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Discretio in Middle English Spiritual Advice, c. 1350–1450

by

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Abstract

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This dissertation shows how the "discernment" discourse in late medieval England shaped the form of thought and the form of life for enclosed religious, and how laypeople in their turn used it in the same way. The term *discretio*, latinate and monastic in origin, was already centuries old by the time it began to be used to sharpen specific technical definitions in vernacular contemplative advice. Additionally, it had a double meaning in these texts: a monastic sense, which I call "ascetic prudence," or the moderation of ascetic exercises; and a visionary sense, *discretio spirituum*, a spiritual gift that helps individuals trace the source of their impulses and visions. In both of these applications, the mechanism of *discretio* differed depending on who was using it. When others like spiritual directors and theologians used signs to test a dévot's practices or visions, he used what I call "semiotic evaluation" or "semiotic discernment"; when the dévot him- or herself tracked the trajectory of internal impulses or mindset, he or she used what I call "hermeneutic evaluation" or "hermeneutic discernment." Middle English contemplative texts used both of these mechanisms to teach their audiences the proper form of thought and the proper form of life, though they usually did not name *discretio* explicitly (though occasionally translating it as *discrecyon* or *wis*).

More importantly, these texts reframed *discretio* for a wider audience. Rather than describing a purely self-directed spiritual gift, *discretio* represented in the newer context of the papal schism and various continental heresies a way for spiritual directors to test and delimit the spiritual authority of their advisees and readers. Clerically-authored works like *The Scale of Perfection*, *The Chastising of God's Children*, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, and *The Myroure of Oure Ladye* demonstrate how this worked for their increasingly mixed religious and lay audiences. Translating *discretio* from a latinate to vernacular context, however, did not limit it to a discourse of clerical authority. Vernacular readers learned that although they should rely upon their advisor's judgment for maintaining the proper form of life, they ought to regulate their own form of thought. The works of two renowned English female visionaries, Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe, are cases in point. They show that the late medieval English discernment discourse was unstable and incoherent, and that non-male practitioners could use it as a tool to think through theological problems and questions of spiritual authority. Ultimately, *discretio* in Middle English spiritual advice enabled rather than limited vernacular readers' spiritual authority and the literary expression of their sometimes-singular forms of life.

My introduction explains the state of current scholarship on *discretio* and explores the historical usage of the Latin term and its translation into Middle English in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Most scholars characterize discernment as comprised of only *discretio spirituum*, and describe it as a late medieval male professional (clerical, medical, and inquisitorial) discourse that especially targets female dévots and visionaries, and their spiritual authority. I demonstrate, however, that there is more to the practice than a set of criteria formulated by male professionals for testing the authenticity of others' spiritual experience, which I designate "semiotic evaluation." Early Christian authors like John Cassian and Augustine of Hippo deploy terms depicting the objects of *discretio* in order to describe the regulation of one's own thought, which I call "hermeneutic evaluation." Early Middle English texts like the *Ancrene Wisse* and Richard Rolle's *Form of Living* also use varied terms to describe this self-regulation. These texts set a precedent for late medieval English discernment, which inherits a wider range of valid spiritual authorities.

The first chapter, "Teaching *Discretio* in Advice for the Contemplative Life," discusses the dissemination of discernment in its dual mechanisms, semiotic and hermeneutic evaluation, through *The Scale of Perfection*, *The Chastising of God's Children*, and *The Cloud of Unknowing*. The authors of these vernacular works propose different forms of discernment based on readers' presumed level of contemplative expertise. To counteract any misdirected religious enthusiasm in novices or intermediate (Proficient) contemplatives, Hilton in the first part of the *Scale* and *The Chastising of God's Children* emphasizes the spiritual director's expertise in semiotic discernment, obedience to which results in the reader's ascetic prudence and maintenance of the correct form of life. The *Scale*'s second part and *The Cloud of Unknowing*, however, introduce hermeneutic discernment as the Perfect contemplative's self-regulation of thought, the mastery of which is equivalent to the height of contemplation itself. Thus, these latter works argue that hermeneutic discernment confers on the Perfect authority to lead potentially singular lives since correct form of thought leads to the correct form of life.

The second chapter, "*Discretio* as Form of Thought," focuses on the assumption of spiritual authority by a particular reader, Julian of Norwich. Analogous moments in the Short Text and Long Text attest to her use of hermeneutic discernment, and a specialized type of discernment that I call affective discernment, by revealing the formal traces of the process of her personal contemplative experience. I show that in the Short Text, Julian uses the word "stirrings" to mark moments of doubt about her expertise in *discretio spirituum*, which then become the very framework for her Long Text. These moments in which discerning the spirits operates most clearly in the Short Text actually reveal a theological crux, the disjunction between the coexistence of a loving God and human sin, which she exposes in the later text. Indeed, the same passages on discernment are reconfigured in the Long Text into the visions of the Lord and Servant and of Mother Christ in order to reconcile this theological disjunction. Julian, therefore, uses hermeneutic and affective discernment as intellectual tools to work through her theological doubts, and as spiritual ones to confirm the Holy Spirit's guidance in the translation of her visionary experience into legible texts. Moreover, she demonstrates that *discretio* is not merely a clerical instrument of surveillance and authorization: any contemplative reader could gain spiritual and literary authority by mastering discernment as a form of thought.

The third chapter, "Adapting *Discretio*," explores how monastic writers alter discernment to respond to the mixed lay-monastic readership of Sheen Priory and Syon Abbey in the early fifteenth century. I use Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* and four works composed for the Syon-Sheen monastic complex—the *Speculum devotorum*, the *Speculum inclusorum*, *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*, and *The Orcherd of Syon*—to show how the Sheen and Syon brethren taught *discretio* for various religious exercises, and particularly for holy reading. Because Syon-Sheen ministered to its community members through books, applying discernment to reading was an essential skill for their contemplative practice. Like the fourteenth-century spiritual directors before them, these writers advocated for the use of different types of *discretio* based on the reader's religious status: semiotic discernment for lay readers and hermeneutic discernment for monastic readers. This vocational separation allowed lay readers to use imaginative sentential biblical interpretation to act "meekly" toward the text, while it allowed monastic readers to use self-reflection prompted by the text to order their thoughts. The separation of discernment's senses along vocational lines reveals how Syon-Sheen simultaneously strove to become the center of English devotional life while also policing the boundaries of spiritual authority, which now belonged in gradations even to the laity. *Discretio* continued to be tied up in the discourse of clerical authority into the fifteenth century.

The fourth chapter, "Unifying *Discretio*," deals with the ramifications of discernment's vocational divide in the second quarter of the fifteenth century. I argue that an exemplary layperson, Margery Kempe, seeks to establish her semi-religious lifestyle by unifying the two types of *discretio* in her *Book.* She uses "lay" semiotic discernment, ascetic prudence and meekness to text and to spiritual advisors, to attain to the higher level of "monastic" hermeneutic discernment, or knowledge of self and of God. Like Julian of Norwich before her, she uses hermeneutic discernment as an intellectual tool to examine her own theological crux: the basis of the spiritual authority conferred on herself by mystical speech. In Book 2, Kempe creates a disjunction between God's authority and that of her spiritual director in order to investigate whose judgment ultimately authenticates her speech. She concludes that God's judgment relativizes all human judgment, which undermines the utility of using *discretio* to authenticate her speech to begin with; but even so, *discretio* is useful as a means to articulate this understanding. The demonstration that God's authority stands behind her mystical speech establishes her text's authority and the validity of the mixed contemplative life that she pursues.

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List of Abbreviations

CCSL – Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CSEL – Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
EETS – Early English Text Society
MED - Middle English Dictionary
PL – Patrologia Latina
SC – Sources Chrétiennes
TEAMS – Teaching Association for Medieval Studies

Preface

The conventional modern account of *discretio spirituum* generally focuses on the discernment of spirits for visions and revelations by spiritual directors and theologians starting in the thirteenth century.[1] These male clerics use physical criteria like facial expressions, bodily posture, and tone of voice, as well as moral criteria like demeanor, meekness toward others, and adherence to church doctrine to test for the authenticity of visions and revelations. If certain signs are present in the visionary, the director judges the vision to derive from a divine, demonic, or human source. If the vision is judged to be sent from God, then it may be written down to be shared abroad, and it may even be used to verify the sanctity of the visionary him- or herself.

