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Scratching the Surface : Observations on the Compilation of some Late Middle English Sermons

Som men he [the Holy Spirit] 3af wyt with wordes to shewe,
To wynne with treuthe þat the world asketh,
As prechours and prestes and prentises of lawe.
They leely to lyue bi labour of tonge
And bi wit to wissen opere as grace hem wolde teche.
[*Piers Plowman* C. XXI. 229-33]¹

In recent years it has become increasingly apparent that the understanding of Middle English literary texts owes as much to those working in the field of textual criticism as it does to the exponents of well-established literary-critical techniques.² Literary works are now being re-assessed by study based upon a return to manuscript sources; the evidence of so-called “bad” manuscripts is no longer summarily dismissed; editors are urged to provide “open” editions.³ George Kane has also claimed that many editions of Middle English texts currently available are inadequate for one reason or another, to which may be

¹ Ed., Derek Pearsall, *Piers Plowman : the C-Text*, rev. ed, Exeter: University Press, 1994.

² See, for example, Derek Pearsall, ed., *Manuscripts and Texts: Editorial Problems in Later Middle English Literature*, Cambridge: Brewer, 1987; A. J. Minnis, ed., *Late-Medieval Religious Texts and their Transmission: Essays in Honour of A. I. Doyle*, Cambridge: Brewer, 1994. For a more general discussion of some important concerns see Derek Pearsall, “Editing Medieval Texts: Some Developments and some Problems”, in Jerome McGann, ed., *Textual Criticism and Literary Interpretation*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985, pp. 92-106.

³ For Old English Literature see, especially, Kevin Kiernan, *Beowulf and the Beowulf Manuscript*, rev. ed., Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1986. For Middle English, see the important essay by Derek Pearsall, “Texts, Textual Criticism and Fifteenth-Century Manuscript Production”, in Robert F. Yeager, ed., *Fifteenth-Century Studies*, Hamden, Connecticut: Shoe String Press, 1984, pp. 121-36, and the literature there cited. On the question of “bad” manuscripts see, especially, George Kane, “‘Good’ and ‘Bad’ Manuscripts: Texts and Critics”, in his *Chaucer and Langland: Historical and Textual Approaches*, London: Athlone Press, 1989, pp. 206-13. As defined by Professor Kane, an “open” edition is “one where the editor makes available all the evidence needed to check his conclusions and decisions”. See his essay “Outstanding Problems of Middle English Scholarship”, in *Chaucer and Langland*, pp. 228-41, at 229.

added the further observation that there exists a large number of such texts that have never been the object of editorial treatment at all.⁴

Among this mass of Middle English awaiting re-discovery, the prose sermon collections of the late-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries figure prominently. Even if it is true that most of the important ones are “now being edited”, it is equally undeniable that both the general reader and the potential editor would, at the present time of writing, be hard-pressed to gain a comprehensive, balanced picture of the genre.⁵ Today's potential editor has very few reliable guides as to the *textual* nature of the sermon literature other than those editions which are now in print. These are few in number and, though they may be said to be broadly representative of the genre as a whole, they give something of a distorted picture of what an editor can expect to find, and this for a number of reasons.

In the first place, of the collections currently available, a disproportionately large number are known to exist only in unique manuscript copies. Such is the case of the *Speculum Sacerdotale*, *Jacob's Well*, and the sermons preserved in London, BL MS Royal 18 B xxv, edited by W. O. Ross in 1940, and now universally referred to as “the Ross sermons”.⁶ The situation with regard to the texts edited recently by Dr. Gloria Cigman, though slightly better, is of much the same order.⁷ They give the impression that sermons, surviving individually⁸ or in collections, have by and large failed to come down to us in multiple copies. Worse, the decision taken by Theodor Erbe, editor of John Mirk's *Festial*, virtually to dispense with recording substantive variants to his chosen base text might lead an unwary reader to suppose that these variants are so infrequently met with and are of such a jejune quality that they are of little value to the editor

⁴ Kane, “Outstanding Problems”, p. 228.

⁵ Helen L. Spencer, “The Study of Medieval English Preaching: What Next?”, *Medium Aevum*, 59 (2000), 104-09, at 107. Dr Spencer's *English Preaching in the Later Middle Ages*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, is now the authoritative guide to the subject. Alan J. Fletcher, *Preaching, Politics and Poetry in Late-Medieval England*, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998, conveniently brings together many important studies. Among valuable earlier work one may cite G. R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England*, Cambridge: University Press, 1926 and, *idem*, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, Cambridge: University Press, 1933, 2nd ed Oxford: Blackwell, 1961.

⁶ These are available in the following editions: E. H. Weatherly, *Speculum Sacerdotale*, Early English Text Society, [hereafter EETS] 200, London: Routledge, 1936; Arthur Brandeis, *Jacob's Well: An English Treatise on the Cleansing of Man's Conscience*, EETS OS 115, London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trübner, 1901, and W. O. Ross, *Middle English Sermons*, EETS 209, London: Routledge, 1940.

⁷ See the discussion of the contents of the manuscripts by Jeremy Griffiths in her *Lollard Sermons*, EETS 294, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. xi-xxix.

⁸ On sermons in this category see Veronica O'Mara, “A Checklist of Unedited Late Middle English Sermons that Occur Singly or in Small Groups”, *Leeds Studies in English*, ns 19 (1988), 141-66.

and literary critic alike.⁹ Such a position, however, is untenable. Even when one examines the Wycliffite sermon cycle, the sole major collection which is witnessed in a large number of manuscripts and which has been expertly (and recently) edited, the nature and extent of substantive variation observable in the non-base manuscripts may not always reflect the situation to be found in other, orthodox, collections, copied out in less strictly-controlled circumstances.¹⁰ In what follows, I intend to focus on one of these orthodox collections in order to discover how some, at least, of the sermon compilers set about their work, and to suggest how such observations can be of real value in editorial work.

The sermons (68 in number) of the collection I have in mind are, in whole or in part, extant in seven fifteenth-century manuscripts which reflect three distinct stages in the development of the cycle which they form, a complete *De Tempore* cycle for Sundays and some major non-dominical feasts — Nativity, Circumcision, Epiphany, etc. — of the liturgical year. The earliest-known version is imperfectly witnessed in Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg.6.16 [MS C], an anthology of sermons, liturgical and non-liturgical, compiled, it would seem, by a member of the secular clergy for his personal use.¹¹ Dated to the second half of the century, it preserves twenty-one sermons, one a fragment, of which eight belong to the fully-expanded liturgical cycle.¹² Seven of these eight sermons¹³ are also to be found in a later collection, one preserving the intermediate stage in the growth of the text. Of this text, two manuscripts are known to exist, both in the British Library in London: Harley 2247 [MS H] and Royal 18 B xxv [MS R].¹⁴ The last-known stage in the growth of the text, preserving expanded versions of all the texts common to C and to HR, is

⁹ Th. Erbe, *Mirk's Festial*, EETS ES 96, London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trübner, 1905. For the complexity of the manuscript evidence surrounding this text see, in the first instance, Martin Wakelin, "The Manuscripts of John Mirk's *Festial*", *Leeds Studies in English*, ns 1 (1967), 93-118. An interesting case of textual distortion arising from Erbe's editorial method is highlighted by Susan Powell, "Lollards and Lombards: Late Medieval Bogeymen?", *Medium Aevum*, 59 (1990), 133-9.

¹⁰ See Anne Hudson and Pamela Gradon, eds., *English Wycliffite Sermons*, 5 vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986-93. There is good evidence to suggest that the Lollards, in their endeavours to disseminate their ideas, paid particular attention to the accuracy of scribal work, a phenomenon which cannot be said to be characteristic of orthodox collections. Indeed, in some cases, one might well argue the contrary.

