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The Martial Christ in the Sermons of Late Medieval England

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Abstract

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Current scholarship on the devotional practices of late medieval England has emphasized two representations of Christ. The first, considered the dominant trend, is that of the suffering Christ; the second, a minor, but important trend particularly for female audiences, is the maternal Christ. Both are revealing of the nature of late medieval Christocentric devotion. This project contributes to the understanding of late medieval Christocentric devotion in England during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries by examining the representation of Christ in a martial role, as presented to clerical and lay audiences through the medium of popular sermons. It is a new contribution to the scholarship of late medieval devotion in its demonstration of a multifaceted Christ; the martial Christ echoes, but in many ways also contrasts, the images of the suffering and maternal Christ, in order to provide its audience with a more complex rendering of the human Christ, one which may have been more accessible to a lay populace seeking to form a relationship with him.

This project also contributes to the growing field of sermon studies, intended to be comprehensive in nature. It uses a different approach to sermon studies, in that the entire corpus of nearly 4,500 sermons was reviewed. This was done in order to provide the most complete picture of the martial Christ. As a result, this project examines Christ in various martial roles, as well as his modelling of knighthood for kings, knights, preachers, and the laity. These representations were utilised by preachers to instruct their audiences in devotional practice, specifically forms of affective meditation; it was used as a didactic tool to teach the laity the complex doctrines of redemption and atonement; and finally, it was employed as a means to demonstrate the importance of right living in order to fulfil what Christ had promised on the cross, that is eternal salvation.

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Table of Sermons

Manuscript	Sermon	Scripture	Occasion	Language	Audience	Exempla/Theme	Author, if edited
Cambridge							
Corpus Christi, MS 357	ff. 1ra-13va	Luke 16:2	Quinquagesima	Middle English	Mixed	Three Estates	Knight, Ione Kemp
University Library, MS Ii.3.8	ff. 74v-76r	Matthew 21:9	unknown	Latin	Mixed	Christ-fighter/priest	
University Library, MS Ii.3.8	ff. 77v-79r	Hebrews 9:12	Good Friday	Latin	unknown	Devil's Rights Theory	
University Library, MS Gg. 6.26	ff. 22v-23r	Psalms 104:1	unknown	Middle English	Mixed	Lover-knight	Galloway, Andrew
University Library, MS Kk.4.24	ff. 143v-150r	Canticles 2:5	Passion Sunday	Macaronic	Mixed	Lover-knight	
Hereford							
Cathedral Library, MS O.iii.5	ff. 17rb-18va	Luke 11:18	unknown	Latin	unknown	miles Christi	
Cathedral Library, MS O.iii.5	ff. 24rb-26ra	John 5:24	unknown	Latin	unknown	Christ-knight	
Cathedral Library, MS P.5.xii	ff. 79v-81r	Psalms 19:9	unknown	Latin	Mixed	Christ-knight-King	
London, British Library							
Cotton MS Claudius Aii, Part ii	ff. 54r-56r	unspecified	Tenebrae	Middle English	Mixed	Lion-knight	Powell, Susan
MS Additional 40672	ff. 51r-52r	Ephesians 6:10	21 post Trinity	Middle English	Mixed	Christ-knight	Hudson, Anne
MS Harley 2247	ff. 10v-13r	unspecified	unknown	Middle English	Mixed	Devil's Rights Theory	Powell, Susan
MS Harley 2247	ff. 58r-61v	unspecified	1 Sunday Lent	Middle English	Mixed	Warrior-bridegroom	Powell, Susan
MS Harley 2247	ff. 84r-85r	unspecified	Tenebrae	Middle English	Mixed	Lion-knight	Powell, Susan
MS Harley 2268	ff. 185v-198v	Psalms 45:5	Annunciation	Middle English	Mixed	Lover-knight	O'Mara, Veronica
MS Harley 3760	ff. 23r-26v	2 Peter 2:17	3 post Easter	Latin	Mixed	miles Christi	Devlin, Mary
MS Harley 3760	ff. 96r-101v	Luke 1:27	Annunciation	Latin	Mixed	Knighthood	Devlin, Mary
MS Harley 7322	ff. 26r-v	unspecified	unknown	Latin	unknown	Lover-knight	Ross, Woodburn O
MS Royal 18.B.xxiii	ff. 76r-79r	Ephesians 5:2	3 Sunday Lent	Middle English	Mixed	Lover-knight	
London							
Lambeth Palace, MS 352	ff. 216r-224v	Revelation 1:5	Good Friday	Macaronic	Mixed	Lover-knight	Johnson and Wenzel
University of London, MS 657	pp. 261a-263a	Matthew 4:1	1 Sunday Lent	Latin	unknown	miles Christi	

Table of Sermons

Manuscript	Sermon	Scripture	Occasion	Language	Audience	Exempla/Theme	Author, if edited
Oxford, Bodleian Library							
MS Bodley 95	ff. 96r-98v	Ephesians.6:10	unknown	Middle English	Mixed	Three Estates	
MS Bodley 649	ff. 27r-34r	Matthew15:21	2 Sunday Lent	Macaronic	Mixed	Christ-knight-King	Horner, Patrick J
MS Bodley 649	ff. 34r-40v	Luke 11:21	3 Sunday Lent	Macaronic	Mixed	Christ-knight	Horner, Patrick J
MS Bodley 649	ff. 91r-96v	1 John 8:59	Passion Sunday	Macaronic	Mixed	Three Estates	Horner, Patrick J
MS e Musaeo 180	ff. 154r-158v	John 4	21 post Trinity	Middle English	Mixed	Lover-knight	Morrison, Stephen
MS e Musaeo 180	ff. 242r-247r	Luke 16:2	Septuagesima	Middle English	Mixed	Three Estates	Morrison, Stephen
MS Laud misc. 77	ff. 46r-48v	John 2:1	2 post Epiphany	Latin	unknown	Warrior-bridegroom	Akai, Yuichi
MS Laud misc. 706	ff. 72r-80r	Psalms 49:11	Funeral Sermon	Latin	Mixed	Knighthood	Horner, Patrick J
MS Laud misc. 706	ff. 98r-109r	Ephesians 5:6	3 Sunday Lent	Middle English	Mixed	Devil's Rights Theory	Horner, Patrick J
MS Laud misc. 706	ff. 144r-152r	Ephesians 5:1	unknown	Middle English	Mixed	Preacher-knight	Horner, Patrick J
MS Rawlinson C.751	ff.81r-89r	Luke 11.14	3 Sunday Lent	Middle English	Mixed	Devil's Rights Theory	
Oxford							
Balliol College, MS 149	ff. 31r-38v	Canticles 2:5	Good Friday	Macaronic	Mixed	Warrior-bridegroom	
Magdalen College, MS 79	ff. 10v-14v	Luke 24:26	Easter	Latin	unknown	<i>miles Christi</i>	Wenzel, Siegfried
Magdalen College, MS 93	ff. 144-147	Luke 1:31	Annunciation	Latin	unknown	Round Table Sermon	
New College, MS 92	ff. 148v-151r	Wisdom 10:12	Funeral Sermon	Latin	Mixed	Knighthood	Mifsud, George
University College, MS 97	ff. 162v-170r	Hebrews 9:12	unknown	Middle English	Mixed	Warrior-bridegroom	
Worcester							
Cathedral Library, MS F.10	ff. 48v-53v	Hebrews 9:14	Passion Sunday	Latin	unknown	Devil's Rights Theory	Grisdale, D M

Introduction

Scholarship on devotion in later medieval England has primarily focused on two representations of Christ: the suffering Christ, easily identified in all media as the human Christ dying on the cross and greatly examined in scholarship; and the slightly less common image of the maternal Christ, more challenging to identify in medieval works, but still drawing attention from scholars. Both images reflect the late medieval understanding of Christ's humanity and the devotional practices associated with his human role.

This thesis will argue for the importance of an alternative image of Christ in late medieval devotional representations, and explore the related methods by which medieval Christians expressed their devotion. It will do so through the genre of sermons. The study of sermons is a study of late medieval devotion; through the image of a martial Christ, the sermons reveal previously unknown ways in which medieval preachers and their audiences understood, expressed, and practiced their devotion to Christ, as well as ways in which they conceived of and reflected upon their own devotional practices. By not including an in-depth examination of the martial Christ in sermons – the most important method of mass communication in the later Middle Ages – the current state of scholarship is incomplete, missing a minor, but significant trend in Christocentric devotion. I will argue that the martial image of Christ may have resonated with a very wide audience, providing new insight into the mentality of the medieval sermon audience. In addition, this thesis adds to the ever-expanding field of scholarship in 'sermon studies.' While it attempts to approach the sermon corpus with a particular theme in mind, I hope to contribute to the wider scholarship of popular preaching in late medieval England and encourage other scholars to approach the large corpus in the same manner, a method in which the value is worthy of the challenges.

An Introduction to Medieval Sermon Studies

Late medieval preachers have bestowed an enormous resource upon modern scholars of sermon studies, as well as religious and social history, literary history, and linguistics, with the thousands of extant preaching materials they recorded. Beginning in the thirteenth century and continuing into the early modern era, the extant collections of sermons and sermon-related materials from England and the Continent are vast. G R Owst, the undisputed father of medieval English sermon studies, founded what would become a flourishing academic discipline with his two works: *Preaching in Medieval England* and *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*.¹ Owst described the pulpit as a social activity and medieval sermons a source which contributes to the knowledge of social life and thought as well as English ecclesiastical history. His two books were the first to look at the preacher and his role within that social life, at the wider impact of the preaching movement, at the sermons themselves, and in his second volume, at the influence and impact of literature on sermons. Helen Leith Spencer's *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* provides an updated and successful attempt to build upon Owst's original achievement.² Spencer's is an interdisciplinary study of English sermons written in the late fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries; it attempts to relate the texts to their historical and cultural context by focusing on vernacular materials in order to show the diversity of the medieval English church. The contributions of both authors are the entry point for any student of medieval preaching.

In order to limit this project, I have restricted my sources to those sermon collections with English provenance belonging to the period roughly spanning the years of

¹ G R Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England: An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of the Period c. 1350–1458* (Cambridge, 1926); and *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1933).

² Helen Leith Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1993).

the Hundred Years War, what Siegfried Wenzel has called ‘the golden age of preaching.’³ Although I have placed limitations upon which of the extant sermon collections from the later Middle Ages I will use in this study, what remains is still a very large corpus of nearly 4,500 sermons, both in Latin and Middle English. The sermon corpus is preserved in the many challenging scripts of the later Middle Ages, found across dozens of manuscripts in a variety of archives. Most of these remain unedited and for the novice scholar, inaccessible. This has meant that they are only lately beginning to be widely studied. Even so scholars rarely examine the entire corpus; rather, the corpus is often approached in pieces, either by examining the works of a known sermon author, a rarity itself within the corpus,⁴ or by analysing an individual manuscript collection.⁵ These approaches can offer wonderful insight into the mentality of the individual author, known or unknown. Often though, this approach only reveals something specific about the author or collection and leaves the modern historian unclear as to whether the individual author’s views within sermons reflect any wider currents within medieval society as a whole.

Contrary to these approaches, this study aims to be a comprehensive survey of the entire

³ Siegfried Wenzel, ‘Preface’, in *Latin Sermon Collections from later Medieval England: Orthodox Preaching in the Age of Wyclif* (Cambridge, 2005), xv; henceforth abbreviated as *Latin Sermon Collections*.

⁴ Wenzel has identified the known sermon authors of collections from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. He provides a simple biography for each, as well as any relevant secondary literature on the author. Of the eight authors identified only three have had their sermon collections edited; they are: *A Mendicant Sermon Collection from Composition to Reception: the Novum opus dominicale of John Waldeby*, OESA, ed. Yuichi Akae (Turnhout, 2015), *The Sermons of Thomas Brinton, Bishop of Rochester (1373-1389)*, 2 vols., ed. Sister Mary Aquinas Devlin (London, 1954) and *Mirk’s Festial: A Collection of Homilies by Johannes Mirkus, Edited from Bodl.MS. Gough Eccl. Top. 4, With Variant Readings from Other MSS*, part 1, ed. Theodore Erbe, EETS Extra Series 96 (London, 1905); additional secondary sources discussed in Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 40, 47 and 58 respectively. The remaining five identified authors have not had their collections edited, but have had scholarly attention on their lives and preaching in general; these include: John Sheppey (sources provided by Wenzel, p. 26), Richard FitzRalph (p. 31), Philip Repingdon (p. 50), John Felton (p. 54), and Robert Rypon (p. 66).

⁵ There are three complete editions of sermon collections by an unknown author: *A Late Fifteenth-Century Dominican Sermon Cycle, edited from Bodleian Library MS E Musaeo 180 and Other Manuscripts*, ed. Stephen Morrison (Oxford, 2012); *A Macaronic Sermon Collection from Late Medieval England: Oxford, MS Bodley 649*, ed. Patrick J Horner (Ontario, Can., 2006); *Middle English Sermons: Edited from British Museum MS Royal 18 B. Xxiii*, ed. Woodburn O Ross, EETS 209 (London, 1940). There are two works in which the Middle English sermons have been edited from a larger collection of Latin sermons: *Four Middle English Sermons: Edited from British Library MS Harley 2268*, ed. Veronica O’Mara (Heidelberg, 2002) and *Three Middle English Sermons from the Worcester Chapter Manuscript F.10*, ed. D M Grisdale (Leeds, 1939). The corpus of Wycliffite sermons have been edited in five volumes: *English Wycliffite Sermons*, eds. Anne Hudson and Pamela Gradon (Oxford, 1983-96).

late medieval atmosphere of preaching; the corpus has great potential to reveal aspects of medieval history when examined thematically as a whole.

This study approaches the corpus in a manner quite different from most previous studies, by examining the presence of a specific theme – the image of the martial Christ – across the corpus in order to provide fresh insight and a new understanding of late medieval devotion to Christ. I have attempted to isolate this theme across the English corpus of the later Middle Ages; beyond those restrictions however, the body of evidence has been left wide open in order to obtain the fullest picture of the martial Christ theme within sermons. Sermon authors were not constrained by the models set out for them in the *artes praedicandi*, sermon collections, and known *exempla*; they were influenced by many other literary genres both implicitly and explicitly.⁶ In addition to taking their cues from model sermon materials intended to be didactic and adaptable for many users, authors were influenced by a wide range of secular and religious writing, including poetry and satire, secular manuals and religious treatises, romance literature, texts by classical authors, and other devotional and didactic material. The influence of these genres upon each other cannot be overstated and thus throughout this project non-sermon materials will be considered for their patterns, parallels, and clear signs of influence upon sermons (although the direction of this cultural transmission is not always discernible).

⁶ For the primary scholarship on the *artes praedicandi*, see: Siegfried Wenzel, 'Artes Praedicandi': A *Synthesis of Scholastic Sermon Structure* (Toronto, 2015); *The Art of Preaching: Five Medieval Texts and Translations* (Washington, D.C., 2013); and 'The Arts of Preaching', in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Volume 2: The Middle Ages*, eds. Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson (Cambridge, 2005), 84-96; Kimberley Rivers, 'Memory and Medieval Preaching: Mnemonic Advice in the *Ars Praedicandi* of Francesco Eiximenyes (ca. 1327-1409)', *Viator* 30 (1999), 252-84; Marianne Briscoe, *Artes Praedicandi* (Turnhout, 1992); Thomas Marie Charland, *Artes praedicandi: Contribution à l'histoire de la rhétorique au moyen âge* (Paris, 1936); Harry Caplan, *Mediaeval "Artes Praedicandi": A Hand List: Cornell Studies in Classical Philology* 24 (Ithaca, 1934) and *Mediaeval "Artes Praedicandi": A Supplementary Hand List: Cornell Studies in Classical Philology* 25 (Ithaca, 1936). For scholarship on medieval sermon *exempla*, see: David Jones, *Friars' Tales: Thirteenth-century Exempla from the British Isles: Selected Sources* (Manchester, 2011); Jacques de Vitry, *The Exempla or Illustrative Stories from the Sermones Vulgares of Jacques de Vitry*, ed. Thomas Frederick Crane (London, 1923).

First though, the sermons from my period of interest need be identified. To do this I have relied on two invaluable resources. Foremost, Siegfried Wenzel's, *Latin Sermon Collections from Later Medieval England*.⁷ This study is the first to describe all the Latin sermon collections extant from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Wenzel provides detailed descriptions for thirty-six manuscript collections, and then, inventoried from dozens of manuscripts, he provides for each individual sermon the occasion, theme and scriptural verse, incipit, explicit, foliation, and if known, manuscript location of the sermon in any further manuscripts. He describes over 3,000 sermons in total. It is an essential guide to any scholar studying Latin sermons of this period. The second resource used, Wenzel's counterpart for sermon collections of the same period recorded in Middle English, is Veronica O'Mara and Suzanne Paul's *Repertorium of Middle English Prose Sermons*.⁸ O'Mara and Paul provide information on some 1,450 sermons from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, from more than 160 manuscripts. For each, a description of the manuscript is given including a general description, contents, comments recorded on the manuscript, any parallel traditions, and a bibliography. This is followed by the description of the individual sermons under the following headings: occasion, heading/title (as given in the manuscript), biblical theme, incipit, explicit, a summary of the text, any further biblical quotations, proper names, place names, theological concepts, exempla, verse, and relevant bibliography. These two works together delineate and describe the entire corpus of surviving sermons from fourteenth and fifteenth century England.

Even with geographical and period limitations, reading the corpus is still an enormous undertaking. There is however a number of editions of sermon collections and individual sermons available (see sermon table) which helped to reduce the amount of sermons I examined within manuscripts. This however is still a very large number. Thus,

⁷ Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*.

⁸ Veronica O'Mara and Suzanne Paul, *A Repertorium of Middle English Prose Sermons*, 4 volumes (Turnhout, 2007); abbreviated henceforth as *RMEPS*, with volume and page numbers provided.

in order to survey thousands of sermons, I have identified certain indicators – key words and phrases – which allowed me to work through the manuscripts efficiently. These include words connected to martial language (*miles, militia, pugnator, pugilis, armaturum, bellum*, etc.) as well as any mention of Satan or the devil, as Christ was likely to be engaging in warfare with his obvious enemy. Certain scriptural themes also proved to be more useful than others, both for identifying and ruling out sermons that would likely reveal a martial Christ. For example, sermons with themes from Ephesians 6, ‘Put on the armour of God’ (*Induite vos armaturam Dei*) and Job 7: ‘Life for man upon earth is warfare’ (*Militia est vita hominis super terram*) warranted an in-depth review as they often include martial language. The sermons that produced images of a martial Christ or martial language, such as the use of spiritual armour, are however not limited by sermon occasion or scriptural theme. The Christ-knight and related images were employed in sermons using a variety of scriptural authorities, various contexts, and any sermon occasion. Sermons including martial language and the martial Christ, as will be demonstrated, had numerous functions, primarily the expression of their devotion to Christ, but also as a preacher’s tool to instruct his audience in the intricacies of doctrine and to prescribe moral living. It should be noted however, that given the presence of martial imagery in some unexpected places, there may well be other uses of the image in less obvious locations or other sources yet to be identified. The present thesis however does its best to identify the theme within the entire corpus of late medieval sermons. Sufficiently varied iterations of the theme have been discovered to persuade me that the likelihood of new material containing substantially different uses and images of a martial Christ is low.

Sermon Form, Structure, and Occasion

Between the early thirteenth and late fifteenth centuries, preachers in England and Europe often embraced a rigidly structured sermon format.⁹ Clear and coherent structure and rhetoric mattered a great deal because they facilitated understanding on the part of the audience and allowed listeners to remember the sermon in order to later reflect on its message. The scholastic sermon,¹⁰ identified by its technical language as well as grammatical, logical, and stylistic concerns, was taught through technical treatises known as *artes praedicandi*, of which approximately 230 treatises survive in manuscripts and early printed books. These popular treatises could be comprehensive, covering voice modulation, physical gestures, suggested sources and structure for sermons; or a narrow approach that only provided the preacher with instruction on how to build an effective sermon. They ‘followed actual practices used by preachers who learned and practiced their craft’ in university settings such as Oxford, in order to be used by those preachers who did not learn the university techniques.¹¹

Every *ars praedicandi* declared that a scholastic sermon should be built upon a short text chosen from scripture, known as the *thema*. A fully developed scholastic sermon would include a *thema*, not to be confused with the general theme that a sermon may or may not have; a *prothema*, an introductory exhortation to grab the audience’s attention, for example, a popular quotation; the protheme is related to the *thema* and agrees with the general subject of the sermon but is not necessarily from scripture. Next followed an initial

⁹ Nearly every scholarly work within the field of sermon studies includes to some degree a description of the ‘medieval sermon’ form and structure. The most comprehensive include: Wenzel, *Art of Preaching*; the Preface to *Latin Sermon Collections*, xi-xvii; Christoph T Maier, *Crusade Propaganda and Ideology: Model Sermons for the Preaching of the Cross* (Cambridge, 2000), 34-50; Spencer, *English Preaching*, 228-47.

¹⁰ I have adopted the most recently used term for this type of sermon, implemented by Wenzel, *Art of Preaching*. Previous terminology includes the ‘modern’ sermon, used because medieval writers referred to them as *sermo modernus*; the ‘university’ sermon, identified by the stylistic techniques developed at the universities such as Oxford and Paris, but dismissed by Wenzel because sermons that adopted this across England were more often than not preached outside the university; and the ‘thematic’ sermon, applied because sermons of this form are based on a *thema*, but dismissed by Wenzel as misleading because not all sermons have an identifiable theme.

¹¹ Wenzel, *Art of Preaching*, xi.

prayer in which the preacher asked the audience to pray for him and his effectiveness. Preachers were aware of the need for effective preaching. Throughout the sermon, the *thema* is repeated, a means to bring the audience's attention back to the primary message in order that it may be used as a mnemonic device for later reflection. The preacher then provided a brief introduction to the *thema* in which he explained his purpose, the message or moral he hoped to communicate. Scholastic sermons are easily identified by their divisions, in which the *thema* is divided for structure and clarity. Divisions may be based on a sentence or a clause called a *divisio*. Or they may be concerned with an individual word taken from the *thema*, called a *distinctio*; for example, the *thema* 'Domine, salvum fac regem' would be divided into three distinctions based on 'domine,' 'salvum fac,' and 'regem.' Each division or distinction is then developed with the main content of the sermon; these can include further subdivisions or subdistinctions. The sermons concluded with a closing prayer. Sermons may have also included *exempla*, well-known narratives and stories, often fanciful or amusing, used across sermon literature; *exempla* are often the obvious rhetorical device deployed for the audience's amusement and enjoyment. They may also include: *figura*, referring to a biblical person or event that may have a spiritual or moral meaning; narratives from classical authors and texts; personal anecdotes; and occasionally allusions or explicit reference to historical or contemporary persons or events. What should be clear is that a fully developed scholastic sermon had the potential to be very detailed, long, and often complicated; because of this, the majority of sermons that were likely preached to the laity at local parish churches exclude most of the technical difficulties, leaving us with some sermons that have a *thema*, a clear theme, typically three divisions without further subdivisions, and a great number of *exempla*.

Extant sermons are found in what are commonly referred to as sermon collections. Rather than adopting David d'Avray's definition of the term 'model sermon collections'

which assumes that the collections were used within a limited, academic sphere, produced to serve as models for other preachers to use in their own preaching, Wenzel argues that ‘if one extends the intention of producing models from the authors to collectors and scribes, it surely becomes reasonable to claim that any sermon that got written down could, and probably was intended to, function as a model to be used by other preachers, whether they were confrères, students, or simple vicars’.¹² Thus, all the sermon collections considered by Wenzel and the present thesis should be considered as potential models for any preacher, scribe or collector who had access to them. These collections are divided into two types: systematic collections, or sermon cycles, which contain one or several sermons for each of the occasions that follow the Church’s liturgical calendar in a regular order. These regular cycles were either *de tempore* sermon cycles, preached for the Sundays of the year, or *de sanctis* sermon cycles, preached for the feasts of the saints. A second type, the random collection, contains sermons haphazardly gathered for a variety of occasions, without ordering them according to their place in the Church year. While Sunday and saint’s sermons were regular occurrences, sermons for special occasions are commonly found within collections; these include sermons for processions, funerals, synods, at a university, convocations, those announcing news about war or peace times, special prayers for a campaign or for the king, the dedication of a church, or a visitation.

Written and Oral Sermons

Two important considerations for the study of sermons are language, and the relationship between the written text and the delivered, or ‘live’, sermon. Most sermon collections have been recorded in Latin; this suggests two possibilities: that the sermons were preached to a clerical audience, or the sermons were recorded in Latin, but preached

¹² Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 3; David d’Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris before 1300* (Oxford, 1985), 105.

in English. It is likely that many sermons were preached and then later written down by the preacher or listener, which has resulted in a great number of the extant sermons being recorded in abridged versions, with obvious inconsistencies, discrepancies, or without being completed. A third possibility is presented by Christoph Burger, who has examined a case in which the same sermon was recorded in both Latin and French, the former delivered to a clerical audience at the University of Paris, the latter delivered in the parish church of St Séverin in Paris.¹³ This is a rare occurrence however. It is far more likely that many sermons from the late medieval period were indeed preached in English and recorded in Latin, as vernacular sermons increased in number alongside the laity's growing interest in personal piety and devotion. Likewise, sermons originally preached to the clergy could still be incorporated into the sermon collections used to preach to the laity. While language is an important indicator as to who made up the audience, the recorded language is not necessarily the language the sermon was delivered in; internal indicators, such as the content, or who the preacher addressed, are often more important factors. For example, sermons may specify *ad clerum*, *ad populum*, *ad studentes*, or be addressed to 'Reverendi' or 'Reverendi domini' which specifically identify clergy. 'Domini' or 'Domini mei' are ambiguous, probably addressing a clerical audience, but could also be directed to lay nobility. 'Karissimi fratres' most probably addressed members of a religious order, monastic or mendicant, whereas a simple 'Karissimi' leaves the audience undetermined; it could be either clerical or lay.¹⁴ Internal references often demonstrate that the audience was mixed, with both clerics and the laity imagined to be listening. While this helps determine the audience make-up and certainly suggests that the sermon was preached orally, short of internal cues, there is no real way to determine if a sermon was

¹³ Christoph Burger, 'Preaching for Members of the University in Latin, for Parishioners in French: Jean Gerson (1363-1429) on "Blessed Are They That Mourn,"' in *Constructing the Medieval Sermon*, ed. Roger Andersson (Turnhout, 2007), 207-20.

¹⁴ Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 9.

actually preached live in precisely the form we have written. Without witnessing a sermon's delivery, we cannot assess the preacher's tone, inflection and volume, his timing and rhythm, hand gestures and facial expressions, all of which contribute to whether the sermon is delivered effectively and influence how an audience receives the message. Thus, it is a challenge to draw firm conclusions about an audience's reactions and responses. These limitations however do not mean that it is impossible to deduce the thoughts and ideas of the preacher or how his audience would have digested his message.

Scholars of medieval sermons should be aware of the limitations and approach them with some caution. Wenzel offers some reassurance when considering popular sermons however:

The modern reader's quest to come close to the actual delivery is not entirely hopeless. It stands to reason that sermons that contain a good number of "popular" elements – such as proverbs, allusions to games, snatches of vernacular songs – that include English material in the Latin text to the point of becoming genuinely macaronic, and that hold such marks of orality as addresses to the audience, imperatives in the singular, rhetorical questions, the use of the inclusive first person plural, and a more leisurely style of telling narrative exempla, may indeed reflect actual preaching quite closely.¹⁵

While it may not always be possible to distinguish between a written or live sermon, or to construct the atmosphere of the experience, the sermon as evidence of medieval devotion and practice does not lose value. The composed sermon still reflects the thoughts and ideas of the preacher and what he intended his audience to receive. Sabine Volk-Birke argued that no other form of public speaking creates such a valuable link between speaker and audience as the sermon because the preacher teaches an absolute truth while being a representative of that truth in that his own life is supposed to both guarantee and demonstrate what he has proclaimed.¹⁶ Her assessment of the preacher seems an idealization of the virtues of preachers and the esteem in which he is imagined to be held.

¹⁵ Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 19.

¹⁶ Sabine Volk-Birke, *Chaucer and Medieval Preaching: Rhetoric for Listeners in Sermons and Poetry* (Tübingen, 1991).

Preachers were certainly concerned with their audience's behaviour, evident in the large number of sermons dedicated to giving instruction on right living. This does not however guarantee that the preacher himself practiced what he preached. His message should reflect his own devotional life and act as a mirror for his audience; these audiences would have included members of the clergy as well. His message and instruction still sheds light on how preachers and audiences thought they should be living, and is as much an indictment of improper behaviour as instruction for right living. With Christ as their model, the image of perfection in man and God, the preacher is subtly acknowledging that every Christian, himself included, must reform their behaviour and strive to model their lives after Christ.

The Preacher and his Lay Audience

As the laity of the later Middle Ages not only gained access to education and literature, both secular and religious, they also raised their expectations of what was delivered from the pulpit. It should be noted that while literacy among the laity certainly was on the rise, vernacular texts still had a limited readership. A growing hunger for new knowledge is however reflective of cultural change. Lay audiences desired further learning beyond memorisation of the Creed and Ave Maria. This desire to know more however began to blur the line between orthodoxy and heresy. Helen Leith Spencer argued that to a large extent, the conflict between the Lollards and their opponents was a battle over the education of the laity. She suggested that the history of late-fourteenth and fifteenth-century sermons 'is inextricably bound up with the greater struggle that was then taking place over lay education and censorship: sermons were one vehicle of instruction among others.'¹⁷ Due to this struggle, orthodox preachers were left with the choice of either countering heresy in their sermons with correct understanding of doctrine or restricting

¹⁷ Spencer, *English Preaching*, 5.

knowledge and limiting what messages were delivered. These consequences of the spread of heresy are evident in sermons; one such example in Oxford, MS Bodley 649 includes both of these approaches. Here, the preacher first provided a lengthy defence of orthodox belief and authority, including exposition of the Trinity, the Sacraments, the validity of indulgences, and the communion of saints. He also attempted to limit the laity's knowledge by repeatedly instructing his audience to remain within appropriate boundaries of understanding, such as knowing the Creed, but leaving the 'subtleties' to the priests.¹⁸ The presence of such reprimands within sermons such as MS Bodley 649 reveals to the modern scholar something of the nature of the medieval audience. Access and education expanded for the laity, providing them new ways to express devotion, perhaps reading devotional treatises such as Nicholas Love's *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*.¹⁹ Love claimed that meditating on Christ's life was the proper form of devotion and submitted his translation to Archbishop Arundel himself. Paul Strohm described Love's treatise as part of a propaganda offensive of substantial proportions, supplementing Arundel's *Constitutions*, in order to counter the spread of Lollardy.²⁰ The result of increasing vernacularism in late medieval England, the perceived Lollard threat, and reactions like Arundel's *Constitutions* resulted in a culture of censorship.²¹ The Bodley 649 author's sermon is one such example reflective of these cultural changes.

Despite possible censorship and limitations to sermon messages, audiences, clerical and lay alike, required stimulating material to hold their interest. The image of a martial

¹⁸ Patrick J Horner, *A Macaronic Sermon Collection from Late Medieval England: Oxford, MS Bodley 649* (Ontario, Can., 2006), 154-79; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 649, ff. 34r-40v; henceforth, MS Bodley 649.

¹⁹ Discussed in detail below.

²⁰ Paul Strohm, 'Reading and Writing,' in *A Social History of England, 1200-1500*, eds. Rosemary Horrox and W Mark Ormrod (Cambridge, 2006), 454-72 at 464.

²¹ Nicholas Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409,' *Speculum* 70 (1995), 822-64; Christopher G Bradley, 'Censorship and Cultural Continuity: Love's *Mirror*, the *Pore Caitif*, and Religious Experience Before and After Arundel' and Michael G Sargent, 'Censorship or Cultural Change? Reformation and Renaissance in the Spirituality of Late Medieval England,' in *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth Century England*, eds. Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh (Turnhout, 2011), 115-32 and 55-72 respectively.

Christ is an example of this. Preachers had the difficult task of both delivering valuable material and keeping their audience's attention. Thus, the goal of any preacher was to effectively deliver his message. In Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli's article on the effectiveness of preachers, particularly those preaching in late medieval Italy, she argued that the use of dramatic and relevant *exempla* and resorting to attention-grabbing displays was a conscious strategy of preachers.²² She described the medieval preacher colourfully, and her words are well-suited to the theme of this thesis:

The preacher...was loved by the crowds precisely because he was able to draw them in and inspire them to do as he insisted ... In this respect the preachers were a weapon to be wielded defensively or offensively, as well as the keepers of an arsenal suitable for building community and pursuing all that fell within the Christianization of civic life and the fostering of general welfare. Their weapon was the word, sometimes murmured and sometimes bellowed, often repeated and imitated, and tied to the need to persuade and to do, offering itself as a basis and a tool for action.²³

Muzzarelli's description portrays the preacher in a role likely far grander than most would have considered themselves. Preachers speaking at St Paul's Cross may have indeed imagined themselves as a weapon wielded to effect change in London, but the average parish priest likely held more modest goals. Sermon evidence does suggest however that audiences were not always eager to hear a sermon, which would make some degree of performance and dramatic story-telling necessary. Helen Leith Spencer described the congregation as a 'captive audience' understandably reluctant to listen to a long-winded preacher. She described one instance in which an anonymous friar observed that many people stood up during sermons so they could discreetly walk out. He said: 'But þese dayys mochyl folk wyl nout lowyn hem to syttyn doun at þe sermoun...but þei welyn

²² Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, *From Words to Deeds: The Effectiveness of Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2014.) Her discussion suggests that preachers were chosen by civic as well as religious authorities and thus much of the preaching was intended to promote the development of the city. The purpose of preaching may differ from English preachers, as we know little about the involvement of civil leaders selecting men to become clergy, but her point about needing to both attract and maintain an audience remains valid.

²³ Muzzarelli, *From Words to Deeds*, 7-8.

stondyn, þat þey moun redely gon away 3if þe prechour plese hem nout' (But these days many people will not humble themselves to sit down at the sermon...but instead stand up so that they can easily leave if they don't like the preacher).²⁴ Likewise, sermon content, with dramatic *exempla* and imagery supports the argument that audiences were in need of something beyond moral directives and the threat of damnation. This thesis pursues a particular example of this, examining how a specific theme – the martial Christ – was deployed in order to appeal to the audience's need and desire for their sermons to be spiritually enriching, instructive, and enjoyable at one and the same time.

Late Medieval Christocentric Devotion: The Suffering, Maternal, and Martial Christ

Thus far, the aims of this thesis have been defined by the type of source examined: late medieval sermons. It is also defined by the state of scholarship on an important element in late medieval Christianity, namely Christocentric devotion. The following section is intended to summarize the current scholarly positions on late medieval Christocentric devotion. It is within this context that any investigation of the martial Christ must be situated. To accomplish this, I will briefly survey the recent scholarship on the dominant trends identified by scholars, namely the suffering and the maternal Christ. The study of these two related images has greatly contributed to our understanding of late medieval devotional practices, emphasizing devotion to Christ's humanity. Responses to these images have been studied to reveal the late medieval Christian's desire to enter into a personal relationship with the divine. Later chapters will likewise show that the subject of this thesis, the martial Christ, did much to achieve the same goal. This section will conclude with a brief introduction of the existing yet limited, scholarship on the image of a martial Christ.

²⁴ Spencer, *English Preaching*, 1-2.

An Affective Response to the Maternal and Suffering Images of Christ

The maternal image of Christ, like the martial image, is a minor trend within the devotional practices of late medieval England. That does not however mean that they are undeserving of the attention of scholars. A number of works have investigated the use of the feminine representation of Christ, primarily as found in its most extravagant demonstration, in Julian of Norwich's mystical visions, but also in more recent studies on the feminine Christ as an expression of Marian piety and devotion and as a coping mechanism for twelfth-century monks living celibate lives.²⁵ The most comprehensive study of Christ in a feminine role is Caroline Walker Bynum's *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*.²⁶ Bynum's work first acknowledged that the image of Jesus as Mother was not first imagined by mothers or even females, but by male ascetics, particularly twelfth-century Cistercian monks. Bynum provided a number of early examples of the 'Christ as Mother' theme. The most significant contributions were from Anselm of Canterbury and Bernard of Clairvaux who provide three functions for the Christ-mother image: that it is generative and sacrificial in that generation (revealed through birth pangs); that it is nurturing; and the third, that the loving and tender figure of the mother is instinctively and fundamentally willing to die to provide life for her child, an

²⁵ Conrad Leyser, 'From Maternal Kin to Jesus as Mother: Royal Genealogy and Marian Devotion in the Ninth-century West' and Brian Patrick McGuire, 'In Search of the Good Mother: Twelfth-century Celibacy and Affectivity,' in *Religion, Motherhood, and Society in Medieval Europe: 400-1400*, eds. Henrietta Leyser, Conrad Leyser and Lesley Smith (Farnham, 2011), respectively 21-40, 85-102; Margaret Ann Palliser, *Christ, our Mother of Mercy: Divine Mercy and Compassion in the Theology of the Shewings of Julian of Norwich* (Berlin, 1992), 107-22; Brant Pelphrey, *Christ our Mother: Julian of Norwich* (London, 1989), 161-8; Ritamary Bradley, 'The Motherhood Theme in Julian of Norwich,' *Fourteenth Century English Mystics Newsletter* 2.4 (1976), 25-30; John Bugge, *Virginitas: An Essay in the History of a Medieval Ideal*, The Hague: Archives Internationales d'Histoire des Idées (1975), 100-5; Eleanor C McLaughlin, "'Christ My Mother': Feminine Naming and Metaphor in Medieval Spirituality," *Nashota Review* 15 (1975), 228-48.

²⁶ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1982); expanded from: 'Jesus as Mother and Abbot as Mother: Some themes in twelfth-century Cistercian Writing,' *Harvard Theological Review* 70 (1977), 257-84; reproduced in *Medieval Religion: New Approaches*, ed. Constance Hoffman Berman (New York, 2005), 20-48.

obvious analogy to Christ.²⁷ Anselm reflected on Christ as a mother in a prayer to St Paul.

He described Jesus as a giver of life:

Truly, master, you are a mother. For what others have conceived and given birth to, they have received from you ... You are the author, others are the ministers. It is then you, above all, Lord God, who are mother.²⁸

As well as the nurturing hen, gathering her chicks:

And you also, soul, dead by yourself, run under the wings of your mother Jesus and bewail your sorrows under his wings. Christ, mother, who gathers under your wings your little ones, your dead chick seeks refuge under your wings ... Your warmth resuscitates the dead; your touch justifies sinners.²⁹

More elaborate than Anselm, the Cistercian abbot, Bernard of Clairvaux used “mother” to describe not only Jesus, but Moses, Peter and Paul. He used the imagery to illustrate the nurturing nature of Christ. In his ninth sermon on the Song of Songs, he explained, ‘...the breasts of the bride are superior to worldly or carnal love; the numbers who drink of them...cannot exhaust their content; their flow is never suspended, for they draw unceasingly from the inward fountains of charity.’³⁰ Bernard agreed that the bride’s breasts are finer than wine (Song of Songs 1:2). He is pointing out the exceptional quality of God’s grace and for him, an experience of ecstasy derived from love, not drunkenness from wine.³¹ For Bernard, the nurturing power of Christ, delivered from his blood as milk from a mother’s breast, is an unfathomable gift from God. Anselm and Bernard demonstrate two of the three functions that the analogy of motherhood served: that it is generative and nurturing. Bynum argued that while there was a tradition of maternal imagery within patristic texts,³² the presence of maternal metaphors in twelfth-century devotional texts is less an aspect of looking back to these models of the early church, and

²⁷ Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 130.

²⁸ Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 114; quoting Anselm’s prayer 10 to St Paul, *Opera omnia* 3:33 and 39-41, in *Méditations and prières de saint Anselme*, trans. A Castel and introd. A Wilmary, Collection Pax 11 (Paris, 1923), i-lxii and 48-61.

²⁹ Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 114.

³⁰ Bernard of Clairvaux, ‘Sermones in Cantica Canticorum,’ in *On the Song of Songs I*, trans. Killian Walsh (Shannon, 1971), 60; *PL* 183:819B.

³¹ M C Halflants, ‘Introduction,’ *On the Song of Songs I*, n.17.

³² For her discussion of maternal metaphors within patristic texts, see *Jesus as Mother*, 125-9.

more a means to adopt new trends of spirituality, including the rise of affective spirituality.³³ Indeed, these writers were both utilising images and metaphors already present within the culture, as established by their predecessors, as well as instigating and engendering a new trend in piety and devotion.

The image of the suffering, Crucified Christ, is arguably the most significant and representative image of the Middle Ages. The early medieval image of the crucified Christ was one of victory, of Christ defeating Satan through his sacrifice; the Passion was a battlefield in which Christ earned his victory.³⁴ In his tract, *The Perpetual Virginity of Blessed Mary*, St Jerome called on the power of the Cross: ‘The greater the humiliations He endured for me, the more I owe Him. And...you will be able to produce nothing more shameful than the cross...in which we believe, and by which we triumph over our enemies.’³⁵ By the thirteenth century however, the message of the Passion and the scene of Christ on the cross had shifted to emphasize Christ’s humanity. This is reflected in images of the martial Christ as well. It should be noted that the martial Christ is in many ways a continuation or possibly, due to this shift in devotional emphasis, a resurrection of the early medieval understanding of the victorious warrior-Christ. And yet, like the later, dominant, image of Christ on the cross, it also emphasized his suffering and humanity. Christ on the cross had become the focal point of artistic representation and piety and played an essential role in the devotional practices of the late Middle Ages.³⁶ The

³³ Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 129.

³⁴ For the Victorious Christ by the Church Fathers, see Augustine’s *Exposition on Psalm 95* and Jerome, below.

³⁵ Jerome, *De Virginitate Beatae Mariae*, trans. W H Fremantle, G Lewis and W G Martley, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, vi, eds. P Schaff and H Wace (New York, 1893), 344; *Patrologia Latina* 23:212B-213A.

³⁶ Scholarship on the image of and devotion to Christ’s Passion are too numerous to name. However, some essential works include: Eleanor G McCullough, ‘Praying the Passion: Laypeople’s Participation in Medieval Liturgy and Devotion,’ PhD thesis, University of York (2011); Carolyn Muessig, ‘Performance of the Passion: the Enactment of Devotion in the Later Middle Ages,’ in *Visualizing Medieval Performance: Perspectives, Histories, Contexts*, ed. Elina Gertsman (Aldershot, 2008); A A MacDonald, H N B Ridderbos and R M Schlusemann, eds., *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture* (Groningen, 1998); Ellen M Ross, *The Grief of God: Images of the Suffering Jesus in Late Medieval England* (Oxford,

representation of the suffering Christ is found across the genres. Christ Crucified was ubiquitous across churches, in panel and wall paintings, altarpieces, stained glass windows, stone and wood carvings, and architecture. It was depicted in literature, devotional texts, Books of Hours, prayer books, and illuminated manuscripts. As Ellen Ross so adequately stated, ‘the gaze of late medieval England was fixed on the broken body of a wounded and bloody Jesus surrounded by weeping bystanders.’³⁷ The Passion was presented outside the church confines through the performance of Passion plays and the drama-cycles. Poets composed Passion lyrics graphically detailing Christ’s torment and trials. And sermons presented the Passion to all audiences in order to deliver the message of Christ’s great sacrifice and the culmination of God’s work of redemption for mankind.

In contrast to the maternal image of Christ and its limited authorship and readership, the suffering image was omnipresent. Both however are essential to our understanding of affective spirituality and devotion in the later Middle Ages. Given the ubiquity of the suffering image across the Middle Ages, scholarship regarding it is profuse, touching on all the genres referred to above. Thus, for the purposes of this thesis, I will focus only on the use of the suffering Christ image in regards to compassionate, or ‘affective’ responses by those reading, hearing, or seeing this particular demonstration of Christ’s humanity. I am imposing this limitation because an affective response to Christ’s humanity is the primary function of both the suffering and maternal representations of Christ, and more importantly, it is found in the sermons examined. Rather than being a reaction against an image of the suffering or maternal Christ however, the sermons demonstrate that in many cases the image of a martial Christ was intended to encourage a similar response. Thus, martial images of Christ fit within the history of late medieval

1997); Flora Lewis, ‘The Wounds in Christ’s Side and the Instruments of the Passion: Gendered Experience and Response,’ in *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*, eds. Lesley Smith and Jane H M Taylor (London, 1997), 204-29.

³⁷ Ross, *Grief of God*, 3.

affective meditation and devotion, if not within the current scholarship on Christocentric piety.

In order to place the martial Christ within the tradition of affective devotion, it is first necessary to define this practice. Although it is almost exclusively aligned with the representations of the suffering and maternal Christ, affective devotion will become important to the way in which we read examples of the martial Christ in the sermons. As one might expect, scholarship on affective meditation and compassion devotion in the later medieval period is abundant.³⁸ It has been considered within the history of emotion because it primarily examines the feelings elicited toward the images of the suffering Christ.³⁹ Sarah McNamer has recently provided a concise survey of the origins of affective devotion to Christ's Passion, noting both its early uses by Anselm and Bernard, as well as the significant contributions made by women, such as Julian of Norwich.⁴⁰ For our purposes, affective piety and practices of devotion are defined by the use of images of Christ that elicit strong emotional and compassionate responses. Scholarship has established this was achieved through suffering and maternal images of Christ; this thesis argues that the martial Christ brought forth these responses as well.

By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, men and women alike were deeply committed to an emotional expression of Christocentric devotion primarily represented by the suffering Christ, but by both the maternal and martial as well. They desired this form

³⁸ Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia, 2010); Jennifer Bryan, *Looking Inward: Devotional Reading and the Private Self in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia, 2008); Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800-1200* (New York, 2002); Jeffrey Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York, 1998); Thomas H Bestul, *Texts of the Passion: Latin Devotional Literature and Medieval Society* (Philadelphia, 1996); Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (London, 1993); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, 1987).

³⁹ For a brief introduction on the history of emotion, see: Barbara H Rosenwein, 'Thinking Historically about Medieval Emotions,' *History Compass* 8 (2010), 828-42 and 'Worrying about Emotions in History,' *The American Historical Review* 107 (2002), 821-845; Elodie Lecuppre-Desjardin, *Emotions in the Heart of the City, 14th-16th century* (Turnhout, 2005).

⁴⁰ McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 58-59.

of devotion because it enabled them to enter into a personal and intimate relationship with Christ himself, and through him, a relationship with the divine, that is God. Authors, including an early example in Clement of Alexandria (d. 215), as well as Bernard of Clairvaux, described a mother's milk and Christ's blood as interchangeable; Christ who feeds the individual soul with his own blood was paralleled with the image of the nursing mother whose milk is her blood, offered to her child.⁴¹ Both the feminized description of Christ, often visualised by explicit scenes of childbirth and breastfeeding, and the often violently graphic display of Christ's torture, death, and broken body, were intended to facilitate a direct and personal relationship with Christ based on appreciation and awe of his actions for mankind. While meditating on Christ as mother was likely intended for private devotion, reflecting on Christ's Passion was often experienced communally, such as witnessing a Passion play or sermon, but primarily the devotion was also personal and private, meant to be an intimate experience which resulted in a deeper understanding of the enormity of Christ's sacrifice. The practices associated with Passion devotion are intimately associated with the concept of *imitatio Christi*. The devotee practicing affective meditation attempted to enter into a personal relationship with Christ by imagining his suffering and sacrifice and relating it to their own. These affective practices are experienced in two forms: the repeated recollection and memory of his Passion (a mnemonic approach) or by imagining him or herself present at the Passion, or by taking on the wounds and suffering of Christ him or herself (a mimetic approach).⁴²

⁴¹ Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 133; see also, Bynum, 'The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages,' in *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, 1992), 79-117.

⁴² Michael Camille, 'Mimetic Identification and Passion Devotion in the Later Middle Ages,' in *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late Medieval Culture*, eds. MacDonald, Ridderbos and Schlusemann (Groningen, 1998), 183-210; Farkas Gabor Kiss, 'Memory, Meditation, and Preaching: A Fifteenth-Century Memory Machine in Central Europe,' in *The Making of Memory in the Middle Ages*, ed. Lucie Dolezalova (Brill, 2010), 49-78.

The first, the mnemonic approach, theorized by the *artes meditandi*, consisted of the habitual exercise of recollecting one's pious memories. This was applied to the affective tradition through the repeated recollecting of Christ's Passion. In his consideration of how persecution and pain can uncover medieval thought by exploring the ways in which it was encountered in everyday life and culture, Anthony Bale noted that medieval culture 'made an abiding and usually edifying connection between memory/remembering and terror/pain' as seen in the central image of the Passion of Christ.⁴³ Bale suggested that Passion images and the forms in which they were narrated are 'amongst the pre-eminent medieval memory systems,' recalled to aid in a personal experience of the Passion.⁴⁴ Those practicing would recall each stage of Christ's Passion culminating in his death as a means to identify with Christ. This identification was meant to facilitate an intimate relationship with Christ, bringing them into a closer proximity with God.

The second approach, the mimetic method, was a more demanding attempt to enter into proximity with God. Practitioners of affective meditation believed that one could only fully understand Christ's sacrifice for them through experience; thus, one must share in Christ's pain, either through identifying with his creative power as a birthing experience or his suffering on the cross, in order to advance their relationship with him. Imitation provided the best way for understanding through experience.⁴⁵ The most dramatic rendering of Christ in the role of mother is found in the mystical writings of Julian of Norwich and her *Revelations of Divine Love*. In it, she recounts her visions of Christ in order to teach of his love and compassion. For Julian, God, and Christ as Mother, made it impossible to envision God as a distant forbidding judge who seeks to condemn and

⁴³ Anthony Bale, *Feeling Persecuted: Christians, Jews, and Images of Violence in the Middle Ages* (London, 2010), 121.

⁴⁴ Bale, *Feeling Persecuted*, 121.

⁴⁵ Ross, *Grief of God*, 10.

destroy; rather, God has given birth to mankind through creation, and rebirth through Christ towards salvation.⁴⁶ She described the works of Jesus as mother in terms of this birth:

The Mother's service is nearest, readiest, and surest: [nearest, for it is most of nature; readiest, for it is most of love; and surest] for it is most of truth. This office none might, nor could, nor ever should do to the full, but He alone. We know that all our mothers' bearing is [bearing of] us to pain and to dying: and what is this but that our Very Mother, Jesus, He – All-Love – beareth us to joy and to endless living? – blessed may He be! Thus He sustaineth us within Himself in love; and travailed, unto the full time that He would suffer the sharpest throes and the most grievous pains that ever were or ever shall be; and died at the last. And when He had finished, and so borne us to bliss, yet might not all this make full content to His marvellous love; and that sheweth He in these high overpassing words of love: *If I might suffer more, I would suffer more.*⁴⁷

Julian emphasized the tender and loving nature of a mother, one who is willing to, and sometimes does, die to give her child life. Bynum noted that this sentiment was 'particularly appropriate to a theological emphasis on an accessible and tender God, a God who bleeds and suffers' in order to stimulate human love.⁴⁸ Christ as mother was a point of access for men and women to enter into a relationship with Christ. Thus, through pain and suffering, like that of the Crucified Christ, the maternal image provided an affective devotional response.

The most influential devotional text of the later Middle Ages was the pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes vitae Christi*.⁴⁹ It was translated into French, Swedish, Irish, Spanish, Italian, Catalan, and English. A particularly popular version was Nicholas Love's *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Christ*. These meditative texts invite the reader into a dramatic mimetic devotional experience in which they imagine themselves present within

⁴⁶ Pelphrey, *Christ our Mother*, 39.

⁴⁷ Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, the Fourteenth Revelation, ch. 60, ed. Grace Harriet Warrack (London, 1901), 148-9.

⁴⁸ Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 133.

⁴⁹ Ian R Johnson and Allan F Westphall, *The Pseudo-Bonaventuran Lives of Christ: Exploring the Middle English Tradition* (Turnhout, 2013).

the Gospel narrative, including Christ's Passion and death. On Christ's Passion, Love urges the reader to repeatedly imagine all of Christ's suffering:

Nowe if þou take gude hede to alle þat haþ bene done to oure lorde Jesu, & alle þat he haþ suffrede, at matyne tyme & pryme & tierce, in to þis tyme shale it not be sene to þe as matire of grete compassion of his grete passio and soror? Sopely I trowe zis.

And namely if þou wilt nowe make in þi mynde a recapitulacione, & reherse in generale þat he haþ suffrede, & þat haþ be done to him in to þis tyme.⁵⁰

The reader is encouraged to repeatedly imagine Christ's Passion in their present time, to 'rehearse' it as if it was a daily performance. Love's instruction uses both forms of affective devotion, a repeated memory of the Passion, and the reader's imagining of their own presence and participation at the Passion. Both responses should be one of compassion and pity.

Another example from a meditation on Christ's life, written by a late-thirteenth-century Franciscan, instructs his audience on the meditation of Christ's Passion. He said:

He who wishes to glory in the Cross and the Passion must dwell with continued meditation on the mysteries and events that occurred. If they were considered with complete regard of mind they would, I think, lead the meditator to a (new) state ... One cannot so lightly treat so much bitterness and suffering of our Lord Jesus, for which reasons you must again see and attend. Great and much consideration is upon us, penetrating and pious, as is said, you are present at these things.⁵¹

According to this author, through meditation, the practitioner is brought to a new state in which he can be present at Christ's Passion. He does this in order to 'receive new compassion, new love, new solace, and then a new condition of sweetness that would seem to him a promise of glory.'⁵²

The tone and language of this meditative genre often echoes what is found within popular sermons and suggests that sermon authors may have been influenced by this genre

⁵⁰ Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ: A Reading Text*, ed. Michael G Sargent (Exeter, 2004), 172.

⁵¹ *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, in *Meditations on the Life of Christ, an Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*, trans. and ed. Isa Ragusa and ed. Rosalie B Green (Princeton, 1961), 317, 320.

⁵² *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, eds. Ragusa and Green, 317.

of writing. Both the popularity of meditations on Christ's Passion as a strand of affective Christocentric devotion and the inclusion of similar themes within sermons demonstrate the presentation of new methods of devotional practice to the laity.

The experiences prompted from reading this type of literature imply a state of transcendence, entering a 'new state' as described above, which is exactly what those writing within both the meditative and mystical traditions attempted to express. This is particularly evident of the writings of Richard Rolle and of Julian of Norwich.⁵³ An example of both the considerable influence of writings such as the pseudo-Bonaventuran meditations and the potential reach of mystical writings is found in a unique sermon of Hereford Cathedral Library, MS O.iii.5.⁵⁴ The unknown Augustinian author of the sermon was a likely devotee of the Cult of the Holy Name and was influenced by the writing of Richard Rolle. His sermon echoes the mysticism of Rolle in both his guidance on the contemplative life and his promotion of a personified Holy Name of Christ. Alongside other strands of Christocentric devotion in the later Middle Ages, there was also an increase in participation in the cult of the Holy Name, beginning in the mid-fifteenth-century.⁵⁵ The rise in the cult's popularity is another example of the response to the laity's demand for private expressions of piety. The cult is an interesting example of the transmission of particularly monastic devotion to the laity of late medieval England in which participants worship the power in Christ's Name, much like the cult devoted to the Virgin Mary. The Name itself has power and was prayed to and meditated upon. The

⁵³ See: Ross, 'The Dynamics of Divine Appeal: The Suffering Jesus in the Literature of Spiritual Guidance,' in *The Grief of God*, 15-40; William F Hodapp, 'Ritual and Performance in Richard Rolle's Passion Meditation B,' in *Performance and Transformation: New Approaches to Late Medieval Spirituality*, eds. Mary A Suydam and Joanna E Ziegler (London, 1999), 241-72; Christopher Abbott, 'His Body, The Church: Julian of Norwich's Vision of Christ Crucified,' *The Downside Review* 115 (1997), 1-22.

⁵⁴ For an in-depth examination on the influence of the cult of the Holy Name within the Hereford sermon, see my article, 'Preaching the Name: The Influence of a Sermon on the Holy Name of Christ,' *The Journal of Medieval History* 40 (2014), 195-208.

⁵⁵ For the invocation of the Holy Name within Nicholas Love's *Mirror*, see: Rob Lutton, 'The Name of Jesus, Nicholas Love's *Mirror*, and Christocentric Devotion in Late Medieval England,' in *The Pseudo-Bonaventuran Lives of Christ: Exploring the Middle English Tradition*, eds. Johnson and Westphall, 19-53.

sermon author sought to bring monastic ideals to an urban and knightly audience and thus a martial context is also found in the sermons dedicated to the Holy Name.⁵⁶ Just as the imitation of Christ is an expression of affective devotion, here The Holy Name is the model which ordinary men should strive to emulate. The author explains the defeat of the Devil by means of the bow in the hand of the Blessed Name, the bow compared to the suffering of Christ:

... the bow is most effective when man fights from a distance, thus the Passion of Christ was most effective against the Devil since He fought him at a distance. Because the Devil is far from us in nature – because he is spiritual and we are corporeal – and because he is in hell and we are in the world. And thus, the Blessed Name conquered the Devil by means of the bow and through the memory of the Lord's Passion.⁵⁷

The author emphasises the humanity of man, saved by the humanity of Christ. Human nature is separated from hell and the Devil, thus limiting the Devil's power over man when he recollects the suffering of Christ. Repeated memory of the Passion is a means of affective devotion, but here, in addition to entering a devotional space, the devotee also defeats the Devil, that is sin.

Julian of Norwich is another author within the mystical tradition whose experience included a vivid description of Christ's Passion:

In this [moment] suddenly I saw the red blood trickle down from under the Garland hot and freshly and right plenteously, as it were in the time of His Passion when the Garland of thorns was pressed on His blessed head who was both God and Man, the same that suffered thus for me. I conceived truly and mightily that it was Himself shewed it me, without any mean.⁵⁸

For Julian, the vision of Christ's death prompts a movement of compassion for all Christians:

⁵⁶ The example of a martial Christ within this sermon is discussed in chapter 5, page 163-4.

⁵⁷ Hereford Cathedral Library, MS O.iii.5, f. 24vb: 'Nam archus est valde terribilis cum quo homo pugnat a longe, sic passio Christi fuit diabolo valde terribilis cum a longe pugnavit. Quia iste longe est a nobis in natura; quia iste spiritualiter in natura et nos corporales et ipse est in inferno et nos est in mundo. Et sic Beatus Nomen vincebat diabolum per archum et per memoriam passionis Dominice eius resistendo temptacioni.' Translation my own.

⁵⁸ Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, the First Revelation, chapter 4, ed. Warrack, 8.

Thus I saw how Christ hath compassion on us for the cause of sin. And right as I was afore in the [Shewing of the] Passion of Christ fulfilled with pain and compassion, like so in this [sight] I was fulfilled, in part, with compassion of all mine even-Christians—for that well, well beloved people that shall be saved. For God's servants, Holy Church, shall be shaken in sorrow and anguish, tribulation in this world, as men shake a cloth in the wind.⁵⁹

Mediations on Christ's Passion were not limited to those writing lengthy meditative tracts or those within the mystical tradition however. The following vernacular Passion lyric similarly inserts the reader into the scene of the Passion:

Nou goth soone under wod
Me reweth, Marie, thi faire rode,
Nou goth soone under tre,
Me reweth, Marie, thi sone and the.
[Now goes the sun under the wood,
I pity, Mary, your fair face,
Now goes the sun under the tree,
I pity Mary, your son and you.⁶⁰

The lyric is simple yet full of emotion. Like Julian's vision, the use of present-tense verbs 'goth' and 'reweth' includes the reader into the scene 'nou' and the 'historical distance of time and space between the present and the past disintegrate.'⁶¹ Like those meditating on the maternal image of Christ, here, the reader attempts to engage directly in a relationship with Christ by joining him in his suffering.

The images of both the suffering and maternal Christ, and the few other examples given here as demonstration, provide a useful model of affective devotion and meditation in the later Middle Ages. It was within this devotional tradition that many of the images of a martial Christ were produced and interpreted in the later Middle Ages. Like these two other themes, more established in historical scholarship, the Christ-knight theme often attempted to provoke the same emotional, compassionate, and affective responses.

⁵⁹ Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, the Thirteenth Revelation, chapter 28, ed. Warrack, 57.

⁶⁰ From Oxford, Bodleian Library MS 3462, the lyric is edited in *Middle English Lyrics*, eds. Luria and Hoffman (1974), but is quoted here in Middle and modern English from William F Hodapp, 'Sacred Time and Space Within: Drama and Ritual in Late Medieval Affective Passion Meditations,' *The Downside Review* 115 (1997), 235-48.

⁶¹ Hodapp, 'Sacred Time and Space Within,' 235.

Preachers intended to guide their listeners in this type of devotion. People listening to sermons had available to them, in addition to the popular Crucified Christ, and limited (but still popular) Maternal Christ, an alternative image of Christ presented to them. For many people this image of a martial Christ may have been a more affecting and effective way to enter into that highly desired intimate relationship with the divine.

The ultimate goal of this thesis is to demonstrate that late medieval Christians were presented with the representation of the human Christ in a martial role, in addition to the dominant trends of the suffering and maternal Christ. The evidence from popular sermons shows that preachers presented their audiences with a martial Christ in order to encourage new expressions of affective devotion, instruct on right living, and explicate the complex doctrines of atonement and redemption. The first two chapters of this thesis provide the necessary framework within which the martial Christ can be understood. Martial language was not new to late medieval popular preaching; it was a widely used trope within monastic and crusade preaching, beginning as early as the eleventh century. The first chapter examines the culture of knighthood within its Christian context and the perceptions and ideals of chivalry that were to influence sermon authors. The second chapter continues this discussion with popular representations of knighthood beyond popular preaching, those found in romances and vernacular literature, which were desirable reading for the medieval audience, including an increasingly literate laity, and thus highly influential in the composition of popular sermons. The remaining chapters then examine the specific representations of the multifaceted martial Christ in the sermon corpus: chapter three introduces the theme of the lover-knight, to which most of the current scholarship is dedicated. Scholarship has been limited to an examination of the theme within genres usually categorized as 'literature.' Within this small field the primary works are Marie de

Lourdes Le May's dissertation on *The Allegory of the Christ-Knight in English Literature*, the first attempt to isolate the theme; and Rosemary Woolf's 'The Theme of Christ the Lover-Knight in Medieval English Literature.'⁶² Both authors make brief mention of the theme within the body of sermon literature. Woolf goes so far as to conclude that 'the allegory of the lover-knight occurs in so many places that it would be tedious to enumerate and examine each one; and no doubt a thorough search of Latin sermon manuscripts would produce further illustrations.'⁶³ Woolf's suggestion, and the limitations of a focus upon so-called literature, will be pursued in what follows. Chapter three also introduces an almost completely disregarded image of Christ, that of the warrior-bridegroom.⁶⁴

The fourth chapter examines the representation of Christ as the paragon for martial earthly kingship alongside two unique images in which actual warlike kings are likened to this regal Christ. The fifth chapter then examines the varied representation of what I have termed the 'Champion Christ,' an image in which Christ is a victorious conqueror engaged in battle. A large number of articles have discussed the presence of the Christ-knight in *Piers Plowman*, the best example of the motif within medieval literature.⁶⁵ Langland's portrayal of the Christ-knight will be discussed in chapter five; the motif of 'Jesus the jouster' was not limited to *Piers* and is found in sermons as well. Thus, the existing scholarship, though limited to an examination of the theme within literature, is a useful resource in providing context, but is lacking in terms of what the image might have meant

⁶² Marie de Lourdes Le May, *The Allegory of the Christ-Knight in English Literature* (Washington, D.C., 1932); Rosemary Woolf, 'The Theme of Christ the Lover-Knight in Medieval English Literature,' *The Review of English Studies*, New Series 13 (1962), 1-16.