I find this account, however, lopsided toward a narrative of surveillance and control, and most significantly, I find that it is incomplete. Middle English literary evidence shows that *discretio spirituum* was used more widely than for authenticating visions and revelations. The "spirits" could actually move contemplatives to pray, fast, console, confess, meditate, cry, and a whole host of other non-revelatory activity. Often, the terms *discrecyon* or *discret* are related to regulating these impulses to non-revelatory activity, and moreover, while often applied to spiritual directors, they are also applied to the contemplative directly. In other words, there is at least one distinction that the main scholarly narrative overlooks: the use of *discretio spirituum* by oneself as opposed to that used by others.

I use the wider term *discretio* as my object of study in order to distinguish the different senses of *discretio spirituum* that I have recognized in premodern sources, namely, "ascetic prudence," or the moderation of penitential and devotional practices, and the "discernment of spirits," which as others have noted is the process by which the source of visions and revelations is identified. In both of these applications, however, I also discovered that the mechanism of *discretio* differed depending on who was using it. When others like spiritual directors and theologians use signs to test a dévot's practices or visions, he uses what I call "semiotic evaluation" or "semiotic discernment"; when the dévot him- or herself tracks the trajectory of internal impulses or mindset, he or she uses what I call "hermeneutic evaluation" or "hermeneutic discernment." My hope is that by exploring the latter mechanism in relation to the former, I will open a space in scholarship to consider *discretio spirituum* as an intellectual tool that visionary writers used to propagate and shape their own visions and forms of life.

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[1] The exceptions are Wendy Love Anderson, "Free Spirits, Presumptuous Women, and False Prophets: The Discernment of Spirits in the Late Middle Ages," Ph. D. diss., University of Chicago, 2002; Wendy Love Anderson, *The Discernment of Spirits: Assessing Visions and Visionaries in the Late Middle Ages* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011); and Stefan Podlech, *Discretio: Zur Hermeneutik der Religiösen Erfahrung bei Dionysius dem Kartaüser* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 2002). Cf. Rosalynn Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices: The Discernment of Spirits in the Writing of Late-Medieval Women Visionaries* (Suffolk: York Medieval Press, 1999); Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003); Dyan Elliott, *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, and Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Barbara Newman, "Possessed by the Spirit: Devout Women, Demoniacs, and the Apostolic Life in the Thirteenth Century," *Speculum* 73 (1998): 733-70.

Women and Discretio spirituum

There is no doubt that *discretio spirituum* used by male spiritual directors and theologians had negative and oppressive effects on women. Semiotic evaluation was an effective way in shaping the image of "legitimate" contemplatives, and modern scholars have described the myriad ways that this image regulation impinged on women's religious expression.[2] Specifically, because women's religious expression was often conceived of as bodily in nature and actually performed as such, male clerics by using semiotic evaluation quickly conflated the ecstatic female body with the demoniac's. Women's scrupulosity in confession also tended to vilify them as possessed by demons rather than God. Women, in other words, were in the unique position of being the easiest targets of semiotic discernment.

It is also true, however, that women were not the only targets of semiotic discernment. While Middle English advice texts teaching discernment often stage their address to women religious, manuscript transmission shows that the actual historical audiences of such texts were both men and women. Because I am interested in the different senses of *discretio spirituum* and their divergent mechanisms, semiotic and hermeneutic evaluation, I assume that contemplatives may either be male or female. I alternate between using male and female pronouns throughout the dissertation accordingly. Interestingly, although the texts that stage female audiences tend to represent them as novices, the case studies in chapters 2 and 4 show that women were also taught hermeneutic discernment. In these chapters, I use female pronouns following the genders of the authors Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich. Whenever a text stages the gender of an audience, I follow those conventions for pronoun usage.

[2] See Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*; Elliott, *Proving Woman*; Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit*.

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Introduction

[Tunc discrecio] This lady and hire Maydenis meke
Of this mannis creawance weren fful glad
This ladies thanne vnto hym speke
To been of good chere they hym bad
ffor Mercy besilye aye thow bee seke
ffor lyif un leeffull that thow hast lad
– *Speculum Misericordie*, ll. 929-34

For discretion is the mother of all virtues, as well as their guardian and regulator.
– John Cassian, *Conference 2,* Chapter 4

In a 1939 PMLA article, Rossell Hope Robbins made available for the first time a little-known (and still little-known) Middle English poem called the *Speculum Misericordie*.[1] Though he describes it as "a tissue of many fifteenth-century doctrinal commonplaces bound together by a rather prosaic allegory," Robbins also calls attention to the fact that the poem "stands apart from any main stream of allegorical development" due to one of its central figures, the Lady Discrecio.[2] Throughout the poem, she and her seven daughters representing the virtues of Humility, Charity, Patience, Labor, Largesse, Abstinence, and Chastity, advise a stubborn young man who is on the brink of death to repent of his sins and ask God for mercy. The advice of Discrecio and her brood goes unheeded, however, until Discrecio acting as a Lady Philosophy of sorts reminds the sinner that "God myghtte have take thy sowle thee froo / And thee have dampned for evere more / But hee thee sparede and dede nowght soo / By cavse hee wolde thow saved were."[3] In other words, she reminds him of the love and mercy God has already shown, which ought to persuade him that God would grant more mercy should he confess. This word finally bowls him over, figuratively and literally, and once he awakens from his faint, repents while calling on a group of saints whom she and her daughters had cited previously.

While Discrecio does not have the last word in the poem, she acts as the sinful youth's main interlocutor. Arguably, her speeches do more work than all seven of her daughters' speeches combined; indeed, their allegorical characters seem to come to life only in the youth's responses to them. In short, Discrecio appears to be the engine of the young man's 976-line didactic verse confession. Yet as Robbins argues at the end of the article, she is most interesting "for she is not widely known."[4] Though he cites her appearance in a number of fifteenth-century works—*Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, the *Mirror de l'Omme*, *The Assembly of Ladies*, and even *Everyman*—and her role as guide in Hawes' *Example of Virtue*, none of the works account for the origin of her enigmatic appearance as confessor and general spiritual advisor of the wicked layman in the *Speculum Misericordie*. How might a mother figure stand in for a male confessor? Or, even setting aside her allegorical personhood, how might a layman be absolved without an

[1] Rossell Hope Robbins, "The Speculum Misericordie," Publications of the Modern Language Association 54, no. 4 (1939): 935-66.
[2] Robbins, "The Speculum Misericordie," 937.
[3] Robbins, "The Speculum Misericordie," 960.
[4] Robbins, "The Speculum Misericordie," 965.

actual confessor at his deathbed? What does it mean for a layman to use or obey discretion to begin with?

Discretio is the main concern of this study. In it, I argue that fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century English vernacular works of spiritual advice, especially about devotional practices like contemplation, prayer, meditation, and reading, show how *discretio* was an exercise fundamental to the contemplative life. It was used to shape both the form of life and form of cognition for vowed religious and devout laity alike. Moreover, in the cases of Julian of Norwich's *Revelations* and Margery Kempe's *Book*, I demonstrate how it succeeded in doing so. I hope to lay the groundwork for explaining its unusual personification in the *Speculum Misericordie* and its appearance by name in a wide range of fifteenth-century devotional literature by analyzing its treatment in Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*; *The Chastising of God's Children*; *The Cloud of Unknowing*; Julian of Norwich's *Revelations*; Nicholas Love's *Mirror*; a number of texts associated with the Brigittine abbey of Syon and the Carthusian charterhouse at Sheen; and Margery Kempe's *Book*. It develops, through the dissemination of such works in late medieval England, into a popular (in the sense of "renowned" and "of the people") virtue while remaining a practice in the background of the same works. Sometimes it is explicitly mentioned, but more often than not, it is only implied. To whatever extent it is named explicitly, however, these works' use of *discretio* as a tool of spiritual agency for readers of all stripes revises a narrative of a vernacular theology used mainly for censorship and control of non-clerical, non-male writers and readers.[5] While *discretio* is never fully freed from the discourse of clerical authority and female submission in these works, neither is it fully contained within it.

