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CHAPTER SIX

The Deadly Sins and Contemplative Politics: Gerson's Ordering of the Personal and Political Realms

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Jean Gerson adapted the pastoral and monastic deadly sins traditions in order to create an authoritative voice for himself in his court sermons. He did this by identifying the University of Paris with the Holy Spirit or the embodiment of virtue and the university's enemies with the seven deadly sins. This strategy reflected his understanding of the university's role as the fountain of truth for Christian Europe. It also, however, invited his audience to consider the university closely for the purpose of discerning whether it served sin or virtue. The relationship between the evolution of Gerson's understandings of the deadly sins and the political and intellectual contexts in which he deployed the deadly sins tradition demonstrates how Gerson simultaneously crafted his arguments to fit the needs of particular audiences while constantly revising a seemingly coherent theological understanding of the relationship between intellectual authority and the anatomy of the soul.

Modern scholars have recognized the fifteenth-century theologian and chancellor of the University of Paris, Jean Gerson (1363–1429), as an important contributor to the medieval tradition of the seven deadly sins. Gerson addressed the deadly sins in his handbooks for parish priests, his sermons to the laity and his theological treatises.¹ He also deployed the deadly sins tradition in

¹ For an overview of Gerson's treatment of temptation and each of the seven sins, see L. Mourin, *Jean Gerson, prédicateur français*, Rijksuniversiteit te Gent, Werken uitg. door de Faculteit van de Wijsbegeerte en Letteren 113 (Bruges, 1952), pp. 232–43. For a more detailed catalogue of Gerson's treatment of sin and the deadly sins, see C. Brown, *Pastor and Laity in the Theology of Jean Gerson* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 117–70, esp. pp. 123–58. For a list of Gerson's verse treatments of vices and virtues, see Newhauser, *Treatise*, pp. 30–1. Newhauser notes that the incorporation of lists of the deadly sins into penitential handbooks, like Gerson's *Manual for Simple People* discussed below, contributed to the demise of the independent genre of treatises on virtues and vices and thus the tendency on the part of modern scholars to overlook this genre. Newhauser also suggests that Gerson elaborated on the deadly sins tradition in a manner that distinguished mortal from venial instances of the sins

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sermons he delivered before the French royal court addressing issues that may be characterized as primarily political rather than pastoral, such as the papal schism and the civil strife among the French nobility.² A comparison of Gerson's various deployments of the seven deadly sins, moreover, suggests that a potent cross-fertilization occurred between his pastoral, political and theological works which encouraged him to reinforce and elaborate upon his previous deployments of the sins in each subsequent deployment.³ As a result, his treatment of the sins in his pastoral and political works seems to have influenced his understanding of the university-trained theologian's role as an agent of reform in the Church and realm. This constant elaboration on the sins explains how Gerson, who wrote most of his works to address particular institutional and political issues, can also be understood as a systematic thinker; at the same time, it demonstrates the centrality of the sins to late medieval pastoral, political and intellectual thought.⁴

Gerson's treatments of the seven deadly sins simultaneously express his theological and political aims. As previous Gerson scholarship has argued, Gerson developed his understanding of his own authority as a theologian in dialogue with his understanding of spiritual anthropology or the anatomy of the soul. Gerson's understanding of the relationships among the different parts of the soul, in turn, reflected Augustinian, monastic and scholastic discussions about how the interactions among divine grace, the intellect, the will and the passions affect an individual's ability to cultivate virtue and avoid sin. In this respect, it is perfectly possible to incorporate Gerson's treatment of the seven deadly sins into a systematic theological explanation of the relationship between the divinely established ecclesiastical hierarchy and the soul of the individual Christian.⁵

on the basis of intention. See *Treatise*, pp. 50, 95–6, 140. For a detailed discussion of Gerson's contribution to the demise of the deadly sins tradition, see Bossy, 'Arithmetic', pp. 222–33. In contrast, Morton Bloomfield suggests that Gerson's writings on the deadly sins 'were too late to greatly influence medieval literature', in *Sins*, p. 90.

- 2 Such as Gerson's sermons discussed below: 'Accipietis virtutem', 'Adorabunt eum' and 'Vivat rex', in Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres complètes*, 10 vols. in 11, ed. P. Glorieux (Paris, 1960–73), VII.2, 431–49, 519–38, 1137–85.
- 3 Gilbert Ouy has demonstrated through a careful examination of Gerson's *Opus tripartitum* that in addition to being aware of the needs of different audiences as he translated his own works from Latin to French Gerson also revised some of his Latin works after he had presented them in a pastoral context in French. This second revision suggests that his pastoral concerns did indeed inform his formal theology. See G. Ouy, *Gerson bilingue: les deux rédactions, latine et française, de quelques oeuvres du chancelier parisien*, Études christiniennes 2 (Paris, 1998).
- 4 For the purposefully political nature of Gerson's writings, see D. Hobbins, 'The Schoolman as Public Intellectual: John Gerson and the Late Medieval Tract', *American Historical Review* 108 (2003), 1308–37 (p. 1326). For the suggestion that such contextual readings of Gerson should characterize future Gerson scholarship, see B. P. McGuire, 'Introduction', in *A Companion to Jean Gerson*, ed. B. P. McGuire, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 3 (Leiden, 2006), p. xvi.
- 5 For a detailed description of Gerson's understanding of the anatomy of the soul, see

The deadly sins tradition, however, also presented Gerson with a powerful starting point from which he could explore his role as a spokesman of the university from the vantage point of a preacher or spiritual advisor not only for the individual but also, on a larger scale, for the Church and the kingdom of France. In doing so, he was able to conflate the king's soul with his political kingdom, to use the five senses as a means to insinuate how the spiritual and political realms are united, and to appropriate the trappings of courtly discourse and political symbolism for the purpose of augmenting his authority as a university-trained preacher. As a result of his conflation of the spiritual and political realms, Gerson mapped the vices, namely allegorical figures or demons thought to work within the human soul, onto the bodies of political actors such as the French nobility. This strategy allowed Gerson to express unpopular ideas and even biting political criticism in such a way that rather than banishing him from the court, the king and the princes of the blood repeatedly invited him back.⁶ As Gerson's more scholastic treatments of the theologian's authority indicate, however, he could not escape the limits of his own construction. He recognized in his own treatises addressing the authority of university-trained theologians that university-based authority claims were open to the same scrutiny that he himself applied to the laity and the crown. Theologians could exercise authority only to the extent that they could demonstrate their own victory over the sins.

The synthetic and complementary nature of the arguments Gerson presented to these three different audiences (crown, laity, and university) suggests that Gerson subscribed to a theologically consistent and seemingly systematic treatment of the deadly sins. His political sermons demonstrate, however, that he also developed his understanding of the sins to suit his political goals. In this respect, he provides an excellent opportunity for examining the relationship

S. E. Ozment, *Homo Spiritualis: A Comparative Study of the Anthropology of Johannes Tauler, Jean Gerson and Martin Luther (1509–16) in the Context of their Theological Thought*, *Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought* 6 (Leiden, 1969), pp. 49–83. For a discussion of how Gerson's understanding of the anatomy of the soul and the Pseudo-Dionysian hierarchy of the universe determined the limits of speculative and affective human knowledge, see McGuire, 'Introduction', pp. 40–9. For the implicit suggestion that Gerson's understanding of the anatomy of the soul, pastoral discourses on the deadly sins and the equation of charity with obedience worked together to form a synthetic understanding of the relationship among humans, God and society, see Brown, *Pastor and Laity in the Theology of Jean Gerson*, pp. 119–20, 164–7.

⁶ For a comparison of Gerson's success with that of less fortunate preachers and university representatives, see G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes, *Jean Gerson, Apostle of Unity: His Church Politics and Ecclesiology*, *Studies in the History of Christian Thought* 94 (Leiden, 1999), pp. 22, 27. Gerson repeatedly violated the crown's ban against publicly discussing the papal schism; see D. Taber, 'The Theologian and the Schism: A Study of the Political Thought of Jean Gerson (1363–1429)' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1985), pp. 117–20. For a discussion of Gerson's early court sermons (1389–97), see Mourin, *Jean Gerson, prédicateur français*, pp. 53–166.

