



HAL
open science

Everyman and preaching style

Stephen Morrison

► **To cite this version:**

Stephen Morrison. Everyman and preaching style. Everyman, Jan 2009, Nancy et Toulouse, France. pp.113-131. hal-04626008

HAL Id: hal-04626008

<https://hal.science/hal-04626008>

Submitted on 26 Jun 2024

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

***Everyman* and Preaching Style**

Stephen Morrison
Université de Poitiers

De tous les genres littéraires, le théâtre compris, c'est la littérature sermoinaire anglaise de la fin du Moyen Age qui a eu la plus grande influence sur *Everyman* en termes de contenu et d'expression. Même si cette remarque n'est pas nouvelle, la proximité textuelle entre pièce et sermons n'avait jamais été démontrée et illustrée de façon adéquate. Le présent article vise à combler cette lacune. Il s'appuie à la fois sur des sermons publiés et sur un long cycle inédit d'importance majeure présentant des schémas verbaux et thématiques qui sont au cœur de *Everyman*.

Set multi habent amicos similes predictis tribus, scilicet mundum, parentes, et bona opera. Nam aliqui diligunt mundum plus quam se quando pro seipsis [...] qui [mundum] tamen in extrema necessitate, quando as tumulum ire secundum cursum nature oportet, in nullo iuvabit, set omnino deficiet [...] ¹

It may seem something of a paradox that the morality play *Everyman* should owe a good deal more, in terms of content and style, to the late Middle English sermon than it does to any play, mystery or morality. I shall have one or two things to say about content, but my main concern in this essay is with the verbal make-up of the play and its proximity to what can only be called a preaching style, evidence for which is only beginning to emerge now as more and more sermon collections are being given the editorial treatment they so obviously deserve.

The morality play in general, and *Everyman* in particular, differs from the mystery play, the major dramatic form of the late Middle Ages, because the latter is rooted in time, giving dramatic enactments of events recounted in the Bible – the Fall of Man, Noah's ark, the Sacrifice of Isaac, the Crucifixion, etc. *Everyman* stands outside of time because it is concerned with Man's spiritual redemption and his joyful entrance into heaven, which places the play in eternity. Medieval preachers, even though they may preach about the world and its ills, have their minds firmly fixed on that which lies beyond.

¹ Siegfried Wenzel, ed., *Fasciculus Morum* (University Park & London: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), pp. 380-1. *FM* is a preacher's manual: 'But many have friends like the three I have described, namely, the world, relatives, and good deeds. Some love the world more than themselves [...]. Yet this friend [the world] will give them no help whatever in their ultimate need, but when they must go into their grave in the due course of nature, but it will fail them [...]'

As a preamble to what follows, a general statement on the precise nature of the textual situation regarding *Everyman* and sermon literature might be thought relevant. The text of the morality play *Everyman* is freely available in a number of recent editions. I know of two done by A. C. Cawley: one for a general readership (with normalised spelling) in Dent's *Everyman* series, the other aimed at an undergraduate audience, published by Manchester University Press.² To these one should add the more recent bilingual edition prepared by the TEAMS team in Kalamazoo, in which the Middle English text is accompanied by the Dutch original, and which is also designed to meet the needs of a university audience.³ Both these latter print the sixteenth century text; the slight discrepancies between them are to be explained by the fact that the Manchester edition uses a copy of the first edition, while the TEAMS edition is based on the second. For the play, then, the texts are multiple and easily accessible.

Of the sermon literature of the period – late fifteenth century – admittedly much more voluminous, no such happy statement is at all possible. Of the twenty or so extant collections, only a handful have ever benefited from editorial work, and of them, one, *Jacob's Well*, is incomplete (we have about a half of the unique manuscript), while at least one other, John Mirk's *Festial*, is in need of re-editing.⁴ Of the rest, according to Dr. Helen Spencer, most are now, in her words, 'being edited.'⁵ An encouraging sign, perhaps, but it may be significant that no major collection has seen the light of day since she made that statement, that is, in the year 2000. Patience is decidedly a virtue, then, in an area where, for most people, the identification of commonplace, conventional utterances (and it is with these that I shall principally be dealing) is hampered by the remoteness of much relevant material.

A. C. Cawley, in his 1961 Manchester edition of the play, said this: 'It is now accepted by most scholars that the medieval moral plays are a dramatic development of the sermon (p. xiii).' The editors of the Oxford

² Respectively *Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays*, 2nd ed. (London: Dent, 1957), and *Everyman* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961).

³ Clifford Davidson, Martin W. Walsh and Ton J. Broos, ed., *Everyman and its Dutch Original Elckerlijc* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007).

⁴ The current editions are: Arthur Brandeis, ed., *Jacob's Well*, part 1 (all published), Early English Text Society [hereafter EETS] OS 115 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Trübner, 1900), and Theodor Erbe, ed., *Mirk's Festial*, EETS ES 96 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Trübner, 1905). Susan Powell of the University of Salford has prepared a new critical edition of the *Festial*. It is to be published by the EETS in two volumes, OS 334 and OS 335, in 2009 and 2010.

⁵ Helen L. Spencer, 'The Study of Medieval English Preaching: What Next?' *Medium Aevum* 69 (2000), 104-09.