⁶³ Woolf, 'Christ the Lover-Knight in Medieval English Literature,' 14.

⁶⁴ The theme is very briefly mentioned by Woolf, 2-3.

⁶⁵ John A Burrow, 'Conscience on Knights, Kings, and Conquerors: *Piers Plowman* B.19.26-198,' *YLS* 23 (2009), 85-95; Lawrence Warner, 'Jesus the Jouster: The Christ-Knight and Medieval Theories of Atonement in *Piers Plowman* and the "Round Table" Sermons,' *YLS* 10 (1996), 129-43; Nicole Clifton, 'The Romance Convention of the Disguised Duel and the Climax of *Piers Plowman*,' *YLS* 7 (1993), 123-28; R A Waldron, 'Langland's Originality: The Christ-Knight and the Harrowing of Hell,' in *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature: Essays in Honour of G H Russell*, eds. Gregory Kratzmann and James Simpson (Cambridge, 1986), 66-81; Anna Baldwin, 'The Double Duel in *Piers Plowman* B XVIII and C XXI,' *Medium Aevum* 50 (1981), 64-78; Wilbur Gaffney, 'The Allegory of the Christ-knight in *Piers Plowman*,' *PMLA* 46 (1931), 155-68.

for the wider (that is non-reading) late medieval audience. Each of the depictions of Christ in chapters three to five is evidence of a newly-identified image of Christ, available to the public for use in their private devotional practices. The final chapter demonstrates the culmination of the martial Christ image in sermons; it focuses on the application of a martial Christ to ideas about the preacher himself and his audience. This chapter reveals the ways in which medieval Christians could insert themselves into the role of the martial Christ. Preachers used the image to influence their audiences' daily lives in practical ways. For any medieval Christian, imitating the martial Christ allowed them to express their love of Christ as a means of affective devotion and meditation.

The various images of the martial Christ, like the established suffering and maternal images, reflect the thoughts and ideas of late medieval preachers, presented to the widest possible audience, from clerical to lay persons, men and women, from king, to noble, to commoner. The martial Christ had a message for every medieval Christian. This thesis attempts to not only identify the martial Christ within the sermon corpus, but to analyse what this image reveals about our understanding of late medieval Christocentric devotion. Literary works were becoming increasingly accessible in the later Middle Ages, but even those works composed in the vernacular had a limited readership. Popular sermons on the other hand were the primary method of mass communication throughout the Middle Ages and would have a much greater impact on the populace than any other medium, possibly with the exception of artistic representations in churches. So, while an increasing number of lay men and women had access to new vernacular texts and new mediums to use as devotional tools, the majority of lay Christians still relied on the instruction and guidance of their preacher. Thus, to have a complete picture of how the medieval Christian understood the complex nature of Christ, both his human and divine

manifestations, the martial Christ as presented in the sermons of the later Middle Ages must be included within the discussion of Christocentric devotion.

Chapter 1 – A Christian Culture of Knighthood

In order to fully understand the notion of a martial or chivalric Christ in later medieval sermons, perceptions of violence and warfare, spiritual and literal, as well as perceptions of chivalry must first be placed within the particular traditions that influenced late medieval English preaching. This includes the eleventh and twelfth-century monastic language of warfare, appropriated by monastic communities in the liturgy and used to support their relationships with lay patrons; the long crusading history from the eleventh to the fifteenth century and its impact, if any, on the notion of a fighting Christ; and the perceptions of chivalry, the chivalric code, and models of knighthood in late medieval England. Each of these informed the representations of Christ as a knight and warrior found in the sermons of the popular preaching movement of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Monks and Warfare: the Monastic Language of Violence

Before thirteenth-century churchmen and crusaders redefined the term *militia Dei* to include the literal battle against pagan enemies of the Christian faith, patristic commentators and their successors had long ago associated spiritual warfare with members of the monastic community. A robust martial language is found in the liturgical texts and ritual of everyday monastic life. Monks self-identified with the tradition of the *milites Christi* and spiritual warfare, equipping themselves with the ‘arma Dei’ spoken of in St Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. They did so in order to wage a daily battle against sin and evil on behalf of themselves and their lay patrons.¹ The tone of martial language used among monastic communities remained prevalent in the popular sermons of the later

¹ Katherine Allen Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture* (Suffolk, 2011), 9-10; James A Brundage, ‘Crusades, Clerics, and Violence: Reflections on a Canonical Theme,’ in *The Experience of Crusading*, i, eds. Marcus Bull and Norman Housley (Cambridge, 2003), 147-56.

Middle Ages, preached to both clergy and laity, forming an unbroken chain of clerics applying violent imagery to the actions of the followers of Christ, both spiritual and literal. These ‘monastic warriors’ were first influenced by the writings of the Church Fathers, as well as finding exemplars in the Old Testament scriptures. St Augustine’s justification of warfare was his attempt to reconcile the Christian concepts of peace and pacifism with Roman law. His writings and opinions remained influential throughout the Middle Ages. While he desired to reconcile peace and war, Augustine still held great reservations about warfare, lamenting over the evils of past wars.² Yet he approved of a Christian’s involvement in wars in which the ultimate goal was to secure peace. He argued that wars were rough punishment for the sins and crimes of those involved and in some cases were indeed just.³ He referred to great characters of the Old Testament, such as Moses and Joshua, to justify his rationale. Drawing from Cicero’s *De Officiis*, Augustine redefined a just war as one which avenges injuries (*iusta bella ulciscuntur iniurias*), or one waged against a people or city who disregard the punishments of wrong-doers or for the return of what they unjustly seized.⁴ As long as individuals were not using physical violence against private persons, even in self-defence, the violence was justified. Katherine Allen Smith points to the importance of St Ambrose recommending the warrior David as a behavioural exemplar for clerics in his *De Officiis*, as well as Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and Job.⁵ The great prophets and kings of the Old Testament were transformed into models of Christian virtues, and the readers of patristic commentaries developed these characters even further, making them honorary *milites Christi*.⁶ When pursuing virtuous exemplars as the justification for spiritual warfare and inspiring lay warriors, such military leaders as Moses and David were obvious and acceptable choices to monastic writers.

² Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XIX, 7, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, 1950), 310-11.

³ Frederick H Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1975), 16.

⁴ Russell, *Just War*, 18.

⁵ Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture*, 12.

⁶ Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture*, 12.

The presence of militaristic language is evident in both the Divine Office and liturgy rehearsed daily by the monks of the various monastic orders. These rituals were important elements of monastic identity and included the role of the *miles Christi*. Here too, Augustine influenced later medieval thinkers. His *Enarrationes in Psalmos* attempted to re-envision the Psalms and their pugnacious God to conform to the Pauline model of spiritual warfare found in Ephesians. For example, Augustine transformed the violent imagery of Psalm 7:13-14: ‘Unless you will be converted, he will brandish his sword: he hath bent his bow and made it ready. And in it he hath prepared the instruments of death, he hath made ready his arrows for them that burn.’ Augustine suggested that the bow represents Scripture, the arrows the apostles, and Christ the sword.⁷ For those monks who recited Psalms daily, the language of the Psalms, which included substantial martial terminology, would naturally become part of their everyday vocabulary. Commentaries such as that of Augustine meant that images of warfare and battle would all the more easily come to mind when preaching and writing.

Smith argued that with the permeation of the texts of the Divine Office by martial language, ‘liturgical actions mediated monastic communities’ relationship to war and warriors, and the perception of liturgical prayer as a particularly potent form of spiritual warfare strongly shaped monastic spirituality.’⁸ The use of this language presented itself in two important ways: first, the monk’s self-identification as a spiritual warrior engaged in a battle against unseen forces; and second, in their occasional dealings with the world outside the monastery, when speaking to those lay persons whose daily life involved literal warfare. Inside the walls of the monastery, clerics identified themselves as great warriors; reaching outside their enclosures, monks shaped liturgical prayer into a weapon, praying for the victory of leaders in battle.

⁷ Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture*, 25.

⁸ Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture*, 28.

Lay patrons of monasteries were eager for that weapon to be wielded in their favour and thus monks prayed for their local patron's victories as well.⁹ By c. 1000, lay patrons readily sought monastic support through prayer for success in battle.¹⁰ The following example shows one eleventh-century preacher's careful balance between his approval of violent acts in battle with the watchful eye of God upon them, and the condemnation of unjust acts during war:

... you who have the Christian name and bear the standard of the cross on your brow ... with God's help you defend the Christian name ... Abstain from evil deeds, abstain from carnal desire, put God in front of your eyes ... Act in such a way that God does not desert you on the day of tribulation ... Let the shield of his piety protect and defend you ... know that God does not desert you, because your opponents who battle against you, are battling not only against you, but against God ... Whatever you do, do it for God and God will fight for you.¹¹

Sermons which adopted messages of violence, delivered well into the eleventh century, are an early example of the communication of martial imagery and ideas delivered by the Church to the laity. By the fourteenth century, images of warfare had become customary in popular preaching and Christ was used as the model for such behaviour.

Prior to popular dissemination however, martial imagery was deeply embedded within monastic culture. The transmission of the notion that the monastic ideal was fulfilled by spiritual military service evolved with the various 'rules' created during the early medieval centuries in the Latin West. Augustine described the monastic life as 'holy warfare',¹² while Cassian imported the militant asceticism of the East into the monasteries of the West.¹³ His works influenced the writings of Gregory the Great as well as the *Rule of Benedict*. For Cassian, the monk held warrior status and could be promoted within the monastic militia, wore spiritual armour, and waged battle against vices, demons, and the

⁹ Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture*, 29.

¹⁰ Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture*, 31.

¹¹ 'Letter of Consolation for those Going off to War,' trans. Michael C McCormick, 'The Liturgy of War from Antiquity to the Crusades,' in *The Sword of the Lord: Military Chaplains from the First to the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Doris L Bergen (Notre Dame, 2004), 58-60.

¹² Augustine, *De opere monachorum*, c.22.26, 25.32, 26.35, ed. in *PL* 40: 57– 82 (at cols. 569, 571– 2, 574).

¹³ Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture*, 90.

flesh.¹⁴ The *Rule of Benedict* also envisioned the monastic life as a militia and the tasks of the monk as battles he must wage to gain victory.¹⁵ The illuminated copy of Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job* made at Cîteaux is striking in the many kinds of violence it depicts. Those who are overtly knightly are always portrayed victorious, while those figures not necessarily knighted (for example, an unarmed man battling a dragon) are in tenuous or unfortunate circumstances.¹⁶ Knighthood here seems to be glorified. Conrad Rudolph notes that while military imagery used to describe the spiritual struggle dates to the beginning of monasticism, 'the specifically knightly predilection in this type of imagery received special emphasis within the monastic culture of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, and the Cistercians were among the most active in this practice,' referring to themselves as the 'new knights of Christ' in the *Exordium Parvum*, the official account of their origins.¹⁷

Monks lived their lives according to rigid monastic rules and daily decrees which were imbued with martial rhetoric. The evidence of this language can be found in the sermons, letters, and hagiographies of nearly all monastic authors. A few examples from prominent and mainstream monastic authors are given here to demonstrate the parallels between these and the sermons to be discussed in subsequent chapters.

The account of the life of St Hugh (Adam of Eynsham, ca. 1196-1232) described his encounter with a multitude of new temptations as he entered his cell, early in his religious life:

Rather did the tempter direct all the ancient weapons of his infernal armoury against a new recruit to this holy warfare, and in particular, as if from a very

¹⁴ For a brief overview on Cassian works and influence, see Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (Oxford, 1999), 24–7.

¹⁵ For martial language in Benedict's *Rule*, see his Prologue and description of an anchorite in chapter 2; Joan D Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict: Insight for the Ages* (Slough, 1992), 19, 32-3; Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture*, 93.

¹⁶ Conrad Rudolph, *Violence and Daily Life: Reading, Art, and Polemics in the Cîteaux Moralia in Job* (Princeton, 1997), 43.

¹⁷ Rudolph, *Violence and Daily Life*, 43.

powerful crossbow, he shot bolts which, he hoped, I could not resist since they were part of myself. I mean that he aroused my carnal lusts.¹⁸

Hugh described this struggle as being incited, assailed, and buffeted and it is only through the intervention of Christ that Hugh was saved from these temptations after ‘besieging’ Heaven with his groans.¹⁹ Although Christ is not described as a warrior in this instance, it is not unreasonable to think that for Hugh, and for Adam’s readers, Christ may have wielded some sort of weaponry to gain his victory.

Likewise, in a letter written by Peter Damian to his friend the hermit William, Peter advised William employing martial rhetoric:

Do not allow the flying javelins of the enemy to terrify you ... the loud blasts of trumpets to frighten you, not the dense forest of weaponry to keep you locked in your room. But like a famous warrior who has put aside all fear, come out and break into the ranks of the enemy like lightening sent from heaven. Take up arms like a man, and bearing the banner of Christ, eagerly charge where the battle rages hand to hand. Be quick to cut down with your sword whatever is near you, and always remember to protect yourself ... with the shield of faith.²⁰

Peter reconciled any concerns William might have had over committing a violent act, even a metaphorical one, by instructing him not to fear inflicting wounds, but rather to look to Solomon’s words: ‘Do not be afraid when...evil strikes at you; for the Lord will be at your side.’²¹ Peter then quotes Paul from Ephesians 6, concluding that William only needs to arm himself with God’s armour and he shall overcome evil.

In the correspondences between Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny and Bernard of Clairvaux, reflections on the political issues plaguing Europe and the Church in the twelfth century are aggressively, and sometimes sarcastically, discussed.²² Their final correspondence, letter 192, is preserved only on Peter’s side and uses martial imagery to

¹⁸ *Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis: The Life of St Hugh of Lincoln*, v. 1, eds. Decima L Douie and David H Farmer (Oxford, 1985), 28-9.

¹⁹ *Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis*, 28.

²⁰ Peter Damian, ‘Letter 10,’ *Letters 1-30, The Father of the Church, Mediaeval Continuation*, trans. Owen J Blum (Washington, D.C., 1989), 113-123, at 122.

²¹ Peter Damian, ‘Letter 10,’ 122; Proverbs 3:25-6.

²² For all of the letters between Peter and Barnard, see Gillian R Knight, *The Correspondence between Peter the Venerable and Bernard of Clairvaux: A Semantic and Structural Analysis* (Ashgate: Hants, 2002).

discuss the issues between the two men and the Church. The second half of the letter, in which Bernard's initial request can only be reconstructed through Peter's response, suggests Bernard had asked Peter for 'clemency' and to resume his affection for his 'withdrawing sons.'²³ The issue that prompted the request is not explicitly stated. Hinting that he will indeed heed Bernard's request, Peter wrote, 'It urges that they should feel that I found rather a father than judge in the bosom of the apostolic see, and that the sword already drawn to strike has been replaced in the sheath of mercy.'²⁴ Gillian Knight suggests this passage may refer to the Old Testament, where David sees an angel of the Lord holding a sword to be used against Jerusalem, but commanded the angel to put the sword into its sheath.²⁵

In the passage that follows, Peter continued his discussion of the sword. This passage alludes to Bernard's epistle to Pope Eugenius calling for another crusade. In that letter, Bernard claimed that the two swords of St Peter, one used 'by his command, the other by his hand' need to be drawn again 'in defence of the Eastern Church.'²⁶ To Eugenius he said:

If you love Christ as you should...with all your soul, and with all your strength ... then you will make no reservations, leave nothing undone while his bride is in such great danger ... An extraordinary danger demands an extraordinary effort.²⁷

Peter the Venerable took up the issue of the Church's two swords by anticipating the objection that St Peter no longer has the sword because Christ said to him, 'Return the sword into the sheath. Everyone who receives the sword will perish by the sword.'²⁸ He continued:

²³ Peter the Venerable, 'Letter 192,' in *The Letters of Peter the Venerable*, v. 1, ed. G Constable, *Harvard Historical Studies* 78, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 445-6.

²⁴ Peter the Venerable, 'Letter 192,' 445-6.

²⁵ Knight, *Correspondence*, 268; 1 Chronicles 21:16, 27.

²⁶ Knight, *Correspondence*, 268.

²⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux, 'Letter 399' in *The Letters of St Bernard of Clairvaux*, trans. Bruno Scott James (Gloucestershire, 1998), 471; Bernard's contribution to crusading commentaries and works will be looked at further below.

²⁸ Matthew 26:52.

It is true, I say, it is true. The Church does not have the sword of the king, but it has the rod of the shepherd. Concerning this the apostle says, “What do you wish? Shall I come to you in the rod or in the spirit of mercy?” And why do I say it has the rod? Rather, it also has a sword, according to the same: “And take up the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.”²⁹

While it is not entirely clear if Peter is taking issue with or agreeing with Bernard’s understanding of the two swords,³⁰ what is evident is the ease with which these authors use martial language, both from Scripture and in their own words, to demonstrate their points. These examples serve to highlight the difficulty in finding a monastic author who does not employ martial rhetoric to describe daily life as spiritual warfare.

The final example comes from a sermon by Jean Gerson (1363-1429). Gerson was a theologian and chancellor of the University of Paris who spent his retirement at a Celestine monastery in Lyon. While he was sceptical of monasteries in general and urged bishops to examine their local monasteries, two sermons preached to monastic audiences have survived.³¹ In these instances, Gerson took up the issues of the Cistercians’ abandonment of the ideals of St Bernard; to the Carthusians, he addressed the behaviour of individual monks who had forgotten the meaning of their vocation. To both, he used as his theme scripture from the Song of Songs and opened with a discussion of mystical theology. For our purposes, we find a description of Mary which uses martial rhetoric:

... beautiful as the moon in the conception of the son of God, bright as the sun in her glorification, and terrible as an army with banners in the defence of the human race.³²

Mary is at the centre of action in Gerson’s sermon, crushing the head of the serpent, terrible as an army. Images of a violent Mary are rare in the sermons of the later Middle

²⁹ Peter the Venerable, ‘Letter 192,’ 1.446.

³⁰ Crucial to Peter’s argument is that one of these swords, ‘used by his command,’ is not to be drawn by his hand. While he has followed the wording found in John (18:11), returning the sword into a ‘sheath,’ rather than to its ‘place,’ he has appropriated the possessive adjective from Matthew (26:52), ‘its sheath.’ Gillian Knight suggests that Peter the Venerable has omitted the possessive, targeting Bernard for selective use of Scripture; Knight, *Correspondence*, 270.

³¹ Brian Patrick McGuire, “‘Shining Forth Like the Dawn’: Jean Gerson’s Sermon to the Carthusians,” in *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. Carolyn Muessig (Leiden, 1998), 37-52.

³² McGuire, “Shining Forth Like the Dawn,” 42.

Ages, rather it is her son who will embody the role of defender of the human race.

The greatest example of the use of martial rhetoric amongst monastic authors is found in Bernard of Clairvaux's *De Laudibus Novae Militiae*. Bernard, the figure-head and founder of the Cistercian Order, addressed this eulogy of the military order to Hughes de Payns, Grand Master of the Templar Order and Prior of Jerusalem. Although this work is addressed to a military order, it was still a monastic audience. It demonstrates not only Bernard's familiarity with this type of language, but also his interest in knighthood itself and its reform, in speaking directly to the knights of the Temple.³³ Bernard provides a bridge in the discussion of martial language as both a monastic author and the author of the *Rule* for the Knights Templar.

The Influence of Crusade Preaching from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Centuries

It is essential to the larger discussion of a martial Christ to consider the crusading movement and the liturgies and sermons associated with it. We will then look to their lasting effects in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In subsequent chapters it will become clear that the representation of Christ as a soldier in the sermons of late medieval England is reminiscent of the previous centuries' crusade propaganda, but they do not serve the same purpose and are thus important in their own right. Both bodies of material have a shared rhetoric, but one that is employed for very different reasons.

The request made by Hughes de Payens to Bernard of Clairvaux seeking a code of proper behaviour for the Templar knighthood demonstrates the potency of the monastic ideal of spiritual warfare. For Bernard, the Templars were the epitome of this monastic ideal, wielding not one, but two swords, spiritual and literal, against God's enemies. The Templar 'is truly a fearless knight and secure on every side, for his soul is protected by the

³³ Jean Leclercq, *Monks and Love in Twelfth-Century France: Psycho-Historical Essays* (Oxford, 1979), 21, 91.

armour of faith just as his body is protected by armour of steel. He is thus doubly armed and need fear neither demons nor men.³⁴ They represented the ideal of both monastic and chivalric life. He said, 'I do not know if it would be more appropriate to refer to them as monks or as soldiers, unless perhaps it would be better to recognize them as being both. Indeed they lack neither monastic meekness nor military might.'³⁵ He then exclaimed:

Go forth ... you knights, and repel the foes of the cross of Christ ... Know that neither death nor life can separate you from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ, and in every peril repeat, "Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." What a glory to return in victory from such a battle! How blessed to die there as a martyr! Rejoice, brave athlete, if you live and conquer in the Lord; but glory and exult even more if you die and join your Lord. Life indeed is a fruitful thing and victory is glorious, but a holy death is more important than either. If they are blessed who die in the Lord, how much more are they who die for the Lord!³⁶

Bernard's enthusiasm above is tempered by his condemnation of worldly knighthood and the trappings of the material:

... there is that terrible insecurity of conscience, in spite of all your armour, since you have dared to undertake such a dangerous business on such slight and frivolous grounds. What else is the cause of wars and the root of disputes among you, except unreasonable flashes of anger, the thirst for empty glory, or the hankering after some earthly possessions? It certainly is not safe to kill or to be killed for such causes as these.³⁷

Bernard's text to the Templars remained influential throughout the Middle Ages, despite the suppression and eventual dissolution of the order from 1307 to 1312, guiding later crusaders and knights across Europe. However, exposition of the relationship between spiritual battle and the literal fight against God's enemies was not limited to the monastic orders. With each call to crusade by the papacy, preachers across Europe required access to crusade propaganda and model sermons to deliver to their congregants. Their task went beyond preaching the good of crusade to the recruitment of men and fundraising. Indeed,

³⁴ Bernard of Clairvaux, 'In Praise of the New Knighthood,' in *The Cistercian Fathers Series: Number Nineteen, The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux*, vii, Treatises III, trans. Conrad Greenia (Kalamazoo, 1977), 130.

³⁵ Bernard of Clairvaux, 'In Praise of the New Knighthood,' 140.

³⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux, 'In Praise of the New Knighthood,' 130.

³⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux, 'In Praise of the New Knighthood,' 133.

crusade preaching and indulgences were a highly effective vehicle for the mass communication of warfare.

Fortunately, an excellent comprehensive study of model crusade sermons has been completed and will be considered here briefly in order to use as a comparison to later sermons preached outside the context of the crusades.³⁸ Christoph Maier looked at the extant *ad status* sermons specifically preached to encourage crusading in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. *Ad status* sermons provided the medieval preacher with model sermons to be directed to particular types of audiences rather than simply following the liturgical calendar. Sermons for special processions, visitations, funerals, and preaching regarding military campaigns such as a crusade are included in this type of sermon. *Ad status* sermons were not typically recorded as they are particular to a specific event and are thus rare in manuscripts in comparison to the liturgical sermons. Crusade sermons, preached to announce a new crusade, recruit, fundraise, and mark the departure of a crusader or crusading army, were undoubtedly preached in the thousands. By the thirteenth century, the Christian church had been involved in crusades against Muslims in Spain, Africa, the Holy Land and Apulia, the Mongols, pagans in the Baltic, heretics in Languedoc, Germany, Italy and the Balkans, Orthodox Christians in Greece and the Hohenstaufen rulers in Italy and Germany.³⁹ With their recorded scarcity however, little is known about their content, yet much can still be learned from the model sermons edited by Maier.

Model crusade sermons emphasized the moral, devotional and penitential aspects of crusading, as well as their being essential military campaigns. They were however didactic texts, providing examples of themes, arguments and authoritative references. Thus, when composing sermons for their own purposes, preachers adapted the material for

³⁸ Christoph T Maier, *Crusade Propaganda & Ideology: Model Sermons for the Preaching of the Cross* (Cambridge, 2000).

³⁹ Maier, *Crusade Propaganda & Ideology*, 3.

their specific audience. Preachers who needed to recruit participants did so by promoting the spiritual benefits of joining. Those commissioned to raise money expounded the necessity and righteousness of the campaigns and how those at home could aid in the success of God's will. These sermons were tools of propaganda and reveal the manner in which the Church attempted to shape the public's view of the crusades.⁴⁰

The seventeen sermons edited by Maier are from five authors: James of Vitry, Eudes of Châteauroux, Gilbert of Tournai, Humbert of Romans and Bertrand de la Tour. All were academics involved in the pastoral reform movement that originated at the University of Paris; they were prolific in the writing of sermon collections; and although they approached these texts as aids to other preachers, they were still in tune with the public image of crusading at the time they were writing.⁴¹ Their individual approaches varied. James of Vitry composed extended sermons, much longer than the typical sermon; Gilbert and Eudes wrote simple sermons that a preacher could follow step by step and easily adapt to his own situation; Humbert and Bertrand's sermons can be described as abridged models, offering brief sketches that would need to be fully developed.⁴² These three types of models are typical of sermon collections.

It is clear by looking at both the model crusade sermons of the thirteenth century and the sermons preached in England over the course of the Hundred Years War that there is a continued influence from the earlier examples to the latter. While the later sermons do not employ the image of Christ as a knight on crusade, they present knighthood and the function of war in a similar manner. This is evident in the common themes found in the model sermons identified by Maier.

In the model crusade sermons, knights embarking on crusades are identified as *crucesignatus* (or *crucesignata*), that is, someone who has taken the crusading vow and

⁴⁰ Maier, *Crusade Propaganda & Ideology*, 3.

⁴¹ Maier, *Crusade Propaganda & Ideology*, 16.

⁴² Maier, *Crusade Propaganda & Ideology*, 33.

attached a cross onto their clothing. They are described as one taking, supporting, or receiving the cross. These terms are specific to crusade sermons and are not found in the sermons of fourteenth and fifteenth-century England. Yet, there are some terms that are found in both. Crusaders are described as soldiers (*milites*) who have joined the army or militia of God and/or Christ (*militia Dei/Christi*). They are fighting a war for God (*pugna Dei*) or for Christ (*pro Christo pugnare*).⁴³ Eudes de Châteauroux described the crusader:

And today, who but the knights more aptly and more evidently trust that Christ is their lord? They follow his call and form his army, Isaiah 46: *Calling a bird from the east and from a distant land a man of my will*. They follow the Lord's call like noble birds and they form his army and cavalry; thus they trust that he is their lord.⁴⁴

These same motifs are found in the sermons of late medieval English preachers.⁴⁵ A common trope includes knights, as well as clerics and lay persons, engaging in spiritual warfare, described as the soldiers of Christ (*miles Christi*):

Yet through baptism, he is liberated from original sin and the servitude of the devil; and the soldiers of Christ are made the heirs of heaven...Just as in Job 7: *The life of man upon earth is warfare* and 2 Timothy 2: *Labour as a good soldier of Christ Jesus*. This soldier is not ordained to strike at the air⁴⁶ and the nearest thing in nature [human beings], but to drive out spirits, to tame the powers and princes of darkness, to tame/master/subdue the illicit stirrings of the flesh, and to resist the suggestions of Satan, with his worldly accomplices, and those of worldly desires. Firstly, according to the last chapter of Ephesians: *For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and power, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places*. According to 1 Corinthians 9: *I so fight, not as one beating the*

⁴³ Maier, *Crusade Propaganda & Ideology*, 54.

⁴⁴ Eudes de Châteauroux, Sermo II, section 4, in *Crusade Propaganda & Ideology*, ed. Maier, 147.

⁴⁵ The following example is found in Oxford, Magdalen College MS 79, ff. 10v-14v, henceforth MS Magdalen 79; discussed in Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 100-15, 453-61.

⁴⁶ *Aerias* is a particularly interesting term used here to mean spirit or demon. Relating demons as creatures of air was a common trope in the Middle Ages. In Aquinas' *Treatise on Separate Substances*, he relates Augustine's interpretation of demonic nature: 'demons are airy animals because they have the nature of airy bodies; and, for that reason, they are not destroyed by death, because there prevails in them an element, namely air, which is quite suitable both for acting as well as being acted upon,' in Aquinas' *Treatise on Separate Substances*, ch. 20, trans. Francis J Lescoe (Connecticut: Saint Joseph College, 1959); the term *aerem* is also found in the popular and widely disseminated *Key of Solomon*, a grimoire with as many as 144 manuscripts from between 1440-1825. The text asserted that Solomon, having invoked the name of Jod, 'was found worthy to have all manner of power over the Demons and the forces and powers of Air,' in *The Veritable Key of Solomon: Three Different Texts from those Translated by S L MacGregor Mathers*, eds. Stephen Skinner and David Rankine (London, 2008), 297. The sermon author's use of such a term rather than simply using *daemon* suggests he had contact with a text discussing the nature of demons.

*air: But I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection: lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway.*⁴⁷

The most common representation of Christ engaging in an aggressive act, or that of his soldiers, is in conflict with the devil. Sermon authors used this motif as an allegory for the battle with vice and sin in everyday life. Likewise, in the following example from University of London, MS 657, a late-fifteenth-century preacher used Christ's temptation by the devil and mankind's daily encounter with sin to demonstrate Christian knighthood:

*Then Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil [Matthew 4:1]. I understand from Job 14: [Shall man that is dead, thinkest thou, live again?] All the days in which I am now in [military] service, I await until that day when my restoration shall come. From these words it is clear that the Christian is the soldier of Christ, and therefore, just as he is warned [in advance], he should be bathed for military honour, and receives the accolade. For the Christian, this bath is baptism and receiving the accolade, is confirmation. He is in the figure of Christ who was a soldier because of old he was the one chosen for honour from a thousand and therefore, he was called a soldier who was chosen from thousands. Thus, it is said of Christ in Canticles 5:10: My beloved is white and ruddy, chosen out of thousands.*⁴⁸

There are a number of interesting elements in this sermon. First, the preacher suggested that spiritual warfare is not limited to those who are accustomed to fight, rather that 'the Christian', any Christian is a *miles Christi*. The notion that clergy and lay congregants could and should engage in a spiritual war with the devil to defeat sin is common amongst late medieval sermons.

⁴⁷ Magdalen MS 79, f. 14r: 'Sed per baptismum liberatur ab originali peccato et servitium diaboli; et efficitur miles Christi heres caeli...Iuxta illud Iob vii: *militia est vita hominis super terram* et 2 Timothy 2: *labora sicut bonus miles Iesu Christi*. Hoc enim militia non ordinatur ad verberandum aerem et proximos in natura. Sed ad debellandum aerias, potestates et principes tenebrarum ad domandum illicitos motus carnis et ad resistendum suggestionibus Sathanae cum suis satellitibus et concupiscentiae mundane. Pro primo Ephesia ultimo: *non est nobis colluctatio adversus carnem et sanguinem, sed adversus principes, et potestates, adversus mundi rectores tenebrarum harum, contra spiritualia nequitiæ, in caelestibus*. Pro primo Cor ix: *sic pugno, non quasi aerem verberans: Sed castigo corpus meum, et in servitum redigo: ne forte cum aliis praedicaverim, ipse reprobus efficiar.*' Translation my own. Job 7:1, 2 Timothy 2:3, Ephesians 6:12 and 1 Corinthians 9:26-7.

⁴⁸ University of London MS 657, f. 261a: 'Ductus est Iesus in desertum a spiritu. Pro ingressu sermonis accipio illud Iob 14, *cunctis diebus quibus nunc milito, expecto donec veniat immutatio mea*. Ex quibus verbis apparet quod quibus Christianus est miles Christi, ideo sicut pro monendus ad militarem honorem balneatur et recipit alapam. Sic quibus Christianus balneatur in baptismo et recipit alapam in confirmationem. In cuius figuram Christus qui fuit miles quia, sicut antiquitus de mille eligebatur vnus ad honorem illum et ideo dicebatur miles qui electus ex milibus. Sic Christus de quo dicitur Canticles 5: *Dilectus meus candidus et rubicundus; electus ex millibus.*' Translation my own.

Secondly, the preacher of MS London 657 described a portion of the knighting ceremony and relates it to the ritual sacraments of baptism and confirmation.⁴⁹ From the eleventh century, the Church made great effort to saturate the ideal of knighthood with religious meaning, symbolism, and imagery.⁵⁰ As mentioned above, clerics often included success in battle as part of their prayer and liturgy. Likewise, liturgical books included prayers and blessing rites for both the knight's sword and a newly made knight. Richard Barber compared these prayers with those used to bless the tools of trade, such as the ploughman's plough or fisherman's nets.⁵¹ He also noted that the knighting ceremony was often held in conjunction with the great church festivals because knights were often men from the highest of social rank.⁵² As the ideals of Christian knighthood became commonplace within the prayers, liturgies, and sermons of the Church, writers incorporated these ideals into their own works, such as books of chivalry and romances. Religious authors, such as Ramon Llull (d. 1316), and his *Le Libre del Orde de Cauayleria*, as well as actual knights, such as Geoffroi de Charny (d.1356) and his treatise *Livre de Chevalerie*, promoted their ideas of knighthood and spirituality. These chivalric texts emphasized the religious aspects of knighthood. Llull described the knight's sword as the perfect symbol of their profession's spirituality:

Unto the knight is given a sword which is made in the shape of a cross to signify that just as our Lord Jesus Christ vanquished on the Cross the death into which we had fallen because of the sin of our father Adam, so the knight must vanquish and destroy the enemies of the Cross with the sword.⁵³

Like Llull, Charny described the spiritual aspects of knighthood in great detail:

⁴⁹ For a detailed analysis of the knighting ceremony, see Maurice Keen's 'The Ceremony of Dubbing to Knighthood,' in *Chivalry* (London, 2010).

⁵⁰ Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2003), 42.

⁵¹ Richard Barber, 'Chivalry and *Morte d'Arthur*,' in *A Companion to Malory*, eds. Elizabeth Archibald and A S G Edwards (Cambridge, 1996), 23.

⁵² Barber, 'Chivalry and *Morte d'Arthur*,' 23.

⁵³ Ramon Llull, *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, trans. Noel Fallows (Woodbridge, 2013), 6.

On the eve of the ceremony, all those who are to be knighted the next day should enter a bath and stay there for a long time, reflecting on the need to cleanse their bodies henceforth from all impurities of sin and dishonourable ways of life; they should leave all such impurities in the water. Then they should come out of the water in the bath with a clear conscience and should go and lie in a new bed in clean white sheets; there they should rest as those who have emerged from a great struggle against sin and from the great peril of the devils' torment.⁵⁴

Charny's use of spiritual language is clearly an appropriation of sacramental religious practice; likewise, the MS London 657 sermon author related the bathing element of the knighting ceremony to the sacramental ritual of baptism.

Charny continued by describing every element of the knighting ceremony in parallel with each element's religious meaning. The knights were dressed in clean white linen symbolising their purity and freedom from sin; red tunics, which represented their pledge to shed blood in defence of the Church; black hose to remind them that from the Earth they came and upon death they will return to it; white belts to surround their bodies with chastity; and red cloaks, as a symbol of their humility.⁵⁵ The knights then held a vigil through the night, attended a special mass in the morning and completed the ceremony with confirmation:

Then the knights who confer the order on them should kiss them as a sign of confirmation of the order conferred on them and received by them, and that peace, love, and loyalty may be in them; thus should they strive on behalf of and uphold the order with all their hearts wherever they can. Then these knights should give them the collee⁵⁶ [a light tap, probably here with sword] as a sign that they should for ever more remember this order of knighthood which they have received and carry out all the activities that may pertain to this order.⁵⁷

While the Church never officially declared the knighting ceremony as one of the Holy Sacraments, it was very closely associated with them. Books of chivalry like Charny's and

⁵⁴ Geoffroi de Charny, *A Knight's Own Book of Chivalry*, ed. Richard Kaeuper and trans. Elspeth Kennedy (Philadelphia, 2005), 91-2.

⁵⁵ Charny, *Knight's Own Book of Chivalry*, 91-2.

⁵⁶ In the sermon, the term for this is *alapam*, literally meaning receiving a blow with the back of the hand, known as the accolade.

⁵⁷ Charny, *Knight's Own Book of Chivalry*, 92.

Llull's and the author of the above sermon demonstrate the synthesis of a secular profession and its ceremony with religious purpose and meaning.

Just as authors incorporated religious symbolism into the administrative actions of knighthood, in this case the knighting ceremony, they were also deeply concerned with the spiritual aspects of knighthood. While the military and political aspects of crusading are less prominent features in the model sermons, likely because the specifics would have been added by preachers, portraying warfare as an act of devotional activity was crucial to recruitment. It is important to briefly mention here that knights were especially concerned with their eternal salvation when going off to war.⁵⁸ Crusaders were portrayed as soldiers in God's army, doing his work. Preachers described the relationship between a crusader and God as an intimate one, defined by obligation and love.⁵⁹ The model sermons employ feudal terminology to explain this relationship. Humbert of Romans, in his second model sermon, suggested that just as a worldly king calls on his vassals to fight, so the Lord calls his 'faithful' to fight on his behalf:

... as kings usually gather a large force in great matters of impending war and open their treasures to give large gifts, so in the matters of faith and that which pertains to it, which are the major matters within the church, the King of Glory gathers his faithful through his vicar on earth to fight against the infidels and their supporters and offers a very large gift of indulgences from his treasures to bestow on those who will fight.⁶⁰

Gilbert of Tournai was even more explicit in his use of feudal analogy and his listener's obligation to God:

The Lord is afflicted by the loss of his patrimony and wants to test his friends [and find out] if they are his faithful vassals. He who holds a fief from a liege lord and abandons him, when he is attacked and when his patrimony is taken away from him, is rightly deprived of his fief. You hold everything that you have from the highest emperor, who today has you called to his aid; and even if you are not bound by feudal law, he bestowed on you so many benefices and offers

⁵⁸ Marcus Bull, *Knightly Piety and the Lay Response to the First Crusade: The Limousin and Gascony, c. 970-1130* (Oxford, 1993); Timothy Guard, *Chivalry, Kingship, and Crusade: The English Experience in the Fourteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2013), 144-58.

⁵⁹ Maier, *Crusade Propaganda & Ideology*, 56.

⁶⁰ Humbert of Romans, Sermo II, section I, in *Crusade Propaganda & Ideology*, ed. Maier, 217.

you so much pay, such as the remission of sins etc., that you must rush to this sign in order to be true witnesses of the faith like the sons of the eternal inheritance.⁶¹

Maier suggested that because feudal terminology was a recurring theme in the model sermons, it had become one of the established means of explaining the crusades: 'it could be used for justifying the crusade as God's war and explaining the nature of the crusader's relationship with God in terms of the duties and rewards which followed from service in the army of the Lord.'⁶² In other words, preachers employed the language with which congregants would have been most familiar to explain the violence and warfare that some may have had trouble reconciling. Indeed, the feudal system continued to be evoked in the sermons of late medieval England, in what are known as 'Three Estates' sermons. While the purpose of the three estates model is not to encourage crusading, it shares the functionality of crusade sermons as a didactic tool, a model to which listeners would have been able to relate. Proselytizing appropriate knightly conduct was a popular motif of late medieval sermons and the three estates model provided preachers one context to situate social mandates of behaviour within. As the three estates label implies, this attempted to reach all levels of society: those who preach, those who work, and those who fight. The martial imagery of this model was typically limited to defining appropriate behaviour and condemning sinful actions.

The most significant theme in the model crusading sermons is the crusader depicted as one following Christ by imitation; for the crusader, into death. This theme, *imitatio Christi*, common in the sermons spanning the Hundred Years War, finds its precedent in crusade sermons of the preceding centuries.

The concept of following Christ is developed in three ways in the model sermons: firstly, following him into battle, as a soldier of Christ; secondly, by seeking a spiritual

⁶¹ Gilbert of Tournai, Sermo I, section 6, in *Crusade Propaganda & Ideology*, ed. Maier, 186.

⁶² Maier, *Crusade Propaganda & Ideology*, 56.

union with Christ through the penitential aspects of a crusading pilgrimage; and finally, by following him into death. These models were employed by Eudes of Chateauroux, Humbert of Romans and Gilbert of Tournai, all of whom presented it within the context of Luke's account: 'If anyone wants to come after me, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me.'⁶³ For the Crusader, taking up the cross had numerous meanings: taking up the sword against non-Christians, the sword often analogized as a cross; taking the crusader's cross on their clothing when joining a crusade; carrying the Word of the Cross to non-Christians; or the ultimate imitation of Christ, taking the cross into death. Eudes of Chateauroux described these instances with praise:

Similarly, in how much joy are they immersed who put the wood of the cross into their hearts ... when they take the cross for the Lord, carry the cross after the Lord, and heeding his advice who says: He who wants to come after me, let him renounce himself, take up his cross and follow me!⁶⁴

And in this case, glorified death on crusade, a martyr's death:

Those who take the cross renounce, that is abjure, themselves by exposing themselves to mortal danger, leaving behind their loved ones, using up their belongings, carrying their cross, so that afterwards they may be carried to heaven by the cross.⁶⁵

Like their crusading predecessors, knights of the later Middle Ages identified their imitation of Christ with their martial profession. Geoffroi de Charny recognised the balance between the dangers of the profession and the eternal rewards:

And does God not confer great honour when He allows you of His mercy to defeat your enemies without harm to yourself? And if you are defeated, does not God show you great mercy if you are taken prisoner honourably...? And if you...die honourably, does not God show you great mercy when He grants you such a glorious end to your life in this world and bears your soul away with Him into eternal bliss? And you can see that no one should be too afraid or too overjoyed or too disturbed at such happenings, but should give thanks...and those who put their lives in danger with the deliberate intention of avoiding shame are strong in all things.⁶⁶

⁶³ Maier, *Crusade Propaganda & Ideology*, 60-1; Luke 14.

⁶⁴ Eudes de Châteauroux, Sermo IV, section 12, in *Crusade Propaganda & Ideology*, ed. Maier, 164.

⁶⁵ Eudes de Châteauroux, Sermo V, section 7, in Maier, 170.

⁶⁶ Geoffroi de Charny, *Livre de chevalerie*, edited in Kaeuper and Kennedy, *The Book of Chivalry of Geoffroi de Charny: Text, Context, and Translation* (Philadelphia, 1996), 133.

Likewise, Henry of Grosmont, Duke of Lancaster (c. 1310-61), treated the knightly profession as a form of penance, accepted by God, and as atonement for sins in his *Livre de seyntz medicines* (The Book of Holy Remedies). Although not explicitly stated, Kaeuper suggested that a reader could not doubt that Grosmont had his profession in mind when writing the treatise, as ‘the text crackles with chivalric or feudal terminology of wounds, war, courts, castles, siege, prison, ransom, vassalage, treason, safe-conduct ... [and Lancaster] asserts that because of his sins he is at war with God. He demonstrates his willingness to suffer as Christ suffered:

And if, dearest Lord, I have in this life any persecution for you touching body, possessions, or companions, or of any other sort, I pray, dearest Lord, that I may endure willingly for love of you, and since you, Lord, so willingly suffered such pains for me on earth, I pray, Lord, that I may resemble you insofar as I can find in my hard heart to suffer willingly for you such afflictions, labours, pains, as you choose and not merely to win a prize nor to offset my sins, but purely for love of you as you, Lord, have done for love of me.⁶⁷

For Lancaster and Charny, the idea of taking on suffering to be closer to Christ was a concept that not only suited their violent profession, but provided justification for it. Simply put, those knights that were concerned about their devotion to Christ and more importantly, their salvation, equated the demanding and dangerous nature of their profession with meritorious suffering, similar to the mystical understanding of suffering.

The theme of *imitatio Christi* is prevalent among sermons of the later Middle Ages as well, but the imitation of Christ is presented quite differently. Audience members were not encouraged to take up the cross and follow Christ on crusade; rather, they were encouraged to imitate Christ in their daily lives and private devotion. In doing so, they were attempting to enter into an intimate relationship with Christ.

⁶⁷ Henry of Lancaster, *Livre de seyntz medicines: The Unpublished Devotional Treatise of Henry of Lancaster*, ed. E J Arnould (Oxford, 1940), 4; translated in Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors*, 39; M Teresa Tavormina, ‘Henry of Lancaster: *The Book of Holy Medicines*,’ in *Cultures of Piety: Medieval English Devotional Literature in Translation* (Ithaca, 1999), 19-40.

Thus far, the model crusade sermons have provided a historical precedent for some elements that we will go on to examine in depth as they appear in sermons of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, while also demonstrating how the later material evolved away from the particular circumstances and demands of preaching the crusades. While the model crusade sermons were composed by authors associated with the University of Paris, men who were not preaching in England, model crusade sermons still influenced English preachers as well. Crusade propaganda was commissioned by the papacy whose directives were disseminated throughout England as they were across the Continent. By the thirteenth century, crusade preaching, under the authority of the papacy, had become highly systematized.⁶⁸ Pope Urban's call for the first Crusade in 1095 was delivered to all Christian nations and like those from the Continent, English crusaders were eager to join from the start. Christopher Tyerman's *England and the Crusades* is an essential study of a specifically English perspective of the crusading movement and the effects it had on English society and politics from the first crusade into the sixteenth century. While not aggressively pursued by English kings of the later Middle Ages, crusading was still undertaken by powerful men of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Two such examples are the failed crusade of Bishop Henry Despenser and Cardinal Beaufort's crusade against the Hussites. These two examples demonstrate the crusade sermons were still preached in the later medieval period in England, even if evidence of them has not survived.

Henry Despenser (c.1341-1406) was the fifth son of Baron Edward Despenser and grandson of Hugh Despenser, a favourite of King Edward II. Henry's eldest brother Edward succeeded as baron and fought for Pope Urban V in Italy and alongside the Black Prince in Gascony. Edward was described by contemporaries as 'one of the most

⁶⁸ Christopher Tyerman, *England and the Crusades, 1095-1588* (Chicago, 1988), 152.

renowned and chivalrous knights of his day.’⁶⁹ He was the greatest influence in his youngest brother’s life. With four older brothers, all of whom obtained knighthood, Henry was destined for Church service. He was given a papal dispensation at age eleven and made a canon of Salisbury. However, despite his Church career, Henry was awarded the status of knighthood and followed his brother into the service of Urban where he distinguished himself as a military commander in the Pope’s Italian crusades.⁷⁰ Urban considered him a promising man and later appointed him to the See of Norwich in 1369. During the 1381 Peasants’ Revolt, Henry quelled the revolt in his diocese. He defeated the East Anglian rebels at North Walsham, imposed imprisonments and summary executions, including that of rebel leader, John Lister. The Augustinian canon Henry Knighton commented on the event, praising the bishop’s actions:

... sent by the divine mercy upon high, who appeared with a strong armed force, and disturbed the evil doers at their work ... dealt with them as they deserved, some being put to death, some committed to prison, none being spared ... And when numbers of them fled to the church ... they who had not feared to ravage the church’s pastures did not deserve the church’s protection, and some were struck down with lances and swords by the altar ... They found no mercy in the bishop’s eye ... [and] his avenging hand reached out upon them with great joy, and the absolution of the bishop’s sword was not unworthily visited upon them for their misdeeds.⁷¹

Knighton was not shocked or appalled that a cleric was imposing sentences including executions. Rather, he claimed that because the rebels had come specifically to destroy the church and men of the church that ‘it was fitting that they should die at the hands of a churchman.’⁷² Knighton and Despenser certainly saw no conflict with Christ’s command of peace.

⁶⁹ Richard Allington-Smith, *Henry Despenser: The Fighting Bishop* (Dereham, 2003), 2.

⁷⁰ Lesley Coote, ‘The Crusading Bishop: Henry Despenser and his Manuscript,’ in *Prophecy, Apocalypse, and the Day of Doom: Proceedings of the 2000 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Nigel Morgan (Donington, 2004), 40.

⁷¹ Henry Knighton, *Knighton’s Chronicle 1337-1396*, ed. G H Martin (Oxford, 1995), 224-7.

⁷² *Knighton’s Chronicle*, 227.

It was two years later in 1383 that Despenser would use the 1381 risings as a catalyst for a crusade against the anti-pope Clement VII. The crusade was certainly approved by Pope Urban VI and King Richard sanctioned the preaching of the crusade in England. Despenser was permitted by Urban to grant indulgences to anyone who went on or contributed to the crusade.⁷³ He was also given authority to permit clerks to take the cross.⁷⁴ He was then licensed to preach against schismatics in York and Canterbury and to act against any opponents. When the presence of a French army in Flanders threatened English trade and security and the count of Flanders sided with Clement, the Crown had a strong reason to support Despenser's crusade as well; raising money by donation for military aid and indulgences had more mass appeal than raising taxes. Unfortunately for the bishop, his army was faced with the French Royal army and was forced to withdraw. Receiving no aid, he and his army returned to England. Despenser was impeached for misconduct and temporarily stripped of his temporalities; he regained them after taking part in King Richard's 1385 Scottish campaign. Bishop Despenser was not the only failed crusading cleric.

Like Despenser, Henry Beaufort, bishop of Winchester was another cleric actively involved in warfare. In 1426, he was offered the role of cardinal by Pope Martin V. The following year, in March of 1427 he was appointed legate for the kingdoms of Bohemia, Hungary and Germany and was entrusted with the management of crusading efforts against the Hussites.⁷⁵ He accepted and subsequently attempted to raise a crusading army in England to defeat the Hussite movement. The Hussites had become a powerful threat to the political, social, and religious structures of Bohemia, as they broke from both king and pope. And with the creation of 'field armies', they became a menace to their closest

⁷³ *Knighton's Chronicle*, 41.

⁷⁴ Margaret Aston, 'The Impeachment of Bishop Despenser,' *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 38 (1965), 133.

⁷⁵ G A Holmes, 'Cardinal Beaufort and the Crusade against the Hussites,' *English Historical Review* 88 (1973), 721-50.

neighbour, southern Germany. Thus, the disregarded Pope Martin and King Sigismund and the threatened German states required assistance and the papacy was the only power able to provide said support.⁷⁶ Once appointed, Cardinal Beaufort attempted, but failed, to raise a German army in support of the crusade against their enemy. With his next measure, and the support of Martin's granting a new scheme of papal indulgences, Beaufort turned his eye to the English in the hopes of raising an army. In a papal letter from Martin to Beaufort, the cardinal was charged with preaching a crusade in England.⁷⁷ Secular authorities were called to join him in the enterprise. However, political tensions in England made this appeal an uneasy one. England was having trouble financing and providing men for the own war with France. This led to a lengthy debate between the king's council and Beaufort and the papacy.⁷⁸ Pope Martin was suspicious of a secret conspiracy linking the Bohemian Hussites and English Lollards, but did not voice it in so many words. He did however point out that the English should consider helping since the Hussite movement grew out of the Lollard movement and England itself may face a similar threat.⁷⁹ The Church however never declared an official crusade against the Lollards, although many sermons of the period preach using a similar rhetoric of violence (this is discussed in chapter 6). The Hussite crusade debate was concluded with the agreement that Beaufort could have men, but the crown would provide no funding, and furthermore Beaufort would have to raise both the funding and the army himself by proclaiming, or rather by preaching, a crusade. He was permitted by the king's council to take an army of 250 spears and 2,500 archers and was seemingly ready to leave for the expedition in June 1430. Unfortunately for Beaufort his efforts were for naught; an English army was defeated by the French at Patay and the English were panicking over

⁷⁶ Holmes, 'Cardinal Beaufort,' 722.

⁷⁷ Holmes, 'Cardinal Beaufort,' 726.

⁷⁸ See Holmes article for detailed account of the debate.

⁷⁹ Holmes, 'Cardinal Beaufort,' 736.

Joan of Arc. Beaufort's men were sent to France soon after and eventually were all lost in the war.⁸⁰ It is essential to note that in the short time Beaufort had between the approval from the council and the raising of his army, it can be assumed that his crusade propaganda and preaching were a success.

For our purposes these examples are important in demonstrating the relevance of crusade preaching in England in the fourteenth and fifteenth century. Examples of crusade sermons beyond their earlier models have proven scant, and indeed none of the English sermons from the end of the Middle Ages are for the proclamation of a crusade. Yet even with this lack of evidence, they undoubtedly took place. It is possible that the sermons that employ the image of Christ as a knight do not utilize crusading rhetoric or narrative because crusade sermons were still being preached and thus crusading language was confined to that purpose. Likewise, the image of Christ as a knight might have indeed been used in late medieval crusade preaching. Without surviving sermons, neither scenario can be ruled out. It is clear however that the ideals of knighthood and the chivalric code, identified by Bernard in his *Praise of the New Knighthood*, as well as other later chivalric texts, are essential to understanding the representation of a martial Christ. As Timothy Guard has pointed out, the involvement of the English military in the crusading movement well into the fourteenth century remained a 'defining function of chivalric society' during the so-called 'golden age of English chivalry.'⁸¹ It is impossible to draw a distinct line between crusade preaching and perception and the sermons analogizing the ideals of chivalry; one simply influences the other. The crusade sermons of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries employ a rhetoric of violence and warfare that was easily adapted by fourteenth and fifteenth-century preachers into their sermons that espoused spiritual battles, presented within the context of the chivalric ideal.

⁸⁰ Holmes, 'Cardinal Beaufort,' 742.

⁸¹ Guard, *Chivalry, Kingship, and Crusade*, 1.

The Chivalric Ideal in Late Medieval England: A Brief Overview

The examination of knighthood, chivalry, and more specifically ‘the golden age of chivalry’ is a saturated area of scholarship. Nearly all aspects of the chivalric ideal, the code of conduct, and the image of the medieval knight have been approached by scholars seeking to uncover the social, political, economic, militaristic, and religious implications of one of the most important images of the later Middle Ages. Chivalry and knighthood have been analysed in medieval art, romance literature, pious treatises written by knights, codes written for knights, examinations of military campaigns, chronicles of warfare, what knights wore, what weapons they used, and the list can go on.⁸² The representation of a knight in medieval preaching however, and more specifically Christ as a knight, has not hitherto been examined. The following overview will provide a brief introduction to the ideal of chivalry and knighthood as it was presented to medieval society. These representations and the derived perceptions of knighthood will then prove crucial to understanding and placing the figure of a Christ-knight within late medieval culture via popular preaching.

At its origin, it is impossible to separate chivalry and knighthood. The term knight shares meaning with the French term *chivalier*, connected to the term *cheval*, or horse. Knights were fighting men on horseback, introduced into England by the Normans in 1066.⁸³ Maurice Keen defined the knight as ‘an aristocrat, probably of noble ancestry, capable when called upon of equipping himself with arms and a war horse.’⁸⁴ Nigel Saul pointed out that the ethic of chivalry came about from both the camaraderie which developed between men as they trained, as well as the efforts of the Church to temper and

⁸² There are too many scholarly works on chivalry to list them here. Maurice Keen’s 1984 work, *Chivalry* is at the forefront of the area. Works by Nigel Saul, Richard Kaeuper, and Norman Housley can all be listed here.

⁸³ Nigel Saul, *For Honour and Fame: Chivalry in England, 1066-1500* (London, 2011), 7.

⁸⁴ Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven, 1984), 1-2.

focus their violence towards ends they approved of, particularly the crusading movement.⁸⁵ The knights of the 'golden age of chivalry' had thus become something beyond fighting men on horseback. They were the embodiment of a glorified and possibly unattainable chivalric ideal. For Keen, the concept of chivalry is difficult to define, a term he described as abstract, unable to be separated from both the aristocracy and the martial world, but also fused with religion after the twelfth century.⁸⁶ Richard Kaeuper took this one step further suggesting that chivalry was the strongest of ideas, second only to religion, and has not been emphasized enough.⁸⁷ By the later Middle Ages, the knight is a good soldier, but also a good man. He embodies Christian ideals, upholds justice and peace, and like Chaucer's Knight, he loves 'trouthe and honour, freedom and curtesie.'⁸⁸ The chivalric ideal is not to be seen as a characteristic of the knightly profession that was also religious, but rather, chivalry was the knightly expression of lay piety, a deeply religious experience by particularly pious men.

As a result of this fusion of a violent profession with Christ's command for peace, forgiveness and love, knights were faced with conflicting roles as soldiers and peacemakers. As Kaeuper suggested, many knights were concerned about their souls and had troubling thoughts regarding the consequences of violence.⁸⁹ Didactic treatises were produced in response to the changing role of the knight and its growing emphasis as an expression of Christ-centred devotion. Geoffroi de Charny described the atonement of sin through the hardship of the knightly life.⁹⁰ He selectively incorporated religious ideas within the martial framework. His work embodies the religious mentality of chivalry.

⁸⁵ Nigel Saul, *Age of Chivalry: Art and Society in Late Medieval England* (London, 1992), 6-7.

⁸⁶ Keen, *Chivalry*, 16.

⁸⁷ Richard Kaeuper, *War, Justice, and Public Order* (Oxford, 1988), 187.

⁸⁸ Chaucer, "General Prologue," ll. 43-50, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. L D Benson (Boston, 1987), 24. For Chaucer's knight, see: Stephen H Rigby, 'The Knight' in *Historians on Chaucer: The 'General Prologue' to the Canterbury Tales*, eds. Stephen Rigby and Alastair Minnis (Oxford, 2014), 42-62; and *Wisdom and Chivalry: Chaucer's Knight's Tale and Medieval Political Theory* (Leiden, 2009).

⁸⁹ Richard Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors: The Religious Ideology of Chivalry* (Philadelphia, 2009), 27.

⁹⁰ Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors*, 37.

Charny concluded that the heroic and ascetic suffering of righteous knighthood merited divine forgiveness.⁹¹ As a knight himself, Charny justified his profession:

Were anyone ... to say that those who are engaged in a career of arms would not be able to save their souls, they would not know what they were saying, for in all good, necessary, and traditional professions anyone can lose or save his soul as he wills.⁹²

Justification is a common theme in treatises, both composed by active knights, but also by those observers and philosophers, such as Ramon Llull.

William Caxton printed *The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry*, his English translation of Llull's Catalan original, which was already a classic text throughout Europe in the fourteenth century.⁹³ Llull's text, composed between 1274 and 1276 was an immediate success and was quickly and widely disseminated. Llull was concerned with defining the knight's military and political office as protector of the realm and dispenser of justice, assuming that force would be necessary in order to maintain peace.⁹⁴ Believing knights to be ordained by God to carry out his justice, Llull's model knight required moral virtue. He often employed an analogy between the knighthood and priesthood, suggesting that lesser knights were to be obedient to the greater knights, following traditional hierarchical models; just as the lowest parish priest had to be obedient to those above, upwards to Christ, so did the knight.⁹⁵ In his exposition on the duty of knights, Llull (in Caxton's translation) stated:

God hath chosen the clerkes for to mayntene þe holy feith catholike with scripture and resons ayest the mescreauts⁹⁶ and not bileuyng ... god of glory hath chosen knyȝtes by cause þat by force of armes they vaynquyssh the mescreautes whiche daily laboure for to destroye holy chirche and suche knyȝtes ... mayntene the feith by the whiche we entende to be saued.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors*, 47.

⁹² de Charny, *Livre de chevalerie*, 162-5.

⁹³ Ramon Llull, *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, trans. Noel Fallows (Woodbridge, 2013).

⁹⁴ Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors*, 14.

⁹⁵ Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors*, 15.

⁹⁶ One that holds a false faith or believes in false gods

⁹⁷ William Caxton, *The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry: Translated and Printed by William Caxton from a French version of Ramon Llull's Le Libre del Orde de Cauayleria*, ed. A T P Byles, EETS 168 (London, 1926), 25.

The ‘golden age of chivalry’ coincided with the development and increase in piety and personal devotion amongst the laity. Charny and Llull could not separate the fighting man from the religious man and thus had to find justification for one within the other.

But the ideals of chivalry were unattainable for many, or even most, knights; this is reflected in sermons condemning the bad behaviour of knights. Knights faced an internal struggle because the idealised version they were expected to exemplify did not reflect the reality of a period defined by warfare and violence. Only in the person of Christ could the chivalric ideal truly become realized. This is the case in Christine de Pisan’s *Épître d’Othéa*, translated by Stephen Scrope, and dedicated to his step-father Sir John Fastolf upon his retirement (ca. 1441). In his dedication Stephen commended Sir John to ‘devote the remainder of his days to conflict those spiritual enemies that war against the soul.’⁹⁸

As a young author struggling with poverty, Christine de Pisan began composing works for wealthy patrons such as the Dukes of Burgundy and Orleans, as well as King Charles V and VI. In 1407 she wrote *Livre des fais d’armes et de chevalerie*, a treatise espousing strong moral opinions on chivalry and knighthood, in which she believed that the knight’s morality and relationship to God was inherent and did not need to be over-emphasized.⁹⁹ Pisan was well-versed with Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and used it as her primary source for *Épître d’Othéa* as well as French Romance and poetry. In the work, Christine regarded the classical deities and demigods as men and women who raised themselves up above others and were thus accorded divine honours.¹⁰⁰ The epistle is divided into one hundred ‘textes’ each providing moral precepts and rules of behaviour. In

⁹⁸ Stephen Scrope Esq, *The Epistle of Othea to Hector or The Boke of Knyghthode, Translated from the French of Christine de Pisan, with a dedication to Sir John Fastolf*, ed. George F. Warner (London, 1904), xxv.

⁹⁹ This text was also translated and printed by Caxton: *Book of the Fayttes of Armes and of Chyualrye: Translated and Printed by William Caxton from the French Original by Christine de Pisan*, ed. A T P Byles, EETS 189 (London, 1932).