Moreover, *discretio* not only recontextualizes these canonical works of religious prose within a wider web of spiritual direction and lay religious instruction, but it also fundamentally changes how we, as modern readers, might understand their contents. For Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe especially, it provides both a framework for authorizing visions and mystical

[5] See Bernard McGinn, *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics: Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Marguerite Porete* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 1-14; 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; Nicholas Watson, "Visions of Inclusion: Universal Salvation and Vernacular Theology in Pre-Reformation England," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27, no. 2 (1997): 145-87; Nicholas Watson, "The Middle English Mystics," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 539-65. For a revised definition of "vernacular theology" that is less agonistic, see Vincent Gillespie, "Vernacular Theology," in *Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature: Middle English*, ed. Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 401-20; Vincent Gillespie, "Chichele's Church: Vernacular Theology in England after Thomas Arundel," in *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England*, eds. Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 3-42; Ian Johnson, "Vernacular Theology / Theological Vernacular: A Game of Two Halves?," in *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England*, eds. Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 73-88; Linda Georgianna, "Vernacular Theologies," *English Language Notes* 44, no. 1 (2006): 87-94.

speech, and an impetus for writing.[6] Indeed, it would seem that these female mystics understood *discretio* to endow individual practitioners with a specifically discursive spiritual authority.[7] If men could hold spiritual authority *ex officio*, women could, through *discretio*, hold spiritual authority *ex verbo*. In a sense, the transmission of *discretio* beyond the monastery to lay readers may only be of secondary importance to scholars of literary history compared to how it reshapes our understanding of Kempe's *Book* and the relationship between Julian's Short and Long Texts. More specifically, this study will trace the development of the two senses of English *discretio*, which are divided based on patristic and medieval Latin usage: the first sense refers to monastic moderation of external behaviors and practices, which I call "ascetic prudence," and the second sense refers to mystical discernment of internal impulses, more widely known as *discretio spirituum*. The second sense is more widely known due to the various biblical references to prophecy related to this term, especially John's warning to "test the spirits" concerning false prophets (1 John 4:1) and Paul's pairing of prophecy and the "discernment of spirits" in his catalogue of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:10).[8] Origen was the first to relate the charism of interpreting prophecy to the practice of sifting out false prophets, which was popularized by St. Antony's use of it in Athanasius of Alexandria's *Vita Antonii*.[9] Both Augustine of Hippo in *De*

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[6] For *discretio spirituum* in Julian of Norwich's and Kempe's writing, see Bernard McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism, 1350-1550*, The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism, 7 vols., Vol. 5 (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2012); Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, "*Discretio spirituum* in Time: The Impact of Julian of Norwich's Counsel in the *Book of Margery Kempe*," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium VII: Papers Read at Charney Manor, July 2004*, ed. E. A. Jones (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 119-32; Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, "The Making of *The Book of Margery Kempe*: The Issue of *Discretio spirituum* Reconsidered," *English Studies* 92, no. 2 (2011): 119-37; Virginia Langum, "Discretion in Late Medieval England," Ph. D. diss., Cambridge University, 2011; Rosalynn Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices*.

[7] For female discursive authority, see John Coakley, "Women's Textual Authority and the Collaboration of Clerics," in *Medieval Holy Women in the Christian Tradition c. 1100-c. 1500*, eds. A. J. Minnis and Rosalynn Voaden (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 83-104; Claire M. Waters, *Angels and Earthly Creatures: Preaching, Performance, and Gender in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Linda Olson, "Did Medieval English Women Read Augustine's *Confessiones*? Constructing Feminine Interiority and Literacy in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," in *Learning and Literacy in Medieval England and Abroad*, ed. Sarah Rees Jones (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 69-96; Ian Johnson, "*Auctricitas*? Holy Women and Their Middle English Texts," in *Prophets Abroad: The Reception of Continental Holy Women in Late-Medieval England*, ed. Rosalynn Voaden (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996), 177-97; Felicity Riddy, "'Women Talking About the Things of God': A Late Medieval Sub-Culture," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 104-27; Mary Carpenter Erler, *Women, Reading, and Piety in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[8] All references to the Latin Vulgate are cited from the *Douay-Rheims Bible* website, http://www.drbo.org/.

[9] Anderson, *The Discernment of Spirits*, 22-28. For the Greek text, see G. J. M. Bartelink, ed., *Vie d'Antoine*, SC 400 (Paris: Cerf, 1994). I have used the English translation by Robert T. Meyer, *St. Athanasius: The Life of Saint Antony* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1950).

Genesi ad litteram and *Confessiones*, and Gregory the Great in *Dialogues* built upon the Antonine gift of discerning the spirits in their expositions of vision and dream theory, though both were only recognized as authorities on *discretio spirituum* in the late Middle Ages.[10]

The lesser known sense of ascetic prudence draws from the life of St. Antony in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, from which John Cassian draws in his second *Conference*.[11] In this conference, when Abbot Moses talks about *discretio*, he not only describes it as a gift of the Holy Spirit that enables one to distinguish whether something is from God or the devil (*discretio spirituum*),[12] but he also depicts it as a moral virtue taught by spiritual elders for the act of monitoring thoughts and their resultant behaviors,[13] specifically "to protect us from either excess" of too much or too little asceticism.[14] This monastic model of *discretio* was emphasized by Cassian's immediate successors, and was disseminated through the Rule of St. Benedict, which prescribed the *Conlationes* as regular reading.[15] By the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas could equate *discretio* and *prudentia,* from which I draw my own descriptor.*[16]* In sum, the Latin word, *discretio*, retained both senses after the fifth century, although individual authors may have emphasized one sense more than the other. Middle English *discrecion* and its related terms seem to have translated *discretio*'s multivalence, which only grew more complex in the late Middle Ages.

By the end of the twelfth century, *discretio spirituum* for the first time became a contentious issue upon Pope Innocent III's composition of *Cum ex iniuncto*,[17] which specified that the right to preach cannot simply draw from the claim of being sent by God, but rather that it

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[10] Anderson, *The Discernment of Spirits*, 28-33. Augustine of Hippo, *De Genesi ad litteram* 12.6 in PL 34, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1844-64), cols. 458 ff. and *Confessiones* 6.13 in *Confessions*, ed. James J. O'Donnell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* 4.50, as *Grégoire le Grand: Dialogues*, 3 Parts, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, SC 265 (Paris: Cerf, 1978-80), 172-76.

[11] Anderson, *Discernment of Spirits*, 28, 33-37. *Conlationes* 2 as Eugène Pichery, ed., *Jean Cassien: Conférences I-VII,* SC 42 (Paris: Cerf, 1955).

[12] *Conl.* 2.9 in Pichery, 119-20: "Quomodo ergo adquiri debet cupimus edoceri, aut quemadmodum utrum uera et ex deo, an falsa et diabolica sit possit agnosci."

[13] *Conl.* 2.11 in Pichery, 123: "Hoc igitur modo ad scientiam discretionis uerae peruenire facillime poterimus, ut seniorum uestigia subsequentes neque agere quicquam noui neque discernere nostro iudicio praesumamus"; *Conl.* 2.20 in Pichery, 101: "Hanc igitur tripertitam ratione, oportet nos iugiter obseruare et uniuersas cogitationes quae emergunt in corde nostro sagaci discretione discutere, origenes earum et causas auctoresque primitus indagantes, ut quales nos eis praebere debeamus ex illorum merito qui eas suggerunt considerare possimus."

[14] *Conl*. 2.16 in Pichery, 131: "Omni igitur conatu debet discretionis bonum uirtute humilitatis adquiri, quae nos inlaesos ab utraque potest nimietate seruare."

[15] Anderson, *Discernment of Spirits*, 35-36.

[16] Anderson, *Discernment of Spirits*, 36. She notes that the equivalence is addressed in F. Dingjan, *Discretio: Les origines patristique et monastiques de la doctrine sur la prudence chez Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Assen: van Gorcum, 1967), 229-50.

[17] Anderson notes that Innocent III may have been reacting specifically to unauthorized preachers belonging to the Waldensian community at Metz (*Discernment of Spirits*, 48-49). Cf. Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 73, 76.

must be demonstrated "by working miracles or through special witness of the Scriptures."[18] While Hildegard of Bingen, Joachim of Fiore, and Elisabeth of Schönau were not asked to formally "prove" the source of their prophecies earlier in the century, the growing popularity of the "new mysticism"—the various lay religious movements that were marked by visionary narratives, especially by and about women; vernacularity; and informal communities or other unusual living arrangements[19]—and the continuing consolidation of a papally-led church hierarchy after the eleventh-century Gregorian Reform culminated in "the earliest set of guidelines for distinguishing between true and false prophecy in the post-Augustinian church."[20] These guidelines were disseminated through their inclusion in the *Decretales* collected under Pope Gregory IX between 1230-1234, and only became fuel for the debate over Joachism and its reception by the Franciscan and Dominican orders through the early fourteenth century.[21] In effect, *discretio* from its earliest medieval reception was entangled with questions about who held authority within the institutional church.