Medieval English Literature anthology are even more assertive: ‘The morality has especially close links with the sermon;’ and A. M. Kinghorn has gone so far as to call *Everyman* a ‘sermon-play.’⁶ One of the things which these three statements have in common – others can, if necessary, be found – is that they lack any illustrative support. It is this illustrative support that I attempt to provide in what follows.⁷

Unlike Chaucer’s Parson, who declared that he was ‘nat textueel’,⁸ I, in a slightly more restricted sense, am, in that without text I can do nothing. The truth of that statement is, you may think, borne out by the length of the quotations which follow in this study. Their length is to be explained first by my contention that much of the language common a) to sermons and b) to sermons and moralities is utterly conventional and typical. Typicality will only be accepted in argument if there is pertinent evidence in abundance. Second, I have sought to complement this evidence, drawn from a range of easily-accessible sources, by a substantial amount of material preserved in a long, highly orthodox (like *Everyman*) sermon cycle dating (like *Everyman*, again) from the end of the fifteenth century, but which is still unavailable for general study. My contention is that since the cycle shows patterns of verbal articulation witnessed in other sermons and related compositions, it may be taken to reflect standard approaches to sermon compilation on the part of those responsible for their creation. This would at least suggest that the other, as yet inedited, collections are likely to behave in the same way. If this position is accepted, it may be useful to explore the possibility of there having been what might be termed a writing community made up of men who, at different times and in different geographical locations, availed themselves of the same or very similar verbal associations and constructs in carrying out clearly-defined, clearly-perceived compositional tasks. It seems to me that there existed a shared perception amongst writers working entirely independently that, within a

⁶ See J. B. Trapp, Douglas Gray & Julia Boffey, ed. *Medieval English Literature*, 2nd ed (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 465, and A. M. Kinghorn, *Medieval Drama* (London: Evans Brothers, 1968), p. 120.

⁷ Gerald R. Owst, in his *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge: CUP, 1933, 2nd rev. ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1961), pp. 527-30 offers some general parallels, but his treatment is cursory. Much the same may be said, too, of the few remarks made by J. W. Blench, *Preaching in England in the late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964), pp. 324, 332. The current authority on late Middle English preaching, Helen L. Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) does not consider the morality play in the light of sermon rhetoric.

⁸ *The Canterbury Tales*, X(1), 57. See L. D. Benson et al. ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed (Boston: Houghton & Mifflin, 1987).

given mode of composition, certain lexical and syntactic procedures were to be followed.

From this, it may be argued that by the end of the fifteenth century (and perhaps before), English sermons destined for lay congregations, in thus conforming to well-established compositional procedures, provided the literary context on which, virtually by definition, the writer of *Everyman* drew. (It is as well to bear in mind here that he is writing verse; the sermons I examine are all in prose). In short, it seems difficult to imagine how a late fifteenth-century morality play could have been composed without recourse to the preachers and their work. No other context exists.

If that context's thematic concerns are readily grasped, their linguistic character (I use the term in its widest possible sense) is not. *Everyman* and the late-medieval sermon share much common ground: both are concerned with the proper road to redemption for mankind, beset by sin, through the quest for self-knowledge and repentance (within an orthodox context which insists on the necessity of sacramental confession), thus achieving a state of grace which opens the door to the workings of God's mercy, essential for the redemptive process to be successfully enacted and completed. In both, men are taught to die – *Disce mori* and the *artes moriendi* come to mind here – and their education allows them willingly to pass through the three stages of repentance: confession, contrition and satisfaction, all three evoked at length in the second half of the play, all three found ubiquitously in sermon literature. All that is readily perceptible; what is not so evident is that in both sermon and play the same (or closely similar) verbal tools are drawn upon.

It is now time to move to demonstration, which is in two parts. The first, in which the text of *Everyman* is not directly drawn upon, seeks to show that sermon construction is not random. The evidence strongly implies that, at certain moments in their compilations, sermon writers drop into modes of expression that are universally recognized. They conform to patterns, and the result is occasionally what might be called the use of formulas or formulaic language. On the basis of this 'shared perception', as I have called it, the second part of the demonstration offers a series of confrontations between utterances found in the play and their corresponding realisations in sermon literature. The object of the comparisons is obviously not to suggest that a given sermon text served as source for the playwright. Quite the reverse. In the light of what will emerge from the first part of the textual analysis, one should rather say that commonplace verbal formulations in sermons so pervaded the literary imagination that playwrights simply re-used what was to hand as a matter of course.

I begin, then, with what I call *Formulas and recurrent lexical items* under two rubrics: the so-called translation formula, very often serving as an opening formula, and the closing formula. The first often appears at the beginning of a sermon since preachers often liked to begin their discourse with citation of either the designated liturgical reading for the day in question, or some other suitable authoritative text, then provide a translation (occasionally a paraphrase) of it. The transition is introduced thus:

a) the translation formula (often an opening formula)

Þe wordes þat I haue take to sey at þis tyme ben þus *muche* on Englyssh to youre vnddyrstondynge [...] (Ross, *MES*, 3/20)⁹

These wordes þat I haue takon to seye at þis tyme ben [...] þus *muche* to sey on Englissh tonge (Ross, *MES*, 47/35).

Þes wordes þat ich ha take to prech of at þis tyme, þei be [...] þus *miche* to seie on englissh tunge to your vndirstondynge (Grisdale, *MES*, 51/6).

Rogemus. Good men, þese wordes þat I haue tane to speke, þei ben wreton in þe secunde boke of Kyngis, and þei ben þus moche to sey in Ynglyssche: ‘Sonne, I schall dye for þe.’ (Palm Sunday, MS O, f. 293r)¹⁰

Goode men, þese wordes þat Y haue seyde in Latyn [...] ben þus moche to sayn in Englyssh. (Cambridge, Pembroke College MS 285, f. 63r)¹¹

b) the closing formula

To þe whiche ioye God brynge you and me þat for vs dyed on rode tre (Ross, *MES*, 12/15)

To þe whiche blis graunt vs he þat for vs died on rode tre (Ross, *MES*, 103/31)

To the whiche ioye God bryng boþe yow and me, that dyed for vs on þe rode tree, *et cetera. Amen.* (Trinity 9, MS O, f. 97v).

Such utterances invite comparison with what is found at the end of the play:

Unto the whiche place God brynge us all thether

That we may lyve, body and soule togyther (918-19)

In these wholly unrelated texts (notice the distinct dialectal forms: *miche*, *muche*, *moche*, for example), a pattern quickly emerges. Thus, the sequences *þe wordes þat I haue take to sey* and *ben þus muche to sey*

⁹ Full bibliographical references to the editions used are given in the bibliography at the end of the text.