¹¹ For texts and full discussion see Ariane Lainé, *Cambridge, University Library. MS Gg.6.16: édition critique et étude d'un outil de prédication moyen-anglais, accompagnées de notes et d'un glossaire*, 2 tomes, thèse de doctorat, Poitiers, 2000.

¹² Namely: Nativity, Circumcision, Epiphany, Sexagesima, Quinquagesima, Ash Wednesday, Lent 2 and Lent 3. Since C's Ash Wednesday sermon provides the source for two sermons for the same feast in the fully-expanded cycle, the count should properly be nine.

¹³ Or eight of the nine, depending on the mode of calculation.

¹⁴ For the text and copious comment see Susan Powell, *A Critical Edition of the Temporale Sermons of MSS Harley 2247 and Royal 18 B XXV* (unpublished Ph.D dissertation, University of London, 1980) where, pp. 35-43, she establishes the superiority of H over R. Of the above-mentioned sermons, it is that for the Epiphany which is wanting in HR.

witnessed in four late fifteenth-century manuscripts: Oxford, Bodleian Library, e Musaeo 180 [MS O]; Lincoln, Cathedral Library 50 and 51 [MS L]; Gloucester, Cathedral Library 22 [MS G]; and Durham, University Library, Cosin V.iv.3 [MS D].¹⁵ Unusually, all four are the work of the same scribe. The three distinct groups which these seven manuscripts form will be referred to as: C, then HR, and finally, OLGD.

I have selected this material precisely because it allows one to see, as the editions mentioned earlier do not, how sermon compilers set about the task of reproducing the texts of their exemplars. It may be argued that the evidence they furnish should not be seen as reflecting typical features of compositional practice, since the manuscripts as a body do not, on the whole, provide us with such a rich vein of comparable material. However, the trends observable here do tally with those witnessed by a major revision of John Mirk's *Festial* (extant, *inter alia*, in MSS HR), and it may reasonably be supposed that subsequent adaptations of that influential text — the sermons of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Greaves 54, for example — will reveal similar compositional concerns and procedures.¹⁶ An examination of some representative extracts from the seven manuscripts under discussion will reveal what those concerns and procedures were. I begin with the opening of the Ash Wednesday sermon in C, compared to the corresponding passage in the other manuscripts, represented by H, then by O:

MS C

/fol. 51^r/ Worschypull frendys, 3e xall fast on Wednusdeye. As the commendabyll constitution off holy faders off holy chyrche hathe ordeynyd, it is called *Caput Ieiunii*. The principall and the begynnyng off that holy faste þat oure soffereyne saveore Criste Ihesu haloed in hys manhode qwhan he fastyd xl deys and xl nyghytys, 3iffyng vs exawmpull to doe the same to make vs worthye and /51^v/ abell in clennes off lyffe to welcum þat goode Lorde into owre sawles, receyevyng hys precious body on Ester deye.

MS H¹⁷

Ryght worshipfull freendis, ye shall faste on Wednesday as þe comendable constitution of Holy Chirch hathe ordeyned. For þat day is called "Caput Ieiunij," the principall and begynnyng of þat holy fast þat oure souereyn saviowre Criste Iesu halowed in his manhode whan he fastid xl days and xl nyghtes, 3evyng vs example to do þe same and make vs worthi in clennes of life to welcum oure mercifull saviowre Criste Iesu and to resceyve his precious body on Estir Day.

¹⁵ Lincoln 50 and 51 are one manuscript bound today in two separate bindings. The Durham manuscript, though not physically a fragment, has only 12 of the 68 items which form the fully-expanded version. For reasons which can here only be stated, not demonstrated, the text in this late group closest to the early stages of development (as seen in C and HR), is that of MS O. All quotations will, therefore, be from O, unless otherwise stated.

¹⁶ On the persistent use of the *Festial* see Alan J. Fletcher, "Unnoticed Sermons from John Mirk's *Festial*", *Speculum*, 55 (1980), 514-22. The HR collection has been described by Alan J. Fletcher and Susan Powell, "The Origins of a Fifteenth-Century Sermon Collection: MSS Harley 2247 and Royal 18 B XXV", *Leeds Studies in English*, ns 10 (1978), 74-96.

¹⁷ Powell, *A Critical Edition*, p. 182.

MS O

/fol. 251^r/ Frendys, 3e schal fast vpon Wednysday next commyng as þe laudabyll custome of holy chyrche hath ordende. For that day is calde *Capud ieiunii*, the hede, principall and begynnyng of that holy fast that owre soveren sauiovre Criste Ihesu halowed in his manhed when he fastid xl dayes and xl nyztis, 3evyng exsamyll to [all vs to]¹⁸ do the same, and make vs worthy in clenness of lyfe to welcum hym and resevyve his precius body in forme of brede vpon Ester Day. And therfore seyth Criste in the gospell as that day: *Cum ieiunatis, nolite fieri sicut ypocrite tristes*; ‘When /251^r/ 3e faste, [n]yll ye be [made] as ypocritis sorowfull?’ *Exterminant enim facies suas, vt pareant hominibus ieiunantes*; ‘For they put owte þer facis owte of kyndly termys þat þei seme fastyng to men.’ As who seythe, they faste for they wolde be named holy, and so they schewe owtewarde that they be holy in fasting because they wolde be commendyd in þat vertu. To soche pepyll spekythe Criste in the same gospell folowyng, and seythe thus: *Amen dico vobis, receperunt mercedem suam*; ‘Truly I sey to yow, they haue resecyvid there mede.’

The sermon opens with an explanation of what the feast signifies, and the accounts in C and H are virtually identical. H omits three short phrases from C (*holy faders* (1. 2), *and abell* (7) and *owre sawles* (8), while elaborating on *goode Lorde* (7-8) and preferring a more hypotactic *to resevyve* to the earlier *receyevyng* (8). The situation in O is different, however, since the writer has decided that what constitutes a rather general comment on fasting (in C and H) should be made to function more specifically in its liturgical setting. This he achieves by quoting from the gospel reading for that day, Matt. 6: 16-21, by translating part of it, and by explicating what he translates. The Latin, though brief, is given correctly, and it may be thought that the writer consulted a copy of the Vulgate in the constitution of his expanded version. The likeliest setting for such work is a library of some description.

Confirmation of these compositional traits is readily available in the other sermons which our manuscripts share. A convenient example is found in the sermon for the Nativity in a passage which seeks to explain the beneficial effects of the birth of Christ on mankind. The relevant extracts are as follows:

MS C

/fol. 39^r/ [before the birth of Christ] all mankynde was bareyn off grace and seke ffor syn, bot nowe in the spryngyng off the blyssyd byrthe off Criste Ihesu, mankynde is deliuyrde ffrom all sekene off dampnacion, the qwycche gracious lorde is verre son of ryghȝtwesnes as the Wyse Man wrytythe: *Sol iusticie per omnia prospexit et gloria Domini plenum est opus eius*; ‘Owre soffereyne Lorde Cryste Ihesu is verre sun off ryghȝtwesnes, beheldyng all thyngys, and hys ioyfull werkys be fful off grace’, *Ecclesiastici 42^o*.

MS H¹⁹

biforne Cristes birth all mankynde was bareyn of grace and sike for syn, but now in þe springyng, þat is to sey, in the blessid birth of Goddes son, Criste Ihesu, mankynde is deliuyered from all sekene of dampnacion, which mercifull Lorde is verray son off rightwisnes. *Ecclesiastici 42: Sol iusticie per omnia prospexit et gloria Domini plenum est opus eius*; ‘Owre souereyn savior Criste Ihesu is verray son of rightwisnes, all thynges beholding, and his ioyfull werkis be full of grace.’