¹⁰⁰ George F Warner, ‘Introduction,’ in *The Epistle of Othea to Hector*, xx.

his introduction to the text, Stephen described the book 'as wele off gostly and spirituell actis off armys for the sowle hele as of worldly dedys and policie gouernaunce.'¹⁰¹

Addressed by the Goddess of Prudence, Othea, to her protégé Hector, Othea encouraged Hector to attain true knighthood through the practice of virtue. Each text provided a lesson employing characters from classical mythology describing the appropriate behaviour of knighthood. The 'knyght of Cryst...shuld be know by the dede of armes in goode workyng, and that siche a knyght shulde haue the dwe prayse that longgeth to goode men.'¹⁰² The following example furthermore likened the preacher to a knight of Christ, required to be arrayed in the language of truth for holy preaching:

Wednysday is named after Mercurye, [the which] ys a planete that yevyth infuence off pontificall bahavyng and of fayre langage arayed wyth retorique ... Mercurie ... we may vudirstonde that the knyghte of Jhesu Cryste shulde be armed wyth good prechynges and wordes of techynges.¹⁰³

Mars, the god of warfare was also interpreted as the Son of God because of Christ's victory:

Twysday is named after Mars ... the god of bateyle may wele be called the Sone of God, the whiche bateilled victoriously in this worlde, by example; [and the good sperit shulde] folow his Fadere Jhesu Cryst and fyght ayens vicis.¹⁰⁴

And because ultimately man can only attempt perfection, even in knighthood, by striving to be like Christ, Christ himself is likened to the 'good knyght,' the epitome of the chivalric ideal:

Appollo or Phebus, that is the sone, to whom the Sonday is yoven ... the sonne, by whom we notyfye trowthe, we may take that man shulde haue in hys mouth the trwthe of the very knyght Jhesu Cryst and flee all falsenes.¹⁰⁵

Like her *Book of the Fayttes of Armes and of Chyualrye* before it, Christine's *Épître d'Othéa* provided a knightly audience with a manual for behaviour. The *Book of the*

¹⁰¹ Scrope, *Epistle of Othea to Hector*, 2.

¹⁰² Scrope, *Epistle of Othea to Hector*, 81.

¹⁰³ Scrope, *Epistle of Othea to Hector*, 23-4.

¹⁰⁴ Scrope, *Epistle of Othea to Hector*, 22-3.

¹⁰⁵ Scrope, *Epistle of Othea to Hector*, 21.

Fayttes depended much on the authority of Vegetius' *De re militari* and defined a code of conduct. *Épître d'Othéa* on the other hand provided a much more colourful approach by taking the fantastic characters of mythology and adapting them to a Christian context. Perhaps her second attempt at presenting knighthood offered a more approachable text for readers. In any case, her works presented knighthood in a manner reminiscent of Bernard's *De Laude Novæ Militiæ ad Milites Templi*.¹⁰⁶ Both offered proper knightly conduct within the context of just war theory, requiring just cause and righteous intent for violence to be considered acceptable.

Conclusion

It is because, in the medieval world, the nature of mankind was always striving to be like Christ, that Christ was the pinnacle of any model, in this case, the chivalric ideal. In order to reconcile the conflicting roles of a knight, one of a soldier, the other a Christian, authors, both clerical and secular, refocused the knights' position on the battlefield to one of penance and sacrifice. The ideal of knighthood became sanctified. Likewise, the language of violence and warfare used by monastic authors was utilised as a means to transform the monk into a soldier of Christ. The monastic life was repositioned to be one of a spiritual battle, their battlefield also sanctified. For monks in the cloister and crusaders travelling to the Holy Land, they based their 'warrior status,' spiritual or literal, on Christ's victories. It was from these cultural resources that Christ's representation as a knight, in later medieval sermons, came to be formed. Those sermons, which form the main subject of this thesis, were made for contexts somewhat different from the pioneering era of monasticism and from the crusades, but still reminiscent of them.

¹⁰⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux, "De Laude Novae Militae Ad Milites Templi," *PL* 182:924A.

Chapter 2 –

Popular Images of Knighthood: Romances, Vernacular Literature, and Sermons

Knighthood has thus far been considered in its idealised forms, demonstrated by the monastic identification with spiritual warfare, the justification of violence to engage in ‘holy’ wars, and the notion of martial knighthood presented in various chivalric manuals. This chapter is concerned with the presentation of chivalry and knighthood within English, and thus more popular, modes of communication and the perceptions of those who encountered these images; first in the romances and vernacular literature lay persons would have been familiar with, and secondly, in the sermons of late medieval preachers. It will explore the different concepts of knighthood found in these texts, their dissemination, and the ways in which knighthood was conveyed in the sermons of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This inquiry will provide the framework and background for the representation of a martial Christ in sermons, which will be discussed in the succeeding chapters. The widespread perceptions, while not reality and not the undiluted ideal, are important to the thesis because they help us to understand how preachers and audiences might have begun to make sense of the martial Christ imagery. Sermon authors were concerned with knighthood in two distinct forms: ‘proper’ knighthood, by which I mean the approved behaviour tied directly to the precepts of the Church; and ‘spiritual’ knighthood, or the practice of personal piety by knights, as defined by both the Church and the knights themselves. The depiction of knights within sermons teeters between the reality of a knight’s experience and the Church’s vision of what that experience should be, although it should be noted that some of these ideals, such as valour and prowess, indeed shaped the daily lives of knights and their actions in combat and were less idealised versions of themselves and more likely how they defined their status as knights of the realm. It is only the martial aspects of knighthood and their relationship to religion that are

being considered here, setting aside the administrative functions of knights, such as their involvement with juries, royal commissions, or their roles as landlords. This is because it is within the martial role of knighthood that we find conflict with Jesus' call to peace and non-violence. The non-martial aspects of knighthood already fit within the established Christian framework. Each genre, romance, literature, and sermon, is important to the interpretation of the practice of knighthood within society and the perceptions of readers and audience members when they encountered these images.

The audience that encountered the images and language of chivalry reached beyond the noble and knighted classes. While the status of 'knight' may have been privileged, notions of chivalry were presented to those non-knighted men still involved in warfare, as well as the common man or woman. John Barnie showed that while this elite thought of war as an ennobling occupation, in which their code 'successfully isolated them from the brutality and suffering which characterizes the [Hundred Years] war for most modern historians,' it would have meant nothing to the common soldier.¹ The soldiers that made up the English army were, according to Barnie, 'beyond [chivalry's] terms of reference.'² And yet, it is noted in a recent work identifying the roles and functions of combatants during the Hundred Years War that terms such as 'gentle' and 'esquire' were applied to men-at-arms, suggesting that their service required they have a 'reasonably elevated social status prior to taking up arms, or else that the military service itself was deemed to be socially uplifting' and the idea that an esquire was of a social standing just below a knight found its origins within the military context of the fourteenth century.³ Thus it is possible that the identification of the fighting profession as noble was not limited to the knighted class. Indeed, the aristocracy and knights conceived of their actions in the language of

¹ John Barnie, *War in Medieval Society: Social Values and the Hundred Years War, 1337-99* (London, 1974), 72, and chapter 3.

² Barnie, *War in Medieval Society*, 70.

³ Adrian Bell, Anne Curry, Andy Kind and David Simpkin, co-authors, *The Soldier in Later Medieval England* (Oxford, 2013), 104.

honour, valour, and the ideals of the chivalric code, imbibed through the manuals and literature of the period, but the common soldier was not entirely divorced from the ideals of chivalry. Recent scholarship has demonstrated the popularity of romances among social classes below the aristocracy.⁴ Likewise, the Church's interest in the appropriate behaviour of knights resulted in the presentation of chivalric idealism in the sermons of preachers. It is likely that chivalry, as presented in the various forms of literature and preaching, did indeed penetrate the imaginations of a wide range of social groups.

Chivalric Knighthood in Romance Literature

Chivalry in romance literature can be divided into three types: the chivalric exploits of knights, courtly love, and spiritual chivalry.⁵ The chivalry of courtly love will be looked at in the following chapter. Scholarship on romance literature often used to warn that as historical evidence, the genre is too close to fiction, divorced from reality. Richard Kaeuper for example argued that 'we must recognize both the prescriptive and descriptive stances as immensely interesting and informative for our analysis and we must strive to disentangle them.'⁶ In contrast to Kaeuper, Nicola McDonald argued against separating reality from fiction, suggesting that the genre 'provides us with a unique opportunity to explore the complex workings of the medieval imaginary and the world outside the text that feeds and supports it.'⁷ For McDonald, while romance was still relevant for historical and theoretical analysis, it was a form of entertainment and pleasure. Through romances, and through popular preaching, a wide-reaching audience beyond the knighted class was

⁴ See: Michael Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry in Medieval England* (Oxford, 2014); *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance*, eds. Raluca Radulescu and Cory Rushton (Cambridge, 2009); *The Pulp Fictions of Medieval England: Essays in Popular Romance*, ed. Nicola McDonald (Manchester, 2004); and *Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, eds. Ad Putter and Jane Gilbert (Abingdon, 2000).

⁵ Richard Barber defined these three strands of chivalry in his chapter, 'Chivalry and the *Morte Darthur*,' in *A Companion to Malory*, eds. Elizabeth Archibald and A S G Edwards (Cambridge, 1996), 19-35.

⁶ Richard Kaeuper, 'William Marshal, Lancelot and the Issue of Chivalric Identity,' *Essays in Medieval Studies* 22 (2005), 1-19 at 8.

⁷ McDonald, *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England*, 1.

exposed to the ‘imaginary’ of chivalry and romance. These images shaped how people thought about chivalry and knights, and in this sense, the ‘imaginary’ representations were indeed ‘real.’ For our purposes, the identification of ‘imaginary’ verses ‘real’ knighthood is irrelevant; it is the content of the representations that are significant, specifically the qualities of knightly prowess and piety. Any sermon-audience’s perceptions of chivalry and knighthood would have been based on the images in romance to some extent, and these would in turn have informed their reception of images of a martial Christ.

Using his approach to ‘disentangle’ fiction from reality, Kaeuper provided a side by side comparison of William Marshal with Lancelot; the former, a great knight and statesman who served under four kings from Henry II through Henry III and the latter, Arthur’s greatest knight. While this study is primarily concerned with audience perceptions of chivalry and knighthood despite its real or imaginary context, one of Kaeuper’s contributions to this field is important nonetheless: passages in both romance and historical biography reveal an undeniable fusion of chivalry and prowess; that chivalric identity based on prowess must also yield honour; and yet the fundamental quality of prowess ‘works under constant debate and insistent claims of guidance,’ typically as prescribed by the Church.⁸ Kaeuper has pointed out the contradictory nature of medieval knighthood, one that is present and often justified in contemporary sermons. In Marshal’s authorized biography commissioned by his son, *Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal*, as well as in the Lancelot romances, the qualities ascribed to the ideal hero ‘reveal powerful ideals from the society that created him.’⁹ Both works are literary representations, intended to reach a wide audience; the popularity of romance is well-known and Marshal’s biography was also likely intended for wide readership, at least

⁸ Richard Kaeuper, ‘Literature as Essential Evidence for Understanding Chivalry,’ in *The Journal of Medieval Military History* 5, eds. Clifford J Rogers, Kelly DeVries and John France (Woodbridge, 2007), 1-15 at 10-12.

⁹ Kaeuper, ‘William Marshal, Lancelot and the Issue of Chivalric Identity,’ 9.

amongst the court, including knights and nobles. Thus, these works, one a biography, the other a romance, provide an image of knighthood known to a wide audience, emphasizing the importance of prowess and knightly piety.

Although the romance narrative typically included moral and ethical lessons, romance literature was primarily intended to entertain its readers. Authors employed themes such as the adventures of chivalric knights because they appealed directly to them. The moral and ethical issues communicated through these themes were a by-product of the genre, but they nonetheless provide some insight into the role of knighthood and how readers might have perceived it. The most complete exposition of knighthood in a romance is found in the speech delivered by the Lady of the Lake in *Le Livre de Lancelot du Lac*. The Lady informs Lancelot that even the greatest of knights will tremble at the requirements of true knighthood. She urges Lancelot to carefully consider the undertaking:

This task of defence was conferred upon those men whom people commonly deemed the most worthy: men who were tall and strong and handsome and lithe, loyal and brave and bold, men who had all the virtues of heart and body. But knighthood was not given to them lightly or without a price; no, a heavy burden was placed on their shoulders.¹⁰

The exposition goes on to include such qualities as courtesy, graciousness, compassion, generosity, and above all, defence of the Church. The deeds of the knight are great, but only if he can live up to these expectations. It is no wonder the Lady reveals some scepticism when ascribing the role to Lancelot.

The ideals of chivalry are also evident in Gawain's battle speech to his knights in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*:

‘Fear not, my fine fellows, the flashing of shields...
If we fight the foe today, the field shall be ours.
Their foul faith shall fail and falseness be destroyed.

¹⁰ *Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, ed. Norris J Lacy, trans. Part 1, Samuel N Rosenberg (Cambridge, 2010), 112.

Those fellows in their front rank look frail and untested;
Their faith is in fealty to the Fiend himself.’¹¹

In just those last three lines, Gawain calls into question the main components of the enemy’s chivalric conduct: their Christian faith, their manliness, and their loyalty and honour. The enemy lives by falseness, their abilities and potential prowess are mockingly called into question, and their loyalty is not to the king (or Christ) but to the devil himself. The fusion of chivalry and religion is demonstrated in that their loyalty is expressed in the language of faith. The enemy has eschewed the defining characteristics of chivalric knighthood by renouncing their fealty and thus faith in God and by swearing loyalty to the devil. It is not however just the enemy in the romances that fails to meet the established standards of the chivalric code; knights, the supposed heroes of the stories, failed as well.

The values of chivalric romance often found their way into sermons. Sometimes the influence was direct, as with the following Arthurian example. Chrétien de Troyes, labelled ‘the inventor of Arthurian literature as we know it’ was the author of the five earliest Arthurian romances, including the story of Lancelot, as well as Yvain, in *The Knight with the Lion*.¹² In this tale, Yvain is convinced by a fellow knight to embark on great chivalric adventures. Yvain is so enthralled by his deeds that he fails to return to his wife. She refuses his eventual return and Yvain succumbs to a deep grief. He embarks on a new journey to discover how to win back his love. Along the way, we find an interesting episode: while walking in the woods, Yvain hears an anguished cry. Heading towards it, he finds a venomous dragon holding a lion by the tail and burning his flank with fire. Yvain decides to help the lion because ‘venomous and wicked creatures deserve only harm.’ He cut down the dragon with his sword, also having to cut a piece of the lion’s tail to save him. Yvain assumed the lion would attack him, but he did not; rather he acted ‘nobly and

¹¹ Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, trans. Brian Stone, in *King Arthur’s Death: Alliterative Morte Arthure and Stanzaic Le Morte Arthur* (London, 1988), 122-3.

¹² *Crétien de Troyes: Arthurian Romances*, trans. William W Kibler (London, 1991), 1.

splendidly,' bowing in total submission, bathed in tears of humility. He was thanking Yvain for delivering him from death. Thereafter, the lion stayed by Yvain's side to serve and protect him. He ate only after Yvain ate his fill, and watched over him as Yvain slept. After weeks had passed, Yvain fainted in grief over his lost lady's love. As he fell, he was wounded by his sword and bled. The lion thought Yvain had died and was thus determined to kill himself using Yvain's sword, but Yvain awakened before the lion could end his life. They then continued on.¹³ This brief narrative within the Yvain story demonstrates the qualities of the chivalric knight: bravery in the face of danger, selflessness, and a deep loyalty earned. This is part of Yvain's journey to redemption in the eyes of his wife. The very same narrative is found in two sermons of the fourteenth century: British Library, MS Cotton Claudius A.II and British Library, MS Harley 2247.¹⁴

The lion-knight exemplum is first found in the Cotton sermon collection. Cotton Claudius A.II contains John Mirk's *Festial*, a collection of sixty-four sermons for the major feasts of the Church calendar. Mirk intended *Festial* to provide straightforward preaching material for the many poor parishes of England. Along with his preaching manuals, Mirk authored the sermons to educate ignorant priests and thus the sermons contain numerous exempla. The lion-knight exemplum is attributed to Alexander Neckam.

Mirk adapted the Yvain romance narrative to fit within a Christian framework; the knight is likened to Christ, the lion to mankind. Like all sermon exempla, it is intended to teach a spiritual lesson to the audience, in this case, mankind's dependence on Christ, loyalty to and love of him, and his promise of redemption. Yvain's journey towards redemption has been transformed into all mankind's:

¹³ de Troyes: *Arthurian Romances*, 337-9.

¹⁴ Susan Powell, ed., *John Mirk's Festial: Edited from British Library MS Cotton Claudius A.II*, 2 volumes, EETS 334-5 (Oxford, 2009), n. 334, 103-5; *RMEPS*, ii, 922-4, 968-70, British Library, MS Cotton Claudius A.II, ff. 54r-56r, henceforth MS Claudius A.II; Susan Powell, 'A Critical Edition of the Temporale Sermons of MSS 2247 and Royal 18.B.xxv', 2 volumes, PhD thesis (University of London, King's College, 1980), v.2, 170-73; *RMEPS*, ii, 1093-5, 1128-9, British Library MS Harley 2247, ff. 84r-85r, henceforth MS Harley 2247.

Ensawmpul to þis I fynde, os Allessaunder Nekkam telluth, and is þis: þere was sum tyme a knyte þat went owte of his cuntrey into fer cuntrey for to sekon auentures. And so hit felle þat he come into a grete forest and harde a grete noyse of a beste þat was, os hym thouthe, in grete dystresse. Pan for he wolde sene whatte hit was, he ȝode neght and saw how an orybul eddur of grettenesse and of lenthe hade v[m]clyppud a lyon and so bownden hym to a treo as he leynd hym to sclepe. And whan þis lyon awoke and fonde hymself faste and myȝte not help hymselfe, he made a hoged noyse. And whan he saw þis knythe, þan made grette noyse, willyng helpe of hym.

Þan hade þis knythe compassion of þis lyon, but ȝitte he dredde leste, whan he were lose, he wolde a fallon to hym and fowtyn wyth hym. But ȝet for encheson þat he was a knyȝte and seghe þis lyon, þat is kyng of alle bestes, in dystresse, he drow owte hys swerde and smotte þe eddur asondur. Pan anone þe lyon, felyng hym losse, he felle downe to þe knytes fete as meke as a spaynell, and so algate aftur, nyȝte and day, in vche place. He sued þis knyȝte, and lay at hys beddys fette vche nyȝte, and in vche turnement and batayle he helpud hys maystur, so þat alle men spokyn of þis knyȝte and of þis lyon.

Ȝit be cownsel of som men, he hadde þis lyon in suspexcion. Wherefore whan he ȝode aȝayne home to his owne cuntrey, pryueliche, whil þe lyon sclepud, he ȝode into a chyppe and so saylyd forthe. But whan þe lyon awoke and myste hys maystur, anone he ȝaff a grete rerde and ȝode aftur hym to þe see. And whan he seghe no noȝer bote, he wode into þe see and so swamme aftur also ferre os he mythe. And whan hys myȝte faylud hym, þan he was drownyd.

Be þis knythe we may vnderstande Criste, Goddys Sone of heuen, þat come of a ferre cuntre, þat is, owte of heuen into þis worlde, and fonde mankynde bow[n]den wyth þe olde eddur, þat is, wyth þe bondus of þe fende, to þe treo of inobediens. Wherefore wyth þe swerde of [hys] holy worde and wyth hys harde passion he bowte mankynde of hys bandus and makyth hym free. Wherefore vche man þat is kynde to hys God, he wil þank hym for þat losyng, and louen hym, and be buxum to hym alle þe tyme þat he is lyuyng here, schewing þe lore and þe teching of hys Godde. And so whan he passuth thorough þe salte watur of peyne of deth, he schal come to þe ioy þat euer schal laste. To Wyche ioy God brynge ȝow and me. Amen.¹⁵

In this version, Christ abandons the lion (mankind) to return to his home country and as a result, the lion perishes in the sea. The author offered a moralization that those who pass through the salt water of the pain of death move on to eternal joy. An exemplum in which Christ abandons mankind would find the modern theologian perplexed. For the medieval listener however, the inversion of orthodox theology may not have been unusual. As a creative genre, sermons often presented fantastical elements in which the audience would

¹⁵ Powell, *John Mirk's Festial*, 105.

have been aware of the underlying orthodox doctrine. Literary and pictorial images of Christ continually expanded and, as Holly Johnson noted, preachers exploited explicit metaphors they assumed the audience readily recognized and ‘invoke[d] images in more suggestive ways, assured that the basic outlines of the image are already formed in the audience’s memory.’¹⁶ In this instance, the preacher may have intended to draw attention to the humanity of Christ by revealing his suspicion of the lion; however, the fault would ultimately lie with the lion for giving Christ cause to suspect him, while Christ remained blameless.

The sermon quoted below, found in MS Harley 2247, is based on the corresponding *Festial* sermon but has been slightly modified from Mirk’s version. While the story begins in the same way, the ending has been altered so that mankind is saved by Christ in this life and the next. The scene in which the Christ-knight sails back to his country has been removed and perpetual joy is gained by the removal of the devil’s bonds:

And so Criste lowesyd mankynde owte of the bonde of þe devell with þe swerd of his precious passion and made hym fre. Wherefore must euery man and woman shewe kyndenes to þat gode Lorde as þe lyon did vnto þe knyght, to be obeshaunte to hym, and thanke hym of his godenes and his vnbyndinge from þe bondes of þe devell ... so whan we shall passe the payne of bodily dethe, þat we may haue þe perpetuall ioye of blisse bought by Cristes blessid blode.¹⁷

The Harley author emphasized the need for every man and woman to show kindness, obedience, and give thanks for their freedom, rather than the previous examples’ use of creative theology to emphasize Christ’s humanity and redemptive power.

In both examples, the sermon exemplum demonstrates a number of things: first, it is an excellent example of the appropriation of romance literature into popular preaching; likewise, it shows the use of chivalric language employed by the author to illustrate the sacrifice and victory of Christ. While the focus of the authors may not be to moralise the

¹⁶ Holly Johnson, ‘Preaching the Passion: Good Friday Sermons in Late Medieval England,’ PhD dissertation (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001), 346.

¹⁷ Powell, ‘Critical Edition of the Temporale Sermons,’ 173; MS Harley 2247, ff. 85r-v.

ideals of chivalric behaviour, by using the familiar romance narrative and likening Christ to a knight, the authors have espoused these ideals within the larger context of the sermons.

Based on the portrayals of Lancelot, Yvain, and their fellow knights, these standards may appear idealistic and unattainable. And yet the romances are filled with anecdotes in which the very same heroes fail to live up to the expected standards.¹⁸ Lancelot is an adulterer; Yvain abandons his wife for a life of adventure; Gawain is an oath breaker, portrayed as angry and vengeful, and the actions of his youth result in Arthur's institution of the annual oath taken by his knights to ensure their virtuous actions. The list can go on. Likewise, historical accounts of warfare, battles, and skirmishes, especially during the Hundred Years War, provide an abundance of examples in which the knights and soldiers engaged in horrible acts of looting, destruction, and rape. James Wade points out that Thomas Malory, author and compiler of many of the Arthurian stories, was himself accused of raping the same woman twice, suggesting that while knights may have fully understood what was expected of them, the ideals of chivalry and romance were not always achieved in practice.¹⁹ In the cases of Lancelot, Yvain, Gawain, and others, their un-chivalric actions were redeemed by further acts of humility and chivalric deeds. Similarly, Andrea Hopkins described another form of romance in which knights redeem sinful behaviour.²⁰ In what she calls 'penitential romance', Hopkins suggested that religious poems with features characteristic of romance are not saints' lives, sermon exempla, homilies, or religious treatises, but are rather, religious romances. In this branch of the genre, rather than their virtue undergoing a test, being found true and given a reward, the knights in question – Guy of Warwick, Sir Ysumbras, Sir Gowther, and

¹⁸ James Wade, 'Ungallant Knights,' in *Heroes and Anti-heroes in Medieval Romance*, ed. Neil Cartridge (Cambridge, 2012), 201-18.

¹⁹ Wade, 'Ungallant Knights,' 202.

²⁰ Andrea Hopkins, *The Sinful Knights: A Study of Middle English Penitential Romance* (Oxford, 1990).

Roberd of Cisyle – repent, atone, and are forgiven their sins.²¹ In each of these four narratives, the sinful knight is transformed into a penitent hero.

Taking all this into account, the chivalric code, and more specifically, chivalry as presented in romance literature, cannot be simplified as a list of qualities found in a knight; rather, as Kaeuper has suggested, chivalry was a ‘force’ in its own right, which brought about major social work, and romance was one of its purveyors.²² Chivalry was important to social order in that its strict code provided boundaries for violence, defined by the ideal of honour. It was, as Kaeuper named it, a ‘code of restraint.’²³ It also contributed the ideals of knightly piety, reinforced by Christian ideals and virtues. Its place within popular preaching demonstrates that chivalry and knighthood were embedded within popular discourse, both secular and religious, at many levels of society. Thus, the presence of chivalric knights, and especially Christ as a knight, in contemporary sermons, suggests that chivalry and knighthood were not just codes of conduct or aspects of one social class, but were part of the ‘imaginary’ foundation of medieval society as a whole. The creativity of sermon authors is especially demonstrated by the malleability of both chivalric and theological themes in sermons and their ability to bring them together.

‘Proper’ Knighthood: Chivalric Knighthood in Vernacular Literature and Sermons

The case for reciprocal influences between secular literature and popular preaching was long ago made by G R Owst, and on this point at least he has not been contradicted.²⁴

For example Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, John Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* (The

²¹ Hopkins, *The Sinful Knights*, 19-20.

²² Richard Kaeuper, ‘The Societal Role of Chivalry in Romance,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance* (Cambridge, 2000), 97-114 at 99.

²³ Kaeuper, ‘The Societal Role of Chivalry in Romance,’ 99.

²⁴ The foundational work for the mutual influence between literature and sermons is Owst’s *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England: A Neglected Chapter in the History of English Letters and of the English People* (Oxford, 1966). The majority of subsequent scholarship on medieval sermons will both refer to the works of Owst and their debt to him, as well as furthering his work on the dependent relationship between the two genres.

Lover's Confession), and William Langland's *Piers Plowman* contain many chivalric themes such as images of chivalric knighthood, examples of social protest against the improper behaviour of knights, and the universal 'Three Estates' model, which are also shared with sermons. In whatever genre such themes appeared they were addressed dynamically, critically and satirically. The interplay of genres and themes made religious images of knighthood ubiquitous: a vital background to the images of Christ as a knight that will be explored in the remaining chapters.

The 'Three Estates' model was an important literary trope of the later Middle Ages, but it was first recorded by two eleventh-century French bishops and then appropriated into the literature of French authors, before its adoption by fourteenth-century English authors. In the case of the bishops, both emphasized the dependent nature of this tripartite relationship. Adalbero, bishop of Laon described those that pray, fight, and work as members of the house of God which 'may not be torn asunder; so that on the function of each, the works of the others rest, each in turn assisting all.'²⁵ Gerard, bishop of Cambrai similarly suggested that 'each is the concern of both the orders.'²⁶ The development of the estates satire genre in France and England lamented and critiqued the conditions of society and its failures, rather than the mutual support of each class.²⁷ The genre was enthusiastically taken up by authors of fourteenth-century England, secular and religious, in order to critique the nation's continual state of turmoil. Likewise, preachers of the same period adopted the model to critique the behaviour of the social orders, some more vehemently than others, in order to preach confession, repentance, and behavioural change. To preachers, and authors such as Chaucer, Gower, and Langland, the model was, as

²⁵ Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined* (Chicago, 1980), 7.

²⁶ Duby, *The Three Orders*, 7.

²⁷ The standard work on estates satire in England is Jill Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire: The Literature of Social Classes and the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge, 1973); for an early but comprehensive study of estates literature from its origins through the sixteenth century, see: Ruth Mohl, *The Three Estates in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (New York, 1933).

Maurice Keen has pointed out, a truism, the natural and accepted structure of society.²⁸

But it was also a model to be played with and made to address a range of concerns. The estates model demonstrated both what was expected of knights in its exposition of ‘proper’ knightly behaviour, as well as providing examples of social protest, as seen in the authors’ criticisms against improper behaviour.

In the works of Chaucer, Gower, and Langland, the appropriate behaviour of the knighted class can at first appear to be yet more idealised expectations of knighthood. This is certainly epitomized in *Piers Plowman* (*Passus XVI*, B text) where the knight is portrayed as Christ. This episode will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters, but it is important to note here that Langland’s primary image of a knight in *Piers Plowman*, a text which comments on the institutionalized social order of the time in the whole of the work, allegorized Christ as a champion knight. That is not to say that Langland placed the knighted class above all other social orders by relating the knight to Christ; Piers himself has Christ-like qualities too. Rather, Langland employed the chivalric knight as an exemplar of a perfect champion, in this case the Christ-champion. Langland subscribed to the traditional estates model elsewhere in his poem.²⁹ In *Passus VI*, Langland described the knight in accordance with the standard tripartite model. When Piers asks the company to plough a half acre of land with him, the knight is told to protect the Church and labourers ‘fro wastours and fro wikked men that this world destruyeth.’³⁰ Here, the knight assumes his traditional role of protector of Church and Commons.³¹

²⁸ Maurice Keen, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages, 1348-1500* (London, 1990), 1.

²⁹ Alan J Fletcher, ‘The Social Trinity of *Piers Plowman*,’ *The Review of English Studies*, New Series 44 (1993), 343-61; Matthew Giancarlo, ‘Political Forms and Institutions in *Piers Plowman*’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Piers Plowman*, eds. Andrew Cole and Andrew Galloway (Cambridge, 2014), 115-35.

³⁰ William Langland, *Piers Plowman: The B Version Passus VI*, l.28, eds. George Kane and E Talbot Donaldson (London: Athlone, 1975), 349.

³¹ In the Prologue, Langland refers to the estates of the realm as ‘kyng’, ‘knyȝthod’, and ‘communes’, meaning the common population of the community; see Giancarlo article from note above for a discussion of the commons, pp. 117-18.

In contrast to a brief appearance in *Piers*, the knight holds a much more significant role in the *Canterbury Tales*, with an appearance in the ‘General Prologue’ as well as a tale of his own. Knights are also featured in others tales, such as the ‘Wife of Bath’s Tale.’ The accounts of knighthood in Chaucer vary considerably and deserve attention, and yet it is the Knight of the ‘Knight’s Tale’ that has received critical interest. Much debate has appeared in the scholarship regarding this Knight and his true character. Chaucer described him as a worthy man who loved chivalry and truth; numerous battles are mentioned, emphasizing the knight’s prowess; he was perfectly dressed, a gentleman; a Christian on pilgrimage. The knight appears in this example to be a paragon. Stephen H Rigby and others have shown the depth of this characterisation, which must have rung true for readers: for example, the knight was socially conservative and the ideal representative of the fighting class; he was a mercenary adventurer who chose to fight abroad rather than fight for his own country; he was a challenger to ‘the ideological orthodoxy of the time by suggesting that those ideals themselves were perhaps flawed.’³² For Rigby the knight was an open-ended question, leading readers to evaluate the status and values of the knight within the context of fourteenth-century English society.³³ This final comment is in agreement with Maurice Keen’s view, that the Knight must be related to the contemporary scene of Chaucer’s lifetime.³⁴ This is certainly the case if the perception of the medieval reader is to be considered.

Chaucer’s Knight, along with the Parson and Plowman, may indeed represent idealised versions of each estate. Helen Phillips suggested that the brotherhood between the Parson and Plowman represented the mutual service required of the traditional model, while the relationship between the Knight and his son the Squire symbolised *gentil*

³² Rigby, ‘Knight,’ 43.

³³ Rigby, ‘Knight,’ 43.

³⁴ Maurice Keen, *Nobles, Knights, and Men-at-Arms in the Middle Ages* (London, 1996), 103.

identity, which was given its authority through inheritance, indicative of their social rank.³⁵

Although Chaucer depicted an idealised archetype from each estate, Phillips placed the *Canterbury Tales* within the genre of estates satire noting that every other character is shown in light of their sins and vices.³⁶ The Knight of the ‘General Prologue’ may be an idealised display of knighthood, or as suggested, one that is open to debate, presented by Chaucer satirically in order to subtly condemn the failed chivalry of knights. In Caxton’s epilogue of his translation of Llull’s book of chivalry, his lament over the current state of chivalry is revealed:

To noble gentylmen that by their vertu entende to come and entre in to the noble ordre of chyualry / the whiche in these late dayes hath ben vsed accordyng to this booke here to fore wreton but forgotten / and the exerces of chyualry / not vsed / honoured / ne excercysed / as hit hath ben in auncyent tyme.³⁷

He concluded by imploring the knights of England to emulate the knights of Arthur’s Round Table and the heroic knights of English history who ‘occupye so many large volumes.’³⁸ Caxton’s lament would come as no surprise to those reading his translation; by the end of the fourteenth century and into the fifteenth, opinions of the war with France had evolved and criticism of knights’ and soldiers’ motivations for warfare and actions abroad and at home were commonplace.³⁹ The ‘Alliterative Revival’ of the later fourteenth century, with political poems and satires such as the well-known ‘Simonie’ demonstrate the degree of social unrest of the times and the willingness of authors to critique it, even if anonymously.⁴⁰ Although sometimes celebrated in romance, the

³⁵ Helen Phillips, *An Introduction to the Canterbury Tales: Reading, Fiction, Context* (London, 2000), 27.

³⁶ Phillips, *Introduction to the Canterbury Tales*, 26-7.

³⁷ Caxton’s lament in his epilogue to Raymon Llull’s *The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry*, ed. Alfred T P Byles (New York, 2004), 121.

³⁸ Llull’s, *Book of the Ordre of Chyualry*, 122.

³⁹ See Nigel Saul, ‘A Farewell to Arms? Criticism of Warfare in Late Fourteenth Century England,’ in *Fourteenth Century England II* (Woodbridge, 2002), 131-45.

⁴⁰ T A Shippey, Foreward to *The Alliterative Tradition in Early Middle English Poetry: Political Complaint and Social Analysis in The Song of the Husbandman and Beyond*, ed. Michael S Nagy (New York, 2011); for a large collection of political poems, see: *Political Poems and Songs Relating to English History, composed during the period from the accession of Edward III to that of Richard III*, ed. Thomas Wright.

condemnation of illicit behaviour is explicitly demonstrated by preachers who were clearly indicting the well-known behaviour of knights throughout England.

The many examples of corruption, vice, and improper or immoral behaviour in literature likely reflected the reality surrounding its authors. The often cruel behaviour of the knighted class was not unknown to the other members of society. John Gower, a contemporary of both Chaucer and Langland, expressed his opinion of the social condition as thoroughly as a medieval author could, in Anglo-Norman French, Latin, and English.

In the *Mirour de l'Omme* (1377), Gower addressed the cause, condition, and remedy of man's position on earth, considering man's vices and virtues. He described the estate of knighthood in the traditional sense, honourable, virtuous, and as one who defends the Church, maidens and widows. He condemned those who stay home and make war on their neighbours rather than seeking honour in France. He claimed that people commonly say 'many knights can be seen who have lost their sense of shame and have become so violently covetous that their valour amounts to nothing.'⁴¹ In his criticism of the estate of knighthood in *Vox Clamantis* he provided the traditional description of a good knight in the first paragraph, but by the second, Gower posed the question, 'what honour can a conqueror have if a woman's love can conquer him?'⁴² Rather, he said, a knight must protect his honour above all things. Gower urged caution against vice for the knighted. In his final work, the *Confessio Amantis*, Gower's unrest over the state of society is demonstrated by the Lover's confession.

In this his most influential work, Gower presented the problems of the three estates in a very different manner to both Chaucer and Langland. This very lengthy Middle English poem is classified as a 'poem of consolation,' a genre which typically includes a narrator's restless state of mind and his search for peace; the Lover's search for repose in

⁴¹ John Gower, *Mirour de l'Omme*, trans. William Burton Wilson (East Lansing, Mi., 1992), 309, 312.

⁴² Gower, *Vox Clamantis*, in *The Major Latin Works of John Gower: The Voice of One Crying and the Tripartite Chronicle*, trans. Eric W Stockton (Seattle, 1962), 196.

the *Confessio* is analogous to England's search for peace and justice.⁴³ It defines Truth, Liberality, Justice, Pity, and Chastity as the means to deal with cupidity, all virtues to be found in a good ruler and knight, but in the case of the Lover, the means to save man's soul. The *Confessio* provides his absolution through confession, in what Russell Peck called Gower's attempt 'to conjoin social criticism presented in a nonfictional mode with fiction.'⁴⁴ Gower's three major works taken together present the knight first in light of expected behaviour (as in the *Mirour*), then through failures (found in *Vox Clamantis*), and then spiritual remedy (found in the *Confessio*).

As for Gower, spiritual remedy, in the form of repentance, confession, and penance, was the main objective for preachers who employed similar themes in their sermons, often using the three estates model. An excellent example of the traditional expression of the model is found in Thomas Wimbeldon's sermon *Redde rationem villicationis tuae*, its theme taken from Luke 16:2.⁴⁵ It is extant in thirteen English and two Latin manuscripts as well as a number of printed editions from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁴⁶ Wimbeldon preached the sermon at St Paul's Cross in 1388 and his audience would have included all levels of London society.⁴⁷ It was likely preached for Quinquagesima Sunday (the Sunday before Ash Wednesday), a day associated with freedom from bondage and the Day of Doom. The sermon opens with the parable of the

⁴³ Russell A Peck, 'Introduction,' in John Gower, *Confessio Amantis* (Toronto, 1980), xx.

⁴⁴ Peck, 'Introduction,' *Confessio Amantis*, xii.

⁴⁵ Ione Kemp Knight, *Wimbeldon's Sermon*, *Redde rationem villicationis tuae: A Middle English Sermon of the Fourteenth Century* (Pittsburg, PA, 1967).

⁴⁶ Much of the sermon is replicated in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS e Musaeo 180, ff. 242r-247v, a collection of English sermons; edited in *A Late Fifteenth-Century Dominical Sermon Cycle, edited from Bodleian Library MS E Musaeo 180 and Other Manuscripts*, ed. Stephen Morrison (Oxford, 2012). The sermon was preached on Septuagesima Sunday (the third Sunday before Ash Wednesday). This sermon is derived from Wimbeldon's sermon, duplicating some sections exactly and expanding others; it is a much shorter sermon, excluding Wimbeldon's entire second part concerning the day of death and resurrection. It solely looked at the ordering of society and is another example which applied the traditional three estates model. Discussed in Morrison's introduction, xlv and edited, 78-83.

⁴⁷ Horner, 'Preachers at Paul's Cross: Religion, Society, and Politics in Late Medieval Preaching,' in *Medieval Sermons and Society: Cloister, City, University*, eds. B M Kienzle, J Hamesse, A Thayer and D L Stoudt (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1998), 261-82.

vineyard. The labourers of the house are the Three Estates, priests, knights, and labourers.

Wimbledon applied the conventional model to these three offices:

Ryzt so in chirche beþ nedeful þese þre offices: presthode, kny3thod and laboreris. To prestis it falliþ to kutte away þe voide braunchis of synnis wiþ þe swerd of here tonge. To knyztis if falliþ to lette wrongis and þeftis to be do, and to mayntene goddis lawe and hem þat ben techeris þer of, and also to kepe þe lond fro enemyes of oþer londes. And to laboreris it falleþ to trauayle bodily and wiþ here sore swet geten out of þe erþe bodily liflode for hem and for oþer parties. And þese statis beþ also nedeful to þe chirche þat non may wel ben wiþouten oþer.⁴⁸

Wimbledon emphasized that as each of the classes labour, so shall they be rewarded and he concluded this section urging his congregation to labour in the estate to which God has called him. He then reminded those of the priesthood and knighthood that they are not only responsible for their own wellbeing, but must answer for the care of the others as well.

Wimbledon's sermon lacks the scathing condemnation of illicit behaviour found in other sermons; rather it presented a gentle urging of the Church's expectations of society.

Wimbledon's sermon emphasized the dependent nature of each estate, much like the early French bishops, Adalbero and Gerard.

Unlike Wimbledon, who presented a traditional estates model in his sermon, some authors found the classical form insufficient and adapted the model to suit their particular audience.⁴⁹ When an author departed from the classical form of the estates model, he would often appeal to another traditionally respected figure or analogy to lend authority to his deviation.⁵⁰ These deviations typically allowed for an author to expand the model to include additional occupations or positions within society. These modifications provide insight into the intended audience.

One such example of an adjusted and expanded estates model is found in MS Bodley 649 in which the sermon author compared the members of society to aspects of the

⁴⁸ Knight, *Wimbledon's Sermon*, 63; Cambridge, Corpus Christi, MS 357 (ff. 1ra-13va) at f. 1rb.

⁴⁹ Fletcher, "'The Unity of the State exists in the Agreement of its Minds': A Fifteenth-Century Sermon on the Three-Estates," *Leeds Studies in English* 22 (1991), 103-37.

⁵⁰ Fletcher, 'The Unity of the State,' 106.

temple of God.⁵¹ For this author, the walls of the temple are the ‘good commons’ (*bona communitas*) ‘who by their strong work’ protect society from thirst and hunger. The clergy and knights are represented by two pillars of the temple; the right pillar, firmness, or *rachyn*, as found in 1 Kings 7, is the clergy ‘who ought to be firm in faith and belief, firm in doctrine and preaching, firm in giving example, firm in life and in all behaviour.’⁵² The second pillar, strength, or *bos*, represents the knighthood, ‘who ought to be vigorous in supporting the temple of God, vigorous in maintaining the faith and justice of the Church, vigorous in resisting injuries, in chastising rebels, and in routing enemies.’⁵³ Once he had assigned the roles of the traditional estates, the author continued with his analogy, expanding the model to include the roof of the temple, those who venerated relics; the windows, those who are the preachers of the word of God; and the doors, those who are the bishops of the Church who have to keep the laws, closed at times and open at others.⁵⁴ For the author, each of these groups make up the spiritual temple of God, but each is falling short in its duty. Thus, the sermon then transitions into a reproach of the estates: Christ went out of the temple to hide from attack (this is the theme of the sermon, taken from John 8); those who attacked him he later threw out; they were those selling oxen, those selling doves, and the moneychangers. He threw them out because:

The moneychangers have cast so sorely the flint of false opinion [and heresy] at the pillar of the clergy that the true mirror of faith was on the point of falling; the dove sellers have shot so sharply the rock of dissention at the pillar of chivalry that the sparks of charity have flown out of all the joints; the drivers of livestock have thrown so often the stone of extortion at the poor commons that there was much wailing and wavering in the temple wall.⁵⁵

The goal of this preacher’s sermon is twofold. The first aim will be further examined in chapter 4, considering the sermon as propaganda and its overwhelming praise of King

⁵¹ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 396-417; MS Bodley 649, ff. 91r-96v.

⁵² Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 397; MS Bodley 649, f. 91v.

⁵³ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 397; MS Bodley 649, f. 91v.

⁵⁴ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 399; MS Bodley 649, f. 92r.

⁵⁵ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 399; MS Bodley 649, f. 92v.

Henry V. Sent by the Lord to conquer vice and sin, Henry is said to sustain the whole edifice of the temple, strengthen its pillars, and support its walls. Yet while it praises Henry, it condemns the estates he rules over. The sermon is another example of a complaint against society's failures during the war with France and the role the three estates play within it. Thus, this preacher's second aim is to encourage his congregants to alter their behaviour to something worthy of their Church and king.

Estates sermons are a further demonstration that the duties of knights and the values of chivalry that joined religious virtue to martial strength were very deeply ingrained in sermon culture and thereby in the population at large. Preachers however were not limited to the three estates model to achieve this. In a sermon found in Magdalen College, MS 79, John Dygon discussed the expected duties of noble lords. Although he did not explicitly use the estates model to explain the proper ordering of society, he concluded his sermon in prayer, asking that the virtues of justice, humility, mercy and charity be multiplied in every Christian estate.⁵⁶

Likewise, the duties of kings, lords, and knights are discussed in two sermons by Thomas Brinton.⁵⁷ Brinton was bishop of Rochester from 1373 to 1389. As a young man, he survived the Black Death, witnessed numerous battles of the Hundred Years War, and was a favourite of King Edward III. He was greatly influenced by the major events that brought about social, political, and religious change in the fourteenth century and this is evident in his sermons. His sermons are found in British Library, MS Harley 3760 and cover every sort of preaching occasion including a sermon in honour of the Black Prince after his death in 1376. He was active in both the politics and religious life of England and preached against the Great Schism, the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 and would eventually

⁵⁶ Wenzel, *Preaching in the Age of Chaucer: Selected Sermons in Translation* (Washington, D.C., 2008), 165-81; Oxford, Magdalen College MS 79, ff. 1r-4v.

⁵⁷ The 103 extant sermons of Brinton are edited in *The Sermons of Thomas Brinton*, ed. Devlin. An overview of Brinton's career can be found in Devlin's article, "Bishop Thomas Brunton and His Sermons," *Speculum* 14 (1939), 324-44.

oppose Wyclif. He was chiefly concerned with the state of England and thus rebuked all of the social classes alike, urging reform. In a sermon preached for the third Sunday after Easter, Brinton expanded upon the duties of knights in relation to support of their king:

I said ... that the King's earthly honour principally stands in three [things]: clearly, in military power, wise council and the wisdom of the clergy, and in just control of the people ... soldiers should offer the protection to the king, and protection of the life of the king. Because it follows, *Vegetius, De re militari*, book four, chapter one, soldiers swear by God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, they should do all things which the king commands with vigour and never desert the military service. Indeed, the duty of soldiers is to keep rule with order and to defend the church by the sword. Their responsibilities are to profess to honour the priesthood, to bring peace to the provinces, to keep off injustice from the poor, to procure a good reputation, and, if need be, give their lives for the commonwealth. Certainly, just as the honour held for our king is in his control, the strength and courage of his soldiers can be verified through him, 2 *Chronicles 9, magnified above all kings.*⁵⁸

He expanded on this further in a sermon preached at the Carmelite Priory at Aylesford, in the presence of John Grey, third Baron Grey of Codnor. John Grey was a renowned soldier under Edward II and a notable benefactor of the Carmelite House, founded by his ancestors. He was buried there in 1392.⁵⁹ Brinton related the establishment of the knightly class to the origins of Rome:

That the title of the 'knight' (*militis*) is in the name of honour and labour. It is of honour because, as it is in the history Rome, the city was founded and named by Romulus and Remus, a thousand warriors (*pugnatores*) were chosen and were called knights (*milites*) ... [and] of labour, because as we read in *Polycratico*, the soldier swears by God and by Christ and the Holy Spirit and will obey the lord in all things and foremost he vigorously takes on work, the soldier will never desert [the field], will protect the life of the prince, and for the [good of the] public, never flee death. And those soldiers who have received their swords from the altar are appointed to knighthood (*militiam*), ordained to protect the church, to venerate the clergy, to prevent injustice, to maintain peace and order in the land, if necessary, to shed blood for his brothers, to injure no man or his property, and to live from one's own means, not another's goods. Surely, the soldier who holds the title [of knight] is honourable. Who, if on the contrary, embellishes his military sword belt, who has forgotten what the attributes of a soldier are, rises against the Holy Church of God, violating ecclesiastical laws, and by unjust

⁵⁸ Devlin, *Sermons of Thomas Brinton*, 46; British Library, MS Harley 3760, ff. 23r-26v at f. 25r. Translation my own.

⁵⁹ Simon Walker, 'Grey, John, third Baron Grey of Codnor,' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/11545>, accessed 25 Sept. 2015.

means seizing the inheritance of Christ, despoiling the poor, aggravating their neighbours, maintaining disputes and violence, defaming prelates of the Church, abominably perjuring themselves against Christ.⁶⁰

For Brinton, the stability of the realm was as dependent on the fighting class as it was the king and the Church. Associating it with the establishment of Rome was to assign it a high honour and may reflect the presence of Baron Grey. Typically, as a bishop, Brinton's audience included all members of society and thus his sermons provide excellent insight into the expectations of each estate, even if his sermons do not specifically follow the estates model. In either case, the Church and its preachers were motivated to define the expected behaviour of the knighted class during the tumultuous times of the fourteenth century. The behaviour of knights depicted in sermons certainly came from the surrounding culture of chivalry and estates satire. Indeed, preachers adopted chivalric themes from popular culture that were profoundly imbedded within it. The concepts of knighthood were disseminated within the three estates genre intended to encourage knights to embrace their role as protector. For those outside the knighted class, the picture of knights described to them by preachers was one of strength and virtue, a group of men they should not just depend on, but emulate.

‘Spiritual’ Knighthood: *Milites Christi* in Life and Death

Knightly piety was demonstrated in the previous chapter in the treatises of actual knights, such as Geoffroi de Charny and Henry of Grosmont.⁶¹ These men in particular were acutely aware of the conflict between a violent profession and their Christian faith. They were deeply concerned with their salvation. For these men, the order of knighthood and the spiritual experience of a knight, including his redemption and salvation, were intrinsically bonded. This was demonstrated in their own display of affective piety and

⁶⁰ Devlin, *Sermons of Thomas Brinton*, 167-8; MS Harley 3760, ff. 96r-101v at f. 96r. Translation my own.

⁶¹ See chapter 1, pages 50-51 for discussion of Charny and Lancaster.

imitatio Christi. Likewise, the piety of knights was a significant part of the image of knighthood that made its way into sermons, and thereby provided the context in which sermon audiences would have received more complex theological messages surrounding the Christ-knight. Preachers embraced chivalric language and anecdotes in order to promote the imitation of Christ as a knight in the daily defeat of sin.

This is apparent in two sermons, one preached upon the death of a knight, Nicholas Malemeyn, the other, on the anniversary of Thomas Beauchamp, a military commander in the Hundred Years War. In both sermons, the preachers spoke to the chivalric deeds of the two knights during their lives, their spiritual rewards, and the need for others to emulate their actions in their own lives. The first of these sermons was preached by John Sheppey, a Benedictine who moved through the roles of prior, superior, and ended his life as the Bishop of Rochester (1352-60).⁶² Sheppey was sympathetic to the ordinary man and his sermons reflect his interest in the social concerns of his diocese. He authored sermons during and after the Black Death; he spoke of oppression and the struggles among the merchant class; and he criticised the war with France. These themes are addressed in the Malemeyn sermon. Sir Nicholas Malemeyn was created a knight Banneret by Edward I in 1300 and attended the first parliament of Edward III in 1327 as a knight of Kent. While he was not involved in the profession of arms later in life, there is evidence of his military valour and honourable service to Edward I.⁶³ Sheppey used Malemeyn's chivalric past as the foundation for his sermon; the fact that he returned to the knightly behaviour of Malemeyn's youth rather than the pious deeds of his later years demonstrates the authority chivalric deeds could lend to a sermon. Sheppey intended to draw a moral for the living, in this case his knightly audience, rather than solely glorifying Malemeyn. This choice was

⁶²A brief introduction to Sheppey's career and an edition of the Malemeyn sermon are found in: George Mifsud, 'John Sheppey, Bishop of Rochester, as Preacher and Collector of Sermons,' BLitt thesis (University of Oxford, 1953); Sheppey is also discussed in Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 26-30.

⁶³ Mifsud, 'John Sheppey,' 191-2.

intentional: Sheppey was being practical, using Malemeyn's chivalric past to present a lecture on the Christian life.⁶⁴

The sermon theme is taken from the Book of Wisdom 10:12, 'She, [Wisdom] protected him from his enemies and kept him safe from those who set an ambush for him. She intervened on his behalf in a difficult contest so that he might know that godliness is more powerful than anything.' Sheppey began with the necessary attributes to engage in battle, maintaining that Malemeyn fought bravely against sin:

A hard decision should not be given to a man who cannot foresee its consequences, because not thinking about the conclusion is empty and worthless. A conflict or battle should be conducted as though it will be won; therefore, it should not be given over to the weak or timid man, but rather to the strong and bold man who knows how, and is able, to conduct the battle to victory. This is demonstrated in Maccabees 2, where it is read that Mathathias, the leader of the Israelites, knowing his death to be imminent and wishing to ordain the best rule for his people, said: "Judas Machabeus, good to his men from his youth, may your prince be a soldier, and wage war for the people."

Truly, the whole Christian way of life, it is rightly ordered, in war etc. against those three famous enemies, *the world, the flesh and the devil, against whom this soldier strives while he lives - so that the pious may hope and believe that he has brought them glorious victory - so it might be said that God gave him difficult battles in order that he would conquer.* Which two phrases were exhibited in order that it should be considered how the soldier earned the right to be commended (for his actions). Firstly, it was the divine will that ordered him - 'He gave him a hard battle.' Secondly, the immense prize that he had from this - 'in order that he conquered.'⁶⁵

In his exposition on the theme, Sheppey emphasized that a pious man engages in spiritual warfare during his life and if successful, a crown will be given unto him, as found in

⁶⁴ Mifsud, 'John Sheppey,' 193.

⁶⁵ Mifsud, 'John Sheppey,' 202-3; Oxford, New College MS 92, ff. 148v-151r at f. 148v: 'Negocium arduum non debet committi illi qui nescit nec potest ipsum ad finem debitum deducere et intentum, quia vacuum et inane dicitur illud quod non assequitur finem suum. Finis ad quem ordinatur certamen sive bellum est victoria: quod, igitur, est ut certamen sive bellum non committatur debili vel timido sed forti potius et audaci qui scit et potest certamen ad victoriam pervenire. Figura huius habemus Machabeus 2, ubi legitur quod Mathathias qui fuit dux populi israelitici, videns mortem suam imminere, ac volens de populi regimine et rectore utili ordinare, dicit sic: *Judas Machabeus, fortis viribus a iuventute sua, sit vobis princeps militie, et ipse aget bellum populi.* In rei veritate, tota vita christianorum, si debitae ordinatur, in militia, etc. *contra tres hostes illos famosos, mundum scilicet, carnem et dyabolum, contra quos strenue pugnavit dum vixit mobilis iste miles et, ut pie credi et sperari potest, de ipsis victoriam gloriosam reportavit, ut vere de ipso dici possit quod Deus certamen forte dedit illi ut vinceret.* In quibus verbis duo se offerunt intuenda, ex quibus iste miles potest merito commendari. Primum est divinum imperium quod admisit – *certamen forte dedit illi.* Secundum est immensum premium quod ex hoc habuit – *ut vinceret.*' Translation and emphasis my own.

Apocalypse 6:2, ‘there was a crown given him, and he went forth conquering that he might conquer.’ He also introduced an important element that would have resonated with his knightly audience: ‘so it might be said that God gave him difficult battles *in order* that he would conquer.’ Like Charny and Lancaster, Sheppey recognized that the justification of martial activity was crucial to knighted men. Sheppey’s sermon moralised the three conditions of a just war, reassuring his audience that if they engaged in warfare justly, as Malemeyn did, their salvation would be secure. He claimed that in order for warfare to be just it must be undertaken by the authority of a superior, it must be fought manfully, and it must be fought against an enemy.⁶⁶ Sheppey assigned the role of the authority figure to the king, reinforced by ‘whoever has seen the confusion in the realm of France.’⁶⁷ He identified the most treacherous enemy as those infamous three, the world, the flesh and the devil:

[I]t is required that a just war is that which certainly has a just cause. And one of the most just causes is that if your adversary is greatly false: and thus it is shown afterwards, these [three] enemies are the very falsest. He would be stupid who wanted to expose himself to death without just cause.⁶⁸

Sheppey’s comment, that God ‘gave him battles *in order* that he would conquer,’ echoes the *imitatio Christi*; Charny, Lancaster, and Malemeyn struggled and suffered so that they would conquer and claim victory, both on earth and in heaven.

The second sermon, preached on the anniversary of the death of Sir Thomas Beauchamp, is found in Bodleian Library, MS Laud misc. 706.⁶⁹ The Laud manuscript

⁶⁶ Mifsud, ‘John Sheppey,’ 195.

⁶⁷ Mifsud, ‘John Sheppey,’ 206; New College MS 92, f. 149: ‘Ille qui novit confusionem regni Francie scit quod nullus. Translation my own.

⁶⁸ Mifsud, ‘John Sheppey,’ 207; New College MS 92, f. 149: ‘[Q]uod requiritur ad iustum bellum est quod certans habeat iustam causam. Et una de iustissimis causis est quod si sit eius adversarius falsus magnus: et sicud ostendam postea, isti hostes sunt falsissimi. Fatuus esset qui vellet se exponere morti sine iusta causa.’ Translation my own.

⁶⁹ The sermon is translated in Horner, ‘An Edition of Five Medieval Sermons from MS Laud Misc.706,’ PhD dissertation (University at Albany, State University of New York, 1975), 216-49 and edited in ‘A Sermon on the Anniversary of the Death of Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick,’ *Traditio* 34 (1978), 381-401; it is also discussed in Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 88-90, 578-82. Wenzel adopted the modern foliation

contains a collection of 34 sermons, originally the property of the Benedictine Abbey of St Peter at Gloucester. Patrick Horner has analysed the manuscript in great detail and describes it as ‘a composite manuscript assembled from sermons made and collected by Benedictine monks at Oxford in the fifteenth century.’⁷⁰ The sermons were composed at least in part by John Paunteley, a monk of St Peter’s and ordained priest. The author refers to contemporary concerns and fears across England, such as the imminent threat of a French invasion in the late 1380s. The subject of the sermon in question, Thomas Beauchamp (d. 1401), was Earl of Warwick and a great magnate of the realm. He was prominent in the political workings of the kingdom. He was stripped of his title and lands by Richard II in 1397 after his involvement in the Merciless Parliament, but was later restored when Henry IV took the throne. He was the father of William Beauchamp, who was suspected of being a ‘Lollard knight’ due to his relationship with Lewis Clifford, John Clanvowe and William Neville.⁷¹ The Beauchamps were highly regarded for their piety and devotion, their charitable works and generous giving to churches and religious institutions. The author of the sermon chose to focus on these aspects of Thomas’ life rather than his political and social achievements.

The sermon, as noted by Patrick Horner, includes tropes common within late medieval literary practices and social theory, for example God’s bestowal of the field of Paradise upon Adam, compared to a sealed charter which Adam breaks.⁷² It also includes an example of adjusted estates theory, in which the field of earth is divided into those who

provided in the manuscript, updated from Horner’s original examination; both foliations will be provided, Horner’s in brackets. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud misc. 706, ff. 72r-80r (ff. 73r-81r in Horner).

⁷⁰ Horner, ‘Benedictines and Preaching in Fifteenth-Century England: The Evidence of Two Bodleian Library Manuscripts,’ *Revue Bénédictine* 99 (1989) 313-32 at, 320; a detailed summary can be found in Horner’s unpublished doctoral dissertation, ‘Edition of Five Medieval Sermons.’

⁷¹ Jeremy Catto, ‘Sir William Beauchamp: Between Chivalry and Lollardy,’ in *The Ideals and Practice of Medieval Knighthood III, Papers from the Fourth Strawberry Hill Conference 1988*, eds. Christopher Harper-Bill and Ruth Harvey (Woodbridge, 1990), 39-48.

⁷² Horner, ‘Sermon on the Anniversary of the Death of Thomas Beauchamp,’ 384. The charter metaphor was common in prose and poetry; see: Mary G Spalding, *The Middle English Charters of Christ*, Bryn Mawr Monographs 15 (1914); Rosemary Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1968), 210-14.

have honour, the magnates, those who have riches, the merchants, and those left fallow in the world, the poor. The Laud preacher likely adapted traditional estates theory for his audience, a mixed group made up of the nobility, the knighted, the wealthy and the poor. He does not let this stop him from condemning those nobles who seek to avoid eternal punishment for their evil deeds by purchasing prayers at a chantry, a complaint common to social criticisms of the time.⁷³ Lastly, the sermon provides an analogy of Thomas Beauchamp with the *militia Christi*.

As mentioned, the sermon opens with God's bestowal of the field of Paradise upon Adam in the form of a charter. Adam would have full inheritance to the field, a free gift given to him by God; the parchment represented pure innocence; the stamped seal was the seal of God's own arms. Adam was tempted by the false juror, the devil, and thus erased his own charter when he ate of the apple. Once the charter was broken, he was thrown into the field of man. Although the author began using legal language to dramatise the Fall, the consequence of this sin is laid out completely in chivalric terms. It is worth quoting in full:

As Christ says in the Gospel, 'the field was the world,' Matthew 13. And it would never be restored again, but [Christ] bought it with battle and took the title of conquest. In this terrible Damascene field, our spiritual enemies, the devil, the flesh, and the world have pitched their tents, reared and displayed their banners, and fight strongly against the human race. The devil with the rusty sword of anger and envy; the flesh with the sharp arrows of inordinate affections and with the burning brands of bodily lust; and the world with the snares of covetousness and the hidden traps of subtlety and deceit. This mankind lives in the field of great dread. He is walled about with enemies. But on the other hand, if he may be a valorous knight and manfully overcome his ghostly enemies in the field – Ah, Lord God, since man is so feeble and overwhelmed with his enemies, how shall he save himself in this hard war? Here is no remedy but one. It behoves him to see that he be securely armed with those arms that God gave him when he drove him out of paradise. And what are those? Nothing else but the leather tunic. For as says Sacred Scripture, 'He made for him leather tunics,' clothed him in leather as in a coat of armour for defending himself from his enemies.

But by chance it seems to you that this is a singular array to go to battle in. [I]f this armour be well tried, you will see that no one is found more secure. For as says that Master of Stories, 'He clothed man in leather, which is made of the hide

⁷³ Horner, 'Sermon on the Anniversary of the Death of Thomas Beauchamp,' 383.

of dead animals,’ for this purpose, that as many times as he sees this tunic he would call to mind that he was mortal and by necessity he would die. And as says Augustine, ‘The memory of death is sufficient defence against any sins.’ For if you are great indeed because your rich clothes and elegant appearance, the devil is careful to place you in arrogance and stir you to pride. Remember your coat of armour; take heed of your leather coat. Recognize inwardly that you will die; and as you see a peacock, be he never so proud of his gay feathers, when he looks over his foul feet he puts down his tail and forgets all his own glory, so you, when you think of you dangerous end, of death, repel from you the arrogance and pride of your heart and thus all other temptations. As Sacred Scripture says, ‘Remember your last end and eternally you will not sin.’ And to this end, as our doctors say, funerals and interments were ordained that men pray for those who have passed out of the world and keep their own death in mind. For this is the cost of the armour that God lent us for fighting against our spiritual enemies. With this, if any valorous knight manfully overcome his other adversaries in the field, the Emperor, who sits in the high tent of heaven, as a just judge, sees all our warlike deeds, and shall honour him and worthily reward him, crown him, and make him a king.⁷⁴

The sermon author began with Christ as the exemplar, he who ‘bought [the world] with battle and took the title of conquest.’ As will be demonstrated in later chapters, it is the Christ-knight as the champion who rescued mankind. Yet the author, acutely aware of his knightly audience, applied the metaphor to all Christian knights, ‘any valorous knights [who] manfully overcome ghostly enemies in the field.’⁷⁵ Bringing the sermon back to its main subject, the author then applied the metaphor of the *bonus Christianus miles* to Thomas Beauchamp, who:

[S]trenuously resisted temptations of the devil and especially at the last moment when he was fighting in the war, when he was dying, just as a good Christian soldier, armed with the shield of good faith, confessed and contrite for his sins, finally conquered his enemies. And when he received safe conduct through the blessed sacrament of the altar, he passed out of this world.⁷⁶

The language of chivalry and representations of brave knights fighting non-Christian enemies in foreign lands and spiritual enemies in everyday life was a powerful image for late medieval preachers, one that would resonate with clerical audiences, knightly

⁷⁴ Translations of the Beauchamp sermon are taken from, Horner, ‘Edition of Five Medieval Sermons,’ 216-25; MS Laud misc. 706, ff. 73v-74r.