¹⁰ Manuscript sigils are explained in the bibliography. Manuscript O, Oxford, Bodleian Library, e Musaeo 180, has been chosen as the base manuscript for a critical edition of a late fifteenth-century orthodox sermon cycle. It is to be published by the EETS as *A Late Fifteenth-Century Dominical Sermon Cycle* in two volumes, OS 337 and OS 338 in 2010 or 2011.

¹¹ Cited by Spencer, *English Preaching*, p. 56.

appear with a regularity which would, under other circumstances, be attributed to direct copying. Such is not the case here. It is noticeable, too, that these formulas are subject to slight variation: *to sey /to preche*; *to sey /to speke*, invariably good proof of formulaic status. The amount of substantive variation is, it should be noted, small, too small for it to reflect the degree of *mouvance* which is ubiquitously present in late Middle English prose discourse. The verbal articulation here is evidently deliberate.¹²

The same is true with closing formulas, one of which is illustrated here, showing the following patterns: *to þe whiche ioye / blis*; *God brynge / graunt vs he*; *þat for vs dyed / that dyed for vs*, the whole finishing with mention of the *rode tre*. One important controlling element here is, of course, the end-rhyme *me / tre* in what may be taken to be a verse couplet. It is noticeable, too, that the couplet cited from the play conforms to this prosodic arrangement.

Such conformity to a verbal model is not confined in sermons to such formal structural utterances as these. It manifests itself also at key moments in the accounts of the life of Christ, especially certain vivid moments in his Passion. I draw attention here to three details drawn from two moments in the gospel narrative. The first is Christ's treatment in the house of Ciaphas, the high priest, where violence is done to him: the buffeting. In the Vulgate accounts of Matthew (Matt. 26: 67) and Mark (Marc. 14: 65), the term used is *colaphus*; in John's gospel (Ioan. 18: 22), one reads *alapa*, indicating perhaps a less heavy slap than what is implied in the former term. Even though two terms are used, in at least one gospel translation, the later version of the Wycliffite Bible, only one is found for the translations: *buffat*.¹³ Whether verbal or nominal, *buffat* appears to have been automatically associated with this incident and, by extension, to other moments in the passion story, as exemplified in the following extracts, where the contexts indicate that Christ is subjected to the violence in an outdoor setting.

c) The Buffeting

(In the house of Ciaphas, the high priest. Matt. 26: 67, Marc. 14: 65, Ioan. 18: 22)

Per stert a Iew & smot oure lord a buffat vnder þe ere (Pickering, *SEMP*, 1. 2223).

¹² On *mouvance* see Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 84-96.

¹³ The standard edition is Josiah Forshall & Falconer Madan, eds., *The Holy Bible... made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and his Followers*, 4 vols. ([Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1850] New York: AMS Press, 1982).

[...] dispised and scorned in iiij. maners. First in the hous of Anne wher he was and receiued spittingnges, *bofetes* and was blindefeld (Hamer, *GL*, vol. 1, p. 240)

Buffetes him that makes this bere (boast)

For to God may he not be dere

That ovr lawe so destroyes

(Lumiansky & Mills, *CMC*, I, 286)

At other moments in the Passion

And afore hys dethe, he swete bote blod and watyr, and for vs he sufferid skornys and many schrewed wordis of þe Iewys. And þei spytt in his face and *bofetid* hym, and all þis was for ʒow and me. (Sermon for Palm Sunday, MS O, f. 298r).

he suffride hem moost pacientli [...] to scorne him *and to buffeten him*, and to al tobawme him wit her spittinges (Hudson, *TWT*, p. 31/246).

Quando falsi Iudei false accusarunt ipsum, sput in facie eius, al to-betoun him and *to-buffet* him – et ipse nichil murmurauit set pacienter sustinuit vt agnus –, he fordide sigillum ire (Horner, *MSC*, p. 103)

The account in the Oxford manuscript suggests that the writer had the crucifixion itself in mind. From the point of view of lexical association, the last-quoted extract, taken from a recently-edited macaronic sermon collection, is particularly interesting. The English comes to the surface of the text, supplanting the Latin (which is dominant throughout) at precisely the point at which an English preacher would have selected the word *buffat*. It may be significant that it is this moment in the narrative that is Englished, and not any other.

Certain evocations of the crucifixion itself read as if language has in some way been codified. Christ's body is not simply *streynd* on the cross, it is *streytely streynd*: in a couple of lyrics (one by Rolle), in an orthodox sermon, in a sermon said to be associated with the Lollard movement (although to what extent the sermons edited by Gloria Cigman are of that persuasion is, apparently, not a straightforward question). Lollard thought, as reflected in the texts, is not noted for its preoccupation with the suffering humanity of Christ, the devotion to the five wounds, etc., although other examples of this same phrase are not wanting in such texts. The following evocations may be considered:

d) streytely streynd

The fowrte tyme was when he hyng vpon the crosse where every membyr of his blyssed body was all tobreste, for he was so *streytly streynd* vpon the cros tat every senew brake in sondyr, and therwithe [he] schede his blyssed blode þe whiche was þe rawnsome of our redempcion (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS e Musaeo 180, f. 209v, Sermon for the Circumcision, inedited)

þe fifte payment of þis blessid raunsum was maad whanne þe blesside hondes and armes of oure Lord Jesus Crist weren *streytli streynd* vpon þe cros and grete bustus nailes dryuen þoru (Cigman, *LS*, p. 71)

Sa *straytly vpryght streyned* on þe rode (Brown, *RL*, n° 79/18)
apon whiche crosse he was neylyd and *streynyd so wofully and streytly* that þer
was no ioynt ner synow in his body but that hyt aperyd in his holy flessche
(Barratt, *SP*, p. 86/866)

