threw it very hard against his heart, all the pain would be forgotten because of the joy. In the same way, we are all in prison here, and owe God huge debts of sin. ... The harm that is done to us, either through words or through actions, is our ransom.[129]

This sort of rhetorical question, expecting an affirmative answer, is also found in the *exemplum* given in Part Four: 'Hwen dei of riht is iset, ne deð he scheome þe deme þe a þis half þe isette dei brekeð þe triws', 'When a day for judgement has been fixed, surely a man is showing contempt of the judge if he breaks the truce before the day fixed'.[130]

It may not be surprising that neither *essample* nor *forbisne* occur in Parts One or Eight, which are concerned with the more practical matters of the Outer Rule, but neither does either term occur in Part Five, the Part which most closely follows the schematic pattern of a form of *pastoralia*. In Part Five, however, there are a series of rhetorical questions, of the same form as found in the *essamples*, illustrating the horrors of the consequences of sinning against God as reasons why a man should be sorry for his sins, 'Þeos ant monie reisuns beoð hwi mon mei beo bitterlichi sari for his sunnen, ant wepen ful sare', 'These, and many others, are the reasons why a man should be deeply sorry for his sins, and shed bitter tears'.[131] The second of these reasons is particularly blunt, suggesting the torment in hell and addressing the sinner directly as *þu*:

> A mon þe were idemet, for a luðer morðre, to beo forbearnd al cwic oðer scheomeliche ahonget, hu walde his herte stonden? Me, þu unseli sunful, þa þu þurh deadlich sunne murðredest Godes spuse (þet is, þi sawle), þa þu were idemet forte beon ahonget o bearninde wearitreo i þe eche lei of helle.

> If a man were condemned, for a vicious murder, to be burnt alive or ignominiously hanged, what would he feel like? Why, you wretched sinner, when you murdered the

---

[128] *AW* Pt. 6, ed. Millett, p. 6; Corpus 402 f. 99ᵇ 3-13.

[129] *AW* Pt. 3, Corpus 402 f.34ᵃ 17-28.

[130] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402 f.77ᵇ 27-f.78ᵃ 1.

[131] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402 f.85ᵃ 22-4.

spouse of God (that is, your soul) through mortal sin, you were condemned to be hanged on a burning gallows in the eternal fire of hell.[132]

Surely such an argument has much in common with an enthymeme, such as this from Part Six:

> And nis he a cang cniht þe secheð reste i þe feht ant eise i þe place? *Milicia est vita hominis super terram*, al þis lif is a fecht, as Iob witneð.

> And surely it is a stupid knight who looks for rest in the fight and ease on the battlefield? *The life of man on earth is warfare*; all this life is a battle, as Job testifies.[133]

Exempla tend to work as illustrations rather than as similes or analogies, but in *Ancrene Wisse* at least this distinction gets blurred and short stories that could be classed as *exempla* are sometimes introduced by 'ase' or 'ilich': whoever conceals a sin is 'ilich þe mon þe haueð on him monie deadliche wunden, ant schaweð þe leche alle ant let healen buten an, þet he deieð upon as he schulde on alle', 'like the man who is suffering from several mortal wounds, and shows them all to the doctor and has them healed except for one, which he dies from as he would have from all of them';[134] he is also 'ase men in a schip þe haueð monie þurles þer þe weater þreasteð in, ant heo dutteð alle buten an, þurh hwam ha druncnið alle clane', 'like the crew of a ship full of holes through which the water is rushing in, and they block all but one, by which they are all drowned'.[135] The point of these stories is to stress the reality of moral danger by likening it to physical danger. There are also illustrative narratives in this Part, including one introduced by the more neutral phrase 'Me teleð of þe hali mon ...', 'There is a story about a holy man'.[136] This is followed by two other stories, 'Alswa of anoþer þet wes forneh fordemet ...', 'There is a similar story of someone else who was almost damned ...' and 'alswa of leafdi', 'and another of a lady';[137] these are short stories illustrating or demonstrating the importance of confession.

Joseph Mosher suggests that *Ancrene Wisse* was innovative in using *exempla* in the vernacular. The examples he gives are not only those preceded by the term *essample*; he also suggests others which he terms 'narrative illustrations'. As he points out, these stories often appear as 'familiar references';[138] the common feature of the stories Mosher suggests as *exempla* is that they are not scriptural, but proverbial or common tales. One of the stories he suggests as a familiar *exemplum* is that of the three holy men, 'Nabbe ȝe iherd tellen of þe þreo hali men?', 'Haven't you heard the

---

[132] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402 f.84ᵇ 16-22.
[133] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402 f. 97ᵃ 6-8. This is very similar to the enthymeme from Basevorn's *Forma Praedicandi* given as an example of the technique in Chap. 3. Shepherd suggests that Part Seven is 'a tissue of persuasive enthymemes', *Ancrene Wisse, Pts. 6 & 7*, p. xlviii.
[134] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402 f. 85ᵇ 19-22.
[135] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402 f. 85ᵇ 22-25.
[136] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402 f.85ᵇ 25; a similar exemplum is given in the section on confession in Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogus miraculorum*.
[137] *AW* Pt. 5, Corpus 402 f.86ᵃ 6-7 and f.86ᵃ 9.
[138] Mosher, *The Exemplum*, pp. 87-8.

story of the three holy men?'[139] While the Queen of Heaven administers medicine to two of them, of the third, who was fussy about his food and drink, she says, 'he is his ahne leche', 'he is his own doctor'.[140]

Dennis Rygiel uses the brief reference to two sick men from earlier in Part Six to illustrate the style of *Ancrene Wisse* and to show the importance of a holistic approach to its study. He argues that one needs to examine literary devices within the context of the function and the readership of the text: 'The exemplum of the two sick men and the related metaphors (sin as sickness, bitter drink as the experience of suffering or death) are common figures yet still alive enough then to seem at once inevitable and telling.'[141] The point of this story is that only one of the men was prepared to drink bitter herbal medicines to recover his health; the analogy with Jesus drinking a bitter drink on the cross is drawn and the conclusion becomes clear:

> Godd for ure secnesse dronc attri drunch o rode, ant we nulleð nawt bittres biten for us seoluen. Nis þer nawiht þrof. Sikerliche, his folhere mot wið pine of his flesch folhin his pine. Ne wene nan wið este stihen to heouene.

> God drank a bitter drink on the cross for our illness, and we are not willing to taste anything bitter for our own sake. Nothing will come of that. There is no doubt that his follower must follow his suffering with the suffering of his own flesh. Nobody should expect to go up easily to heaven.[142]

Underlying this argument is the assumption that what applies to bodily health applies also to spiritual health. Physical suffering, including that caused by disease, is used metaphorically to indicate the penance of the anchoresses, but it is also to be understood literally.[143] Suffering, in whatever form, is both a way of paying for future ease and rest in heaven and a way of drawing closer to Christ, since the suffering of Christ is presented as both an agency for redemption and as a model for life in this world. It is also through suffering that the disease of sin can be cured and it is this association with the harsh cure for a disease, as in the 'bitter herbal medicines' ('bitter sabraz') drunk to recover health, that necessitates penance involving suffering in some form;[144] the most bitter remedy (*amarissimum antidotum*) of penance goes back to Jerome's exposition of Isaiah[145] and in Hubert of Sorbonne's sermon the troubles of this life are a

---

[139] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402 f.100ᵃ 12.
[140] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402 f.100ᵃ 23-4.
[141] Dennis Rygiel, 'A Holistic Approach to the Style of *Ancrene Wisse*', *Chaucer Review*, 16 (1982) 270-81 (p. 277).
[142] *AW* Pt. 6, ed. Millett, p. 5; Corpus 402 f. 98ᵇ 17-21.
[143] In a similar way, James of Vitry, in a sermon to farm workers uses images of working the fields as metaphors, but also to remind the workers of their place in society as those who literally ploughed the fields and scatter the seeds. James of Vitry, 'Sermo ad agricolas'.
[144] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402, f. 98ᵇ 13.
[145] Jerome, *Commentarii in Isaiam*, Bk. 14, PL 24. 491.

medicine for the soul.[146] The bitter remedy can take the form of personal confession and penitence; the image of being healed through confession is also used in the sermon for Quadragesima Sunday in the *Lambeth Homilies*:

> Hu mei þe leche þe lechnien þa hwile þet iren sticat in þine wunde. Nefre. Ne þu ne miȝt beon wel iscrifen god almihti to cweme. bute þe heo alle for-lete eiðer ȝe þa ane ȝe þa oðer.