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between conceptions of the seven deadly sins and their cultural and political contexts. In his political deployment of the seven deadly sins tradition, Gerson constructed a systematically informed synthesis of theological reflections on intellectual authority, monastic practice, relations between the laity and the clergy and court symbolism.⁷ This synthesis evolved with each deployment while maintaining its systematic appearance, demonstrating the impossibility of separating theological commitments from their immediate context, for these commitments gain their meaning as they are deployed and inform a worldview that must constantly correct itself in order to make sense of historical and political change.⁸

The evolution of Gerson's understanding of the seven deadly sins began with his pastoral engagement with the sins as a young scholar and court preacher. As research on the seven deadly sins has established, the sins played a central role in medieval pastoral care. In the high and late Middle Ages Europeans formulated their confessions on the basis of the seven deadly sins and could expect their pastors to encourage them to examine their consciences in dialogue with this widespread tradition that had permeated literature, art and mirrors for princes.⁹ Gerson elaborated on this pastoral role for the seven deadly sins in his handbook for preachers, *Doctrinal aux simples gens* (*Manual for Simple People*), which he wrote some time between 1380 and 1400, when the bishop of Reims endorsed it as an excellent pastoral tool. As the introduction appended to the handbook suggests, the contents were eventually examined and approved by many doctors of theology at Paris, suggesting that this handbook expressed broadly held assumptions about the basics of pastoral care.¹⁰

⁷ In this manner, Gerson's deployment of the deadly sins is much more systematic than his references to medieval bestiaries, which Dulac argues did not need to be systematically developed because his audience would have been well acquainted with the examples he used. See L. Dulac, 'Un bestiaire politique dans l'oeuvre de Jean Gerson?', in *Furent les merveilles prouvées et les aventures trouvées*. *Hommage à Francis Dubost*, ed. F. Gingras et al., Colloques, congrès et conférences sur le Moyen Age 6 (Paris, 2005), pp. 209–24.

⁸ Newhauser suggests that during the Middle Ages 'literary compositions of all kinds remained bound to a communicative situation'. For this reason he suggests that although the form of the sins and their hierarchical relationship remained somewhat constant over time, it was also a natural part of the development of the genre of treatises on virtues and vices for the relationships between the vices to change and for treatments of the deadly sins to leak into other genres such as the confessional manual. For this reason, Newhauser suggests that changes in emphasis on certain sins may be linked to changes in cultural outlook. See *Treatise*, pp. 60, 64–8, 180, 197–202. Newhauser elaborates on the sins as cultural constructions in 'Introduction: Cultural Construction and the Vices', in *Seven Deadly Sins*, pp. 1–5. A similar argument about the relationship between individual identity, worldview and specific historical positions may be elicited from M. Somers, 'The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach', *Theory and Society* 23.5 (1994), 605–49.

⁹ Newhauser, *Treatise*, pp. 85–6, 124–35, 138–42. See also Bloomfield, *Sins*, pp. 91–104.

¹⁰ Gerson, *Oeuvres*, X.2, 295. For questions about date and audience, see B. P. McGuire,

At first glance, Gerson's treatise appears to be no more than an annotated list of different guidelines for Christian behavior in which the deadly sins comprise one list among many. The *Doctrinal* includes, among other subjects, standard preaching topics such as the articles of the faith, love of one's neighbor, love of one's enemies, the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, the Ten Commandments, the five senses, the seven deadly sins, the sacraments, purgatory, the last judgment and the joys of heaven.¹¹ The topics are arranged in list form and there is no readily apparent systematic framework that brings them together to form a cohesive argument. Repeated emphases and the very few instances in which the topics of different lists mingle suggest, however, that the treatise would have served two goals that also characterize Gerson's court sermons. The handbook conveys its pastoral lessons in language that is carefully tailored to engage with the worldview of its intended audience while simultaneously emphasizing the expertise and authority of the clergy as such authority was understood within the university community.

In addition to keeping his discussions brief and writing plainly and in French, Gerson presented his message in a manner that reflected the concerns of late medieval urban life.¹² For example, in his discussion of how faithful Christians should love God with the appropriate charity, he identified the scriptural figure Job with a Parisian bourgeois, calling him the greatest *preu-domme* of the earth and emphasizing his extreme wealth.¹³ When discussing the commandment to keep the Sabbath, Gerson explained that in addition to attending church on the Sabbath and listening to the entire sermon, individuals must also avoid dancing, which becomes the occasion for the lesser of the seven deadly sins, namely, anger, envy, lust and sloth. This occurs, he elaborated, because dances cause people to be proud and to desire pretty robes and jewels in addition to turning them away from the spiritual goods they should pursue.¹⁴ He also attacked having pride in one's robes and jewels, in addition to having pride in one's lineage, wealth or high office when he addressed the deadly sin of pride.¹⁵

Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation (University Park, 2005). The work was originally thought to be written by the bishop of Reims himself because it appears under his name in the municipal library in Reims; however, Palémon Glorieux, the modern editor of Gerson's work, believed Gerson to be the author of the manual, and an expert on Gerson paleography, Gilbert Ouy, also believes this to be the case. Moreover, Ouy suggests that Gerson was probably among the university masters to approve the text and that the ideas represented in it were in wide circulation in Paris as Gerson composed his other catechetical works. See Ouy, *Gerson bilingue*, p. xv.

¹¹ Gerson, *Oeuvres*, X.2, 295–321. For the importance of catechetical treatises such as this in the development of treatments of the seven deadly sins, see Newhauser, *Treatise*, pp. 65, 71–2, 85–8, 133–5, 138–42.

¹² Gerson, *Oeuvres*, X.2, 296.

¹³ *Ibid.*, X.2, 297.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, X.2, 300.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, X.2, 302. Providing this type of detail was common to sermons and treatises on the vices, and treatments of pride frequently focused on excessively ornate clothing.

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Gerson repeatedly emphasized the relationship between Christian charity and the appropriate religious attitude and behavior of the individual parishioner. Charity, Gerson explained, causes the good Christian to thank God for his suffering, encourages him to love his neighbor and enemy appropriately and motivates him to perform acts of spiritual and corporal mercy. Gerson claimed that the performance of the deeds of mercy could save an individual from a bad death and served to extinguish the sins of a truly repentant individual who had gone to confession, in the same way that water puts out fire.¹⁶ Charity itself is demonstrated by an individual's careful attention to the Ten Commandments, which in turn also helps the individual avoid the seven deadly sins.¹⁷

In this context, the seven deadly sins become a list of destructive behaviors that place an individual's soul in peril, cause the individual to be a source of strife within the community and indicate the individual's general lack of Christian charity. For example, individuals who suffer from pride do not protect the good name of their neighbors. Those suffering from envy hold the good lives of others in contempt and foster discord between people. Those suffering anger murmur against God and physically injure others. Those guilty of avarice commit usury and fraud.¹⁸ Although Gerson does not specifically state this point, by implicit comparison it becomes clear that none of these sins is compatible with the prescriptions about charity towards God and neighbor that Gerson emphasized in his handbook. Furthermore, as Gerson stipulated in his introduction to the deadly sins, individuals succumb to the sins because they do not love God enough to keep his Commandments.¹⁹ In other words, individuals who act in accordance with Gerson's description of

See Newhauser, *Treatise*, pp. 79, 128, 155. Peter Biller observes that theologians used priests' manuals to critique contemporary social behavior as early as the thirteenth century and that their concerns may have resulted from a need to address the rise of new professions and as a result may have affected the ways in which both professional ethics and estates satire developed. See P. Biller, 'Confession in the Middle Ages: Introduction', in *Handling Sin: Confession in the Middle Ages*, ed P. Biller and A. J. Minnis, *York Studies in Medieval Theology* 2 (York, 1998), pp. 11 and 16–17. John Bossy suggests that it was Gerson's ability to elaborate on the Ten Commandments in this manner that allowed the Commandments eventually to replace the sins as the basis of confession. See 'Arithmetic', p. 222.

- ¹⁶ For the suggestion that thanking God for suffering is an expression of charity, see Gerson, *Oeuvres*, X.2, 296; for the assertion that charity encourages the Christian to love his neighbor and enemy as well as to perform the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, see *ibid.*, X.2, 298–300; for the suggestion that performing the acts of mercy should save an individual from a bad death and from sin, see *ibid.*, X.2, 299.
- ¹⁷ For the suggestion that keeping the Ten Commandments demonstrates an individual's charity, see *ibid.*, X.2, 296, 300. For the suggestion that keeping the Ten Commandments protects the individual against the deadly sins, see *ibid.*, X.2, 302.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, X.2, 302–3. In this sense, Gerson participates in a long-standing tradition of treating sin as a breach of social peace. See Biller, 'Confession in the Middle Ages: Introduction', p. 16.
- ¹⁹ In doing so, he portrayed the sins as the seven-headed beast from the Apocalypse (12: 3, 13: 1 ff.), a convention described in Newhauser, *Treatise*, pp. 163–4.

the sins demonstrate to the clergy, and to the world at large, that they do not love God as they should.