Till a pyler I was pyght
Tuged & tawed all a nyght
And waschen in myne awen blode
And *straytely streded* on þe rode
Streyned to dry on þe rode tre
Als parchemyne aw for to be
Here now & yhe sall wyten
How þis charter was wryten
(Spalding, *Charters*, p. 26)

My dereworthly derlyng sa dolefully dyght,
Sa *straytly vpryght streyned* on þe rode;
For þi mykel mekenes, þi mercy, þi myght,
þow bete al my bales with bote of þi blode
(Richard Rolle, *A Lyric*, Hanna, p. 33)

The popularity of *streytely streyned* may be accounted for by assuming that the striking image to which it leads was a favourite with some writers: that of Christ's body as a sheet of parchment being prepared for writing. I offer three extracts, including one from the Gloucester manuscript, in which there is similar lexical stability to that observed in the examples given earlier (the Gloucester manuscript is the only one of the three listed to preserve sermons for Holy Week):

e) the harrow

þi bodi is streyned *as a parchemyn-skyn upon þe harowe* (Richard Rolle, *Meditation on the Passion*, Horstmann (1895), *YW* I. p. 100).

suffrede hym to be streyned on the hard cros, moore dispitously & greuously þan euer was schepys skyn streyned on the wal or vp-on *þe parchemyn-makeris harowe* ayens þe sonne to drye (Ps.-Richard Rolle, *Meditacion of þe fyue woundes of Ihesu Crist*, Horstmann (1896), *YW*, II p. 440)

þe awtyr-stone betokenythe Cristis body þat was drawn on þe cros as streyztte *as a skynne of parchement is drawn on an harowye*, so streypte þat all his bonys myzte be tolde (Sermon for Maundy Thursday, Gloucester, Cathedral Library, MS 22, p. 242, inedited).

What I am trying to establish here is the probability that, for some writers at least, there existed a consensus about how to articulate certain ideas in late medieval religious discourse. None of the material so far discussed, or very little, is to be found in *Everyman* because the play is not concerned with the narrative of the Passion of Christ, as such, but it may be said to be relevant to that play because it highlights a literary genre displaying compositional characteristics which are mirrored in other,

closely related works. Logically, then, if there is consensus between sermons and lyrics, between sermons and poetic meditations on the passion, and so on, one would expect there to be parallels of a similar order between sermons and the morality play, *Everyman*. And that is exactly what we find.

The evidence, and it is quite voluminous, has been arranged into three broad categories: biblical commonplaces; aspects of imagery common both to sermons and the play; and, finally, the rather general consideration of the everyday language the playwright has recourse to. These categories are not entirely water-tight, with some examples as much at home in one as in another, but I felt that some structuring was necessary in the presentation. If I draw heavily on the sermon collection in the OLG manuscripts, it is because it is an important one, its texts are quite fresh in my mind, and it is not yet in print.

There is, in the play, a considerable amount of biblical allusion. For the sake of space, I limit the list to a handful of items. Lines from the play are given first, with line numbers enclosed in brackets:

f) biblical allusion

Man in the begynnyng,
 Loke well and take good hede to the endyng (10-11)

immediately recalls:

And how sone þu schalt pas owte of þis worlde no man can tell, saue God only. And therefore seythe Salamon: *Memorare nouissima [tua], et in eternum non peccabis*; 'Haue mynde one þine endyng day and þu schalt neuer synne.' (Eccles. 7: 40. Circumcision, MS O, ff. 207rv)

Then

Felawshypp and Jolyté
 Bothe, Strengthe, Pleasure, and Beauté
 Wyll vade from thee as floure in Maye (16-18)

should be compared to:

And as a flowre þu schalt fade away, as Iob rehersithe and seythe: *Homo natus de muliere, breui viuens tempore*. (Circumcision, MS O, f. 207r)

A man may well be lykened to a flowre þat sone passithe away, as þe prophet Daudid seythe: *Homo sicut fenum dies eius; tanquam flos agri sic effloreat*. Ps. 102: 15. (Epiphany Octave 1, MS L, f. 37r)

Homo natus de muliere, breui viuens tempore, repletur multis miserijs. Qui quas[i] flos egreditur et conteritur, Iob tercio decimo; 'Man is born of a woman, lyving but a schort tyme, and he is filled withe moche wrechednes; and as a flowre he growythe, and anon he fadythe away.' (Iob 14: 1. Trinity 25, MS O, ff. 172v-173r)

From God's complaint (lines 22-63)¹⁴

I hanged bytwene two theves, it cannot be denyed;

To get them lyfe I suffrede to be deed;

I heled theyr fete, with thornes hurt was my heed (31-3)

Deinde mittit aquam in pelvem et coepit lavare pedes discipulorum et extergere linteo, quo erat praecinctus. Venit ergo ad Simonem Petrum et dicit ei Petrus: 'Domine, tu mihi lavas pedes?' (Ioan. 13: 5-6)

O, Deth, thou cummest whan I had thee leest in mynde (119)

Veniet dominus servi illius in die qua non sperat *et hora qua ignorat* (Matt. 24: 50).

Quia mors est certa, dies autem eius incertus; (for 'Dethe is certeyn, but forsoþe the day of hym is vncerteine.'). (Trinity 6, MS O, f. 76v)

The firste cawse that we scholde haue ever in owre remembraunce is þe vncerten tyme of dethe, as seynt Barnard seythe: *Nichil cercius morte, et nichil incercius hora mortis*. þat is to sey: 'No þing is more certen then is dethe, ne no þing more vncerten then is the owre of dethe.' (Trinity 24, MS O, f. 169r).

Oo, wretched caytyfe, whether shall I flee

That I myght scape this endles sorow? (171-2)

quo ibo ab spiritu tuo et quo a facie tua fugiam? (Ps. 138: 7).