> How may the physician heal thee whilst the iron sticketh in thy wound? Never. Neither canst thou be shriven sufficiently well to please God Almighty, unless thou forsake all thy sins, both the one and the other.[147]

The idea that suffering in this world would be rewarded in heaven – or at least reduce time spent in purgatory – was not confined to those who had taken up a religious vocation but was applicable to all devout people. It is arguable that it provided a form of social control, but it is also concomitant with the affective spirituality of the period, which was often expressed in images and stories of suffering. The purpose of these short narratives is to persuade the audience of a moral truth. Wogan-Browne suggests that the 'more characteristic rhetorical form' for anchoritic treatises such as *De Institutione Inclusarum* and *Ancrene Wisse* is 'the analogy or *similitudo*' rather than narrative-based forms; this is appropriate for the 'highly-interiorized'[148] and static life of the anchoress, but the more general reader of *Ancrene Wisse* lived in a world of plot and story. It seems – although this is not an absolute distinction – that those rhetorical devices with a strong narrative content such as *forbisnes* and *exempla* are particularly used when the purpose is to persuade the reader of a general moral truth, rather than to exemplify the specialised spirituality of the anchoress.

Analogies often have a narrative element, but they not only illustrate moral points being made, they also have the force of an argument. In Part Two an example from Exodus is given as an analogy for the behaviour of a woman who reveals herself to men's eyes: the woman is signified (*bitacned*) by the one who uncovers the pit. The author admits that the judgment is harsh, but does not question the validity of extending, by means of analogy, a law that dealt literally with the negligence of uncovering pits to the case of a woman who is seen, and desired, by a man. Like the one who uncovers the pit, she is held responsible and culpable.[149] Analogy relies on a thought process that accepts resemblance as a means for establishing truth: analogies illustrate one idea by means of another, more familiar, one and often take the form of an extended simile.

---

[146] Hubert of Sorbonne, Sermon 15, in Bériou, 'La Prédication', pp. 202-211, (p. 208).

[147] *Old English Homilies*, ed. Morris, p. 23; trans. p. 22.

[148] Price [Wogan-Browne], 'Inner and Outer', p. 197.

[149] *AW* Pt. 2, this section is lost in Corpus 402 and is supplied from Cleopatra, ff. 24ʳ –24ᵛ.

One of the reasons why one ought to flee from the world is given in the form of an analogy –
again using the kind of rhetorical question implying an affirmative answer often found in *Ancrene
Wisse*:

> þe bere a deore licur, a deorewurðe wet as basme is, in a feble uetles, healewi i bruchel
> gles, nalde ha gan ut of þrung bute ha fol were?

> if someone were carrying a valuable liquid, a previous fluid such as balsam, in a frail
> vessel, ointment in fragile glass, surely she would head out of a crowd unless she was
> stupid?[150]

The anchoress herself is the vessel; the precious ointment her virginity;[151] the need to keep such a
precious treasure safe by heading out of a crowd is put forward as an argument for the solitary
life and detachment from the world. In Hubert of Sorbonne's sermon to beguines, virginity is
also presented as the treasure above all treasures: virgins, being uncorrupted, are closest to
God.[152] Carolyn Muessig comments on the centrality of chastity in the penitential life which was
at the heart of the spirituality of beguines: 'Regardless of the marital status of the various holy
women, the emphasis of their religious vision is defined through their penitential practice which
places chastity at the height of their spiritual perfection'.[153] It is the value placed on chastity –
and that this value is accepted as a premise – that allows the analogy with a fragile vessel and a
vulnerable treasure to work.

Metaphors are used for both specific and general audiences; the imagery of warfare and castles
which is recurrent throughout Part Four has antecedents in the monastic tradition and was used
by Hubert of Sorbonne in his sermon to beguines. The same imagery is suitable for a mixed lay
audience and indeed in one of the Lambeth Homilies, the sermon for Quadragesima Sunday,
there are images of wounds needing to be healed and castles that must be defended.[154] In Part
Four of *Ancrene Wisse*, attacks of the devil are likened to an assault on a castle;[155] the sins with
which the devil tempts people are presented as his army and an allegorical exegesis of passages
from the Book of Kings and Chronicles is used to support this image. In the midst of this,
however, the sisters are addressed: 'Ne wende ȝe nawt te rug, mine leoue sustren, ah wiðstondeð
þe feondes ferd amidde þe forheaued, as is iseid þruppe, wið stronge bileaue', 'Do not turn to

[150] *AW* Pt. 3, Corpus 402 f.44ᵇ 8-10.
[151] This image is ultimately from St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians.
[152] Hubert of Sorbonne, Sermon 15, in Bériou, 'La Prédication', p. 206.
[153] Carolyn Muessig, 'Paradigms of Sanctity for Thirteenth-Century Women' in *Models of Holiness in Medieval
Sermons*, Textes et Études du Moyen Âge, 5 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Fédération Internationale des Instituts
d'Études Médiévales, 1996), pp. 85-102 (p. 98).
[154] *Old English Homilies*, ed. Morris, p. 23; trans. p. 22.
[155] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402 f.66ᵇ 1-5.

flee, my dear sisters, but resist the devil's army face to face, as is said above, with firm faith'.[156] The anchoress above all must resist the temptations of the devil.

In the fight against temptation, the devil is a very real presence, as is acknowledged in a section of Part Four, dealing with remedies against lechery, in which the metaphor of the dog of hell is used. The source of this image is probably Cassian, but a close parallel is found in a sermon by Odo of Cheriton,[157] and Stephen Langton used the metaphor of the devil as a dog that should be repelled with the cross of Christ in a sermon to nuns,[158] which suggests the popularity of this image with thirteenth-century preachers. The sisters are warned of the dangers of being seduced into consenting to the devil – the devil is both the source of the sin and manifested in the person of the seducer. He is also described as a mad dog and a filthy mongrel, 'wed dogge' and 'fule cur-dogge'[159] who must be beaten off with the holy cross. While fighting the devil in the form of a dog is meant metaphorically, since the cross is also the crucifix the anchoress has in her cell and since she is advised to make the sign of the cross with her hand, the picture conveyed is of the anchoress actually swinging a heavy cross as the dog cringes in the corner; the dog of hell becomes a vivid and real presence in the cell of the anchoress.

The cell itself can act as a metaphor; anchoresses who have too little to do and who are vain about their white hands, 'should scrape up the earth every day from the grave in which they will rot', 'schulden schrapien euche dei þe eorðe up of hare put þet ha schulen rotien in'.[160] Anchoresses could expect to be buried in the cell in which they had lived, but the cell is also a metaphoric tomb, allowing identification with Christ:

> ʒef ʒe þenne i nearow stude þolieð bitternesse, ʒe beoð his feolahes, reclus as he wes i Marie wombe. Beo ʒe ibunden inwið fowr large wahes? Ant he, in a nearow cader, ineilet o rode, i stanene þruh bicluset hetefeste. Marie wombe ant þis þruh weren his ancre-huses.

> If, then, you endure bitterness in a narrow place, you are his companions, enclosed as he was in Mary's womb. Are you confined inside four spacious walls? *He* was in a narrow cradle, nailed on the cross, closely confined in a tomb of stone. Mary's womb and this tomb were his anchor-houses.[161]

---

[156] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402, f.72ᵃ 25-27.

[157] Millett, Notes to forthcoming edition, referring to Odo of Cheriton's Sunday gospel sermon for Advent 4.

[158] Phyllis B. Roberts, 'Stephen Langton's *Sermo de Virginibus*' in *Women of the Medieval World: Essays in Honor of John H. Mundy* ed. by Julius Kirshner and Suzanne F. Wemple (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), p. 114, trans., p. 106.