In addition to creating a means by which outsiders are able to judge how well an individual loves God, the *Doctrinal* also suggests that those who have the proper charity towards God and neighbor will respect the authority of the clergy. As part of his explanation of the commandment to honor one's father and mother, Gerson admonished those who 'serve, honor and pray to God and his mother and his saints' but do not also show honor to 'spiritual fathers, such as prelates, curates and priests or other ministers of God'.²⁰ In this way he implied that failing to show respect to the clergy indicated a failure to honor God. In his discussion of the seven sacraments, he asserted that priests are the fathers of all Christians and the light of the world. They also, when they consecrate the Eucharist and absolve sins, perform works greater than the angels are capable of performing.²¹ Moreover, sinful priests, especially priests who consecrate the Eucharist when guilty of the sin of lust, bring damnation upon themselves, but do not prevent the sacrament from working.²²

These observations suggest that Gerson's annotated list reflects a systematic theological explanation of the relationship between the divinely established ecclesiastical hierarchy and the soul of the individual Christian. Moreover, it is a systematic theological explanation that consistently emphasizes the glory and authority of the clergy. In this sense, the work is consistent with the theological framework within which Gerson's treatment of the seven deadly sins has tentatively been placed.²³ This framework, inspired in part by the work of Pseudo-Dionysius, reflected a rigidly hierarchical understanding of relations between individuals occupying distinct offices or positions within the Church. The highest orders in this hierarchy purge, illuminate and perfect the orders immediately below them. The lower orders obey the orders above them and, in turn, purge, illuminate and perfect the orders immediately below their own. The individual parishioner, who is situated at the lowest rank in this hierarchy, may only work to purify himself or herself. In this case, obedience is stressed.²⁴

²⁰ Gerson, *Oeuvres*, X.2, 300-1: 'Item qui aux peres espirituelz, comme prélas, curés, prestres ou autres ministres de Dieu, ne portent honneur; ceux qui . . . font aultres choses que on n'y doit que Dieu et sa mère et ses saints servir, honnouer et prier.'

²¹ *Ibid.*, X.2, 309.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ See n. 4 above.

²⁴ For an explanation of how Gerson applied a Pseudo-Dionysian understanding of the celestial hierarchy to the Church hierarchy of his day, see L. Pascoe, *Jean Gerson: Principles of Church Reform*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought 7 (Leiden, 1973), pp. 17-32. Pascoe observes (p. 32) that Gerson often gendered the laity feminine and emphasized its lack of power. Dyan Elliot has argued that there was a widespread tendency among high medieval clergy to represent the laity as female because women were barred from holding clerical office. See D. Elliott, *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 2004), p. 48. Peter Biller has suggested that modern scholarship has

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Thus, beginning with the articles of the faith, Gerson reminded his reader of the necessity to hold and believe these articles as 'the holy Church holds and believes them'.²⁵

Gerson's deployment of the sins as a sign of a lack of charity in a treatise that also suggests that charity is expressed through respect for the clergy echoes university arguments regarding the role of the theologian in the Church.²⁶ Such arguments, which were developed in defense of the right of university members to collect benefices *in absentia* so that they could pursue their studies, depicted theologians as the architects of the Church and the simple priests as its carpenters. Theologians protected the Church from heresy by clarifying Church doctrine and then presenting that doctrine so that all Christians could understand and follow it for their own personal benefit and also for the good of the Christian state. These arguments noted that the task of teaching was listed among the gifts of the Holy Spirit in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, and they compared the role of theologians in the Church to that of martyrs, virgins and stars in the sky. Such justifications were readily available in statements by Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent and Pierre d'Ailly, all writers whose works Gerson knew well.²⁷

placed more emphasis on the gender of the penitent than the medieval sources, which explicitly gender the penitent female only when dealing with sexual sins. See Biller, 'Confession in the Middle Ages: Introduction', pp. 14–15.

²⁵ Gerson, *Oeuvres*, X.2, 296: 'Et se par ta simplese tu as creu ou crois aultrement aucuns articles, ton entencion doit tousiours estre de croire et tenir comme sainte Eglise le tient et croit.'

²⁶ This use of the sins to support the authority of the clergy and the nobility was first deployed by Gregory I and remained influential up to Gerson's time. See Newhauser, *Treatise*, pp. 188–9. Gerson's elaboration of this theme, however, also reflected his experience as a member of the University of Paris.

²⁷ For the equation of theologians with martyrs by Aquinas and Henry of Ghent and the equation of theologians with architects by Aquinas, see I. P. Wei, 'The Self-Image of the Masters of Theology at the University of Paris in the Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46.3 (1995), 398–431 (pp. 402–3, 409–10). For a list of papal comparisons of university masters to the stars of heaven, see A. L. Gabriel, 'The Ideal Master of the Mediaeval University', *The Catholic Historical Review* 60 (1974), 1–40 (pp. 7–8). In his defense of the right of the University of Paris to censure the Dominican theologian John of Monzon, Pierre d'Ailly suggested that theologians had apostolic authority because Paul included teaching among the gifts of the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 4. See Pierre d'Ailly, *Tractatus ex parte universitatis studii Parisiensi pro causa fidei, contra quemdam fratrem Johannem de Montesono Ordinis Praedicatorum*, in *Collectio judiciorum de novis erroribus qui ab initio duodecimi saeculi . . . usque ad annum 1632 in ecclesia proscripti sunt et notati*, ed. C. Du Plessis d'Argentré, 3 vols. (Paris, 1725–36; reprint Brussels, 1963), I.2, 77. For an analysis of d'Ailly's argument and its influence on Gerson, see D. Taber, 'Pierre d'Ailly and the Teaching Authority of the Theologian', *Church History* 59.2 (1990), 163–74. Throughout this tract it is clear that d'Ailly cited all available precedents for university authority and consulted the anti-mendicant tracts written by Henry of Ghent. Gerson also frequently cited the works of Aquinas and demonstrated a familiarity with d'Ailly's treatise against Monzon in his 1389 treatise, *Gallia quae viris semper*, in *Oeuvres*, X.1, 9.

In fact, a significant part of Gerson's theological reform of the Parisian university included reviving this tradition. Gerson expressed his desire to redefine the theologian as an individual primarily concerned with pastoral rather than speculative questions in his early letters regarding the reform of the university. As Gerson imagined in a letter he wrote to Pierre d'Ailly in 1400, theologians who embraced Gerson's reform would dedicate themselves to 'the education of the people and the solution of moral questions', goals he would further through the production of a little treatise 'on the main points of our religion, and especially on its precepts, for the instruction of uneducated people'.²⁸ He seems to have fulfilled this task with his own *Doctrinal* and his many other pastoral works.²⁹ In his 1402 treatise titled *Contra curiositatem studentium* (*Against the Curiosity of Scholars*), he indicated that when the university had fulfilled this task of turning its attention from speculative to pastoral questions it would serve as a 'unique and excellent and incorruptible fountain of the study of theology, from which other schools of theology would branch off like streams'.³⁰

This ambitious understanding of the role of the university within the Church, however, did not readily translate from the university or parish context to the context of the French royal court. Kings and princes had access to sufficient wealth and power to question the relevance of sermons urging them to penitence and repeatedly expressed their disapproval of the Parisian university's attempts to shape political or ecclesiastical policies.³¹ Gerson,

²⁸ Translated in B. P. McGuire, *Jean Gerson: Early Works* (New York, 1998), p. 174. Gerson, *Oeuvres*, II, 28: 'Et pro honore Dei attendatur diligenter quanta est necessitas pro instructione populorum et pro resolutione materiarum moralium temporibus nostris. . . ita fieret per facultatem vel de mandato ejus aliquis tractatulus super punctis principalibus nostrae religionis, et specialiter de praeceptis, ad instructionem simplicium . . .'

²⁹ Bossy credits Gerson's *ABC des simples gens*, *Miroir de l'ame* and *Opus tripartitum* with exercising tremendous influence over French pastoral care. See 'Arithmetic', p. 223.

³⁰ Gerson, *Oeuvres*, III, 248–9: 'evitacionem confusionis doctrinarum, ut sicut est una fides, et unum caput in spiritualibus, sic sit unicus et praecipuus studii theologiae fons incorruptus, a quo caetera theologiae studia velut rivuli deriventur'. This treatise is a systematic elaboration upon the themes expressed in the letter. See S. E. Ozment, 'The University and the Church: Patterns of Reform in Jean Gerson', *Medievalia et humanistica* n.s. 1 (1970), 112. Early thirteenth-century theologians who were interested in the application of theology to pastoral concerns also were critical of speculative theology. See J. Bird, 'The Construction of Orthodoxy and the (De)construction of Heretical Attacks on the Eucharist in *Pastoralia* from Peter the Chanter's Circle in Paris', in *Texts and the Repression of Medieval Heresy*, ed. C. Bruschi and P. Biller, *York Studies in Medieval Theology* 4 (York, 2003), p. 52.

³¹ The French royal court under Charles VI was considered to be so taken with worldly pleasures that speakers before the court presented their arguments in allegorical form in order to convince the king and the court to pay attention. By setting up an allegorical situation and then inscribing the audience in the text, which is so constructed, speakers attempted to situate their audience so that existing cultural norms would inspire them to act in a specific manner. See V. Minet-

however, was able to overcome this challenge to his authority by adjusting the pastoral tradition of the deadly sins to meet the needs of a court audience. In the *Doctrinal*, Gerson implied that the inner state of parishioners would be revealed to others through their behavior. The possession of Christian charity would be demonstrated by victory over the sins and obedience to the clergy. In his first extant court sermon, Gerson similarly emphasized the role played by the public in discerning the king's inner state through observing his behavior.