⁷⁵ Horner, ‘Edition of Five Medieval Sermons,’ 217; MS Laud misc. 706, f. 74r. Emphasis my own.

⁷⁶ Horner, ‘Edition of Five Medieval Sermons,’ 218; MS Laud misc. 706, f. 74v.

audiences, and audiences of lay congregants alike – all aware of the ongoing warfare at home and abroad, all reminded daily of their own spiritual battle to be waged.

Conclusion

This chapter has established what ideas and images of knighthood were presented in the sermons of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, including where those ideas came from, such as chivalric and romance literature, literature of social protest, and social satire, in order to examine how these themes were developed by sermon authors.

While it remains difficult to determine just how knights thought of their profession and its relation to their spirituality, the evidence analysed provides some insight into what they thought of themselves as well as how others perceived them. Knights were portrayed to be deeply loyal in their profession and their faith, and thus we find similar language in regards to both. This is reflected in both romance literature and sermons. Similarly, the mutual influence between romances and popular preaching reflects the prevalence of martial language and imagery. A chivalric mentality was deeply rooted within the literature of popular culture and was thus frequently adopted by sermon authors. Authors such as Chaucer and Langland appealed to a wide audience with their works of satire; while these works were certainly written for pleasure and enjoyment, they also intended to stimulate thought and criticism. Like sermon authors, Chaucer and Langland utilised common genres and themes that would appeal to their readers. Also like sermon authors, Gower appealed to his audience's spiritual concerns by condemning immoral behaviour and urging behavioural change, typically through confession and penance. In each genre, the idealised models are presented and the practical realities are addressed, whether through satire or reproach. The three estates theory, a tool for expounding the proper roles within society, was both a traditional and adaptable model to preach expectations of

knightly behaviour and was thus popular with religious and secular authors alike. And finally, the spiritual concerns of the knights themselves are reflected in the funeral sermons preached on behalf of two great knights. It is clear that the Church was seriously concerned with the behaviour of knighted men, on the battle field and in their daily actions; knights were as concerned with their personal salvation as they were their duties towards the realm. And due to this concern and its overwhelming presence in late medieval culture, chivalric rhetoric and narratives were employed to provoke thought amongst the non-knighted classes as well. The overlap of expectations and responses between the Church and the knights suggests that there was a need for the justification of their violent profession. Later chapters will show that knighthood was also a useful vehicle for other theological messages. The approaches of knights and preachers towards the practice of knighthood differed, but they shared the same ideals – a class of men who were not defined by their violent profession, but by their honour and service to king and God, often by violent means. The chivalric mentality of the late Middle Ages was sustained by its Christian framework and thus, as the remaining chapters will show, Christ, as a lover, conqueror and champion, was the exemplary medieval knight.

Chapter 3 – Christ the Beloved: the Lover-knight and Warrior-bridegroom

Chapters one and two have shown what perceptions of violence, warfare, and chivalry influenced preachers in late medieval England, where these ideas came from, and how images of knighthood were then presented in their sermons. In addition to this, the chivalric culture of late medieval England often presented Christ as a knight or soldier, in romance literature, satirical literature and poetry, chivalric texts, and popular sermons.¹ The previous chapters provide the necessary background and framework that have demonstrated how and why Christ was an appropriate model to be placed within a martial context. The purpose and meaning of the martial Christ images in sermons is the subject of the remaining chapters.

The first such example, and subject of the present chapter, is that of a martial Christ as the beloved. ‘Christ the Beloved’ is best understood as a single large category, but we shall distinguish here between a lover-knight and a warrior-bridegroom type. The lover-knight is the earliest recorded representation of Christ as a knight, in the *amour-courtois* literary convention. It was immensely popular in late medieval sermons, and has been well-studied in some respects. The warrior-bridegroom depiction is distinctive in deriving both from the nuptial imagery of the Old Testament and the patristic imagining of Christ’s Passion as a battle. In the later Middle Ages this early warrior-bridegroom image was transformed into a chivalric knight. It was not nearly as popular as the motif of the lover-knight, perhaps because it was thought antiquated, and is found in fewer sermons. It has also, consequently, been less well studied by historians.

The popularity of the beloved theme is explained by its combination of chivalric themes, including influences from romance texts, with the dominant expression of piety in later medieval Europe: that of the meditation on Christ’s Passion and death. The Christ-

¹ Le May, *Allegory of the Christ-Knight in English Literature*; Woolf, ‘Theme of Christ the Lover-Knight in Medieval English Literature.’

knight motif provided a masculinised representation of Christ's suffering intended to evoke an emotional response. Both varieties of the beloved representation – the lover-knight and the warrior-bridegroom – are therefore significant to the study of late medieval Christocentric devotion in that they offer images of Christ strikingly different, though complementary, to the culturally-dominant suffering Christ. The beloved Christ mirrors the image of this broken and human Christ in its purpose; these depictions of Christ, expressed through the language of chivalry, were used by authors to explain the theology of Christ's love and of mankind's redemption through the Passion.

‘For love, he became man to fight’: Passion Devotion and Christ the Lover-knight

Devotion to Christ's Passion was arguably the most significant form of piety in the late Middle Ages.² Men and women, religious and secular, were confronted with the Cross in all media – paintings, carvings, altar pieces in even the poorest of parishes, architecture, drama, music, preaching, and the liturgy. The adoration of the host was ritually and lovingly presented in the mass. The Corpus Christi and Passion plays delivered this particular form of worship to the world outside the Church walls. Christ on the Cross was ubiquitous. And yet, authors of literature and sermons sought alternative ways in which to demonstrate Christ's suffering in order to both entertain and instruct their audiences and explore other aspects of Christ's humanity, but also contribute to the development of lay piety and personal devotional practice in the later Middle Ages. Christ's death is central to the most significant theological discussions, particularly the question of why God became human. This led to a growing desire among the laity to have a personal relationship with Christ.³ Christ on the Cross, a human being, living and dying and resurrected, became

² MacDonald, Ridderbos and Schlusemann, *Broken Body*.

³ For scholarship concerning the development of popular piety, see: Katherine L French, 'Localized Faith: Parochial and Domestic Spaces' and Laura A Smoller, "'Popular' Religious Culture(s)", in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity*, ed. John H Arnold (Oxford, 2014), 166-82 and 340-56 respectively;

accessible, even approachable. Once medieval audiences identified with Christ as a person, they could then identify with him as one of their own, as a king, a ploughman, a spouse, or a knight.

In the first of the Beloved Christ motifs, the Lover-knight exemplum, Christ is likened to a chivalric knight who engages in battle to win the love of a lady. This was a common allegory in medieval literature, preaching manuals and sermons. The exemplum was a means for authors to demonstrate the love of Christ through the shedding of his blood and the redemptive power of his death. It is first found in the thirteenth-century *Ancrene Wisse*, in the section entitled ‘On Love.’ The *Ancrene Wisse*, or the ‘Guide for Anchoresses,’ is a book of instruction for three lay noblewomen enclosed as anchoresses, although the readership expanded to include all the women enclosed at the time. It was written in the vernacular with the Latin scriptures also given in translation, suggesting a possible lay readership.⁴ A book specifically written for women meant to be a living life separate from worldly things, especially men, and thus any interaction with chivalric deeds, may seem an unlikely home for the first mention of Christ as a knight. Yet, as has been demonstrated in previous chapters, the saturation of late medieval society with a chivalric mentality was not limited to a specific group. Secular and religious literature, romances, monastic culture, and popular preaching, all included militaristic language. The women for whom the work was originally intended, women born of noble birth, may have been familiar with the literature of courtly romance and thus the author felt no need to offer any explanation for depicting Christ as a knight. Rather, that the allegory was

Elite and Popular Religion: Papers Read at the 2004 Summer Meeting and 2005 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society, eds. Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory (Woodbridge, 2006); John H Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief in Medieval Europe* (London, 2005), 28-30, 38-42; Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (London, 1996), 52-73; Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1991), 98-129; André Vauchez, *The Laity in the Middle Ages: Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices*, ed. Daniel E Bornstein (Notre Dame, 1993), Part II, esp. 95-106; Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, 21-3, 235-7.

⁴ Yoko Wada, ed., *A Companion to Ancrene Wisse* (Woodbridge, 2010); Cate Gunn, *Ancrene Wisse: From Pastoral Literature to Vernacular Spirituality* (Cardiff, 2008).

appropriate even to female anchorites demonstrates the pervasiveness of the knightly appeal. As it is the first instance recorded, it is worth quoting the episode from the *Ancrene Wisse* in full:

A lady was completely surrounded by her enemies, her land laid waste, and she herself quite destitute, in a castle of earth. But a powerful king had fallen in love with her so passionately that he sent his messengers to woo her, one after another, often many together; he sent her many splendid presents of jewellery, provisions to support her, help from his noble army to hold her castle. She accepted everything as if it meant nothing to her, and was so hard-hearted that he could never come closer to winning her love. What more do you want? At last he came himself; showed her his handsome face, as the handsomest of all men in appearance; spoke so very tenderly, and with words so beguiling that they could raise the dead to life; did many amazing things and performed great feats before her eyes; demonstrated his power to her; told her about his kingdom; offered to make her queen of all that he owned. All this had no effect. Wasn't this contempt extraordinary, since she was never fit to be his maidservant? But because of his gentle nature love had so overcome him that at last he said: 'You are under attack, my lady, and your enemies are so strong that without my help there is no way that you can escape falling into their hands and being put to a shameful death after all your suffering. I am prepared to take on that fight for your love, and rescue you from those who are seeking your death. But I know for certain that in fighting them I will receive a mortal wound; and I am very willing to do it in order to win your heart. Now, therefore, I beg you, for the love I am showing towards you, to love me at least when this is done, after my death, although you refused to during my life.' This king did just as he had promised: he rescued her from all her enemies, and was himself shamefully ill-treated and at last put to death. But by a miracle he rose from death to life. Surely this lady would have a base nature if she did not love him after this above all things.⁵

While the king is portrayed as a deeply sympathetic character, the author draws attention back to the actions of the lady with his closing rhetorical question. It is in the answer to this question, found within the following spiritual allegory, which the author is leading to: the lady's inadequate response to the king – her rejection of God – is a message of warning to its readership. The author goes on to explain that:

The king is Jesus, Son of God, who in just this way wooed our soul, which devils had besieged. And he, like a noble suitor, after numerous messengers and many acts of kindness came to prove his love, and showed by feats of arms that he was worthy of love, as was the custom of knights once upon a time. He

⁵ *Ancrene Wisse: Guide for Anchoresses: A Translation based on Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 402, 7.3-4*, ed. Bella Millett (Exeter, 2009), 146-8.

entered the tournament and, like a bold knight, had his shield pierced through and through in battle for love of his lady. His shield, which hid his divinity, was his dear body, which was stretched out on the cross: broad as a shield above in his outstretched arms, narrow below, where the one foot (as many people think) was fixed above the other. That this shield has no sides signifies that his disciples, who should have stood by him and been his sides, all fled from him and abandoned him like strangers, as the Gospel says: *They all abandoned him and fled*. This shield is given to us against all temptations, as Jeremiah testifies *you will give your labour as a shield for the heart*. This shield not only protects us against all evils, but does still more: it crowns us in heaven. *With the shield of good will* – ‘Lord,’ says David, ‘you have crowned us with the shield of your good will.’ He says ‘shield of good will’ because he suffered willingly all that he suffered. *Isaiah: he was offered because he wished to be*. ‘But master,’ you say, ‘what was the point? Couldn’t he have saved us without less suffering?’ Yes, indeed, very easily; but he chose not to. Why? To deprive us of any excuse for denying him our love, which he had paid so dearly for. People buy cheaply what they do not value highly. He bought us with his heart’s blood – a higher price was never paid – to attract our love, which cost him so much suffering. In a shield there are three things: the wood, and the leather, and the painted design. So it was in this shield: the wood of the cross, the leather of God’s body, the painting of the red blood which was coloured so brightly. Again, the third reason: after a brave knight’s death, his shield is hung high in church in his memory. Just so this shield – that is, the crucifix – is placed in church where it can be seen most easily, as a reminder of the knightly prowess of Jesus Christ in the cross. His beloved should see in this how he bought her love: he let his shield be pierced, his side opened up to show her his heart, to show her openly how deeply he loved her and to attract her heart.⁶

The *Ancrene Wisse* author used the lady’s repeated rejection of the knight to demonstrate mankind’s unworthiness. This was a message intended to resonate with its audience. By placing great emphasis on the events leading up to the knight’s battle to illustrate how undeserving mankind is of Christ’s love, the lesson of the narrative is that much more palpable: you are wholly undeserving, but Christ redeemed you despite your rebuke.

The narrative as found in the *Ancrene Wisse* is repeated in a single sermon in British Library MS Harley 7322.⁷ The manuscript, written in different hands dating to several points in the fourteenth century, is described by Wenzel as a preacher’s notebook, containing a variety of materials useful to a preacher, including the *Gesta Romanorum*, the

⁶ *Ancrene Wisse*, ed. Bella Millett, 146-8.

⁷ The exemplum is edited in Woolf, *Art and Doctrine: Essays on Medieval Literature* (London, 1986), 104-5 and discussed in Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 219; London, British Library MS Harley 7322, ff. 26r-v.

Fasciculus Morum, a number of English verses, and ninety sermons.⁸ The lover-knight exemplum is the same as that of the *Ancrene Wisse* in plot, but is told with more straightforward and simple language:

It is told in some histories that there was a noble lady called Faustina who, exiled from her own country and deprived of all her followers, was besieged by her enemies within an earthen fortification. Yet she was loved by a noble king. So he sent to her letters declaring his love for her, and various gifts. She, however, while accepting his gifts, refused his love. But the king sent other, even more magnificent messengers with letter and gifts. She did as before and utterly despised his love. At last this faithful and gracious king came to her in his own person, showing her his power and promising her that she would be queen in his kingdom and that he was willing to love her from the heart. But this wretched creature entirely despised it. The king said tearfully to her, ‘Woman, I pity your misery, that you are besieged on all sides by your enemies and you cannot escape them by any means. Yet I will fight for you and sustain wounds if yet after my death you will be willing to love me.’⁹

In particular, the spiritual application of the allegory has been considerably truncated:

In the spiritual sense, I understand by this queen, human nature expelled from Paradise and besieged by the Devil, the flesh, and the world and other enemies in this vale of clay. So this good and gracious king is Christ, who loved our human nature so much that for it he was willing to die, and whom we do not trouble to love in return, in life or in death.¹⁰

Rosemary Woolf suggested that this version, more in line with the biblical and patristic image of the faithless heroine, had no literary analogue beyond that of the *Ancrene*; the husband’s immense capacity for forgiveness was anomalous and the character of the unfaithful wife was more often the subject of satire.¹¹ Later versions of the tale adapted to developing literary and devotional tastes by transforming the lady into a regretful penitent. Rather than emphasize her sinful nature, the narrative is used in popular preaching to demonstrate Christ’s nature. It was transformed alongside the development of lay piety and the exposition of theology. Meditation on Christ’s Passion was such a prevalent form of late medieval piety, that its encouragement was not limited to popular preaching, and we

⁸ Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 219.

⁹ Woolf, *Art and Doctrine: Essays on Medieval Literature*, 104-5.

¹⁰ Woolf, *Art and Doctrine: Essays on Medieval Literature*, 104-5.

¹¹ Woolf, *The English Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1968), 46-7.

must consider its appearance in a variety of genres in order to understand its use in preaching.

The shift from emphasizing the lady's transgression to Christ's suffering is demonstrated in a number of fourteenth-century English lyrics containing similar themes. English lyrics, short verses often included in sermons, share many devotional and meditative themes with preaching.¹² The majority of English lyrics recounting Christ's Passion make Christ the speaker of the complaint, with the reader or listener being asked to imagine himself present at the crucifixion scene. Descriptions of suffering were intended to move the reader to compassion, an expression of affective piety and devotion. The lover-knight lyric, however, transformed Christ into a knight, his Passion into a battle, and the meditator is directed to imagine that he is a prisoner whom Christ will rescue for the return of his love. The most complete version in lyric form is found in Cambridge University Library, MS. Dd. 5. 64, III, entitled 'Christ Pleads with His Sweet Leman':

Lo! lemman swete, now may þou se
þat I haue lost my lyf for þe.
What myght I do þe mare?
For-þi I pray þe speciali
þat þou forsake ill company
þat woundes me so sare;

And take myne armes pryuely
And do þam in þi tresory,
In what stede sa þou dwelles,
And swete lemman, forget þow noght
þat I þi lufe sa dere haue boght,
And I aske þe noght elles.¹³

We find in the second stanza Christ pleading with his lady to treasure his bloodied armour, to hang it in her chamber. The allegory was meant to be an emotional rendering of Christ's Passion, instructing the audience to not only meditate on the Passion, but to recall the memory of it, as if they were themselves a witness, in order to fully understand Christ's

¹² Wenzel, *Verses in Sermons: Fasciculus Morum and its Middle English Poems* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978).

¹³ Carleton Brown, *Religious Lyrics of the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1952), 94.

suffering. The ‘art of memory’ was closely linked with preaching and meditative exercise and was already a growing practise in the fourteenth century. By the fifteenth century, didactic treatises such as the *ars memorativa* and *artes meditandi* identified ‘a process of “seeing” and mentally “reading” memorized matter’ such as Christ’s Passion.¹⁴ The appeal of the lover-knight exemplum is strengthened first by its chivalric narrative, and further by its exposition of Christ’s suffering. The lover-knight image enabled both author and audience to engage in expressions of affective devotion.

Another lyric example is found in British Library, MS Harley 2316, a Dominican preaching manuscript of the fourteenth century. Here, the Christ-knight allegory accompanies another common trope, the allegorisation of the Cross:

Biheld mi side,
mi wndes sprede so wide,
Restles I ride.
Lok up on me! Put fro 3e pride.

Mi palefrey is of tre,
wiht nayles naylede 3wrh me.
Ne is more sorwe to se-
Certes noon more no may be.¹⁵

In this brief episode, the chivalric language is moderated; there is no bloody armour, no plea to a lover. It was intended to display to its reader a moving demonstration of Christ’s sorrow. Christ is however shown riding on the cross into battle as a knight on his horse, a clear expression of the similarity in purpose between the suffering and knightly Christ in recounting Christ’s sacrifice for mankind. The allegorisation of Christ’s wounds and the instruments of the Passion, particularly the cross, are among the most common themes in Passion literature and preaching.

¹⁴ Kiss, ‘Memory, Meditation, and Preaching,’ 49-78; See also, *Memory and Commemoration in Medieval Culture*, Part 1, Elma Brenner, Meredith Cohen and Mary Franklin-Brown, eds. (Farnham, 2013); Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, second edition (Cambridge, 2008).

¹⁵ Brown, *Religious Lyrics*, 67.

‘Passion preaching’ was the preaching of sermons on or around Good Friday and Easter focusing on Christ’s Passion, death and resurrection.¹⁶ Authors of Passion sermons intended to evoke an emotional and affective response to Christ’s Passion. They did this by slipping out of the role of preacher and into that of the supplicant or meditator, modelling devotion and penitent roles for their audience, while never losing sight of their homiletic goals.¹⁷ The fourteenth and fifteenth-century versions of the lover-knight exemplum shifted the source of the narrative’s message from the behaviour of the cold-hearted lady to the actions of the knight to elucidate the theological concerns of Christ’s death and resurrection. Thus, it was this adapted lover-knight exemplum that was most commonly used in Passion sermons. An allegorisation of Christ riding the cross, as in the Harley lyric, is found in such a sermon, preached on Good Friday. This instance, embedded within a lover-knight exemplum, is found in a fifteenth-century macaronic sermon, *Amore languet*. The sermon is significant, being found in four manuscripts: Cambridge University Library, MS Kk.4.24; Oxford, Magdalen College, MS 93; Dublin, Trinity College, MS 277; and Oxford, Balliol College, MS 149.¹⁸

Taking his theme from the Song of Songs, the author of *Amore languet* emphasized Christ’s role as lover, rather than the knight in this Passion sermon. As the title suggests, the author described Christ as a languishing lover, desperate for his beloved and suffering for her to display his love. Christ’s love, and his sacrifice, is then presented through the lover-knight exemplum in which the Christ-knight seeks the love of his spouse, representing the individual soul. In this version of the tale the unfaithful wife

¹⁶ The term ‘passion preaching’ was introduced by Johnson in ‘Preaching the Passion.’

¹⁷ Johnson, ‘Preaching the Passion,’ 392, 397.

¹⁸ Cambridge, University Library MS Kk. 4.24, ff. 143vb-150ra; Oxford, Magdalen College MS 93, ff. 152r-157r; Dublin, MS Trinity College 277; and Oxford, MS Balliol College 149, ff. 31r-38v; the sermon is discussed by Wenzel in *Macaronic Sermons: Bilingualism and Preaching in Late-medieval England* (Ann Arbor, 1994), 212-67 and by Holly Johnson, ‘Preaching the Passion,’ 329-34.

realizes her offense against her lord, comes to regret it terribly, and sends the knight a gift of a heart of pure gold and a letter beseeching his forgiveness. The text of this letter reads:

I love whom I fled, I feel whom I loved,
My flight I regret, in regret I return.¹⁹

The heart of pure gold contained four leaves, a message written on each. The sermon author provided these in both Latin and English:

For love I mourn (*Amore langueo*)
I perish for thy sake (*Langore pereo*)
I hope for thy grace (*Percundo spero*)
My life is on thy face (*Sperando reuiuisco*)²⁰

The narrative ends with the lady's reconciliation with her lord, due to her humility. No action is taken by the knight in this version; rather the sermon author relied on the audience's awareness of the exemplum's long-standing tradition. In the allegorical interpretation, the author declared Christ's knighthood as noble (*nobili genere procreatus*) because he is the Son of God and used his role as a knight and his subsequent battle with the devil to elucidate the *arma Christi*, another popular motif found specifically within Passion sermons. Here we find the description of Christ's body during his Passion, a crown of thorns for his helmet, nails piercing his hands and feet, acting as gloves and spurs, 'for a horse he had the cross on which he hung...and thus he rode against his enemy with a lance not in his hand but sticking in his side.'²¹ The sermon author certainly emphasized the languishing love affair of the lady and lord, but by using the lover-knight exemplum, he gave to the audience the image of Christ as both lover and knight, linking the two images through the popular exemplum. Johnson described the sermon as a conversation within the sermon, one between the lovers, each languishing for the other (the knight for the lady and then the lady for her lost lord), as well as an external dialogue

¹⁹ Translations taken from Wenzel's edition of Oxford MS Balliol 149, in *Macaronic Sermons*, 212-67 at 224.

²⁰ Wenzel, *Macaronic Sermons*, 224-5.

²¹ Wenzel, *Macaronic Sermons*, 225.

between the audience and Christ, mediated by the preacher.²² The exemplum thus acted for its lay audience as a model for an intimate relationship with Christ.

The most fully-developed representation of Christ riding the cross of his Passion is found in a macaronic sermon of MS Bodley 649, preached for the second Sunday of Lent. MS Bodley 649 contains two sets of sermons, the first edited and translated by Patrick J. Horner.²³ The manuscript is of Benedictine provenance from the first half of the fifteenth century and the twenty-three macaronic sermons of the first set draw heavily upon the social, political, and ecclesiastical history of early fifteenth-century England. A number of the sermons include martial imagery, commonly employed to describe the audience's need to arm themselves for spiritual warfare. In the sermon below, martial language is used, first to describe Adam, God's first knight, 'captain of the field of Paradise' and then Christ, his heavenly soldier sent to free mankind. The Christ-knight is developed by an allegorical exposition of the narrative of Machabeus found in 2 Maccabees 11. The sermon reads:

When the accursed king Antiochus had long oppressed the people of God, and they were not powerful themselves to resist his army, they entreated God for succour and comfort, and God, compassionate towards them, sent a man from heaven, a horseman riding in front, who was armed with golden arms, clothed in a white robe, and brandished a sharp lance in his hand. And, as scripture says, his coming comforted the people of God so much that "they were prepared not only to fight with men but with the fiercest beasts." By that king Antiochus, whom scripture calls the root of sin, may reasonably be understood the devil, the head and leader of all sin and misery, who, as I said before, so long oppressed the people of God, the human race, that they were impotent to resist him completely. But the Father of mercies sent to us a horseman from heaven riding on a horse, that is his son riding on the cross on Good Friday.²⁴

Here the Christ-knight is inserted into the Maccabees narrative, evoking the image of Christ riding at the head of his army in Revelation 19: 'And I saw heaven opened, and beheld a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called faithful and true, and with justice doth he judge and fight.' Elsewhere, the Bodley author declared that Christ 'seized

²² Johnson, 'Preaching the Passion,' 333.

²³ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 130-53; MS Bodley 649, ff. 27r-34r.

²⁴ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 138; MS Bodley 649, f. 29v.

the horse of the holy cross on Mount Calvary to fight against our enemy the demon of hell.²⁵ The Christ-knight here is not the languishing lover-knight of previous examples, although he is sent to provide both ‘succour and comfort’ and is ‘lacerated for love of us’ when wounded. Rather, the Christ-knight fights for the love of mankind as a powerful soldier sent to ‘joust on the cross’ against the devil. He is the epitome of the chivalric ideal. Unlike his contemporaries’ use of the popular lover-knight exemplum, the Bodley author expanded upon the Christ-knight motif anticipating his audience’s awareness of the chivalric theme. The Bodley author’s representation of Christ is a far more dramatic rendering of the Christ-knight fighting the devil. Like the intentions of his fellow authors’ to evoke strong emotional, affective, and meditative responses from their audiences, the Bodley author too dramatises Christ’s Passion, emphasising his victory rather than his suffering within a chivalric context. The chivalric ideal is indeed an ever-present theme within Christ-knight imagery. For the Bodley author, the Christ-knight embodied perfect chivalric manliness and prowess; for authors of the lover-knight exemplum, the chivalric ideal was realised in Christ’s perfect love for his lady, the individual soul. Both representations display Christ’s demonstration of love in the work of redemption.

In the lover-knight exemplum of *Amore langueo* the lady seeks redemption from her abandoned knight. The most popular and frequently used example of this grief-stricken lady is found in the *Gesta Romanorum*, known as the ‘Bloody Shirt’ exemplum.²⁶ The *Gesta* was intended to provide sermon authors with entertaining tales to incorporate into their sermons without abandoning moral and theological instruction. In this version of the tale, the poor character of the lady has been removed, and instead the emphasis is placed upon the reciprocation of the knight’s love. When the lady explains to the knight that she

²⁵ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 138; MS Bodley 649, f. 29v.

²⁶ *The Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum: Formerly edited by Sir Frederic Madden for the Roxburghe Club, and now Re-edited from the MSS in British Museum and University Library Cambridge* (London, 1932), 23-26; Nineteen sources for the bloody-shirt exemplum are given in the *Index Exemplorum* (#4020), which does not include the sermons included in this discussion.

has nothing to give him, for even her virginity was lost to a wicked earl, he responds, ‘And I aske noon oþer of þe, but that þou be my love, and love non so wele as me.’²⁷ Upon his death, the lady hangs his bloodied shirt in her chamber so that she would be reminded of him, and weep for him whenever she looked upon it. In this form, the lover-knight exemplum is a clear re-telling of the Passion story. The author intended for listeners to be reminded of Christ’s sacrifice, his bloodied body hanging on the cross, and from that image, they should be prompted to meditate on Christ’s Passion. The intention of the *Amore langueo* author echoed the aims of those who employed the images of the maternal Christ and the suffering Christ, or man of sorrows, whose image was also intended to provoke an affective response from its readers and viewers, in which they not only remember, but take on the pain of Christ’s suffering as a demonstration of their piety and love. The lover-knight image, while similar in its purpose to the suffering Christ, provided its audience with a more complicated picture of the human Christ, a martial role to contrast his suffering role. Rather than reflecting on Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, a passive demonstration of his sacrifice through surrender, the lover-knight demonstrates Christ’s active role in mankind’s redemption, through battle. For some, the martial Christ was perhaps the more relatable figure and his actions could be meditated upon and applied to their own spiritual battles.

The bloody-shirt exemplum is found in a further two Middle English sermons, one for ‘Passion Soneday’ (British Library, MS Harley 2268) and one for Lent (British Library MS, Royal 18.B.xxiii).²⁸ Both sermons contain an abbreviated version of the *Gesta*’s lover-knight exemplum. The *Gesta*’s specific use of Fredrericus, ‘a wise Emperour, regnyng in þe Cite of Rome’ has been replaced with an anonymous king and his daughter. The sermons however maintain the moral of the exemplum, that through Christ’s sacrifice,

²⁷ *The Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum*, 24.

²⁸ Ross, *Middle English Sermons*, 72-83; London, British Library MS Royal 18.B.xxiii, ff. 76r-79r; and O’Mara, *Four Middle English Sermons*, 79-105; London, British Library MS Harley 2268, ff. 185v-198v.

man's inheritance (*herytage*) has been restored. The authors' use of Middle English and the removal of a classical reference suggest sermons preached for lay audiences.

The Harley sermon belongs to a group of sermon collections composed by Benedictine authors that spoke vehemently against unorthodoxy, specifically the Lollard heresy, as well as making controversial and outspoken political commentary. Along with the Harley MS, the manuscripts in this group include the aforementioned MS Bodley 649, as well as Bodleian Library, MS Laud misc. 706 and Worcester Cathedral Library, MS F.10. The Harley sermon, a very lengthy example, is primarily concerned with the ways in which people should free themselves from sin. The author compared the great battle between God and the fiend with that of his fellow man's fight against sin. The lover-knight exemplum sets the stage for the dramatic confrontation between Christ and the fiend, while maintaining the traditional narrative structure:

I rede of a worthy maydyn þe qwyk was be a wykkyd tyrant and hyr enmye spoyld and dysheryte of hyre herytage ... þe kynggys sone interly louyd and for here loue went and armyd hym agayns þis wykkyd tirant and fawght wyth hym opynly. Bot in þat batell and conflykte he was slayn and so þe maydyn recoueryd hyre heritage agayn ... and scho toke hys armor þat he was slayn in, and als bloody als yt was, scho set it in hyr chambyr opynly þat scho myth thynk vpon hym.²⁹

The Harley author then expanded upon the lover-knight exemplum, attaching the image to King Arthur. He explained that like Christ, King Arthur 'thorow byttyr passion and pyne for owre sake in þis batell, armyd wyth owre manhede, he was slayn and owre herytage restoryd and recoueryd agayn.'³⁰ Thus King Arthur was the paradigm of worldly knighthood and kingship as Christ was for spiritual knighthood and kingship. The sermon author appealed to the audience's comfort with, and preference for, chivalric themes in the context of Christ's Passion. As I have argued above, elements and themes from popular

²⁹ O'Mara, *Four Middle English Sermons*, 95; MS Harley 2268, f. 193v.

³⁰ O'Mara, *Four Middle English Sermons*, 95; MS Harley 2268, f. 193v.

romance were ubiquitous within popular preaching; the Harley sermon is just another example of this alliance.

Through the dramatic rendering of the lover-knight as a model of Christ's Passion, the preacher brought the practice of meditating on Christ's Passion into the public realm of his lay congregation, and urged them to meditate upon Christ's suffering themselves privately. But this was a suffering born of spiritual and physical combat, not of passive sacrifice.

Two essential points can be taken from the lover-knight exemplum discussed thus far. First, it is a striking example of the fusion of chivalric culture, religious literature, and popular preaching. The lover-knight narrative clearly demonstrates the author's awareness of courtly romance; indeed the story reads as one. The allegory provided no explanation as to why Jesus was an appropriate exemplar for this knight; rather, it is simply stated that Christ came to prove his love to his lady by means of knightly prowess and valour. The chivalric ideal is epitomized in Christ, his very knighthood demonstrated on the cross. Second, the exemplum is an excellent example of the teaching of doctrine through popular narrative. The lover-knight is used to demonstrate the redemptive nature of Christ's love. The various authors deliver a very clear message to their audience: Christ acts completely out of love, even when his love is not received; and that his love and devotion should prompt a return of love from mankind, and in the case of the bloody-shirt exemplum, remembered and meditated upon.

A further variation is found in the *Fasciculus morum*.³¹ Rather than teaching for meditative practice, the following exempla emphasize ingratitude and unworthiness, as in this instance, the lady's rejection of the knight. The teaching here is to guide the audience towards confession and penance. The *Fasciculus* is an early fourteenth-century handbook

³¹ Wenzel, *Fasciculus Morum: A Fourteenth-Century Preacher's Handbook* (London, 1989) and *Verses in Sermons: Fasciculus Morum and its Middle English Poems* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978).

for preachers written in Latin by an English Franciscan friar, and now extant in twenty-eight manuscripts. It was most likely used across England. In addition to ample preaching materials which include religious doctrine and morals, biblical citations and authorities, fables, exempla, and exegesis, the *Fasciculus* includes more than fifty poems composed in Middle English. It is arranged under the headings of the seven deadly sins and their counterpart virtues. It is under the sin of Envy, and the subtitle ‘Christ’s Passion’ that the lover-knight exemplum is found.

The *Fasciculus* author used the lover-knight exemplum in his exposition of Christ’s Passion, in order to answer the question, ‘Why did Christ shed his blood for man?’; his answer ultimately being, for love. He explained that as a remedy for sin, Christ engaged in a fierce war for mankind against his enemies. Here the cross is not the horse upon which Christ rides, but is his weapon, ‘a double-edged battle ax.’³² His sacrifice displayed his ‘burning love’ and the appropriate response is to love him back. Like the bloody-shirt version of the story, the *Fasciculus* author focused on the lady’s response to the knight’s actions. The author insisted that one should not be ungrateful towards Christ’s love and charity. The author imaginatively used Virgil’s Aeneas in the role of the knight, and references a likely fictitious commentator on Alexander the Great.³³ He says:

Aeneas burned so much with love for a girl that he would humble himself by becoming poor for her sake and exalt her with rich gifts. And this he did. Some day it happened that, as he returned greatly wounded from fighting a battle for her, he came back hardly alive. He went to her confidently as to a safe refuge, because he had loved her more than anyone else and exalted her by becoming poor. But in her ingratitude she shut her doors and steadfastly denied him entrance. Upon this he wrote to her his mishap in the words of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and told her:

Cerne cicatrices veteris vestigia pugne;
Quesivi proprio sanguine quicquid habes.

³² Wenzel, *Fasciculus Morum*, 200-1: ‘Qui quidem baculus crucis figuram habuit bellatoris baculi, qui bipennis dicitur eo quod in summitate habet duo cornua.’

³³ Woolf, ‘Theme of Christ the Lover-Knight in Medieval English Literature,’ 8-9.

(Behold my wounds, which traces are of ancient fight;
Whate'er thou hast, I gained it with my blood).³⁴

The distich derives from Ovid's *Amores* (III, viii, 19-20); Wenzel noted that these Ovidian lines appealed to medieval preachers, as he has found them outside the *Fasciculus* and in works and sermons clearly influenced by it.³⁵ They are also found alongside the lover-knight exemplum in the Middle English treatise *Dives and Pauper*.³⁶ This version of the exemplum appears to be a conflation of both the *Gesta* version, in which the plot-structure of the story has been applied, and the *Fasciculus*, demonstrated by the presence of the Ovidian distich. The *Fasciculus* author emphasized the importance of the Ovidian lines by providing in addition an English interpretation of Ovid's words as applied to Christ knocking on his love's door:

Beholde myne woundes, how sore I am dyȝth,
For all þe wele þat þou hast I wan hit in fyȝt.
I am sore woundet, behold my skyn.
Leue lyf, for my loue let me comen in.³⁷

He then provided the spiritual application of the exemplum in which Aeneas as Christ is deeply in love with a girl, man's soul. The most apparent change from previous versions of the exemplum is the change in the lady's social rank. In all previous examples, the lady and knight are of equal rank, of noble lineage, and the lady has been disinherited. The *Fasciculus* author however has made the lady poor and the spiritual allegory explained in that Christ loved man's soul so much that he exalted her by becoming poor, 'that in order to make her rich and noble he took on him our nature and became poor and entered a fierce war for her sake.'³⁸ In response, she ungratefully locks him out by committing sin;

³⁴ Wenzel, *Fasciculus Morum*, 204-5. The main narrative and distich were given in Latin with the Middle English interpretation of the distich below.

³⁵ Wenzel, *Verses in Sermons*, 162.

³⁶ *Dives and Pauper*, *Commandment VI, chapter XV*, EETS 280, v. 1, part 2, ed. Priscilla Heath Barnum (Oxford, 1980), 99-101.

³⁷ Wenzel, *Fasciculus Morum*, 204.

³⁸ Wenzel, *Fasciculus Morum*, 204.

ingratitude and its demonstration of unworthiness are important themes within this exemplum.

This variation of the exemplum is also found in two Middle English sermons of the fifteenth century: the only two examples of Christ the lover-knight to be found outside the context of Passion preaching. The first, in Bodleian Library, MS e Musaeo 180, applies the exemplum from the *Fasciculus* exactly as it is found in the handbook.³⁹ The Middle English sermon cycle found in MS e Musaeo 180 is extant in varying degrees of completeness in seven manuscripts.⁴⁰ It is a collection of *de tempore* sermons from the late fifteenth century. The cycle employs a great number of popular exempla and discusses themes common to late medieval preaching, including the ordering of society, Christ's suffering and Passion, and pastoral care. The sermon below is extant in three of the seven manuscripts.⁴¹ The sermon was preached for the twenty-first Sunday after Trinity and does not focus on Christ's Passion, but rather the need for one's soul to be cleansed of sin. The author opened the sermon with the narrative in which Christ heals the ill son of a king (John 4) and relates the child's illness to man's soul in need of Christ's healing:

Be þis litil kyng is vnderstonde every cristen man and woman lyvyng in this present lyfe the whiche hathe a sonne sore seke, that is to sey, he that hathe a sowle seke and gretly vexyd with the sekenes of syne and is in poynt and in perell of dethe. That is to sey, all the while þat a sowle is combered with dedly synne, then it stondythe in þe wey of everlastyng dethe that is to sey everlastyng damnacion. Therefore þu þat art a mortalle creature owȝte to remember evermore of þe grete kyndnes of Criste, and þinke how dere þat blissed Lorde bowȝte thi sowle in suffryng of so many peynes and pascions to saue the sonne, that is to sey, thi sowle, from endles damnacion.⁴²

³⁹ Morrison, *Late Fifteenth-Century Dominical Sermon Cycle*, 370-4; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS e Musaeo 180, ff. 154r-158v, henceforth MS e Musaeo 180.

⁴⁰ MS e Musaeo 180; Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg. 6.16; Durham, University Library, MS Cosin V.iv.3; Gloucester, Cathedral Library, MS 22; London, British Library, MS Harley 2247; Cambridge, St John's College, MS D.20; Lincoln, Cathedral Chapter Library, MS 50; London, British Library, MS Royal 18.B.xxv.

⁴¹ MS e Musaeo 180, ff. 154r-158v; Lincoln Cathedral, MS 50, ff. 63v-68r; and Gloucester, MS 22, pp. 628-36.

⁴² Morrison, *Late Fifteenth-Century Dominical Sermon Cycle*, 371; MS e Musaeo 180, f. 155r.

He then employed the *Fasciculus* version of the lover-knight exemplum focusing on the lady's response to Christ's sacrifice, in this case, mankind's soul:

Ensampyll we haue hereof of a grete k[ny3t] of Troye þat was calde Enneas, and his lemman, whereof tellythe Virgilius, *Enedes et eciam commentacio super Alexandrum, libris quinto et sexto*. This kny3te loved his lemman so moche wherfore he 3afe hyr grete riches and put hymselfe into batell for hys luffe; and there he was gretly wounded. But ever he skapyd and had victory of [hys enmys]. And so forthewith he was very sore seke. And then he cam vnto his paramoure for socowre because sche scholde take hede to the victorius dedys þat he had done for hyr luffe. And as sone as sche perceyvid the commyng of hym, sche schit fast the 3atis a3enst hym and barred hem fast that he scholde not com in, in token that sche loved another more þen sche dyd hym. And then he sent hyr a letter, as tellythe a grete clerke, *Ouidius, libro secundo De Transformatis*:

*C[e]rne cicatrices veteris vestigia pugne;
Quesivi proprio sanguine quicquid habes.*

‘Beholde,’ he seythe, ‘my woundis þat ben the tokens of myne old fu3tyng and werris. And I haue gete it withe myne owne bloode al þat ever þu hast.’

Now gostly to owre purpose. To speke be this kny3te may be vnderstonde owre soueren sauiewre Criste Ihesu, and by hys peramore is to understonde mans sowle. To make hyr riche he made himself pore, when he cam downe frome þe riche kyngdome of heven and becam man, pore and nedy, for to by mans sowle to þe riche kyngdome of heven. And on Good Fryday he was in batell, and full sore wounded to the dethe for vs, and had the victory of his enemys. But 3it, for al this, mans sowle, that is Godis paramowre, sche schit fast hyr 3atis withe barrys of synne, and so kept hym owte with ivell lyvyng.⁴³

The lover-knight example is rendered exactly as it is found in the *Fasciculus*, the Ovidian distich included. Here, the author used the example, specifically the lady's barring of the gates, to demonstrate mankind's sinfulness and need for redemption. Like the authors who composed Passion sermons, those of the *Amore langueo* and the sermons from MSS Bodley 649, Harley 2268, and Royal 18.B.xxiii, the e Musaeo preacher concluded the episode by urging his audience to ‘remember his Lord God, of the victorius dedis þat he hath done for owre saluacion, and then com and sey to the good Lord as this litil kyng dyd...“Lord, come downe withe þi grace and merci or...my sowle dye in synne.”’⁴⁴ The

⁴³ Morrison, *Late Fifteenth-Century Dominical Sermon Cycle*, 372; MS e Musaeo 180, ff. 155r-156r.

⁴⁴ Morrison, *Late Fifteenth-Century Dominical Sermon Cycle*, 372; MS e Musaeo 180, f. 156v.

indication of the laity's desire for a personal relationship with a version of Christ willing to fight for them is demonstrated again.

The second use of the *Fasciculus* lover-knight exemplum is found in a fifteenth-century sermon in Cambridge University Library, MS Gg.6.26.⁴⁵ The manuscript contains a number of Latin sermons as well as two Latin versions of the *Gesta Romanorum*; the English sermon is the only piece written completely in the vernacular. Andrew Galloway described the manuscript as a 'friar's work-a-day sermon book.'⁴⁶ The presence of the *Gesta* in the book, as well as the alternative *Fasciculus* version of the lover-knight exemplum in its English sermon, suggests an author well-aware of the Christ-knight motif. Here, we find a sermon not specifically using the exemplum for the exposition of Christ's Passion, although there is language within the sermon that would certainly allow the preacher to expand it into a Passion sermon. Rather, the sermon, composed for an unspecified occasion, deploys the lover-knight in order to develop its main theme:

Frendes ther be many thynges the whiche shulde move men to hye them to confessioun. Amonge whiche first I note the Vnkyndeness that þe synner shewth to allmyti God þe whiche tarieth and deferryth to returne vnto hem.⁴⁷

The sermon author here emphasises the sinner's need for the confession of unkindness towards God. The notion of kindness was widespread in the literature of late medieval England. Sarah McNamer described its development as an 'unprecedented degree of circulation' and an 'increasing obsession' with the term 'unkindness' itself.⁴⁸ Andrew Galloway traced the development of the term, describing it as a 'keyword' adopted throughout the literature of England:

⁴⁵ The individual sermon is edited by Andrew Galloway, 'A Fifteenth-Century Confession Sermon on "Unkyndeness" and its Literary Parallels and Parodies,' *Traditio: Studies in Ancient and Medieval History, Thought, and Religion* 49 (1994), 259-69 and discussed in Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 210-12; Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg. 6.26, ff. 22v-23r; henceforth MS CUL Gg. 6.26.

⁴⁶ Galloway, 'Fifteenth-Century Confession Sermon,' 259-69.

⁴⁷ Galloway, 'Fifteenth-Century Confession Sermon,' 266; MS CUL Gg. 6.26, f. 22v.

⁴⁸ McNamer, 'Kyndenesse and Resistance in the Middle English Passion Lyric,' in *Affective Meditation*, 174-206, at 178 and 191.

With its volatile mixture of secular and religious controversy and its trilingual intellectual culture still dominated by the clergy, yet increasingly accommodating a literate laity, fourteenth-century England was rich in swiftly developing "keywords" that preachers, chroniclers, noblemen, and poets used to think about and indeed to give structure to social and religious ties.⁴⁹

Deeply rooted in the concept of gratitude (*gratitudo* and *gratia*), when translated into Middle English the term meant not only 'kind,' but 'natural' and 'of one's kin.'

Galloway's examination concluded that the term 'kindness' signified a wide-reaching concept of social ties, cohesion, and community, placing affinity over hierarchy as the social ideal. He noted that religious writers composing in Middle English enthusiastically engaged with words with double-meanings, in this case exploring the 'natural' and 'moral' meanings of kindness. This is important when looking at the CUL Gg.6.26 sermon's use of the lover-knight exemplum.

Confession and unkindness are allegorised using the lover-knight exemplum. The theme of unkindness was taken directly from the *Fasciculus*' emphasis on the lady's ingratitude: 'But in her ingratitude she shut the doors and steadfastly denied him entrance (*Set ipsa tanquam ingrata portas seravit et aditum constanter sibi negavit*).'⁵⁰ The author began:

This Vnkyndenesse sheweth Virgil in a booke callid *Eneidos* by a noble knyght the whiche is callid Eneas. This knyght hadde a powerfull mayde to his sustyr and she was expulsid and dishenherit bi a gret tyraunt from all hir goodes and possessions. Nopirpelasse þis noble knyght so entireli luffid his sustyr þat to sett hir agayn in hir landes and possessiouns he made hemselfe pore and agayn hir enemy helde a grete batell, in the whiche he gate þe victory ... This noble knyght being gretly woundid ... came vnto the gates and knokkid desiryng to a cum in and she, as a woman most Vnkynde, lokkid þe gate and sayde sternely he shull not cum ther.⁵¹

The exemplum follows the *Fasciculus* model with one major departure; the lady representing the soul has been transformed into the knight Aeneas', 'sustir,' rather than

⁴⁹ Andrew Galloway, 'The Making of a Social Ethic in Late-Medieval England: From *Gratitudo* to "Kyndenesse,"' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 55 (1994), 365-383 at 365.

⁵⁰ Wenzel, *Fasciculus Morum*, 204-5.

⁵¹ Galloway, 'Fifteenth-Century Confession Sermon,' 266; MS CUL Gg. 6.26, f. 22v.

lover. Galloway suggested that this change may be the result of the author's 'personal touch,' playing on the multiple meanings of the term, emphasizing the natural and familial dimensions. The woman has been made of Aeneas' 'kynde' or kin.⁵² He also suggested that this may be 'an especially English application of the Christ-knight' as he identified a similar use in a fifteenth-century lyric found in no less than fifteen manuscripts. Like the MS Gg.6.26 sermon, the lyric, 'A Ihesu, þi swetnes wha may it se,' portrays the Christ-knight within the context of kindness, in gratitude and as kin, as well as presenting Christ in battle:

If I for kyndnes suld luf my kyn,
 Þan me think in my thocht
 Be kyndely skylle I suld be-gyn
 At him þat has me made of noght.
 His sembland he sett my saule within
 And þis world for me wroght,
 Als fader of fude my luf to wyn
 Herytage in heuen he has me boght.

To heuen he went with mykell blys,
 When he had ouercomen his batail;
 His baner full brade dysplaid is,
 When so my fa wull me assail...

Þus wald my spouse for me fyght,
 And wounded for me he was full sare;
 For my luf his ded was dyght,
 What kyndenes myght he do me mare?
 To yheld him his luf haue I no myght,
 Bot luf him lely I suld þarfore,
 And wrik his will with wordes ryght,
 Þat he lered with lufly lare.⁵³

Here, the author poses the question: 'What kyndenes myght he do me mare?' He does so to emphasize Christ's choice to die in order to save mankind; there is no further kindness he could deliver on behalf of his spouse. The lyric author also placed Christ's Passion in familial terms, with Christ restoring his ancestral heritage. Likewise, towards the

⁵² Galloway, 'A Fifteenth-Century Confession Sermon,' 262.

⁵³ Brown, *Religious Lyrics*, 61-5.

conclusion of the MS Gg.6.26 sermon, the author presented Christ in battle for the restoration of mankind's heritage. The preacher, writing in the first person on behalf of Christ, said:

I fawte with þe devele and at þe last in þe felse of þe mownt of olives with full sore woundes I ovircam him, and with þe price of my blode I redemyd thee fro prison and thraldom and restorid thee to þi own heritage of hevyn. And ... so long I have callid at þe gates of a synner sowle till þe blode hath brist owt ... on gode Friday on þe crosse I shedde my hert blode.⁵⁴

Although both the lyric and sermon are not specified as belonging to the Lenten season, the style and language certainly suggest they should, and the author may have intended it as a model for a Passion sermon.

There is a second interesting point to be made regarding the author's transformation of the lover into the knight's sister, one that Galloway mentions in passing; that is, the author's apparent removal of a sexual relationship between the knight and lady, by making her one of his kin. One explanation not offered by Galloway is that the sermon author was, like the *Fasciculus* author, familiar with the writings of St Bernard and his commentaries on the *Song of Songs*. If so, the sermon author may have been applying the term sister as found in scripture: 'Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast wounded my heart' (*Vulnerasti cor meum, soror mea, sponsa; vulnerasti cor meum*).⁵⁵ Bernard explained this relationship in his sermon on the Holy Spirit: 'She is his sister because they have the one Father; his bride because joined in the one Spirit.'⁵⁶ If this is the case, the author was not omitting the sexual nature of the relationship, but merely choosing to emphasize the familial bond.

We cannot dismiss the often eroticized descriptions of the relationship between Christ and his spouse, the soul. Scholars agree that erotic language was an important

⁵⁴ Galloway, 'Fifteenth-Century Confession Sermon,' 268; MS CUL Gg. 6.26, f. 22v.

⁵⁵ Song of Songs 4:9.

⁵⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux, 'The Holy Spirit: The Kiss of the Mouth,' sermon 8:9, in *On the Song of Songs, The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux*, ii, trans. Killian Walsh (Spencer, Mass., 1971), 52.

component of the medieval mystical tradition, conceptualising the spiritual union with God in marital and erotic language.⁵⁷ Authors did so in order to explain their intense and passionate feelings towards the divine. Their choice of language derived from the strength of their feelings, an actual physical experience of piety. This language was not limited to female authors within the mystical tradition however. Bernard of Clairvaux's commentaries on the *Song of Songs* demonstrate his promotion of sexual imagery used to describe mystical marriage and while for women, Christ was always the bridegroom, male authors wed additional figures, such as the Virgin Mary, Wisdom, or Poverty, without limiting themselves to specific gender roles.⁵⁸ As the sermons in the upcoming section will further demonstrate, nuptial imagery, both erotic and traditional, was a common trope in medieval preaching.

Another interpretation may be to understand the unkind sister, as Sarah McNamer has described, as a 'recalcitrant beloved.'⁵⁹ In her analysis of a fifteenth-century Passion lyric, Christ reproaches the 'noisy burne,' a 'merry, self-delighting, lower-class English wench of drinking-song tradition' for being 'unkynde' in her failure to respond to Christ's pleas in a grateful and compassionate manner.⁶⁰ McNamer offered an alternative explanation for the maiden's rejection. She claimed that this maiden is just one example of disobedient lovers that begin to occupy the Passion lyrics of the late fourteenth century. These lovers resist Christ's pleas as a form of 'disaffection' embedded within the affective tradition, as a means for the lyric authors to, as McNamer argued, masculinise Middle English Passion lyrics because orthodox lay men were 'caught between increasing cultural pressures to perform straightened forms of masculinity in the world while rendering

⁵⁷ See: Elizabeth Petroff, *Body and Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism* (New York, 1994); Bynum, *Jesus as Mother, and Holy Feast and Holy Fast*; Cristina Mazzoni, *Saint Hysteria: Neurosis, Mysticism, and Gender in European Culture* (Ithaca, 1996).

⁵⁸ Carolyn Diskant Muir, 'Bride or Bridegroom? Masculine Identity in Mystic Marriages,' *Holiness and Masculinity in the Middle Ages*, eds. P H Cullum and Katherine J Lewis (Toronto, 2004), 58-78.

⁵⁹ McNamer, 'Kyndenesse and Resistance in the Middle English Passion Lyric,' 176.

⁶⁰ McNamer, 'Kyndenesse and Resistance in the Middle English Passion Lyric,' 176.

feminized feelings to the suffering Christ in their private devotion.⁶¹ It is impossible to deduce if the MS Gg.6.26 author was working through his own form of ‘anxious masculinity’ when composing the sermon, but if McNamer’s theory is accepted, it can be used to explain the sister’s rejection of Christ, while removing any hint of a sexual relationship between mankind and Christ. In any case, it is clear the sermon author used the lover-knight exemplum to explore mankind’s complex relationship with Christ; he adapted the model to better suit his goals of urging his audience towards confession and penance. The author stressed the point of unkindness, or the rejection of Christ, and its consequences for his audience. The lover-knight was not placed within the typical chivalric framework, but rather was used to make the theme of ‘unkyndenness’ the essential point of the confession sermon. Even so, McNamer’s assessment can be applied to the lover-knight theme in general; the motif provided an image intended to evoke emotional and affective responses within a masculinised, in this case, chivalric framework.

The final example of the lover-knight exemplum is a unique and lengthy adaptation of the story. It is found in a single manuscript, London, Lambeth Palace, MS 352. The manuscript is briefly discussed by Siegfried Wenzel and is both edited and examined by Holly Johnson.⁶² It is described as a miscellany from the late fourteenth to early fifteenth centuries and in addition to the single sermon, contains 74 paragraph-length summaries of Sunday sermons. It is a fully macaronic sermon which addresses the events of Christ’s Passion in a meditative manner, drawing moral lessons from the events. It directly invites the audience to join in a communal meditation of the death of Christ. The sermon was preached for Good Friday and takes its theme from Revelation 1:5: ‘He loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood.’ The lover-knight exemplum is immediately brought to the attention of the audience; the preacher began the sermon with a brief anecdote in

⁶¹ McNamer, ‘Kyndenesse and Resistance in the Middle English Passion Lyric,’ 177.

⁶² Wenzel, *Macaronic Sermons*, 33-4; Johnson, ‘Preaching the Passion’, 57-177, 323-9; London, Lambeth Palace, MS 352, ff. 216r-224v; henceforth MS Lambeth 352.

which a grateful wife mourns her husband. Unlike all the cases above, in which the exemplum is presented briefly as reinforcement to the author's message, here it is the focus of the entire sermon, its primary narrative and metaphor, and the tool to which the author continually returned to deliver his message.

There are three points that make this sermon a particularly interesting example of the Christ-knight motif: first, the author's use of named characters in the lover-knight exemplum (Naomi and Elimelech of the Old Testament Book of Ruth) as opposed to the anonymous characters found in every other lover-knight example⁶³; second, the author's explicitly stated goal for the sermon, that is to bring the audience together in a communal meditation on Christ's Passion and death; and finally, the author's emphasis on and detailed exposition of Christ's victory over the devil, specifically the notion of Christ's Passion as a series of battles engaged in to restore mankind.

In order to understand the way relationships with Christ the lover-knight are configured in this case, we need to focus on the treatment of the Book of Ruth in the medieval exegetical tradition. Ruth is the smallest book in the biblical canon, with only four chapters.⁶⁴ It is an odd text in that God never appears as an actor in the drama and the central character is not only a woman, but a Moabite outsider, rather than an Israelite. For Jewish readers, the purpose of the text was to establish the genealogy of King David; Ruth is the great-grandmother to David. This was important for Christian exegetes as well, as Christ is of the 'house of David.' The Book of Ruth is however, ultimately a love story, written to demonstrate the kind of love God desires for his people. The first chapter begins

⁶³ There are two exceptions to the model of anonymous Lover-knights, both examples however are applied to fictional characters: the first is the example of Aeneas, found in the *Fasciculus Morum* and related sermons; the second, the lover-knight of MS Harley 2268, which first told of an anonymous knight fighting for his beloved, and then, after applying the image to Christ, extended the allegory further to also include Arthur and his knights as part of this lover-tradition.

⁶⁴ The following summary of the exegetical tradition of the Book of Ruth is drawn from Lesley Smith's essential work, *Medieval Exegesis in Translation: Commentaries on the Book of Ruth* (Kalamazoo, Mi., 1996).

with Naomi, Elimelech, and their sons' journey into Moab to escape famine. Upon arriving, Elimelech died, leaving Naomi with their sons, and their Moabite wives, Orpha and Ruth. After ten years and the deaths of both of her sons, Naomi decided to return to her homeland. Her daughter-in-law Orpha returned to her family, but the other, Ruth, refused to leave Naomi and returned with her to Juda. The remaining three chapters tell of Ruth's relationship and marriage to Boaz, and the birth of their son, Obed, the grandfather of King David.

Lesley Smith included in her survey of Ruth the most important of medieval exegetical commentaries, noting also that the length of commentaries was considered when choosing those to include. For our purposes, we only need note that the Book of Ruth, although a difficult text linguistically and because of the required knowledge of Hebrew customs, was still a frequently commentated book by medieval exegetes. Those included in the survey are: from the early Middle Ages, Jerome, Isidore of Seville, Chaldaeus Paraphrastes, Josephus, John Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Ambrose; and from the High Middle Ages, Peter Comestor, Hugh of St Cher, and Nicholas of Lyra; the *Glossa Ordinaria*, which takes its translation from Jerome, is also included. These authors provide the most significant examples within the medieval scholastic tradition. For these exegetes, the Book of Ruth was read as one long allegory, and in one example by Hugh of St Cher, Naomi herself represents the Church.⁶⁵

The Lambeth sermon author has inserted the lover-knight tradition into the brief narrative of Elimelech and Naomi. He may have been familiar with one of the allegorical interpretations of Naomi in which she represented the Church, married to Elimelech, as Christ; thus they become the bride and bridegroom as found in the New Testament, and the lover-knight and his beloved as found in the lover-knight tradition. The sermon author may

⁶⁵ Hugh of St Cher, 'Postills on Ruth,' in *Medieval Exegesis in Translation*, 45.

also have been familiar with the *Glossa Ordinaria*; in this text, Naomi is again related to the Church.⁶⁶ Likewise, in the *Glossa*, it is given that Naomi means ‘beautiful.’ This is also found in the Lambeth sermon; she is described as beautiful and of noble parentage, and is thus related to human nature.⁶⁷ Elimelech, as given in the *Glossa*, is translated as ‘my God is King’ and is a typological parallel to Christ; the Lambeth sermon described him as ‘he who is for God,’ that is the son of God.⁶⁸ The sermon author, if aware of the Ruth narrative and commentaries, may have recognized the parallels between the biblical story which allegorised a husband (Christ) who died, leaving his wife (the Church) a widow. This is however where the sermon author ventured into a highly dramatised version of the Naomi/Elimelech narrative because the only element of the lover-knight tradition present within the Book of Ruth is the brief episode in which Elimelech dies, leaving his beloved Naomi alone to remember him. The story explains:

A certain man of Bethlehem Juda went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons. He was named Elimelech, and his wife, Naomi: and his two sons, the one Mahalon, and the other Chelion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem Juda. And entering into the country of Moab, they abode there. And Elimelech the husband of Naomi died: and she remained with her sons. And they took wives of the women of Moab, of which one was called Orpha, and the other Ruth. And they dwelt there ten years. And they both died, to wit, Mahalon and Chelion: and the woman was left alone, having lost both her sons and her husband.⁶⁹

There is no indication as to how Elimelech died and the only demonstration of Naomi’s grief is in her response to the suggestion by her daughters-in-law to remain with her.

Naomi responded:

Do not so, my daughters, I beseech you: for I am grieved the more for your distress, and the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.⁷⁰

The Lambeth sermon author greatly embellished the story to suit his lover-knight theme:

Now I say Elimelech is dead, the husband of Naomi. Dearly beloved, Naomi was a wondrously fair young woman and of noble parentage, but she was extremely

⁶⁶ ‘The Ordinary Gloss,’ in *Medieval Exegesis in Translation*, 12.

⁶⁷ Johnson, ‘Preaching the Passion,’ 125; MS Lambeth 352, f. 217r.

⁶⁸ Johnson, ‘Preaching the Passion,’ 125; MS Lambeth 352, f. 217r.

⁶⁹ Ruth 1:1-5.

⁷⁰ Ruth 1:13.

poor because she was disinherited from her father's patrimony. Elimelech was the son of a king of another country who loved her so much that he renounced his own kingdom and came to her and married her. Having done this, he saw that she was exceedingly poor and that her children were without possessions, and he began to work diligently and engage in battle. And finally he engaged in one battle with her enemy in which he fought so vigorously and so bravely that he conquered him and recovered her inheritance for her. Yet he received so many blows and so many wounds that he died immediately after that.⁷¹

The sermon author took a minor and little-known biblical story, and fitted it to the familiar lover-knight paradigm. Johnson suggested that the author may have used Naomi and Elimelech as the characters of the exemplum in order to transform it 'into an Old Testament type which will then be fulfilled, not only by Christ in the New Testament, but by Christ and the audience in the present moment of the Good Friday liturgy.'⁷² The audience's role in listening to the narrative in order to fully imagine the Passion events was more important than the preacher's role in preaching. This argument complements another possibility, that the sermon author was aware of the need for mental imagery to enhance the spoken word. Mary Carruthers noted the importance of personalising information which 'helps to distinguish one bit from another.'⁷³ The Naomi and Elimelech adaptation of the lover-knight exemplum, while not a personal experience of the preacher or audience, allowed the sermon author to bring the story into the present and may have aided in the audience's ability to recall the narrative, and from there, its moral lessons. He did so by applying actual characters to the story, historical figures that the audience may have been able to relate to, or in the very least, making it less of an abstract anecdote.

The importance of transforming the lover-knight story into something memorable and relatable is significant in its identification as a Passion narrative. Passion preaching has already been established as a means to recall the events of Christ's Passion in order that the audience reflect on his sacrifice and death and to evoke an emotional response of

⁷¹ Johnson, 'Preaching the Passion,' 124; MS Lambeth 352, f. 212r.