[159] *AW* Pt. 4, Corpus 402, f. 79ᵃ 1 and 10-11.

[160] *AW* Pt. 2, Corpus 402 f. 31ᵇ 23-4.

[161] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402, f. 102ᵃ 28-f. 102ᵇ 5.

The penitential life that is signified by bitterness and confinement is interpreted here as the experience of one enclosed both in body and in cell. What is written about mortification of the flesh may not be directed at the sisters, 'þe oðerhwile þolieð mare þen Ich walde', 'who sometimes suffer more than I would like' but they are reminded of the importance of their enclosure as a thorny hedge to keep out the beasts of hell.[162] Earlier, the anchoress is told 'þench þet tu art eorðe', 'remember that you are earth';[163] this is not merely a metaphor used for poetic effect – it is a vivid expression of how the anchoress should consider herself. Her humility is an essential element in her spirituality; it also recalls her humanity – that she was born of earth and will return to earth. This metaphor expresses the ascetic and penitential nature of the spirituality of the anchoress; rhetorical language both controls the spirituality of the anchoresses and constructs it in the text.

Lengthy *similitudines* and complex patterns of imagery are used in Parts Six and Seven to construct the peculiar nature of anchoritic spirituality, but even here there is evidence of the influence of contemporary pastoral rhetoric. The comparison with the suffering in pain and shame with Jesus on the cross constitutes one of the main imagistic themes in this part – the Passion of Christ. 'Pain and shame' ('scheome ant pine')[164] are the 'hooks', to use Leclercq's term, to which the following images are linked, or woven, making up 'the fabric' of the discourse.[165] Pain and shame are signified by the fiery wheels of Elijah's chariot and by the sword of the cherub before the gates of Paradise;[166] the redness that links these pictures[167] then returns the reader to the cross of Jesus:

> Ant nes Godes rode wið his deorewurðe blod irudet ant ireadet forte schawin on him seolf þet pine ant sorhe ant sar schulden wið scheome beon iheowet?

> And surely God's cross was reddened with his precious blood to show through his own example that pain and sorrow and suffering should be coloured with shame?[168]

The sisters can identify with Christ and draw close to him through the suffering and shame they must endure: suffering is penance the sisters must pay but in return they can expect joy.[169] The bitterness of the penitential life is addressed through elaborate etymology in a passage where the

---

[162] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402 f. 102ᵇ 14-20.

[163] *AW* Pt. 3, Corpus 402 f.33ᵃ 18.

[164] *AW*, Pt. 6, Corpus 402 f. 96ᵃ 6-7; also 'wa ant scheome', at Corpus 402 f. 96ᵃ 23.

[165] 'Each word is like a hook, so to speak; it catches hold of one or several others which become linked together and make up the fabric of the exposé', Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, pp. 73-4. 'Exposé' seems an inappropriate term for this passage in *AW*; 'meditation' may be a better term, but I have settled for the neutral 'discourse'.

[166] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402 96ᵃ 22-f. 96ᵇ 3.

[167] Shepherd comments on Elijah's ascent to heaven that 'It often received pictorial treatment in 12ᵗʰ c. illumination', *AW* Pts. 6 and 7, ed. Shepherd, p. 35.

[168] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402 f. 96ᵇ 5-7.

[169] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402 f. 96ᵇ 20-23.

dear sisters are urged to pay close attention: 'Neomeð nu gode ȝeme, mine leoue sustren', 'Now pay close attention, my dear sisters'.[170] The list of three bitternesses that are represented by the three Marys encapsulate the anchoritic life and emphasise its ascetic and penitential nature:

> Þe earste bitternesse is i sunne bireowsunge, ant i deadbote, hwen þe sunfule is iturned earst to ure Lauerd. ... Þe oðer bitternesse is i wreastlunge ant i wragelunge aȝeines fondunges. ... Þe þridde bitternesse is i longunge toward heouene ant i þe ennu of þis world, hwen ei is se hehe þet he haueð heorte reste onont unþeawes weorre, ant is as in heouene ȝeten, ant þuncheð bitter alle worltliche þinges.

> The first bitterness is in repentance for sin, and in penance, when the sinner has first turned to our Lord. ... The second bitterness is in wrestling and struggling against temptations. ... The third bitterness is in longing for heaven and in weariness of this world, when anyone has reached so high that his heart is at peace from the attack of vices, and he is, as it were, inside heaven's gates, and all worldly things seem bitter.[171]

In Part Six, the author of *Ancrene Wisse* is dealing with penitence within the framework of a dedicated religious life – as his language and style attest – but this life itself is to be understood within the context of contemporary religious sensibility. Features of this religious sensibility, such as the emphasis placed on personal penance and the passion of Christ as an example for that penance, are to be found in writings associated with lay piety, such as sermons, as well as in monastic writings, but gain a greater intensity when dealt with in the context of a dedicated religious life. The incarnational spirituality of *Ancrene Wisse* is evoked through images which allow the anchoress to identify with the suffering of Christ and to see him as a spouse; the association between the Passion of Christ and passionate love for Him is developed further in Part Seven.

Part Seven does not use the spousal imagery derived from the Song of Songs found in Part Six but instead has parallels with thirteenth-century marriage sermons. The metaphor of Christ as the ideal husband in Part Seven of *Ancrene Wisse* attributes to him qualities similar to those found in thirteenth-century marriage sermons as discussed by Nicole Bériou and David d'Avray, qualities also found in contemporary literature; Jesus is presented as wooing the soul, with all the qualities of a courtly knight:

> Nam Ich þinge feherest? Nam Ich kinge richest? Nam Ich hest icunnet? Nam Ich weolie wisest? Nam Ich monne hendest? Nam Ich þinge freoest?

> Am I not supremely handsome? Am I not the richest of kings? Am I not of the noblest ancestry? Am I not the wisest of the wise? Am I not the most courteous of men? Am I not supremely generous?[172]

---

[170] *AW* Pt. 6, Corpus 402, f. 101ᵃ 2-3.
[171] *AW* Pt. 6, ed. Millett, pp. 7-8; Corpus 402 f. 101ᵃ 5-f. 101ᵇ 4; the English terms *deadbote* and *fondunge* are used here rather than the Latinate alternatives – but *ennu* is a French word.
[172] *AW* Pt. 7, ed. Millett, p. 4; Corpus 402 f. 107ᵇ 7-10.

Bériou and d'Avray point out the social and historical interest of these images, in that they say something about the qualities valued in a husband – both in society and in the literature of the period.[173] Bella Millett has traced the development of such 'conditions of eligibility' from early monastic sources, suggesting that as they pass into the tradition of popular preaching in late twelfth-century Paris they illustrate the movement from a monastic to a broader, pastoral, context using a more down-to-earth rhetoric and drawing on courtly literature.[174] This metaphor has internal coherence and is consistent with the incarnational spirituality that is at the heart of the work as a whole. [175] As the ideal husband, he is the model of courtesy – a knight as well as a wooer. Bériou and d'Avray note that 'corteisie' is present in most lists of qualities of eligibility found in Romances, but is lacking in the list in a sermon by Robert of Sorbon.[176] In sermons to beguines in Paris in the thirteenth century, Christ is also himself a knight, and God is 'le seigneur courtois' who treats with mercy those who are faithful to him and generous with their gifts.[177] In *Ancrene Wisse*, the shield the knight carries is the body of Christ stretched out on the cross[178] and, by extension, the crucifix placed in church, as a knight's shield would be hung in church in his memory, 'forte þenchen þer-bi o Iesu Cristes cnihtschipe þet he dude o rode', 'to be a reminder of the knightly prowess of Jesus Christ on the Cross'.[179] The imagination of the reader moves from the allegory of the lover knight, through the image of Christ on the cross likened to a shield, to the actual crucifix in church which the anchorites use as an aid for meditation:[180] the cross serves as a reminder of the spiritual correlative of the asceticism of the anchoritic life. As Christ is the spouse of the virgin and her reward in heaven, he is also, through his Passion, a model or example of the penitential life. He is a perfect husband because of his sacrifice on the Cross: Christ as lover and Christ as redeemer become inseparable. The imagery here links this part of *Ancrene Wisse* both to thirteenth-century marriage sermons and to the bridal mysticism of the beguines.