There is nothing very surprising in this, but I would like to make two points: first, the allusions are invariably to those biblical verses that are staple fare among preachers. Let us not forget that the Bible is a big book; the high degree of coincidence between sermons and the play cannot, I submit, be fortuitous. Also, if the playwright saw fit to include allusions to biblical material, he must have thought them pertinent and useful – elements which would have an impact on his audience. One may, then, reasonably ask where that audience could have acquired the knowledge of biblical discourse to which the playwright was evidently appealing. Extensive reading of English (or, indeed, Latin) bibles among the laity can safely be ruled out. Peter Heath, in his study of the English parish clergy on the eve of the Reformation, found virtually no evidence for the use of Vulgate bibles among the clergy. The use of English bibles among the laity would seem to be an equally remote possibility.¹⁵ No, the only possible

¹⁴ This is in itself a common sermon motif. Christ (or God) is depicted as haranguing Mankind for ingratitude towards him in the light of his suffering. There is an extended treatment in the *Fasciculus Morum*, p. 425; it was a favourite theme with lyric poets (see, for example, Carleton Brown, ed., *Religious Lyrics of the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), Nos. 104, 105 etc.

¹⁵ Peter Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 7, 88-9, 91. See also Margaret Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible* (Cambridge: CUP, 1920), pp. 319 ff. It may also be argued that possession among the laity of books in English was still sufficient to raise suspicion, in the minds of the ecclesiastical authorities, of heresy.

source, it seems to me, is the sermon. Perhaps I should also say here that there is evidence that some sermons (perhaps not all) were preached in the form in which they are preserved in the manuscripts, a position not readily accepted by some scholars.

As for the examples, all are found ubiquitously in the sermons. The verse from Ecclesiasticus: *'haue mynde on þine endyng day'*, which ll. 10-11 of the play would have called to mind, occurs in the Circumcision sermon in MS O and on three other occasions in that collection; there are two occurrences in Cigman's *Lollard Sermons*;¹⁶ three in *Diues and Pauper*, and so on;¹⁷ the comparison of the life of Man to a flower that soon fades and wilts instantly recalls Job. 14: 1, of which there are no fewer than five occurrences in the Oxford collection. Others are to be found in the Ross sermons,¹⁸ in Wimbledon's sermon,¹⁹ as well as in preaching aids, such as the *Fasciculus Morum*.²⁰ The reference to God healing feet calls to mind the episode of Christ washing the feet of his apostles, as recounted in John's gospel, and it would have been familiar to churchgoers, since it forms part of the liturgy for Maundy Thursday.

Finally, the grim reminder of the certainty of death and the uncertainty surrounding the time of its arrival, which Everyman freely admits (119), is a further example of a sermon commonplace. The Oxford collection makes use of it four times, attributing it on three of those occasions to St Bernard (the Brepols CD Rom Library of Latin Texts yielded four instances of the conceit in his works);²¹ it receives elaborate treatment in the *Fasciculus Morum*,²² and its status as a proverb is confirmed by consultation of *Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Phrases*, compiled by the Whitings, where the relevant entry (Death, D96) takes up almost four columns of a large format book.²³

The picture of dependence on sermon and sermon-related literature is reinforced by looking at some examples of what I loosely call sermon

¹⁶ Cigman, *LS*, pp. 78/176 and 194/416.

¹⁷ Barnum, *D & P*, vol. 1 part 2, pp. 96/37, 273/98 and 303/6-7.

¹⁸ Ross, *MES*, 106/11; 271/37 – 272/4.

¹⁹ Knight, *Wimbledon's Sermon*, 1. 635

²⁰ Siegfried Wenzel, ed., *Fasciculus Morum*, pp. 97, 261, 283.

²¹ The Library of Latin Texts (CLCLT), series A and series B, Brepols publishers. Last updating: January 1st, 2009. In typing *incer**+mor**+hor** (for *incertus*, *mors* and *hora*) into the series A, I obtained over twenty instances of this commonplace.

²² For example, pp. 97-105.

²³ B. J. Whiting & H. W. Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings mainly before 1500* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1968), pp. 121-3.

rhetoric covering the following concepts: judgement, sin and death, some characteristics of which are highlighted below.

Judgement, whether personal or general, lies at the heart of Everyman's predicament, and it is naturally a major preoccupation of pulpit oratory. To judge from the verbal articulation favoured by the playwright, it would appear that the audience of the play was being fed a diet already served up in church. Everyman speaks on a number of occasions of the forthcoming judgement in terms of a *rekenynge* or an *acounte*, qualified by the adjectives *strayte* and *sure*. These formulations come straight out of the sermons of the period, and I offer five instances of their working there to insist on the typicality of their form:

g) reckoning (judgement)

[God] Calleth Everyman to a generall *rekenynge* (20)

And that he brynge with hym a sure *rekenynge* (70)

Also, I must gyve *rekenynge strayte* (333)

gyve a *strayte counte* without delaye (244)

To gyve a *strayte accounte* generall (406)

the dredfull day of dome, where that we schall zelde a passyng *streyste rekenyng* of owre ydelnes and of owre wrechednes. (Septuagesima, MS O, f. 245v).

for to answeere of þe goodis þat God haþ bytaken hym whanne þe day of *streyt rekenyng* shal come. (*Wimbleton's Sermon*, ed. Knight, l. 125).

Per þer þre bayleis þat shullen be clepid to þis *streyste rekenyng*. (*Wimbleton's Sermon*, ed. Knight, l. 138-9).

There schall be an *herde rekenyng* of tho curatis that hathe nott done away þer synnes and cawsed oper to do the same in like wise. (Trinity 9, MS O, f. 94r).

of euery maner ydell worde, whateuer it be, þat men or wymmen speken, þei shall *zeue a-countes* þer-of at þe Day of Dome. þis shall be a *streyste rekenyng* (Ross, *MES*, 28/15).