Gerson preached his earliest extant court sermon on Ash Wednesday, 1389, in order to encourage the king to observe Lent piously.³² This sermon, *Quaerite Dominum (Seek the Lord)*, pays particular attention to the deadly sin of pride, which has cost many kings and warriors their lives and/or kingdoms. As the sermon recounts, 'As a result of pride, Saul was driven out of his kingdom, . . . Nebuchadnezzar was deposed, Holofernes was beheaded . . . and Antiochus died the most horrible death'.³³ In addition to rehearsing the expressions of pride addressed in the *Doctrinal*, such as pride in wealth or title, Gerson portrayed this sin as a particularly dangerous obstacle to the king's salvation. Pride, Gerson feared, might prevent the king from taking seriously the need for humble repentance.³⁴ In effect, pride played the same role in this sermon that a more general discussion of the deadly sins played in the *Doctrinal*. It symbolized a wrongful opposition to clerical authority and charitable Christian correction.

The sermon attacks the king's pride, first, by reminding him that all humans are made of dust and are thus equal to the extent that the king does not have dominion over them through any right of his own. Second, it defines pride as a violent wind in which a foolish human forgets he is made of dust and tries

Mahy, *Esthétique et pouvoir de l'oeuvre allégorique à l'époque de Charles VI imaginaires et discours*, Bibliothèque du XVe siècle 68 (Paris, 2005), pp. 11–18. The crown's refusal to recognize the authority of the University of Paris to determine ecclesiastical questions became apparent during the papal schism of 1378, when King Charles V forced the University of Paris to declare in favor of the Avignon Pope Clement VII by May 1379, and when university master John Rouse was imprisoned for suggesting that the schism be solved through a general council and only released when the University of Paris promised to remain silent on the issue of the schism. See A. Bernstein, *Pierre d'Ailly and the Blanchard Affair: University and Chancellor of Paris at the Beginning of the Great Schism*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought 24 (Leiden, 1978), pp. 34–9.

³² Gerson, *Oeuvres*, VII.2, 969–78. For a discussion of the date of the sermon, see Mourin, *Jean Gerson, prédicateur français*, pp. 55–7. Brian Patrick McGuire also discusses this sermon and notes that it was probably given in the royal chapel of Saint Paul. See McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation*, pp. 47–9.

³³ Mourin, *Jean Gerson, prédicateur français*, p. 132. Gerson, *Oeuvres*, VII.2, 971: 'Par orgueil fut Saul deboute de son royaume, . . . Nebugodonosor fut depose, Holofernes fut decole, . . . Antiochus mouru de la plus horrible mort. . .'

³⁴ Mourin suggests that Gerson considered pride to be a sin particular to the French royal court and aristocracy, especially prior to the onset of the mental instability of Charles VI. See Mourin, *Jean Gerson, prédicateur français*, pp. 58, 239–41.

to exalt himself above God.³⁵ Gerson then, in an imagined dialogue between himself and the king, demonstrated his awareness that the king's pride might cause the king to reject his pastoral authority. In this dialogue the king asserts that he need not be concerned with repentance because he is young and wealthy and he enjoys the title of king, among other reasons. Gerson refutes these arguments by observing that life is unpredictable and that wealth not used for charity makes a servant out of the one who guards it so jealously.³⁶ The dialogue form and Gerson's emphasis on the danger that pride presents to the king suggest, however, that it may not have been very difficult for Gerson to imagine his sermon falling on deaf ears. Gerson even reminded the king that fasting for forty days was not too great a sacrifice to make in exchange for eternal life.³⁷

In order to counter the king's pride, Gerson reminded him that all of Paris sees everything he does, to the extent that the Parisians note when he is sleeping, when he rises, when he hears mass, when he eats breakfast and when he bathes.³⁸ In other words, Gerson emphasized the fact that all of Paris was watching to see if the king behaved as a good Christian. Then Gerson asserted that the king must uproot all pleasures and inclinations of the body and the flesh so that his body will obey his spirit.³⁹ A reasonable king, Gerson intimated in this sermon, subordinates his urges to reason and therefore appears to have acted reasonably in the constant gaze of his subjects. A component of such reasonable behavior, of course, would be the careful observation of Lent. A king who did otherwise, one infers from Gerson's argument, announced to all his subjects that he was so possessed by foolish pride that he thought himself greater than God.

This ability of the king's subjects to discern his spiritual and intellectual health played a central role in Gerson's 1391 sermon, *Adorabunt eum* (*They will adore him*), which he delivered at Epiphany. Here, Gerson's deployment of the sins became more complex in response to the sermon's ambitious goals. In addition to using the deadly sins to admonish the king to behave in accordance with his Christian beliefs, Gerson sought to portray the university in Paris as an authoritative advisor to the crown in all ecclesiastical and political matters. In effect, Gerson attempted to renegotiate the relationship between the university and the French crown.⁴⁰

³⁵ Gerson, *Oeuvres*, VII.2, 970–1.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, VII.2, 972–5.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, VII.2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, VII.2, 974.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, VII.2, 976. In this sense, Gerson applied the confessor's knowing gaze, as it was constructed in confessors' manuals, to the people of Paris. They could look at the king and know what sins he was committing. For the confessor's ability to discern sin, see Biller, 'Confession in the Middle Ages: Introduction', p. 5.

⁴⁰ Gerson, *Adorabunt eum*, in *Oeuvres*, V, 519–38. For the date and context of the sermon, see Mourin, *Jean Gerson, prédicateur français*, p. 65. Morral suggests that this sermon was given to remove a royal ban against public discussion regarding

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Historically, this relationship had been fraught with tension because the university depended on the king for its mere existence and political relevance, as well as the protection of its members against the financial and physical aggression of the people of Paris, disgruntled aristocrats and royal officials. Additionally, the university, as a corporation or scholars' guild, depended on the king's willingness to support its right to govern and discipline its members in order to maintain the solidarity necessary for the cultivation of an established standard of expertise that would then allow university members to speak authoritatively regarding the disciplines in which they were trained. Similarly, the French king and the pope relied on the university's reputation as a seemingly independent body of self-governing experts when they sought the university's public backing of their programs of religious or political reform. These conditions caused a discrepancy between the way university members understood the institution's relationship with the Church and crown and the way that relationship was understood by authorities such as popes and kings. University members understood each royal and papal grant of privileges as confirmation that their unique authority was essential to the rational and moral governing of the Church and the secular realm, while kings and popes considered these concessions reflective of the value they placed on the university's obedient support.⁴¹

an end to the schism. See J. B. Morrall, *Gerson and the Great Schism* (Manchester, 1960), pp. 30–3; Taber discusses the complexities of the relationship between this sermon and the ban on discussing the schism. See Taber, 'The Theologian and the Schism', pp. 260–9. For McGuire's discussion of the sermon, see *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation*, pp. 49–51.

- 41 For the connection between the masters' independence and their political worth to popes and kings, as well as the role they played in publicly affirming papal and royal policy, see I. P. Wei, 'The Masters of Theology at the University of Paris in the Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries: An Authority Beyond the Schools', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 71 (1993), 37–63. William Courtenay has recently re-evaluated the role played by the collective decisions of the University of Paris in royal politics at the turn of the fourteenth century, noting that a careful reading of the sources suggests that Philip IV was the first king to seek the university's collective opinion on matters and to place a particular value on the opinions of theologians. Courtenay argues that Philip was so interested in obtaining a scholarly consensus that he coerced scholars and manufactured documents. See W. Courtenay, 'Learned Opinion and Royal Justice: The Role of Paris Masters of Theology During the Reign of Philip the Fair', in *Law and the Illicit in Medieval Europe*, ed. R. M. Karras, J. Kaye and E. A. Matter (Philadelphia, 2008), pp. 149–63. For a detailed discussion of the privileges the university sought from popes and kings and the violence its members sometimes suffered, see P. Kibre, *Scholarly Privileges in the Middle Ages: The Rights, Privileges, and Immunities of Scholars and Universities at Bologna, Padua, Paris, and Oxford*, Mediaeval Academy of America, Publication 72 (Cambridge, MA, 1962), pp. 132–78. For the important role played by royal sponsorship in the foundation of the University of Paris, see S. Ferruolo, 'Parisius-Paradisus: The City, its Schools and the Origins of the University of Paris', in *The University and the City: From Medieval Origins to the Present*, ed. T. Bender (Oxford, 1988), pp. 22–43. For the connection between university privileges and

This relationship had a tremendous influence on Gerson's portrayal of the university theologian's role as a preacher and counselor, which may directly reflect the limited interest in university opinions expressed by the crown in the late fourteenth century.⁴² The tensions inherent in university-crown relations exploded during the papal schism of 1378-1417. Like many of his predecessors, Charles V (r. 1364-80) had portrayed himself as a patron of the university.⁴³ He also encouraged what has been identified as the beginnings of a distinctly French humanist movement within the context of the royal College of Navarre and openly consulted with university masters regarding issues of administration and reform.⁴⁴ This happy partnership came to an end with the beginning of the schism, when a majority of the cardinals withdrew from Rome, renounced their election of Pope Urban VI and elected Clement VII in his place.