¹⁸ Emendations to O from the non-base manuscripts are enclosed throughout, as is customary, in square brackets.

¹⁹ Susan Powell, ed., *The Advent and Nativity Sermons from a Fifteenth-Century Revision of John Mirk's Festial*, Middle English Texts 13, Heidelberg: Winter, 1981, pp. 102-03.

MS O

/fol. 202^v/ all mankynde the whiche was baren of grace and sore seke in synne, now in þe spryngyng [of þe] blessid incarnation of Ihesu Criste [is delyverde from all sekene of dampnacion], þe whiche [gracius Lorde] is the very sonne of ryȝtwisnes, as holy scripture testifyethe, *Ecclesiastici quadragesimo secundo: Sol iusticie per omnia prospexit, et gloria Domini plenum est opus eius*. That is to sey: 'þe sonne of ryȝtwisnes lyȝttenyng all þing, and þe werke of hym is full of his glorie.'

Moreover, seynt Iohn rehersithe in þe gospell and seythe: *Vita erat lux hominum*; 'The lyffe was the lyȝte of man.' *Et lux in tenebris lucet, et tenebre eam non comprehenderunt*; 'And þe lyȝte schynethe in derkenes, and de[r]kenessis comprehendyd not it.' As who seythe, þu þat /203^f/ art in þe derkenes of synne, þu mayst not þen resceyue the lyȝt of grace that God of his goodnes hathe ordende to all mankynde. *Erat lux vera, que illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum*; 'There was a very lyȝt the whiche lyȝtne the every man þat commethe into þis worlde.' So þus I haue prevyd that owre soueren sauour Criste Ihesu, be his blissed natiuite, haþe lyȝtned vs withe his good grace, the whiche is to vs a comfortabyll werke.

The point of the quotation from the Book of Ecclesiasticus, 42: 16 (which all manuscripts preserve), is that the light of the sun / Son²⁰ heals mankind of the sickness of sin. Not content to respect the limits of the teaching in his exemplar (as reflected by C and H), the compiler of O makes a logical association between *sol* (Ecclus. 42: 16) and *lux* (John 1: 4) to form a very pertinent extension to the exegesis, one that echoes an earlier comparison of Christ to the light of the sun. In C, the passage reads as follows:

/fol. 39^f/ ryghȝt so owre soffereyn Lorde Criste Ihesu is callyd the wysdam off thee ffadure in heven by the grete schynynge influence vnto creatures, in as myche as all thyngys by made by hym: *Per ipsum omnia ffacta sunt, Iohannis primo*.

The writer ends this section by quoting John 1: 3, and it may be argued that it is this verse that induced the compiler of O to develop his teaching by incorporating the verse following this: *Erat vera lux*, etc.

What these extracts plainly show is that texts produced in what I like to term manuscript culture evolve in the course of their transmission. They are not merely subject to obviously unintentional scribal error of a routine kind (which it is an editor's duty to identify and correct), they are deliberately modified, expanded, so extensively that comparison of the early version of one text with that of its later manifestation(s) reveals the existence of at least two texts, not one. Recognition of such textual evolution or, if one prefers, textual variability, must be considered as a contributing factor to the working out of editorial principles and procedures. Thus, there is no warrant for suppressing the two extended passages in O, discussed above, on the grounds that they do not form part of the primitive version in CHR, since the latter is being transformed into another, distinct text by the compiler of O.

Textual variability manifests itself equally in cases where scribes decide, for whatever reasons, to make extensive cuts in the reproduction of material in

²⁰ This play on words is a commonplace of medieval sermons and devotional writings in general.

their exemplars. In many cases it is clear that such editing must be regarded as deliberate since the “seams”, as it were, of the excised sections are only apparent after a comparison with the longer, original version is made.

This may be conveniently illustrated by examining the make-up of the first sermon in the collection, that for the first Sunday in Advent. Extant in three MSS, O, L and D, it takes as its theme the gospel reading for that day, Matt. 21: 1-11, in which Christ directs two of his disciples thus: *Ite in castellum quod contra vos est, et statim invenietis asinam alligatam, et pullum cum ea: solvite, et adducite mihi, etc.* The two disciples in the *moralle vnderstondyng* (fol. 178^r) of the gospel represent God's creation of man and his subsequent redemption, an equation the sermon writer illustrates by working in an elaborate *exemplum* about a Castle of Wisdom, the *Castrum Sapience* (fol. 178^v), of which all trace has been removed by the scribe of the exemplar of D. So skilfully is it done that the reading of D in isolation shows no sign whatever of disturbance.

In MS O the beginning and end of the first section of the *exemplum* is introduced as follows. The preacher is speaking of the purpose of the Incarnation:

/fol. 178^r/ [Christ] bow₃te man with his precius pascion to bryng al mankynde to þe castel of heven. Ensampil of this castel we haue in *Gestis Romanorum*, that þer was in the olde tyme a castell þat was calde *Castrum Sapience*, the castell of wisdom; and in the entryng of this castell there was deput iij scheldis... */179^v/* *Moraliter*. Gostly to owre purpose. Be this castell²¹ is vnderstonde þe kyngdome of heven, the whiche is a suer castell and a perfite plesaunt abiding [...]

Thereafter, the body of the *exemplum* is taken up with the spiritual significance of the three mentioned shields. Corresponding to the above passage, the writer of the sermon preserved in D has this:

/fol. 2^r/ bow₃te man withe his precius passion for to bring al mankynde into the castell of heven, the whiche is a suer castell and a perfytt plesaunt abydyng [...]

Any suspicion that the omission is due to a fortuitous ‘eye-skip’ (on *heven*) must, in the light of the remaining evidence, be resisted. After a passage in which the preacher remarks on the difficulty man has in reaching heaven, he resumes the narrative of his *exemplum* thus:

/fol. 180^v/ Therefore and 3e purpose to enter into this castell aforeseyde, þat is to sey, [in]to the perpetuall ioye, þe kyngdome of heven, then muste 3e haue ever in 3owre remembraunce these iij scheldys aforeseyde.

in which reference is made of the *Castrum Sapience*, as is apparent from the mention of the shields. For the writer of MS D, however, it is the *castellum* of the gospel that is meant. Compare his version of the above passage:

/fol. 3^r/ Therefore and 3e purpose for to enter into þe castell aforeseyde, þat is to sey, into the perpetuall ioyes of þe kyngdom of heven, then muste 3e have evermore in 3owre remembraunce the departyng owte of þis worlde

The next two sections of the *exemplum* in O are self-contained units, beginning: *The secunde þat I spake of..* (fol. 183^r) and *The therde schelde þat 3e*

²¹ That is, the castle of the *exemplum*, not that of the gospel reading.

schall haue in mynde... (184^v), and these are simply omitted by the redactor of D. However, at the end of the sermon where the writer of O recalls a detail of his edifying tale — the word *medefull* is said to appear on the third shield (fol. 179^v): *The therde I seyde it schall be passyng medefull, þat is, to hem þat schall stonde in þe wey of saluacion...*(185^v) — the preacher of MS D makes the necessary substitution: *And to all tho that schall stonde in the wey of saluacion...* (fol. 6^v). The sermon in D is, as a result of this careful surgery, shorter by about one third than the version in O. Perhaps the cuts were motivated by nothing other than the desire to be brief, or briefer. Whatever the explanation, it is clear from this Advent sermon, and from the earlier instances of textual expansion discussed above, that scribes assumed active, critical editorial roles in the constitution of their sermon collections, a fact that a modern editor will have to take into consideration when going about his own editorial business.