The imagery of Parts Six and Seven is the expression of a spirituality in which, through her suffering and enclosure, the anchoress could identify herself with the crucified Jesus, in the hope

---

[173] Bériou and d'Avray, 'The Image of the Ideal Husband' p. 51.

[174] Bella Millett, 'The Conditions of Eligibility in the *Ancrene Wisse* Group', paper given at International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, 15 July, 2003.

[175] Bériou & d'Avray, comment on the literary quality of the metaphor as used in sermons and the importance of its having cumulative coherence, 'Image of Ideal Husband', p. 50.

[176] There was some caution about this particular quality, Bériou & d'Avray, 'Image of Ideal Husband', pp. 45-6.

[177] Bériou, 'La Prédication' p. 187. This is one of a number of occasions where a phrase is recorded in French rather than Latin, suggesting an association with popular French literature, for example, the angel Gabriel is a 'cortois mesager', Ranulphe d'Hombières, Sermon 24 in Bériou, 'La Prédication', p. 211.

[178] *AW* Pt. 7, Corpus 402 f. 105ᵇ 28- f. 106ᵃ 1.

[179] *AW* Pt. 7, Corpus 402 f. 106ᵃ 25-6.

[180] The rubric in Part One, 'Þis ureisun biuore þe muchele Rode is of muche strengðe' is followed by a series of prayers to the cross, *AW* Pt. 1, Corpus 402 f. 8ᵇ 23-4.
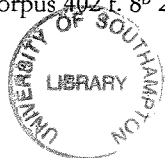
of enjoying bliss with the resurrected Christ; the language is emotive and, at times, erotic. But this is not the whole story of the rhetoric – or the spirituality – of *Ancrene Wisse*. The use of the rhetoric of *pastoralia*, as well as the concerns for the moral and spiritual education of a wider readership than the anchoresses, sets *Ancrene Wisse* within a context of lay piety. The careful division of the work and sign-posting of those divisions meant that this work was accessible to any devout, literate person wanting to follow a religious life – whether enclosed in a cell or in the world. The author used the immediate experiences of his primary readership who were enclosed within the cell and the literary tradition of monastic discourse and imagery; but the many illustrations from the Scriptures, the Lives of the Fathers, romantic literature and contemporary *exempla* throughout *Ancrene Wisse* would appeal to a lay audience in the world as much as to the anchoresses. The rhetoric is not just a reflection of the spirituality of the work; rather, it is through the rhetoric – the way it is written – that the spirituality of *Ancrene Wisse* is constructed; this is true both of the more general pastoral elements and the elevated spirituality of the anchoresses. *Ancrene Wisse* is a work that addressed lay anchoresses while also acknowledging its wider audience of devout lay people and the composition of the work shows the alternation between, and integration of, the concerns of these two audiences: *quibus alia dicenda sunt, aut certe aliter*, to whom different things should be said, or at least said in a different way.

Conclusion

Different things are said, or at least said in a different way to different readers – but in *Ancrene Wisse* one voice unites them. The voice is that of the anonymous author; he is able to claim authority, not by who he is, but through what he writes. Men writing guides for anchoresses had to balance their admiration for the vocation of such women with the need to assert their authority. *Ancrene Wisse* fits into the tradition of anchoritic guidance writing, following the model of works such as Aelred's *De Institutione Inclusarum* with which it has often been compared. Both the Middle English translation of *De Institutione Inclusarum* and a version of *Ancrene Wisse* occur in the late fourteenth-century Vernon manuscript – suggesting their common purpose in this late redaction as works of spiritual guidance for an audience that was probably female and may have been lay. The version of *De Institutione Inclusarum* found in Vernon omits its first section found in the original Latin version – that dealing with outward observances and 'external forms' – which, the modern editors suggest, make this translation 'self-evidently highly appropriate for inclusion in an anthology of works of a religious and devotional nature, concerned with *sowlehele*'.[1] The part omitted was that most closely related to the monastic roots of its author and this points to an important difference between *Ancrene Wisse* and *De Institutione Inclusarum*; it is in the ways that *Ancrene Wisse* is different that the distinctive voice of its author emerges.

Both *De Institutione Inclusarum* and *Ancrene Wisse* were written at the request of their first recipients – in both cases anchoresses known to the authors. As enclosed virgins, anchoresses had a status beyond that of other women: their strict enclosure as well as their virginity set them apart. It was acknowledged in the Benedictine Rule that anchoritism was an advanced form of the religious life; anchorites were not neophytes but those who had already 'spent much time in the monastery testing themselves and learning to fight against the devil'.[2] This was probably the case with the sister of Aelred of Rievaulx, for whom Aelred wrote his guide; like the monks of old, the sister of Aelred vowed herself to a stricter life – that of solitary enclosure. The anchoresses for whom *Ancrene Wisse* was written, however, entered the anchorhold from the world – for them it was an alternative to the nunnery. They did not enjoy the security and authority of a recognised religious order; nevertheless, it is claimed in *Ancrene Wisse* that their spiritual status was at least the

---

[1] *Aelred of Rievaulx's De Institutione Inclusarum*, ed. Ayton and Barratt, p. xviii.
[2] 'The Rule of St. Benedict' in *Regular Life: Monastic, Canonical and Mendicant* Rules, ed. Douglas J. McMillan and Kathryn Smith Fladenmuller, Teams (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), p. 51.

equivalent of that of a religious: they are to keep themselves pure and unspotted from the world, more than other religious.[3]

Aelred wrote *De Institutione Inclusarum* as a formal letter with expectations of a wider audience than that of his sister, but he wrote as a Cistercian abbot within a monastic tradition and the wider audience was of other, younger, recluses. He was able to claim authority by virtue of his status. The author of *Ancrene Wisse* was addressing his charges, not as an abbot with authority over vowed religious, but as a preacher and advisor encouraging and comforting those who had chosen an alternative form of religious life; he was also addressing an audience in the world beyond the cell. *Ancrene Wisse* was highly influenced by Cistercian spirituality – Bernard of Clairvaux is one of the most frequently cited authorities – but the author himself may have been a Dominican and *Ancrene Wisse* reaches beyond the monastic tradition which fed it. *Ancrene Wisse* uses Aelred's *De Institutione Inclusarum* and the sermons of Bernard of Clairvaux, but it is an eclectic work, taking material and techniques from many sources as they seemed useful. These sources include thirteenth-century pastoral literature designed to enable preachers and priests to fulfil their duties towards their congregations and parishioners.

Ancrene Wisse includes material intended for both a general lay audience and the anchoresses, but the author is in command of his material and able to control his audience. The balance and orderliness that is evident in the text reflects the moderation and control that was required of the anchoresses and anyone else wanting to follow a spiritual life. The control is not just that imposed by an authority – it is implicit that those reading this text have to take some responsibility for their own lives. *Ancrene Wisse*, with its sections on temptation, confession and penance, can be seen as a vernacular example of early thirteenth-century *pastoralia* and as such can be read within the context of the pastoral mission to the laity. It is relevant that it was written in the vernacular language, Middle English, used by the gentility and growing middle classes, rather than the Latin of the churches and universities. The careful division of *Ancrene Wisse* into 'destinctiuns' and the inclusion of *exempla* are examples of rhetorical features common in pastoral literature aimed at lay people. *Exempla* were not new, but what we see at this time is them being used for a new purpose, to a new audience, with increased vigour – and in the vernacular. Metaphors and similitudines construct an incarnational spirituality in *Ancrene Wisse* that is both particular to the anchoresses as brides of Christ and relevant to the wider movement of affective piety. The devotions set out in *Ancrene Wisse* – focussing on the Virgin Mary and the Passion of Christ – place *Ancrene Wisse* in the transition between monastic and lay piety.

---

[3] *AW* Preface, Corpus 402, f. 3a 26-7.