The audience of the play would also have been familiar with the extended use of allusions to the legal process, represented by Everyman's impossibility of finding a lawyer to defend him, and the corrolary, in the sermon, that sinful man's representative must be Christ, something that Everyman eventually learns:

For wete thou well thou shalte make none attournay (112) (make no one your advocate)

And moreover, as 3e see that an honeste persone may, be goodly menys, gete hym a good vokat before a iuge, so in like wyse we haue a *sure and a tru vokat* for vs before the Fader of heven, evermore redy to answeere for vs. (Sermon for the Ascension, MS O, f. 27r).

My examples illustrating ways in which the concept of sin may be articulated comprise two wholly conventional and ancient associations which should occasion no surprise: the bonds of sin, and sin as a disease.

As for the first, the play makes the concept dramatically vivid through the inertia of Good Dedes, incapable of rising because of her weakness, induced by Everyman's sin. The Oxford sermon collection comes late in a long line of sermons where the association is made, reaching back (in English) at least until the Blickling Homilies of probable tenth century date.²⁴ But that Old English homily is itself a witness to the influence of Latin patristic and Carolingian writers. Using the Brepols CD Rom of the Library of Latin Texts, I searched for the phrase *vincula peccatorum*, without the use of asterisks or other restrictive search devices, and was rewarded with thirty-four instances. Evidence culled from the sermon literature includes the following:

h) Sin

- bonds of sin

Good Deeds Here I ly, colde in the grounde.

Thy synnes have me so sore bounde (486-7)

Be this holy patriarke (John the Baptist) þat þus ley in bondis and thus in preson may be vnderstonde every synfull creature liyng in *þe bondis of synne* and wrechednesse of synful livyng. Advent 3, MS O, f. 191r.

when I was made *bonde to [þe fende] be custome of synne*, he bowȝte me withe his hert blode and made me fre. Epiphany Octave, MS O, f. 216v.

The firste is for the thraldome and bondage of synne *quia qui facit peccatum seruus est peccati*; 'For he that [doþe synne] is seruaunt and *bonde to synne*', *Luce iij^o et Iohannis octauo*. (John 8: 34). Lent 2, MS O, f. 217rv.

The other unremarkable association is that of sin and disease, especially leprosy which, as Carole Rawcliffe has recently reminded us, was a reality in late Medieval England.²⁵ But the association stretches back to the early years of Christianity. Leprosy is not alluded to either in the play or in the Oxford manuscript: the chosen term in both is *spot*, *spottis*, a term appropriated equally easily by other writers, as the inclusion of passages from the *Ayenbite* and *Dives and Pauper* make clear:

- sin as disease

Wasshe from me the *spottes* of vyces unclene

That on me no *synne* may be sene (546-7)

cast away the derke and mystye *spottis of synne*. (Advent 1, MS O, f. 181r).

[...] þat a man be inwardly in his sowle holy and clene witheowte eny *fowle spot of dedely synne*. (Lent 4, MS O, ff. 125rv).

²⁴ The word *bend* is repeatedly applied to Adam and Eve, the first sinners, in the Blickling Easter sermon. See the edition of Richard Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, EETS OS 58, 63 and 73, repr. as one volume (London: OUP, 1967).

²⁵ In *Leprosy in Medieval England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006).

þes god is y-cleped lyzt, Vor he clenzeþ þe onderstondinge of man of piesternesse of prede and of *spottes of zenne*. (*Ayenbyte of Inwit*, 200/21).

Pu shalt [...] been perfyght wytouten *spoot of dedly synne*. (Barnum, *D & P*, vol. 1, 66/16)

The two remaining categories in this section, 'Books of Good and Bad Deeds' and 'Renaming the Sins,' appear to have greater particularity and are decidedly more interesting. Both are amply illustrated in the exempla of the late Middle Ages, moral stories which were eagerly appropriated by orthodox preachers (but not by Lollards or reformers). The best illustration I know of the topos of the Books of Good and Bad Deeds, evoked in the play, comes in an elaborate narrative in the sermon for the twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity in the e Musaeo collection, the latter half of which is given below.

The story is taken ultimately from Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, completed in 731, and there (bk. 5, ch. 13) concerns a King of Mercia, one Cenred, and an unnamed nobleman in his service. The nobleman, though plagued with physical infirmity, stubbornly refuses to confess his sins despite the entreaties of the king, who evidently fears for the fate of his soul. Cenred then leaves the man for a short interval; on his return, he asks him how he is. The man's reply, as presented in the sermon, is as follows:

- Books of good and bad deeds

And he answerde to þe kyng and seyde: 'A, lorde, a lityll before þat 3e cam in, þer were two aungels here and þei browzt a litil boke withe them. And in þat litill boke they schewyd me all the good dedys that ever I dyd; *and that was but a few*. And anon as they had schewyd me þis boke, they went there wey. And anon after there com a grete company of fendys and they browzte withe hem a grete boke. And in that boke they schewyd me all the synnes and all the wickednes þat ever I dyd.' And anon as he had told his tale to the kyng, he fell in disperacion and seyde sekerly he myzt not be saued. Then cam a devyll and bett his body withe burnyng brondys of the fyre of hell. And so wrechidly he dyed, and his soule went to endlesse dampnacion for evermore. (Trinity 24, MS O, ff. 167rv).

which is directly relevant to these lines of the play:

[...] thy boke of counte with thee thou brynge [...]

For before God shalte thou answer and shewe

Thy *many badde dedes and good but a fewe* (104-08, see further, ll. 134, 187)

The story is noted extensively by Tubach in his *Index Exemplorum*; it was evidently very popular.²⁶

²⁶ Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, n° 1501.