Charles V and his successors forced the university to affirm the validity of the election of Clement VII despite the fact that the countries of origin of several prominent university members had declared for Urban VI. These scholars, unable to renounce their obedience to a pope supported by their home countries, left Paris and founded universities of their own to the detriment of the authority and reputation of the University of Paris. The crown's ability to dictate such a theologically important decision for the university also publicly called into question the expertise and integrity of the university theologians by forcing them to authenticate the royal opinion on the schism despite the fact that there was no consensus among university members regarding this issue.⁴⁵ Historically, however, theologians believed that

the cultivation of a culture of expertise, see S. Ferruolo, *The Origins of the University: The Schools of Paris and their Critics, 1100-1215* (Stanford, 1985), p. 300; and J. M. M. H. Thijssen, *Censure and Heresy at the University of Paris 1200-1400* (Philadelphia, 1998). For the university's confusion about the relationship between its privileges and authority, see Bernstein, *Pierre d'Ailly and the Blanchard Affair*.

⁴² N. McLoughlin, 'Gerson as Preacher in the Conflict between Mendicants and Secular Priests', in *A Companion to Jean Gerson*, pp. 249-91. Douglass Taber suggests that the arguments made by Pierre d'Ailly in support of the University of Paris in its cases against the chancellor of Paris John Blanchard and the Dominican theologian John of Monzon in particular influenced Gerson's understanding of the theologian's authority in the Church. See Taber, 'Pierre d'Ailly and the Teaching Authority of the Theologian', pp. 163-74; and Taber, 'The Theologian and the Schism', pp. 256-7.

⁴³ For the favoritism Charles V showed the University of Paris prior to the schism and the effect of the schism on university-crown relations, see Bernstein, *Pierre d'Ailly and the Blanchard Affair*, p. 28.

⁴⁴ For the royal encouragement of humanistic studies in Paris under Charles V, see G. Ouy, 'Humanism and Nationalism in France at the Turn of the Fifteenth Century', in *The Birth of Identities: Denmark and Europe in the Middle Ages*, ed. B. P. McGuire (Copenhagen, 1996), pp. 108-21. For the role of the College of Navarre in royal politics under Charles V and Charles VI, see N. Gorochov, *Le Collège de Navarre de sa fondation (1305) au début du XV^e siècle (1418): Histoire de l'institution, de sa vie intellectuelle et de son recrutement*, *Études d'histoire médiévale* 1 (Paris, 1997), pp. 321-561.

⁴⁵ Posthumus Meyjes, *Jean Gerson, Apostle of Unity*, pp. 19-23.

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their role in the Church required them to obey their conscience in all rulings touching on the faith regardless of any threats from political and ecclesiastical authorities.⁴⁶

More importantly, perhaps, the king's demand contradicted the university's traditional explanation for its privileges and intellectual authority, which ascribed to the university, and its theological faculty in particular, the role of 'breast-plate of the faith'.⁴⁷ The university, as its members claimed to understand it, served to prevent France from succumbing to heresy, and in the process preserved France's reputation as the most Christian kingdom ruled by the most Christian king. Gerson promoted this opinion in many of his writings.⁴⁸ In *They will adore him*, Gerson applied this argument directly to the schism. He reminded Charles VI that unlike most kings who are consecrated with earthly oil, Charles was consecrated with holy oil from the flask that God had sent to bishop Remigius of Reims for the baptism of Clovis. After emphasizing Charles's spiritual consecration and his consequent responsibility to defend the Church, Gerson observed that Jerome had praised France because it was free from heresy, that the strength of Charles's Christian faith is evident in the love and affection he has shown the University of Paris and that Charles will outdo all of his predecessors as a defender of the Church by putting aside political ambitions for the purpose of solving the horrible papal schism.⁴⁹

Gerson's suggestion that the king's identity as the most Christian king ensured that he would listen to the university's advice regarding the schism, as well as all other sermons and requests that he placed within this narrative of royal power, demonstrates his determination to frame university requests and accomplishments within a much broader symbolic context defined by nascent French humanism and the university's reputation as a guardian against heresy. In *They will adore him*, Gerson used the seven deadly sins tradition to frame this long-standing defense of the university's status within the realm. Moreover, he did so in a way that disguised his assertion of the unquestionable expertise

⁴⁶ For the theologian's obligation to obey his conscience at all costs, see Wei, 'The Self Image of the Master of Theology', pp. 422–8.

⁴⁷ See Pope Gregory IX, *Parens scientiarum*, in *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, ed. H. Denifle and E. Chatelain, 4 vols. (Paris, 1889–97), I, 137, no. 79. To some extent, Paris theologians attempted to live up to this reputation during the thirteenth century by actively addressing the concerns raised by Catharism in their sermons and treatises. See P. Biller, 'Northern Cathars and Higher Learning', in *The Medieval Church: Universities, Heresy, and the Religious Life: Essays in Honour of Gordon Leff*, ed. P. Biller and B. Dobson, Studies in Church History, Subsidia 11 (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 25–53.

⁴⁸ See, for example, *Gallia quae viris semper*, in Gerson, *Oeuvres*, X.1, 9–10; *Pax hominibus*, in *ibid.*, VII.2, 772; *Rex in sempiternum vive*, in *ibid.*, VII.2, 1005; *Veniat pax*, in *ibid.*, VII.2, 1100; *Vivat rex*, *ibid.*, VII.2, 1137. I discuss this dynamic in 'Gerson as Preacher in the Conflict between Mendicants and Secular Priests'.

⁴⁹ For Gerson's references to Clovis and Jerome, see *Oeuvres* VII.2, 522–3; for his suggestion that the king demonstrated his faith by showing his love for the university, see *ibid.*, VII.2, 530; and for his suggestion that Charles will outdo all of his predecessors, see *ibid.*, VII.2, 534.

of university-trained theologians as an expression of pastoral concern regarding the spiritual health of the king reflected in the state of his kingdom. This strategy allowed Gerson to express political criticism in such a way that it fell under his natural jurisdiction as a preacher.

Gerson accomplished this feat by elaborating on the monastic tradition of 'using the deadly sins to measure the spiritual progress and probity of adherents to the ascetic and contemplative life. This tradition, attributed to the early monastic writer Evagrius of Pontus, focused on the damage that certain forces, which Evagrius ambiguously identified as both evil thoughts and demons, might inflict on the spiritual state of the aspiring contemplative monk. Evagrius warned monks to exercise constant vigilance against these forces.⁵⁰ Similarly, Gerson's sermon focused on the disorder that the sins bring to the soul they have conquered, the methods available to the will to combat these sins and the means by which the king's discerning subjects would be able to determine whether or not their king had successfully employed these methods. Implicit in Gerson's suggestion that the king's subjects may readily discern the state of his soul is the idea that the king who has not conquered the sins is not fit to rule. Through this conflation of the king's spiritual state with his fitness to rule, Gerson brought the king's public policy under the preacher's jurisdiction.

Gerson's claim that the king's policy regarding the schism fell under the jurisdiction of the preacher and university theologian depended on his careful placement of the deadly sins within the sermon as a whole. Focusing on the theme of Epiphany, Gerson explained that the three kings and their gifts of myrrh, gold and frankincense represent the three different kingdoms or realms the king of France was responsible for governing. These were the personal kingdom of the king's own soul, the worldly kingdom of France and the spiritual kingdom of the Church. It was the personal realm, the realm falling entirely within the preacher's jurisdiction, that Gerson directed the king to guard with diligence in order to prevent the enemy of all humans, namely the devil, and his hideous and horrible offspring, the seven deadly sins, from leading the king's soul into danger. Gerson followed this warning with a procession of the seven deadly sins: pride, anger, lust, avarice, sloth, envy and gluttony, along with several daughter sins, including presumption, disdain, vainglory, recklessness, frenzy, desire for revenge, sadness, drunkenness, lying, hatred, detractions and 'other beasts without number'. All of these deadly sins, in alliance with the enemy, Gerson warned the king, assault the personal realm, namely the soul.⁵¹

These sins will be opposed, Gerson argued, only if the king's 'noble heart' or 'free will' sits on the throne of reason, discretion is its chancellor, truth

⁵⁰ C. Stewart, 'Evagrius Ponticus and the "Eight Generic Logismoi"', in *Garden of Evil*, pp. 3–34; Newhauser, *Treatise*, pp. 99–108.

⁵¹ Gerson, *Oeuvres*, VII.2, 524: 'autres bestes sans nombre qui tout d'un accort avec le pechie, le villain tirant, font assaut a ce royaume . . .'

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provides the counsel, justice and mercy are the provosts and bailiffs, providence is the chariot, understanding his messenger and humility his subjects and knights.⁵² In other words, Gerson described the king's soul as a political realm governed by spiritual and political virtues. This is the first instance in this sermon in which Gerson suggested that a king who governed himself well could be readily recognized by the composition and behavior of his counselors and appointees. As the sermon progressed, Gerson continued to elaborate upon this argument, which he had first deployed in his 1389 sermon, *Seek the Lord*.

If free will sits on the throne of reason, Gerson explained, the four passages to the soul will be closed to the enemy. Gerson identified these passages as the ears, which are subject to flattery and adulation; the eyes, which are subject to false love; the mouth, which is subject to false speech; and the heart, which is subject to pride. If the passages are guarded well, Gerson continued, the realm will exist in peace and tranquility. In this manner, Gerson's warning implies a connection between the king's spiritual health and the health of his public kingdom.