Turning now to an equally important ingredient in any discussion of sermon composition, it will have previously been noticed that one feature of scribal activity which emerged from an examination of the Ash Wednesday and Nativity sermons above was the deliberate inclusion of Latin material absent from the scribes' immediate sources, a practice which points to a desire to impart authority to a text, to invest it with a more learned character than it otherwise would have possessed. This predilection for the written word also directs attention to the question of the identification of the sources these churchmen turned to in their sermon writing, and it is the second major question that I would like to address in this study.

Even a cursory glance at the sermon cycle preserved in O (and other manuscripts) will quickly establish the prominence of Latin source material in the constitution of the text. Patristic, (rarely Carolingian) or later medieval authors are often cited by name before their words are quoted. The following formulation — on the foul nature of the human body — made by the writer of the sermon for the fourth Sunday in Lent (fol. 285^v) is utterly typical of sermon literature in general, both in sentiment and in compositional practice: “Therefore seythe seynt Barnard: *Homo nichil aliud est quam saccus stercorum et esca vermium*; A man as to þe body is noþing ells but as it were a sakfull of dong or wormys mete.”

The identification here is not hard to make, since the work known as the pseudo-Bernard *Meditationes Piissimae* is a staple of medieval preaching, both in Latin and in the vernacular(s).²² More problematical is the necessary distinction to be made between the ultimate and the immediate sources. By this I mean that an English preacher may quote, say, St. Augustine or St. Bernard, not from direct acquaintance with their writings, but through borrowing from an intermediary text in which the elements of the original formulation have been

²² Ed. J-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Paris: 1844-64, vol. 184, col. 485 ff.

assembled. An incisive example of this phenomenon is found in the first of the two sermons for Ash Wednesday where the writer draws a parallel between the legendary seven-headed serpent, the hydra, and the seven deadly sins. The English writer says this:

MS O

/fol. 256^v/ Isodorus tellythe of a serpent þat is calde Id[r]a²³ þat hathe vij heddys. And the nature and kynde of þis serpent is if one hedde be smeton of of hym, in þe same place schall growe þe h[e]de²⁴ aþene. And so þer may no man slee þat serpent but if case be þat all the heddis be smeton of at onys. Ryȝt so in lyke wyse may synne well be calde þe venomose [serpent]²⁵ Id[r]a²⁶ þat hathe vij heddys, that is to sey, the vij dedely synnys, *que capitalia dicuntur*. For if þe synner smyte of one hede be confesion of his dedely synnes and hyde [þe t]other²⁷ within hym, anon growythe þer mo vycis and synnes. Wherefore he þat wyll be purged clene, he muste confesse hym of all his synnes that he may sey with Daudid þe holy prophete: *Delictum meum cognitum tibi feci*; ‘Lorde, I haue made my synne opyn to þe.’

Figure of this, *Secundo Regum 3^o capitulo*. When Kyng [Daudid]²⁸ had synned in avowtre with Barsabe, Nathan the prophete blamyd hym and reprevyd hym of his synne be þe commawndement /257^r/ of God. Then Daudid þe kyng repented him of his synne and came downe frome þe troone of his concistory and mekely sat vpon þe erthe, and with grete contriscion he tolde opynly all his synnes and all his lyfe, and seyde: *Peccauit*. Then owre mercyfull Lorde Criste Ihesu sent aþene Nathan the prophete to Kyng Daudid, seyng: *Transtulit peccatum tuum Deus a te, et non morieris*; ‘Owre Lorde,’ quod Nathan, ‘seythe that for thi grete contriscion he haþe forþeven the þi synnes, and þu schall not dye gostly.’

It seems reasonable to suppose on this reading that the preacher would have us believe that he first consulted a text by Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636) on the nature of the hydra, then drew the parallel with the Old Testament story of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11: 3ff). But there is good evidence to show that he did nothing of the sort. That evidence is contained in a text, an intermediary text, known as the *Fasciculus Morum*, a fourteenth-century Franciscan aid to preaching which enjoyed some popularity among English sermon writers of the fifteenth century, and which the man responsible for the expanded texts of the OLGD cycle turned to on a number of occasions. On this occasion, in a section which discusses the virtues of a good confession,²⁹ we read:

Refert enim Ysidorus de quodam serpente nomine ydra habente capita septem, cuius natura est quod si unum capud per se abscindatur, quod tria alia continuo succrescunt, nec quovis modo interfici potest quousque omnia simul eius capita auferantur. Reuera sic est de peccatore qui forte habet in se septem mortalia peccata, que eciam capitalia dicuntur. Unde bene postest dici ydra serpens ille venenosus habens septem capita, qui

²³ Idra] Ida O

²⁴ hede] hode O

²⁵ serpent] omitted O

²⁶ Idra] Ida O

²⁷ 3e tother] iij other O

²⁸ Daudid] omitted O

²⁹ This Ash Wednesday sermon begins: *Confescion is a gostly purgacion of synne*, announcing its main theme. The whole of this sermon is based on the *Fasciculus Morum*, an identification made by Susan Powell, *A Critical Edition*, pp. 404 ff.

si confiteatur tantum unum peccatum mortale ut sic illud caput abscondat, vel forte omnia preter unum, revera propter illud unum dimissum paulatim succrescunt plura. Et si vult bene purgari, oportet quod omnia simul tollat, ut possit dicere Domino illud Psalmi: *Delictum meum cognitum tibi feci* [...] In cuius figura cum rex David adulterium cum Bersabee commisisset et cum super hoc a propheta Nathan redargueretur, de throno concistorii descendit et super terram sedit ac peccata sua coram omnibus confiteri non erubuit. Unde propheta confestim audivit hec verba a Deo de illo: Transtulit Dominus peccatum tuum a te; non morieris.

Identifying sources, immediate or ultimate, from which the sermon writers drew their material is clearly of considerable importance in the editorial process. It gives the editor a yardstick by which to measure his author's intentions and it may, in some cases, serve to identify scribal error where no error is in any way suspected. A striking example of just such a phenomenon is furnished by the very same Ash Wednesday sermon discussed immediately above. It comes at a point where the preacher, still relying on the *Fasciculus Morum*, compares a sinner to a hart, thus:

MS O

/fol. 257^r/ Wherefore a synner muste haue þe properte of an hert. For an hert, when he hath the fowþten wythe eny venomus best, forsothe forthewithe he rynneth to a feyre fressche /257^r/ rynnynge water wherein he wyll bathe hym and wassche hym and refressche hym. Ryȝte so every synner þat is venomyd wythe dedly synne, he muste rynne to þe fressche [rynnynge]³⁰ water of confesion and þer wassche hym till he be clenysyd frome all maner of venome of dedely synne, þat he may sey wythe Daud: *Sicut cervus desiderat ad fontes aquarum, ita desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus*; 'As þe hert desyrethe þe water þat spryngethe of wells or of revers, so, Lord,' quod Daud, 'my sowle desyrethe to the.'

The nature of an hert is also when he is schot wythe an arow, if he may escape, he gothe and etyþe an erbe that is cald betanye, whose vertu is, as leches seyne, that it wyll draw owte þe venom and hele þe wounde.

This is a fairly close translation of the following passage. The hart:

qui postquam pugnando hauserit venenum, velociter properat ad fontem, ubi se balneat, lavat, et refollicat. Revera sic nos ad confessionem oportet festinare et ibi nos ab omni veneno peccati mundare; *Psalmista: Sicut cervus desiderat ad fontes aquarum, ita desiderat anima mea, etc.* Et nota quod natura cervi est quando sagittatur, si evadere potest, querit statim herbam bitonic, cuius natura est secundum medicos ferrum extrahere et sanatur.³¹

Among the substantive variants to the text in O, one is particularly worthy of notice. Where, towards the end of the passage, reference in O (and L) is made to the power of the herb betony to draw out *þe venom*, manuscript G reads *iron*. Comparison of English and Latin reveals that OL are in error,³² and that G preserves the correct reading, corresponding as it does to *ferrum extrahere*. The identification of the source makes possible, therefore, the correction of a sequence of text — *draw owte þe venom and hele þe wounde* — which, in the

³⁰ rynnynge] omitted O

³¹ Siegfried Wenzel, ed. *Fasciculus Morum; a Fourteenth-Century Preacher's Handbook* (University Park, Pennsylvania & London: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989, p. 472.