⁷² Johnson, 'Preaching the Passion,' 327.

⁷³ Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, second edition (Cambridge, 2008), 76-7.

gratitude and compassion. The martial Christ adds to this type of meditation an image of the human Christ that the audience could further relate, an active and aggressive fighter. The lover-knight sacrificed himself like the suffering Christ, but first he directly engaged in combat to do so. This is a considerably different manner in which Christ demonstrates his love. Johnson described the sermon as a love story between Christ and the audience.⁷⁴ The exemplum relates the grateful wife directly to the audience, transforming them from spectator to participant, as those who should ‘remember with mournful sorrow’ Christ’s love and death; Christ represents the husband who died for them in battle. The Lambeth sermon is exceptional in that the preacher is calling the audience to engage in a communal meditation, a *memoria*, of Christ during the Good Friday liturgy. In fact, his opening paragraph began with this call:

It is just that we should recall the sweetness and blessings so that, for the sake of impressing his friendship more firmly [in our minds], we can worthily and fittingly says the words of our chosen *thema*, that ‘he loved us and washed us from our sins.’⁷⁵

He then provided an explanation for this communal form of meditation and piety:

He who often meditates well in the Passion of Jesus Christ should have an occasion for shedding three kinds of tears. For in as much as Christ is our brother, we owe him love and charity. In as much as he was badly treated ...we should have compassion and pity for him. But in as much as he is our head, the head of the Church and we are members of the Church, we should have sorrow and pain in ourselves for the pains which he suffers for us ... And therefore the Apostle commanded us to feel within ourselves the pains of Jesus Christ.⁷⁶

For these reasons, the preacher declared that Good Friday is ‘a time to weep.’⁷⁷ In addition to a response of sorrow, the preacher used Naomi as an exemplar for how exactly a beloved of Christ should remember him and meditate upon his death on Good Friday. Although this version of the lover-knight exemplum does not include a bloody-shirt to be hung in commemoration, as the *Gesta*, the Naomi of the Lambeth sermon remembered her

⁷⁴ Johnson, ‘Preaching the Passion,’ 324.

⁷⁵ Johnson, ‘Preaching the Passion,’ 118; MS Lambeth 352, f. 216r.

⁷⁶ Johnson, ‘Preaching the Passion,’ 120; MS Lambeth 352, f. 216v.

⁷⁷ Johnson, ‘Preaching the Passion,’ 120; MS Lambeth 352, f. 216v.

lover's death above all things. The sermon author described Naomi's actions upon hearing of Elimelech's death:

It was no wonder that she began to weep and to grieve, and she undertook such great reflection for him for his death that she never in her whole life wished to do anything else on the anniversary of his death but sit and weep and listen attentively to the account of how he dies for love of her.⁷⁸

Naomi is therefore established as the model of expected behaviour from the audience. The preacher explained how, 'on this anniversary day she always gathers her children together, as you are now gathered here, to learn and to teach how their Father Jesus Christ died for their love.'⁷⁹ The audience, drawing from the model of Naomi, is instructed not just to recall Christ's Passion, but to 'sit and listen attentively' to the history of how Christ died. Thus the preacher, in this very lengthy sermon, provided a complete account of Christ's Passion; for good meditation calls to mind Christ's death in imaginative detail, a form of affective piety, and in this case, public and communal meditation.

In order to aid the audience in developing a clear mental imagining of Christ's death, a necessary step for their communal meditation, the author described the events of the Passion, the battles Christ engaged in, and his death in great detail. This detail created 'strong visual images, through expression and gesture, which will fix the impression of his words.'⁸⁰ Thus, the sermon author did not simply narrate the account of Christ's Passion, but relayed the story in great detail. These historical events provide the sermon with its primary structure, its divisions and developments. The sermon's primary divisions are three stages of Christ's 'trewlove': his 'transformation' from deity to human; his 'deformation' through pain and suffering; and that by which he was made 'formless,' that is his death. Each display of true love is likened to a four-leafed clover-like plant. In the second and third signs of this faithful love, each plant leaf is assigned a Middle English

⁷⁸ Johnson, 'Preaching the Passion,' 124; MS Lambeth 352, f. 217r.

⁷⁹ Johnson, 'Preaching the Passion,' 124-5; MS Lambeth 352, f. 217r.

⁸⁰ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 122.

verse which is used to explain the corresponding events of Christ's Passion. For our purposes, we need only to look at the second stage of love, where Christ is 'deformed,' as this is where he engages in battle. The four Middle English verses aligned with each leaf of the clover are:

For love he tok for man a fyzt,
He favtht wiþ al is myzt,
He was wel fuly dyzt,
And aftyr dampnid wyt ovtin riht.⁸¹

The first verse in which Christ takes on both humanity and mankind's fight emphasized his foreknowledge of the outcome. The preacher explained that while most would not expose themselves to danger for a loved one if they knew they would suffer, Christ, 'a proper soldier'... 'saw and knew well what had to happen and how hard a battle there would be against him, and yet he willingly and knowingly put himself in the place where he knew that his enemies would find him and seek an occasion to fight with him.'⁸² This leaf includes the events before and after the Last Supper. The author described this as 'a more beautiful meal and a more beautiful table than were ever seen on earth. There he held, as it were, his round table with twelve chosen knights who afterwards were conquerors of all the world, because neither Alexander nor Arthur, in all their greatest joy, ever had such good knights.'⁸³

The second verse, in which Christ 'fought with all his might,' guided the audience through the events of Christ's betrayal by Judas, his trial and judgement. These events are the scenes of various battles that make up his Passion story:

Here I have shown you how he fought with all his power: first with all the power of his deity when he stared them all down, namely Judas and the company who came with him; and then secondly with the shield of his forbearance with which he conquered five armies, first Judas and his army, secondly Annas and his army,

⁸¹ Johnson, 'Preaching the Passion,' 73; MS Lambeth 352, f. 218v. For love he became man to fight [for man], He fought with all his might, He was foully treated. And afterwards, he was condemned without justice. Translation my own.

⁸² Johnson, 'Preaching the Passion,' 135; MS Lambeth 352, f. 218v.

⁸³ Johnson, 'Preaching the Passion,' 138; MS Lambeth 352, f. 219r.

thirdly Caiaphas and his army, fourthly Pilate and his army, and fifthly Herod and his army. Against each one of those he fought with the power of his forbearance so that everywhere he had victory, and this is what I said in the second leaf, that ‘for love he fought with all his might.’⁸⁴

The manner in which he fought is said to have been not by Christ the deity, but by Christ the man. This was so he could demonstrate his faithful love to mankind. This ‘mode’ of fighting:

... consisted wholly in suffering and forbearance, because to gain victory, he could not fight in any other way. And so he began that mode of fighting then which had never been used. And Christ taught it to all his soldiers – the apostles, martyrs, men and women – and he taught them the craft so perfectly that afterwards they gained the whole world with it, and they conquered emperors and kings and tyrants. Wherever they took part against him, because they knew nothing about him, they did not perceive the art until they were oppressed and totally conquered ... That new mode of fighting with the shield of suffering Our Lord Jesus Christ first discovered, and he was the first who knew it perfectly. And therefore we understand from this the second leaf, when I say that ‘for love he fought with all his might.’⁸⁵

The dual nature of the human Christ, on one hand, his martial role, demonstrated by the Christ-knight motif, and on the other, his suffering role, demonstrated by the man of sorrows, is perfectly displayed by the way in which the Lambeth author described his mode of fighting as with ‘the shield of suffering.’

Although the *milites Christi* are not explicitly identified, the sermon author described Christ’s first commissioning of his ‘soldiers of Christ’ and their call to continue his work. The preacher also took a very interesting turn in his exposition of Christ’s manner of fighting, drawing attention to the ability of women to engage in this battle as taught by Christ:

And so sometimes a girl (*puella*) alone conquers a king with his entire army, which he knew how to assemble, as St Katherine [conquered] the emperor Maxencius with fifty philosophers and with everyone he knew to lead against her, and St Agnes [conquered] the tyrants of Rome, and so did many others.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Johnson, ‘Preaching the Passion,’ 158; MS Lambeth 352, f. 221v.

⁸⁵ Johnson, ‘Preaching the Passion,’ 147-8; MS Lambeth 352, ff. 220r-v.

⁸⁶ Johnson, ‘Preaching the Passion,’ 147-8; MS Lambeth 352, ff. 220r-v.

In drawing attention to these famous women, the preacher is likely appealing to the female segment of his audience, desiring that every listener has an approachable model to relate to and aid them in their meditation. Preachers were indeed acutely aware of the need to appeal to both genders and thus anecdotes such as that of Sts. Katherine and Agnes, as well as the lover-knight motif, particularly when associated with great figures such as King Arthur, demonstrate the accessibility the motif provided to lay congregants.

In the final stage of Christ's love, his becoming 'unformed' in death, the sermon author narrated the final events of Christ's Passion and crucifixion. These are the final four leaves of the true love plant. One of the most interesting points the sermon author made occurs in Christ's defeat of the devil at the crucifixion. It is a fascinating account from the devil's point of view rather than Christ's: the devil realises his mistake in underestimating Christ and the true nature of his divinity. Christ was not willing to yield to the mocking calls of the Jews at the cross who were daring him to descend if he was indeed God. He refused them because:

They told him to do this at the devil's instigation, and the devil sat on one arm of the cross in order to ensure that he would have some part in him. And when the devil did not find anything there that he sought, he knew that Christ's death was greatly against him, and he wished to have him down [off the cross]. And you can see here how greatly death is to be feared because of the demons who are then gathered around a man, since the devil put himself on the cross to observe Christ.⁸⁷

By placing the devil at the scene of the crucifixion as an active participant, the sermon author maintained the role of the devil as the villain of his narrative, keeping the image of the devil present in his audience's mind. This is hugely significant to our consideration of how audiences may have engaged with images of Christ as soldier. While the Jews and others at the crucifixion were not figures that a late medieval English audience could

⁸⁷ Johnson, 'Preaching the Passion,' 169; MS Lambeth 352, f. 223v.

engage with in battle, the devil was very much considered a malignant, and current, presence in their lives.

There is one final important element yet to be discussed in the Lambeth lover-knight narrative: Christ is not just his lady's lover, but also her spouse. Like the lover-knight of the *Gesta Romanorum* and the Passion lyric, the Christ-knight does not solely take on the role of lover; as her spouse he is both the lover-knight and the warrior-bridegroom. The representation of Christ as a warrior-bridegroom, while not as common in the later Middle Ages, has antecedents that extend further back than the lover-knight exemplum, being found in the writings of the Church Fathers.

‘Thus would my spouse for me fight’: Christ the Warrior-bridegroom

Given the pervasive influence of chivalric culture in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it is not surprising to find the evolution of a warrior-Christ into a chivalric knight. There is however another adaptation of the warrior-Christ that also emerged in the later Middle Ages, the second Beloved Christ motif, that of the warrior-bridegroom. Christ's representation as a victorious warrior is found within patristic theories of atonement. The presence of a warrior Christ in late medieval sermons is a resurrection of this motif; one such configuration is Christ the warrior-bridegroom. For the western Church Fathers such as Ambrose, Augustine, and Gregory the Great, atonement was a dramatic story of divine conflict, known as the *Christus victor* theme.⁸⁸ Christ is imagined as the leader of a victorious conflict against the devil and evil, those things that are against God. By his Passion, Christ fights against evil forces, defeats them by means of his death, releases mankind from bondage, and reconciles the world to himself, that is God. Christ is a victorious conqueror. This is reflected in the earliest representation of the crucifixion in

⁸⁸ Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement*, trans. A G Hebert (London, 1953), 20-3, 54-7.

English poetry; found in *The Dream of the Rood*, in which Christ is presented as a heroic commander of men engaged in battle on the Cross.⁸⁹ The adaptation of this image in the later Middle Ages is represented in works such as *Piers Plowman*, in which the Christ-knight jousts with the devil in the guise of Piers' human nature, a prelude to the crucifixion scene, as well as the many sermons containing the popular lover-knight exemplum.⁹⁰

The early representation of a warrior Christ contributed to the role of Christ as the warrior-bridegroom. The most important contributors to the early configurations of this tradition are Saints Augustine and Bernard. Their writings were widely known with a large readership, particularly Bernard's sermons on the *Song of Songs*. Concurrently, there was a growing tradition of writings concerning the mystical marriage between Christ and the individual soul.⁹¹ Augustine and Bernard's influential works, alongside this growing mystical tradition, as well as the laity's increasing desire to engage with Christ directly and personally, all contributed to the occurrence of an image of Christ that resonated with a varied audience, clerical and lay, knightly or otherwise: a Christ that was personal and attainable – a lover and spouse – as well as protective and commanding – a fighter and saviour. The warrior-bridegroom image, although much less common than the lover-knight, was another powerful instrument for the exposition of Christ's Passion and redemption in the sermons of fourteenth and fifteenth-century preachers. The relationship between the two images is found in the nuptial narratives of the Old and New Testaments: the faithlessness and adultery of the lady, as demonstrated in the many lover-knight exempla described above, necessitated that her husband would engage in battle to rescue

⁸⁹ Michael D Cherniss, 'The Cross as Christ's Weapon: The Influence of Heroic Literary Tradition on *The Dream of the Rood*,' *Anglo-Saxon England* 2 (1973), 241-52; Alison Finlay, 'The Warrior Christ and the Unarmed Hero,' in *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature: Essays in Honour of G H Russell*, eds. Gregory Kratzmann and James Simpson (Cambridge, 1986), 19-29.

⁹⁰ Langland, *Piers Plowman: The B Version*, eds. Kane and Donaldson, 607-31.

⁹¹ E Ann Matter, 'Mystical Marriage,' in *Women and Faith: Catholic Religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge, Ma., 1999), 31-41 and 'The Marriage of the Soul,' in *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Medieval Western Christianity* (Pennsylvania, 1990), 123-50.

and restore her; in other words, the faithlessness of the lady, whose analogue is found in the Old Testament, was redeemed by her knight-spouse, whose counterpart is Christ, in the New Testament.

Nuptial imagery and a theology of love are present throughout both the Old and New Testaments. Hosea provides the first description of the relationship between God and Israel as matrimonial, albeit an unhappy union. The first three chapters describe YHWH's own wife Israel as a promiscuous harlot, sacrificing to Baal rather than to God. Likewise, in Jeremiah Israel has broken its marriage vows and committed adultery with harlots; while Ezekiel examines the consequences of Israel's adultery.⁹² In each allegory, although Israel is an ungrateful bride, she is loved by God who will take her back. Nuptial imagery, found throughout the New Testament in Corinthians, Ephesians, the Synoptic Gospels, the Epistles of John, and the Apocalypse, depict the Church as the spotless bride who marries the lamb.⁹³ It is from both traditions of nuptial allegory that St Augustine provided the foundation for the image of Christ as the warrior-bridegroom for subsequent medieval authors.

St Augustine used these nuptial narratives to expound Christ's love of mankind, set within the context of redemption. In his commentary on the Gospel of John, Augustine establishes the completion of the Old Testament in the New; all things begin and end with God and Christ is the fulfilment of all things. He opened his treatise saying:

The miracle indeed of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby He made the water into wine, is not marvellous to those who know that it was God's doing. For He who made wine on that day at the marriage feast ... the self-same does this every year in vines.⁹⁴

⁹² Larry L Lyke, *I Will Espouse You Forever: The Song of Songs and the Theology of Love in the Hebrew Bible* (Nashville, 2007), 3-27.

⁹³ Johns Varghese, *The Imagery of Love in the Gospel of John* (Rome, 2009), chapters 1-2; Richard A Batey, *New Testament Nuptial Imagery* (Leiden, 1971).

⁹⁴ Augustine, *Tractate 8* (John 2:1-4), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, vii, trans. John Gibb, ed. Philip Schaff (New York, 1888), Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1701008.htm>, accessed 11 April 2015.

Continuing on his theme of the efficacy of both God and Christ, Augustine examined the marriage feast at Cana. He asked:

But what says the apostle? 'I have espoused you to one husband, to present you a chaste virgin to Christ.' Why does he fear lest the virginity of Christ's bride should be corrupted by the subtlety of the devil? 'I fear,' says he, 'lest as the serpent beguiled Eve by his subtlety, so also your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and chastity which is in Christ.'⁹⁵

Thus has He here a bride whom He has redeemed by His blood, and to whom He has given the Holy Spirit as a pledge. He has freed her from the bondage of the devil: He died for her sins, and is risen again for her justification.

Who will make such offerings to his bride? Men may offer to a bride every sort of earthly ornament – gold, silver, precious stones, houses, slaves, estates, farms – but will any give his own blood? For if one should give his own blood to his bride, he would not live to take her for his wife. But the Lord, dying without fear, gave His own blood for her.⁹⁶

Augustine alluded to the sin of Israel in his harangue of brides who accept worldly gifts such as gold and silver. For Augustine, the harlot, that is Israel who is the Church, is redeemed by Christ in his defeat of the devil and her release from bondage. God's work is finished in Christ; the Christ who accomplished this task is the warrior-bridegroom preparing his bride for their marriage. This is even more explicit in Augustine's commentary on Psalm 44. Here, Augustine related Christ to 'the beloved' of the Psalm; the King and Queen are the bridegroom and his bride He wrote:

Let the Psalm then now sound of Him, let us rejoice in the marriage-feast, and we shall be with those of whom the marriage is made, who are invited to the marriage; and the very persons invited are the Bride herself. For the Church is the Bride, Christ the Bridegroom.⁹⁷

Augustine then examined the manner in which the bridegroom came to 'battle':

Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O most Mighty (Psalm 44:3). What is meant by 'Your sword', but 'Your word'? It was by that sword He scattered His enemies; by that sword he divided the son from the father, 'the daughter from the mother, the daughter-in-law from the mother-in-law.' We read these words in the

⁹⁵ 2 Corinthians 11:3.

⁹⁶ Augustine, *Tractate 8*.

⁹⁷ Augustine, *Exposition of Psalm 44, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, viii, trans. J E Tweed, ed. Philip Schaff. (New York, 1888) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1801045.htm>, accessed 11 April 2015.

Gospel, 'I came not to send peace, but a sword' (Matthew 10:34). And, 'In one house shall five be divided against each other; three against two, and two against three' (Luke 12:52); i.e. 'the father against the son, the daughter against the mother, the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law.' By what 'sword', but that which Christ brought, was this division wrought? Some young man is minded to give himself up to God's service; his father is opposed to it; they are divided against each other: the one promises an earthly inheritance, the other loves an heavenly [inheritance]; the one promises one thing, the other prefers another. The father should not think himself wronged: God alone is preferred to him. And yet he is at strife with the son, who would fain give himself to God's service. But the spiritual sword is mightier to separate them, than the ties of carnal nature to bind them together.⁹⁸

Christ's metaphorical sword is used in place of the word of God. This sword divided family from their earthly ties in order to strengthen their spiritual ones, Christ's piercing arrows were the expression of his love:

Your arrows are sharp, are most powerful (Psalm 44:5); words that pierce the heart, that kindle love. Whence in the Song of Songs (2:5) it is said, 'I am wounded with love.' For she speaks of being wounded with love; that is, of being in love, of being inflamed with passion, of sighing for the Bridegroom, from whom she received the arrow of the Word. Your arrows are 'sharp', are 'most powerful'; both piercing, and effective.⁹⁹

Here, Augustine used Christ's armour as a means to demonstrate his love for mankind. He used martial imagery to describe Christ's love within the context of man's redemption. Similar language is found in two fifteenth-century sermons in Oxford, University College, MS 97 and British Library, MS Harley 2247.¹⁰⁰ Both provide examples of nuptial narratives used to illustrate mankind's redemption, and their debt to Augustine is clear.

MS University College 97 is an early-fifteenth-century manuscript containing a wide variety of materials. Among them were a Latin copy of the *Gesta Romanorum*, Latin material ascribed to Bernard, Thomas Wimbleton's sermon (1388), Sir John Clanvowe's *The Two Ways* (ca. 1380s), Richard Rolle's *Form of Living* (ca. 1348), and the sermon in

⁹⁸ Augustine, *Exposition of Psalm 44*.

⁹⁹ Augustine, *Exposition of Psalm 44*.

¹⁰⁰ Oxford, University College MS 97, ff. 162v-170r, henceforth MS Univ 97, discussed in *RMEPS*, iv, 2268-72. Transcription my own; and Powell, 'Critical Edition of the Temporale Sermons, v. 1, 206-14 and discussed in *RMEPS*, ii, 1117-9; London, British Library, MS Harley 2247, ff. 58r-61v.

question, written by John Gregory, an Augustinian friar.¹⁰¹ All of these works contain martial language, with the *Gesta*, Wimbledon's sermon, and the Gregory sermon all including Christ-knight images.

John Gregory's sermon takes its theme from Hebrews 9:12: 'By his own blood, entered once into the holies, having obtained eternal redemption.' Gregory used the theme to discuss the power of Christ's blood to heal both physical and spiritual maladies. First, there are three types of human blood that cause sicknesses which can only be cleansed through Christ's blood. Second, there are three types of scriptural blood, that 'of kynde', used to bring mankind comfort; blood of sin, to rouse anger; and blood of pain, to make mankind afraid, specifically the pain of the last judgment.¹⁰² An example is taken from Matthew 9:20 in which a woman was healed upon touching Christ's garment. Gregory explained this garment to be Christ's Passion, which was given to mankind alone.¹⁰³ In order to further demonstrate God's love of mankind Gregory then used an exemplum interpreted to elucidate the redemption. The moral begins with great similarity to the lover-knight exemplum:

I rede of a lorde whiche þat had a fayr douzter, þe fairest creature þat myzt be & þis lorde loued moste his douzter of alle erthely thynges. Come a sorteyn person and wowed (wooded) þis mayden and nouzt withstondyng þe grete loue þat hir fader hadde unto hir, she for soke hir fader and went with þat man. This maiden was [away] from hir fader [for a] long tyme. Unto þe tyme þat a serteyn person whiche þat loued muche þe lorde and his douzter. And he treted so be twene (mediated) þe lorde & his chylde, þat þe childe was reconsyled azeyn unto hir fader.¹⁰⁴

As in the lover-knight exempla, a lady was seduced by and absconded with a man, much to the sorrow of her father. With the help of a 'mediator' she is reconciled with her father. At this point, the exemplum continues with its nuptial theme:

¹⁰¹ The manuscript is briefly discussed by Catto, 'Sir William Beauchamp between Chivalry and Lollardy,' 43-7; MS Univ 97 may have been compiled for Sir William Beauchamp, son of Thomas Beauchamp, discussed above at p. 88

¹⁰² MS Univ 97, f. 167r.

¹⁰³ MS Univ 97, f. 168r.

¹⁰⁴ MS Univ 97, f. 168v.

And when þe fader was plesed, he let mary hir to þis worthy knyzt and at hir mariage she receyued ryales (royal) giftes. Þe fader gaf hir a cote down to þe helys and y writte in þe cote þese wordes: I haue forȝefe þe. Falle heuer este.

The knyzt þat wedded hir zafe hir a seel and writen in hym þese wordes: now þou art knytte to me, turne þou neuer aȝeyn from me.¹⁰⁵

Both father and spouse presented this lady with marriage gifts; the father's, confirming his forgiveness of her actions and her spouse's, urging her to never repeat her mistake by turning away from him. The scene is evocative of a courtly romance. The knight takes on the role first of mediator, reuniting the king and his daughter, and then steps into the role of the husband, uniting her to himself, a hero in both roles.

Gregory then provided the spiritual interpretation of the story. God acts as the father; the wooer, the devil; the Christ-knight is both the spouse and the mediator between the father and lady, who is both mankind and the individual soul. Like the lady, mankind received the gift of forgiveness from the father and from Christ, a seal:

Þe spouse þat wedded hir zafe hir a seel & wreten in hym þese wordes: Now þou art knytte un to me, turne þou neuer from me. This seel was þe grete wounde in his herte whiche was yshape liche a Bysshop seel. For in openyng of this wounde, hells gates weren yclosed and paradys gates yopened, and þere fore seith Seynt Bernard: 'The blode of Crist is þe key of paradys.' Man, in þe openyng of þis wounde, þou were ywedded to Crist be alle sacramentis of holy chirche.¹⁰⁶

While this example does not provide a detailed rendering of the Christ-knight's battle with the devil, he is the warrior-bridegroom. His martial actions are implied in Gregory's description of Christ's wounds and in his designation as a knight. Here, Gregory alludes to the popular Harrowing of Hell narrative in which Christ's breaks open the gates of Hell, defeats the devil, and releases those in Limbo. Both the Christ-knight motif and the Harrowing of Hell story were popular enough that it can be assumed the audience was familiar with the complete narratives. Likewise, both were used to further explain the doctrine of redemption, summarised in Gregory's conclusion: 'Þat was þe laste peyn þat he

¹⁰⁵ MS Univ 97, ff. 168v-169r.

¹⁰⁶ MS Univ 97, ff. 169v-170r.

suffred on þe rode tre, by whiche þenkyng þou may ouercome alle manere temptacion of synne.¹⁰⁷

A similar example is found in British Library, MS Harley 2247. The Harley manuscript is a fifteenth-century revised version of Mirk's *Festial*. Mirk frequently employed martial language in his sermons to explain doctrine and morals in a manner appropriate to an unlearned audience. The following sermon, preached during the Lenten season, discussed Christ's victory over the devil. Like Gregory's sermon in MS University College 97, Christ's defeat of the devil is used to explain mankind's redemption. In both sermons, Christ is married to the king's daughter, in this case the Church rather than the individual soul. Unlike the Gregory sermon which only alluded to Christ's warrior role in his defeat of the devil, much of the Harley sermon is dedicated to a lengthy allegory of Christ engaged in warfare with the devil and his eventual defeat. Christ and devil are related to David and Goliath:

And Criste as a victorious conqueroure ouercome þe devell and had þe victory as Daudid did ouercome þat gyaunt, Goly, schewyng us example myghtely to resiste and withstonde þe temptacions, suggestions and soteltees of þe devell. Wherby, bi experience, if a victorius werroure desyre to haue þe better and victory of his enemyes in batayle, descretely [he must] avise hym and bethinke hym how by sum sottell mene the capteyn on þat o þer partye may be ouercome, slayne or cast down. For when a prince or a capteyne be ouerethrowen, the peple on þat syde shulde sone be putte to flight. And ... he that cowde or myght ouercome suche a capteyn, he shulde be made knyght or promoted to grete worship.¹⁰⁸

Casting Christ in the role of David was an interesting choice for the author. When David faced Goliath, he was still just a small boy, not yet the great king and it was Goliath who was the great leader of an army. Linking David with Christ may seem an odd comparison, yet it is possible that the author was subtly acknowledging the humanity of Christ, rather than the all-powerful warrior; he was first the underdog, the sacrificial lamb who overcame a great power.

¹⁰⁷ MS Univ 97, f. 170r.

¹⁰⁸ Powell, 'Critical Edition of the Temporale Sermons,' 210; MS Harley 2247, f. 59v.

The Harley author does not just cast Christ in the role of David, but proceeds to give advice as to how a great prince should engage in battle. The Christ-knight must defeat the captain of the opposing side, the devil who is the captain of vice and sin, in order to win the war. To aid him, the sons of Jesse would have dressed David/Christ in Saul's armour – the delights of the world – but rather, he gathered five stones: incarnation, passion, resurrection, ascension, and the descent of the Holy Spirit. With one of these stones:

With þe sure stroke of his precius passion, cawsed [such a wound] in his brayne that he fell down to þe grownde. And with þe same swerd of þe holy crosse the develles powere was distroyed. And whan þe dolorous duke of dampnacion, þe devell of hell, was brought to grounde and þe pusaunce of his powere putte to flight, than was Daudid, Goddis son, weddid to þe kynges doughter, Holy Chirch.¹⁰⁹

The author used violent imagery to deliver his point, an image of a warrior-Christ, who is rewarded with a bride. This scene is employed to describe Christ's defeat of the devil through his Passion in order to free mankind: 'And so was mankynde beseged and now is delyuerid from dampcaion bi þe bowntevous bataile of Cristes passion.'¹¹⁰ Allegorising Christ's Passion as a battlefield echoes the Patristic notion of the *Christus victor*, as well as the sermon of MS Lambeth 352.¹¹¹

The final example of the warrior-bridegroom is found in a fourteenth-century marriage sermon by John de Waldeby. His use of the Christ-knight is an unusual example of Christ the warrior-bridegroom in which Christ is described as 'Christ the fighter' (*Christus est pugil*). It is found in Bodleian Library, MS Laud misc. 77.¹¹² The manuscript is a collection of Sunday sermons completed in 1365. Waldeby was an Augustinian friar and preacher who read theology at Oxford in the 1340s, becoming a doctor of theology by

¹⁰⁹ Powell, 'A Critical Edition of the Temporale Sermons,' 213; MS Harley 2247, f. 61r.

¹¹⁰ Powell, 'A Critical Edition of the Temporale Sermons,' 214; MS Harley 2247, f. 61r.

¹¹¹ MS Lambeth 352 is also discussed above at pages 117-21.

¹¹² Akae, *Mendicant Sermon Collection*, 319-27 and discussed in Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 40-4 and 625-30; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud misc. 77, ff. 46r-48v; henceforth MS Laud 77.

1354. He spent his life with the Austin friars of York and died there in 1372. Wenzel described him as ‘one of the most popular preachers’ surveyed in his book due to the number of extant manuscripts.¹¹³ The presence of so many extant manuscripts from this single author is confirmation of David d’Avray’s argument for sermons as a mode of mass communication. D’Avray proposed that from the mid-thirteenth-century, marriage sermons, those that read the Gospel account of the marriage of Cana – not sermons preached at wedding ceremonies – were ‘broadcast’ to a vast public audience, of clerical, but especially lay persons.¹¹⁴ These model sermons are found in numerous manuscripts and were preached at a time of the liturgical year just following a period where marriage rites were forbidden from being practised, up to and including the week after Epiphany. These marriage sermons were about the positive treatment of ‘actual’ marriage, strongly supporting the ‘goodness’ of marriage. The message the clergy delivered to the laity was ‘that marriage was a union that nothing could break: indissolubility was an absolute value.’¹¹⁵ As model sermons, they often employed a standard set of *topoi*; these typically included the point that marriage was commended by authority because God instituted it in Paradise; that it came before sin; that it caused the hope for children; that it was a remedy to avoid fornication; and that it was commended by the bodily presence of Christ at Cana and by the working of miracles, such as water transformed into wine.¹¹⁶

Some of these *topoi* are indeed found in the marriage sermon of MS Laud 77. The sermon was preached for the first Sunday after the octave of Epiphany and takes its theme from John 2:1: ‘A marriage was made.’ It includes the standard *topoi*: the Gospel reading of the marriage feast at Cana; the establishment of marriage by God’s authority; the hope of offspring and remedy against fornication; and the miracle of Christ turning water into

¹¹³ Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 40.

¹¹⁴ d’Avray, *Medieval Marriage Sermons: Mass Communication in a Culture without Print* (Oxford, 2001).

¹¹⁵ d’Avray, *Medieval Marriage Sermons*, 3.

¹¹⁶ d’Avray, ‘The Gospel of the Marriage Feast of Cana and Marriage Preaching in France,’ in *The Bible in the Medieval World: Essays in Memory of Beryl Smalley* (Oxford, 1985), 207-24, at 210.

wine. Like the Passion sermons surveyed above in which the audience was encouraged to reflect and meditate on the death of Christ, here too Waldeby encouraged his audience to reflect on Christ; in this case however, it is the marriage made by God when he ‘united human nature to himself,’ rather than meditation upon his death.¹¹⁷ Waldeby’s purpose is made clear:

We ought to reflect on this marriage and we ought to be not so much astounded as to give untiring thanks for the fact that a so distinguished and so wealthy man was willing to marry our nature like a poor serf girl, and we should make efforts with the utmost attention in order that we may never hereafter be separated from God by our sins.¹¹⁸

Like sermons using the lover-knight exemplum, Waldeby remarked upon the amazing notion that a deity would unite itself to sinful mankind. Here too, the listeners’ response should be awe and gratitude.

Waldeby’s sermon is made up of two primary divisions, that marriage is an unbreakable chain, dissolved only by death; and that it is a bearable remedy ‘because it is carried out for abundant offspring.’¹¹⁹ In the first division, the six water-jars that were transformed into wine at the marriage feast act as the remedy against six evils: solitude and loneliness, infertility, poverty, and taking pleasure of the flesh account for the first five. The final evil is the inability to express love to another. While marriage was ultimately a contract, D’Avray suggested that in the preachers’ view, ‘love was a moral obligation and one which married people could be persuaded by arguments to fulfil.’¹²⁰ Waldeby defined love by comparison to, first, the turtledove, for its faithful love, in that when the male dies, the female does not marry again; and second, to the elephant, because the elephant remains a chaste animal and never commits adultery.¹²¹ Both of these characteristics are present, both positively and negatively, in the various lover-knight exempla; the lady who hangs

¹¹⁷ Akae, *Mendicant Sermon Collection*, 319; MS Laud 77, f. 46r.

¹¹⁸ Akae, *Mendicant Sermon Collection*, 319; MS Laud 77, f. 46r.

¹¹⁹ Akae, *Mendicant Sermon Collection*, 319; MS Laud 77, f. 46v.

¹²⁰ d’Avray, ‘Gospel of the Marriage Feast,’ 216.

¹²¹ Akae, *Mendicant Sermon Collection*, 323; MS Laud 77, f. 47v.

her lord's bloodied shirt never marries again, and there are numerous examples where the lady is unfaithful, including the warrior-bridegroom example found in MS University College 97, which tells of an unfaithful lady redeemed by Christ in marriage. Adultery and loyalty are significant themes of the lover-knight and warrior-bridegroom motifs, and they are the primary subject of Waldeby's sermon. After his discussion of love, he then seriously condemned the breach of marriage, with biblical examples of adulteresses punished by stoning and the cleansing of adultery with white hot iron. Waldeby may have not included the lover-knight exemplum in his sermons because of its lack of punishment for the faithlessness of the lady.

While Waldeby's sermon follows nearly all the requirements of the model marriage sermon, it also includes one significant deviation, a discussion of spiritual marriage in addition to bodily marriage. He described this marriage thus:

Christ contracts this marriage with the Christian soul in the process of baptism. Hosea 2:20: 'I will marry you to myself by means of faith,' but because that marriage is quickly dissolved by sin which is like spiritual adultery, therefore, it follows: 'I will marry you to myself by judgement and justice and I will come in with mercy and sympathy (Hosea: 2:19).¹²²

Spiritual marriage with Christ is only preserved from spiritual adultery, or sin, through penitence. To demonstrate those who still turn away from Christ within spiritual matrimony, Waldeby used an example of a Crusader. He explained:

For not everyone who marries Christ waits for dinner, because, when temptation comes, they cast the marriage away and consent to the devil. [They are] similar to the leader of an army of Christians against Saracens to whom, as he is running away, a worthy soldier says, 'Await your death and this night you will be dining with Christ'. [The fleeing Crusader] replies, 'I do not want to eat today because today I am fasting'. So it is with the many who do not maintain by perseverance the marriage contracted in penitence with Christ.¹²³

Here, Waldeby condemns the actions of the Crusader, fleeing the battle and likely death, and thus his union with Christ upon that death. The warrior-bridegroom however, who

¹²² Akae, *Mendicant Sermon Collection*, 325; MS Laud 77, f. 47v.

¹²³ Akae, *Mendicant Sermon Collection*, 326; MS Laud 77, f. 48r.

enters into battle, is joined in union with Christ. Waldeby made the comparison between the two knights by employing a scene from the Old Testament Book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy consists of three sermons delivered by Moses to the Israelites. It is a legal text that reiterates the Ten Commandments first found in Exodus 20 and expands on them into the statutes and ordinances that make up the central portion of the book. It is not a frequently cited text in late medieval sermons, likely due to the book's exposition of Old Testament law. Patristic and later medieval authors did however comment on the text. Augustine, more than any other author, impacted the medieval Christian understanding of Deuteronomy with his frequent references to the text in many of his writings.¹²⁴ He emphasized the providential requisite of the survival of the Jews and their scriptures as evidence to the truth of Christianity.¹²⁵ Essentially the Old Testament was a proof text and the Church Fathers read in Deuteronomy and other Jewish texts the prophecy of the coming of Christ and his Church. Rabanus Maurus (ca. 834) affected later medieval attitudes towards Jewish law in his substantial study of Deuteronomy.¹²⁶ For him, the 'second' law was the Gospel of divine grace and he emphasized a necessity for good works.¹²⁷ The influence of Maurus' commentary was evident by its recurrent appearance in the *Glossa Ordinaria*, although Lesley Smith commented that one manuscript of the Deuteronomy *Glossa* appears to have been 'so little read that no one bothered to add the chapter numbers.'¹²⁸ For later medieval exegetes, the old law of Deuteronomy and its ceremonial aspects were no longer binding; ceremonial and ritual law became clearly identified with obsolete observances.¹²⁹ While the law of Deuteronomy had its place and

¹²⁴ Thomas J Renna, 'Christian Exegesis of Deuteronomy: Patristic to Scholastic,' *Michigan Academician Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters* 23:1 (1991), 19-29, at 20.

¹²⁵ Renna, 'Christian Exegesis of Deuteronomy,' 20.

¹²⁶ Rabanus Maurus, *Enarratio Super Deuteronomium Libri Quatuor*, PL 108:837C-998D.

¹²⁷ Renna, 'Christian Exegesis of Deuteronomy,' 24-25.

¹²⁸ Renna, 'Christian Exegesis of Deuteronomy,' 25; Lesley Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria: The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary* (Leiden, 2009), 120-1.

¹²⁹ Renna, 'Christian Exegesis of Deuteronomy,' 27.

time, it was now completed with Christ and his new law. This notion may help explain

Waldeby's use of the passage and its application to Christ:

Contrary to this case [of the leader of the Crusade], 'If you will have gone out to war and God will have given you a victory and, you will have seen a woman who pleased your eyes from a number of captives and you will have wished to have her as your wife, you will take her into your house to cut her hair and cut her nails, and she will lay aside the clothes in which she was captured, and sitting in the house she will weep for her father and mother for a month; later you will go into her and she will be your wife.' (Deut. 21:10-13).

In moral terms, Christ is the fighter (*pugil*), the sinful soul is the captive woman, because she has been captured in the war of preaching by the sword of the divine word. This soul, when it pleases God, ought by the razor of the tongue to cut the hair and the nails of her hands, that is, the filthy thoughts and unjust deeds, and [she ought] to sit grieving for a month, that is, to put an end to evil and to grieve continuously concerning what she has done and change her clothing of error which is from the company of the devil into the clothing of grace which is the unimpaired clothing of Christ and she ought spiritually to weep for her father and mother, that is, she ought to grieve as a penitent because she has offended Christ and the Church, and thus Christ takes the penitent and the person who perseveres in penitence as his wife, and begets the offspring of good works from her.¹³⁰

If Waldeby understood the old law to have been superseded by the new, we may explain his use of this Old Testament passage as a narrative device; Deuteronomic law could only be read as an allegory with its literal fulfilment completed in Christ. Thus, the marrying of a captive of war represents Christ's capturing of the human soul.

The marriage between these two parties is still strikingly unusual. In his article on 'Divine Warrior Theology' within the Book of Deuteronomy, Richard Nelson explained that the scene from Deut. 21 used 'Divine Warrior and sacral war motifs to encourage humane behaviour towards nature and marginalized human beings.'¹³¹ The case of the captive woman provided a law that validated marriage 'to a captive woman who would have no legally recognized relative to act for her, making normal contractual marriage

¹³⁰ Akae, *Mendicant Sermon Collection*, 327; MS Laud 77, f. 48r.

¹³¹ Richard D Nelson, 'Divine Warrior Theology in Deuteronomy,' in *God So Near: Essays on Old Testament Theology in Honour of Patrick D Miller*, eds. Patrick D Miller, Brent A Strawn and Nancy R Bowen (Winona Lake, In, 2003), 241-59 at 242; Nelson defined 'Divine Warrior' as the mythic presentation of Yahweh as a warrior god and 'sacral war' as the practice of warfare as a religious activity. For a general background of this theology, see Patrick D Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973).

arrangements impossible.¹³² Nelson explained the unusual nature of the Deuteronomy scene as follows:

In this particular case [Deut 21], marriage is in the picture because of the man's choice and loving desire. She has full status as a wife and is given time to adjust to her new situation. In choosing to marry her, however, he must be willing to lose his claim to her potential value as a slave, because marital sex creates a relationship of marital responsibility. The acts required of her are symbolic of her change in status. Her month-long isolation ("remain in your house") is a classic example of the liminal state characteristic of rites of passage that separate persons from an old status and incorporate them into a new one...She puts aside her former life and captive status, represented by her clothes, hair, and nails...The wife-to-be is shedding bits of her former self.¹³³

Waldeby's choice of this Old Testament passage within his sermon is certainly remarkable. The instance of marriage in Deuteronomy, based on the laws of ancient Israel, seems to have little place within a late medieval sermon, yet it may serve to demonstrate that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, marriage was still a complex institution, even when set within the Church's law. Conor McCarthy demonstrated the various ways in which a marriage could have been considered valid by the Church even when traditional consent was not present.¹³⁴ The sermon is alluding to this complexity in that the marriage between Christ and the human soul did not reflect the typical contractual marriage. If necessary, Christ was willing to behave harshly and aggressively towards the soul in order to show his love for it. In some cases, a pugilistic Christ was necessary for redemption. Thus, Waldeby's use of Deuteronomy has elements that fit well within the lover-knight and warrior-bridegroom narratives. First, is Waldeby's description of Christ as the 'fighter' or possibly 'champion' (*Christus est pugil*). It is an interesting word choice; typically martial representations of Christ described him as *miles* (knight or soldier), but it is possible that Waldeby intentionally avoided using *miles* in order to distance this version of Christ from chivalric implications. Christ in this instance does not evoke images of

¹³² Nelson, 'Divine Warrior Theology,' 250.

¹³³ Nelson, 'Divine Warrior Theology,' 250.

¹³⁴ Conor McCarthy, *Marriage in Medieval England: Law, Literature, and Practice* (Woodbridge, 2004), 21-50.

chivalric court romance; rather, he is a battle-hardened combatant fighting for his bride, not wooing her in a court. In either case, whether we interpret Christ here to be an anonymous fighter, pugilistic warrior, or chivalric knight, the designation of him as the warrior-bridegroom is explicit.

The relationship between the fighter and captive also echoes the previous examples of the Beloved Christ. Here, the man has sacrificed his claim to her value – in Christ’s case, he sacrificed his own claim to life. Likewise, the woman’s ‘change of status’ can be seen as the redemption of the soul or Church and her transformation from sinful to redeemed. Paul claimed in 2 Corinthians 3 that keeping the Mosaic Covenant had been superseded by faith in Christ, which is the New Covenant because Christ fulfilled all Old Testament prophecy. Like the Lambeth sermon in which an Old Testament narrative, Ruth, was employed to reveal Christ’s love, here too, a difficult Old Testament scene is used to demonstrate Christ’s love, and sacrifice, in addition to his fulfilment of prophecy. The warrior-bridegroom motif, like the lover-knight, was used to demonstrate the theology of Christ’s love.

Conclusion

With the great proliferation of chivalric culture during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the representation of Christ as a knight was common in the popular sermons of late medieval preachers. The Christ-knight represented the epitome of the chivalric ideal. The popular motif of the Beloved Christ, in its common form of the lover-knight as well as the less frequent warrior-bridegroom, was used by late medieval sermon authors to both enhance the Passion narrative and explain the doctrine of redemption. These martial images provide further insight into conceptions of late medieval popular Christocentric devotion and affective meditation by revealing an alternative to the suffering and maternal

representations of Christ. Another aspect of the human Christ, a martial Christ, was presented to the audience. These images demonstrate the integration of chivalric culture, religious literature, and popular preaching. These themes presented to the medieval audience Christ's sacrifice and faithful love, significant elements of the Passion story that preachers desired their audiences to remember during the Lenten season and meditate upon, both communally and in their private devotion. Passion meditation was an important factor in the development of individual and private lay devotional practice, particularly in the expression of affective practices. By employing the image of Christ as a lover-knight and warrior-bridegroom, preachers offered an additional approach to Christ in which congregants could meditate upon, that is, his love for a sinful mankind and their own personal redemption through his death. Their intention was to guide their audience towards an emotional, affective response of compassion, sorrow, awe, and gratitude. The multi-faceted image of the Beloved Christ offered accessible images to both male and female audience members, including a masculinised image of Christ's suffering employed to demonstrate Christ's love. The Beloved Christ motif provided for preachers a means to explain the theology of Christ's love and sacrifice and it enabled audience members to better understand the dual nature of Christ, that of man and deity. The pervasiveness of chivalric values as a symbolic code understood by many within and beyond the knightly elite meant that it provided a means for preachers to communicate ideas about Christ's mediatory and championing role, standing between man and God, to a wide and varied audience.

Chapter 4 – Christ as King and Kings as Christ

This chapter will examine the specific image of a knightly Christ who was also a king, in two sermons: Hereford Cathedral Library, MS P.5.xii and MS Bodley 649. This particular image differs from those we have already discussed because although the Christ-knight remains the perfect embodiment of knighthood, he is also a paragon of earthly kingship. He shares similar qualities as the beloved Christ, but he is not a knight of the court or a loving spouse, he is a knight and king fighting to save his people. Preachers portrayed Christ in the role of the beloved to dramatise Christ's Passion and thus instruct their audiences on the implications of Christ's suffering and death in their present lives. This evocative image of Christ was intended to relate Christ's suffering in an affective and meditative manner, an effort at guidance towards penance, confession, and ultimately salvation. There are however two unique instances in which the lover-knight is also portrayed as a king. This particular narrative – of a kingly Christ-knight – was first found in the *Ancrene Wisse*, and we find it repeated in a single sermon in British Library, MS Harley 7322, datable to the fourteenth century.¹ Likewise, a further single sermon in British Library, MS Harley 2268, datable to the fifteenth century, expanded the image of Christ as the lover-knight to include a portrayal of him as King Arthur.² In each of these sermons Christ the lover-knight demonstrates his love for humanity through his knightly actions, intended as a devotional device for audiences; his role as a king was secondary to his role as the lover. In the two sermons presented in this chapter, it is in the role of the king that the Christ-knight is used to demonstrate his love for humanity.

Christ as the paragon for earthly kingship bears some similarity with the lover-knight image, a shared message for salvation, but, in their application of the Christ-knight to actual kings, these other sermons also demonstrate the intertwining of political,

¹ London, British Library MS Harley 7322, ff. 26r-v; this instance, and the following example are discussed in chapter three, pages 97-99.

² O'Mara, *Four Middle English Sermons*; London, British Library, MS Harley 2268, ff. 185v-198v.

ecclesiastical, and social concerns of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries within popular preaching. These sermons present moral positions and instructions to an audience through the medium of an extended representation of ideal kingship. As the Christ-knight is the instrument for the spiritual redemption of mankind, the kings presented in the sermons are instruments for the national redemption of England.

This chapter will place the two sermons of Hereford Cathedral and Bodley 649, in which a specific king is depicted as if he were Christ, within the context of contemporary textual representations of kingship, both in sermons generally and in the ‘mirrors for princes’ genre. The aim of the chapter is to contextualize and thereby understand the purposes of two sermons which present a distinctive representation of kings, whose significance is hitherto under-appreciated because not placed within the tradition of the martial images of Christ. The representation of the Christ-knight as the model for perfect kingship is found in Hereford Cathedral Library, MS P.5.xii and MS Bodley 649.³ With only these two known examples, this instance of the Christ-knight is a minor, but important strand of the motif, and impacts the way in which scholars should consider both Christocentric devotion and notions of late medieval kingship.

Perfect Kingship

Kingship is a theme found frequently within late medieval sermons; the purpose of the topic varies, but preachers often commented on the state of England, and as would be expected, its governance. In a sermon delivered to a lay audience in 1374 Bishop Thomas Brinton, court preacher for Edward III, described three necessary qualities of a temporal king, drawing from the Books of Wisdom and Proverbs. He argued that wisdom, mercy,

³ Hereford, Cathedral Library, MS P.5.xii, ff. 79v-81r, henceforth MS Hereford P.5.xii, discussed in R A B Mynors and R M Thomson, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Hereford Cathedral Library* (Woodbridge, 1993), 101; Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 154-79; MS Bodley 649, ff. 34r-40v.

and severity of justice were needed for the governance of God's people.⁴ These qualities are mirrored in the expected qualities of the medieval kings of England. The two sermons examined below are unusual because rather than just discuss kingship they equate Christ specifically with their contemporary rulers, Edward III and Henry V. Kingship is presented in an idealised form as a vehicle for the moral instruction of the preachers' audiences. They draw on notions of perfect kingship in order to present an exemplary model of behaviour. Thus, the king is represented as Christ and the ultimate saviour of his people. Their understanding of perfect kingship was likely drawn from the biblical understanding of kingship, as well as their contemporary expectations of the duties of their own sovereign.

The presentation of kingship, primarily in the Old Testament, but also the New, establishes qualities of a perfect king that include wisdom, justice, compassion, love, righteousness, humility, and the need for good counsel. Above all, a king must understand he is subordinate to God, he must fear and love God, and recognise that his wisdom derives from God's wisdom because his sovereignty is tied to God's sovereignty.⁵ As G.L. Harriss so aptly stated, '[t]he king stood at the apex of human society, looking to God immediately above and to his subjects below him. To God he should be humble and obedient, for only thus could he expect obedience from his subjects. To his subjects he should appear magnificent, just, and benevolent, representing to them the qualities of the Godhead.'⁶ Eric Miller and others have argued that while the Old Testament narratives about kings influenced ideas, rhetoric, and ceremonies of early medieval rulership, commentators of biblical texts read them allegorically, looking 'spiritually through the lens of biblical kings to their vision of Christ the King, who is the true model to imitate – not

⁴ Devlin, *Sermons of Thomas Brinton*, i, 169-176; London, British Library MS Harley 3760, ff. 96r-101v.

⁵ For the Deuteronomic Law of Kings, see Deuteronomy 17:14-20; for examples of the qualities of a king, see Proverbs: 8:15, 16:12, 20:28, 25:1-5, 29:4, 14.

⁶ G L Harriss, *Henry V: The Practise of Kingship* (Oxford, 1985), 10.

only religiously but politically as well.’⁷ They suggested that Christ as King was a mimetic political model in the early Middle Ages. The sermons discussed below demonstrate that this was true of the later Middle Ages as well; Christ, whether as king or knight, was the model for all worldly roles and behaviour.

The notion of exemplary values and principles is found in the promises made by English monarchs when they accepted the Crown. The coronation oath of the English monarchs, used since Anglo-Saxon times, included four promises, sworn in the name of the Trinity and laid before the king in written form on the altar. The king promised his protection of the Church, to maintain peace and provide justice to his people, to suppress evil laws and customs, and to protect the rights of the Crown.⁸ His laws and customs are described as both devout and just.⁹ Many of the qualities of a good king are reminiscent of the characteristics of proper knightly practice, as described by authors of chivalric texts, such as in Geoffroi de Charny, in his *Livre de chevalerie*. Charny indeed paused in his discussion of knighthood to discuss the reasons why kings and princes exist. Taking up nearly one hundred lines, Charny explained the ‘true function in which rulers were created,’ and gave a lengthy list of their attributes. Below are a few used to describe those rulers who are ‘chosen’ by God. These characteristics in particular echo those virtues expected of proper knights and those modelled by Christ:

They were chosen in order to endure and withstand greater physical hardship, painful exertions, and mental anxiety than any of their people because of the heavy responsibility they had taken on in the task of government for which they had been chosen and with which they had been entrusted. They were chosen that they might love, fear, and serve God and all his works ... so that they might place the people's profit before their own ... that they might protect their people without taking

⁷ Eric P Miller, ‘The Political Significance of Christ’s Kingship in the Biblical Exegesis of Hrabanus Maurus and Angelomus of Luxeuil,’ in *Biblical Studies in the Early Middle Ages: Proceedings of the Conference on Biblical Studies in the Early Middle Ages: Università degli studi di Milano, Società internazionale per lo studio del Medioevo latino, Gargnano on Lake Garda, 24-27 June 2001*, eds. Claudio Leonardi and Giovanni Orlandi (Florence, 2005), 193-213 at 194.

⁸ Henry Gerald Richardson, ‘The Coronation Oath in Medieval England: the Evolution of the Office and the Oath,’ *Traditio* 16 (1960), 111-202, at 171-3

⁹ Robert S Hoyt, ‘The Coronation Oath of 1308,’ *The English Historical Review* 71 (1956), 353-83, at 358.

anything from them apart from those dues the people owed to their lord, and it was not for the lords to enrich themselves at the cost of impoverishing the people without reasonable cause ... to administer justice and to maintain the rights of the humble as well as of the mighty ... that they might show pity and mercy where appropriate ... to be the first to take up arms and to strive with all their might and expose themselves to the physical dangers of battle in defence of their people and their land ... to be bold and of good courage against their enemies and against all those who seek to deprive them of possessions or honour ... to give of their own freely and generously to men of worth who had well deserved it and to those likely to deserve it and to the poor to sustain them ... so that they might lead lives of such integrity that no reproach could be levelled against them, nor could they be held in ill repute for any unworthy or shameful behaviour; for their good and honest way of life should set an example for others.¹⁰

Charny's expectations of kings and lords far exceeded what rulers might actually have been capable of, but certainly reflect the thoughts and ideas of Charny himself, and what he hoped his target audience, fellow nobles and knights, would adopt as their vision of true kingship.

The key literary tradition circulating in this period, demonstrating the ideas and practice of medieval kingship, is found within the tradition of advisory literature, the genre of 'mirrors for princes.'¹¹ These texts were treatises written for kings and noblemen to influence opinion on the practice of personal lordship and they emphasized the development of individual morality above the proper management and operation of institutions.¹² The genre's writers sought to define and bring about the ideal model of kingship that would best advance the common good and 'therefore devoted themselves to prolonged injunctions to be virtuous, wooing their readers with promises of earthly felicity and eternal bliss in a manner reminiscent of their classical forebears.'¹³ For these writers, good governance was founded on the theological (Faith, Hope, and Charity), and especially the cardinal virtues (Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude).¹⁴ One such

¹⁰ Charny, *A Knights Own Book of Chivalry*, sections 25, eds. Kaeuper and Kennedy, 77-9.

¹¹ John Watts, *Henry IV and the Politics of Kingship* (Cambridge, 1996), 15; Nicholas Perkins, *Hoccleve's Regiment of Princes: Counsel and Constraint* (Cambridge, 2001), 1.

¹² Watts, *Henry IV and the Politics of Kingship*, 15.

¹³ Watts, *Henry IV and the Politics of Kingship*, 23.

¹⁴ Watts, *Henry IV and the Politics of Kingship*, 23.

example is Thomas Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes*, written in 1410-11. It is relevant to the discussion here because it was written for Henry Prince of Wales, two years before he was crowned Henry V in 1413. Henry V is the subject of one of the sermons below, and was likely familiar with this treatise. The second half of the lengthy poem forms a book of advice for the prince concerning the vices a prince must avoid and the virtues he must observe. These include: on the dignity of a king (lines 2164-91); on a king's keeping his coronation oaths, and on truth and cautious speech (ll. 2192-2464); on justice (ll. 2465-2772); on observing laws (ll. 2773-2996); on pity (ll. 2997-3311); on mercy (ll. 3312-3458); on patience (ll. 3459-3626); on chastity (ll. 3627-3899); on the magnanimity of a king (ll. 3900-4004); that a king must not base his happiness on riches (ll. 4005-4123); on the virtue of generosity and the vice of prodigality (ll. 4124-4473); on the vice of avarice (ll. 4474-4746); on a king's prudence (ll. 4747-4858); on keeping counsel in all situations (ll. 4859-5019); and on peace (ll. 5020-5439).¹⁵ Hoccleve's advice relies on the theological virtues drawn from scripture. It is clear that the character of a king was influential upon the behaviour and actions of his people.

The qualities of kingship as defined by scripture, biblical commentary, such as Nicholas Lyra's exegesis on the Old Testament, and literature, such as Charny's treatise and the Hoccleve's mirrors for princes, intended to provide an ideal model for kingship. Such works likely informed the notions of kingship presented by the two sermon authors. For both authors present their kings in idealised forms, modelled after Christ himself, and reminiscent of the various models discussed above.

¹⁵ Thomas Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes*, ed. Charles R Blyth (Kalamazoo, 1999).

Perfect Kingship Modelled by Edward III in the Role of Christ

The first example of the Christ-knight in the role of the king is found in Hereford Cathedral Library, MS P.5.xii. The Hereford manuscript was first briefly discussed by W D Macray in an 1893 article in the *English Historical Review*.¹⁶ He identified the manuscript as written in a fourteenth-century hand, containing Hugh of St Victor's treatise, *De clauistro animae*, as well as a collection of thirty-one sermons. While the collection is not attributed to any particular author, Macray and others concluded that John Stratford, Archbishop of Canterbury and Chancellor of England (ca. 1333) is responsible for at least part of the collection. Macray first pointed to Stratford as their likely author due to one sermon's mentioning of the author's trials and sorrows for faint-heartedly fleeing from enemies.¹⁷ Macray connected this to Stratford's falling out with Edward III in 1341 for insufficiently funding the king's military campaign in his capacity as chancellor, leading to Edward's reluctant signing of a truce with France, and eventually, the formulation of charges against the prelate. The manuscript was next noticed by E W Kemp due to its containing a sermon by Henry de Harkley (d. 1317), Chancellor of Oxford University.¹⁸ That sermon, also found in Lambeth Palace Library, MS 61, about Thomas Becket is, according to Kemp, remarkable in its 'wealth of historical allusions' and detail. Its presence in MS Hereford P.5.xii led Kemp to examine the authorship of that manuscript in order to confirm Macray's previous assertions.¹⁹ He discovered that the Harkley sermon 'stands out as something different from all the rest' and that many of the remaining

¹⁶ W D Macray, 'Sermons for the Festival of St Thomas Becket, etc. Probably by Archbishop Stratford,' *English Historical Review* 8 (1893), 85-91.

¹⁷ Macray, 'Sermons for the Festival of St Thomas Becket,' 85.

¹⁸ E W Kemp, 'History and Action in the Sermons of a Medieval Archbishop: The Bishop of Chichester,' *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Richard William Southern* (Oxford, 1981), 349-65.

¹⁹ Kemp, 'History and Action in the Sermons of a Medieval Archbishop,' 357; the Hereford MS's authorship by Archbishop Stratford was adopted by Mynors and Thomson in the Hereford Cathedral Catalogue, as well as G T Lapsley, 'Archbishop Stratford and the Parliamentary Crisis of 1341,' *English Historical Review* 30 (1915), 193-215, and M McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century (1307-1399)*, (Reprinted: Oxford, 1991.)

sermons indeed have a strong association with Stratford.²⁰ As confirmation of Stratford's authorship, Macray and Kemp pointed in particular to the sermon containing the Christ-knight example, sermon 15, headed *Pro salute Regis*.²¹

Stratford composed this sermon in order to encourage his audience to pray for their king. In his praise of Edward III's qualities as a good king deserving of prayer, he relates the king to Christ, in that he too is willing to die for his people. The author sought prayers for the king for his expedition into Scotland. The sermon should be understood within the political climate of the 1320s and 30s and the Crown's combative relationship with the Scots. The Scots took advantage of the political upheaval in England after the fall of Edward II (1327) and Edward III's first experience of war was 'from the English point of view, a thoroughly unsatisfactory peace.'²² The peace terms of 1328 included the full recognition of Robert Bruce, and the marriage of his son David to Edward's sister, Joan, and left no mention of the Scottish lands various English magnates had been granted. These men, the so-called 'Disinherited,' renewed the war in 1332 by launching a private expedition. They invaded Scotland by sea, routed the Scottish army at Dupplin Moor, and crowned Edward Balliol, son of the deposed king John, the new King of the Scots. Their success was not accepted by the Scots however and they eventually drove out Balliol who in turn appealed to Edward III for help. With his aid, the Scottish army was defeated at Halidon Hill. Balliol acknowledged Edward's feudal lordship over Scotland and granted

²⁰ Kemp points to a number of phrases that suggest not only a bishop preaching, but specifically, an archbishop, 360; he also points to the form of citation and style written by Stratford elsewhere and finds parallels within the sermons, and concludes that three of the sermons were likely preached to the provincial councils in 1341, 1342, and 1347, 360-1; and he connects some of the author's attacks on the dismissal of counsellors and ministers to a letter Stratford wrote to Edward in which he attacked the king's change of counsellors, 362.

²¹ MS Hereford P.5.xii, ff. 79v-81r; the sermon is only partially edited by Macray and briefly discussed by both Macray, 'Sermons for the Festival of St Thomas Becket,' 86-7 and Roy M Haines, 'An English Archbishop and the Cerberus of War,' in *The Church and War: Papers Read at the Twenty-first Summer Meeting and the twenty-second Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. W J Sheils (Oxford, 1983), 153-70; for further background on Stratford, see Haines, *Archbishop John Stratford: Political Revolutionary and Champion of the Liberties of the English Church, ca. 1275/80-1348* (Toronto, 1986).

²² Michael Prestwich, *Plantagenet England, 1225-1360* (Oxford, 2005), 244-6.

the king much of southern Scotland, but Edward's individual victories were not enough to win the war against the Scots and the 1330s, 40s, and early 50s, found him entangled in countless campaigns. As Chancellor of England, Archbishop Stratford was unavoidably involved in these political matters. Roy M Haines argued that while his view of the Scottish settlement could only be surmised, 'there is no reason to suppose that Stratford, by then chancellor and shortly to become archbishop, was other than in sympathy with the turn of events [a move towards war with the Scots]. Serious divergence from royal wishes would have entailed friction; what we know of him at this time points in the opposite direction.'²³ Haines put forth the Hereford sermon as proof of this point, for in it, Stratford praises Edward III and his campaigning efforts, relating him to Christ. The rarity of this particular theme can be explained by the unusual circumstances the Hereford sermon addresses: a previously out-of-favour churchman seeking the good graces of his king and thus using as the king's allegorical counterpart in battle, Christ himself, in order to demonstrate Stratford's loyalty.

The Hereford sermon takes its theme from Psalms 19:9, '*Domine, saluum fac regem*' (Oh Lord, save the king). Stratford divided the theme using one of two traditional ways found in the *ars praedicandi* attributed to St Bonaventure: *intra* (dividing the verbal matter of the theme) and *extra* (dividing a concept that is contained in or suggested by the theme).²⁴ Stratford employed the *intra* method, which is, according to Wenzel, of greater appeal to trained exegetes, that is the clergy, rather than a lay audience.²⁵ It is however impossible to determine the exact make-up of the intended audience. Three of the Hereford sermons, one of which Kemp used to further suggest Stratford's authorship, are each entitled *In congregacione prelatorum et cleri*, specifically designating a clerical audience. With the absence of such a clear description of the *Pro salute Regis* sermon, we cannot

²³ Haines, 'An English Archbishop and the Cerberus of War,' 156.