In *Ancrene Wisse*, the long tradition of anchoritism is adapted to respond to the lay religious movement of the thirteenth century. It addresses lay anchoresses who were typical of the numbers of quasi-regular women both in England and on the continent, but it also responds to the demand by the pious laity for spiritual direction. This is not a text written in Latin and addressed to clerics or monks, but written in English and directly addressing lay people who are searching to find a way to follow a religious life outside the conventional religious orders. While the tradition from which *Ancrene Wisse* grew as a work of anchoritic guidance must be acknowledged, we need also to read it in the context of thirteenth-century pastoral literature as an example of the democratisation of spirituality and a forerunner of the fourteenth-century vernacular theology.

Bibliography

Unpublished material:

'Cest li Riule' in MS. Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris, 2058, f. 60ra – 65vb

Baldwin, Mary, '*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background in the Christian Tradition of Religious Instruction and Spirituality' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, 1974)

Primary Texts:

Ancrene Wisse:

> *Ancrene Wisse ed. from MS Corpus Christi College Cambridge 402*, ed. J. R. R. Tolkien, EETS 249 (London, 1962)

> *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwle, ed. from Cotton MS. Titus D. xviii*, ed. Frances Mack, EETS 252 (London: Oxford University Press, 1963 (for 1962))

> *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwle, ed. from Cotton MS. Nero A. .xiv*, ed. Mabel Day, EETS 225, (London: Oxford University Press, 1952)

> *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwle, ed. from Cotton MS. Cleopatra C. vi*, ed. E. J. Dobson, EETS 267 (London: Oxford University Press, 1972)

> *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwle, ed. from Magdalene College, Cambridge, MS. Pepys 2498*, ed. A. Zettersten EETS 274 (London: Oxford University Press, 1976)

> *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwle: The 'Vernon' Text, edited from Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Eng. poet. a. 1*, ed. by Arne Zettersten and Bernhard Diensberg, Introduction by H. L. Spenser, EETS 310 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

> *The Ancrene Riwle (The Corpus MS.: Ancrene Wisse)*, trans. by M. B. Salu (1955; Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1990)

> *Ancrene Wisse Parts Six and Seven*, ed. by Geoffrey Shepherd (1959; Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1991)

> *Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works*, trans. by Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson (New York: Paulist Press, 1991)

> *Ancrene Wisse: Guide for Anchoresses*, trans. by Hugh White (London: Penguin, 1993)

Aelred of Rievaulx, 'De Institutione Inclusarum' in *Opera Omnia*, ed. by A. Hoste and C.H. Talbot C.C.C.M. Vol. 1 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1971); translated as 'A Rule of Life for a Recluse' in *Treatises, The Pastoral Prayer* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1971; pbk. reprint, 1995)

Aelred of Rievaulx's De Institutione Inclusarum: Two English Versions, ed. by John Ayto and Alexandra Barratt E.E.T.S. (London: Oxford University Press, 1984)

Alan of Lille, *De Arte Praedicatoria* in PL 210; *The Art of Preaching* trans. by Gillian R. Evans, Cistercian Series, 23 (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1981)

Anselm, 'De Custodia Interioris Hominis' in *Memorials of St. Anselm*, ed. by R. W. Southern and F. S. Schmitt, Auctores Britannica Medii Aevi, 1 (London: Oxford University Press, for the British Academy, 1969), 354-360

Berengar, 'Jusjurandum quod in eadem synodo fecit Berengarius' in *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova*, ed. by J. D. Mansi (Venice, 1774), vol. 19, col. 900

Bernard of Clairvaux, *S. Bernardi Opera*, ed. by J. Leclercq et al. Vol. 1, (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957 -)

Bernard of Clairvaux, *Works of Bernard of Clairvaux*, trans. by Kilian Walsh et al., Cistercian Fathers Series, (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1971 -)

Bernard of Clairvaux, 'Liber de Diligendo Deo', PL vol. 182

Bernard of Clairvaux, 'On Loving God' in *Selected Works*, trans. by G. R. Evans, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1987)

Brown, Carleton, ed., *English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932)

The Cloud of Unknowing and The Book of Privy Counselling, ed. from MS by Phyllis Hodgson, EETS, O.S. 218 (London: Oxford University Press, 1944; rep. 1958)

Cloud of Unknowing trans. by Clifton Wolters (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961)

Concilium Lateranense IV in *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, ed. J. Alberigo et al., 3rd ed. (Bologna: Istituto per le Scienze Religiose, 1973); trans in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman P. Tanner (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990), Vol. 1

'Consuetudines Fratrum Predicatorum' in *De oudste Constituties van de Dominicanen: voorgeschiedenis, tekst, bronnen, ontstaan en ontwikkeling (1215-1237) met uitgave van de tekst*, Bibliothèque de la Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique, fasc. 42 (Leuven: Leuvense Universitaire Uitgaven, 1965)

Francis of Assisi, 'Epistola II' in *Opuscula Sancti Patris Francisci Assisiensis* ed. by PP. Collegii S. Bonaventurae (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1904)

Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Hiezechihelem* in Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 142

Gregory the Great [Grégoire le Grand], *Règle Pastorale*, intro. par Bruno Judic, texte critique par Floribert Rommel, traduction par Charles Morel, Sources Chrétienne, 382 (Paris : Éditions du Cerf, 1992)

Guerric of Igny, *Liturgical Sermons* Vol. 2, trans. by monks of Mount St. Bernard Abbey, Cistercian Fathers Series, 32 (Spencer, Mass.: Cistercian Publications, 1971)

Gertrude of Helfta, *Oeuvres Spirituelles*, Vol. 3, *Le Herault, Book 3*, ed. and trans by Pierre Doyere, Sources Chrétiennes No. 143 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1968)

Gertrude of Helfta, *The Herald of Divine Love*, trans. by Margaret Winkworth, Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1993)

Gregory the Great [Grégoire le Grand], *Règle Pastorale*, Sources Chrétiennes, 382 (Paris : Éditions du Cerf, 1992)

'Hali Meiðhad' in *Medieval English Prose for Women: Selections from the Katherine Group and* Ancrene Wisse, ed. by Bella Millett and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, rev. pbk. ed., 1992)

Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, ed. by Adelgundis Führkötter and Angela Carlevaris, CCCM 43 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1978)

Hubert of Sorbonne, Sermo 15, 'Ad beginas in festo beati Iohannis in mane', in Bériou, 'La Prédication', pp. 202-211

Hugh of St. Victor, 'De Sacramentis Christianae Fidei', in PL 176; *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*, trans. by Roy J. Deferrari (Cambridge, Mass.: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1951)

Hugh of St. Victor, 'In Salominis Ecclesiasten Homiliae xix; Homilia Prima', in PL 175

Hugh of St. Victor, 'The Grades of Knowledge' in *Late Medieval Mysticism*, ed. by Ray C. Petry, The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957)

Humbert of Romans, 'Ad Mulieres Religiosas Inclusas Quascumque' in *Prediche alle donne del secolo XIII: Testi di Umberto da Romans, Gilberto da Tournai, Stefano di Borbone* ed. by Carla Casagrande (Milan: Bompiani, 1978), pp. 57-60

Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints* trans. by William Granger Ryan, 2 vols. (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1993)

James of Vitry, 'Vita Mariae Oigniacensis' in *Acta Sanctorum* June, Vol. 4, ed. by D. Papebrochius (Antwerp, 1707)

James of Votry [Jacques de Vitry], *The Life of Marie d'Oignies*, trans. by Margot H. King, Peregrina Papers Series, 3 (Toronto: Peregrina, 1993)

James of Vitry, *Sermones in Epistolas et Euangelia Dominicalia totius anni* (Antwerp: Ionnais Stelsii, 1575)

James of Vitry, *The Exempla of Jacques de Vitry*, ed. Thomas Frederick Crane, for the Folk-Lore Society (London: David Nutt, 1890)

James of Vitry, 'Sermo [LX] ad agricolas et vinitores et alios operarios' from B.N., ms. lat. 17509 ff. 122rb-124vb (XIIIe s.) in J.-Th. Welter, *L'Exemplum dans la Littérature Religieuse et Didactique du Moyen Age* (Paris: Occitania, 1927), pp. 457-467