³² The scribe of the exemplar was, in the writing of the word *venom*, probably influenced by the earlier mention of poison — *hauserit venenum*.

absence of any such source, would be unlikely to raise the suspicions of even the most diligent of editors. As it stands, the passage in O makes perfectly good sense, and when base texts give good sense, editors generally leave them undisturbed.

Though English sermon writers have constant recourse to Latin authors and to preaching aids like the *Fasciculus Morum*, it would be wrong to think that these constitute their sole sources of instruction and edification. By the middle of the fifteenth century, there was evidently sufficient English material in circulation to satisfy some, at least, of the preachers' needs. The most striking and most unusual manifestation of this reliance on the vernacular is the use made of the later version of the Wycliffite Bible (WLV) in the translations of the gospel and epistolary readings of the liturgical year. Although by no means typical, the OLGD group makes extensive use of it, as any number of passages will show. For the purposes of illustration, I take the lection for the second Sunday after Easter, John 10: 11-16, the parable of the Good Shepherd. The text of the sermon is given first, followed by that from WLV:

MS O

[fol. 4^v] Ego sum pastor bonus. "I am a good scheperde. A good scheperde 3evithe his lyfe for his schepe. But an hyred hyne, that is not þe very scheparde, whose be not þe schepe not his owne, he sethe a wolfe comyng and he leyvithe the schepe and fleithe. And þe wolfe ravisschethe and disparblythe þe schep. And the hyzred hynde flethe for he is an hyred hyne, and the schepe perteyneth not to hym. I am a good scheparde and I know my schepe and my schepe know me. As the fader knowithe me I know the fader, and I put my lyfe for my schepe. I haue other schepe þat be not of this folde; it behouithe me to bryng /S^r/ hem togeder; and they schal here my voyce. And it schall be made oo folde and oo scheparde." This is the gossell as *litteraliter*.

[WLV]: I am a good shepperde. A good shepperde 3eueþ his lyf for his sheep. But an hyrid hyne (*Vulg.* mercenarius), and þat is not þe shepperde, whos ben not þe sheep his owne, seep a wolf comyng, and he leeuip þe sheep and fleep, and þe wolf rauisshep and disparpliþ þe sheep. And þe hirid hyne fleep for he is an hyrd hyne, and it perteyniþ not to hym of þe sheep (*Vulg.* non pertinet ad eum de ovibus). I am a good shepperde and I knowe my sheep and my sheep knowen me. As þe fadir haþ knowen me and I knowe þe fadir, and I putte my lyf for my sheep. I haue oþere sheep þat ben not of bis foolde; it behouip me to brynge hem togidere; and þei shulen heere my vois, and it shal be maad oo foolde and oo shepperde.³³

The sermon follows the biblical text so closely that it is inconceivable that it came about in any way other than copying. Although the vocabulary used is unremarkable, the bible translators have opted for a number of distinctive formulations in their endeavours to remain as faithful to the original as possible, formulations which two writers are very unlikely to have hit upon independently. Such, I believe, is the case of *whose be not þe schepe not his owne* and *the schepe perteyneth not to hym*, both of which reflect the syntax of the Latin and which, at the same time, show slight variation when compared to

³³ J. Forshall & F. Madden, ed., *The Holy Bible [...] made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and his followers*, 4 vols, Oxford, 1850.

the Wycliffite text, but which nevertheless preserve the distinctive quality of the latter. Other, independent, translations of this lection are quite different: consider this one from the corresponding sermon in the Royal 18.B.xxiii collection:

I am, he seȝþ a good herdman. For a good herdman ȝeueþ is own soule for is shepe; and an herdman þat haþ no shepe of hys own propur, when þat he seeys þe wolfe com, he flees, and þan þe wolfe peryshesh þe shepe and skaterysh hem all. But I am a good herdman, he seys, þat ȝeueþ my soule for my shepe. And þei knowe me well and foloweþ me, and I knowe hem.³⁴

The corresponding piece in the Wycliffite sermon cycle similarly makes use of the term *herde* for *pastor* in a translation which, as is the case throughout this cycle, makes no use of WLV whatsoever.³⁵

This is a curious circumstance, since it is only natural to suppose that Lollard apologists and sympathisers would have relied heavily on a translation which they themselves were responsible for. But such is not the case. Appropriation of the translation by more orthodox churchmen is, it would seem, of infrequent occurrence, and the incorporation of its text into the OLGD group sermons thus unusual.

This perplexing situation highlights the need for a thorough investigation into the phenomenon of biblical translation in England at the end of the Middle Ages. The persistent demands for the Englishing of scripture associated with the Lollards, and the equally adamant refusal of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to comply are well-known.³⁶ Mere possession of a book or books in English was enough to direct the suspicion of heresy towards the owner. But the position of the Wycliffite Bible resists easy elucidation: for such a controversial text, one which might be thought to have circulated in a climate of secrecy and concealment, a remarkably large number — over 250 — of manuscript copies have survived to the present day.³⁷ Furthermore, it is the product of the Lollard movement, yet its text is scrupulously orthodox in content, the aim of the translators being to produce as faithful a readable version to the original Latin as possible. At the moment of writing, it is impossible to gauge the extent of its influence in the composition of preaching materials, simply because so few of the sermon collections are available in editions which meet the requirements of modern scholarship.

This notwithstanding, it is possible to identify a number of specific instances in which English source material of a less controversial nature is being

³⁴ Fd. Ross, *Middle English Sermons*, pp. 137-8.

³⁵ Ed. Anne Hudson, *English Wycliffite Sermons*, vol. 1, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983, p. 438.

³⁶ Extracts from relevant texts are conveniently set out in Anne Hudson, ed., *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*, Cambridge: University Press, 1978.

³⁷ See Conrad Lindberg, "The Manuscripts and Versions of the Wycliffite Bible: a Preliminary Survey", *Studia Neophilologica*, 42, (1970), 333-47.

exploited by sermon writers. An examination of the OLGD cycle shows, for example, that five items have been borrowed directly from Mirk's *Festial*, viz: De Questionibus (G, pp. 233-9), Maundy Thursday (G, 239-44), Good Friday (G, 244-50), Holy Saturday (G, 251-5) and Ascension (G, 332-41). The fact that they are all preserved in only one manuscript and that they are all, save one, designed for delivery during Holy Week, suggests (though it by no means proves) that there may have been a dearth of suitable preaching material for that period in the liturgical calendar.

Furthermore, indebtedness to one other celebrated English sermon is witnessed in the pieces for Septuagesima (O, fol. 242-7^v) and the ninth Sunday after Trinity (O, 92^v-97^v), both of which are copies, with some additions and omissions, of parts of Thomas Wimbledon's St. Paul's Cross sermon on the theme *Redde rationem villicacionis tue* (Luke 16: 2), preached at St. Paul's Cross, London, around 1388. In the case of the sermon for Septuagesima Sunday, it is even possible to pin-point which recension of Wimbledon's text was used. The theme of that text is that the three estates — *presthode, knythyode and laborers* (O, fol. 243) — should diligently fulfil their obligations to one another, for:

ryȝte as he lyvyde here witeowte traveyle, so schal he lacke there the rewarde that he schold haue in heven, þat is þe endles ioye. As he was here lyvyng not after his astate acordyng to his degre ne ordur, so schall he be put into the place there as 'No ordur is but everlastyng errowre', and þat is in hell, seythe lobe, *sexto decimo capitulo*.

where the words quoted in English render *nullus ordo, sed sempiternus horror habitat* (Job 10: 22). The preacher's *everlastyng errowre* thus makes poor sense, and the majority of the thirteen manuscript copies known today of Wimbledon's text preserve the obviously correct reading: *horroure*.³⁸ However, five of those manuscripts read *erroure* at this point, indicating that the OLGD compiler was working from that well-represented recension, and that the fault is not attributable to him. Emending the OLGD text here to bring it into line with the majority reading would, in my opinion, be inappropriate.