The most significant of these four passages for our understanding of Gerson's rhetorical strategy is the ears. The ears, if not properly guarded, Gerson elaborated, will fall under the influence of Adulation, who is born of Avarice and has no concern for the damage she inflicts on her lord or her people as long as she gains whatever she wants. Worse, she will bring with her Pride and Presumption and cause her lord to hate those loyal counselors who love him and to promote those who are unworthy in their place. Such was the state, Gerson observed, of the personal realms of Xerxes of Persia, Ahab of Israel, Nebuchadnezzar and Holofernes.⁵³ Gerson's evaluation of these kings, however, depended on his knowledge of them as historical actors rather than on any actual knowledge of their spiritual state. In other words, Gerson's use of these kings confirms the implication in his sermon that the king's behavior provides his subjects with a window into the state of his soul.

Gerson, however, seems to have considered these implicit connections between the king's inner and outer states to be insufficient. He elaborated on the dangers of insufficiently guarded ears for the purpose of emphasizing this connection. He warned Charles VI, who was known for his willingness to accept advice, to protect himself from such dangerous adulation by soliciting advice from 'people and counselors who love nothing above God, the faith, and Christianity'. Otherwise, Gerson admonished, the king's wicked counselors might cause him to do wicked things that would damage the honor of his good reputation.⁵⁴ Gerson thus divided the king's potential counselors into two opposed groups: those who loved God and those who flattered the king for the sake of fulfilling their greedy desires.

⁵² *Ibid.*, VII.2, 525.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, VII.2, 525–6: 'les gens et conseillers qui sur riens aiment Dieu, la foy et crestiente'.

Having already implied that the king's choice of counselors would announce to his discerning subjects whether or not the king had conquered the deadly sins, Gerson alluded to the identity of both the 'counselors who love nothing above God' and 'the wicked things' advised by avarice-born Adulation that could cost the king his reputation as the most Christian king. In the sermon's conclusion, Gerson discussed the king's governance of the spiritual realm, which Gerson had defined earlier in his sermon as the estate of the clergy.⁵⁵ When Gerson delivered this sermon, Charles VI was planning to march to Avignon and then to escort Pope Clement VII from Avignon to Rome. Once in Rome, Charles planned to vanquish Clement's opponent and place Clement on the papal throne, thus solving the papal schism.⁵⁶ Gerson warned that such a war would only cause Jews and Saracens to rejoice. Furthermore, he implied that if the king had been informed of the university's suggestions on this matter, he would have followed them instead of planning to solve the schism by force.⁵⁷ The juxtaposition of this claim with Gerson's careful distinction between counselors who love God and those driven by avarice implies that Gerson considered the university to be the only counselor appropriate to a king who had conquered the deadly sins.⁵⁸

In the process of making this argument, Gerson skillfully manipulated the existing discourses about the role the five physical senses played in the pursuit of Christian truth and spiritual perfection. In classical and early Christian literature, the senses were recognized as the passage through which the soul interacted with the world and therefore were considered dangerous openings through which deception and temptation could enter the soul and lead it astray. Thus, Plato portrayed the individual who allowed his senses to guide him as a man driving a chariot pulled by out-of-control horses.⁵⁹ Elaborating on this tradition, Philo of Alexandria illustrated the temptations represented by the senses in the portrait of a man with two wives, Pleasure and Virtue. In Philo's depiction, Pleasure is accompanied by a retinue of other vices including Recklessness and Faithlessness and promises to provide her husband with pleasures to satisfy each of the five senses: sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, VII.2, 521.

⁵⁶ See Mourin, *Jean Gerson, prédicateur français*, p. 65.

⁵⁷ Gerson, *Oeuvres*, VII.2, 532.

⁵⁸ Taber has also argued that Gerson's sermon, *They will adore him*, expressed an understanding of the university-trained theologian's role in society that Gerson consistently maintained in his later works. In particular, Taber focuses on Gerson's equation of theology's role within the political and ecclesiastical realms with the role played by reason in the personal realm. See Taber, 'The Theologian and the Schism', pp. 261–5. When this sermon is examined in comparison with the existing deadly sins tradition, an additional aspect of Gerson's portrayal of the University of Paris as reason appears. This is Gerson's conflation of the personal realm with the political realm and subsequently the deadly vices with actual political actors.

⁵⁹ L. Vinge, *The Five Senses: Studies in a Literary Tradition*, Acta Regiae Societatis Humaniorum Litterarum Lundensis 72 (Lund, 1975), p. 24.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

These classical explorations of the role played by the senses in differentiating between pleasure and virtue predated the development of the deadly sins tradition, which primarily concerned itself with the quest for monastic perfection and therefore was as concerned with spiritual vice as with sensory temptation.⁶¹ However, the two traditions did not develop in isolation from one another, and as Morton Bloomfield has suggested, it is possible that Philo's feminine personifications of Pleasure and Virtue may have influenced the *Psychomachia* of Prudentius, which explored the deadly sins tradition through an allegorical battle for the soul of humankind fought between feminine personifications of the virtues and vices.⁶²

Moreover, the tradition of the five senses became an integral part of the Christian tradition because of its use by Augustine of Hippo in his exploration of the individual's inability to find Christian truth without divine assistance. In his *Confessiones*, Augustine suggested that neither truth nor God could be found through the efforts of the unaided physical senses. Rather, only after the senses had been rightly ordered by an individual's love for God and the gift of divine grace, could the individual apply the senses to the world and arrive at the only truth they were capable of announcing, namely the glory of God's creation.⁶³

Like the deadly sins, the senses also played an important role in monastic hagiography, which emphasized the ability of the devil to manipulate appearances for the purpose of inviting the aspiring monk to sin. Thus, the devil caused a silver container to appear in the desert to tempt Antony of Egypt to commit the sin of avarice and appeared disguised as Christ to tempt Martin of Tours to commit the sin of pride.⁶⁴ For this reason, the Christian tradition of spiritual discernment emphasized the necessity of testing visions to see if they occurred as the result of divine inspiration, mental delusion or demonic possession.⁶⁵ This widespread belief in the devil's ability to deceive the senses persisted throughout the Middle Ages and into the early modern period. For example, elaborating on early Christian and medieval distrust of the senses,

⁶¹ Newhauser, *Treatise*, pp. 99–103.

⁶² Bloomfield, *Sins*, pp. 64–5.

⁶³ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessionum libri XIII* x.34–5 and 40, ed. M. Skutella, rev. L. Verheijen, CCSL.27 (Turnhout, 1981), pp. 182–6, 190–1. For the potential destabilizing effect of the senses and the need for an 'education of the senses', see R. Newhauser, 'Peter of Limoges, Optics, and the Science of the Senses', in *Pleasure and Danger in Perception: The Five Senses in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. Special issue of *The Senses and Society* 5,1 (2010), 28–44.

⁶⁴ Athanasius, *Vita sancti Antonii monachi* 11.9–11, ed. H. W. F. M. Hoppenbrouwers, in *La plus ancienne version latine de la vie de S. Antoine par S. Athanase: Étude de critique textuelle*, *Latinitas Christianorum primaeva* 14 (Utrecht, 1960), pp. 91–2; and Sulpicius Severus, *Vita S. Martini*, ed. J. Fontaine, 3 vols., *Sources Chrétiennes* 133–5 (Paris, 1967–9), III, 306–8.

⁶⁵ For concern about the authenticity of women's visions that centered on the connection between these visions and the five senses, see Elliott, *Proving Woman*, pp. 208–11.

some early modern authors portrayed them as doors to the soul through which 'temptation, vice and evil spirits' could all easily enter.⁶⁶

Gerson's personification of avarice-born Adulation may be understood within this context. She appears as a feminine allegorical personification of a vice, and the king's willingness to listen to her demonstrates his inability to govern his senses. The fact that she enters through the ears is all the more significant because it is through the ears that one should hear the word of God and be moved towards Christian behavior.⁶⁷ What is most significant about this figure, however, is that Gerson's deployment of her allowed him to conflate the monastic and pastoral traditions of the deadly sins. By doing so, he shifted the focus of his sermons from the king's behavior to the king's advisors.

Gerson suggested, in both the *Doctrinal aux simples gens* and *Seek the Lord*, that specific behaviors indicated the presence of specific sins. He also suggested that an individual's behavior demonstrates the individual's inner state. Members of the laity who broke the Ten Commandments, committed the seven deadly sins or disrespected the clergy, Gerson reasoned, demonstrated to all that they did not love God with Christian charity. Kings who failed to observe Lent, following Gerson's reasoning, indicated that they were so proud that they did not fear God. Such connections between specific behaviors and vices were an established part of the deadly sins tradition as it was expressed in moral treatises and confessional literature.