Jocelin of Brakelond, *The Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond*, trans. by H. E. Butler (London: Thomas Nelson, 1949

Julian of Norwich, *A Book of Showings to the Anchoress Julian of Norwich*, ed. by Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978)

Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, trans. by Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (London: S.P.C.K., 1978)

The Lay-Folks Mass-Book, ed. by Thomas Frederick Simmons E.E.T.S., O.S. 71 (London: Trubner, 1879)

Libellus de Diversis Ordinibus et Professionibus qui sunt in Aecclesia, ed. and trans. by G. Constable and B. Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972)

The Life of Christina of Markyate, A Twelfth Century Recluse, ed. and trans. by C. H. Talbot (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959; rep. with additional material, 1987)

Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Barry Windeatt (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000)

Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora* Vol. 4, ed. Henry Richards Luard, Rolls Series, 1877 (Wiesbaden: Kraus reprint, 1964)

Matthew Paris, *Historia Anglorum* Vol. 2, ed. by Sir Frederic Madden, Rolls Series, 1866 (Wiesbaden: Kraus Reprint, 1971)

Mechthild von Magdeburg, *Flowing Light of the Divinity*, trans. by Christiane Mesch Galvani, intro. by Susan Clark, Garland Library of Medieval Literature, Series B, Vol. 72 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991)

Medieval English Prose for Women: Selections from the Katherine Group and Ancrene Wisse, ed. by Bella Millett and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, rev. pbk. ed., 1992)

Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises, First Series, ed. by Richard Morris (London: Early English Text Society, 1868)

Peraldus, *Summa virtutum ac vitiorum*, 2 vols bound in 1 (Moguntia, 1618)

Peter Abelard, 'Commentaria in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos' in *Opera Theologica*, ed. by E.M. Buytaert CCCM 11, (Turnholt: Brepols, 1969)

Peter Abelard, *Ethics* ed. & trans. by D. E. Luscombe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971)

Peter Comestor, 'Tractatus de Sacramentis' ed. by Raymond M. Martin, appendix to *Maitre Simon et Son Groupe: De Sacramentis* ed. by Henri Weisweiler (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1937)

Richard Rolle, 'The Mendynge of Lyfe' in *English Mystics*, ed. by Windeatt

Richard of St. Victor, 'De Gratia Contemplationis' in P.L. 196

Richard of St. Victor. 'The Mystical Ark' in *The Twelve Patriarchs; The Mystical Ark; Book Three of the Trinity*, trans. by Grover A. Zinn, Classics of Western Spirituality (London: S.P.C.K., 1979)

Robert of Basevorn, 'Forma praedicandi' in Th.-M. Charland, *Artes Praedicandi* (Paris & Ottawa: Publications de l'Institut d'Études Médiévales d'Ottawa, 1936), pp. 232-323

Robert of Basevorn, 'Forma praedicandi', trans. by Leopold Krul in *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts* ed. J. Murphy, pp. 114-215

'The Rule of St. Benedict' in *Regular Life: Monastic, Canonical and Mendicant* Rules, ed. by Douglas J. McMillan and Kathryn Smith Fladenmuller, TEAMS (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997)

Les Statuts de Prémontré au Milieu du XIIe siècle, ed. by Pl. F. Lefèvre and W. M. Grauwen, Bibliotheca Analectorum, Praemonstratensium Fasc. 12 (Averbode: Praemonstratensia, 1978)

Stephen Langton, 'Stephen Langton's *Sermo de Virginibus*' ed. by Phyllis B. Roberts in *Women of the Medieval World: Essays in Honor of John H. Mundy* ed. by Julius Kirshner and Suzanne F. Wemple (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), pp. 103-118

'Templum magistra beguinarum de dedicatione ecclesie' in Bériou, 'La Prédication'

Thomas of Chobham, *Summa Confessorum*, ed. by F. Bloomfield, Analecta Mediaevalia Namurcensia, 25 (Louvain: Éditions Nauwelaerts, 1968)

Thomas of Chobham, *Summa de arte praedicandi*, ed. by F. Morenzoni, CCCM, 82 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1988)

Thomas of Eccleston, *Tractatus de Adventu Fratrum Minorum in Angliam*, ed. by A. G. Little (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1951)

Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, ed. by Thomas H. Bestul (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, for TEAMS, 2000)

Walter Hilton, *The Ladder of Perfection* trans. by Leo Sherley-Price (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957)

Secondary material:

Backhouse, Janet, *Books of Hours* (London: The British Library, 1985)

Baker, Denise Nowakowski, *Julian of Norwich's* Showings: *From Vison to Book* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994)

Baldwin, Charles Sears, *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic (to 1400) Interpreted from Representative Works* (Gloucester, Mass,: Peter Smith, 1959)

Baldwin, J. W., *Masters, Princes and Merchants:: The Social Views of Peter the Chanter and His Circle*, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970)

Barratt, Alexandra, 'The Five Wits and their Structural Significance in Part II of *Ancrene Wisse*', *Medium Aevum*, 56 (1987), 12-24

Barratt, Alexandra, 'Small Latin? The Post-Conquest Learning of English Religious Women', in *Anglo-Latin and its Heritage*, ed. by Siân Echard and Gernot R. Wieland, Publications of the Journal of Medieval Latin, 4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), pp. 51-65

Bennett, J. A. W., *Middle English Literature* ed. by Douglas Gray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986)

Bériou, Nicole, 'La Prédication au béguinage de Paris pendant l'année liturgique 1272-73', *Recherches Augustiniennes*, 13 (1978) 105-229

Bériou N., and D. L. d'Avray, 'The Image of the Ideal Husband in Thirteenth-Century France', in *Modern Questions about Medieval Sermons: Essays on Marriage, Death, History and Sanctity*, by N. Bériou, D. L. d'Avray et al. (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi Sull'Alto Medioevo, 1994), pp. 31-69

Biller, Peter, 'Words and the Medieval Notion of "Religion"', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 36 (1985), 351-69

Bird, Jessalyn, 'The Religious's Role in a Post-Fourth-Lateran World: Jacques de Vitry's *Sermones ad Status* and *Historia Occidentalis*' in *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. by Carolyn Muessig (Leiden: Brill, 1998

Bloomfield, Morton, *The Seven Deadly Sins: An Introduction to the History of a Religious Concept, with Special Reference to Medieval English Literature* (Michigan State College Press, 1952)

Bolton, Brenda M., 'Mulieres Sanctae', in *Women in Medieval Society*, ed. by Susan Mosher Stuard (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976), pp. 141-158

Bolton, Brenda M., 'Some Thirteenth Century Women in the Low Countries: A Special Case?', *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*, 61 (1981), 7-29

Bolton, Brenda M., 'Thirteenth-Century Religious Women: Further Reflections on the Low Countries "Special Case"' in *New Trends in Feminine Spirituality*, ed. by Dor et al., pp. 129-157

Boyle, Leonard E., 'The Fourth Lateran Council and Manuals of Popular Theology' in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. by Thomas J. Heffernan, Tennessee Studies in Literature, vol. 28 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), pp. 30-43

Bremond, Claude, Jacques Le Goff and Jean-Claude Schmitt, *L'"Exemplum"*, Typologie des Sources du Moyen Age Occidental, Fasc. 40 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1982)

Butler, Cuthbert, *Western Mysticism* (1922; London: Arrow Books, 1960)

Burton, Janet, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain, 1000-1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)

Bynum, Caroline Walker, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982; pbk. ed., 1984)

Bynum, Caroline Walker, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987; pbk. ed., 1988)

Bynum, Caroline Walker, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995)

Coakley, John, 'Friars as Confidants of Holy Women in Medieval Dominican Haiography' in *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe* ed. by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Timea Szell (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 222-46

Colledge, Eric [Edmund]. '*The Recluse*: A Lollard Interpolated Version of the *Ancrene Riwle*', *Review of English Studies*, 15 (1939), 1-15 and 129-145

Colledge, Eric, *The Medieval Mystics of England* (London: Murray, 1962)

Colish, Marcia L., *The Mirror of Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968)