Other vernacular texts would also appear to have been popular with English preachers. One such is Richard Lavynham's *Litil Tretys* on the seven deadly sins, a text which, although unsuitable for recitation as a sermon, was capable of adaptation to that form "as the Ashmole [Oxford Bodleian] 750 copy shows".³⁹ Equally significant is the fact that the *Tretys* is not infrequently found in the company of sermons or similar material of a pastoral nature in some of the fourteen manuscripts in which it is today known to survive. In addition to

³⁸ Knight, Ione Kemp, ed., *Wimbledon's Sermon, Redde Rationem Villicacionis Tue: A Middle English Sermon of the Fourteenth Century*, Duquesne Studies, Philological Series 9, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1967, p. 66.

³⁹ Van Zutphen, J. P. W. M., ed., *A Litil Tretys on the Seven Deadly Sins by Richard Lavynham, O. Carm.*, Rome: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1956, p. xii.

Ashmole 750 these include: Harley 211, Harley 2383, Douce 60 and Leeds, Brotherton 501. Preachers evidently regarded it as a useful quarry. It provides the OLGD compiler with over half of his material making up the sermon for the seventh Sunday after Trinity, as the following extracts show. The sermon is given first:

MS O

/fol. 80^v/ A grete clerke, *et est Sanctus Thomas secundum quosdam vel Albertus secundum alios, in Compendio Theologie, libro 181^v tercio*, the vij dedly synnes, he seythe, are likened to vij dyvers beestis, as pride to a lyon, covetise to an vrchon, slowthe to an asse, gloteny to a beere, wrathe to a wolfe, envy to an hownde, lechery to an hogg or a swyne. Of whiche figurs and ensampyls I thynke to towche a litill at þis tyme of eche of hem, and then I bequethe 3ow to almy3ti God.

which can only be a close copy of:

As towching þe ferst mateer an holy man wrytith in hys book, *et est Sanctus Thomas secundum quosdam vel Albertus secundum alios in compendio theologie, libro 3^o*. The seuene dedly synnys, he sayth, be lyknyd to seuene sundry bestis: as pride to þe lyon, couetyse to þe vrchoun, wrathe to þe wolf, enuye to þe hound, slowthe to þe asse, glotonye to a bere and lecherye to a swyn. Of whiche figuris & ensamplis y thenke to towche in ech of þe seuene dedly synnys be hem self.⁴⁰

The order of the sins in O departs from that given by Lavynham, whose arrangement, however, is faithfully reproduced in the LG recension. On the basis of that simple comparison, the editor will have no hesitation in re-arranging the opening of the text in O, especially since the order in which the sins are discussed in the body of the sermon adheres to the pattern laid out by Lavynham.

The influence of the work is noticeable, too, in the sermon for the first Sunday in Lent, on Christ's temptation in the desert (Matt. 4: 1-11). The gospel reading speaks of the virtue of fasting, a subject which induces the writer to examine the perils of its opposite vice — gluttony, thus:

MS O

/fol. 264^v/ A gloten is likened to a bere for ij skyllys. One is þis: a bere hathe all wey a talent in his tong to certen metis the whiche makethe hym ever to lyk his tong; so in like wyse, a gloten hathe all wey a maner of talent in his tong to taste metis þat ben dentuus. Anoþer skylly is þis: a bere hathe so grete delyte to hony, wherfore he wyll go to þat place þer as is a swarme of bees and so lykethe away the hony the whiche þei labord sore fore, and long tyme to make it and bryng it togeder (fol. 264^v).

This is clearly based on the following extract from Lavynham's treatment:

A gloton is liknyd to þe bere for too skelys. One is þis. The bere alwey haþ a maner of talent in his tunge to certayn metis which þat he louyth. & þat makyth him ofte to likken hys tunge, as experyence schewith wel at ey3e. Ry3t so a gloton haþ al wey a maner of talent in his tonge to taste metis þat be deyste. Anoþer skile is þis. þe bere haþ so gret delyt to þe hony þat he wil come to þat place wher he gessyþ to fynde a swarm of been & likkyn a wey her hony which þey haue trauguayd abowte.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Van Zutphen, *A Litil Tretys on the Seven Deadly Sins*, p. 1.

⁴¹ Van Zutphen, *A Litil Tretys on the Seven Deadly Sins*, p. 19.

While the opening of the text in O reads *a bere hathe all wey a talent*, the corresponding sequence in Lavynham is *The bere alwey haf a maner of talent*. Since it is so that the phrase *maner of talent* is preserved in the LG recension, it is evident that the scribe of O has omitted two words which an editor should, on the authority of both Lavynham and the other manuscripts in the group, restore.

Other sources are considerably more elusive, though the likelihood that the writer is constructing his sermon from English, as opposed to Latin, material remains strong. Thus, at the end of the sermon for the fourth Sunday in Advent, the Durham manuscript inserts a long passage on baptism (the theme of the sermon as a whole) which finds no echo in any of the other manuscript witnesses. It reads as follows:

MS D

/fol. 21^r/ And that witnessythe seynt Barnarde in his Medytacions, sayng on this wyse: *O quam debio diligere Dominum meum, qui me fecit cum non eram, redemit cum perieram, et eduxit de exilio, redemit de seruicio, vnxit me oleo leticie, vocauit me nomine suo vt ad vncto dicerer vnctus et a Christo dicitur christianus.* O, seythe seynt Barnarde, I must nedys love moche my Lorde God, for when I was now3te he made me, and when I was spylt he helpyd me a3ene, and when I was exylyd and owtelawde by custome of synne from the kyngdome of he /21^v/ ven, he brow3te me thedur a3ene; and when I was made bonde to þe fende by custome of synne, he bow3t me wythe hys precius hert blode and made me free a3ene, and anoyntyd me wythe the oyle of baptyd and cristened me and callyd me by his owne name. And of þat anoyntyng I scholde be callyd anoyntyd man, and of Criste «I scholde» *canc.*⁴² I schold be callyd a cristen man. In þis we may see that we be moche bownde to serve God and to love hym, for this blessyd sacrament of baptyd wasschybe vs and makethe vs clene «fo» *canc.*⁴³ frome all the orygnalle synne of owre forme fader Adam and makythe vs abyll if we preserve and kepe owre counaunte to be of the howseholde meny of God in the kyngdome of heven. Wherfore I may sey as seynt Iohn seythe in the gossPELL, *Ego baptizo in aqua; medius autem uestrum stetit.* I baptyse in watur.

The very same passage forms part of the sermon for the Sunday in the Octave of the Epiphany, where all three manuscripts preserving this sermon (OLG) include it. It compares interestingly with the passage from D:

MS O

/fol. 216^r/ And therfor seythe seynt Barnarde in his Meditacions þus: *O quam debeo diligere Dominum meum, qui me fecit cum non eram, redemit cum perieram; et eduxit [de exilio, redemit de seruicio, vnxit]⁴⁴ me oleo leticie, vocauit me nomine suo, vt ab vncto dicerer vnctus et a Christo dicerer christianus.* ‘O,’ seiþe seiñt Barnard, ‘I muste nedys luf moche my Lord, then when I was now3te he made me, and when I was spilled he helpt me a3ene; when I was exyled and owtelawde be synne fro the kyngdome of heven, he brow3te me thedyr a3ene; when I was made bonde to [þe fende]⁴⁵ be custome of synne, he bow3te me withe his hert blode and made me fre, and anoynted me withe the oyle of baptyd and cristened [me]⁴⁶ and cald me be his owne name, þat of [þat]

⁴² I scholde] cancelled by the scribe.