In *They will adore him*, however, Gerson claimed that the people of Paris, the French kingdom and the entire world could also see the vices personified as they interacted with the king. This struggle, explored first by Evagrius in the *Praktikos* and later represented as an allegorical battle by Prudentius in the *Psychomachia*, traditionally took place inside the mind of the individual.⁶⁸ In other words, Gerson turned the mind of the king inside out by conflating it with the king's political realm. In the context of this royal mind, now visible to the entire world, the University of Paris played the role of the allegorical virtues, while those of the king's advisors who disagreed with the university played the role of the allegorical vices. It was no longer necessary to infer the state of the king's soul from his behavior. This state was plainly visible in the company he chose to keep and the advisors he chose to heed.⁶⁹ Moreover, having been mapped

66 S. Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford, 2007), p. 24.

67 Augustine, *Confessionum libri* 11.8, ed. Skutella, p. 199; and Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, pp. 26–7.

68 Newhauser suggests that even though Gregory I altered the deadly sins tradition by applying it to monastic and political communities rather than to the efforts of the isolated ascetic, the tradition remained through the twelfth century a means of impressing 'the authority-based structure of Christian moral thought' upon 'the individual conscience', *Treatise*, pp. 187–91.

69 Minet-Mahy notes that the conflation of the body politic with the king's body was an established tradition by Gerson's time. See Minet-Mahy, *Esthétique et pouvoir*, p. 359. Minet-Mahy also argues that the purpose of the allegory was to identify the author as an advisor to the prince through the use of an imaginary scene that

onto actual political actors, namely the university and the king's advisors, the virtues and vices walked freely about in the world as real individuals who could save or threaten the state as their nature directed them.⁷⁰

The carefully constructed slippage between the personal, political and spiritual realms that characterizes this sermon may have allowed Gerson to make his point without raising the king's anger. The king could not easily object to Gerson's advice that he choose as his advisors individuals 'who love nothing above God', and Gerson never explicitly identified the king's actual advisors as the embodiment of avarice-born Adulation. Thus, the sermon left the king free to denounce flatterers while continuing to listen to his habitual advisors, and perhaps as a result, the sermon was not successful in meeting its immediate political goals. Evidence suggests that Charles VI was still planning to solve the schism by force for at least one month following Gerson's sermon.⁷¹ Gerson, however, was invited to return to the French royal court as a preacher. The crown's continued willingness to hear Gerson preach about the sins, and his further elaboration upon this theme, suggest that both parties viewed these arguments as a form of useful communication. Additionally, in his later court sermons, Gerson continued to deploy the deadly sins tradition as justification for an extension of university authority into arguably political affairs, and thus he elaborated on both the university's function as the visible embodiment of the king's spiritual virtue or reason and the idea that the deadly sins walked abroad in France in the persons of the king's wicked advisors.

One and a half years later, in his sermon *Accipietis virtutem* (*May you receive the virtue*), Gerson urged the king of France to avoid additional wars with England, even if pursuing peace cost the king worldly honor and territory.⁷² Gerson delivered the sermon on Pentecost, shortly after peace talks between England and France had been called off because of Charles VI's poor health.⁷³ Recognizing that his argument ran counter to the values of the royal court, Gerson denounced the heresy that argued that theology prevents a sovereign

will inspire the prince to accept allegory's message of reform. See *ibid.*, p. 47. Her argument, however, is concerned with the efficacy of the writer's message rather than with the struggles for institutional authority engaged in by Gerson on behalf of the University of Paris.

⁷⁰ Minet-Mahy notes that by 1437, theatrical presentations of the vices were incorporated into royal ceremonies. See *ibid.*, p. 364. Gerson's political critiques and discernment treatises, however, indicate that in his understanding the presence of the vices in the world had moved beyond the theatrical.

⁷¹ Taber, 'The Theologian and the Schism', p. 118 n. 8. McGuire suggests that it was Gerson's political innocence that allowed him to deliver this sermon without incurring the king's wrath. See McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation*, p. 51.

⁷² Gerson, *Oeuvres*, VII.2, 446.

⁷³ For the date and context see Mourin, *Jean Gerson, prédicateur français*, pp. 77–9; Morrall, *Gerson and the Great Schism*, p. 33; and McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation*, pp. 55–7.

from governing well.⁷⁴ In fact, he structured the sermon to identify the University of Paris with the Holy Spirit and the advocates of war with idolaters and knights of the devil.⁷⁵

In the first section of this three-part sermon, Gerson established that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles for three reasons. These were to help the apostles defend themselves against the seven deadly sins, to give them the courage to be martyrs and to provide them with the wisdom necessary to lay the foundations of the early Church.⁷⁶ For this reason, Gerson explained, all Christian states must be governed in accordance with theology, inferring that in Gerson's time the study of theology fulfilled the role played by the Holy Spirit during the apostolic period. In his concluding argument Gerson urged the king to arm himself with the shield of firm belief and the sword of true wisdom and to forgo further war with England. Furthermore, he warned the king that those who promote war 'wish to nourish themselves and their horses by letting them come into battle against poor people, desiring to live off human flesh and drink human blood'. These individuals, Gerson warned, 'are the enemies of Christianity, opponents of the holy Church, fomenters of schisms' and 'guest-houses of the devil'.⁷⁷ A king who followed their advice, Gerson implied, was no better than the idolaters of Greece and Rome who were famous for waging war against the entire world contrary to the obligation to love one's neighbor.⁷⁸ Gerson concluded, however, that he knew that Charles VI would not be won over by these forces because it seemed that the king had the Holy Spirit in his soul and wished to defend and increase Christianity by seeking peace.⁷⁹ In this manner, he identified the university's theologians, or at least the anti-war message forwarded by these theologians, as the king's defense against the sins and thus the guardian of the king's soul, directing the king's actions in the same manner that the Holy Spirit had guided the apostles.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Gerson, *Oeuvres*, VII.2, 439.

⁷⁵ For the knights of the devil, see *ibid.*, VII.2, 434. For idolaters, see *ibid.*, VII.2, 439.

⁷⁶ For the Holy Spirit as a defense against the sins, see *ibid.*, VII.2, 432–3; for the martyr's dependence on the Holy Spirit, see *ibid.*, VII.2, 434–7; for the Holy Spirit as a teacher for the early Church, see *ibid.*, VII.2, 437–8.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, VII.2, 445: 'qui veulent nourrir eulx et leurs chevaux par laisser venir bataille contre le poure people desirent vivre de chair humaine et boyre de sang humain, . . . Et peult on bien affermer que telez sont ennemys de crestiente, contraires a saincte esglise, fauteurs de scismes, hostelleries de diable . . .'

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, VII.2, 439.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, VII.2, 449.

⁸⁰ Douglass Taber argues that Gerson conflated the university with the apostles in this sermon. See Taber, 'The Theologian and the Schism', pp. 274–80. It is possible that, as Taber argues, Gerson did intend to compare theologians to the apostles when discussing the courage the apostles drew from the Holy Spirit which allowed them to oppose injustices; however, Gerson also likened prelates and 'the knights of Jesus Christ' to the apostles, urging both groups to be guided by the Holy Spirit. See Gerson, *Oeuvres*, VII.2, 441.

The Deadly Sins and Contemplative Politics

Gerson continued to elaborate on the University of Paris as a source of divine inspiration and the guardian of the king's soul against his avarice-driven flatterers in his 1405 sermon, *Vivat rex (Long live the king)*.⁸¹ In this sermon, Gerson described the university as the daughter of the king, who sent out her eyes to survey the entire realm of France for the purpose of noting disturbances and inequalities and bringing these to the king's attention.⁸² Gerson suggested that this visionary daughter of the king, who served as a feminine personification of divine Wisdom, could recognize the sins of the kingdom. In this manner, he created a role for her that was not unlike that played in contemporary hagiography by actual women visionaries whose special relationship with God allowed them to detect the hidden sins of others.⁸³

Gerson's visionary daughter of the king reported disturbances everywhere and described a realm turned upside-down, in which people suffered violence when they deserved justice and persecution when they deserved defense, to such an extent that young girls were violated, married women engaged in prostitution and sacred places were profaned.⁸⁴ Such a disordered state is the state that Gerson predicted in *They will adore him*, when he suggested that the sins wanted to attack the soul and warned the king against listening to the voice of avarice-born Adulation.⁸⁵ It is not surprising then, that *Long live the king* explained the disastrous state of the French realm with reference to the presence of the sins: 'falsity, sloth, lust and injustice'.⁸⁶ Alluding to his earlier description of the daughter of the king sending her eyes over France, Gerson suggested that the king send his own gaze over all things for the purpose of eliminating the influence of avarice, pride, presumption, hate, carnal pleasures, lying and duplicity.⁸⁷ He then generously offered the help of the University of Paris, who as the mother of wisdom, he explained, was accustomed to the exercise of discretion.⁸⁸ Only after establishing the visionary authority of the university did Gerson offer his specific suggestions for judicial, fiscal and spiritual reform.⁸⁹

With this depiction of the visionary university as the embodiment of divine wisdom, Gerson explored to the fullest extent the claim to spiritual and political authority that he first advanced in *The Manual for Simple People* and elaborated in his sermons *Seek the Lord* and *They will adore him*. By equating the

81 For the date and context, see Mourin, *Jean Gerson, prédicateur français*, pp. 169–75. See also McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation*, pp. 187–9.