²⁴ Wenzel, *Macaronic Sermons*, 77.

²⁵ Wenzel, *Macaronic Sermons*, 77.

rule out a mixed audience of, at the very least, clergy and the king's noble supporters, most of whom would likely be able to follow the *intra* method. Additionally, the divisions of the sermon are straightforward, each without further division, and would not have been difficult to follow. The sermon begins with this simple division:

Domine, saluum fac regem. Of these words, three things are noted, for salvation. First, a prayer is to be directed to Him who is Lord of the king, as it is said, because [it is] to the Lord: *Domine*. Second, for him because for the king: *regem*. Third, to what effect, truly, he is saved: *saluum fac*.²⁶

The first division provides numerous scriptural references as to why the preacher and his audience must pray to the Lord. He says:

Indeed it is the prayer of a just man, just as if it were a message sent speedily to hurry towards God, or a guarded message to solicit [Him], or an anxious message to entreat [Him], just as the message set free to speed toward him: thus the message is loosed in order to speed towards [Him]: the prayer has been weighed down by no burden of sins. Ecclesiasticus 3:[4]: "He who loves God will fall to prayer over his sins and sin no more; so, all his life long, his prayer shall find audience." A prayer, indeed, is to be unburdened from sins, supported by merits, and continued by desires; then it may be heard in its time.²⁷

While Stratford appears to use the sermon as an attempt to praise his king, possibly as suggested in an attempt to remain in or return to the king's favour, he also instructs his audience in his moral understanding of salvation and the importance of prayer. Stratford first beseeches his audience to pray to the Lord; he says, 'Devote yourselves to prayer.' Then can they take up the call of the second division, and pray for their king, just as their king is devoted to them:

But nothing on earth can be better than to pray for the people: except to bring forth special prayers for the royal estate. Certainly not: the wise king conserves his people, thus said Solomon, in 3 Kings 3:[9]: "So give your servant a

²⁶ MS Hereford P.5.xii, f. 79v: '*Domine, saluum fac regem.* Sermo Ps[almi]. In quibus verbis tria pro salute notari possunt. Primo ad quem Regis dicitur dirigi oratio quia ad dominum: *Domine*. Secundo pro quo quia pro rege: *regem*. Tertio, ad quem effectum ne salvetur: *saluum fac*.' As this sermon is only partially edited by Macray, the transcriptions and translations provided are my own.

²⁷ MS Hereford P.5.xii, f. 80ra: 'Est autem oratio viri, iusti ad Deum tanquam nuncius expeditus ad accelerandum, tanquam nuncius discretus ad petendum, tanquam nuncius sollicitus ad impetrandum, tanquam nuncius expeditus ad accelerandum: tunc nuncius expeditur ad accelerandum: que orans nullo peccatorum onere gravatus est: Ecc[lesiasticus] iii, qui diligit deum exorabit pro peccatis et continebit, se ab illis et in oratione dierum exaudietur. Oratio enim exoneranda est a peccatis sublevanda meritis continuanda desideriis et tunc exaudietur tempore suo.' Translation my own.

discerning heart to govern your people.” And upon this, it is also said: “The unwise king forgets his people” (Ecclesiasticus 3:5). Therefore, the people of Judea petition their king for themselves, saying:

‘Our king will judge us, embark before us, and will fight our war for us.’ (1 Kings 8:20) If therefore you wish to ask for the health of the people, ask for the health of the king. Certainly, we believe that today God gives to us a king who fights our war for us, and God [fights] for him. Indeed, he goes forth for his people and the church of God, not for money or temporal things.²⁸

Sent by God, Edward is presented as especially deserving of prayer. He is praised for his willingness to fight for his people, his disregard of money and temporal costs. Stratford also references a past campaign and the conditions which further contribute to making Edward a great king, willing to fight in severe conditions against the most unruly of people:

Thanks be to the lord king, having entered the war in such a cold winter of storms and miseries, he came to our defence ... [while the Scots] rather maintain evil, thefts, homicides, raping widows and virgins, breaking the peace of the people and our lord king, who sustains such things for us in these days. Certainly they are piteous, the Scots, enemies of the king, because they are foreign.²⁹

The sermon may be taken as evidence of political propaganda to assure the people of the king’s just efforts against the savage Scots. Macray connected this passage to Edward’s expedition of 1336, in which severe weather conditions and poor harvests hindered success. This same year, Edward’s brother, John of Eltham died at Perth and was buried in January 1337 at Westminster Abbey by Stratford, who celebrated a requiem mass. Stratford’s roles of politician and clergyman are both demonstrated.

²⁸ MS Hereford P.5.xii, f. 80va: ‘Set nunquid poterit in terra ista melius orari pro populo: quam orationes speciales effundere pro statu regio. Certe non rex enim sapiens conservat populum suum, ideo dixit Salomon, iii R[egum] iii: *Dabis servo tuo cor docile ut possit iudicare populum tuum hunc multum* et id circo: aliqui dicitur: *Rex insapiens perdet populum suum*, Ecc[lesiasticus] x: Ideo, populus iudeorum petierunt sibi regem dicentes. Iudicabit nos rex noster et egredietur ante nos et pugnabit bella nostra pro nobis. Si ergo rogare volueritis pro salute populi: rogate pro salute regis. Certe credimus quod hodie dedit nobis Deus regem qui pugnabit bella nostra pro nobis et Deus pro eo. Ipse enim pro populo suo et ecclesia Dei non solum pecuniam et temporalia effundit.’ Translation my own..

²⁹ MS Hereford P.5.xii, f. 80va-b: ‘Domino igitur rege in guerra tali in yeme, in tanta tempestate, frigore et miseria, pro defensione nostra exeunte...manutenentes, furta, homicidia, viduarum, et virginium raptus, pacem populi et domini nostri regis, qui tanta pro nobis indies sustinent, infringentes. Certe illi sunt regis peiores inimici quam Scoti, quia illi extranei et ante faciem.’ Translation my own.

It is at this point in the sermon, after the development of the king's exceptional qualities, that he is related directly to Christ. Stratford described Edward first as an earthly paragon of righteousness and justice, fighting for his people, while God fights for him. Stratford does not limit Edward's abilities to those of man; rather he shares the attributes of one of God's great warriors, as well as the Son of God himself:

In the manner of Christ's death, he exposed his own body to all danger for his brother, familiars, and friends. Thus it may be said of him as it was said of Maccabeus. In Maccabees 3:[3-5], it is said of Judas: "Judas brought greater glory to his people. In his armour, he was like a giant. He took up his weapons and went to war ... He was like a ferocious lion roaring as it attacks. Judas hunted down those who broke the Law and set fire to all who oppressed his people."³⁰

Like Christ, the king is willing to sacrifice himself for his people. He is knowingly willing to die; he is the epitome of honourable kingship, bravery, and although it is not explicitly said, he embodies the knightly ideal. And like Christ's battle, this campaign is just:

And afterwards salvation is served, if it has been directed into his hands, as it is said in 1 Maccabees 13:[6]: "But I will avenge my nation and the sanctuary and your wives and children." And now it does not fall to me to urge on behalf of my own soul. And certainly in this case, the battle has a just cause. Indeed, there are three just causes for a battle: for faith, for law, and for country.³¹

For Stratford, Edward III is the epitome of kingship. It is of course impossible to determine whether Stratford believed his own words or whether this is indeed propaganda to gain support for the king. As archbishop, Stratford was as influential in the political affairs of the kingdom as he was concerned with its spiritual welfare; he may have at least assumed the details of his sermon would reach the king's ears and thus made sure to present the king as positively as possible. Certainly there was no better comparison to be made than Christ himself and although the association is stated explicitly only once, the relationship

³⁰ MS Hereford P.5.xii, f. 80va: 'Set, ad modum Christi morti et omni periculo corpus suum ex ponit fratrem, notos, et amicos. Ita quid de eo dici potest quid de Machabeus dicitur, in Macha[baeorum] iii, dicitur de Iudea: *Induit se lorica sicut gigas, et succinxit se arma bellica et protegebat castra gladio suo. Similis factus est leoni in operibus suis...et persecutus est iniquos [perscrutans eo] et qui conturbabant populum suum et eos succendit flammis.*' Translation my own.

³¹ MS Hereford P.5.xii, f. 80va: 'Et servitur postea si directa est salus in manu eius, dicitur, i Macha[baeorum] xiii: *Vindicabo itaque mean, et sancta, natos quoque nostros, et uxores.* Et nunc non mihi contingat procere anime mee. Et certe in casu isto, iustam habet pugne causum. Tres enim sunt cause iuste pugne: pro fide, pro iure, et pro patria.' Translation my own.

between Christ, Edward, and the battle resonates throughout the sermon. It is demonstrated in that the war was a just war, sanctioned by God, and that at the campaign's conclusion, 'salvation [was] served.'

The final sermon division however is not about Edward or the politics of the country, but an appeal to the audience regarding their need of salvation. Like the authors who employed the lover-knight and warrior-bridegroom examples, Stratford is concerned with his listener's eternal salvation.

Now we come to the third, that is, *to what end*. Certainly, that he might be saved, that ought to be the purpose of prayer, that in all his acts, God should guide him, and also He goes with those who are with him for the liberation of their people.

The prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well, and so it is with sins: he may be forgiven of whatsoever sins of his soul, cured of sickness in body, but for a prayer of the faithful ...no hesitation disturbed our prayers, and no desperation overthrew the good faith of our request. If such effusion of prayer had obtained for us that for which we had asked, we would not hesitate to perceive that we had submitted our prayers to God *effectually*. Whence Lord, whatsoever you request has been entrusted to you, because you will take the prayers and make them happen.³²

Stratford emphasized the importance of effective prayer, unburdened by sin, made directly to God in order that salvation is received. This effectiveness of prayer would also be applied to the king's success in war, so the sermon lesson is two-fold: pray effectively for the success and health of the king and effectively for the success and health of your soul. As suggested above, the character of the king deeply influenced the character of the realm. Both the metaphor of kingship, common in other sermons and other genres, and particularly significant for the analysis here, the specific comparison between a living king

³² MS Hereford P.5.xii, f. 80va: 'Modo veniamus ad tercium, scilicet ad quem effectum. Certe ut salvus fiat, iste enim debet esse orationis effectus, ut in omnibus suis actibus: Deus eum dirigat et etiam eum cum suis qui illi secum sunt qui pro liberatione populi sui. Oratio fidei salvabit infirmum et sic in peccatis est: dimittetur ei aliquando ex peccato anime, secetur infirmitas in corpore, set fidelis oratio... Cum orantes nos nulla interpellaverit hesitatio et fiduciam petitionis nostre nulla desperatio deiecerit. Si optinvisse nos in ipsa orationis effusione quod poscimus senserimus non ambigimus preces ad Deum efficaciter penetravisse. Unde dominus quecumque orantes petitis credite quia accipietis et eueniet vobis.' Translation and emphases my own.

and the Christ-knight, are being used to represent the spiritual fight that all Christians should engage in on behalf of their own salvation and care of their souls.

With Stratford's dual roles of politician and clergyman, it is easy to identify within this single sermon his interest in both the political and ecclesiastical concerns of the early to mid-fourteenth-century. He was equally concerned with the health of the king and the health of the kingdom. Sermons were often vehicles for mass communication, and in this case, can arguably be seen as an agent of propaganda as well.³³ Alison McHardy discussed mandated requests for special prayers throughout the diocese of Lincoln as the first stage of the Church's involvement in the war effort.³⁴ She argued that these prayers were 'the essential element of patriotic liturgy.'³⁵ She noted that the exact form of this liturgy is usually not known as extant examples are rare. Stratford's sermon can certainly be considered a form of patriotic liturgy requesting special prayers. His use of the Christ-knight as the moral exemplar for Edward III, depicting him as a model of perfect kingship, effects the way in which we should consider medieval kingship. Like Christ, the king must seek to attain perfection in both the temporal and spiritual realms; Stratford's sermon suggests that kings should strive not just to be Christ's representative and vicar, but to be like Christ in their readiness to sacrifice themselves for their people. Stratford's application of Edward's Christ-like actions to the struggle towards salvation for all Christians contributes to our understanding of late medieval Christocentric devotion. Christ was

³³ Several pieces of scholarship have examined the use of propaganda by the English church during the Hundred Years War; see: Alison K McHardy, 'Religion, Court Culture and Propaganda: The Chapel Royal in the Reign of Henry V,' in *Henry V: New Interpretations*, ed. Gwilym Dodd (York, 2013), 131-56 and 'Some Reflections on Edward III's Use of Propaganda' in *The Age of Edward III*, ed. J S Bothwell (Cambridge, 2001), 171-92 and 'Liturgy and Propaganda in the Diocese of Lincoln during the Hundred Years War,' in *Religion and National Identity: Papers Read at the Nineteenth Summer Meeting and the Twentieth Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. Stuart Mews (Oxford, 1982), 215-27; C T Allmand, 'The War and the Non-combatant,' in *The Hundred Years War*, ed. Kenneth Fowler (London, 1971).

³⁴ McHardy, 'Liturgy and Propaganda,' 216-7.

³⁵ McHardy, 'Liturgy and Propaganda,' 221.

being used to associate the role of kings, in their physical battles for the kingdom, to all mankind's spiritual battles to attain the heavenly kingdom.

Perfect Kingship Modelled by Henry V in the role of Christ

The second, and more elaborate, example of the Christ-knight as the model for perfect kingship is found in a macaronic sermon of MS Bodley 649. The manuscript has caught the attention of a number of scholars; the sermons were first recognized by G.R. Owst in his foundational studies of preaching in medieval England; then first focused study of Bodley 649 was conducted by Roy M. Haines, who examined individual sermons and their reflection upon the Church and politics of the period; Patrick J. Horner examined the manuscript as evidence of fifteenth-century Benedictine preaching, and then provided a complete edition and translation of the manuscript's first set of sermons; and finally, Siegfried Wenzel used the manuscript in his studies of macaronic preaching and the Latin sermon collections of late medieval England.³⁶ The present study adds to this considerable research by highlighting the significance of this manuscript's inclusion of two representations of the Christ-knight (the second of which will be discussed in the next chapter), as well as numerous examples of martial language and imagery (discussed in the final chapter).

³⁶ These various works are: Haines, "'Wilde Wittes and Wilfulness': John Swetstock's Attack on those 'Poyswunmongeres,' the Lollards," *Studies in Church History* 8 (1971), 143-53; 'Church, Society and Politics in the Early Fifteenth Century as Viewed from an English Pulpit,' *Studies in Church History* 12 (1975), 143-57; "'Our Master Mariner, Our Sovereign Lord': A Contemporary Preacher's View of King Henry V," *Medieval Studies* 38 (1976), 85-96; *Ecclesia Anglicana: Studies in the English Church of the Later Middle Ages* (Toronto, 1989), 201-21. Horner, 'Benedictines and Preaching in Fifteenth-Century England, 313-32'; "'The King Taught Us the Lesson': Benedictine Support for Henry V's Suppression of the Lollards," *Mediaeval Studies* 52 (1990), 190-220; the translations used in this chapter are from Horner's *Macaronic Sermon Collection*. Wenzel, *Macaronic Sermons; Latin Sermon Collections*, 84-7. The translations used in this chapter are from Horner.

MS Bodley 649 is of Benedictine provenance, written in a single hand developed by university scribes in the early fifteenth century.³⁷ It contains two sets of sermons, the latter which is described as a miscellaneous set of sermons, intended for a variety of occasions, in no particular order; they are addressed to general audiences, are loosely organized, with all but three of the twenty sermons written entirely in Latin. The first set in the manuscript contains twenty-five sermons, two of which are in Latin; the remaining twenty-three, edited by Horner, are noteworthy for their zealous praise of King Henry V, for their vehement attack upon the Lollards, for their staunch defence of orthodox authority, and finally, for their bilingual character. In his praise of Henry V, the preacher refers to past and present English victories, including Crecy (1346), Poitiers (1356), Shrewsbury (1403), Agincourt (1415), and the Southampton Plot (1415).³⁸ He also refers to the Lollard insurrection (1413-14) and specifically mentions Sir John Oldcastle, the Lollard ‘captain who recently was burned’ (in 1417).³⁹

The sermons were written in a very rare macaronic form, which mixed Latin and English. Wenzel’s study of macaronic sermons proposed that there are distinct characteristics particular to macaronic sermons; these include the glossing of technical and idiosyncratic words in English; the translation of structural elements of the sermons, such as the theme and division; and the movement between Latin and English across syntactic boundaries, in which languages are mixed together within a single sentence, what linguists call ‘code-switching.’⁴⁰ Within macaronic sermons, English is found in two forms; the first acts as a gloss and can be used to translate individual words or larger sections from Latin into English; the second, as found in the sermon discussed here, includes English words

³⁷ The following summary details of MS Bodley 649 are drawn from Horner’s edition of the manuscript, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 2-7.

³⁸ Found in MS Bodley 649, respectively: f.1r (Crecy and Poitiers), ff. 97v and 113r (Shrewsbury), f. 35r (Agincourt), ff. 35r-v and 130r (Southampton).

³⁹ MS Bodley 649, f. 13r (Lollard insurrection) and f. 37v-38r (Oldcastle).

⁴⁰ Wenzel, *Macaronic Sermons*, 113.

and/or phrases to designate divisions within the sermon. In the case of Bodley 649, the author provided his theme first in Latin and again in English, and before expanding the sermon into its divisions, repeated his theme in English. Wenzel suggested these English insertions emphasize the sermon's thematic and structural importance.⁴¹ He also concluded that the sermon writer must be thought of as 'functionally and fluently bilingual.'⁴² Several of the sermons suggest this unknown author to be a Benedictine monk, associated with Oxford University. This is strengthened by the fact that four of the sermons are also found in MS Laud misc. 706, including the sermon with the Christ-knight image discussed in the following chapter.⁴³

Like Bodley 649, the Laud manuscript contains Latin and English sermons, although none is macaronic; it was likely written at the same time, the early fifteenth century, also in Oxford; it belonged to John Paunteley and contains sermons that strongly attack the Lollards.⁴⁴ These connections strengthen the claim of both a Benedictine and university setting for the composition of the Bodley sermons. The intended audience in both however, varies. Some sermons address "*Reverendi domini et magistri*," and were clearly intended for a learned, likely university audiences, while others were clearly addressed to mixed audience, acknowledging the clergy and giving them learned instruction, while at the same time, addressing the laity, with 'everyday' language. This is apparent by the preacher's persistent message that the laity should rely on the clergy and not exceed their limitations; he says: 'Take the substance of your creed and leave the subtlety to the clergy'; and elsewhere, 'Keep yourself within the boundaries, and know

⁴¹ Wenzel, *Macaronic Sermons*, 18.

⁴² Wenzel, *Macaronic Sermons*, 112.

⁴³ MS Bodley 649, ff. 27r-34r and MS Laud misc. 706, f.71ra-v (it is however incomplete).

⁴⁴ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 5; Wenzel, *Macaronic Sermons*, 53-5 and *Latin Sermon Collections*, 88-90; Paunteley is also discussed above, chapter 2, page 88 regarding his authorship of the Thomas Beauchamp funeral sermon.

what they are.’⁴⁵ The apparent contradictions in audience – university and lay within individual sermons – may be explained by the argument made by Kantik Ghosh in his recent examination of academic freedoms, limitations, and the rise of heresy within the fifteenth-century university.⁴⁶ As the established Church, particularly under the leadership and influence of Archbishop Arundel, became increasingly concerned with ‘ill-sounding propositions’ and the potential of controversial and disruptive ideas derived from within the University, it attempted to limit academic freedom and make it easier for scholars to be condemned as heretics.⁴⁷ There was a ‘heightened concern about the risks of departing too far from common usage, and the concomitant possibility of misinterpreting the technical logico-linguistic discourses of philosophical theology’ and the impact of these interpretations outside the University.⁴⁸ In other words, Arundel and others attempted to delineate boundaries between learned theology and popular devotion in order to prevent the dissemination of heretical ideas to those outside the University. Our Bodley 649 author may indeed fit within the new model Arundel established: a university educated Benedictine monk who preached to a wide audience on topics that included the social, political, and religious concerns of early-fifteenth-century England, and preached vehemently against the Lollard heresy. His audience therefore received a rigid message of orthodox constraint – proper pastoral care and proper behaviour – in which the Christ-knight was an exemplary model.

The Christ-knight image is found in the sixth of the Bodley 649 sermons.⁴⁹ It was preached for the third Sunday of Lent and intended for a mixed audience demonstrated by

⁴⁵ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 168 and 510; MS Bodley 649, f. 38r and f. 126v.

⁴⁶ Kantik Ghosh, ‘Logic, Scepticism, and ‘Heresy’ in Early Fifteenth-Century Europe: Oxford, Vienna, Constance,’ in *Uncertain Knowledge: Scepticism, Relativism, and Doubt in the Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2014), 261-283.

⁴⁷ Ghosh, ‘Logic, Scepticism, and ‘Heresy,’ 268-9, 278.

⁴⁸ Ghosh, ‘Logic, Scepticism, and ‘Heresy,’ 268.

⁴⁹ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 154-79; MS Bodley 649, ff. 34r-40v.

the above-mentioned direction to the laity, which was concerned with transubstantiation, a lesson intended to correct the false Lollard teaching:

But the circumstances of this article, how the colour and taste of bread and wine remain without the substance of bread and wine ... you are not required to know, they do not pertain to you. So do not make fine distinctions within, do not wrack your brain about it. Take the substance of your creed and leave the subtlety to the clergy ... do not involve yourself too much in matters of faith. Walk not too far for wandering, fly not too high for falling, reduce your flights, lower your wings, and stand on your creed.⁵⁰

The preacher used the sermon to simultaneously praise King Henry V, condemn the Lollard heresy, reinforce orthodox authority, and instruct his audience in a message of salvation. He often asserted clerical authority, encouraging, if not berating, the lay members of the audience to mind their place. The sermon takes its theme from Luke 11:21, *Fortis armatus custodit atrium* (The strong man, fully armed, guards his courtyard). The author provided an English translation of the theme:

A myȝti werroure and a wyȝt
Kepes his halle armed bryȝt.⁵¹

The ‘mighty warrior’ is established immediately as the theme, and thus primary character of the sermon; he is left nameless here, as he will subsequently be shown to represent Christ, Henry V, the cleric and the layman. Everyman encounters the same battle in life, the fight against sin; and everyman must be equipped to defeat it. The sermon protheme then expands upon this with an exposition of the cursed king Antiochus. Like the Stratford sermon, the Bodley author also cites from the apocryphal Maccabees text, in this case, 2 Maccabees 11. Antiochus oppressed the people of God and because they were unable to defend themselves, God sent them aid in the form of the Christ-knight:

And out of his mercy, God sent them a soldier from heaven riding on a horse, clothed in a white robe, armed with golden arms, and brandishing a lance in hand ... his own son the second person of the Trinity, riding on the cross on Good Friday. The white robe or tunic was the purest body which he assumed from the

⁵⁰ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 169; MS Bodley 649, f. 38r.

⁵¹ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 155; MS Bodley 649, f. 34r. “Wight” in Middle English can mean strong; “bright,” equipped, alert, or adept.

glorious Virgin pure from every stain of sin and misery. The golden arms were his splendid godhead which is so strong that it cannot or could not ever be pierced. His white tunic was torn and lacerated on the cross for us when his blessed body wounded, beaten, nailed, and pierced with a lance. But the golden armour of the godhead was impenetrable; it did not suffer pain or passion, sorrow or harm. By the sharp lance, which he brandished in his hand is understood the bitter passion, the sharp death of the Lord Jesus, by which he conquered the devil and overcame his rule, by which he let us all out of passion and into the courtyard of happiness. The coming of this heavenly soldier comforted the people of God so much ... they rejoiced to suffer humiliation for the name of Jesus.⁵²

This is a remarkable depiction of Christ, who is at once crucified on the cross and suffering a bitter passion for mankind, while at the same time riding down from heaven on his horse, the victorious king coming to save them. This is a perfect demonstration of the blending of Christ's two primary roles: the suffering Christ and the martial Christ. Here, the author brings together these aspects of Christ's humanity without a hint of contradiction, and provides for his audience the sacrificial lamb who died to save them, and the resurrected king who will return. It would have been a powerful and evocative image in the fifteenth century. For those audience members of the knightly class, the image of Christ donned in full armour, riding his horse, coming to conquer, may have resonated with their desire to find justification in their violent profession and transform it into an expression of piety. For those in the audience of the knighted class, as well as those outside of it, both clerical and lay, the image may have evoked images of Christ's Passion and inspired devotion to his sacrifice and death on the Cross. It may have also reminded them of the well-known lover-knight image, also leading them to meditate on Christ's Passion. The Bodley author utilised an image of Christ that resonated with each member of his audience. It is also worth pointing out again the invocation of the Holy Name of Jesus, as it has a place within

⁵² Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 155; MS Bodley 649, f. 34v. There is a similar description of Christ as the celestial rider on a white horse, but in these instance, it is taken from Apocalypse 6:2: 'And I saw: and behold a white horse, and he that sat on him had a bow, and there was a crown given him, and he went forth conquering that he might conquer.' The use of this image of Christ is found in seven sermons: Oxford, Merton College MS 236, ff. 126ra-127vb; Hereford Cathedral Library MS O.iii.5, ff. 24rb-26ra; Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Barlow 24, ff. 205r-206r; Worcester Cathedral Library MS F.10, ff. 262v-263v; University of London MS 657, pp. 235a-238 and pp. 238a-240b; and lastly, Wimbledon's *Redde rationem villicationis tuae*, in Cambridge, MS Corpus Christi 357, ff. 1ra-13va.

late medieval sermons in relation to a martial Christ.⁵³ The Bodley author explains that the people of God are willing to suffer for the Name of Jesus. Like the aforementioned sermon found in Hereford Cathedral Library, MS O.iii.5, the Bodley 649 author presents the Holy Name of Christ as an active agent of salvation, personified in the role of the soldier to save mankind. Like images of the suffering Christ, the invocation of the Holy Name brings together devotion to Christ's sacrifice and his martial role.

As well as using this language, likely to evoke a range of associations surrounding the martial Christ, the preacher applies his analogy to the present, identifying Antiochus as the devil who put on the 'livery of Lollardy' and raised a great army against the Lord. The preacher laments at just how many thousands have fallen to this heresy and attacks their plan to 'make Lollards of the clergy.' Like his response to his people's oppression by Antiochus, God sends them a soldier, the Christ-knight who is likened to Henry V:

The God of pity and mercy, seeing the sobbing and sorrows, the tears and prayers of the Church, as a great comfort to all of us sent to us a heavenly soldier, clothed in white, armed with golden arms, and brandishing a lance in hand. This is the heavenly soldier who lives blessedly, our liege lord the king, whom God sent to us in defence of the Church and the salvation of the whole realm. The white tunic is cleanliness of conscience, purity of life, to which he pledged himself in the first coronation, for, as it is said, he renounced the devil and all his works and vowed himself to virtue and purity of life. He was dressed in this white garment, so he has continued in purity of life even to this point, which is a mirror to all of us, a light and lamp to all the lords of this realm. The golden armour is the highest grace in which God armed his in defence of himself and all of us. With his golden armour he is armed on every side: gracious in speaking, gracious in living, gracious in wars and in every work.⁵⁴

The comparison between Christ and Henry is striking. Henry is introduced in the exact same manner as Christ, a heavenly soldier, sent by God; both are clothed in white, armed with golden arms with a lance in hand. Christ's garment represents his pure body that he assumed from the Virgin Mary; this is reflected in Henry's garment, the purity of his life and cleanliness of conscience. Christ's golden armour signifies the impenetrable godhead,

⁵³ See page 26 in the introduction, as well as my article, 'Preaching the Name: The Influence of a Sermon on the Holy Name of Christ,' *The Journal of Medieval History* 40 (2014), 195-208.

⁵⁴ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 157; MS Bodley 649, f. 35r.

unable to be pierced even throughout his passion; Henry's armour is given by God, the highest grace he can bestow, in order for Henry to defend God and his people. The Bodley author carefully translated the divine nature of Christ into human qualities possessed by Henry in order to make him God's most powerful representative in the present time. The Bodley author used the comparison of his king to Christ as a means to reveal one expectation of kingly behaviour, providing us with an insight into his notion of kingship. He did so when he stated that Henry's white tunic, his purity of life, was that which Henry 'pledged himself in the first coronation, for, as it is said, he renounced the devil and all his works and vowed himself to virtue and purity of life.' The Bodley author has placed possibly the highest value, as it is the only expectation mentioned, in the king's clean living and virtue. This is significant to the Bodley author because this behaviour 'is a mirror to all of us, a light and lamp to all the lords of this realm.' Therefore, according to the author, the king's behaviour directly influenced his people and they are reflected back in him.

At this point the preacher praises the king's recent victories, particularly his suppression of the Lollards:

Unless he has been armed with the golden arms of grace, he had been overthrown among the rebel lords and the Lollards who rose against him. Unless he had been safely armed with the arms of grace, he was likely to have died on the field or been captured in war at Agincourt. Unless he is protected with the golden arms of grace, he could not endure the battles of Normandy in winter. May God give him such a reign that he may be always armed against enemies with the golden armour of grace. By the lance that the soldier brandished in hand is understood the sharp decrees against the Lollards through which they are handed over to the fire and death, through which the army of Antiochus is dispersed and the people of God greatly comforted. This heavenly soldier has jousting so manfully with his lance in the cause of God, that Antiochus falls, the old castle of the devil is overturned, the clergy are liberated from great fear, and all the realm placed in peace and quiet. This is likely to continue if we live as we ought.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 157-9; MS Bodley 649, ff. 35r-v.

Here, the sermon author can be described as patriotic, if not sycophantic. He seems to suggest that King Henry has single-handedly defeated all the people's enemies and delivered them into peace. He is a Christ-figure indeed in this preacher's estimation, and not just that, but a Christ-knight figure too. As in the Stratford sermon with its praise of Edward, Henry too does all things; he is a spiritual paragon, pious and pure, as well as a perfect soldier, manly, strong, braving the harshest winters. No king since Edward III had received as much praise as Henry V; both men were made ideal representations of kingship.

And like the Stratford sermon, there is a strong message of salvation present in the Bodley 649 sermon. This preacher was also concerned with the salvation of the nation's souls, as much as acknowledging the king's greatness. The remainder of the sermon is dedicated to the proper instruction of the audience in the ways of the orthodox church, all the while, aggressively condemning the actions of those sinful Lollards. The preacher uses God's armour to provide three divisions in the sermon: the shield of faith, the helmet of hope, and the breastplate of love. Within these divisions, he defends the articles of faith commonly denied by heretics. He first defends the Trinity, attacked by Arius and Sabellius, as well as indulgences, 'the other high means of mercy and salvation.'⁵⁶ He then defends the sacraments and through them the forgiveness of sin. The Lollards, he says:

... despise oral confession which is part of penance, they hate to hear of that, they despise that sacrament which is the necessary and safe remedy against actual sin. It is the necessary remedy! It is not sufficient for salvation to confess only to God, as the Lollards assert, but you must also confess orally to a priest in the place of God. This vocal confession is so necessary that, if you have the opportunity for it, you cannot be saved without it.⁵⁷

The Bodley 649 preacher was a master at using his condemnation of heretical Lollard practice to encourage, if not aggressively push, his audience into following his prescribed

⁵⁶ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 167; MS Bodley 649, f. 37v.

⁵⁷ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 165; MS Bodley 649, f. 37r.

moral instruction. He equated God's sending of Christ to save mankind from damnation to God's sending of Henry to save mankind from the new damnation, Lollardy. While Henry was sent in order to save England from heretics, the individual – those whom the preacher is addressing – must seek forgiveness through confession. The established church maintained that this was only achieved through oral confession to a priest. To urge his audience towards confession, he used spectacular imagery, such as Christ charging down from heaven on his white horse, or Henry V jousting against the devil, liberating the people from the grip of heresy. He undoubtedly understood the need to appeal the audience's desire for exciting storytelling in order to guarantee that the moral of his message was understood.

Conclusion

Stratford and the unknown Bodley author have much in common in their preaching tone, style and message. Although the Bodley sermon is considerably lengthier than Stratford's, many of the thematic elements, moral positions, and goals are the same; the Bodley author expands considerably, where Stratford's points are brief. The sermons were preached nearly one hundred years apart from the other, and yet Stratford and the Bodley author both used the Christ image for their respective kings in much the same manner, both seeing the political conditions of England in a similar light. The sermon content suggests a shared ideology, with both men emphasizing personal repentance and spiritual renewal; Stratford expounds solely upon the purpose and efficacy of prayer, while the Bodley author goes into great detail to do with the individual's need to adhere to orthodox tradition and practice, and avoid heresy at all costs. Likewise, both men extend their theological positions into the political sphere, commenting, if not lamenting, on the current state of England. For Stratford, the Scots are the cause of turmoil and strife; for the Bodley

author, England's people have neglected their social and religious obligations, have fallen victim to the Lollard heresy, and have surrendered to laziness and sin. Both authors describe God as the active force, sending Christ and sending kings – both as redeemers. The qualities shared by both Christ and the two kings further reveals Christ's humanity, while at the same time elevating England's kings to a Christ-like status; they are warrior-kings, redeemers, and saviours. Both authors employed Christ as the saviour of mankind's souls; and in the role of Christ, placed their current kings as the saviour of the people and the realm of England. For Stratford, God delivered Edward III to the people in order that he would fight their war, as Christ had already fought the ultimate war for them. Edward III was a great deliverer. For the Bodley author, Henry too was sent by God in defence of the church in order to re-establish England's relationship to God by delivering its people from the grip of heresy. Henry too was a great liberator. Both Stratford and the Bodley author provided a reflection of their warrior-kings, Edward III and Henry V, through Christ's pugilistic actions.

Through the medium of kingship, considered in its idealised form, the sermon authors attempted to achieve a number of goals which affect our understanding of late medieval Christocentric devotion. They describe an unbroken chain of model behaviour descending from Christ as the perfect exemplar of earthly kingship, through the authors' respective kings, continued through to the laity in regards to their daily moral behaviour. For the audiences of these sermons, devotion to their king operated as a conduit for personal devotion to Christ. The image provided for audiences a way in which to consider their kings and kingship as a standard or model set apart from others, an ideal to be reached, and something they can reflect in their own behaviour and devotion. The representation of Christ in a martial role also allowed for preachers to present kings as

agents of national redemption, just as the Christ-knight was an agent of spiritual redemption.

Chapter 5 - Christ the Champion

This chapter examines the representation of Christ as a champion, battling in various contexts, always victorious. In this expression of a martial Christ, he is not necessarily depicted as a knight, yet engages in various confrontations with the devil. This image, while mostly unexplored by historians in sermon scholarship, has precedents elsewhere in the poetry and drama of late medieval England. In which direction dissemination and influence flowed between these genres is difficult, if not impossible, to determine, but the popularity of some works depicting Christ in this way and the presence of these motifs in popular preaching suggest at least a common knowledge and possibly common sources between popular sermons and secular literature. This chapter discusses the various representations of the Christ Champion in poetry, drama, and sermons. It examines their similarities and differences in regards to function, in these instances the preacher's instruction on the complex doctrines of atonement and redemption, as well as the Christ Champion image's use as a model for proper and thus holy behaviour.

The Case for Atonement: The Round Table Sermons and *Piers Plowman*

The popularity and subsequent influence of chivalric literature upon homiletic literature has been duly noted thus far, as described in the discussions of Christ the lover-knight and Christ the warrior-bridegroom. In the following examples, Christ is still portrayed within the context of chivalry, but the romantic elements have been removed. Christ is no longer fighting for the love of a lady, a clear indication of courtly love; rather, the image is employed to explain theories of atonement, or mankind's reconciliation with God through Christ. This is found in the 'Round Table' (*tabula rotunda*) sermons, so named because they contain a model sermon *exemplum* which allegorizes Arthur's Knights of the Round Table. It is also found in Langland's *Piers Plowman*. The Round Table

exemplum has been identified by Lawrence Warner in five manuscripts.¹ Warner examined the Round Table sermons solely in regards to their relationship with Langland's *Piers Plowman* and Langland's presentation of atonement theory. Likewise, this chapter examines *Piers Plowman* and the Round Table sermons, by specifically looking to the Champion Christ as the means to explain these doctrinal theories. As a model *exemplum*, the Round Table narrative was inserted into a sermon with little alteration, as is the case for four of the five examples. The fifth mentions the *exemplum* only by name ('*tabula rotunda*'), suggesting it was widespread enough for an author to read the reference and already have sufficient knowledge of the narrative. The Round Table *exemplum* is an interesting narrative which depicts Christ in the role of a jouster in a tournament, fighting for mankind. The motif was used to answer the question, why was the Son, rather than the Father or Holy Spirit incarnated? The passage is worth quoting in full, taken from the most extensive example in Oxford, Magdalen College, MS 93:

It is said in the Creed, "Who for us men and for our salvation came down from the heavens." But why did the Son come down sooner than the Father or the Holy Spirit? I shall tell you through an exemplum. One reads in the exploits of Arthur that he had noble knights of the Round Table, and when they were gathered together at the same time they hung up their shields on the wall of a castle. And if anyone touched someone else's shield, its owner fought with him who touched it. To our business: the three persons of the Trinity can be called knights of the Round Table because all are equal in virtue and power. The Trinity chose the spirit of Adam as the castle in which the Father set down a shield of power, for Adam had the power to live forever; the Son set down a shield of wisdom, through which Adam knew all natures of plants, fish, birds, and animals, to whom he gave names according to their natures; and the Holy Spirit set down a shield of grace, by which Adam was filled with burning love and grace. But the devil touched the shield of the Son, and not of the Father or of the Holy Spirit, because he promised Adam not that he would be more powerful or grace-filled, but wiser, when he said, "You shall be like gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5). Therefore it was fitting that the Son descend and defend his shield and fight with the devil. The Son therefore came, as Isaiah shows, saying:

¹ Lawrence Warner provides a detailed survey of the Round Table sermons in 'Jesus the Jouster: The Christ-Knight and Medieval Theories of Atonement in *Piers Plowman* and the "Round Table" Sermons,' *YLS* 10 (1996), 129-43; the five MSS are: Cambridge, Jesus College MS 13, f. 84; Worcester Cathedral Library MS F.126, f. 118; London, British Library Harley 3760, sermons by Thomas Brinton, edited by Mary Aquinas Devlin; Oxford, Magdalen College MS 93, f. 144, the fifteenth-century preacher's notebook of John Dygon; and the reference only, found in Oxford, Merton College MS 248, f. 166.

“A son is given to us” (Isa. 9:6). For even if God was able to convey welfare to us by will alone, nevertheless he wished to be incarnated and to suffer for us, so that he might make an appropriate satisfaction, vehemently kindle us to his love, and, through these, completely abolish the sins and works of the devil. Thus, the First Letter of John: “For this purpose, the Son of God appeared, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (John 3:8).²

The explanation of the atonement here is quite unusual, with not only a Christ-knight figure, but also the introduction of a Father-knight and a Holy Spirit-knight, each with their own shields presented for possible combat. In this explanation of atonement, it is not only the question of how mankind was reconciled to God that was answered (through Christ’s overcoming of the devil), but also why it was the Son who was chosen. The *exemplum* author provided scriptural authority for why the Son’s shield was chosen by the devil, rather than the Father or Holy Spirit. However he provided no scriptural authority or alternative source for the presence of a Father-knight or Holy Spirit-knight. This appears to be a creation of his own to further dramatize the tournament scene; possibly the author identified a need for multiple combatants and employed the Trinity to fulfil this need. Thus, while this *exemplum* is a standardized model, the depiction of all three aspects of the Trinity as knights is completely unique. Christ depicted as a worthy knight chosen to destroy his enemy the devil at a tournament, however, is not unique.

The Round Table *exemplum* is a striking example of the influence of the chivalric genre on popular preaching. The stories of Arthur and his heroic knights reached all levels of society. It has a long history in literature, in the shared language of Latin and the vernacular languages found in England and the Continent.³ The prolific writers of the

² Warner, ‘Jesus the Jousting,’ 136-8, from Oxford, Magdalen College MS 93, ff. 144-147 at f. 144.

³ To point out a few: in the central Middle Ages, the author of the Latin *Historia Brittonum*, a popular work that straddles history and narrative, uses the Arthurian narrative to proclaim the success of the British against invaders under the protection of God; see: Sian Echard, ed., ‘Introduction: The Arthur of Medieval Latin Literature,’ in *The Arthur of Medieval Latin Literature: The Development and Dissemination of the Arthurian Legend in Medieval Latin* (Cardiff, 2011), 12; from his *Historia regum Britannie*, Geoffrey of Monmouth is credited, alongside Chretien de Troyes’s vernacular parallel, as the founder of the enduring Arthur tradition; see: Sian Echard, ‘Geoffrey of Monmouth,’ in *The Arthur of Medieval Latin Literature*, 45; William of Malmesbury wrote of Arthur, dismissing the legend of his return, but stating that he should be treated in truthful histories, rather than the ‘foolish tales of the Britons’; see: Elizabeth Archibald, ‘Arthurian

Middle Ages, both popular and widely read by contemporaries, contributed to the dissemination and popularity of the Arthurian legends. This would eventually culminate with the introduction of book printing in late medieval England and the widespread production of Arthurian romances, including the adventures of the Knights of the Round Table.⁴ While this tradition was rapidly growing in secular literature, authors of homiletic literature incorporated and adapted this genre into their own writings, for their own purposes.

In the example of the Round Table sermons, Arthur and his knights are utilized to elucidate the theory of atonement in a way accessible to an audience with varied levels of comprehension. The use of the tournament to explain doctrine is an example of preachers adapting secular culture into their sermons, in this case an activity the Church often opposed because of its violent nature. Throughout the Middle Ages, tournaments were among the most popular of aristocratic sports, alongside hunting and hawking.⁵ They allowed for men to demonstrate their prowess, as well as providing an outlet for men not only prepared for but often hoping for the advancements of war. Tournaments included jousts, single combat between two horsemen, and the grand mêlée, mounted combat between large parties of knights. For those who could not participate in the events due to restrictions of social rank, tournaments were still social gatherings in which all classes could participate through observation.

Latin Romance,' in *The Arthur of Medieval Latin Literature: The Development and Dissemination of the Arthurian Legend in Medieval Latin*, ed., Sian Echard (Cardiff, 2011), 132. Chaucer not only borrowed from Romance, but explicitly mentioned the French romance *Lancelot de Lac* as a book that women admire; see: Melissa Furrow, *Expectations of Romance: The Reception of a Genre in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2009), 3-4.

⁴ John J Thompson, 'Collecting Middle English Romances and some related book-production activities in the later Middle Ages,' in *Romance in Medieval England*, eds. Maldwyn Mills, Jennifer Fellows and Carol M Meale (Cambridge, 1991), 17-38.

⁵ David Crouch, *Tournament* (London, 2005); Mary Arlene Santana, *The Tournament and Literature: Literary Representations of the Medieval Tournament in Old French Works, 1150-1226* (Canterbury, 1999); R Coltman Clephan, *The Medieval Tournament* (London, 1995).

Church-goers listening to a Round Table sermon, who either participated in tournaments or viewed them, would have had an understanding of the pre-tournament ritual of hanging the shields on display, and the combatants' responsibility to touch the shields of those they wish to fight. R H Cline suggested that tournaments found their models in literature as early as the first-half of the thirteenth century and did so increasingly until the end of the Middle Ages.⁶ Knights assumed the identities of Arthur's great knights when participating in jousts, no doubt an early form of life imitating art. Likewise, late medieval preachers speaking to a mixed audience of clerical and lay congregants found the idealised representations of Arthur and his knights an appropriate model for behaviour, easily employed in allegorical narrative, as well as an attractive and likely attention-grabbing way to deliver moral directives.

As in the Round Table sermons, Langland used the motif of Christ as a knight. He used it to demonstrate Christ's fight for 'mankynde' rather than that of a lover as found in the lover-knight exemplum. The romance elements of the motif have again been removed and the emphasis shifted to the fight between Christ and the devil. Warner argued that Langland is indebted to homiletic literature and the Round Table sermons, suggesting they lie behind both his use of the image and his theology. R A Waldron however argued for Langland's originality, suggesting that Langland's removal of the romantic elements from the Christ-knight motif were innovative and interesting modifications.⁷ While it is impossible to determine which direction the current of influence and dissemination travelled, Langland's knowledge of sermon literature, in particular the *artes praedicandi*, is evident elsewhere in the poem, particularly in the 'sermons' delivered by Reason

⁶ Ruth Huff Cline, 'The Influence of Romances on Tournaments of the Middle Ages,' *Speculum* 20 (1945), 204-11 at 204.

⁷ R A Waldron, 'Langland's Originality: The Christ-Knight and the Harrowing of Hell,' in *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature: Essays in Honour of G H Russell*, eds. Gregory Kratzmann and James Simpson (Cambridge, 1986), 66-81; Wilbur Gaffney, 'The Allegory of the Christ-Knight in *Piers Plowman*,' *PMLA* 46 (1931), 155-68 at 166.

(B.5.11) and Scripture (B.11.107). As Wenzel pointed out, Langland's concern with man's spiritual destiny and the saving of souls and his condemnation of vice, sin, and the failings in nearly all classes of society are the primary concerns of late medieval preachers.⁸ In either case, popular preaching and literature of the late medieval period are inexorably entwined.

There are striking examples from scripture in which authors and preachers were well versed: Job 7:1, '*militia est vita hominis super terram*' (warfare is man's life on earth) and Revelation 19:15, 'And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp two edged sword; that with it he may strike the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of God the Almighty.' Omitting the romantic elements from the scene therefore would not have been a shocking narrative turn for audience members.

Rather than a lover, Langland casts Christ as a jousting knight engaged in single combat with Satan. Upon waking from a dream in which the Trinity is explained (C.XIX), Will has his sixth vision on Palm Sunday. He asks, - "'Who shal iouste with Iesus,' quod y... 'Nay,' quod faith, 'bote the fende and fals doem to deye.'"⁹ Faith responds, Christ will fight on behalf of Piers and the fiend will perish.

This episode begins with the arrival of a knight to fight on behalf of humanity. Faith claims, it is Jesus who will 'juste in Jerusalem' in the place of Piers:

This Iesus of his gentrice shal iouste in Pers Armes,
In his helm and in his haberion, *humana natura*;
That Crist be nat yknowe here for *consumm[a]tus Deus*,
In [Pers paltok] the [plouhman] this prikiare shal ryde.¹⁰

⁸ Wenzel, 'Medieval Sermons,' in *A Companion to Piers Plowman*, ed. John A Alford (Berkeley, 1988), 155-72 at 155.

⁹ William Langland, *Piers Plowman: The C Version*, eds. G Russell and G Kane (London, 1997), *Passus XX*, ll. 26-7, pp. 608-9.

¹⁰ Langland, *Piers Plowman: The C Version*, ll. 21-24, p. 608.

In this encounter, Christ is prepared to joust in Piers' armour, his helmet and shirt of mail, as an armed horseman (*prikiare*), in order to disguise his true identity of the Consummate God. Langland then interrupts the allegorical duel between Christ and Satan and applies the jousting motif to the Biblical narrative, in which Jesus is set against Longeus: 'Ac þer cam forþ a knyȝt wiþ a kene spere ygrounde...to Iusten wiþ Iesus, þis blynde Iew Longeus.'¹¹ While scholarship has debated the function of the dual-duels,¹² it is important to note here because both instances of Christ engaged in a duel portray him disguised as a knight.

The disguised knight motif is borrowed from chivalric literature such as Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*, also translated into Middle English, in which Yvain and Gauvain fight each other over the love of two sisters, disguised, only to be later revealed.¹³ Once recognized, the combatants yield to one another. The mutual agreement to end the battle is consistent with codes of chivalry and the emphasis on fraternity and loyalty between friends.

The use of Christ as a disguised knight in *Piers* takes on a rather different tone. While Langland certainly uses this popular motif to allude to the chivalric code and court life, while reinforcing his religious moralization, the scenes between Christ and Satan and Longeus do not invoke the same notions of loyalty and honour as that of Yvain and Gauvain. Rather, Langland introduces a variant on the typical motif for his own purposes. In his duel with Christ, Longeus represents mankind's sinfulness; in the Biblical narrative, he literally stands in for the Jews that condemn Christ. Although Christ is not explicitly in disguise, Longeus is blind and thus unable to recognize Jesus until he is healed by Jesus'

¹¹ Langland, *Piers Plowman: The B Version*, eds., Kane and Donaldson, B.18.78, 82, p. 611.

¹² Nicole Clifton, 'The Romance Convention of the Disguised Duel and the Climax of *Piers Plowman*,' *YLS* 7 (1993), 123-28; Anna Baldwin, 'The Double Duel in *Piers Plowman* B XVIII and C XXI,' *Medium Aevum* 50 (1981), 64-78; Maureen Quilligan, *The Language of Allegory* (Ithaca, 1979), 76; John A Burrow, 'The Actions of Langland's Second Vision, *Essays in Criticism: A Quarterly Journal of Literary Criticism* 15 (1965), 247-68.

¹³ Clifton, 'The Romance Convention of the Disguised Duel,' 126-7.

blood and he then at once surrenders. This is a slight adaptation of the aforementioned yielding between friends. In the encounter between Christ and Satan, in which Christ is prepared to joust disguised in Piers' armour, Langland's representation of Christ as a knight in disguise contributes to the question surrounding his true human nature.¹⁴

In *Piers* Christ's true nature is revealed in his defeat of Satan and his victory over death. It is his disguise, unarmed but for his hidden majesty, that deceives the devil. Indeed, the Christ-knight is 'withouten spores oþer spere.'¹⁵ His weapon is the Cross. Alison Finlay noted the paradox that this weapon represents humility and passivity,¹⁶ but by the fourteenth century it was already an ancient motif. Michael Cherniss has suggested that the Cross in the early medieval *Dream of the Rood*, acting as a sword, was the consequence of the influence of the heroic literary tradition.¹⁷ Early Germanic poetry, which portrayed Christ as a warrior-chief may have led Anglo-Saxon poets to the idea that the Cross acted as a follower of Christ, like a retainer to a secular lord. And as man depends on his sword in battle, a tradition emphasized in heroic literature by the personification and naming of swords, Excalibur and Durendal for example, and their glorification as heroes in their own right, so Christ depended on the Cross in his victory over Satan.

The Towneley 'Crucifixion' play adds another chivalric variant upon the theme. Rather than the Cross acting as Christ's sword, it is portrayed as Christ's horse, upon which he is 'saddled' at his Crucifixion. Christ is mocked and taunted by torturers:

In faith, sir, since ye call yourself a king,
You must prove a worthy thing
That wends thus to the war;
You must joust in tournament;
Unless ye sit fast ye may repent,
By me thrust down before.

¹⁴ Finlay, 'The Warrior Christ and the Unarmed Hero,' 19; the question of Christ's true nature is an important point in the below discussion of Devil's Rights theory.

¹⁵ Langland, *Piers Plowman: The C Version*, Russell and Kane, *Passus XX*, l. 10, p. 607.

¹⁶ Finlay, 'The Warrior Christ and the Unarmed Hero,' 20.

¹⁷ Cherniss, 'The Cross as Christ's Weapon,' 242.

Thank us when thy steed thou straddle
 For we shall set thee in thy saddle,
 Fear no fall, be thou bold.
 I promise no lance will shift thee,
 Unless thou sit well thou had better let be
 The tales that thou hast told.

Stand near, fellows, and let us see
 How we can horse our king so free,
 By any chance;
 Stand thou yonder on that side,
 And we shall see how he can ride,
 And how well wield a lance.¹⁸

There is a rather interesting modification in this example. Here, the motif of the chivalric Christ-knight is placed in the hands of Christ's torturers. They insist he 'must joust in tournament' thereby removing his choice in the matter. As the Crown of Thorns symbolically mocked Christ's kingship, it is possible that here, Christ the jouster is intended to mock his role as an idealised model of chivalry. The Towneley author may have indeed been providing a critique of this common motif, rather than a positive use of it.

The Towneley author does however place the scene within the context of Christ's kingship. He was not alone in associating Christ's knightly status with his kingly status. Again this is demonstrated in *Piers Plowman*. In B, passus 19 (C, passus 21), the protagonist Will encounters Conscience in a dream. Conscience then delivers what Sarah Wood argued is another of the poem's sermons.¹⁹ Conscience explains to Will how Christ lived in succession the lives of a knight, then a king, and finally, a conqueror:

'Is crist moore of myat and moore worpi name
 Than Iesu or Iesus þat al oure Ioye com of?'
 'Thow knowest wel', quod Conscience, 'and þow konne reson,
That knyght, kyng, conquerour may be o persone.

¹⁸ Martial Rose, 'Crucifixion,' *The Wakefield Mystery Plays* (London, 1961), 332-33.

¹⁹ Sarah Wood, "'Ecce Rex": *Piers Plowman*, B.19.1-212 and its Contexts,' *YLS* 21 (2007), 31-56; Wood suggests that although a *thema* is not identified, the speech is indeed a sermon based on the use of the Christ-knight exemplum, the discussion of the names of Christ, the allegorization of the gifts of the Magi, and the division of the sermon into three parts, all consistent with late medieval popular preaching.

To be called a knyght is fair for men shul knele to hym.
 To be called a kyng is fairer for he may knyghtes make.
 Ac to be conquerour called, þat comeþ of special grace,
 And of hardynesse of herte and of hendenesse
 To make lordes of laddes of lond þat he wynneþ
 And fre men foule þralles þat folwen noat hise lawes.’²⁰

Wood argued that Conscience’s ‘sermon’ emphasizes the kingship of Christ. She claimed, ‘in presenting an allusion to the entry into Jerusalem under the rubric of “knight, king and conqueror”, Langland is evoking a traditional interpretation ... [presenting] Christ as a king entering a city in triumph, it provides the homilists, like Conscience, with an opportunity to reflect on the qualities of Christ as king.’²¹ John A Burrow however, suggested that Wood places too much emphasis on Christ’s kingship in the poem, arguing that it is the conquering Christ of the Resurrection to which the argument of the speech is directed. It ‘culminates with Christ’s act of spiritual conquest, looking forward to that mission which the church thereafter will so inadequately fulfil.’²² The kingly phase represents Christ’s ministry on Earth, his miracles, or ‘defence’ of his people against disease, his entry into Jerusalem, and his Passion (19.46-47), while his conquering phase represents all his power after his crucifixion.²³ This argument can also be made of the Christ-king of the previous in chapter, in which his ministry on Earth is equated with the triumphs of the authors’ current living kings, Edward III and Henry V. In this case however, it is the conqueror who is given greater authority than the king, with ‘special grace’ because he has the power to raise individuals or cast them down. Christ ‘conquered he on cros as conquerour noble’ (19.50) first at the Harrowing when he ‘rauysshed helle’ and left Lucifer shackled below

²⁰ Langland, *Piers Plowman: The B Version*, eds., Kane and Donaldson, B.19.24–33, p. 633. Emphasis my own.

²¹ Wood, “‘Ecce Rex,” 34.

²² Burrow, ‘Conscience on Knights, Kings, and Conquerors,’ 93–4; Burrow is referring to the last phase of the poem in which Conscience provides the account of Christ’s grant of power of the keys to the kingdom of heaven to Piers/Peter. Peter and his successors are meant to exercise the conqueror’s power won for them by Christ, to raise up and cast down, subject to the same condition that governs Christ at the Last Judgment. In accordance with this condition, popes, bishops, and priests are meant to employ their deputed power of binding and loosing, as in their administration of the sacrament of penance. It is this role that Burrows describes as inadequately fulfilled.

²³ Burrow, ‘Conscience on Knights, Kings, and Conquerors,’ 86–7.

(19.54-57) and again ‘was he conquerour called of quyke and of dede’ (19.53). Burrow rightly pointed out that while Conscience declares the knight, king, and conqueror may be one person, the different offices and roles between them are clearly distinguished.²⁴

I suggest however, that it is Conscience’s explanation of the knightly phase of Christ’s life that is the most interesting, and most problematic. Conscience assigns the office of knighthood to the early part of Christ’s life, when he is subject to Mary and Joseph, the period about which Scripture reveals the least. Christ could be neither king nor conqueror until he ‘wexe in þe manere of a man’ learning to perform the ‘sleightes’ needed to be a successful king and conqueror.²⁵ During this time, he suffered, fought, and bled.²⁶ Langland implies that Christ’s humanity developed between his childhood and adulthood, culminating at his crucifixion and resurrection. Conscience observes that while the knight is ‘fair,’ the king is ‘fairer’ and yet still the conqueror comes ‘of special grace,’ each suggesting the development of Christ.²⁷ This could have been deemed problematic because it contradicts the notion that Christ was both a perfect man and God from conception. Langland’s notion indeed challenges the more conventional idea of Christ’s perfection. To give one example, Aquinas explains this in terms of the grace of Christ:

... the grace of Christ cannot be increased on the part of grace. But neither can it be increased on the part of the subject, since Christ as man was a true and full comprehensor from the first instant of His conception.²⁸

Thus, Christ cannot have a ‘special grace’ as a conqueror that he did not already possess. Christ was restricted to human development in the physiological sense, but as the Triune God, he cannot be limited by earthly experience to make him first a knight, then a king, and finally a conqueror. Rather, he is all of these things at once no matter the actions involved in each phase. Indeed, in each of the phases of Christ’s life – his birth and

²⁴ Burrow, ‘Conscience on Knights, Kings, and Conquerors,’ 87.

²⁵ Langland, *Piers Plowman: The B Version*, eds., Kane and Donaldson, B.19.97-8.

²⁶ Langland, *Piers Plowman: The B Version*, B.19.102-3, 107.

²⁷ Langland, *Piers Plowman: The B Version*, B.19.28-30.

²⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part III, ‘Incarnation,’ question VII, article XII.

upbringing (knight), his death (king), and his resurrection (conqueror) – both his humanity and divinity are essential to the understanding of humanity's reconciliation with God. In all of these examples, whether knight, king or conqueror, Christ is employed as the chivalric champion of mankind, fighting for his reconciliation with God.

The Case for Redemption: Devil's Rights Theory

Thus far, the representation of Christ as a knight in late medieval preaching has been utilized as an explanation of the theory of atonement, demonstrated by the Round Table sermons. The battle between Christ and the devil manifests in medieval literature and popular preaching in another striking exposition of doctrinal theory, commonly known as Devil's Rights theory. This theory explains the redemption of mankind in terms of the devil's proprietary rights over mankind and Christ's reclaiming of what is rightfully his – an often complex argument between Christ and the devil over who is entitled to rule mankind. The language of this theory was placed easily within a legal framework. Scholarship has recognized the profound presence of legal culture within medieval literature.²⁹ This use also extends to popular preaching. And thus terms such as 'rights' and 'possession' are used, as well as discussions of justice, scenes of trials (e.g. the trial of Christ), and a verbal debate between Christ and the devil. All of these motifs are devices used to explain man's redemption and will be discussed below.

Devil's Rights theory has a long history in secular and religious texts. While the various examples share common threads which help identify the theory, they can also vary in detail. Well-known sources include Grosseteste's *Château d'amour*, also translated into the Middle English *Castle of Love*, the apocryphal but well-known *Gospel of Nicodemus*, and the Middle English *Devil's Parliament*. Langland's jousting scene in *Piers Plowman*

²⁹ Emily Steiner and Candace Barrington, eds., *The Letter of the Law: Legal Practice and Literary Production in Medieval England* (Ithaca, 2002).

has stirred up some scholarly debate to whether it qualifies as an example of the theory. In addition to these literary examples, the idea of Devil's Rights also appears in numerous late medieval sermons.

While the narrative form of Devil's Rights theory varies, it always addresses the doctrine of redemption and the devil's place within it. For late medieval theology, defining the doctrine of redemption began with Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*. Prior to Anselm's systemization of the doctrine, there was no standardized theory of salvation in medieval western thought. Although numerous theories of soteriology existed, and atonement was a central feature in the Apostles', Athanasian, and Nicene creeds, the details of redemption are not addressed.³⁰ Theories concerning the devil's place in redemption theology were present, but were not concretely established as doctrine. While Devil's Rights theory places the devil as a central figure and mankind's role is subordinate (he is out of the action), Anselm's 'Satisfaction' theory places the devil and his defeat in the subordinate role, and defines redemption in terms of God's restoration of mankind through Christ. Christ, and thus mankind, is the central figure:

God did not, therefore, compel Christ to die; but he suffered death of his own will, not yielding up his life as an act of obedience, but on account of his obedience in maintaining holiness; for he held out so firmly in this obedience that he met death on account of it.³¹

It has been argued that Anselm's theory resolved the question of the redemption; by removing the devil as the central character in mankind's redemption, Anselm could have made Devil's Rights theory irrelevant to late medieval thinkers.³² As the following

³⁰ Thomas A Fudge, 'Concepts of Salvation in the Western Church to the Sixteenth Century,' in *Communio Viatorum* 55 (2003), 217-47 at 233.

³¹ St Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, book I, ch. IX, trans. Sidney Norton Deane (Chicago, The Open Court Publishing Company, 1903, reprinted 1926); online in Fordham University *Medieval Sourcebook*: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/anselm-curdeus.asp>, accessed 12 November 2013.

³² R W Southern went so far as to suggest that the theory 'disappeared for good,' in *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven, 1953), 234-6 at 235; Rosemary Woolf also suggests that Devil's Rights theory was superseded by Anselm's satisfaction theory, shifting the emphasis to a personal relationship with God, in 'The Theme of Christ the Lover-Knight.' C W Marx however argued that Devil's Rights theology continued

examples will demonstrate, however, the frequent appearance of Devil's Rights theory in late medieval literature and sermons suggests otherwise.

As noted, a common trope found in Devil's Rights theory was a scene of verbal debate between Christ and the devil in which possession over mankind is fought. Christ and the devil present their cases to one another and inevitably, Christ is the victor. The model of the 'debate' in which responses are addressed directly to objections was already established in the writings of Augustine (*Enchiridion*), Abelard (*Sic et Non*), Aquinas (*Summa Theologica*), Adelard of Bath (*De Eodem et Diverso*), and other Scholastic writers. It is interesting to note that while the debate scene is not one of physical violence in which Christ defeats the devil, it is a verbal confrontation, in which the violence is redirected into an intellectual fight between the parties. Here, Christ defeats the devil through non-violent debate, while retaining his position of mankind's champion. Christ in this role is not limited to success through violence; rather, the Champion Christ is victorious by whatever means are necessary, whether a physical or verbal confrontation.