⁴³ fo] cancelled by the scribe.

⁴⁴ de exilio...vnxit] omitted O.

⁴⁵ þe fende] God by grace O.

⁴⁶ me] omitted O.

anoynt[ing]⁴⁷ I scholde be calde anoynted [man],⁴⁸ and of Criste I scholde be callyd a cristen man.' In þis we may see /216^v/ and vnderstonde þat we be moche bownd to owre Lorde God. For in like wyse as þis holy man cristened owre sauiovre in water, so owre sauiovre Ihesu hathe cristened vs in his precius bloode.

Positing the existence of a hitherto-unidentified English source lying behind these passages may be defended in the following way. Despite the minor infelicities in the base text of the Epiphany Octave sermon, it is immediately apparent that both versions are remarkably close to each other, textually; the chances of such lengthy texts, having been translated on at least two different, independent occasions, producing such lexical and syntactic uniformity are so remote as to be virtually inexistent. Furthermore, both make the erroneous attribution to St. Bernard (see below), although the possibility of the misattribution having been present in the source has to be allowed. Yet, confirmation of the position argued here is provided by the Latin text upon which both vernacular versions are dependent. That text, often but probably without foundation attributed to St. Augustine, is the *De Spiritu et Anima*, the relevant section of which reads:

Miser ego, quantum deberem diligere Deum meum, qui me fecit cum non eram, redemit cum perieram! Non eram, et de nihilo me fecit; non lapidem, non arborem, non avem vel aliquod de animalibus aliis, sed hominem me voluit esse: dedit mihi vivere, sentire, discernere. Perieram, et ad mortalem descendit, mortalitatem suscepit, passionem sustinuit, mortem vicit; et sic me restauravit. Perieram, et abieram, quoniam in peccatis meis eram venumdatus: venit ille post me ut redimeret me; et tantum dilexit me, ut sanguinis sui pretium appenderet pro me, talique pacto et reduxit me de exsilio, et redemit de servitio. Nomine etiam suo vocavit me, ut memoriale suum semper esset apud me.⁴⁹

Here, comparison shows that the pseudo-Augustine text has been rather heavily edited by the author of the passage reflected in the vernacular sermons. It is inconceivable that two scribes/editors should independently make exactly the same cuts and re-arrangements. Both of the sermon extracts derive from a pre-existing version in the vernacular, yet to be identified.

The only remaining theoretical possibility, that one vernacular version is a direct copy of the other, seems equally unlikely. Neither passage begins in the same way: *And that witnessythe seynt Barnarde in his Medytacions, sayng on this wyse* (D) for *And therfor seythe seynt Barnarde in his Meditacions þus* (O); where D speaks of being *owtelawde by custome of synne*, O says merely *owtelawde be synne*; at the end of the translated section, D proceeds by saying *In þis we may see that we be moche bownde to serve God*, while O has *In þis we may see and vnderstonde þat we be moche bownd to owre Lorde God*. In what

⁴⁷ of þat anoynting] of anoynted man O.

⁴⁸ man] omitted O.

⁴⁹ Ed. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Paris, 1844-66, vol. 40, col. 792. The same passage is used extensively in *The Tretyse of Loue*, ed. J. H. Fisher, EETS 222, London: Routledge, 1951, p. 8/24 ff, in a discussion of Christ's gift of himself to mankind.

follows after this point, the texts diverge completely. Cumulatively, these observations would seem to rule out direct copying.

Another likely instance of the recourse to vernacular source material is seen in comparing an extract from the sermon for the second Sunday in Advent with a similar one in the Ross collection.⁵⁰ It suggests that there was more vernacular preaching material in circulation in the fifteenth century than is sometimes assumed. The sermon is based on the lection: *Erunt signa in sole, et luna, et stellis* (Luke 21: 25), and the object of the preacher's reflexion is the Day of Judgement, a day which, he teaches, will be *profitabill* to the just, but *cruell and vengeabyll* to all others. He reinforces this last point in the following passage:

MS O

/fol. 186^v/ Of the whiche [day] rehersithe seynt Barnard in the persons of synfull pepill and seythe thus, *Et est in sermone De Aduentu Iudicis, vbi sic: Semper, inquit, diem illum extremum considerans, toto [cor]pore contremesco, et cetera;* 'All wey when I thynke vpon the last day, for drede my body quakethe' and I am all astonyed, for I can not fynde oo frende at þat tyme for to stonde withe me. For all my synnes and my wickednes and all maner of mens dome schal passe azenste me. For there schall no man pray for other, but all ry3tfull pepyll schall be chosyn of God and be dempt to þe blisse of heven everlastyng. */187^r/* And all tho that be synfull and wickede pepill schall stonde to his dome, and non schall be saued. But tho that habe ben truw in there lyvyng, they may blysse þe tyme that ever they were born; and þei that hathe led there lyfe in synne and falsnes may haue cawse to curse the tyme þat ever þei were borne. For truly, seythe seynt Barnarde, ry3t as þe clowde lettibe þe ly3t of þe sonne þat it may not schyne vpon the erthe, ry3t so þere schall be a clowde over synfull mens dedis betwene God and hem [that they schall not see þe very face of almy3tty God]. Wherefore they schall be in grete hevynes, and þat witnessibe Criste in the gospell of þis day where he seythe thus: *Pressura gentium;* 'Overleyng of pepill' of the grete power and correccion of almy3ti God. And so it may well be seyde it schall be dredefull. And that I may preve be þe tokens þat schall be schewyd before þat */187^v/* almy3ti God schall come to iuge all pepil.

This passage shows strong textual affiliation with the following:

I seid also þat þe þrid maner of commyng shall be at þe Day of Dome, qwen he shall deme men. And 3e shall vndirstond þat þise ij first were helpyng vnto mankend, but þe iij shall be to som ioyfull and helpyng, and to som ful dredefull and grisly. þerfor spekeþ seynt Barnard of þis commyng in synnefull mens persons and seyþ, *et est in sermone De Adventu Iudicis, ubi sic: Semper, inquit, diem illum exstremum considerans, toto corpore contremesco, et cetera;* "Alwey when I thenke on þe last day, for drede my bodie quakeþ, for I can not fynde oon frend to stond at þat day for me, but my synne and my wickednes azeyns me. And þer shall no man pray for oþur, but Goddes oune choson children shall be raueshed vp in þe eyre. And þei þat shall be dampned, þe erthe shall swallow hem. Certeyn, seys seynt Barnard, like as þe clowde letteþ þe li3the of þe sonne þat it may not shyne vpon þe vrthe, ryght so þer shall be a clowde of synnefull mans dedis betweyn God and hem, þat þei shall not see þe blessed face of God."⁵¹

⁵⁰ The editor supposes it to be a sermon for Advent (Ross, *Middle English Sermons*, p. xliii), but there is nothing in the manuscript to indicate the days on which the sermons were to be preached.

⁵¹ Ross, *Middle English Sermons*, p. 317.