At the same time, twelfth- and thirteenth-century scholastic developments in medicine and the introduction of sacramental confession during the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 associated *discretio* with misogynistic practices. Because the male confessor held the authority in various contexts to pass judgment on female spirituality, women fell prey to institutionalized gender biases about the authenticity of visions, belief, and religious experience. According to thirteenth-century medical treatises on the humoral makeup and spiritual physiology of men and women, for instance, the female body was considered more easily entered and controlled by evil spirits than the male body.[22] Thus, fifteenth-century exorcism manuals "were carefully scripted as 'self-interpreting' rituals that authorize a narrow spectrum of interpretation to viewers and to the demoniac herself" where the male cleric is aligned with the divine and the "female victim" is aligned with the demonic.[23] Similarly, the interpenetration of sacramental confession with judicial confession in the early thirteenth century paved the way for using inquisition and evidentiary proof as the protocol for assessing both heretics and candidates for canonization.[24] For women, this meant that confessors sought substantive physical proof of their sanctity, even to harmful extremes.[25] It also meant that scrupulosity, as a potential virtue or vice that women were thought to be more susceptible to physiologically, put them in danger of confessing themselves culpable in heresy trials.[26] In short, the marked physicality of women's spirituality made assessments of spiritual authenticity, including *discretio spirituum*, rely on external signs

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[18] In *Die Register Innocenz' III*, ed. Othmar Hagender et al. (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Academie, 1979), 2:273: "Non sufficit cuiquam nude tantum asserere quod ipse sit missus a Deo, cum hoc quilibet haereticus asseveret, sed oportet, ut astruat illam invisibilem missionem per operationem miraculi vel per Scripture testimonium speciale."

[19] Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism*, 1200-1350, The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism, 7 vols., Vol. 3. (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 25.

[20] Anderson, *Discernment of Spirits*, 42-49, at 49.

[21] Anderson, *Discernment of Spirits*, 50-80.

[22] Caciola, *Discerning* Spirits, 140-61, 207-22.

[23] Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 26, 225-73; cf. Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 205-9.

[24] Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 9-43, 119-230.

[25] Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 183-90.

[26] Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 218-30.

that could only be interpreted by male professionals, whether confessors, theologians, or physicians.[27]

Discretio spirituum specifically takes on associations with heresy and inquisition in England after the translation and transmission of Alfonso of Jaén's *Epistlola solitarii ad reges,* a defense of the visions of St. Birgitta of Sweden, in the late fourteenth century after the start of the Great Western Schism.[28] This occurs among other English translations of various Continental texts of revelatory theology, which display a clerical interest in expanding the topics of religious instruction while remaining vigilant about textual intrusions of Continental heresy.[29] Nevertheless, because concern did grow over the textual transmission of heresy in England at this time, clear guidelines about interpretive agency of internal impulses take a backseat to delineating a framework of accountability to a spiritual superior within which to enact that agency in texts of spiritual advice. For instance, in the English *Epistola* the spiritual authority of its mystical subject, Birgitta, is subjected to her advisor's judgment by *discretio spirituum,* which emphasizes that he verify her impulses by whether or not she leads a virtuous form of life.[30] Like

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[27] For wide-ranging monographs on the physicality of women's spirituality, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast, Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991); Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995); Nancy Bradley Warren, *The Embodied Word: Female Spiritualities, Contested Orthodoxies, and English Religious Cultures, 1350-1700* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010). For specific studies on misogynistic aspects of the male professional discourse, see Claire M. Waters, *Angels and Earthly Creatures*; Monica Helen Green, *Making Women's Medicine Masculine: The Rise of Male Authority in Pre-Modern Gynaecology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); A. J. Minnis, "De impedimento sexus: Women's Bodies and Medieval Impediments to Female Ordination," in *Medieval Theology and the Natural Body*, eds. Peter Biller, A. J. Minnis, and Eamon Duffy (Rochester, NY: York Medieval Press, 1997).

[28] Rosalynn Voaden, "Rewriting the Letter: Variations in the Middle English Translation of the *Epistola solitarii ad reges* of Alfonso of Jaén," in *The Translation of the Works of St Birgitta of Sweden into the Medieval European Vernaculars*, The Medieval Translator 7, eds. Bridget Morris and Veronica O'Mara (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 170-85.

[29] Kathryn Kerby-Fulton names William of St. Amour, William of Ockham, Peter of John Olivi, and John of Rupescissa as the four Continental heretics whose works in translation aroused suspicion and censorship in England during the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (*Books under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006)). The suppression of these four writers seems to have been more effective than that of Wycliff and his followers under Archbishop of Arundel's 1409 Constitutions (see her "Chronology of Non-Wycliffite Cases of Heresy and Related Events in Post-Conquest England and Ireland, with Other Relevant Dates" at xix-lii; cf. 397-401).

[30] Rosalynn Voaden, ed., "The Middle English *Epistola solitarii ad reges* of Alfonso of Jaén: An Edition of the Text in British Library MS Cotton Julius F.ii" in *Studies in St Birgitta and the Brigittine Order*, 2 vols., Analecta Cartusiana, 35:19, ed. James Hogg (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1993), I, 142-79. Cf. Jan van Ruusbroec,

many of the post-Schism scholastic writers on *discretio* such as Pierre d'Ailly and Henry of Langenstein who aimed to find "rules and methods by which to judge the prophecies which the Schism had made suddenly controversial," the English translation of Alfonso's *Epistola* highlights the new model of *discretio spirituum* which "assumed that the visionary was unable to assess his or her visions and instead ought to rely on outside authorities to validate any given revelation."[31]

However, other late medieval English accounts of *discretio* are notably varied in their portrayal of the practice's legitimate authorities. Virginia Langum argues that female mystical authors like Julian of Norwich and Birgitta of Sweden fight the misogynistic *discretio spirituum* discourse by placing the authority of *discretio*'s judgment in the hands of God alone, despite its inevitable disempowerment of women in the professional discourse of surgeons, priests, and judges.[32] The narrative of disempowerment, however, is itself based on the coherence of a late medieval discourse on bodily, external examination and critique.[33] Yet, it is the incoherence of the discernment discourse that late Middle English spiritual advice demonstrates most critically. While there are certainly strong overtones of the existence of a monolithic clerical authority who are institutionalized to pass judgment on personal religious experience, which is corroborated by confession manuals, surgical texts, and inquisitorial records; *literary* evidence seems to suggest that late medieval English readers and writers, especially female ones, imagined the discourse and its authorizing institutional entity to be less homogenous.

Moreover, the mechanism behind each of the senses, rather than the notoriously cited doctrine of the "discernment of spirits" alone, is (I think) the key to understanding *discretio* as a tool of spiritual empowerment in these works.[34] Discernment, whether applied to ascetic exercises or revelatory visions, can seemingly be performed by others or by the dévot herself. This distinction, which is largely overlooked in the modern scholarly narrative about *discretio*, is critical to understanding the range of *discretio* in Middle English spiritual advice. In some cases, spiritual directors use external signs to pass judgment on a dévot's proper form of life or visions, which I designate "semiotic evaluation" or "semiotic discernment." In other cases, the visionary herself tracks the trajectory of her thoughts or mindset to pass judgment on the source of visions, which I designate "hermeneutic evaluation" or "hermeneutic discernment." In special cases, the

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The Chastising of God's Children; and the Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God, eds. Joyce Bazire and Edmund Colledge (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), 173-82.

[31] Anderson, *Discernment of Spirits*, 158-60.

[32] Langum, "Discretion in Late Medieval England," 159-77.

[33] Langum, "Discretion in Late Medieval England," 35-158. See also Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices*, 34-40; Paschal Boland, *The Concept of* Discretio Spirituum *in John Gerson's "De probatione spirituum" and "De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis"* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1959). Anderson argues, however, that Jean Gerson, the most cited medieval *discretio* expert, ultimately failed to systematically theorize it in "Free Spirits, Presumptuous Women, and False Prophets," 300. Cf. Anderson, *Discernment of Spirits*, 190-232; Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 264-303.