Constable, Giles, 'Aelred of Rievaulx and the Nun of Watton : An Episode in the Early History of the Gilbertine Order', in *Medieval Women*, ed. by Derek Baker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978)

Constable, Giles, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; pbk. ed., 1998)

Constable, Giles, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; pbk. ed., 1998)

Cross, F. L., ed., *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd. ed. by E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)

Dahood, Roger, 'Design in Part 1 of *Ancrene Wisse*', *Medium Aevum*, 56 (1987), 1-22

Dahood, Roger, 'The Use of Coloured Initials and Other Division Markers in Early Versions of *Ancrene Riwle*', in *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*, ed. by Edward Donald Kennedy, Ronald Waldron and Joesph S. Wittig (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1988), pp. 79-97

Dahood, Roger. 'The Current State of *Ancrene Wisse* Group Studies', *Medieval English Studies Newsletter* 36 (1997), 6-14

d'Avray, D. L., *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons diffused from Paris before 1300* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985)

d'Avray, D. L., *Medieval Marriage Sermons: Mass Communication in a Culture without Print* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

Devlin, Dennis, 'Feminine Lay Piety in the High Middle Ages: The Beguines', in *Distant Echoes: Medieval Religious Women*, Vol. 1, ed. by John A. Nicholls and Lillian Thomas Shank (Kalamazoo, Mich: Cistercian Publications, 1984), pp. 183-196

Dobson, E. J., 'The Date and Composition of *Ancrene Wisse*', in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 52, 1966 (London: pub. for the British Academy by the Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 181-208

Dobson, E. J., *The Origins of* Ancrene Wisse (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976)

Dor, Juliette, Lesley Johnson and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, eds., *New Trends in Feminine Spirituality: The Holy Women of Liège and their Impact*, Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts, 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999)

Duffy, Eamon, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992)

Dupuy, Michel, 'Spiritualité' in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité Ascétique et Mystique, Doctrine et Histoire*, fondé par M. Viller et al., continué par A. Derville et al., Tome 14 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1990), p. 1144

Elkins, Sharon K., *Holy Women of Twelfth Century England* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 1988)

Evans, G. R., *Alan of Lille: The Frontiers of Theology in the Later Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)

Evans, G. R. ed., *The Medieval Theologians* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001)

Foucault, Michel, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. from the French (London: Tavistock, 1970; pbk., 1974)

Furlong, Monica, *Visions and Longings: Medieval Women Mystics* (London: Mowbray, 1996)

Galloway, Penny, 'Neither Miraculous nor Astonishing: The Devotional Practice of Beguine Communities in French Flanders', in *New Trends in Feminine Spirituality*, pp. 107-27

Galloway, Penny, ' "Life, Learning and Wisdom": the Forms and Functions of Beguine Education' in *Medieval Monastic Education* ed. by George Ferzoco and Carolyn Muessig (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), pp. 153-167

Gaydon A. T., ed., *Victoria County History: Shropshire*, Vol. 2, Institute of Historical Research (London: Oxford University Press, 1973)

Gilchrist, Roberta, *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (London: Routledge, 1994; pbk., 1997)

Goering, Joseph, *William de Montibus: The Schools and the Literature of Pastoral Care* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1992)

Goering, Joseph, 'Pastoralia: The Popular Literature of the Care of Souls' in *Medieval Latin*, ed. by Mantello and Rigg, pp. 670-676

Greetham, D. C.. *Textual Scholarship: An Introduction* (New York: Garland, 1994)

Grundmann, Herbert, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: The Historical Links between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Women's Religious Movement in the Twelfth and thirteenth Century, with the Historical Foundations of German Mysticism*, (2nd. ed., 1961) trans., Steven Rowan (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995)

Gunn, Cate, "'Efter the Measse-Coss, Hwen the Preost Sacreð'": When is the Moment of Ecstasy in *Ancrene Wisse?'*, *Notes And Queries*, 246, N.S., 48 (2001), 105-108

Gunn, Cate, '*Ancrene Wisse*: A Modern Lay Person's Guide to a Medieval Religious Text', *Magistra*, 8 (2002), 3-25

Gunn, Cate, 'Beyond the Tomb: *Ancrene Wisse* and Lay Piety' in *Anchorites, Wombs and Tombs: Intersections of Gender and Enclosure in the Middle Ages*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy and Mari Hughes-Edwards (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, forthcoming)

Gy, Pierre-Marie, 'Liturgy and Spirituality ii: Sacraments and Liturgy in Latin Christianity', trans. by Craig McKee, in *Christian Spirituality I: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff, *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, Vol. 16 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), pp. 365-382

Haren, Michael, *Medieval Thought: The Western Intellectual Tradition from Antiquity to the Thirteenth Century* Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985)

Harper, John, *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy from the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991)

Hilton, R. H., *A Medieval Society: The West Midlands at the End of the Thirteenth Century* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966)

Holdsworth, C. J., 'Christina of Markyate' in *Medieval Women*, ed. by Derek Baker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), pp. 185-204

Hoornaert, R., 'La plus ancienne Règle de Béguinage de Bruges', *Annales de la société d'émulation de Bruges*, 72 (1929), pp. 1-79

Hughes-Edwards, Mari, 'Hedgehog Skins and Hairshirts: The Changing Role of Asceticism in the Anchoritic Ideal', *Mystics Quarterly* 28 (2002), 6-25

Innes-Parker, Catherine, 'The Lady and the King: *Ancrene Wisse*'s Parable of the Royal Wooing Re-examined', *English Studies*, 75 (1994), 509-22

Jungmann, Joseph A, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development*, trans. by Francis A. Brunner, 2 vols (1955; Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1986)

Kennedy, V. L., 'The Moment of Consecration and the Elevation of the Host', *Mediaeval Studies* 6 (1944), pp. 121-50

Kennedy, V. L. 'Robert Courson on Penance', *Mediaeval Studies*, 7 (1945) 291-336

Kienzle, Beverly Mayne, dir. *The Sermon*, Typologie des Sources du Moyen Âge occidental, Fasc. 81-83 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000)

Kienzle, Beverly Mayne Kienzle, 'The Twelfth-Century Monastic Sermon' in *The Sermon*, dir. Kienzle, pp. 271-323

Knowles, David, *The English Mystical Tradition* (London: Burns and Oates, 1961)

Lawrence, C. H., *Medieval Monasticism* (London: Longman, 1984)

Lawrence, C. H., *The Friars: The Impact of the Mendicant Movement on Western Society* (London: Longman, 1994)

le Goff, Jacques, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988; pbk. ed., 1992)

Leclercq, Jean, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, trans. by Catharine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961)

Louth, Andrew, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition from Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981)

Luscombe, D. E., 'Peter Abelard' in *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, ed. by Peter Dronke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 279-307

Macy, Gary, *The Theologies of the Eucharist in the Early Scholastic Period: A Study of the Salvific Function of the Sacrament according to the Theologians c.1080-c.1220* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984)

Mantello, F. A. C. and A. G. Rigg, eds., *Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996)

McDonnell, Ernest W., *The Beguines and Beghards in Medieval Culture with Special Emphasis on the Belgian Scene* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1954)

Millett, Bella, 'The Origins of *Ancrene Wisse*: New Answers, New Questions', *Medium Aevum*, 61 (1992), 206-228

Millett, Bella and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, eds., *Medieval English Prose for Women: Selections from the Katherine Group and* Ancrene Wisse (Oxford: Clarendon Press, rev. ed., 1992)

Millett, Bella. '*Mouvance* and the Medieval Author: Re-Editing *Ancrene Wisse*' in *Late-Medieval Religious Texts and their Transmission*, ed. by A. J. Minnis (Cambridge: Brewer, 1993)

Millett, Bella, 'Women in No Man's Land: English Recluses and the Development of Vernacular Literature in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993; 2nd ed., 1996), pp. 86-103

Millett, Bella, Introduction to *Ancrene Wisse, The Katherine Group, and the Wooing Group*, Annotated Bibliographies of Old and Middle English Literature, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996)

Millett, Bella, '*Ancrene Wisse* and the Conditions of Confession', *English Studies*, 80 (1999), 193-215