As has been pointed out by Alan J. Fletcher,⁵² it is likely that both passages draw on the same source, and that that source is a vernacular one, since it is otherwise very difficult to explain why the sermon writers, supposedly working independently from the same Latin source, leave exactly the same sequence of Latin — *et est in sermone De Adventu Iudicis, ubi sic* — untranslated. Again, both writers provide a summary of St. Bernard's teaching concerning the image of the cloud rather than quoting him, as they had done earlier;⁵³ both retain the same structure of the passage, and both reproduce verbatim sequences — *All wey when I thynke vpon the last day, for drede my body quakethe* is a case in point — which can hardly be accounted for by independent translation.

Of other instances where English compositions may be seen to fuel the sermon compilers, one is particularly intriguing. I refer to the sermon for the first Sunday after Easter, extant in MSS O and G, which is based almost entirely on the latter half of the corresponding piece in Cambridge, Sidney Sussex College, MS 74 (fol. 128^v-31), a late fourteenth-century sermon collection of distinct Lollard hue.⁵⁴ It is in the latter half of this sermon that the discussion turns to the subject of the forgiveness of sin and to a number of contemporary practices of which the reformers took a dim view. These include the payment of *a schrift peny* and *a trental*, together with the offering *to ymages in þer chirche* (fol. 130^v). Immediately before these pronouncements, there comes a long passage in which the denunciation of what was held to be abuse is couched in considerably more robust language. Like the OLGD sermons, those of Sidney Sussex 74 have never been edited; I therefore give the relevant passage in full. It reads as follows:

/fol. 130^v/ ...truste vche mon vnto God and to hise goode dedes, tauzt by Iesu Cristus lore, and not by monnes bostyng þat maken hem self so wurþi as þei weren wel whit (with) God. *Nolite confidere in verbis mendacii, et cetera*, bote ordeyne we vs whit cherite to holde Godes lawe. And we schulen haue oure porcioun, what man so seiþ nay whit all holy seyntes in þe blisse of heuen, be he riche be he poure, aftur þat he loueþ, *pro hac orabit omnis sanctus in tempore opportuno*.

Be hit pardon or be hit preier or oþur suche goode dedes, whoso moste is in charite most part schal haue þerof, zef he neuer zeue money to buye suche þing. And þus schulen we comune in merite whit seyntes in heuen: *remissionem peccatorum*, in forzeuenesse of synne schulen we byleue. Also þat we schulen haue forzeuenesse holly (wholly) of al oure synne of hym þat is domesman zef we forþinke oure synne and amende vs in our lyfe, as Godes lawe techet vs, whitoute suche indulgences as men now buggen (buy), for God selleþ not his mercy as men buyen indulgence whit oþer absolucions sold for worldly wynnynge. For seynt Ambrose seiþ, as is writen in þe lawe: *Verbum domini dimittit peccata, et cetera. Ille solus dimittit peccata qui solus pro peccatis nostris*

⁵² *A Critical Edition of Selected Sermons from an Unpublished Fifteenth-Century de Tempore Sermon Cycle*, Oxford University B. Litt., 1978, unpublished, p. 121.

⁵³ As Ross, *Middle English Sermons*, p. 378 points out, “no such sermon by Bernard appears in Migne.”

⁵⁴ This collection has close but, as yet, imperfectly understood affiliations with the sermons in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 95. See the important study by Helen Spencer, “The Fortunes of a Lollard Sermon Cycle in the Later Fifteenth Century”, *Medieval Studies*, 48 (1986), 352-396. See also her *English Preaching*.

mortuus est. “He only forȝeueþ synne þat suffrede deth for oure synne.” And also seiþ seynt Austyn, and is in þa lawe: *Nemo tollit peccata mundi nisi solus Christus qui est agnus tollens peccata mundi.* “No man doþ away synne, no bote only Crist þe whiche is lomb doying away þe synnes of þe world.” And þefore seiþ God hymself by Ezechiel þe prophete: *In quacumque hora peccatorum conuersus fuerit et ingemuerit, vita uiuet et non morietur.*

The OLGD sermon compiler follows his source closely, breaking off abruptly immediately after copying the quotation from St. Augustine, as may be seen below:

MS O

/fol. 3^r/ It is owre parte withe charite to kepe þe lawys of God. And then schall we haue owre porcion and owre parte, who that ever seythe nay, withe all the holy seyntis in þe blisse of heven, be he riche or be he pore, after he hathe lyved and beleved, [so schall he be rewardyd]. *Pro hac orabunt omnes sancti in tempore oportuno:* ‘For this every seynt in heven schal pray in conevabyll tyme’, be it pardone or be it prayer or eny other soche good dedis; and who that is moste in charite, he schal haue mooste meede.

And so every cristen creature schall haue his mede of hym þat is moste ryȝtwise domesman, if we take repentaunce for owre synnes and then amende vs of owre synfull lyvyng, as the law /3^v/ of God techythe vs, witheowte indulgens and other absolucions solde for wordly wynnyng. As seynt Ambrose seythe, and also it is wretton in the law, *De Penitencia, distincione prima, Verbum Dei dimittit peccata, et cetera. Ille solus dimittit <peccata> qui sol<u>s pro peccatis nostris mortuus est.* ‘He only forȝeivthe synne [þe whiche dyed for owre synnys].’⁵⁵ And also seynt Austen seythe, *De Con<secrat>ione, distincione quarta,*⁵⁶ and it is þe law pleyne: *Nemo tollit peccata nisi solus Deus Christus qui est agnus tollens peccata mundi.* ‘No man dothe away synne, but only Crist, þe whiche is a lombe doying away þe synne of the worlde.’ Here thiselfe that art vnlerned and lackest a perfit moder wit, then þu seyste that the pope and þese prelatys of the chyrche of God may not forȝefe synne. And hereto I answer and sey þis: for vnto the ordur of presthode is commytted *potestatem Petri ligandi atque soluend[i] in celo et in terra:* ‘He hathe þe power of Peter to bynde and to vnbynde in heven and in erthe.’ And þerfor seythe /4^r/ almyȝti God be his prophete Ezechiel, *capitulo decimo octauo, In quacumque hora peccatorum conuersus fuerit et ignorauerit, vita uiuet et non morietur.* ‘In what some ever owre the synfull man is turned from his [synne] and sorowithe in hert therefore, he schall lyfe and not dye.’⁵⁷

The clearly formulated attack on *men who buyen indulgence whit oper absolucions sold for worldly wynnyng* is a staple feature of Lollard polemic, one that reminds the orthodox preacher of the broader context in which it is situated: the denunciation of sacramental confession. Although vociferous in his reply — *Here thiselfe that art vnlerned and lackest a perfit moder wit* — the preacher is careful to cite an authority (alluding to Matt. 16: 19 in *potestatem Petri ligandi atque soluend[i] in celo et in terra*) in riposte to those advanced by his opponent so as to give support to the doctrine he patently champions, that of papal authority.

⁵⁵ Supplied by G, omitted in O through ‘eyeskip’.

⁵⁶ MSS O and G here read *De Confessione*, in error.

⁵⁷ The quotation from Ezechiel is not that of the Vulgate Old Testament, but from the so-called pseudo-Ezechiel. Langland, among others, made use of this very popular formulation in *Piers Plowman* C. VII. 148; Pearsall, *Piers Plowman: the C-Text*, p. 136. On this latter see J. W. Marchand, “An Unidentified Latin Quote in *Piers Plowman*”, *Modern Philology*, 88 (1991), 398-400.

Although the cases are not identical, the use made of the Wycliffite Bible, discussed earlier, and the appropriation here by an orthodox preacher of a sermon of Lollard origins both illustrate the ease with which the heterodox could penetrate and influence the workings of some representative elements of the established Church. To what extent this phenomenon may be seen as indicative of a trend is not yet possible to say, but a clear, or clearer, picture is likely to emerge with the imminent publication of some of the more important sermon collections. In that general endeavour, it is hoped that this present study, concentrating on questions of structure and the identification of sources, will have made a contribution, however small.