[34] Modern historiography on late medieval discernment starts with Boland's 1959 study, which characterizes Gerson's "doctrine" of *discretio spirituum* as a predecessor to early modern *discretio spirituum* (*The Concept of* Discretio Spirituum, x). From the other studies I have cited, only Anderson, Langum, and Podlech make mention of *discretio*'s secondary sense of "moderation."

advanced visionary may even use the tautological logic of a vision to pass judgment on the source of a vision, which I designate "affective evaluation" or "affective discernment." Furthermore, these mechanisms are continuous with each other, developing in order of the dévot's expertise in interpreting signs. Semiotic discernment is the first phase in which she is still learning to interpret externally visible signs (behavior, comportment) of internal impulses. Hermeneutic discernment is the next phase in which she learns to interpret invisible signs (thoughts, feelings) of those impulses' sources. Affective discernment is the final phase in which an invisible sign (thought, feeling) is actually not a sign at all, that is, it does not point to anything beyond itself but rather represents the impulse's source directly. The rarity of affective discernment is notably related to the rarity of reaching the height of contemplation. It is akin to hermeneutic discernment, however, by its self-judgment.

Without the background of the Church Fathers who provide insight, and more specifically, a varied vocabulary of the objects of discernment, the sense of self-regulation of one's form of cognition is all but lost. These objects differ from the external signs of form of life or behavior about which later medieval Latin authors like Henry of Langenstein and Jean Gerson write. For although the Fathers use varied terms, the informal jargon of discernment describes a kind of movement sensed within one's own soul. More precisely, they use vocabulary that captures the sense of punctual change, a movement of the soul with a definite beginning and end; the perceptibility of the motion in response to a particular stimulus; and the activity of the soul that compels another discrete action, whether outside or within the soul.

The latinate terms include forms of *motus, instinctus, cogitatio, impulsus,* and *sapor.* Origen, for example, uses the word, *motus*, to describe both the motivation of the body to fulfill various human urges (eating, drinking, having sex), and the inevitable movement of the human soul toward good or evil.[35] Likewise, he uses forms of *instinctio* for natural and diabolic motivations.[36] Natural motives, however, can lead to diabolical motives if by giving into intemperance someone allows the devil opportunities to tempt him or her to sin further. Later, Origen equates these "instincts" with *cogitationes*, which can proceed from the heart of man, or from evil powers, or from God and his angels.[37] As mentioned above, Cassian also uses forms of *cogitatio* to indicate a movement of the heart, the seat of the soul, that ought to be sifted using one's own *discretio*. Gregory the Great warns that dreams ought only to be believed based on how easily and by what impulse (*impulsu*) they show forth.[38] He continues by saying that holy men are able to discern which dreams are received from a good spirit or by delusion by "a certain internal taste" (*sapore*), which echoes Augustine's portrayal of his mother, Monica, and how she is able to separate mere dreams from divine revelation.[39] In the majority of these cases, the discerner interrogates his or her own impulses or thoughts, especially because they may affect those immediately interacting with the discerner, like his or her monastic community.

Despite the emphasis on using outside authorities for verification of impulses in late medieval Latin letters and treatsies on discernment, all of these terms associated with self-discernment are used in late medieval writings to describe the impulses which could and should

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[35] Origen of Alexandria, *De principiis*, in *Origène: Traité des principes,* SC 268, 5 parts, eds. H. Crouzel and Manlio Simonetti (Paris: Cerf, 1980), 158-62, 196.

[36] *De principiis* 3.2 in Crouzel and Simonetti, 160, 168, 180.

[37] *De principiis* 3.2-3.3 in Crouzel and Simonetti, 168, 170, 196.

[38] *Dialogues* 4.50 in Vogüé, 176.

[39] *Confessions* 6.13 in O'Donnell, 70.

be subject to discernment. Jean Gerson, for instance, uses *motus* to describe the internal movement of the mind or heart when proving the presence of the Holy Spirit.[40] Gerson's predecessors, Henry of Langenstein and Alfonso of Jaén, too, talk about *motus* as perceptible occurrences in which the soul reacts to certain stimuli. In his *Epistola*, Alfonso famously describes Birgitta's divinely sent ecstasy as "a certain miraculous sensible bodily motion in her heart, just as if a living fetus turned itself there."[41] Langenstein, on the other hand, elaborates upon movements of the human soul by other stimuli, as toward various morally neutral objects after an excess of humor,[42] as well as by the divine.[43] Regarding *instinctus* and *impulsus*, according to Henry of Friemar's popular early thirteenth-century treatise, *De quattuor instinctibus,* some "instincts" are from the devil and human nature, and ought not be blindly followed.[44] Peter of John Olivi defends the publication of his own revelations by a "certain impulse of the spirit."[45] Furthermore, Alfonso of Jaén subtly nuances this movement by using forms of *infusus*, which seems to encapsulate the movement *into* rather than simply in the soul after discernment. Birgitta is "infused" with intellectual vision during her out-of-mind experiences, which emphasizes the actor, Christ, who speaks and fills her mind with divine understanding.[46] Although these examples do not speak as clearly to self-discernment, the

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[40] *De probatione spirituum,* in *Oeuvres complètes de Jean Gerson*, Vol. 9, ed. Palémon Glorieux (Paris: Desclée, 1960), 177-85, at 184: "Itaque Bernardus . . . qui tamen expertum se pluries asserit humiliter Sancti Spiritus praesentiam ex intimo motu cordis sive mentis."

[41] *Epistola solitarii ad reges,* cap. 4 in *Alfonso of Jaén,* ed. Arne Jönsson (Lund: Lund University Press, 1989), 137: "Aliqando quoque ipsa sensibiliter senciebat cum ineffabili exultacione spiritus quendam sensibilem corporalem motum mirabilem in corde suo, quasi si ibi esset infans viuus se reuoluens, qui motus ab extra videbatur."

[42] *De discretione spirituum*, cap. 2 in *Heinrichs von Langenstein 'Unterscheidung der Geister' Lateinish und Deutsch: Texte und Untersuchungen zu Übersetzungsliteratur aus der Viener Schule*, ed. Thomas Hohmann (Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1997), 56: "Secundo excessus alicuius humoris vel eius bona vel mala dispositio . . . vertit saepe quodam occulto motu cogitatione, improvise ad haec vel ad illa obiecta."

[43] *De discretione spirituum*, cap. 6 in Hohmann, 88: "Ita divina benignitas volens hominem altius ducere in assensum seu credulitatem naturaliter inattingibilium veritatum, miraculose posuit quaedam media sensibilia supernaturalia inter se et hominem, per quorum discussionem attingeret homo ad perfectiorem creatoris sui cognitionem et moveretur ad eius dilectionem."

[44] *De quattuor instinctibus*, in *Der Traktat Heinrichs von Friemar über die Unterscheidung der Geister*, eds. Robert G. Warnock and Adolar Zumkeller (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1977), 152: "Ad cuius evidentiam est sciendum, quod quadruplex est instinctus sive motio interior. Primus instinctus dicitur divinus, secundus angelicus, tertius diabolicus, quartus naturalis."

[45] Sylvain Piron, ed., "Petrus Ioannis Olivi, Epistola ad Fratrem R," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 91 (1998): 33-64, at 63: "Idcirco solum aliquando de futuris loquor et quodam impulsu spiritus quasi loqui compellor et tunc morem teneo hominis divina et universalia contemplari volentis."

[46] *Epistola solitarii ad reges*, cap. 5 in Jönsson, 146-47: "Quando autem ipsa dixit, vt supra habetur, quod tota consciencia et intelligencia eius in illo raptu extasis replebatur et illuminabatur quodam intellectu spirituali et quod in momento erant, Christo loquente, infusa in

inheritance of patristic vocabulary and its related sense of self-regulation based on personal experience was not entirely lost on these later writers. And perhaps more importantly, in England the influence of these later texts had to contend with the inheritance of the patristic vocabulary of discernment in earlier vernacular contemplative advice.