The final parallel, that involving another exemplum, referred to by one commentator as ‘Renaming the Sins’ is, if anything, even more eloquent. The story involves a man and his seven daughters, interpreted naturally enough as the Devil and the Seven Deadly Sins. Because of the *fowle names* that these latter have – Pride, Avarice, Lechery, etc. – the man encountered difficulty in marrying them to men of the world, until he hit upon the idea of changing their names, thus making them more attractive to potential spouses. Pride is thus renamed as *Honestye*, Envy is recast as *ryztwysnes*, Wrath is transformed into *Virilitas*, *Manhode*, etc. In the play, God remarks, in a line which would have meant much more to a fifteenth-century audience than to today’s theatre-goers, that the sins are *Now in the worlde made commendable*. When the allegorical character Fellowship in the play declares his true colours (271-4), he is closely associated with womanizing and with excessive eating and drinking, the latter activity condemned by virtuous Christians as the sin of Gluttony, and it is precisely with the attribute of *Gode Felischipe* that Gluttony in the sermon exemplum is associated:

The vjth dow3ter [was callid] Gloteny, for the whiche many ar dampned and ben in hell. But bis name is turned nowadayes into a feyre name and is cald Good Felischipe. For he þat is a riatorwe and a revelowre and a grete hawnter of the taverne or the ale howse, and a grete waster of his gooddys, then is he callyd a good felow. (Trinity 5, MS O, f. 73v).

The numerous evocations of this story in sermons and related literature indicate that it was very popular.²⁷

To bring this investigation to a close, I draw attention to some examples of what may be termed the staple language of both *Everyman* and sermons. To be sure, the occurrences of these words and expressions which form the last part of the textual evidence presented here are not confined to these texts alone, but they figure prominently in both sermons and the play, and

²⁷ Further instances are noted and discussed by Anne Hudson, ed., *Two Wycliffite Texts*, EETS 301 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 100, to which may be added the allusion in *The Mirroure of the Worlde*, edited by Raymo *et al.*, l. 1469, and a somewhat different treatment in the *Ignorancia Sacerdotum*, preserved in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Theol. C. 57, f. 9r, which is inedited. The topos has been studied in the context of Chaucer’s poetry by Kathleen M. Ashley, ‘Renaming the Sins: A Homiletic Topos of Linguistic Instability in *The Canterbury Tales*,’ in *Sign, Sentence, Discourse: Language in Medieval Thought and Literature*, edited by Julian N. Wasserman & Lois Roney (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1989), 272-93. The development of the topos is also discussed by Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, pp. 93-4. For exempla which involve nine (or ten) daughters – the number found in the primitive versions of this tale – see Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, n°s 1452, 1589.

can only reinforce the strong impression that the latter is impregnated with sermon rhetoric.

The directive *take gode hede* was constantly on the lips of medieval churchmen, as the eight quotations, taken largely at random from my corpus, demonstrate.

i) good hede

First, from the Messenger's opening announcement: *Loke well and take good hede to the endynge* (11)

Then, from a veritable battery of sermon texts:

Behold wysely these erbis and treis þat þu seist spryng, and *take good hede* what þei bryng forthe. (Lent 1, MS O, f. 266v).

Good men and women, ʒe schal vnderstonde þat we owʒte as þis day for to *take good hede* to the wordys of þe holy apostyll Paule. (Easter, MS G, p. 257).

But *take good hede* of þe swete doctryne of owre sauowre Ihesu. (Trinity 11, MS O, f. 104r).

but *take good hede* vnto þese leprose men, how they disposed hem to the mercy of God. (Trinity 14, MS O, f. 118r).

But and þu wilt lerne the redy wey to the kyngdome of heven, then muste thu *take good hede* to the gospell of almyʒti God: *Et g[la]dium spiritus, quod est verbum Dei*. (Trinity 21, MS O, ff. 158rv).

if ʒe will be the very perfite childern of God, then muste ʒe *take good hede* to the very trowþe of Cristis prechyng. (Trinity 23, MS O, f. 164v).

Take we now hede to þis gospel [...] (Ross, *MES*, p. 134).

Now, sirs, *take we hede* to þe wordes of þe gospell. (Ross, *MES*, p. 140).

Similarly, the adjective *gay*, like its Dutch counterpart *moey*, is a heavily-charged term indicative of moral laxity, even sexual impurity.²⁸

There are numerous occurrences of the word in *Everyman*:

Loke well and take good hede to the endynge

Be you never so gaye (11-12)

Everyman, stonde still. Whether arte thou goynge

Thus gayly? Hast thou thy Maker forget? (85-6)

(Elckerlijc, waer sidi op weghe

Dus *moey?*, ll. 70-1)

Fyrst Felawshyp – he sayd he wolde with me go.

His wordes were very plesaunte and *gaye* (465-6)

Take this, body, for the synne of the flesshe!

Also thou delytest *to go gaye and fresshe*

And in the waye of dampnacyon thou dyd me brynge (613-15)

Sermon writers, too, reflect this shared perception:

²⁸ For enlightenment on the moral overtones of the Middle Dutch term, I am happy to acknowledge the help of Evelien Hauwaerts, a doctoral student at the Université de Poitiers.

For so many *gay bedis* and so litil deuocion saw never man [...] And many *pretendythe to go gay*, for to be magnyfyed in the worlde, thowe it be passyng there degre, the wiche cawsithe many an vntru man and many a woman to lyfe contrariously azenste the lawis of God. (Trinity 3, MS O, f. 61v-62r)

For wenyste þu for to haue heven withe herpyng, pypyng and dawnsyng here, and withe syngyng of thre men songis, or ells for to haue heven withe grete ease of þe body and withe grete welfare of bodily sustinaunce, or withe *riches and gay aray* and ledyng þi lyffe all in iolite? Where fyndiste þu þat ever eny man come to heven withe nowȝte? (Trinity 15, MS L, f. 126v)

The combination *gaye and fresshe* (614) in *Everyman* calls to mind the Wife of Bath's description of Jankin, her fifth husband, as *fressh and gay*, in a context utterly devoid of ambiguity:

[But] in oure bed he was so fressh and gay,
And therwithal so wel koude he me glose,
Whan that he wolde han my *bele chose*,
That thogh he hadde me bete on every bon,
He koude wyne agayn my love anon.²⁹

One final commonplace involves the dangers of procrastination, expressed in both play and sermon by the term *taryenge*:

[...] that he brynge with hym a sure rekenyng
Without delay or ony *taryenge* (71)

[...] Now have I on true Contrycyon
And let us go now without taryenge (650-1)

Confescion I seyde muste be redy witheowte tarryng [...]: Ne terd[e]s conuerti ad Dominum, et ne deferras de die in diem; subito enim venit ira Dei, et in tempore vindicte disperdet te; 'Tary not', seythe the Wyse Man, 'to be conuertyd vnto [þi] Lord God, and defer not long to be vnchargyd frome day to day, for sodenly cummethe the sentence of God to the synfull man.' (Sermon for Ash Wednesday, MS O, f. 257r).