Millett, Bella, '*Ancrene Wisse* and the Book of Hours', in *Writing Religious Women: Female Spiritual and Textual Practices in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Denis Renevey and Christiania Whitehead (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), pp. 21-40

Millett, Bella, '*Ancrene Wisse* and the Life of Perfection', *Leeds Studies in English*, 33 (2002), 53-76

Morris, Colin, *The Papal Monarchy: The Western Church from 1050 to 1250* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989; pbk. ed., 1991)

Morson, John, *Christ the Way: The Christology of Guerric of Igny*, Cistercian Studies, 25 (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1978)

Mosher, Joseph Albert, *The Exemplum in the Early Religious and Didactic Literature of England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1911)

Muessig, Carolyn, 'Paradigms of Sanctity for Thirteenth-Century Women' in *Models of Holiness in Medieval Sermons*, Textes et Études du Moyen Âge, 5 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales, 1996), pp. 85-102

Muessig, Carolyn, ed., *Medieval Monastic Preaching* (Leiden: Brill, 1998)

Muessig, Carolyn 'What is Medieval Monastic Preaching? An Introduction', in *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. by Muessig

Muessig, Carolyn, *The Faces of Women in the Sermons of Jacques de Vitry* (Toronto: Peregrina, 1999)

Mulchahey, Michèle, 'First the Bow is Bent in Study ...' *Dominican Education before 1350*, Studies and Texts, 132 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1998)

Murk-Jansen, Saskia, *Brides in the Desert: The Spirituality of the Beguines* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998)

Murphy, James J., *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971)

Murphy, James J., *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from St. Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974)

Murphy, James J., 'Rhetoric' in *Medieval Latin*, ed. by Mantello and Rigg, pp. 629-638

Newhauser, Richard, *The Treatise on Vices and Virtues in Latin and the Vernacular*, Typologie des Sources du Moyen Age Occidental, Fasc. 68 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1993)

O'Carroll, Mary, *A Thirteenth-Century Preacher's Handbook: Studies in MS Laud Misc. 511* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1997)

O'Mara, V. M.. 'Preaching to Nuns in Late Medieval England', in *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. by Carolyn Muessig (Leiden, 1998), pp. 93-119

Panofsky, Erwin, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1957)

Pearsall, Derek, ed. *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990)

Petroff, Elizabeth Alvilda, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986)

Petry Ray C., ed., *Late Medieval Mysticism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957)

Raw, Barbara, 'Prayers and Devotions in the *Ancrene Wisse*' in *Chaucer and Middle English Studies in Honour of Rossell Hope Robbins*, ed. by Beryl Rowland (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1974), pp. 260-71

Riehle, Wolfgang, *The Middle English Mystics*, trans. by Bernard Standing (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981)

Rosof, Patricia J. F., 'The Anchoress in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries' in *Peaceweavers: Medieval Religious Women*, Vol. 2, ed. by Lillian Thomas Shank and John A. Nichols (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1987)

Rouse, Richard H. and Mary A. Rouse, '*Statim invenire*: Schools, Preachers, and New Attitudes to the Page', in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Robert Benson and Giles Constable with Carol D. Lanham (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 201-225

Rubin, Miri, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

Rubin, Miri, 'What Did the Eucharist Mean to Thirteenth-Century Villagers?' in *Thirteenth-Century England, IV*, Proceedings of the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Conference, 1991, ed. by P. R. Coss and S. D. Lloyd (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1992), pp. 47-57

Rygiel, Dennis, 'Structure and Style in Part Seven of *Ancrene Wisse*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 81 (1980), 47-56

Rygiel, Dennis, 'A Holistic Approach to the Style of *Ancrene Wisse*', *Chaucer Review*, 16 (1982) 270-81

Saenger, Paul, *Space Between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997)

Sheerin, Daniel, 'The Liturgy' in *Medieval Latin*, ed. by Mantello and Rigg, pp. 157-182

Simons, W., 'The Beguine Movement in the Southern Low Countries; A Reassessment', *Bulletin De L'Institute Historique Belge de Rome*, 59 (1989), 63-101

Smalley, Beryl, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964; orig. pub. 1952)

Southern, R. W., *The Making of the Middle Ages* (London: Hutchinson, 1953)

Southern, R. W., *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970)

Southern, R. W., *Robert Grosseteste: The Growth of an English Mind in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986)

Spencer, H. Leith, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993)

Spencer, H. L., 'Middle English Sermon' in *The Sermon*, dir. by Kienzle, pp. 597-660

Talbot, C. H., 'Some Notes on the Dating of the *Ancrene Riwle*', *Neophilologus* 40 (1956), 38-50

Thompson, Sally, *Women Religious: The Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991)

Vauchez, André, *La Spiritualité du Moyen Age occidental VIIIe-XIIe siècles*, Collection S. U. P. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975)p. 5.; trans. as *The Spirituality of the Medieval West from the Eighth to the Twelfth Century* by Colette Friedlander, Cistercian Studies No. 145 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1993)

Venarde, Bruce, *Women's Monasticism and Medieval Society: Nunneries in France and England, 890-1215* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997)

Viller. M., et al., ed., *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité Ascétique et Mystique Doctrine et Histoire*, Vol. 10 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1980)

Voaden, Rosalynn, *God's Words, Women's Voices : The Discernment of Spirits in the Writing of Late-Medieval Women Visionaries* (York: York Medieval Press, 1999)

Wada, Yoko, 'Dominican Authorship of *Ancrene Wisse*: the Evidence of the Introduction', in *A Book of Ancrene Wisse*, ed. by Y. Wada (Suita, Osaka: Kansai University Press, 2002), pp. 95-107

Wakefield, Gordon S., ed., *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (London: SCM Press, 1983)

Wallace, David. ed., *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

Warren, Ann K., 'The Nun as Anchoress : England 1100-1500', in *Distant Echoes : Medieval Religious Women*, Vol. 1, ed. by John A. Nichols and Lillian Thomas Shank (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1984), 197-212

Warren, Ann K., *Anchorites and their Patrons in Medieval England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985)

Watson, Nicholas, 'The Methods and Objectives of Thirteenth-Century Anchoritic Devotion' in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium 4*, 1987, ed. by Marion Glasscoe (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1987), pp. 132-146

Watson, Nicholas, 'Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409', *Speculum* 70 (1995), 822-864

Watson, Nicholas, 'The Middle English Mystics', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, pp. 539-565

Wenzel, Siegfried. 'The Seven Deadly Sins: Some Problems of Research', *Speculum*, 43 (1968), 1-22

Windeatt, Barry, ed., *English Mystics of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)

Winston-Allen, Anne, *Stories of the Rose: The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997)

Wogan-Browne, Jocelyn [Price], '"Inner" and "Outer": Conceptualizing the Body in *Ancrene Wisse* and Aelred's *De Institutione Inclusarum*' in *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature: Essays in Honour of G. H. Russell*, ed. by Gregory Kratzmann and James Simpson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1986), pp. 192-208

Wogan-Browne, Jocelyn, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture c.1150-1300: Virginity and its Authorizations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

Woolf, Rosemary, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968)

Zink, M., *La Prédication en langue romane avant 1300* (Paris, 1976)

Reference:

Concordance to Ancrene Wisse *MS Corpus Christi College Cambridge 402*, ed. by Jennifer Potts, Lorna Stevenson and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993)

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms, Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990)

Middle English Dictionary, ed. Hans Kurath (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1954 -)

Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church. ed. F. L. Cross, 3rd. ed. by E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)

Schneyer, J. B., *Repertorium der Lateinischen Sermones des Mittelalters für die Zeit von 1150-1350*, 9 vols. (Munster, 1969)

Websites:

'The Peraldus Project' at www.english.upenn/~swenzel/survey.html

W. Simons, 'The Beguine Movement in the Southern Low Countries; A Reassessment', available at http://matrix.divinity.yale.edu/MatrixWebData/Simonsc.txt

Alan of Lille, *De Arte Praedicandi* at http://homepages.wmich.edu/~johnsorh/MedievalLatin/Texts/Alan.html