The early thirteenth-century compilation, *Ancrene Wisse,* and Richard Rolle's early fourteenth-century vernacular treatises like *The Form of Living* are examples of the English reception of both the patristic vocabulary, including the sense of self-regulation, and reliance on others' judgment. For example, in the *Ancrene Wisse*, the word "wisdom" is paired with "measure" to indicate the necessity of using self-regulated discretion and moderation in confession and mortification of the flesh.[47] On the other hand, *wis* is the adjective used to describe the discreet confessor in whom anchoresses ought to confide.[48] But while *discretio spirituum* is bypassed with the general prohibition on trusting any visions due to the possible deception by the "noonday demon,"[49] there is also a sense of discerning thoughts as movements of the soul, which primarily take place in the human heart.[50] Similarly, Rolle's use of the word, "discretion," in *The Form of Living* matches the *Ancrene Wisse*'s use of "wisdom" as moderation by self and by others in ascetic exercises.[51] His use of the word, "stirrings," captures precisely a sense of internal movement of the soul, an object of self-discernment, provoked by a stimulus that leads to another discrete mental or physical action.[52] For instance, he specifies that love, the special work of the contemplative life, "is a stirryge of þe soule for to loue God for hym self, and al other thynge for God."[53] This love leads to the destruction of "dedly syn" and "maketh vs on with God," which love is "kyndled with þe fyre of þe Holy Ghost."[54] With regards to potentially negative stirrings of the soul, however, Rolle advises his female solitary reader to rely on the counsel of "conynge men" to avoid deception by the devil who "transfigureth hym in an angel of light."[55] Interestingly, the only actions that this angel might tempt humans with are excess in ease of body or excess of penance.[56] In other words, the tradition of discernment that English monastic writing inherits from early Christian Latin texts is primarily that of ascetic prudence rather than of the discernment of spirits. Moreover, while the framework of receiving advice from a confessor or spiritual director remains in play, self-discernment about the practices of

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intellectu eius multa . . . illustrabatur mens et intelligencia eius diuinitus per supernaturalem, intellectualem visionem."

[47] Bella Millett, ed., *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition of the Text in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 402, with Variants from Other Manuscripts*, 2 vols., EETS o. s. 325, 326 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005-6), 127-28, 140. Cf. 102-3.

[48] Millett, *Ancrene Wisse*, 127, 129.

[49] Millett, *Ancrene Wisse*, 86.

[50] Millett, *Ancrene Wisse*, 20, 69, 90-91, 102-4.

[51] S. J. Ogilvie-Thomson, ed., "The Form of Living," in *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse Edited from MS Longleat 29 and Related Manuscripts*, EETS o. s. 293 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 3-25 at 3-5, 7, 14.

[52] Ogilvie-Thomson, "The Form of Living," 13, 19-21.

[53] Ogilvie-Thomson, "The Form of Living," 19.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ogilvie-Thomson, "The Form of Living," 7.

[56] Ogilvie-Thomson, "The Form of Living," 7-8.

confession, penance, and contemplation is equally encouraged. Vernacular religious writing through the fifteenth century continues using *discretio* in the same way.

Ultimately, I would argue that the Continental *discretio spirituum* discourse imported to England via Alfonso's *Epistola* and other revelatory theological texts was tempered with instruction about form of cognition in late fourteenth-century vernacular spiritual advice. Readers learned that although they ought to rely upon an advisor's judgment for maintaining the proper form of life, they ought to regulate their own forms of thought, which enabled rather than limited their spiritual authority and the literary expression of their form of life. After the Lancastrian reform of monasticism in the early fifteenth century, especially with the building of the monasteries of Syon and Sheen, however, *discretio*'s senses were separated along vocational lines. Yet the institutional transmission of a divided *discretio* did not preclude the transmission of a unified one. By the second quarter of the fifteenth century, even the aspiring laity apparently recognized both senses, as Kempe's *Book* attests.

In the chapters that follow, I aim to demonstrate how *discretio,* as semiotic and hermeneutic evaluation, created a discourse that empowered late medieval English writers of spiritual advice and their readers to explore theological problems and those problems' implications on various forms of religious life. The first chapter discusses the dissemination of *discretio* in *The Scale of Perfection*, *The Chastising of God's Children*, and *The Cloud of Unknowing*. The authors of these vernacular works propose *discretio* based on their readers' expertise in contemplation. For novices and Proficient contemplatives, Hilton in *Scale 1* and the *Chastising*-author provide a caution to overly zealous religious enthusiasm by describing the advisor's expertise in discernment, obedience to which results in ascetic prudence, as a baseline for the correct form of life. For the Perfect contemplative, *Scale 2* and *The Cloud of Unknowing* introduce hermeneutic evaluation as the advisor's prescriptions on the form of contemplative thought. These prescriptions, however, confer onto readers spiritual authority since they emphasize that self-regulated contemplation leads to the correct form of life.

The second chapter focuses on the assumption of spiritual authority by a particular reader, Julian of Norwich. Analogous moments in the Short Text and Long Text attest to her use of hermeneutic discernment, and a specialized type of discernment that I call affective discernment, by revealing the formal traces of the process of her personal contemplative experience. In the Short Text, the discourse of visionary *discretio spirituum* is so foundational to her thought that she has no need to name it explicitly. Rather, she uses the word "stirrings" to mark moments of doubt that become the very framework for her revision: these moments in which discerning the spirits for the source of her visions operate most clearly disappear in the Long Text to be replaced by the major visions of the Lord and Servant exemplum and Mother Christ. Ultimately, she uses hermeneutic and affective discernment to work through her theological doubts and translate her visionary experience into legible texts. She gains spiritual and literary authority as she gains confidence in mastering *discretio*.

The third chapter explores how *discretio* starts to delineate forms of lay life in the early fifteenth century. I use Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* and four works composed for the mixed monastic-lay communities of Syon Abbey and Sheen Priory to show how writers of spiritual advice emphasized the sign of meekness for lay readers, especially in the practice of holy reading. In contrast, those works geared specifically toward monastics endorse self-knowledge and knowledge of God in holy reading. In short, what was formerly discernment for the Perfect (hermeneutic) was reimagined to be strictly monastic, while what was for novices (semiotic) was adopted as suitably lay. The separation of *discretio*'s mechanisms

along vocational lines demonstrates the policing of the boundaries of spiritual authority, which now belonged in gradations even to the laity.

The fourth chapter deals with the ramifications of *discretio*'s vocational divide. I argue that an exemplary layperson, Margery Kempe, seeks to establish her semi-religious lifestyle by unifying the two main mechanisms of *discretio* in her *Book.* She uses the "lay" *discretio* of meekness to attain to the higher levels of "monastic" *discretio*, or the knowledge of self and of God. The demonstration of both senses of *discretio* in her writing establishes the mixed contemplative life that grants a greater degree of individual spiritual agency to Kempe as a layperson. It also shows that Kempe, like Julian of Norwich, uses *discretio* as an intellectual tool to explore theological questions of spiritual authority and human judgment.

Ch. 1 – Teaching *Discretio* in Advice for the Contemplative Life

Spiritual advisors write the conventional pre-modern account of *discretio*. This tradition began with the Church Fathers and was continued by late medieval Latin writers like Henry of Langenstein, Henry of Friemar, Alfonso of Jaén and Jean Gerson. The late medieval vernacular writers in England, like Walter Hilton, the *Cloud*-author, and the *Chastising*-author were no exception.[1] Their teachings about *discretio* capture both the Fathers' concern to detail the objects of discernment, as well as late medieval Latin writers' concern with moderating religious enthusiasm and the danger of heresy. Although these English advisors are diverse in their subject matter and writing styles,[2] they nevertheless agree on the importance of *discretio* for spiritual

[1] See Voaden, "Rewriting the Letter," 170-85; McGinn, *Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism*; Samuel Fanous and Vincent Gillespie, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Marion Glasscoe, *English Medieval Mystics: Games of Faith* (London: Longman, 1993).