An interesting debate scene between Christ and the devil is found in British Library, MS Harley 2247.³³ This fifteenth-century Middle English manuscript contains two sets of sermons, including fifty-two revised sermons of John Mirk's *Festial*. Mirk's collection was widely disseminated in the later Middle Ages, preserved fully in twenty-one manuscripts. Mirk's aim in producing *Festial* was to compose simple sermons for overworked and impoverished parish priests. Susan Powell noted that the goal of the Harley 2247 revisionist was to transform the work from being a limited collection of simplistic preaching models, into a scholarly collection aimed at the growing population of

after Anselm's Satisfaction Theory with authors such as Peter Lombard and Hugh of St Cher, in C W Marx, *The Devil's Rights and the Redemption in the Literature of Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1995), 4.

³³ Powell, 'Critical Edition of the Temporale Sermons,' 91-7; British Library, MS Harley 2247, ff. 10v-13r.

a prosperous and educated laity.³⁴ Through Harley 2247, Devil's Rights theory was presented to the wider lay populace.

The sermon in question, preached on Christmas Day, explains the ways in which Christ brought peace: he made peace between God and man; between the devil and man; between man and woman; between maidenhood, spouse-hood, and widowhood; between the rich man and the poor man; and finally, between the rightful man and the sinful man. The debate scene occurs in the second division: peace between the devil and man. In this scene, the devil makes four allegations against Christ in which 'he wolde callaunge man for his [own].'³⁵ Here, the devil is explicitly claiming ownership over humanity. Christ in turn rebukes each of the devil's claims.

The devil first claims ownership over mankind because mankind ate of the apple. The devil postulates, that because God said, 'what tyme ye ete of this tre of life ye shall die', humanity is rightfully his possession. Christ rebukes this, claiming that because the devil 'lyed falsly' and told Adam that he would not die but 'shall be as goddis', his claim is invalid due to his treachery. In response to the devil's second allegation, that he held rightful possession of mankind for 5,000 years and was never challenged, Christ says, 'man was calanged by holy patriarkes and prophetes and holy men þat were of the Olde Law which knewe wele þat þe devell kept man wrongfully.'³⁶ This alludes to the popular narrative of the Harrowing of Hell in which the holy patriarchs are confined in prison by the devil. The devil next claims that he purchased mankind, bought with an apple. Christ answered saying that the devil deceived man, that his value is worth much more than an apple. The author quotes Isaiah, "'ye be solde frely but ye shall be bought ageyn without golde or syluer," þat is to seye, with þe blessed, sacred blode of God.'³⁷ And finally,

³⁴ Powell, 'Critical Edition of the Temporale Sermons,' 36-7.

³⁵ Powell, 'Critical Edition of the Temporale Sermons,' 138; MS Harley 2247, f. 12r.

³⁶ Powell, 'Critical Edition of the Temporale Sermons,' 139; MS Harley 2247, f. 12r.

³⁷ Powell, 'Critical Edition of the Temporale Sermons,' 139; MS Harley 2247, f. 12r.

‘because of syn, þat is hevy and ponderous, drawing euere downward, and because mankynde had fall into syn þat is hevy and ponderous, he wolde haue kept mankind styll in hell with hym withoute ende.’³⁸ Christ’s final rebuke, that through his Passion, he delivered mankind out of ‘thraldam, bondage, and daungere of þe devell.’³⁹ This pithy dialogue between Christ and the devil, simple in their elucidation, can be fully developed into a complete picture of the late medieval understanding of the doctrine of redemption. The following examples will help to clarify the themes touched upon in Mirk’s dialogue: man as a possession, his purchase, the power of Christ’s Passion, and his descent into Hell. Each of these themes contributes to the representation of Christ as a champion for mankind, whether through negotiation or a physical confrontation with the devil.

The Harrowing of Hell, widespread in all mediums of the Middle Ages, is the most well-known example of Christ’s physical assault and defeat of the devil. It also contributes greatly to the legal framework that supports Devil’s Rights theory. The narrative of Christ’s descent into Hell and his freeing of his imprisoned people is found in the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*, popular in both the Latin and Middle English of England, as well as widespread on the Continent in the vernacular literatures of France, Italy, Germany, Scandinavia, Catalonia, and Occitania.⁴⁰ *The Middle English Harrowing of Hell*, based upon and adapted from a Latin original of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and recorded in at least three thirteenth-century manuscripts, is closely tied to the development of the doctrine of redemption. It is innovative and reflects an ‘intelligent response to developments in devotion and doctrine.’⁴¹ Additions include the speeches of Christ, expanded to include his suffering and Passion, a reflection of the growing development at

³⁸ Powell, ‘Critical Edition of the Temporale Sermons,’ 139; MS Harley 2247, f. 12r.

³⁹ Powell, ‘Critical Edition of the Temporale Sermons,’ 139; MS Harley 2247, f. 12v.

⁴⁰ Zbigniew Izydorczyk, *The Medieval Gospel of Nicodemus: Texts, Intertexts, and Contexts in Western Europe* (Tempe, Arizona, 1997).

⁴¹ C W Marx, ‘The *Gospel of Nicodemus* in Old English and Middle English,’ in *Medieval Gospel of Nicodemus*, ed. Izydorczyk, 207-259 at 220.

the time of affective meditation and devotion. The speeches of Christ, particularly scenes of debate, have been suggested by some to be short dramas, or quasi-dramatic texts, possibly used for recitation.⁴² Likewise, Christ's speech may be seen as a piece of instructional literature common to the period. In this extended version, Christ explains redemption and the fate of those in hell while verbally assaulting Satan:

Satanas, [Christ] seyð, it was min,
 þe appel þat þou ʒaf him,
 þe appel & þe appeltre,
 boþe war maked þurch me;
 hou may þou on ani wise
 of oþer mennes þing mak merchandise?
 Seþþen þou bouʒtest him wiþ mine,
 Wiþ resound schuld ichaue him.⁴³

While Satan does not refute Christ's claim that he had no legal right to offer Christ's property to man because the apple tree was not his own property, he instead asks Christ to leave those in heaven with him. Christ refuses this request, and counters:

Wenestow þat y dyed for nouȝt?
 Wiþ mi dede was mankin bouȝt;
 þai þat haue serued me,
 In blis schal þai euer be;
 Þai þat noþing serued me,
 þai schal in helle be wiþ þe.⁴⁴

The Middle English Harrowing of Hell, a poetical adaptation of the apocryphal gospel, reads very much like scenes from the fifteenth-century mystery plays. Likewise, the Middle English *Gospel of Nicodemus*, preserved in at least four fifteenth-century manuscripts, also closely resembles several of the York plays in stanzaic form.⁴⁵ They are dramatic representations addressing the question of the devil's place in the doctrine of redemption by demonstrating Christ's outwitting and eventual defeat of the devil, while

⁴² Marx, 'Gospel of Nicodemus,' 220.

⁴³ *The Middle English Harrowing of Hell*, ed. William Henry Hulme, in *The Middle English Harrowing of Hell and the Gospel of Nicodemus*, EETS 100 (London, 1908), 2-23 at 8; Hulme's edition provides side-by-side texts from three manuscripts, this quote taken from: Oxford, Bodleian MS Digby 86, ll.81-8.

⁴⁴ *Middle English Harrowing of Hell*, ed. Hulme, 11; taken from Auchinleck MS, NLS Adv. MS 19.2.1, ll. 115-20.

⁴⁵ Hulme, 'Introduction,' *Middle English Harrowing of Hell*, xviii.

emphasizing the legality of Christ's claim over mankind and the injustice on the part of the devil.

The legal framework that Devil's Rights theory sits within is even more apparent in Robert Grosseteste's (d.1253) allegorical *Château d'amour*, translated into Middle English as early as the mid-fourteenth century.⁴⁶ The original text, authored by Grosseteste in French, and intended to be sung or recited, was likely performed before an audience of knightly retainers and officials. It was used to provide a lay audience without theological training with an introduction to aspects of Christian theology.⁴⁷ The later Middle English translation is one example of how theological concepts could be transmitted to a popular audience. R W Southern noted that in addition to addressing theological concepts, this anecdote is 'shrewdly strewn with contemporary legal terminology and shows a knowledge of the procedures of the royal courts.'⁴⁸ The doctrine of redemption is the general theme of the poem as a whole and is explained by means of a legal dispute between Christ and the devil over the devil's right to hold mankind in prison in just over 100 of the poem's 1,862 lines. The devil, unknowing of Christ's divinity challenges Christ, 'þat hose passedede Godes heste/ He scholde [euere] be myn', that is, the devil's, by 'Riht.'⁴⁹ Christ argues that it was the devil who first broke God's contract by committing 'treson to monkuynde' with promises the devil could not keep.⁵⁰ The devil then counters this claiming he was 'bitrayzed' and says only by ransom can mankind be delivered and

⁴⁶ R F Weymouth, 'III.—Bishop Grosseteste's "Castle of Love,"' *Transactions of the Philological Society* 8 (1862), 48–66, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-968X.1862.tb00411.x/citedby>, accessed 14 November 2013; Weymouth argues that the Middle English texts, found in numerous manuscripts, may have been copied as early as the fourteenth century and certainly into the fifteenth century.

⁴⁷ R W Southern, *Robert Grosseteste: the Growth of an English Mind in Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 1986), 225.

⁴⁸ Southern, *Robert Grosseteste*, 226.

⁴⁹ Robert Grosseteste, *Castle of Love*, 'The Middle English Translations of Robert Grosseteste's *Château d'amour*, ed. Kari Sajavaara, in *Mémoires de la Société Néophilologique de Helsinki publiés sous direction de Tauno F. Mustanoja*, XXXII (1967), 295; ll.1059-60.

⁵⁰ Grosseteste, *Castle of Love*, 296, l.1068.

demands Christ's death. Christ agrees to surrender his 'bodi for [man's] raunsoun.'⁵¹ This scene is the dramatic climax of the text and explains the doctrine of redemption in terms Grosseteste's audience would have related to. The devil's guilt of treason denies him any right of possession, but rather than defend his right, he demands Christ's death to which Christ agrees.

Marx pointed out that a crucial element of Grosseteste's *Château d'armour* is derived from Anselmian writing on the relationship between humanity, God and the devil.⁵² Marx suggested that to fully understand Grosseteste's redemption theory, his Latin sermon (*sermo 44* or *dictum 10*) on the redemption must also be considered.⁵³ In it, Christ is described as a 'buyer' (*emptor*) who purchased mankind from God and the devil. He illustrates this by showing that Christ must first pay a price to the king (God) for mankind's freedom. The torturer (the devil) however refused to release his prisoner unless he too received a payment. Christ offered the devil a fair price, but when the devil 'abused the spoil' and desired to keep both payment and prisoner, he lost both 'justly.'⁵⁴ The payment must be paid to God, not the devil, although the devil again takes the liberty to demand unjust payment. This narrative of the redemption in regards to the two payments is unique to Grosseteste but is still a variant on Devil's Rights theory. While it differs from other examples in which the ransom is paid directly to the devil, such as Gregory of Nyssa's *Oratio Catechetica Magna*, Grosseteste is consistent with the theory as described by early Christian authors, such as Augustine. He also however shares Anselm's notion of 'satisfaction,' in which the payment to God echoes Christ's death as the satisfaction of sin

⁵¹ Grosseteste, *Castle of Love*, 298, l.1115.

⁵² Marx, *Devil's Rights and the Redemption*, 66-7.

⁵³ Robert Grosseteste, *Sermo 44/Dictum 10*, edited and translated from London, British Library, MS Royal 7.D.XV, ff.8r-v by C W Marx, *The Devil's Rights and the Redemption in the Literature of Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1995), 156-9.

⁵⁴ Grosseteste, *Sermo 44/Dictum 10*, 157.

made to God.⁵⁵ Both Grosseteste and Anselm situate the devil in a subordinate role to God as his servant. And while Grosseteste's sermon lacks dialogue, it parallels the debate scene found in his *Château d'amour*.

This scene of debate is further developed in the early-fifteenth century *Devil's Parliament*. The text is a version of a 'life of Christ' treatise and shares the stanzaic form of religious verse, and of the Towneley and York plays.⁵⁶ William Marx argued that because the penultimate stanza of the *Devil's Parliament* includes instruction that it be read on Quadragesima Sunday, that is, the first Sunday after Ash Wednesday, that the poem should be included in the 'tradition of verse sermons, and that it is intended for public reading, as part of a church service, or in a context that is not specifically liturgical, but possibly outdoors, at a preaching cross or in some other public place.'⁵⁷ Like popular sermons, it was intended to be delivered to a wide audience which included lay folk. The dramatic climax of the text is Christ's entry into hell in which he debates with the devil in front of a parliament of devils further confusing the issue of Christ's true nature. In this example, the parliament of devils claim 'Be ryzt Ihesus ys owre owyn' not only claiming mankind, but Jesus himself, because he is descended from Adam.⁵⁸ Christ's deception about his divine nature has yet to be revealed and only contributes to their confusion. The remainder of the narrative follows closely the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and is yet another example of the development and popularity of the Devil's Rights theory in late medieval theological writing and literature.

⁵⁵ Marx, *Devil's Rights and the Redemption*, 67.

⁵⁶ *The Devil's Parliament and the Harrowing of Hell and Destruction of Jerusalem*, edited from London, British Library, MS. Add. 37492 and Lambeth Palace Library, MS 853, ed. C W Marx, Middle English Texts 25 (Heidelberg, 1993), version A, l. 88; cf. version B l. 40, p. 39.

⁵⁷ William Marx, 'The Devil as Narrator of the Life of Christ and the *Sermo Literarius*,' in *Preaching the Word in Manuscript and Print in Late Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Susan Powell*, eds. Martha W Driver and Veronica O'Mara (Turnhout, 2013), 63-81.

⁵⁸ *Devil's Parliament*, ed. Marx, 40.

Langland's *Piers Plowman* can also be interpreted as containing a form of Devil's Right theory. The aforementioned jousting scene may not include a lengthy debate between Christ and the devil, yet does include some dialogue in which Christ offers himself in the joust for man's soul. The joust itself echoes the theory's consistent legal terminology in that the joust is a judgement of arms, implying a legal duel, employed to determine rightful possession.⁵⁹ Although not a common practice, trials by battle, or legal duels, did occur as a means to settle disputes. In these instances, particularly accusations of treason which were settled in the 'court of Chivalry,' the involved parties or their selected champions, resolved issues through violent confrontation.⁶⁰ Langland's depiction of Christ in the role of mankind's champion engaged in a duel with Satan brings together both the legal scenes of the aforementioned examples, not necessarily containing a violent confrontation, but rather a verbal one, and Christ's role of the knight jousting for mankind's soul, in this instance, engaged in a violent confrontation. Christ views the devil's deception of mankind as treason and in response to the devil's refusal to abandon his claim, agrees to battle. Richard Firth Green placed this scene within the context of covenantal theology, in which Langland reveals a contract between God and man, broken and then restored. James Simpson suggested that because Christ proves the devil does not have legal possession over mankind Langland is not himself promoting Devil's Rights theory, but is using the narrative to refute the theory, as a way of asserting the legal aspect of the redemption.⁶¹ Green however responded that Simpson's assumption 'fails to appreciate that such inconsistencies typify this theology even in the hands of scholars far

⁵⁹ Richard Firth Green points out that the judgement is broadly represented as a civil battle fought in accordance with writ of right of procedure, the only type of legal duel at the time that allowed champions, in *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Pennsylvania, 1999), 361.

⁶⁰ There were three forms in which a trial by battle could occur: first, the writs of right, or civil actions over land; second, criminal appeals, which were private prosecutions; and thirdly, in the Constable and Marshal's court, or chivalric battles, not far removed from the sport of jousting. For details of each, see: Michael J Russell, 'Trial by Battle and the Writ of Right,' *Journal of Legal History* 1 (1980), 111-34, 'Trial by Battle and the Appeals of Felony,' *Journal of Legal History* 1 (1980), 135-69, 'Trial by Battle in the Court of Chivalry,' *Journal of Legal History* 29 (2008), 335-57.

⁶¹ James Simpson, *Piers Plowman: An Introduction to the B-text* (London, 1990), 215.

more subtle than Langland.’⁶² While the legal implications in these examples are inconsistent, they all share a common representation of Christ. In each case, Christ actively pursues confrontation with the devil and intellectually or physically, if not violently, defeats him. He is a champion for mankind. It is important to emphasize that Langland alone describes Christ’s defeat of the devil in terms of an actual physical fight. The aforementioned authors utilizing Devil’s Rights theory, as well as the sermon authors discussed below merely allude to physical and violent action, leaving it to the reader or listener to deduce a violent image. The examples of verbal confrontation do not diminish Christ’s role as a champion; within this legal framework, Christ was both negotiator and champion. In the case of the sermon authors, it may indeed be that the surviving texts do not provide the complete message as it would have been delivered by preachers. The clear allusions to a ‘jousting’ and ‘fighting’ figure in these texts suggest that preachers may have extrapolated upon the implicit chivalric and violent associations of Christ as champion.

Evidence thus far has demonstrated the persistence of Devil’s Rights theory in late medieval literature even after the introduction of Anselm’s Satisfaction theory. The influence of the writings of the Church Fathers, contemporary theologians, the Romance genre, and popular literature such as *Piers Plowman* on sermon writers cannot be overstated, and thus it is not surprising to find various examples of Devil’s Rights theory in the homiletic literature of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The instances of Christ overcoming the devil within a legal or debating framework are as diverse in sermons as they are in poetry and plays.

Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C.751, is an early-fifteenth-century vernacular manuscript of ten, rather lengthy, sermons, the longest spanning twenty-five folios, as well

⁶² Green, *Crisis of Truth*, 361.

as five tracts from *Pore Caitif*.⁶³ The third sermon of the collection, preached for the third Sunday in Lent, takes its theme from the occasion's gospel reading, Luke 11.14: 'And he was casting out a devil, and the same was dumb.' The author closely follows the patterns found in Grosseteste's representation of Devil's Rights Theory. The language used to present the redemption is legal in nature. The dispute between Christ and the devil is over the 'wrongful possession' of mankind, whom the devil 'deceyvid of his heritage and helde...in prison til þe coming of Crist.'⁶⁴ The devil is treated as one who has committed treason, 'as he takiþ up wrongfully þe kingis state in his rewme' and because of this presumption the devil is justly condemned to perpetual prison or death.⁶⁵

The scene in MS Laud misc. 706 shares key similarities, but also modifies the relationship between God, the devil, and man that is found in Grosseteste and Anselm. Of the four sermons for special occasions in MS Laud 706, one is the funeral sermon for Walter Froucestur, abbot of Gloucester, and another, a memorial sermon for Thomas Beauchamp, earl of Warwick, both discussed in chapter 2.⁶⁶ It is in the first of three Middle English sermons found in MS Laud 706 in which the author uses Devil's Rights theory to discuss the doctrine of redemption.⁶⁷

This sermon, also preached for the third Sunday in Lent, takes its theme from the occasion's epistle, Ephesians 5.6: 'For because of these things cometh the anger of God upon the children of unbelief.' Unlike Grosseteste, the author of the Laud sermon casts God and the devil as opposing rulers, referring to both God and Christ as 'oure lege lord' and the devil as 'kyng.' The scenario is quite different, with 'synne' as the jailer holding mankind and is worth quoting in full:

⁶³ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C.751, ff.81r-89r; discussed in O'Mara and Paul, *RMEPS*, iii, 2196-2214.

⁶⁴ MS Rawlinson C.751, f. 81r.

⁶⁵ MS Rawlinson C.751, f. 81v.

⁶⁶ MS Laud misc. 706 is introduced in chapter 2, at page 87.

⁶⁷ Horner, 'Edition of Five Medieval Sermons,' 72-110; MS Laud misc. 706, ff.98r-109r.

[The devel] put [man] in a dep prison that was in the depe pyt of helle and he made the gayler of the prison, synne. This man was so powr in all the old testament and had so litul habundance of godys, that ys to say largenesse of vertus, that he myzth neuer his rawnsom and synne the gayler schot so fast the prison dore, þat man on nowise myzth come out nor he myzth not a cord with no maner of pleasance to stele a way out of that prison. That oure lege lord Crist Ihesus, consideronge and conseynnyng our nedfule pouerte and the grete crewelnesse of that cursed kyng the deuel, that had takyn us with false sleytis of armys, thorow oure owne negligence. Ihesus sent to that false gailer and comandyd hym that he schuld let man go out of that prison ... Bot this false gailer was obstinate and thorow þe counsel of his kyng the deuel wold not delyvere Cristis lege men out of that cursud prison of helle lesst than he had for hym a gret rawnsom. Oure lege lord seid that he wold com and delyvere us hym self and put his owne body in þis worde in plegh for oure rawsom and overcome thee deuel, his enemy, and [open] the gaile that false synne.⁶⁸

There are a number of things to highlight from this passage. First, as mentioned, the jailer in this case is sin, holding mankind on behalf of the devil, a king in his own right, rather than the devil himself being in the role of jailer. This is quite contrary to Grosseteste, who removes any significant power from the devil in his interpretation of the theory. This calls into question whether the ransom will be delivered to God (as Augustine argued) or directly to the devil (as with Gregory of Nyssa), but which is not revealed in this particular anecdote. Humanity is still depicted as a servant to both kings, unable to provide his own ransom because he does not possess enough virtue.

Secondly, Christ's ransom is described as a pledge (plegh). Both C W Marx and Anna Baldwin have commented on the image of Christ's ransom as a pledge in *Piers Plowman*. Following Christ's joust with the devil, the narrative continues with the Annunciation and the life of Christ, including his trial and crucifixion. At this point, the protagonist meets Faith (Abraham) and the discussion of Redemption is continued. Abraham states that the devil has claimed (*attached*) humanity and that no one may be a pledge or surety (*borw*) for humanity; that no bail (*maynprise*) may free mankind from the devil's prison until Christ comes to free them, laying down as security (*wagen*) a sufficient

⁶⁸ Horner, 'Edition of Five Medieval Sermons,' 103-5; MS Laud misc. 706, ff.107v-108r.

pledge (*wed*), valued at more than humanity's worth, that is Christ's life for mankind's.⁶⁹

Only Christ can offer the sufficient pledge to deliver mankind from the devil's prison.

Anna Baldwin, in discussing the legal implications, explained:

Abraham needs a surety (*borw*) prepared to purchase the original writ of mainprise. This only released a man from prison until his trial, and theoretically committed the bailor to stand 'body for body' (*corpus pro corpore*) in place of the bailee if he absconded before then. Christ will offer as security ... His own body and life, and the devils may retain this life in return for releasing their far less valuable prisoners ... Abraham's bail imagery emphasises the legal forces which prevent mankind from freeing themselves, and also prevent Christ from simply rescuing them from prison. The bail imagery also implies that man is now pledged to stand trial at the Last Judgement...⁷⁰

While Langland and MS Laud 706 share the imagery of Christ's ransom as a pledge, the roles of God and the devil are again quite different. Baldwin suggested that this formulation implies that the devil will hold Christ as security for mankind. Marx however argued that if interpreted in this manner, it ignores the fact that God, and not the devil, condemned mankind at the Fall, and that the devil then plays not the role of the jailer, but the judge of humanity, or the king.⁷¹ This is also what is found in MS Laud 706. Sin acts as the jailer on behalf of his king, the devil. The sermon provokes, yet does not answer the question: does God or the devil hold Christ as security for humanity? It may be that the sermon is incomplete or that the answer to this question was the theme for a subsequent sermon.

Finally, while the authority of the devil in relation to God appears ambiguous through the author's elevating the devil to a king, the author of MS Laud 706 ultimately reveals the power of Christ, who through his death overcomes the devil. The devil in this scene is a trickster, deceiving mankind with 'false sleytis (tricks) of armys.'⁷² By placing God and the devil as opposing rulers, the devil in this case not subordinate to God, the

⁶⁹ Marx, *Devil's Rights and the Redemption*, 101; Langland, *Piers Plowman*, B.16.257-71; C.18.274-88.

⁷⁰ Anna Baldwin, *The Theme of Government in Piers Plowman* (Cambridge, 1981), 65; quoted in Marx, *Devil's Rights and Redemption*, 101-2.

⁷¹ Baldwin, *The Theme of Government in Piers Plowman*, 65; Marx, *Devil's Rights and Redemption*, 102.

⁷² Horner, 'Edition of Five Medieval Sermons,' 103; MS Laud misc. 706, f.107v.

author emphasizes the power of Christ to ‘overcome thee devel his enemy and [open] the gaile.’⁷³ And while it is not explicitly mentioned in this anecdote, a medieval audience would have been familiar enough with the *Gospel of Nicodemus* to understand both the allusion to violence in the talk of ‘arms’ and overcoming an enemy, as well as the allusion being made to Christ’s breaking down the gates of hell and throwing the devil into the pit.

Christ’s sacrificial ransom is further developed in Worcester Cathedral Library, MS F.10. This volume is a miscellaneous sermon collection, containing as many as eighteen booklets, written in at least a dozen different hands, all of the fifteenth century.⁷⁴ It includes 167 sermons, with many arbitrarily repeated throughout the manuscript, and with over twenty found in other sermon collections. The sermons are for Sundays, feast days, and special occasions and occur in the volume in a random order. Although most are anonymous, the manuscript preserves a number of names of monastic preachers: Hugh Legat, a monk of St Albans, Folsham, apparently a monk of Norwich, Master John Fordham, a monk at Worcester; as well as mentioning Richard Alkerton and a funeral sermon commemorating a Lady Blackworth.⁷⁵ It is an interesting collection, with sermons preached to a monastic audience, as well as university and mixed audiences. It also includes four sermons recorded in Middle English, including one by Hugh Legat.⁷⁶ D M Grisdale argued that the likely audience of the English sermons were a mixed audience of clergy and laity, likely at the monastic cathedral church at Worcester.⁷⁷ These sermons belong to the aforementioned group of Benedictine sermons, preached with overt political and religious commentary, orthodox, yet controversial, and fervently anti-Lollard.

⁷³ Horner, ‘Edition of Five Medieval Sermons,’ 103; MS Laud misc. 706, f. 108r.

⁷⁴ A detailed description of the manuscript can be found in Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 151-8.

⁷⁵ Names identified by Wenzel in *Latin Sermon Collections*, 154; Master John Fordham is not to be confused with Bishop John Fordham, but rather held a DTh from Oxford and served as president of the general chapter from 1420–1426.

⁷⁶ Grisdale, *Three Middle English Sermons*.

⁷⁷ Grisdale, ‘Introduction,’ *Three Middle English Sermons*, xxiv.

The final of the completed three Middle English sermons, the fourth being incomplete and nearly illegible, was preached on Passion Sunday evidently between 1389 and 1404, and takes its theme from Hebrews 9.14, ‘Christ offered himself unto God, etc.’⁷⁸ It is a rather elaborate and lengthy sermon and follows the standardised preaching model typical of the period. The sermon includes numerous themes and motifs common to late medieval preaching, such as the seven deadly sins; references a variety of Classical and contemporary sources, including Pliny, Aristotle, Virgil, Apuleius, Augustine, Jerome, and Ambrose; and like the examples mentioned above, it places Christ within an interesting legal context, referring to Devil’s Rights theory throughout the text.

The first division of the sermon sets out a detailed argument for why Christ is himself a king. Before setting out his arguments in this division, the preacher begins his introduction revealing four enemy kings which mankind must overcome, needing to be ‘wel armet and strongliche, 3e, & to ha good helpe azens we go to þis batayle.’⁷⁹ Humanity must be armed against pride with meekness and patience, gluttony and sloth with fasting of meat and drink, envy with peace, and covetous, ‘worst of hem al’, with smart spending, good discretion, and generosity towards neighbours.⁸⁰ In contrast to these enemies, Christ was a king of mercy and goodness.

Devil’s Rights theory is introduced first in the preacher’s explanation of man’s fall and redemption. Humanity was ‘be-seget al abowte o þe deuel & of his knyhtes ... broke þe commaundement o God’ for lust, lechery, wrath, envy, ‘þe which browthten him in-to þe dyrke prison of euerlastynge dampnaciun.’⁸¹ The devil, with his legion of ‘knyhtes,’ can only be defeated when God sends his own knight, who is Christ, to defeat them. Only ‘God Him-selue’ can deliver mankind from this prison and so ‘Crist, þat mithtieste king of

⁷⁸ Grisdale, *Three Middle English Sermons*, 50-80; Worcester Cathedral Library, MS F.10, ff. 47v-52v, (ff. 48v-53v in Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*), henceforth Worcester MS F.10.

⁷⁹ Grisdale, *Three Middle English Sermons*, 54; Worcester MS F.10, f. 48r.

⁸⁰ Grisdale, *Three Middle English Sermons*, 54; Worcester MS F.10, f. 48r.

⁸¹ Grisdale, *Three Middle English Sermons*, 54; Worcester MS F.10, f. 48r.

al þe world...payed raunson for þe to þe fader in heuene.⁸² The preacher here follows the model of Augustine, in which the ransom is paid directly to God. While the bonds that hold mankind are indeed the devil's, the preacher, like Anselm, diminishes the devil's power. This is further explained in the first sub-division of the sermon, in which the preacher proves Christ's kingship through his meeting of three conditions. The first condition, attributed by the preacher to Aristotle's *Secretum Secretorum*, states that a good man and king must be known for his wit and wisdom in diverse countries and that his enemies must take heed of him and dread him.⁸³ In explaining the role of the devil, the preacher says:

... 3if a seruaunt or a grom of a lord had take a prison, þe raunsum þat schuld be payd for him schuld nat be payd to þe seruaunt, but to þe lord or to þe maister op þe seruaunt. Ryth o þe same wise offr' we vp þis schrifte, þis raunsum, but nat to deucl þat hath þis prison, but to vr principal maister & lord, þat is Crist Him-selue.⁸⁴

In this scenario, the devil is relegated to the role of a servant, unworthy of collecting the fee. The preacher is neither dismissing Devil's Rights theory as suggested by Anselmian writings, but is also not assigning the devil any authority or the argument of a just cause. Although the remaining elements of the sermon do not further the case of Devil's Rights theory, they provide interesting representations of Christ. The second condition in which Christ is established as a king is 'þat he be clenliche cloped and paliche arayd.'⁸⁵ Christ, while the model for good behaviour and clean living, is 'arayd' against the Lollard. Hypocrites and false prophets, Lollards are falsely clothed in meekness and holy living, while actually 'mor cruwel þan any wlues, & mor cursedde þan any hondes.'⁸⁶ The congregation is encouraged to be clothed and militarily prepared against them in the

⁸² Grisdale, *Three Middle English Sermons*, 56; Worcester MS F.10, f. 48v.

⁸³ Grisdale, *Three Middle English Sermons*, 57; Worcester MS F.10, f. 48v.

⁸⁴ Grisdale, *Three Middle English Sermons*, 59; Worcester MS F.10, f. 49r.

⁸⁵ Grisdale, *Three Middle English Sermons*, 62; Worcester MS F.10, f. 49v. 'Paliche,' meaning pale in colour, in this case, white and thus holy.

⁸⁶ Grisdale, *Three Middle English Sermons*, 66; Worcester MS F.10, f. 50r. 'Wlues' translates as wolves, 'hondes' as hounds.

armour of Christendom.⁸⁷ Likewise in the third condition demonstrating Christ's kingly status, Christ is indeed himself arrayed against the devil. In this scene, the sermon author does not use the metaphor of clothing to simply demonstrate his point that the outward appearance of Lollards is deceitful, but uses the term 'array' as an additional allusion to the military array of both the clergy and the laity in times of war. He is thus linking the need for recognition of false Christians with spiritual, and possibly literal, battle.

This final requirement, in which Christ 'schuld raþer suffr deth of him-silf þan se his rem or his peple destroyed with enmyes' employs Christ as Codrus, king of Athens. The sermon author, citing John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*, book 4, chapter 3, tells the story of Codrus, who when he hears that his people can only be saved from the Dorians if the king of the Athenians is harmed, 'put a-way al his riche aray & cloþed him in a gromes garnement & e þe same aray, for a wold be det, wente into þe tentes of his enmyes, ter anon-rith was al to-hakked & to-hewen amongst hem.'⁸⁸ Like Christ, this king sacrificed himself while disguised for the salvation of his people.

The final two divisions of the sermon, following the establishment of Christ as a king, depict Christ first as a priest and judge, and finally as a 'man o lawe.' The priest, or judge, is to act as a mediator between the people and God. The preacher speaks against the corrupt, or 'croked' judge that accepts gifts and riches. The sermon author is both providing a model for righteous behaviour while condemning the corrupt behaviour of both clerical and secular officials. For, 'zif a souereyne or a iugge put sensualite & carnal affection before resun, trist wil þerto, a schal err' as fowl e kynde & e riwthwus demyng.'⁸⁹ As a man of law, or 'ambassiatur,' Christ, in this final example, acts as a lowly messenger. When mankind needed to send a message from the devil's prison to God

⁸⁷ The military arrays of the clergy and laity are discussed further in chapter 6.

⁸⁸ Grisdale, *Three Middle English Sermons*, 67; Worcester MS F.10, f. 50v.

⁸⁹ Grisdale, *Three Middle English Sermons*, 73; Worcester MS F.10, f. 51v: 'a sovereign or judge who puts sensuality and carnal affections before reason, shall foully error in righteous judgement.'

in heaven, Christ offered up ‘this letter and charter,’ his own body, to the Father.⁹⁰ This sermon fits well within an emerging literary form of the fourteenth century, the fictive legal document.⁹¹ In the *Long* and *Short Charters*, apocryphal retellings of the Life of Christ through the tropes of affective piety, Christ’s crucified body is bloodily inscribed with a charter of heavenly bliss. The motif is then expanded to include major events including the Harrowing of Hell, described by Emily Steiner as ‘the renegotiation of the devil’s covenant.’⁹² Christ’s charter grants heaven in exchange for a rent of absolute penance. In the case of the Worcester sermon, Christ acts as a messenger, delivering this charter to God. As both a judge and messenger, Christ takes on various roles within a legal system, from the top of the hierarchy – priest, judge, and mediator – to the bottom – lawman and messenger; he is both a Lord and a servant. His role is not one defined by violence, but by resolution, and thus the Champion Christ permeates the legal allegory in both violent and non-violent representations. This is demonstrated in scenes of debate between Christ and the devil in which mankind’s redemption is discussed in terms of property rights, the devil’s actions as an act of treason against God, and mankind’s imprisonment and Christ’s ransom payment for it. The legal allegory facilitated the explication of redemption in which the Champion Christ triumphs through his own defeat, the crucifixion.

Thus far, the Champion Christ image has been implemented by popular preachers to aid in the instruction of difficult doctrinal concepts, theories of atonement and redemption, delivered to a mixed audience of clergy and laymen. The image of the champion does not exclude others, such as Christ as advocate, messenger, judge and so on, but it might be said to encapsulate the protective element of Christ’s redemption of

⁹⁰ Grisdale, *Three Middle English Sermons*, 77; Worcester MS F.10, f. 52r.

⁹¹ Emily Steiner, ‘Inventing Legality: Documentary Culture and Lollard Preaching,’ in *The Letter of the Law*, 185-201.

⁹² Steiner, ‘Inventing Legality,’ 185.

mankind. They are indeed mutually complementary of each other, various representations of the Christ champion motif. In a final example, however, we find an unambiguously pugilistic Christ, who defeats the devil through his death.

This illustration, although not strictly an example of Devil's Rights theory, also places Christ's defeat of the devil loosely within a legal context. The sermon is found in Cambridge University Library, MS Ii.3.8, a composite codex, written in a variety of hands from the early to late fifteenth century.⁹³ The manuscript, in addition to complete and incomplete sermons, contains *exempla*, sermon outlines, a complete example of the *ars praedicandi*, and three treatises on the Decalogue. It very much represents a preacher's notebook and manual, rather than a simple sermon collection. The manuscript also contains a number of pieces in English and has the tone of popular material.

Preached on Good Friday, the nineteenth of the fifty-eight sermons in the collection, takes its theme from Hebrews 9.12: '...but by his own blood, entered once into the holies, having obtained eternal redemption.' Good Friday sermons fall within Holly Johnson's category of 'Passion preaching' in which the depiction of the suffering and death of Christ reached the peak of dramatic public expression.⁹⁴ She suggested that each Good Friday sermon shares the same goal – 'to draw the audience into the liturgical present, making Christ's suffering and death a felt reality and simultaneously fashioning a devotional response to this reality,' prompting the audience to feel sorrow, compassion, contrition, and gratitude.⁹⁵ They often focused on Christ's blood as an agent of salvation. In accordance with this type of preaching, the preacher of MS CUL Ii.3.8 opens with a

⁹³ Cambridge, University Library, MS Ii.3.8, ff. 77v-79r, henceforth MS CUL Ii.3.8; discussed in Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 175-81.

⁹⁴ Holly Johnson, 'Fashioning Devotion: The Art of Good Friday Preaching in Chaucerian England,' *Speculum Sermonis: Interdisciplinary Reflections on the Medieval Sermon*, eds. Georgiana Donavin, Cary J Nederman, and Richard Utz, (Brepols, 2004), 315-34. 'Passion preaching' is introduced above in chapter 3, at page 101.

⁹⁵ Johnson, 'Fashioning Devotion,' 315.

rather negative reminding, and perhaps admonishing, of mankind's responsibility in its own damnation. He begins:

Therefore, by the just judgement of God, both he [Adam] and his progeny were precluded from the path which leads to the happiness of the City of Paradise. And moreover, [mankind] was sentenced to the prison of the devil ... who oppresses the whole of humankind with such violence. No-one can be found in all of humanity who is able to hold back the violence of the devil, or to settle and placate the offence of treason against the Lord.⁹⁶

As in the examples discussed above, mankind is blocked from Paradise and imprisoned by the devil. Violence is indeed mentioned, although specific action is not expanded upon. Before bringing Christ into the narrative, the preacher emphasizes that none among man is capable of overcoming the devil. Rather, Christ takes on the form of man, both a fighter and priest to save him.

Yet surely, the kindness and mercy of the saviour was greater, who from his excessive care loved us, human kind. On this day, to liberate us miserable ones, he assumed the form of a fighter; he assumed the form of a priest. I say, [he assumed] the form of a fighter so that through the staff of the cross he may fight for us against the power of the devil. That is, he assumed the form of a priest and he sacrificed for us through the offering of the most costly sacrifice. The Lord in majesty assumed the form of a fighter; [so that] we may be able to understand that today, he fights as one courageous, beloved, and glorious.⁹⁷

Like the *Christus victor* images from earlier centuries, the preacher describes Christ on the Cross not simply as a victim, sacrificed for humanity, but as a fighter, taking on the devil and defeating him through death. Likewise, this fighter-Christ also acts as a metaphor for a priest engaged in a spiritual battle against the devil (this is further discussed in the following chapter in which the priest takes on the role of the martial Christ). The priest's cross-shaped staff (*baculum crucis*, *patibulum crucis*) is indicative of his authority. For

⁹⁶ MS CUL, li.3.8, f. 77v: 'Ideo, iusto Dei iudicio tam sibi quam sue progenie praecludebatur via ve[n]iendi ad felicitatem civitatis paradisi. Et tum...iudicabatur carceri diaboli qui to[tu]m genus humanum tam violentis opp[re]ssit....nec inve[n]ietur aliquis in toto humano gen[er]e qui posset violenciam diaboli rep[ri]m[er]e vel offensam domine maiestatis sedare et plac[er]e.' Translation my own.

⁹⁷ MS CUL, li.3.8, f. 77v: 'Sed certe maior fuit saluatoris, enim misericordia et benignitas, qui ex nimia care quam dilex[it] nos humanum genus. Hodierna die, pro nobis miseris liberandi, assumpsit formam pugilis; formam sac[er]d[ot]is assumpsit. Inquam, formam pugil' ut per baculum crucis pugnaret pro nobis contra potestatem diaboli. Videt assumpsit formam sacerdotis et per oblacioni sacrificii pretiosissimi pro nobis sacrificaret. Domine maiestati assumpsit formam pugilis. Possimus intelligere quod hodie pugnat tamquam animosus, amorusus, gloriosus.' Translation my own.

Christ, the Cross represents a number of things: his sacrifice and mankind's redemption, his humanity and his divinity. For the fighter, the cross-shaped staff represents his sword. A knight was defined by the presence of armour, particularly his sword; this is a symbol of his knightly position. For the priest, the cross-shaped staff likely represents his clerical staff or a processional cross, both representative of his clerical office.⁹⁸ Thus, Christ the fighter and priest assert their authority over sin and the devil.

Returning to the legal framework, it is in the author's explication of Christ as a fighter that he is also described as the mediator between man and God, man and the angels, and among mankind itself:

First, as a strong boxer, not fighting for us by shield or sword, by lance or arrow; but through virginal blood, delicate and generous. And the very same is that blood of Jesus; it is the unifying [thing] in a divided world, a forgiving thing in judgement, [he is] one who forgives and destroys the proud. Therefore I say that the blood of Christ is [what] unites the divided because, in the first instance, there was grave litigation and separation, between man and the Creator, between man and the angels, and between man and man. But this good author of peace and love is willing to take the manner of this discord; for this he ascends the Patibulum of the Cross, and through the pouring out of this blood, reconciled man and his Creator, joined man and the angel, and brought harmony between men.⁹⁹

While previous examples have represented Christ employing his armour to combat a variety of enemies, here, the arms of Christ are not used in this traditional sense. While they are tools of Christ's power in other contexts, for the purposes of a Good Friday sermon, the authority is found in Christ's blood. His blood alone unites what has been

⁹⁸ In Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*, the parson carries a walking staff that he takes with him as he walks around his parish. Laura Hodges associates this with as an accessory of the pilgrim tradition, as well as with the Parson's pastoral practices that portray him as a good shepherd. See: Laura F Hodges, *Chaucer and Clothing: Clerical and Academic Costume in the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge, 2005), 261-2.

⁹⁹ MS CUL, li.3.8, f. 77v: 'Primo, ut pugilis a[n]imosum quia non pug[na]tis pro nobis per clipeum aut gladium, per lanceam aut sagittam. Sed per sanguinem virgineum, delicatum et gen[er]osum. Et eodem est quod ille sanguis Ih[esu]; est disiunctorum unitivus in mundorum, purgativus in iuriarum, remissivus superborum destruius. Ideo dico, quod sanguis Christi est disiunctorum unitivus quia, in primo, fuit g[ra]ve litigium et divorsum, inter hominem et c[re]atorem, inter hominem et angelium, et inter hominem et hominem. Sed bonus illa auctor pacis et amator, volens illam discordiam de modis tollere; hoc assendit, crucis patibulum, ut per sanguinis effunditio hominem c[re]atori suo reconciliaret, et hominem angelo sociaret, et hominem homini concordaret.' Translation my own.

divided. The author makes use of legal terminology at this point, having Christ reconcile the characters of the narrative through a litigation of sorts. Likewise, Christ resolves the ‘discord’ (*discordiam*) between the involved parties through his acceptance of the Cross. Here, *assendit* may be an example of scribal error, or the author may intend to suggest that Christ both assents (*assentit*) and ascends (*ascendit*), using a play on words to emphasize Christ’s acceptance of his death and his literal ascension of the Cross.

A Case for Perfection: The Christ Champion Paragon

A final purpose for the Christ champion motif is found in sermons employing the image as a means for modelling proper Christian behaviour, as dictated by the code of chivalry as well as the Church. Christ was the embodiment of humanity, and thus was the perfect model for imitation. Thus, imitation of the Champion Christ is a variant of the concept of *imitatio Christi*, but rather than imitating Christ for devotional practices, Christ functions as the paragon and model of Christian behaviour. This model complements the Christ-knight that both epitomized the chivalric ideal, which actual knights emulated through means of affective piety and *imitatio Christi* (chapter 2), as well as providing a model of ideal kingship (chapter 4). The final chapter of this thesis will argue that this image also provided a model for those outside the knightly and noble classes, namely, the clergy and laity. First however, the notion of Christ as the paragon of proper Christian behaviour fits within the Champion Christ motif, particularly in regards to masculinity.

The representation of Christ again as knight, king, and conqueror concurrently is best demonstrated by two sermons in MS Bodley 649.¹⁰⁰ The importance of Christ as king, the spiritual model for Henry V, detailed in the previous chapter’s discussion of

¹⁰⁰ Both sermons include the same image of the heavenly Christ-knight and the accompanying narrative from 2 Maccabees. While they are very similar, they are actually used for quite different purposes. The sermon discussed in chapters 4 and 6 (ff. 34r-40v) solely includes the comparison with Henry V. The sermon discussed here (ff. 27r-34r) immediately precedes the Henry V/Christ-knight sermon in the collection and applies the Christ-knight for a different purpose, discussed below.

kingship must be remembered here. However, this kingly image of Christ is also both a conqueror and a knight and both must be considered as well. In these roles, Christ defeats Satan; when applied to the audience, Christ's defeat of Satan represents their ongoing defeat of sin in their lives achieved through right living.

The preacher explains that Adam was mankind's first soldier, the 'captain of the field of paradise...secure [in the] arms of original justice.'¹⁰¹ But because the devil could not defeat him honestly, he used the 'tricks of warfare' to despoil Adam, similar to the 'false sleight of arms' found in MS Laud 706.¹⁰² As warfare continued to be waged by the devil on earth, God, as foretold by Isaiah, sent a saviour and champion.¹⁰³ As a conqueror and knight, Christ acts as the spiritual model not only for kings, but also for those not born into royalty or nobility yet still able to defeat and conquer sin and the devil.

The preacher of Bodley 649 took his theme from Matthew 15:21: 'From there, Jesus went and departed,' but introduced his theme with only Jesus' name and repeats his theme throughout, again using 'Jesus' to indicate divisions and development. Christ is first described in his role as conqueror:

The highest king of heaven, the Father of mercies, seeing his people, the human race, surrounded on all sides by demons, for their complete comfort and freedom sent to them secretly a soldier in whom he had the greatest confidence, his own son Christ Jesus – the demons being ignorant he had come to free the human race ... But Christ Jesus, seeing that man would not be perfectly at ease in heart unless the devil who had so long oppressed them had been routed and conquered, armed himself with the armour of light – he donned the breastplate of humility, he took for himself the trusty shield of patience, he seized the horse of the holy cross on Mount Calvary to fight against our enemy, the demon of hell. And so heartily did he struggle for us that he sweat blood and water, so powerfully did he fight on the cross with the sharp lance of his painful passion that he conquered the devil, he

¹⁰¹ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 134-6; MS Bodley 649, ff. 28v-29r.

¹⁰² Cf. note 72, p. 194 above; also like MS Laud 706, the Bodley author refers to Adam's misplaced trust in the devil as 'treason.' Similar language is present in the Bodley sermon to those using Devil's Rights theory, but the author does not employ the theory. The shared language may however suggest he too was familiar with the theory. Both the Bodley and Laud authors are also vehemently anti-Lollard, so a shared ideology may be present.

¹⁰³ Isaiah 19:20.

freed us from the oppression, he gave us power to resist him, and reopened for us the gate of heaven that our father Adam had shut by his cowardice.¹⁰⁴

Here, the Bodley author gives no indication of the courtly lover-knight or any implication of a chivalric code. Rather, the Christ portrayed here is a conquering soldier; his battle reflects his Passion – riding the horse of the holy cross, sweating blood and water, wounds from a painful lance. Christ has redeemed mankind, beginning with Adam who was ‘despoiled of his virtuous armour,’ before receiving the wound of eternal death.¹⁰⁵ The Christian values of humility and patience are however emphasized. These virtues, maintained even by one who conquers (Christ) are essential to mankind’s own battle; his imitation of Christ must be rooted within these values.

The Bodley author then introduces the Champion Christ in the role of a knight, first by employing the same narrative from 2 Maccabees (discussed in chapter 4) in which the accursed king Antiochus oppressed the people of God. The same heavenly soldier, ‘armed with golden arms, clothed in a white robe’ is sent by God to crush the devil, destroy his dominion, and free mankind from slavery.¹⁰⁶ From here, the author expanded the heavenly soldier’s role as a knight, specifically one who jousts for mankind. This narrative is evocative of the Round Table exemplum and may suggest the Bodley author was aware of the exemplum or the representation of the jousting Christ in *Piers*. In either case, the comparison of Christ to a jouster is then applied to every Christian:

But after the glorious victory [over the devil, Christ] followed a courtesy of arms which noble lords are accustomed to use. When these youthful lords desire to joust or try other skills, they disguise themselves, put on themselves strange coats of armour so that it will not be recognized at the time who has won the victory. But after they have become more adept and put aside the use of these arms, they confer them secretly on an arms-bearer and make him knight or exalt him to higher honour.

Spiritually speaking: when it pleased our worthy prince Jesus to joust for us on the cross against the devil, he disguised himself in strange arms...silver with five

¹⁰⁴ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 138; MS Bodley 649, ff. 29r-v.

¹⁰⁵ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 134; MS Bodley 649, f. 28v.

¹⁰⁶ Found in both sermons, here at f. 29v (Horner, 138) and previously discussed at f. 34r (Horner, 154).

roses of red tincture ... [these are] the five bloody wounds impressed on that sacred body ... [and]in these strange arms he conquered the devil, and made us who had been slaves free. *And that man might remember his glorious victory he made him [mankind] a soldier and conferred on him these precious arms.*¹⁰⁷

Implying his audience had knowledge of tournament practices or the secular romances, the Bodley author asks the audience to consider the ‘courtesy of arms noble lords are accustomed to use’ and their behaviour at tournaments in which they disguise themselves for the joust, winning with their identities unknown. Once they have put aside the use of arms, they will secretly confer them on another and make him a knight to bring him honour rather than himself. Recalling the discussion of chapter two, this is an idealised vision of the chivalric knight and his devotion to fraternal love and loyalty. Again, the ideals of Christian charity and humility are essential, and his desire to imitate Christ through his chivalric code. The Christian should therefore emulate Christ, who jousting on the cross against the devil and remember Christ’s Passion and command that every Christian should ‘labour as a good soldier of Christ’ in order to defeat the soldiers of Satan.¹⁰⁸

In the Bodley author’s second sermon using the heavenly soldier depiction, he also uses this image of Christ as a model for his audience:

The coming of this heavenly soldier comforted the people so much ... that after the passion they were daring enough to fight against the fiercest beasts ... they rejoiced to suffer humiliation for the name of Jesus. They were so armed with the love of the Lord ... they offered themselves to pain and death ... So pay heed how the heavenly soldier Jesus precedes you in holy behaviour ... and follow his footsteps.¹⁰⁹

The preacher uses the image of Christ as knight, king, and conqueror to urge his audience into better behaviour, modelled first by Christ, then by the king, as in this cases of Edward III and Henry V, and then to the common man.

¹⁰⁷ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 140; MS Bodley 649, ff.29v-30r. Emphasis my own.

¹⁰⁸ 2 Timothy 2:3.

¹⁰⁹ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 154; MS Bodley 649, f. 34v.

In this modelling of proper behaviour, the preacher repeatedly tells his audience to act ‘manfully’ (*‘fortitudine et humanitate; ‘potenter et humaniter’; ‘pugna viriliter’*). In this spiritual war, one should ‘fight as a soldier, prove yourself a man.’¹¹⁰ The concept of masculinity in the Middle Ages has undergone significant scholarly attention in recent years.¹¹¹ The preacher is not simply using powerful rhetoric, but is evoking specific emotional reactions from the men, both clerical and lay, in his audience. As Derek Neal pointed out, “‘man’ could mean a male adult, as it does now, encapsulating the powerful cultural association of masculinity with maturity’ and responsibility, and it could also simply mean a person who has physiologically reached adult maturity, no longer an adolescent or child; likewise, “‘manhood’ can refer to the qualities and characteristics of male adults, and at the same time, humanity.”¹¹² These definitions are all present in popular preaching. In fact, sermons generally offer a similar interpretation of masculinity and manhood that is found in other texts. While they may stress a different aspect of masculinity, sermons tend to ‘adapt the association of manhood with strength, constancy, and honour to their own ethical ends.’¹¹³ Patrick Horner has rightly translated the various terms used in Bodley 649, highlighted above, as ‘manfully’ and ‘with manliness.’ The meaning becomes even clearer when read within the context of pastoral instruction and the terms employed alongside them, ‘strength’ and ‘courage.’

Masculinity in late medieval England is not so easily explained by or limited to the definitions above. Medieval knights indeed epitomized the chivalric ideal prescribing masculinity in terms of prowess, courtly love, competition and conduct. It can however encompass a wide variety of connotations, including self-control, particularly in

¹¹⁰ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 172; MS Bodley 649, f. 39r.

¹¹¹ P H Cullum and Katherine J Lewis, *Religious Men and Masculine Identity in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2013); Christopher Fletcher, *Richard II: Manhood, Youth, and Politics, 1377-99* (Oxford, 2008); Derek Neal, *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England* (Chicago, 2008); Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formation of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2002).

¹¹² Derek Neal, *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England* (Chicago, 2008), 27.

¹¹³ Fletcher, *Richard II*, 36.

confrontations, socially accepted behaviour, and, more importantly, substance – property ownership and proper management, which Neal pointed out, includes the role of the husband in relation to his wife.¹¹⁴ The importance of ‘trueness’ is emphasized as a quality of masculinity, suggesting that deceit and thievery ‘attacked a masculine social self by diminishing it.’¹¹⁵ Unmanly deceit is demonstrated by the devil in Bodley 649 when he used the ‘tricks of warfare’ to defeat Adam.¹¹⁶ ‘True’ manliness reflected much of the Church’s expectations of mankind, honesty, charity, and respect. This is interesting but problematic when considering the previous examples of Christ’s trickery – the concealment of his real identity and subsequent deception to the devil. In these instances, Christ’s behaviour is commended in his defeat of the devil, but when the devil uses his own brand of trickery, he is deceitful and thus unmanly. Attitudes toward manliness need not be consistent in order to be deployed effectively.

Neal also suggested that the clergy, whose lives were vastly different in terms of sexuality, but still paralleled the laity in so many ways, were equally as concerned with their own identities as masculine, their choice of celibacy representing the ultimate form of masculine self-control, not limiting, but emphasizing their masculinity. This is reflected in much of the monastic and secular preaching, in which preachers use militant language and military metaphors to define their own role in great spiritual battles. This is certainly the case of MS Bodley 649’s sermons. The author says individuals must ‘raise up the shield of faith ... with bodily courage and manliness’ so that they are not ‘wounded in spiritual battle’; they must ‘put on the armour of the dead soldier [Christ] ... return to battle and fight manfully.’¹¹⁷ For the cleric, this may have invoked images of battling vice, sin, and combating the temptations against celibacy; for the knight, this may have brought up

¹¹⁴ Neal, *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England*, 68.

¹¹⁵ Neal, *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England*, 36.

¹¹⁶ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 134; MS Bodley 649, f. 28v.

¹¹⁷ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 168, 174; MS Bodley 649, ff. 38r, 39v.

thoughts of both spiritual and earthly battles; and for the non-combatant lay man or woman, being familiar with the language of battle, he may have applied this to his spiritual life as well, if not instances when he encountered actual fighting. In any case, Christ is established as the model to which they should strive. This model is applied to those outside the knightly class, specifically the clergy and laity, and is the topic of the final chapter.

Conclusion

The many examples in both homiletic and narrative poetry portray Christ as a champion, employing terms such as ‘defeating,’ ‘overcoming,’ and ‘conquering’ the devil. Christ acts as an active, aggressive, and sometimes violent participant in the redemption of mankind, an image strikingly different from the supposedly-dominant late medieval image of a broken man hanging on a cross. The martial image of Christ however would not have been contentious to a medieval viewer, listener, or reader. Rather, the image was used to provoke intense feelings from the congregant, encouraging confession and penance. The ‘Round Table’ sermons, alongside chivalric literature and moralizations such as *Piers Plowman*, reinforced orthodox doctrine, while providing models for Christian behaviour. The Christ-knight image would have been directly applicable to a medieval audience, whether a member of the knightly class or not, as concepts of chivalry and the presence of the fighting men were ever-present in the tumultuous times of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Indeed, the use of fighting language in regards to the defeat of the devil is ubiquitous; the language of violence justifies the end result, morality and salvation. The doctrine of redemption was central to late medieval Christian faith and thus it is not surprising to find it represented as frequently in popular preaching, as would be found in all forms of medieval literature, art, and drama. The legal context the doctrine is often placed within may suggest an audience specifically familiar with late medieval law, yet the

average citizen was entrenched in legal situations, with local courts being just as present in rural villages as in larger cities. The appearance of a pugilist Christ and one found in a courtroom may seem a mixing of metaphors, but each unique representation is a variant of the Champion Christ motif. Christ has already been established to have a dual human nature, that of the suffering and the martial; this mixing of legal metaphors demonstrates that within his martial role, here too he is complex and multifaceted. The Champion Christ example, in all forms, served to relate the messages of atonement and redemption to a broad cross-section of people in a manner appropriate to their life experiences, and conscious of the pervasiveness of martial language in many aspects of the culture.

Chapter 6 – The Preacher and Layman as Christ’s Knights

The chapters so far have explored the sources, meanings and purposes of martial depictions of Christ in sermons of the Hundred Years War period. This final chapter examines the representation of martial language and knighthood as a model for the clergy and laity, a position that, as least for the medieval cleric, may seem at odds with Christ’s command for peace. Yet, violence and the Church cannot be so easily divided as the Three Estates model suggests, that there are those who pray, those who fight, and those who labour. This model neglects both the clergy and laity’s responsibilities to the realm during times of war: the various contributions the clergy made to the war effort and the layman’s duty to pick up arms when called upon in defence of the realm. This chapter will first briefly present the martial circumstances in which the clergy and laity found themselves during the Hundred Years War, and their relationship to ongoing warfare. It will then examine whether martial activity, affairs that were of obvious importance to the noble class and to national political culture, had any cultural resonance for the rest of the population. Why was chivalric romance so appealing to those outside the knightly class? For it was likely clerical and lay interest in the martial culture of the period which prompted the widespread use of similar themes, language, and imagery within popular sermons, most commonly expressed through the metaphor of the Christian’s spiritual battle against sin.

Examples of a martial Christ in the chapters thus far have demonstrated a previously unidentified image of Christ utilised for practices of affective meditation and devotion. The Christ-knight, through the battle of his Passion, was intended to evoke intense feelings and an affective response. The sermons examined in this chapter show how the Christ-knight model could also be applied to those meant to be of non-martial life, the common preacher and the layman. The model here has two functions; in the first, these

examples also fit within this strand of affective devotion, specifically *imitatio Christi*. The model's second function differs from those already discussed because it has been presented to a different audience. Previous examples of the Christ-knight emphasized its role in response to perceptions and ideals of chivalry and knighthood, roles typically assigned to the elite. It was also applied to the kingdom's highest worldly representative, the king. In contrast, the sermons examined here reveal that the Christ-knight could be a useful tool for those non-combatants, as a model for active spiritual behaviour and not just as a vicarious example. Rather than using language that would persuade the audience to avoid or repress sin, passive actions, the preachers here prescribe proactive means to engage directly with sin in battle in order to defeat it. The preacher and the audience could be Christ-knights too.

The most important contribution members of the clergy made during period of war was arguably through preaching. As a method of mass communication, preachers were often the only means the populace outside those who attended Parliament had to gain information and news regarding the war and its progress.¹ Preachers were responsible for the morale of their diocese, as well as maintaining public opinion in support of the war. They led and encouraged their congregations to pray for the success of campaigns, and as we have seen in the preceding chapter, for the success of their king. Previous chapters thus far have attempted to demonstrate the depth to which chivalric and martial culture had seeped into popular preaching spanning the Hundred Years War. The pervasiveness of martial language and imagery alongside popular perceptions and ideals of chivalry and knighthood appealed to the wider populace, beyond practicing knights. The goal of this

¹ For a brief look at the relationship between preaching and propaganda, see: David S Bachrach, 'The Ecclesia Anglicana Goes to War: Prayers, Propaganda, and Conquest during the Reign of Edward I of England, 1272-1307,' *Journal of British Studies* 36 (2004), 393-406; Maier, *Crusade Propaganda and Ideology*; Suzanne Cawsey, 'Royal Eloquence, Royal Propaganda and the Use of the Sermon in the Medieval Crown of Aragon, c. 1200-1410,' *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (1999), 442-63; W R Jones, 'The English Church and Royal Propaganda during the Hundred Years War,' *Journal of British Studies* 19 (1979), 18-30.

chapter is to provide some insight into why this culture of warfare and violence was expressed in sermons and why it was so attractive to those whose lives were not entrenched in warfare. These sermons transform literal warfare into the spiritual and call both the clergy and laity to arms.

A Brief Look at Clerical and Lay Involvement in the War Effort

Before looking at the sermons in which the battlefield is not found in the fields of Scotland or France, but rather in the Christian's daily encounter with sin, it is important to acknowledge the occasional involvement some clergy and lay folk had with actual warfare in the later Middle Ages. Clerical and lay participation in the war effort was surprisingly similar in many ways. Both groups contributed financially; the clergy voted for taxes in their convocations and collected this funding for the benefit of the Crown. Likewise, taxes were levied upon the laity to support the war effort, including the parish tax of 1370 and controversial experimental taxes, such as the 1377-1380 poll taxes which were important in causing the 1381 uprising, subsequently not repeated. In addition to the financial support of the war, both the clergy and laity were obligated to participate in the defence of the realm. Alison McHardy has argued that in this period, the line between clergy and laity was becoming blurred by the clergy's involvement in wartime affairs that were otherwise deemed a lay responsibility, most evident in their bearing arms.² For the laity, their obligation to take up arms for civil defence can be traced to the 1285 Statute of Winchester. The clergy's obligation to bear arms is not so easily traced, as it went against the instruction of canon law.³ And yet, there is a history of fighting prelates throughout

² Alison K McHardy, 'The English Church and the Hundred Years War' in *The Church and War: Papers Read at the Twenty-First Summer Meeting and the Twenty-Second Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. W J Sheils (Oxford, 1983), 171-8.

³ Decrees issued by the synods of Meaux (845) and Paris (846) forbade *arma militaria* to anyone of the clergy and a council at Ticino (876) forbade all in holy orders to carry arms in military expeditions:

Europe, including England. Odo, bishop of Bayeux and brother of William the Conqueror, supposedly fought at Hastings with a mace in hand. He is shown in the Bayeux Tapestry with a baculum. In 1072, Ethelwig, abbot of Evesham acted as commander of a contingent of knights, as well as those from several other counties he had jurisdiction over at the time; Thomas Becket, an archdeacon of Canterbury before rising to the role of chancellor, participated in the 1159 campaign in Toulouse; and in 1193, Abbot Samson of St Edmunds wore his own armour and led his knights under his own banner at the siege of Windsor, alongside 'several other English abbots.'⁴ The fourteenth century saw numerous examples of fighting clerics and references to the clergy bearing arms. Bishop Buckingham of Lincoln made special note of his predecessor John Gynewell's (1347-62) arming of the clergy; and it had become so much a part of diocesan life, that Thomas Rippeley, an official of the archdeacon of Leicester, included amongst his documents on diocesan administration, an ordinance providing the details of the weapons and armour required by the clergy for the kingdom's defence.⁵ William Zouche, archbishop of York, was appointed by Edward III as warden of the Scottish march and joint commissioner of array for the northern army. Along with Henry Percy and Ralph Neville, Zouche mustered an army to oppose David of Scotland's invasion in October 1346. He commanded one of three divisions at Neville's Cross, contributing to the English victory and earning him favour with the king.⁶ This list must also include the most notorious of fighting bishops, Henry Despenser, bishop of Norwich, who took an army of 8,000 to fight the French and

Lawrence Duggan, *Armsbearing and the Clergy in the History and Canon Law of Western Christianity* (Woodbridge, 2013), 97.