Taryng..is whanne [god] sendyth þe wyll to amendyn þe of þi lyf & to do wele, þou spedyst þe nouȝt þerto, for þe feend byddyth þe abyden awhyle. (Brandeis, ed., *Jacob's Well*, p. 107/16).

A man þat hath synned scholde not tary fro ȝere to ȝere, ne frome day to day. As the prophete seythe: Ne terdes conuerti ad Dominum, et cetera; 'Tary not ne abyde not long to turne to thy good Lorde.' (Sermon for Lent 1, MS O, f. 270r).³⁰

On the basis of these observations, then, I suggest that, both thematically – the necessity for sacramental confession, the high office of the priesthood, etc. – and stylistically, *Everyman* fully reflects the pervading influence of late medieval preaching, an influence which helps us to define the play as a dramatic enactment of mainstream religious instruction which

²⁹ *The Canterbury Tales*, III (D), 508-12.

³⁰ The Brepols Library of Latin Texts reveals the popularity (over thirty instances recorded) of the biblical verse among prominent medieval preachers: Augustine, Caesarius of Arles, Peter the Venerable, etc.

occupied an important place in the minds of ordinary churchgoers in late fifteenth-century England.

Bibliography

1. Manuscripts (all of the second half of the fifteenth century)

- G Gloucester, Cathedral Library 22
L Lincoln, Cathedral Chapter Library 50 & 51 (one manuscript bound today as two)
O Oxford, Bodleian Library, e Musaeo 180

2. Primary sources

- Barnum, P. ed., *Diues & Pauper*, Early English Text Society 275, 280, 323, 3 vols (Oxford: OUP, 1976-2004).
Baratt, Alexandra, ed., *The Seven Psalms*, Early English Text Society 307 (Oxford: OUP, 1995).
Brandeis, A. ed., *Jacob's Well*, Early English Text Society OS 115 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Trübner, 1901).
Brown, Carleton, ed. *Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century*, 2nd. rev. ed (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952).
Cawley, A. C. ed., *Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays*, 2nd ed (London: Dent, 1957).
Cawley, A. C. ed. *Everyman* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1961).
Cigman, Gloria, ed., *Lollard Sermons*, Early English Text Society 294 (Oxford: OUP, 1989).
Davidson, Clifford et al. *Everyman and its Dutch Original* Elckerlijc (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007).
Deanesly, Margaret, *The Lollard Bible* (Cambridge: CUP 1920).
Erbe, Theodore, ed., *Mirk's Festial*, EETS ES 96 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Trübner, 1905).
Forshall, Josiah, & F. Madan ed., *The Holy Bible...made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and his Followers*. 4 vols. Oxford, 1850 and repr. AMS Press, New York. 1981.
Grisdale, D. M. ed., *Three Middle English Sermons from the Worcester Chapter Manuscript F. 10* (Kendal: Leeds School of English, 1939).
Hamer, Richard, ed., *Gilte Legende*, vol. 1, Early English Text Society 327 (Oxford: OUP, 2006).
Hanna, Ralph, ed., *Richard Rolle*, Early English Text Society 329 (Oxford: OUP, 2007).
Horner, Patrick; ed., *A Macaronic Sermon Collection from Late Medieval England: Oxford, MS Bodley 649* (Toronto: PIMS, 2006).
Horstmann, Carl, ed., *Yorkshire Writers*, 2 vols (London: Sonnenschein, 1895-6).
Hudson, Anne ed., *Two Wycliffite Texts*, Early English Text Society 301 (Oxford: OUP, 1993).

- Knight, I. K. ed., *Wimbledon's Sermon* (Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1967).
- Lumiansky, R. M. & David Mills, ed., *The Chester Mystery Cycle*, Early English Text Society, SS 3, 9 (Oxford: OUP, 1974, 1986).
- Morris, R. ed., *The Blickling Homilies*, Early English Text Society, OS 58, 63 & 73 (London, 1874), repr. in one volume (London: OUP, 1966).
- Morris, R. & Pamela Gradon, ed., *Dan Michel's Ayenbite of Inwit*, 2 vols., Early English Text Society OS 23, 278 (London & Oxford: Kegan Paul, Trench & Trübner; OUP 1886, 1979).
- Pickering, O. ed., *The South English Ministry and Passion*, Middle English Texts 16 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1984).
- Raymo, R. R., Elaine E. Whitaker & Ruth E. Sternglantz, ed., *The Mirroure of the Worlde*, Medieval Academy Books, No. 106 (Toronto: Toronto UP, 2003).
- Ross, Woodburn O, ed., *Middle English Sermons*, Early English Text Society 209 (London: OUP, 1940).
- Spalding, M. C. ed. *The Middle English Charters of Christ* (Bryn Mawr, Baltimore: J. H. Furst company, 1914).
- Trapp, J. B. et al. ed., *Medieval English Literature*, 2nd ed (New York & Oxford: OUP, 2002).
- Tubach, F. C. *Index Exemplorum: a Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1969).
- Wenzel, Siegfried, ed., and trans. *Fasciculus Morum* (University Park & London: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).
- Whiting, B. J. & H. W. Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings mainly before 1500* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1968).