82 Gerson, *Oeuvres*, VII.2, 1138–40.

83 For the ability of visionary women to discern the sins of others, see J. A. McNamara, 'The Rhetoric of Orthodoxy: Clerical Authority and Female Innovation in the Struggle with Heresy', in *Maps of Flesh and Light: The Religious Experience of Medieval Women Mystics*, ed. U. Wiethaus (Syracuse, 1993), pp. 9–27 (p. 18).

84 Gerson, *Oeuvres*, VII.2, 1138.

85 See n. 55 above.

86 Gerson, *Oeuvres*, VII.2, 1150.

87 *Ibid.*

88 *Ibid.*, VII.2, 1154.

89 *Ibid.*, VII.2, 1173–85.

Parisian university with charity, reason and divine wisdom, Gerson placed it and its theologians in charge of discerning which agents posed a threat to the order of the Church and the French kingdom in the same manner that monastic authors argued that reason or wisdom should help the soul discern which impulses are sinful and which are not. In other words, this all-seeing visionary daughter of the king, the embodiment of divine wisdom, fulfilled the same role as other allegorical personifications of the virtues such as Lady Poverty and Lady Philosophy, which were sometimes called daughters of God.⁹⁰ As Barbara Newman has suggested, engaging in literary and theological dialogues with these allegorical figures allowed individuals to reach conclusions which seemed to transcend their own intellectual experience and perceived capacities.⁹¹

Such allegorical play, however, also presented the theological authority of the University of Paris as an object of discernment. That is to say, by juxtaposing his personification of the Parisian university as the embodiment of divine wisdom to the agents of vice, he invited his audience, which was accustomed to the ambiguous nature of the sins, to test her virtue. For this reason, Gerson went out of his way to demonstrate the good intentions of his visionary daughter of the king by emphasizing the daughterly affection she felt for the king and assuring his audience that because the daughter of the king relied upon the king for her protection and wellbeing, her advice could be trusted.⁹² Even when Gerson invited his noble audience to examine the daughter of the king and recognize that her advice reflected the university's collective expertise in the fields of philosophy, medicine, ethics, economics, politics, law and theology, he quickly indicated that this advice was given free of political calculation. He assured his audience that the daughter of the king worked for peace rather than for one side or the other and that she offered the same advice to all who were interested.⁹³

The state of near civil war that characterized politics in Paris at the time when Gerson delivered his sermon *Vivat rex* may explain why he invited his audience to apply the same method of discernment to the university's conduct that Gerson's sermons applied to the king. The fact that Gerson himself applied this type of scrutiny to university-trained theologians as part of his theological reform, however, suggests both the widespread relevance of the sins as a means of measuring authentic piety, rule and truth and Gerson's own commitment

⁹⁰ B. Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 2003), pp. 13–14.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1–50. Brian Patrick McGuire suggests that between 1403 and 1408 Gerson's works attempted to apply divine law to human situations as a means of coping with near civil war in France and the papal schism. See McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation*, p. 196.

⁹² For the assurance that the university spoke with daughterly affection, see Gerson, *Oeuvres*, VII.2, 1137. For the assertion that her dependence upon the king's protection made the daughter of the king trustworthy, see Gerson *Oeuvres*, VII.2, 1138.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, VII.2, 1144–5.

to theological consistency. Gerson applied such scrutiny to the theologians of the University of Paris in his treatise titled *Against the Curiosity of Scholars*. In this treatise, Gerson attacked the tendency of theologians to pursue useless questions for the purpose of serving their own intellectual pride, suggesting that pride produced the daughter sins curiosity and singularity, which in turn caused discord within the university.⁹⁴ Such discord, Gerson argued, turned the university into a tower of Babel and prevented it from fulfilling its main purpose. According to Gerson, the university existed to prevent 'the confusion of doctrines'.⁹⁵ Like his court sermons, this treatise suggests that others will be able to measure the success the Parisian theologians enjoyed in their battle against their particular sins, pride and curiosity, by their behavior. In this case, Gerson intimated that theologians would demonstrate their victory over pride and curiosity through their ability to overcome their internal disagreements, their pursuit of a contemplative form of theological knowledge based upon a strong belief in scripture rather than intellectual pride and their ability to communicate their ideas in clear, simple language.⁹⁶

Gerson consistently argued that victory over the sins identified the good parishioner, the good king and the good theologian. Although the sins proved rhetorically useful and he elaborated upon their meaning in each subsequent political deployment of the tradition, he seems to have constructed his arguments in dialogue with his deeper theological understanding of the relationship between the pursuit of virtue and the pursuit of truth.⁹⁷ In this manner, Gerson's deployment of the sins in his pastoral and political works complemented his writings on theological reform, which urged university theologians to adopt a contemplative approach to their quest for theological knowledge.⁹⁸ As the examples of Antony of Egypt, Evagrius and Saint Martin suggest, the battle against the sins and the pursuit of contemplative truth were one and the same. Moreover, as these ascetics and the theological writings of Augustine of Hippo emphasized, those pursuing virtue and truth constantly struggled with their own doubts about the validity of the information presented to them by their senses and the moral ambiguity encountered when vices masked themselves as virtues.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, III, 230.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, III, 248–9: 'evitacionem confusionis doctrinarum, ut sicut est una fides, et unum caput in spiritualibus'.

⁹⁶ Gerson makes these points throughout his treatise but reiterates them forcefully in the conclusion of his treatise. See *Oeuvres*, III, 249.

⁹⁷ See n. 5 above. Also, Steven E. Ozment, following André Combes has already argued for a 'unified pattern of reform' that connected Gerson's theological reform, as expressed in his letter to Pierre D'Ailly and his treatise *Against the Curiosity of Scholars*, with his mystical theology and ecclesiastical solutions to the papal schism. His deployment of the sins would suggest that his political reform is also part of this synthesis. See Ozment, 'The University and the Church', pp. 111–26 (p. 121).

⁹⁸ See n. 30 above.

⁹⁹ R. Newhauser, 'On Ambiguity in Moral Theology: When the Vices Masquerade as Virtues', trans. A. Németh-Newhauser, in *Sin: Essays on the Moral Tradition in the*

The ambiguity inherent in the interrelated deadly sins and contemplative traditions contributed to Gerson's understanding of the theologian's task and authority. In an early treatise on spiritual discernment, Gerson emphasized the difficulty theologians encountered in the practice of determining the authenticity of the spiritual experiences they themselves had or witnessed in others. He noted that those who were 'verbose, babbling, stubborn, rebellious and given to the worst of habits' to the extent that they paid more attention to wine and food than to examining their own behavior were not fit for the task.¹⁰⁰ In this sense, the theologian's ability to fulfill his role in society differed from that of the priest.¹⁰¹ As Gerson assured his audience in his *Doctrinal aux simples gens*, sinful priests could successfully perform the sacrament, although they would burn in hell for doing so. Proud theologians, like sinful parishioners and sinful kings, however, would be deceived by their sin, and as a result, their advice would be misleading. Gerson's recourse to rhetorical and theological traditions, which stressed the constant scrutiny of self and others, invited the scrutiny of theologians. At the same time, it also encouraged collaboration between the laity, crown and theologians by inviting them to work together to fight the dangers presented by the sins through a process of humble scrutiny of themselves and others. It is this collaborative aspect of the sins tradition that may have allowed Gerson to condemn the crown and nobility so completely in his sermon *Vivat rex*. This sermon described in detail the ways in which their luxurious living, exorbitant taxation, pillaging and judicial extortion left poor parents unable to feed their crying children.¹⁰² And yet it is a tribute to Gerson's successful strategy when addressing the nobility that he could hold a mirror up to the nobility's vices without alienating his audience.

Western Middle Ages, Collected Studies (Aldershot, 2007), essay I. For a summary of the connections that Gerson drew between moral certainty and natural perception that suggests that Gerson's thought contributed to a late medieval receptiveness to skepticism, see R. Schüssler, 'Jean Gerson, Moral Certainty and the Renaissance of Ancient Scepticism', *Renaissance Studies* 23.4 (2009), 445–62.

¹⁰⁰ For the suggestion that this text pays particular attention to many ways theologians and other learned men might fall into error during their pursuit of contemplation, see W. L. Anderson, 'Gerson's Stance on Women', in *A Companion to Jean Gerson*, p. 301. Gerson, *Oeuvres*, III, 38–9: 'quales verbosi, garrulosi, protervie, contentiosi moribusque pessimis dediti, et plus ad epulas vinaque gustu discernendum, quam ad actus suos dijudicandum industrii et seduli . . . '.

¹⁰¹ See n. 22 above.

¹⁰² Gerson, *Oeuvres*, VII.2, 1170–80. For a detailed summary of the critiques Gerson forwarded in this sermon, see McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation*, pp. 187–9.

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Early Modern Culture

The Tradition of the Seven Deadly Sins

Edited by

Richard G. Newhauser and Susan J. Ridyard



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