[2] For general comparisons, see McGinn, *Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism*; Fanous and Gillespie, *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism*; Glasscoe, *English Medieval Mystics*; Wolfgang Riehle, *The Middle English Mystics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981); Joseph E. Milosh, *The Scale of Perfection and the English Mystical Tradition* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966); David Knowles, *The English Mystical Tradition* (New York: Harper, 1961). On differences in style, see Janel M. Mueller, *The Native Tongue and the Word: Developments in English Prose Style, 1380-1580* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Phyllis Hodgson, "Walter Hilton and 'The Cloud of Unknowing': A Problem of Authorship Reconsidered," *The Modern Language Review* 50, no. 4 (1955): 395-406; Ad Putter, "Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* and *The Cloud of Unknowing*," in *A Companion to Middle English Prose*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 33-51; Cristina Maria Cervone, *Poetics of Incarnation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 171-80; Ad Putter, "Moving Towards God: The Possibilities and Limitations of Metaphorical Journeys in Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*," in *Freedom of Movement in the Middle Ages: Proceedings of the 2003 Harlaxton Symposium* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2007), 331-45; J. A. Burrow, "Fantasy and Language in *The Cloud of Unknowing*," *Essays in Criticism* 27 (1977): 283-98; Eleanor Johnson, "Feeling Time, Will, and Words: Vernacular Devotion in the *Cloud of Unknowing*," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 41, no. 2 (2011): 345-68; A. C. Spearing, "Language and Its Limits in *The Cloud of Unknowing* and *Pearl*," in *Approaching Medieval English Anchoritic and Mystical Texts*, eds. Dee Dyas, Valerie Edden, and Roger Ellis (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005); Cheryl Taylor, "Paradox Upon Paradox: Using and Abusing Language in *The Cloud of Unknowing* and Related Texts," *Parergon* 22, no. 2 (2005): 31-51; Charles Lock, "*The Cloud of Unknowing*: Apophatic Discourse and Vernacular Anxieties," in *Text and Voice: The Rhetoric of Authority in the Middle Ages*, ed. Marianne Borch (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2004); Rosemary Ann Lees, *The Negative Language of the Dionysian School of Mystical Theology: An Approach to The Cloud of Unknowing* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1983); Annie Sutherland, "*The Chastising of God's Children*: A Neglected Text," in *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale: Essays in Honour of Anne Hudson*, eds. Helen Barr and Ann M. Hutchison (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 353-73.

progression through the contemplative life, and its division into two phases, which I term "semiotic" and "hermeneutic" discernment. Their works, in other words, are models of late medieval English accounts of *discretio*, which other English writers like Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe will depart from and recontextualize for their own purposes.[3]

Although I distinguish two phases, the second includes and is continuous with the first. The first phase, semiotic discernment, is the evaluation of the source of visions and impulses based on external signs. Spiritual advisors are the main interpreters of these signs because discernment starts with standing outside of one's mere feelings or impulses to examine what the signs mean. As other scholars have noted, this interpretive expertise seems to have become the basis for establishing one's visionary authenticity and authority.[4] More generally, however, it is also the basis for establishing the contemplative form of life, the goal of which is getting virtues and destroying vices. Thus, for contemplative novices and intermediate-level Proficients, establishing such a life is necessarily dependent on meekness and obedience to one's advisor in devotional and penitential acts, which I refer to in the remaining chapters as "ascetic prudence."

The second phase, hermeneutic discernment, is the self-evaluation of the internal sequence of feelings or impulses experienced by a dévot. It is marked in contemplative treatises as the practice of contemplation itself. Because the objects of evaluation are thoughts and impulses that occur before action, it requires self-assessment by the practitioner before any disclosure to an advisor. While disclosure of thoughts and impulses is not required in all circumstances—indeed, there are certain cases in which disclosure is advised against—the practitioner's form of life and external signs continue to be assessed by advisors as a precaution. The contemplative's form of life in this phase, however, is also more fluid since it is based on his or her own discernment of feelings and impulses. Hermeneutic discernment in English advice texts seems geared toward advanced or Perfect contemplatives.

The three works that this chapter explores cover different phases of *discretio*. While *The Chastising of God's Children* and the first book of *The Scale of Perfection* seem to highlight the preparatory phase of semiotic discernment, *The Cloud of Unknowing* and the second book of *The Scale of Perfection* address the advanced phase of hermeneutic discernment. This divide roughly correlates with the presumed religious professional backgrounds of the works' writers and the characteristics of their audiences. While Walter Hilton was an Augustinian canon who had unsuccessfully attempted a hermetic life,[5] the anonymous *Chastising*-author, can only be described as a "practised confessor," which means he was either an active or a contemplative religious.[6] Their work with pastoral care provides an institutional context for their common

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[3] See Yoshikawa, "*Discretio spirituum* in Time," 119-32; Yoshikawa, "The Making of *The Book of Margery Kempe*," 119-37; Langum, "Discretion in Late Medieval England."

[4] See Introduction above.

[5] For a concise biography, see Michael Sargent, "Bishops, Patrons, Mystics and Manuscripts: Walter Hilton, Nicholas Love and the Arundel and Holland Connections," in *Middle English Texts in Transition*, eds. Simon Horobin and Linne Mooney (York: York Medieval Press, 2014), 159-76, at 160.

[6] The edition of *The Scale of Perfection* cited throughout the rest of the chapter by book and line number is Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, TEAMS, ed. Thomas H. Bestul (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2000). The edition of *The Chastising of God's Children* cited by page number is Joyce Bazire and Edmund

concern with semiotic evaluation and the authority of an advisor in spiritual guidance about visions. The *Cloud*-author, on the other hand, while also familiar with pastoral care was institutionally monastic and aptly concerns himself with hermeneutic evaluation, or contemplation proper.[7] This focus draws from his Carthusian context: the order was primarily contemplative, requiring silence, obedience, poverty and enclosure.[8] Because Hilton also attempted an enclosed contemplative life, his concern with hermeneutic discernment in the second book of the *Scale* is unsurprising.[9] The assumed mixed life experiences of Hilton and the *Cloud*-author particularly make them fit to address the concerns of disciples who were transitioning away from living a lay active life to a contemplative one.[10]

The respective audiences of the works also correspond to the observed divide between the preparatory and advanced phases of *discretio*. The *Scale,* addressed to women religious, was a medieval best seller that reached a broad lay and religious audience.[11] Its base of circulation in

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Colledge, eds., *The Chastising of God's Children; and The Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), at 41.

[7] Phyllis Hodgson, the editor of the critical edition of the *Cloud* corpus, notes that based on his influence by Guigo I's *Scala claustralium* the author was probably a Carthusian procurator for a lay brother. The edition of *The Cloud of Unknowing* cited throughout this chapter by page number is Phyllis Hodgson, ed., *The Cloud of Unknowing and Related Treatises*, Analecta Cartusiana 3 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1982), at xii. See also the older EETS edition by Phyllis Hodgson, ed., *The Cloud of Unknowing and The Book of Privy Counselling*, EETS o. s. 218 (London: Oxford University Press, 1944).

[8] Vincent Gillespie, "Cura pastoralis in deserto," in *De cella in seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, ed. Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989), 161-81.

[9] Some have speculated about the *Cloud*-author's direct influence on Hilton's *Scale*, Book 2. See Cheryl Taylor, "A Contemplative Community?: The *Cloud* Texts and *Scale* 2 in Dialogue," *Parergon* 19, no. 2 (2002): 81-99; cf. S. S. Hussey, "Blind Trust, Naked Truth, and Bare Necessities: Walter Hilton and the Author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*," in *"Stand up to Godwards": Essays in Mystical and Monastic Theology in Honour of the Reverend John Clark on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. James Hogg (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 2002), 1-8; Ad Putter, "Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* and *The Cloud of Unknowing*," 33-51.

[10] Vincent Gillespie points out that the brethren of Syon Abbey, for instance, were interested in Hilton precisely because of his works' mixed life predilections in "Hilton at Syon Abbey," in *"Stand up to Godwards": Essays in Mystical and Monastic Theology in Honour of the Reverend John Clark on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. James Hogg (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 2002), 9-61. Nike Pokorn describes the *Cloud*'s audience as Carthusian novices in "Original Audience of *The Cloud of Uknowing* (in Support of the Carthusian Authorship)," in *The Mystical Tradition and the Carthusians, 1*, ed. James Hogg (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1995), 60-77.