⁴ Helena M Chew, *The English Ecclesiastical Tenants-in-Chief and Knight Service, Especially in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Oxford, 1932), 83-4.

⁵ McHardy, 174; referenced from Cambridge, Gonville and Caius MS 588/737, ff. 85v-86r.

⁶ Nicholas Bennett, 'Zouche, William (d. 1352)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/30303>, accessed 1 Aug 2015.

Flemish in 1383.⁷ His attempted crusade however was a failure and upon his return to England he was met with recrimination, impeachment, and forfeiture of his temporalities. These examples demonstrate that although uncommon, fighting clerics were not unheard of by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, even if they fell under the threat of excommunication. There were indeed no roles, including that of military commander, in which the clergy did not participate. Bruce McNab's examination of military activity on the part of the English clergy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries shows further evidence of clerical participation in the war effort beyond financial contribution.⁸ Royal writs of array were distributed to both diocesans and archbishops by Edward III (1368, 1372, 1373), Richard II (1377, 1391, 1385, 1386), Henry IV (1400, 1402), and Henry V (1415, 1418). Each writ begins by addressing the imminent threat to the realm, by the Scots, French, or their allies, and their intention to wreak havoc and upset the Church. By the thirteenth century, it was commonplace that feudal military obligations by clergyman acting as ecclesiastical tenants-in-chief would carry out their commitment by proxy or by scutage.⁹ Yet, as the previous examples have demonstrated, by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it was equally ordinary for a clergyman to take up arms to defend his church, monastery, or the kingdom.

Examples of clerical and non-knightly lay participation are meant to demonstrate that at least some of those traditionally considered outside a life of war had contact and experience with actual warfare at periods throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Thus the appeal to martial culture for these individuals may be linked to their life experience. Many Englishmen and women living near the border of Scotland or along the

⁷ Lesley Coote, 'The Crusading Bishop: Henry Despenser and his Manuscript,' in *Prophecy, Apocalypse, and the Day of Doom: Proceedings of the 2000 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Nigel Morgan (Donington, 2004), 39-51.

⁸ Bruce McNab, 'Obligations of the Church in English Society: Military Arrays of the Clergy, 1369-1418,' in *Order and Innovation in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Joseph R. Strayer*, eds. William C Jordan, Bruce McNab and Teofilo F Ruiz (Princeton, 1976), 293-314.

⁹ For a complete review of ecclesiastical tenants-in-chief, see Chew, note 4 above.

south coast of England would have experienced warfare as sharply as those knights fighting on foreign battlefields. Yet the overwhelming presence of martial themes and imagery within popular sermons, those preached in times of war and peace, suggests that martial images were understood by a much wider populace. Images of warfare, knighthood, and taking up arms resonated with the masses, extending beyond class and gender boundaries.

The Effect of Martial Sermon Imagery on the Preacher and his Audience

Medieval preaching existed in two forms, on parchment and orally. The written form of the sermon had one primary reason for its existence: to be passed on to other preachers as a tool, a means to spread their message consistently and effectively. Thus we have numerous examples of model sermon collections, intended to be used and adapted by many preachers to a variety of audiences, found in multiple copies in multiple manuscripts. They were educational and were typically written by clerics for clerics. The oral tradition of sermons is obviously more difficult to identify. The sermons examined in this thesis were likely transcriptions of ‘live’ sermons, written down after-the-fact; some authors may have had the lofty goal of creating a model collection, but may have also transcribed their sermons for their own personal use. Because most of the examples in this work exist as single copies, it may be assumed that their authors never achieved the status of ‘model sermon author’ and were never or rarely copied. It is possible that they were copied, but have since been lost. In either case, these ‘live’ sermons, preached to lay and mixed audiences were intended to instruct and affect the people listening. How successful their instruction was is summarised aptly by David d’Avray: ‘some will be unaffected, some will be heavily influenced, and many will fall between the two poles.’¹⁰ It is my

¹⁰ d’Avray, *Medieval Marriage Sermons*, 14.

contention that the use of martial themes and imagery within sermons is the product of sermon authors trying to influence and instruct their audience in the most appealing way they knew how. In his work on medieval marriage sermons, d'Avray suggests that preachers were competing for the laity's attention, against popular secular works, such as romances; because these narratives often included messages appealing to the audience, but contradictory to the Christian message, sermons had to push against these messages.¹¹ In the context of marriage sermons, d'Avray notes how vernacular texts were often uninhibited about extra-marital sex, and thus sermon authors were essentially preaching to correct wayward thinking. Romance tales, he says, would have seemed glamorous.¹² If we apply this same interpretation to the martial content within sermons, it can be said that the romanticising of warfare, knighthood, and chivalry in these same vernacular texts was of great appeal to their readers. As we have seen in previous chapters, preachers did indeed correct wayward knightly behaviour in their preaching and redefined what knighthood should be according to the Church. This was largely only applicable to practising knights however. For non-combatants, or people who were not by prescribed order expected to fight, corrective behaviour was not necessary, at least in terms of literal knighthood. Rather, for the clergy and for the common man and woman, preachers utilised these popular themes by transforming the battlefield into a spiritual one. This battle was applied to their daily lives; the behaviour requiring correction was not their knightly conduct, but their daily conduct, their engagement in sinful activity. Likewise, preachers used martial language to influence devotional practices. With Christ's suffering and Passion allegorized as a battlefield, the medieval laity internalized his battle, making it their own spiritual war, taking on Christ's actions and armour. Although it is impossible to give a quantitative or definitive assessment of how often late medieval audiences were presented with images of

¹¹ d'Avray, *Medieval Marriage Sermons*, 11.

¹² d'Avray, *Medieval Marriage Sermons*, 10.

a martial Christ, when the evidence presented thus far is taken into account – the popularity of this type of rhetoric and imagery, alongside the number of specific examples provided - it is clear that these themes were commonplace, not unique or particularly special, but rather, they were engaging, familiar, and thus for the preacher, both useful and effective.

Identifying this form of piety, and connecting it to striking images of Christ in martial guise, is a new way of considering late medieval affective lay piety and devotion. These two goals of the preacher – practical, in respect of behaviour, and devotional – are demonstrated in popular sermons. The preacher and his audience become the knight, put on the armour of God, and face their greatest adversary, Satan. Preachers did this to teach about the nature of salvation, to instil a great desire for confessions, penance and the remission of sin, and to fight against heresy. The martial context was the vehicle they used to appeal to their audience, to keep them engaged, and to explain specific points of doctrine.

‘Put on the full armour of God’: Preacher and Layman Assuming Christ’s Battle

Like the Christ-knight examples discussed in previous chapters, in which the images were meant to provoke strong emotional feelings towards Christ’s Passion and death, echoing the affective meditative practice in which the listener takes on Christ’s torment in order to remember and better understand his suffering, here too we see a new approach to this method of affective meditation, in the form of martial devotion. The meditative practice of the daily exercise of recollecting one’s pious memories was theorized in the *artes meditandi*.¹³ These didactic texts were used to influence devotional practices, initially amongst members of the clergy, but increasingly amongst the laity of

¹³ Kiss, ‘Memory, Meditation, and Preaching,’ in *The Making of Memory in the Middle Ages*, ed. Dolezalova, 58; this is briefly discussed above in the introduction, page 21 and chapter 3, page 100.

the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as they desired a more active role in their spiritual lives. Anthony Bale has pointed to the combination of lay piety with ‘the monastic practice of meditation, emphasising the humanity of Christ and his suffering, with a “visual and physical expression of piety through action and movement.”’¹⁴ This practice was most commonly found in literature exhorting its audience to meditate on Christ’s Passion. The goal was to elicit emotion, evoke compassion, and teach the audience how to feel, what Sarah McNamer has described as ‘compassionate devotion.’¹⁵ Previous examples of the Christ-knight have followed this model, prompting the listener or reader to take on Christ’s pains and wounds received in battle, those that mimic his suffering through his Passion (discussed in detail in chapter 3). A related and indeed similar strand of affective piety is found in another theme within popular sermons; in the following examples, preacher and layman alike are not only meant to take on his suffering and wounds, but also to take on his armour and enter the battle itself. The following will examine four sermons, each demonstrating how the audience were encouraged to become active combatants in their devotional practices.

Two examples of martial devotion are found in Cambridge University Library, MS Ii.3.8 and MS Bodley 649.¹⁶ Both are examples in which the author links the use of spiritual armour with memory of Christ’s Passion. CUL MS Ii.3.8 contains material dating from the early to the very late fifteenth century, including numerous sermons, free-standing *exempla*, sermon outlines, and English material comprising short glosses, translations of quoted authorities and popular sayings. It also contains individual sermons

¹⁴ Bale, *Feeling Persecuted*, 122; quoting: June L Mecham, ‘A Northern Jerusalem: Transforming the Spatial Geography of the Convent of Wienhausen’ in *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Andrew Spicer and Sarah Hamilton (Aldershot, 2005), 139-60 at 139.

¹⁵ McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 2.

¹⁶ Cambridge University Library MS Ii.3.8, ff. 74v-76r inc., henceforth MS CUL Ii.3.8; discussed in Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 175-181, 409-414, and previously discussed and inventoried in Wenzel, *Macaronic Sermons*, 44-46, 133-40; Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 154-79; MS Bodley 649, ff. 34r-40v.

of known authors, including a copy of Wimbledon's *Redde rationem villicationis tuae* in Latin, a Lenten sermon by Bishop Thomas Brinton, and a sermon by Henry Chambron. This is a mixed collection of sermons and sermon material, with most authorship unidentifiable. Wenzel does not comment on the individual sermons or speculate further in regards to possible authorship. The collection appears to be random, intended for the personal use of its owner, a sort-of preaching handbook. It is difficult to determine the nature of the audience for each individual sermon as the markers often used to designate an audience, *ad clerici*, *ad populi*, or *ad generalis*, are not included.

The sermon below was preached for an undesignated occasion and takes its theme from Matthew 21:9: 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.' In discussing Christ's Passion and death, the author said:

It would seem that Christ merited death because he who protects, foremost considers peace. The disturber of peace was himself a witness against his leader. Mathew 10:[34]: *I came not to send peace upon the earth, but a sword...* that is, he made war among man stronger, more cunning, and more diligent... Man, in resisting that war, stirs up Christ. And grace calls the sinner to do penance, however occasionally Christ encourages such a war for our defence. We are sufficient in arms, for he provides defence as well as offense, for he has conferred on us for our protection the robe of charity, the shield of faith, the breastplate of justice, and the helmet of salvation and hope. While they protect us, we will always prevail. He gave us a sharp sword of strength in consideration of the strict judgement and stern punishment which the sinner deserves to incur. *He gave us the lance of the memory of his Passion*, which we ourselves violate.¹⁷

The description of spiritual armour within sermons is frequent; it is a popular trope. The author included the typical defensive weapons, the shield, breastplate, and helmet, as well as the standard weapon for offence, the sword. The inclusion here however of an additional offensive weapon, the lance, is unusual and its attribution of it to the memory of

¹⁷ MS CUL II.3.8, f. 76r: 'Sed ad hac videtur quod Christus meruit mortem quia ipsum qui custodiat pacis habuit principalis. Turbator pacis fuit nam se ipsum sumo in testimonium contra caput suum. Math 10: *Non veni pacem mittere in terram, sed gladium veni...* Idest fecit guerram inter hominem fortiozem, callidiozem, et diligentiozem. Hominis in resistendo istud bellum excitat Christus. Que confert peccatori gratiam penitendi; sed quamvis occasionaliter Christus tale bellum excitet cum pro nostram defensione. Nobis arma sufficiamus, praebeet tam defensiam quam offensiam, nam ad nos protegendum contulit nobis diploidem caritatis, scutum fidei, loricam iusticie, galeam salutis et spei, quibus dum teguntur semper praevalibimus. Dedit nobis gladium vis acutum consideratio stricti iudicii et duri supplicii quem peccator meretur in curere. Dedit et nobis lanceam memoriae passionis sue, quam se temeremus.' Translation and emphasis my own.

Christ's Passion is unique. The preacher has instructed his audience to arm themselves with spiritual weaponry to engage in mankind's war against the devil. The memory of Christ's Passion is used as an offensive weapon employed against the devil. Through the devotional practice of memory, the preacher's audience here is to recall Christ's Passion, the metaphorical battlefield on which he defeated Satan, in order to wage an allegorical daily war of their own against sin.

Very similar language is found in another example of martial devotion, in MS Bodley 649. Here, the author poses a question to his audience, one previously established as a mixed audience of clergy and laity; he asks, 'What do you do when you have lost your armour?' His response is an excellent example of devotional instruction. He says you must:

Flee to the sepulchre of the dead soldier, flee to the cross, to the Passion of the Lord Jesus. There 'hangs all the armour of the valiant ones,' Canticles 4. There is complete armour for the soldier, there is sufficient armour for all Christians. Therefore you who are bare and unarmed, arm yourselves with the armour of the dead soldier, arm yourselves with the virtue and memory of the Passion of Christ: 1 Peter 4, 'Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same thought.' Think how Christ hung on the Cross for us, for our sins he was wounded, for love of us he was killed, he opened his side to bestow grace on you, he opened his heart to show you love, he spread his arms on the cross to obtain mercy for you. *Think then and keep it in mind, and arm yourself against the demon with the memory of the Passion.* If you are weak, it shall fortify you; if you are sorrowful, it shall cheer you; if you are sad, it shall comfort you. So you who live in sorrow, who have lost the helmet of hope and all your spiritual armour, go to the sepulchre of the dead soldier and take up his arms.¹⁸

Christ is the dead soldier, and the injunction to go to his tomb is an instruction to meditate on the resurrection. Here we have a much fuller description of the devotional practice of remembering Christ's Passion. Like the previous example, the Bodley author described Christ's armour as sufficient for all Christians. His armour alone can combat the devil and sin. The act of remembering is itself powerful and is thus included as an essential piece of every Christian's armour.

¹⁸ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 174; MS Bodley 649, ff. 39r-v. Emphasis my own.

Both examples of martial devotion demonstrate an interesting combination of a passive activity (inward devotion and meditation) within an active one (daily penance and confession). Again we find martial language used to express dual roles. Previously it has demonstrated the dual nature of the human Christ, his martial and suffering roles; here it is applying a similar model to popular devotion: passive (memory of Christ's Passion and suffering) and active (daily battle against sin) meditative practices working together. In these two ways, mirroring Christ is an injunction for the listener to become like Christ. Martial language has enabled the sermon authors to utilise themes both appealing and familiar to their audiences, while simultaneously providing devotional instruction. The Bodley 649 author also briefly mentions another element significant to this type of devotional practice. He says, 'if you are sad, [the memory of the Passion] shall comfort you.' Consolatory language is present throughout the corpus of late medieval sermons. It takes martial form in both examples below by using the scripture found immediately preceding Paul's command to put on the armour of God in Ephesians 6: *confortamini in Domino* (be strengthened¹⁹ in the Lord).

The first is found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 95.²⁰ The manuscript contains a fifteenth-century collection of sermons written in English. The compiler has taken the Sunday gospel sermons of the Wycliffite sermons and used them as prothemes for his sermons on the Sunday epistles. Taking his cue from Paul, the Bodley author instructs his audience to take comfort in God, as worldly comfort is a shadow that will soon pass:

For þer may no thyng comforte us more and clothe 3o well in Cristes armyre and the 3e dare not drede 3our enemyes, but fyzt 3e fast with the fende and 3e schal have the victory. For Cristes armyr is full sure to overcome þe fende with and whiche armyre that hit is Seynt Poule telleth in his pistell ... And so the fend had the victory longe tyme over all mankynde, tyll Crist þat was bothe God and

¹⁹ Often translated as comforted.

²⁰ Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 95, ff. 96r-98v; discussed in *RMEPS*, iii, 1625-6, 1687-8.

man brougt this armyre to defend us with. So fast he fougt for oure sake that he was wounded in mony a place and so he had [shewn] all oure enimyes that they dare never this armyre a byde. Be ze ther for clothed yn God and clothe you in his armyre and we us ever more to loue him principally over all thyng: hou þat every man may loue God.²¹

The sermon author of Bodley 95 encouraged his audience to put one's hope in God, whom is all comfort and joy. The sentiment echoes the Bodley 649 author's message, 'if you are sad, it shall comfort you.' The idea of finding comfort through devotional practice has literary precedents and may have been familiar to the authors of Bodley 649 and 95.

'Books of comfort,' numerous but not widely known, have been described by Douglas Gray as a specialised form of devotional literature.²² While the genre includes Thomas More's exemplary work, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation* (1534), most were simple practical books, often composed in the vernacular, such as the *Boke of Tribulacyon* (ca. fourteenth c.) and were didactic in purpose. They often sought to establish an 'art' or 'craft' of dying, and thus popular versions were circulated, such as *The Book of the Craft of Dying*, based on the Latin death text, the *Tractatus de arte bene moriendi*. Amy Appleford defined the text as a 'how to manual that concerns the best way to go about making a good death but is addressed as much to the attendants at a deathbed as to the dying person'; it 'synthesizes and codifies existing liturgical and pastoral materials' into an adaptable template that can be used to shape one's own deathbed moments, or those of one's neighbour.²³ The genre's conception, or at least the motivations behind it, seems likely to derive from the tradition of model sermon materials. Their popularity continued well into the sixteenth century. Gray explained that 'as with "mirrors for princes" the material finds its way into all kinds of other writing: there are "consolatory" elements in "secular" narratives, and in religious works they are omnipresent – as in the *Imitation of*

²¹ MS Bodley 95, ff. 96v-97r.

²² Douglas Gray, *Late Medieval English Literature* (Oxford, 2008), 292.

²³ Amy Appleford, *Learning to Die in London, 1380-1540* (Philadelphia, 2015), 145.

Christ.²⁴ The texts typically included exhortations urging faith in Christ's Passion. In the fourth chapter of *The Book of the Craft of Dying*, the dying are provided a set of prayers that allow them to imitate the five actions Christ performed in his last hours on the cross: praying, crying, weeping, commending the soul to God, and yielding up the spirit.²⁵ The dying were to find comfort in death through the saving actions of Christ. Consolatory works, like others providing devotional instruction, sought to bring the reader into a relationship with Christ. This genre would have appealed to sermon authors' such as those of Bodley 649 and 95 in that it further revealed the complex nature of Christ, both, human and divine. The consolatory language in sermons, in association with martial language demonstrates further the use of a martial Christ in revealing Christ's humanity, making him more accessible to the reader or listener, which was the primary purpose of devotional practice in the late Middle Ages.

The martial devotion of MSS Bodley 649 and CUL li.3.8 and the consolatory language of MS Bodley 95 are brought together in this final example, found in the Wycliffite sermon collection in British Library Additional 40672.²⁶ In this example, the audience is to find comfort in the fight against spiritual enemies. The sermon begins:

Poul techiþ in þis epistele to fyzte wiþ oure goostli enemyes, and hou we shulden be goostli armed and in what foorme fyzte wiþ hem. First Poul coufortiþ Cristis knyztis to make hem hardi for to fyzte, and seiþ *be zee coumfortid in þe Lord and in power of his uertu*. For þe capeteyn of oure batayle, þat is Crist boþe God and man, haþ lordshipe of al þis worlde; siþ þat he is Lord of Lordis, what good knyzt shulde drede hym to fyzte in þe armes of þis Lord? ... And, siþ he ouercam þe feend þat is heed of contrarie batayle, he haþ uertu bi his manhed to ouercome alle enemyes of his knyztis; and in þis knyztis of Cristis batayle shulden be confortid for to fyzte. And herfore biddiþ Poule aftir to take oure armes in Goddis name.²⁷

²⁴ Gray, *Late Medieval English Literature*, 292-3.

²⁵ Appleford, *Learning to Die*, 145.

²⁶ *English Wycliffite Sermons*, i, ed. Anne Hudson (Oxford, 1983), 685-9 and discussed in *RMEPS*, ii, 464-5, 876-8; London, British Library, MS Additional 40672, ff. 51r-52r, henceforth MS Add. 40672.

²⁷ *English Wycliffite Sermons*, 685; MS Add. 40672, f. 51r.

The audience here is directed to find comfort in the battle itself, for when armed with Christ's armour, the Christian cannot be overcome. As previous examples suggested, audiences were directed to take on Christ's suffering through remembrance of his Passion in order to feel compassion and understanding for Christ's death and sacrifice. A similar instruction is delivered here, but rather than compassion, the audience is urged to seek comfort and solace in Christ's battle and victory, for that same victory can be achieved for and by all mankind.

There are many similarities to be found within the affective meditative practices discussed here, whether that is the recollection of Christ's Passion and the assumption of his pain, or the participation in his fight on the cross, a battle against the devil and a daily war waged against sin. Both methods of devotional practice call for the listener to bring the pain, sacrifice, and actions of Christ into their present lives in order to better understand the nature of Christ and his great sacrifice for mankind. These representations of martial devotion, while a minor strand of late medieval devotional practice, must be taken into account when considering the nature of late medieval Christocentric devotion. Without considering martial devotion, and in particular the image of the martial Christ, our understanding of late medieval devotion is incomplete. It is not enough to say that Christocentric devotion is typified by the suffering Christ, and was for some accessible through the metaphor of the maternal Christ; the martial representation allows us to envision a dual-natured Christ, both passive (suffering and choosing to die) and active (dying as result of fighting for mankind). This image reveals a medieval audience much more versatile in their understanding of Christ than previously considered.

Like 'books of comfort' and many vernacular texts of the later Middle Ages, which provided practical applications for the reader to manage life's tribulations and temptations, sermons too provided instruction for proper daily behaviour and living. This has been

demonstrated in the previous chapters' representation of the Christ-knight as the exemplar for moral behaviour. The following sermon examples encourage audience members to engage in spiritual warfare, thus far used as a means for devotional practice, but in these instances, as a means to directly engage with the temptation and sins they are faced with on a daily basis.

The Preacher and Layman as Conquering Hero: Soldier, Fighter, Knight

Sermons in which the preacher and audience are called into battle can be divided into two categories: those in which the battle is to save mankind from sin and those in which the fight is against heresy. The following will examine five sermons in which the preacher is likened to a soldier or knight: two to save mankind from sin, two to save him from the snares of heresy. These are found in Hereford Cathedral Library, MS O.iii.5, Oxford, Magdalen College, MS 79, and Oxford, MSS Bodley 649 and Laud misc. 706. It will then look at a final example in which the audience is likened to the Christ-knight, emboldened to join the fight against both Satan and heresy, also found in MS Bodley 649. The following sermons are entirely unique and use elaborate and often complicated narrative in order to deliver the message.

Hereford Cathedral Library MS O.iii.5 is a fifteenth-century manuscript containing a version of the *Gesta Romanorum* and forty-one sermons.²⁸ Wenzel suggests that while the author is unknown, he was likely an Augustinian canon and doctor of canon law with most sermons delivered at visitations or to the clergy, but with a number for which a mixed audience cannot be ruled out.²⁹ The sermon in question takes its theme from Luke 11:18: 'How shall his kingdom stand?'³⁰ The author applied this theme to a lament for England,

²⁸ Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 159-65, 461-65.

²⁹ Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 159.

³⁰ Hereford, Cathedral Library, MS O.iii.5, ff. 17rb-18va, henceforth MS Hereford O.iii.5. Discussed in Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 159-65, 461-65.

three complaints taken from scripture: ‘for mornying, for wondryng, et for ler[n]yng.’³¹ For mourning, he considered Jeremiah’s lament over the abandoned city of Jerusalem in Lamentations 1:1; for wondering, he described Mary’s questioning of Gabriel as to how a virgin birth was possible; and for learning, he presented Nichodemus’ question to Jesus, ‘how can a man be born again when he is old?’ In his development of the first lament, he provided the following narrative to demonstrate the role of the preacher in saving the lost city:

Julius [Caesar] tells in book, chapter iiii,³² of a certain noble prince, whose people were under siege in a certain city...He ordered one of his soldiers, in whom he was sufficiently confident, to approach the siege, even though their enemies had made such a strong siege...This same soldier, as though he was an enemy of the city, went to the siege and threw his spears and arrows beyond the walls; which those who defended the city, having inspected and examined [the weapons], were greatly comforted, and strongly resisted their enemies and morally served the city for their lord, the Prince this Christ.

The people in the city signify the sinners in the world, those who were besieged by the three worst enemies, namely, flesh, the world, and the devil. *The soldier signifies the preacher* of which the apostle Timothy spoke: ‘Labour like a good soldier of Jesus Christ’ (2 Timothy 2:3).

Indeed, that is to say, this soldier showed the enemy to be a sinner for their outward appearance, by which he shot arrows and thrust spears, and exposed himself to an assault, all the while shouting sharp words, now against pride, now against luxury, firmly and constantly, refusing to turn away. And this soldier shoots arrows to seek help and not to confound, as according to the apostle: ‘I write not these things to confound you; but I admonish you as my dearest children.’ And in order that we more eagerly resist our enemies, he sent this special sign of consolation, namely his own personal sign, which was his body, exalted to the highest on the cross, which was made red with his blood.³³

³¹ These three causes are the only text given in English.

³² The author’s source for this story remains unidentified, possibly a lost work of Caesar.

³³ MS Hereford O.iii.5, f. 17va: ‘Narrat videlicet Iulius, libro iij strage iij capitulo de quodam principe nobili, cuius populus in quodam civit[ate] fuit clausus obsidionis... Ordinavit quod vnus de militibus suis, in quo satus confidebat, ad obsidionem accederet ut cum adversariis suis obsidionem facientibus fortitudinis eos. Iste miles, quasi hostis civit[at]is, accessit ad obsidionem et telas suas et sagittas ultra muros iecit quibus inspectis et lectis illi qui civit[at]em defendebant multum confortati hostibus viriliter resistunt et civit[at]em suo domino servarent moraliter princeps iste Christum.

Significat populus in civitate, peccatores in mundo quo a tribus pessimis inimicis obsidentur scilicet carne, mundo, et diabolo. Miles signat praedicatorum de quo loquitur apostolus, secundo Thimotheus iij: Labora ut bonus miles Christi.

Miles iste idest exteriori apparencia adversarium peccatorem ostendit qua lanceat et sagittat et praeberet insultus dum acuta verba nunc contra gulam, nunc contra luxuriam, firmiter et constanter proposito sed advertite. Si miles iste sagittat ut consulat non ut confundat, qua secundum apostolium, Non ut confundam vos, haec verbis scribo, sed ut filios meos karissimos moneo et ut magis feruentur hostibus nostris

In this first example we find a number of interesting elements. First, the story provided by an unknown source of Julius Caesar is interesting, but convoluted. It is possible that the story was so well-known it could be referenced in an abbreviated form and that this preacher's audience easily followed along. This is in accord with the idea that martial language within preaching was the attempt of preachers to employ an appealing and effective mode of story-telling. The author's point is made clear when he provides the explanation for his metaphor, that those besieged are sinners plagued with the three enemies, the flesh, the world, and the devil, and that the soldier fighting for mankind is the preacher himself. The author employed the most commonly used scriptural reference when spiritual warfare is discussed, from 2 Timothy 2:3, that man must struggle, or possibly suffer, as one of Christ's soldiers. The preacher here risks his safety, throwing off his armour and weapons, exposing himself to the enemy threat, in order to shout 'sharp words.' This may be the author's way of describing the cleric's role as preacher, their sharp words like weapons, aimed at the audience in an effort to encourage them to fight the enemies of the flesh, the world, and the devil. These arrows, or words, are thrown to 'admonish', in this case, instruct the audience to rebuke sin, and instead focus on Christ's sacrifice to save them. His clarification that 'this soldier shoots arrows to seek help and not to confound' may be read as a sort of apology for the use of 'sharp words.' The preacher may have felt it necessary to remind the audience that while they may feel they are under attack, they are in fact being helped. This may suggest some potentially negative responses to the use of weapon metaphors; preachers intended to stir the audience into action, not create feelings that the very armour they are meant to put on is being used against them. In this case however, both preacher and audience are called into direct action against sin; the

recistemus, signum specialissimum confortacionis missit scilicet sigillum suum privatum quod fuit corpus suum excelsum in cruce exaltatum in mortem rubricatum sanguine proprio.' Translation and emphasis my own.

preacher's call is to fight for mankind, while the individual congregant must fight for himself with the weapons thrown to him by the preacher.

Likewise, our second example portrays another fighting preacher engaging directly in warfare on behalf of mankind. Oxford, Magdalen College, MS 79 is a unified sermon collection of the second quarter of the fifteenth century and one of the rare cases in which probable authorship is known, attributed by Wenzel to John Dygon.³⁴ Although Wenzel states that he cannot prove authorship beyond doubt, Dygon's close relationship with Magdalen College, along with notes and examples of several of his writings and his fondness for collecting and composing, are highly suggestive. He owned, collected, and wrote a number of manuscripts, many of which he gave to the college. Dygon earned bachelor degrees in both laws as well as being incepted as a master. He held appointments in several parishes, his last one in London, before being admitted as a recluse to a cell at the Carthusian priory at Sheen, where he lived until at least 1449.³⁵ The sermon collection of MS Magdalen 79 contains sixty-nine sermons for saints' feasts and various others such as Easter. Wenzel suggests that the audience for the sermons may have varied, with rare instruction to the preacher and some direct appeals to the audience.³⁶ It is not clear as to whether the audience for the below sermon was strictly clerical or mixed.

The sermon is one of three included in the collection preached for Easter. It takes its theme from Luke 24:26: 'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory?' Like the Hereford sermon, Dygon used the most popular scripture to fit his martial context. He wrote:

Yet through baptism, he is liberated from original sin and the servitude of the devil; and the soldiers of Christ are made the heirs of heaven ... Just as in Job

³⁴ MS Magdalen 79, ff. 10v-14v; discussed in Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 100-15, 453-61.

³⁵ Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 100.

³⁶ Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 105.

7:[1]: *The life of man upon earth is warfare* and 2 Timothy 2:[3]: *Labour as a good soldier of Christ Jesus*.³⁷

He elaborates upon this scriptural authority with the role of this soldier:

This soldier is not ordained to strike at the air [spirit, i.e. demon] and the nearest thing in nature [human beings], but [he is ordained] to drive out spirits, to tame the powers and princes of darkness, to tame/master the illicit stirrings of the flesh, and to resist the suggestions of Satan, with his worldly accomplices, and those of worldly desires. Firstly, according to the last chapter of Ephesians [6:12]: *For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and power, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places*. According to 1 Corinthians 9:[26-7]: *I so fight, not as one beating the air: But I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection: lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway*. According to Genesis 3:14: *And the Lord God said to the serpent, we understand Satan*.³⁸

Dygon presents an interesting picture of the priest. As one ordained, Dygon, and the allegorical self-representation of the priest presented in his sermon, have been ordained by God to engage in battle with Satan. Dygon seems to be using a pun here, suggesting that priests should not strike into the air, implying an action without direction or intent, while using the common word for demon, *aerías*, a spirit of the air.³⁹ The preacher is not to strike out at those evil spirits and demons, but rather must take this battle further and drive

³⁷ MS Magdalen 79, f. 14r: 'Sed per baptismum liberatur ab originali peccato et servitium diaboli; et efficitur miles Christi heres caeli et h[ab]itac[u]l[u]m Trinitatis. Iuxta illud Iob vii: *militia est vita hominis super terram* et ii Timoth ii: *labora sicut bonus miles Iesu Christi*.' Translation my own.

³⁸ MS Magdalen 79, f. 14r: 'Hoc enim militia non ordinatur ad verberandum aerem et proximos in natura. Sed ad debellandum aerías, potestates et principes tenebrarum ad domandum illicitos motus carnis, et ad resistendum suggestionibus Sathanae cum suis satellitibus et concupiscentiae mundane. Pro primo Ephesians ultimo: *non est nobis colluctatio adversus carnem et sanguinem, sed adversus principes, et potestates, adversus mundi rectores tenebrarum harum, contra spiritualia nequitiae, in caelestibus*. Pro primo Cor ix: *sic pugno, non quasi aerem verberans: Sed castigo corpus meum, et in servitutem redigo: ne forte cum aliis praedicaverim, ipse reprobus efficiar*. Pro Gen iii: *Et ait Dominus Deus ad serpentem sciret Sathanam*.' Translation my own. This passage is also discussed above in chapter 1, at page 44.

³⁹ See also p. 44, n. 46; *Aerías* in reference to the devil or demons is found in Ephesians 2:2: 'In quibus aliquando ambulastis secundum saeculum mundi hujus, secundum principem potestatis *aeris* hujus, spiritus, qui nunc operatur in filios diffidentiae' (Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the *prince of the power of this air*, of the spirit that now worketh on the children of unbelief.); it is also found several times in Aquinas' *De Substantiis Separatis*, for example in chapter 20: '*Daemones aerea sunt animalia quoniam corporum aereorum natura vigent, et propterea morte non dissolvuntur, quia praevalent in eis elementum quod ad faciendum quam ad patiendum est aptius, scilicet aer*' (Augustine seems to say or to leave unsettled that the *demons are airy animals* because they have the nature of *airy bodies*; and, for that reason, they are not destroyed by death, because there prevails in them an element, namely air, which is quite suitable both for acting as well as being acted upon), quoted from: Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise on Separate Substances, chapter 20, section 107*, trans. Francis J. Lescoc (West Hartford, CN, 1959), 113.

out Satan and provocations of the flesh completely. His use of Ephesians 6:12, in which his wrestling is against ‘principalities’, ‘rulers of the world’, and ‘power’ is striking. Sermon authors often criticised the abuses of secular powers in their sermons.⁴⁰ In this case, Dygon very pointedly connects the need for spiritual warfare with an attack on the corruption of secular rulers. For Dygon, their leadership has been corrupted by the devil, and thus, it is by God’s command that he, the preacher, must fight as one who is ordained as a soldier of Christ. He then provided a vivid picture of this battle:

In anticipation of the serpent, I have waged war on the hostilities and punishments among you, that is to say, the spirit of the true church shall join in battle for your life; that is, He shall resist and crush your best persuasions, pride, luxury, and worldly greed. According to 1 John [5:4]: *and this is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith*. He who truly believes this, that Jesus is the son of God who led the life of humility and poverty, condemned pride, avarice, and bodily sin, is enjoined in the Holy Spirit to be strenuous in the military campaign which ought to be waged (against this). We are reinforced by the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the spiritual weapons which the apostle reckoned in last [chapter of] Ephesians: he understood faith instead of the shield, a spiritual sword, that is the word of God, the armour of justice, the helmeted hope of salvation, the lance of prayer, the preparation of the peace of the Gospel [exchanged] for weapons; chastity of mind and body for the girdle or the military belt. These weapons are invincible, because the giver of them is the Holy Spirit, unless man casts them away freely of his will, which defend the church in a spiritual fight. You are the whole strength in war and you shall fight with the ancient serpent, and you will take up the eternal kingdom. Truly Christ shall be made spiritual King, to reign with Him in virtue, and all men shall be ordered of mind and body, conformingly to the will of the lord.⁴¹

Dygon’s sermon is intended to stir his fellow priests to take action. He describes them as

‘the whole strength in war’ when armoured with the lord’s spiritual weapons and they

⁴⁰ For additional examples, see in particular the sermons of Thomas Brinton.

⁴¹ MS Magdalen 79, f. 14r: ‘In spem serpentis inimicitias penas int[er] te et m[i]ll[ita]rem; idest ecclesiam suam fidelem animam et ipsam coneret capud tuum; idest resistet et conculcabit principalem suggestionem tuam, scilicet superbia, luxuriam, et avaritiam mundanam. Pro primo Io ultimo: *haec est victoria, quae vincit mundum, fides nostra*. Qui eius vere credit, quid Iesus est Filius Dei qui duxit vitam humilitatem et pauperitatem contempnit superbiam, avaritiam, et otium carnale, ad hanc vero militiam strenuus peragendam iniunguntur spiritu sancto et roboramur donis eius septem et armis spiritualibus que nu[m]m[er]at apostolus Ephesia ultimo, sciret fidem pro scuto, gladium spiritus, quod est verbum Dei, lorica iustitiae, galeavus? spem salutis, lanceam orationis, praeparatione Evangelii pacis pro armis pedum, castitatem mentis et corporis pro balteo, seu cingulo militari. Haec arma sunt invincibilia, sicut dator eorum spiritu sanctus, nisi homo gratis et voluntaris abiciat eadem, de hac pugna spirituali cavit ecclesiam. Es tote fortes in bello et pugnat cum antiquo serpente et accipietis regnum eternum. Veris etiam Christianus efficitur Rex spiritualis; ad regendum se ipsum in virtute, et omnes vires mentis et corporis in rationem, et conformiter voluntati domine.’ Translation my own.

alone must battle the serpent. His message is clear: the Christ-knight battled for mankind and won his salvation; the priest must now actively engage with the serpent and his influence, that is sin and vice, in order to save mankind again from falling into the trappings of Satan. Free will leads man into temptation, but the priest will wage this war and take up the eternal kingdom. Dygon is clear that the defeat of sin and temptation is not easily accomplished and must include the conformity of both 'mind and body.' A mental imagining of this battle is not enough, for example through means of prayer or meditation; the body must adhere to God's will as well and thus, the priest must take up offensive armour such as the sword and lance, preaching the word and providing a model of right living. The preacher must act as Christ in body and mind, imitating him as the knight, so that his audience might be saved. Martial language is the most appropriate language within this context and Dygon recognized this and seized upon it to have the greatest impact on his audience.

The enemy which mankind is typically set against is one or all of the ubiquitous 'three enemies,' the world, the flesh, and the devil. With the rise in heretical movements in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries however, heresy is a topic that became almost as pervasive within orthodox sermons. Heresy is the focal point of the final three sermons, the first found in MS Laud misc. 706.⁴² The Laud manuscript, composed in the early fifteenth century, has anti-Lollard sentiment, particularly regarding the abuse of preaching, present throughout the collection. The Laud author, as in the Hereford sermon above, used an extended metaphor of a besieged city sent aid by its king, to describe the plight of England:

By thys worthy prince I vndurstond at this tyme Crist, Godis son of heuen, Lord
and Emperoure of alle thys wyde world. This graciouse prince has with-in His

⁴² Horner, 'Edition of Five Medieval Sermons, 111-46 and discussed in Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, 88-90, 578-82. Wenzel adopted the modern foliation provided in the manuscript, updated from Horner's original examination; both foliations will be provided, Horner's in brackets. MS Laud misc. 706, ff. 144r-152r (ff. 149r-156v in Horner).

reme a cite þat He loues tendurliche, Holy Chirche, greuousliche beseget with erowrs and heresis that be werryng amonge vs Cristen pepul in this days. Querfore He desyret gretliche to strenthe vs in the fyzt of Holy Chirche; [He] send His knyzt, the prechwr [of] þe word of God, to comfort and hert vs myztliche to withstond the perlus sawtes and sodden inuasiouns of thes curset enmys. This prechur schulde be sureliche armet with the helme of witte and discrecion, strongliche hertet with boldness of truthe and gode entencion, and truliche famet be vertuus leuyng and honest conuersaciun. For as seth Seynt Ione Crisistonne, *De Opere Imperfecto*, omelia vi, De Laude Pauli, “He that takes on hym the offys of prechyng, hym behoueth nozt to be febyl and freel in leuyng, but bold and myzty in wyt and konyng, redy as a gode knyzt to suffur dethe for the truthe and al maner of mychief.”⁴³

This is a particularly unique example, in which the author directly asserts that Christ sent preachers in the role of the knight to engage with the enemy of the Church, besieged by heresy. The qualities of a good preacher are found in one armed for war with good intention, truthful words, virtuous living, and honest conversation. Taking on the ‘office of preaching’ emboldens him as the ‘good knight’ willing to suffer death like the Christ-knight. There is no doubt as to what the Laud author is calling his colleagues to do; active engagement is not implied, it is explicit. Like Dygon, the Laud author employed the most aggressive action against heresy that his audience could relate to in the form of martial language. Like the author of other anti-heresy sermons such as Bodley 649, the Laud author, in speaking to an audience that almost certainly included churchmen and lay persons (demonstrated by the use of English), on the current state of England, is addressing in his condemnation, the entire country. Such vehement opposition to Lollardy reflects the fear of many orthodox authors over spread and resulting consequences of the Lollard heresy. Thus, in response to such hostilities, the author has directly inserted himself and his fellow churchmen into the action. They must become warriors; they must engage directly with the conflict. In light of Henry IV passing *de Heretico Comburendo* (1401), in which heretics were lawfully burned at the stake, and Thomas Arundel’s

⁴³ Horner, ‘Edition of Five Medieval Sermons, 111-12; MS Laud misc. 706, f. 144r (f. 148r).

Constitutions (1409) against heresy, the Church was actively combating heresy.⁴⁴ Allusion to the statute is made in a fervently anti-Lollard sermon of Bodley 649, in which the author says Lollards must ‘burn with the fire of contrition.’⁴⁵ The Laud author is demonstrating a similar response to the spread of heresy in which preachers are members of the army against heretics.

As we have seen discussed in chapter four, both the Christ-knight and Henry V in the form of the Christ-knight were presented battling heresy in MS Bodley 649. The author of the collection did not cease there with his metaphor however; the final two sermons include a preacher fighting against heresy, as well as an example of the audience being called into battle against sin and heresy. It is the same sermon in which the Christ-knight and Henry V appear in which we also find the priest called into action.⁴⁶ The sermon opens with the dramatic portrayal of Christ riding from heaven on his white horse, lance in hand, sent by God to save his people. The author then continued:

So pay heed how the heavenly soldier Jesus precedes you in holy behaviour, true preaching and bitter passion, and follow his footsteps. And just as he armed himself with the armour of his passion for love of you, so arm yourself with the arms of penitence for love of him and amend your life. These arms are secure enough, you are placed in safe custody. If you wish to preserve yourself within, whether you sleep or are awake, this soldier is your guard ... The demon cannot win you unless you will it, for *the strong man, fully armed, guards the courtyard*.⁴⁷

The author emphasized the necessity of true preaching (*verace predicacione*), here, an allusion to the false preaching of heretics. He continued however with a direct indictment of Lollardy. The sermon opened with the narrative of Antiochus, a king guilty of

⁴⁴ For recent scholarship on the Orthodox Reform movement and responses to both Arundel and the spread of Lollardy, see: *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth Century England*, eds. Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh (Turnhout, 2011), especially articles by: Gillespie, Ghosh, Jeremy Catto, Michael G Sargent, James Simpson, David Lepine, and Sheila Lindenbaum; Maureen Jurkowski, ‘The Arrest of William Thorpe in Shrewsbury and the Anti-Lollard Statute of 1406,’ *Historical Research* 75 (2002), 273-95; Nicholas Watson, ‘Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel’s Constitutions of 1409,’ *Speculum* 70 (1995), 822-64.

⁴⁵ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 54-77; MS Bodley 649, ff. 8r-13v, at f. 13r.

⁴⁶ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 154-79; MS Bodley 649, ff. 34r-40v.

⁴⁷ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 156; MS Bodley 649, f. 34v. The quote ends with Luke 11:21, the sermon’s theme being here repeated.

oppressing God's people, found in 2 Maccabees 11. The heavenly Christ-knight was sent to deliver God's people from this tyranny. Following the call to arms of preachers, the Bodley author returns to this opening scene:

If we wish to apply this story to the current world, by Antiochus we can understand the devil who for a long time has burdened the Church in this realm, who started wars and conflicts among us, and is the cause of the death of many both spiritual as well as corporal. This Antiochus has enlisted many men, many thousands fell to him ... He put on all the livery of Lollardy, he armed himself all with malice and bad faith, and he raised a great army against the Lord and his ministers. This war did not go on for one or two days, but from the time of Wycliffe, who was armed in heresy in every way and was the leader and commander of the devilish war.⁴⁸

The characterization of Wyclif as a commander of war is a strong message by the Bodley author, particularly because Wyclif rejected just war theory and was likely a pacifist.⁴⁹

Yet, for the Bodley author, Wyclif's condemnation as a heretic deserving excommunication certainly aligns with naming him an agent of the devil and the commander of Satan's army. The Bodley author clearly falls among those that would have had him excommunicated, if not executed. The sermon, preached to a mixed audience of clergy and laity left no ambiguity towards the Lollard heresy; in fact the sermon continues with a lengthy defence of orthodox practices attacked by the Lollards. This is the war the Bodley author calls his preachers to join alongside the Christ-knight and Henry V. The tone used suggests that this preacher was not simply using language he thought might best stir his audience into action; rather this is a preacher who believed he, his fellow clergyman and the people of England were engaged in a 'bitter battle' that required true preaching.

The Bodley preacher is not speaking allegorically; he believed a war was in progress. The Lollards had waged this war against each estate: the Church was attacked, for the Lollards 'hurled many vicious words at the poor friars, they slandered their poverty

⁴⁸ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 156; MS Bodley 649, f. 35r.

⁴⁹ Rory Cox, *John Wyclif on War and Peace* (London, 2014).

and the order that the Church approved.’⁵⁰ They provided the means in which the temporal arm seized their possessions by unearthing the treasure of the Church and they disregarded the authority of the Pope. The laity, knights and labourers alike, were attacked through false preaching and teaching, being led astray into incorrect belief, endangering their salvation. For these reasons, God sent their king Henry V to combat them. In the role of the heavenly soldier, Henry liberated the clergy from fear when ‘the old castle of the devil [was] overturned.’⁵¹ This is an allusion to Henry V’s suppression of the Oldcastle revolt.

Elsewhere in the Bodley 649 collection, the preacher names Oldcastle outright:

By the fortress that was being built but not able to stand, I understand the fortress of the devil of hell, Oldcastle and his sect, who were joined together and united in evil against the Lord God, against our gracious king, and the ministers of the Church.⁵²

To defeat this leader and his sect, God sent the ‘warrior of God, our liege lord who now is, [who] set upon it manfully and besieged it, by human calculation.’ Thus, ‘Oldcastle, for all his strength, sank and collapsed.’⁵³

Henry’s suppression of Oldcastle and the Bodley preacher’s praise of his actions are one example of the Church’s support of secular authority’s participation in stamping out heresy, and indeed their dependence on it for carrying out secular forms of punishment for spiritual crimes, as is further demonstrated by the passing of the March 1401 Act, *de Heretico Comburendo*.⁵⁴ While Lollardy was essentially a theological movement, its rise alongside major political upheavals like the 1381 Peasants’ Revolt, brought it into direct conflict with the governing class. As Margaret Aston rightly pointed out, because of the ‘structure of medieval politics and political theory...extreme and penetrating statements on

⁵⁰ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 156; MS Bodley 649, f. 35r.

⁵¹ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 158; MS Bodley 649, f. 35v.

⁵² Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 460-485, at 462; MS Bodley 649, ff. 112v-118v, at f. 113r.

⁵³ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 460-485, at 462; MS Bodley 649, ff. 112v-118v, at f. 113r.

⁵⁴ Maureen Jurkowski, ‘Henry V’s Suppression of the Oldcastle Revolt,’ in *Henry V: New Interpretations*, ed. Gwilym Dodd (Woodbridge, 2013), 103-130; Alison McHardy, ‘De Heretico Comburendo, 1401,’ in *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages*, eds. Margaret Aston and Colin Richmond (Stroud, 1997), 112-26.

the nature of the church and priesthood' had to have some bearing upon society and the state.⁵⁵ The passing of the 1401 Act is further evidence of the alignment of heresy with sedition. While the measure was aimed to suppress every religious activity not positively sanctioned by the Church, without limiting its language to those so-called 'Lollards,' Peter McNiven, like Aston, noted that the governing class had no difficulty in drawing a parallel between gathering Lollard sympathisers and the 'banding together of seditious conspirators bent on overthrowing the king.'⁵⁶ With these considerations in mind, it is easy to see why the Bodley preacher utilised martial language. Heretics were being punished for their spiritual crimes in the most violent manner possible; this could only be deemed acceptable by the established Church if, in the context of warfare, it was deemed just and necessary for the protection of God's kingdom.

This same tone is found in our final example, also from MS Bodley 649.⁵⁷ This sermon, discussed in the previous chapter, also used the narrative of Antiochus to introduce the heavenly Christ-knight's descent to deliver mankind. Like many young lords, Christ disguised himself in this battle as to not be recognized in victory. The author explained how Christ's battle has been transferred to all mankind:

Spiritually speaking: when it pleased our worthy prince Jesus to joust for us on the cross against the devil, he disguised himself in strange arms ... This coat of armour Christ took on himself in dying, in these strange arms he conquered the devil, and made us who had been slaves free. And that man might remember his glorious victory he made him a soldier and conferred on him these precious arms. As a sign of this, the Apostle *commands every Christian*, "Labour as the good soldier of Christ," labour not as soldier of the devil.⁵⁸

Here, the Bodley author, speaking the words of Paul in 2 Timothy 2, commands every Christian, preacher and layman, to labour in this same war against heresy. The Christian

⁵⁵ Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London, 1984), 2.

⁵⁶ Peter McNiven, *Heresy and Politics in the Reign of Henry IV: The Burning of John Badby* (Woodbridge, 1987), 93.

⁵⁷ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 130-53; MS Bodley 649, ff. 27r-34r.

⁵⁸ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 140; MS Bodley 649, f. 30r.

soldier is recognized by his armour, the livery of Christ, that is, love and charity. He says that ‘whoever acts’ in this livery, without giving distinction between class and even gender, ‘is of the livery Christ.’⁵⁹ He then laments over how the presence of this livery has been diminished in present times:

The soldiers of Satan, the accursed Lollards, who sow so many errors among Christians, they turn the people away from God by their false doctrine that many waver in their faith or do not love God as they ought. All such Lollards are servants of the devil, they are outside of charity. Look at the whole crowd, there is not any one in the livery of Christ.⁶⁰

Here, the author used the imperative, instructing his audience to ‘look’ around at those congregants around him. The livery of Christ – the virtues that define Christianity, such as charity, love, humility, and kindness – should be demonstrable via their actions; if not, they may be servants of the devil. The preacher is not merely asking them to check their own behaviour, but to be wary of their neighbours as well. Finally, he reminds them that with Christ as their example ‘Fall every fiend of hell on knee and dread the almighty prince Jesus, for by his armour of light they were conquered.’⁶¹ Although it is unlikely that preachers were trying to incite their congregations into actual confrontation or violence with heretics, it cannot be completely dismissed. It is more likely that audiences were encouraged towards internal, spiritual action – prayer and obedience - rather than violent action; and yet, the threat of heresy was commonly preached and aggressively combated by the ruling class.

Conclusion

The intention of this chapter has been to provide insight into whether or not martial language within popular sermons would have had any resonance with those outside the nobility and knighted classes. The evidence certainly suggests that it indeed did. Sermon

⁵⁹ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 140; MS Bodley 649, f. 30r.

⁶⁰ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 140; MS Bodley 649, f. 30r.

⁶¹ Horner, *Macaronic Sermon Collection*, 152; MS Bodley 649, f. 34r.

authors were aware that audiences required engaging and entertaining material to have their interest and attention held. Their sermon content and message were intended to be both life-changing and soul-saving; preachers were responsible for their congregants' daily and eternal lives. The result very often was the inclusion in popular sermons of martial and often violent language. Audience members that fell outside the world of 'those who fight' were still attracted to the more glamorous, to use David d'Avray's word, aspects of the warrior 'image': elevated status, power, wealth, travelling to foreign lands, and rescuing (or being) the damsel in distress. These romanticized components of the 'warrior life' influenced the laity, particularly with their increasing desire for and access to vernacular literature. The martial Christ was particularly appealing, as he provided the context for the influence of the ever-popular romance genre within the sermons they heard, while remaining an acceptable topic within the Christian framework. It was a logical choice by preachers to bring these two worlds together in their sermons. The Christ-knight image however needed to be used in a way that would resonate with their non-martial colleagues and congregants. Preachers seized upon the familiar and filled their sermons with these same themes and stories, followed with their core material, the spiritual application: the Christ-knight's war against Satan and sin, with the preacher and layman fighting alongside him. The use of martial language used to directly influence those outside the knightly community was then developed in two forms, the devotional, in order to bring clergy and laity into a meditative practice to more fully understand the martial Christ, and practical, as a means to instruct them how to engage in their daily confrontation with sin. Both were intended to fulfil the preacher's role as 'caretaker of souls,' instructing their audiences in the nature of salvation and guiding them to it. For the clergy, who already considered themselves God's representatives on Earth, modelling their lives after Christ was an established practice, both meditative and in daily living. Their role was to preach Christ's

message and save souls. With mankind's sinful nature and the constant threat of the devil's influence, martial language was an appropriate tool for preachers to employ. The Christ-knight defeated the devil with the aid of God's armour, armour in which all Christians are instructed to put on; the preacher easily inserted his fellow clergyman into the role of knight in order to take up the sword of the word of God and preach against vice and for right living. He should become the Christ-knight. Likewise, the non-martial layperson, male or female, was also called to pick up spiritual arms. In this same way, they too should become the Christ-knight. Rather than true preaching however, they were to use the weapons of right living: righteousness, justice, humility, faith, charity and peace. Only through right living, as modelled by Christ, can the layperson don God's armour and emulate the Christ-knight. While both the clergy's and laity's imitation of Christ enabled victory over sin through true preaching and right living, likewise it enabled internal success as well, expressed through affective meditation and devotion. For all Christians, from king to commoner, the martial Christ was a conduit into a divine relationship.

Conclusion

This thesis has argued that the current position of late medieval Christocentric devotion in scholarship needs to include the martial representation of Christ. This alternative image of Christ contributes to the study of late medieval culture in that it reveals that devotional culture was much more influenced by martial culture than perhaps scholars have previously acknowledged; it has done so by presenting evidence from popular sermons of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. As the primary method of mass communication throughout the Middle Ages, sermons offer historians the best means to reveal how the broadest possible audience of late medieval England's Christians were presented with diverse representations of Christ. Prior to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, martial language, sometimes violent, was utilised both by monastic authors, who used the language to transform their daily struggle with sin into a battlefield, as well as authors of crusade sermons, using similar themes to promote, encourage, and justify the crusading movement. While these early examples of martial language have not specifically revealed a Christ-knight, they are a historical precedent for similar themes in the sermons of the later Middle Ages. The language of spiritual warfare is ubiquitous in later popular sermons. Crusade sermon authors' inclusion of *imitatio Christi* provided continuity between the patristic representation of the 'Victor Christ' and the resurgence of the image of a martial Christ in the later Middle Ages. Images of the martial Christ in late medieval sermons are the legacy of crusade sermons, adapted by late medieval preachers to fit within the domestic, political, and cultural context of the Hundred Years War rather than battles in the Holy Land, but maintaining the framework of chivalric piety that crusade sermons emphasized. The representation of knights fighting non-Christian enemies in foreign lands and spiritual enemies in everyday life was a powerful image for late medieval preachers, one that would resonate with clerical audiences, knightly audiences,

and audiences of lay congregants alike. Preachers utilised the persistent awareness of warfare, at home and abroad as a means to express their message of spiritual battles in daily living. For practising knights of the period, a need to justify their violent profession within their Christian values is present in both their own writings and in popular sermons. Preachers explicated the knightly role in service to and defence of the Church in particular. Repeated discourse in writings and sermons regarding knightly behaviour and salvation presented by knights and to knights demonstrates the depth of concern held by these men and their preachers. The role of the knight presented in late medieval sermons reflected the knightly desire for a real life of penance and sacrifice, reminiscent of the role of crusaders in earlier sermons. The imitation of Christ emphasized the ideal of knighthood and thus Christ was the ideal knight.

Rather than taking the cross into foreign lands to battle a literal enemy, later Christians were encouraged to imitate Christ in their daily lives; the monastic ideal left the confines of the monastery and was preached to the masses. It was from these cultural resources that Christ's representation as a knight or soldier in later medieval sermons came to be formed. Christ's representation in a martial role, specifically his battle on the cross, culminated in the promotion of affective devotional practices for both the clergy and laity.

Identifying expressions of affective piety, and connecting them to images of Christ in martial guise, offers a new way of considering late medieval devotion to Christ. This is demonstrated by the fact that various martial Christ images contrast with the dominant images in current scholarship: the maternal and the suffering Christ. The Beloved Christ, both the lover-knight and warrior-bridegroom, has been shown to demonstrate the integration of chivalric culture, religious literature, and popular preaching. Both themes presented Christ's sacrifice and faithful love to the medieval audience through significant elements of the Passion story. Preachers desired their audiences to remember and meditate

upon Christ's Passion, both communally and in their private devotion. Recalling Christ's Passion, his suffering and death, as a battle, was intended to prompt compassionate responses from its audience. The martial Christ was then directly applied to preachers and the sermon audience, a model for them to become not just members of Christ's army, in service of him and God, but by taking on the role of the Christ-knight themselves, in their own suffering and behaviour. The meditative practice of imagining oneself present at the Crucifixion, or taking Christ's suffering onto oneself, could be achieved through the use of martial language and martial readings of common Christocentric tropes; Christ's battlefield became mankind's. Sermon authors instructed the listener to bring the pain, sacrifice, and actions of Christ into their present lives, as a means to encourage a particular image of Christ and his great sacrifice for mankind, in this case, a martial image.

In addition to being the focus of devotional practice, the martial Christ was also a model for behaviour and a tool for doctrinal instruction. Christ as the paragon of kingship provided a model for kings, that they should strive not just to be Christ's representative and vicar, but to be like Christ in their readiness to sacrifice themselves for their people. Christ was being used to associate the role of kings, in their physical battles for the kingdom, with all mankind's spiritual battles to attain the heavenly kingdom. Christ was a model of behaviour for all members of society, from king to commoner. For those hearing a message in which their king was likened to Christ, devotion to their king could operate as a conduit for their personal devotion to Christ. This representation of Christ allowed for preachers to encourage devotion to their king as a war leader following God's command and encouraged audiences to consider their kings as setting a standard of behaviour set above other standards, an ideal to be reached, and something they could reflect in their own behaviour and devotion. The Champion Christ also provided a model for its audience. While his role here was active, aggressive, and sometimes violent, a dramatic picture next

to the suffering and maternal images, the image was not contentious to the medieval audience; rather it was both appealing and identifiable. The appeal of chivalry, even as an ideal, and the 'warrior' lifestyle, was widespread with the threat of renewed warfare throughout the tumultuous times of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The use of violent language to battle Satan and sin is ubiquitous; the language of violence justifies the end result, namely morality and salvation. Thus even a combatant Christ was a model for behaviour; his fight against the devil for mankind was the precedent for mankind's continued daily fight against the same adversary. The martial Christ displayed how the Christian should live. Salvation was in part the result of right living, and thus the martial Christ was a powerful resource for preachers to use in teaching the doctrines of redemption and atonement. In order to understand the need for such sacrifice, the audience needed to understand the doctrine behind it and thus in this preachers fulfilled their role to educate the laity as well. They did so to instil a great desire for confession, penance and the remission of sin, and in some instances, to fight against heresy. The martial context was the vehicle they used to appeal to their audience, to keep them engaged, and to explain specific points of doctrine.

One of the main arguments of this thesis is that the medieval audience was exposed to a multifaceted image of the human Christ; that in addition to the suffering man on the cross, they were also presented with a martial representation, a soldier on the battlefield. This figure is reflective of the surrounding martial culture which greatly impacted devotional culture. By employing the image of Christ as a lover-knight, warrior-bridegroom, and champion, preachers offered an alternative way to approach Christ which differed in form but not purpose from those approaches better known to scholarship. These approaches have a shared purpose: that is, preachers intended to guide their audience in their devotional practices to achieve affective responses of compassion, sorrow, awe, and

gratitude. This thesis however demonstrates that this was achieved with more than the suffering image of Christ. The dual-natured Christ was accessible to both male and female audience members, including a masculinised image of Christ's suffering in the form of a martial Christ, employed to demonstrate Christ's love. The Beloved Christ motif in particular provided preachers with a means to explain the theology of Christ's love, and it enabled audience members to better understand the primary dual nature of Christ, that of man and deity. Martial language is used to express the twofold nature of Christocentric devotion as well: the martial Christ reveals his dual human nature through suffering which is mirrored in passive practices (memory of Christ's passion and suffering) and active practices (daily battle against sin). They are opposing meditative practices working together. Martial language enabled the sermon authors to utilise themes both appealing and familiar to their audiences, while simultaneously providing devotional, moral, and practical instruction.

As a result of the dramatic rise in lay education, literary advancement and enthusiasm, and a growing interest in their own spiritual matters in this period, lay congregants likewise had increased expectations of their preachers. They required not only sermons that would provide instruction on Christian teachings, but stimulating material to keep their interest. Romanticized components of the 'warrior life' appealed to and influenced the laity. The martial Christ was particularly appealing to sermon authors and their audiences because it was reminiscent of popular romance stories. Preachers knew that chivalric romance was widely popular and so it is not surprising they adapted its motifs to their own goals. It allowed preachers to use and adapt popular material and situate it within an accepted Christian framework, providing instruction and moralisations for right daily living. This right living, through the virtues of charity, humility, honesty, and love were represented by Christ's spiritual weapons used to combat sin and Satan. The metaphorical

battlefield on which Satan was defeated was transformed into a literal, daily war against sin. Christ as a model for all Christians allowed them to take up spiritual weaponry to engage in the ongoing war against the devil.

Further examination of the martial Christ would undoubtedly prove fruitful. An extended comparative study of the sermons preached throughout Europe during the same period would achieve something distinctive: was this martial image connected with the particular political circumstances of England during the Hundred Years War, or was it universal? Examination of the martial Christ within literature, drama, and art from England and Europe would also be worth consideration. The present study has attempted to demonstrate that late medieval devotional culture was considerably influenced by the martial culture of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, much more than scholars have thus far acknowledged. This suggests that expressions of belief in the late Middle Ages were considerably influenced by the surrounding culture, even when, as in this case, the surrounding atmosphere was often one of violence and warfare, contradicting Christ's emphasis on peace. Preachers adapted this martial culture to reflect their present cultural circumstances. Sermon culture was inherently combative. Rather than demonstrating that preachers borrowed from secular culture in order to explain Christianity, the evidence presented here points to preachers seeing their religion as martial. Preachers often delivered to their audiences a message of martial Christianity in which a rhetoric of violence was used to incite audiences into action, often combative and violent, against sin, and in defense of their own salvation.

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