[11] See the introduction to Bestul's edition and Michael Sargent, "What Do the Numbers Mean? A Textual Critic's Observations on Some Patterns of Middle English Manuscript Transmission," in *Design and Distribution of Late Medieval Manuscripts in England*, eds. Margaret Connolly and Linne R. Mooney (York: York Medieval Press, 2008), 205-44. S. S.

the fourteenth century was originally in the vicinity of Cambridge, Ely, and Linconshire in the form of the first book, which spread west and north; then, in the fifteenth century, the second book was appended, spreading out less widely from Cambrigde, Ely, and London.[12] The intended or staged audience of the *Chastising* was, like the *Scale,* women religious, possibly a nun of Barking Abbey.[13] It circulated among religious houses of both men and women around London, Lincolnshire, and Yorkshire,[14] but also among the laity.[15] The *Cloud,* however, was primarily owned and circulated among Carthusian houses in Yorkshire and London before the Dissolution.[16] This means that its circulation was restricted to the religious and lay brethren of those houses, which aligns with its specialist tone. Ultimately, the similar makeup of the *Scale* and the *Chastising*'s audiences, and the limited audience of the *Cloud*, suggest that the *Scale* and *Chastising*'s subject materials were considered appropriate for a wider swath of readers pursuing a contemplative life. Despite their different foci—Hilton gives a broad overview of the life as spiritual progression, while the *Chastising*-author focuses on facing temptation in that life[17]—both the *Scale* and the *Chastising* provide direction for beginning and intermediate contemplatives, while the *Cloud* targets advanced contemplatives.[18]

Of course, although these works emphasize different phases, they often overlap in content due to the continuity between semiotic and hermeneutic discernment. For instance, while the *Scale*'s apophaticism is contentious, its commitment to propagating both phases of *discretio* as a

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Hussey argues, however, that the intended audience for the second book of Hilton's *Scale* was a mixed life audience who had limited access to spiritual direction in "Walter Hilton: Traditionalist?," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England, Papers Read at the Exeter Symposium, July 1980*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1980), 1-15; and "The Audience for the Middle English Mystics," in *De cella in seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, ed. Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989), 109-22, at 113.

[12] Michael Sargent, "Text of Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* in the Vernon Manuscript," in *Text, Language and Interpretation: Essays in Honour of Keiko Ikegami*, eds. Yoshiyuki Nakao, Shoko Ono, Naoko Shirai, Kaoru Noji, and Masahiko Kanno (Tokyo: Eihosha, 2007), 19-28.

[13] *Chastising*, 36. Cf. Riehle, *The Middle English Mystics*, 14-15; Elizabeth Schirmer, "Reading Lessons at Syon Abbey: The *Myroure of Oure Ladye* and the Mandates of Vernacular Theology," in *Voices in Dialogue: Reading Women in the Middle Ages*, eds. Linda Olson and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 345-76.

[14] *Chastising*, 37-40.

[15] Roger Ellis and Samuel Fanous, "1349-1412: Texts," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism*, eds. Samuel Fanous and Vincent Gillespie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 133-61, at 153.

[16] *Cloud*, xvii. Riehle, however, argues that the audience included devout lay groups in *The Middle English Mystics*, 15-23.

[17] Ellis and Fanous argue that the *Chastising*'s focus is heresy: "the need to combat heresy and defend orthodoxy comes to override such expressions of the contemplative option as Julian, Hilton, and the author of the *Cloud* were willing to encourage" ("1349-1412," 153).

[18] Pokorn, however, argues that the intended audience was Carthusian novices, see n. 10 above.

mode of contemplative expertise is not.[19] *Discretio* expertise, whether employed by oneself (hermeneutic) or by one's director (semiotic), is a kind of "semiotic" expertise. Both Hilton and the *Cloud*-author agree on the fact that there are "signs" that are encountered during the spiritual exercises of the contemplative life that point to whether the stirring is good or evil.[20] These signs are externally visible, which make it easier to differentiate them from the "stirrings" (consciously-recognized internal movements or sensations) that express them. In other words, the signs are a projection or outward display of the internal stirring, feeling, or impulse. As a novice to spiritual feelings, however, one does not inherently know what those signs are or what they point to. Hence, spiritual directors provide a systematic guide to labeling the signs and their meanings in the early stages of the contemplative life. Only at a more spiritually developed stage can the contemplative start interpreting the signs for himself and start isolating the stirrings behind the signs.

Hilton's and the *Chastising*-author's treatment of discreet confession is also striking. Both authors encourage their readers to speak "in general words or in special" to their confessors about temptations or stirrings, indicating that the reader ought to discern for herself the effect of a stirring on someone else.[21] While this is not the same as evaluating the source of a stirring, it does ask the reader to evaluate the trajectory or ordering of the feeling in time, which helps her discern their source in hermeneutic discernment. Both, moreover, describe how to self-evaluate whether one assents to sin or not in responding to the temptation or stirring. Although the *Chastising*-author does not attempt to describe contemplation or how hermeneutic discernment is foundational to it like Hilton does in *Scale 2*, his advice obviously touches upon the self-assessment of hermeneutic discernment despite his general tendency to highlight the reader's dependence on her advisor's semiotic discernment. In sum, although this chapter distinguishes emphases of semiotic or hermeneutic discernment in works directed at different contemplative audiences, it only does so in an effort to provide a working model of distinctions between two types of *discretio*. Semiotic discernment is not strictly isolated from hermeneutic discernment in the works directed at advanced contemplatives, as the *Cloud* and *Scale 2* show, nor is hermeneutic discernment, in whole or in part, strictly mentioned only in advice to advanced contemplatives, as the *Chastising* example shows.

The rest of this chapter aims to demonstrate how Hilton, the *Chastising*-author, and the *Cloud*-author establish the link between semiotic discernment and the beginning of the

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[19] Nicholas Watson describes Book 2 as an amalgamation of cataphatic and apophatic mysticism in "'Et que est huius ydoli materia? Tuipse': Idols and Images in Walter Hilton," in *Images, Idolatry, and Iconoclasm in Late Medieval England: Textuality and the Visual Image*, eds. Jeremy Dimmick, James Simpson, and Nicolette Zeeman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 95-111, at 109; Maggie Ross and Bernard McGinn separately argue that the *Cloud*'s apophaticism, however, is singular among the English mystical works (see Ross, "Behold Not the Cloud of Experience," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium VIII, Papers Read at Charney Manor, July 2011*, ed. E. A. Jones (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013), 29-50; and McGinn, *Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism*, 401.)

[20] E. g. *Scale* 1.901; *Cloud,* 50.

[21] *Chastising*, 202; *Scale* 2.546. See Steven Justice, "'General Words': Response to Elizabeth Schirmer," in *Voices in Dialogue: Reading Women in the Middle Ages*, eds. Linda Olson and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 377-94.

contemplative life, on the one hand, and hermeneutic discernment and the height of the contemplative life, on the other. In the first half of the chapter, I explore how *Scale 1* and *The Chastising of God's Children* provide a caution to singular contemplative practices by describing a baseline for the correct form of life. This baseline is constructed by the spiritual director's semiotic discernment, or the systematic understanding of how the signs encountered in penance and prayer signify. Beginners and intermediate-level contemplatives are presumed to lack the experience to interpret or even recognize the signs. Even so, both authors also include caveats about obedience in terms of self-regulating thoughts and speech. In the second half of the chapter, I examine how *Scale 2* and *The Cloud of Unknowing* introduce hermeneutic discernment as the advisor's prescriptions on the form of contemplative cognition. The mature contemplative by using it is able to trace her stirrings to their source by judging the overall trajectory of her state of mind. Discerning the source of stirrings is crucial in helping her decide to trust and to continue following the stirrings, or not. While this method of evaluation trains the individual to restrict herself to certain ways of thinking, it also confers spiritual authority onto her since this form of self-regulated evaluation purportedly leads to the correct form of life.

Semiotic Evaluation for Novices and Proficients

Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, Book 1 and *The Chastising of God's Children* are works that focus on establishing the correct form of contemplative life. Although neither work systematically describes different parts of the life, both deploy two common threads of practical guidance that are similarly found in the thirteenth-century rule for anchorites, *Ancrene Wisse*: how performing spiritual exercises by counsel and by reason lead to the correct form of life; and how semiotic evaluation helps the contemplative distinguish the source of her stirrings. Indeed, these two threads of advice differentiate the first book of Hilton's *Scale* and the *Chastising* from the second book of the *Scale* and *The Cloud of Unknowing*. As the second half of this chapter will show, advice about the "blind work" of contemplation propagates a different set of principles by which the Perfect have the privilege and responsibility to regulate themselves and their stirrings.

The main work of the lower level of contemplation is establishing a contemplative form of life. While the ultimate goal is to reach contemplation, "the confoormynge of a soule to God" and "þe forsakynge of himself and of his owne wil," the means to begin or establish the life are the destruction of sin and subsequent attainment of virtues.[22] Hilton puts it this way: "[Contemplation] may not be had but he [the contemplative] be first reformyd bi fulheed of vertues turnyd into affeccion. And that is whanne a man loveth vertu, for it is good in the silf."[23] The love of virtue, however, cannot be had until the contemplative "is first sharpli þretened and assaid wele, proued and tempted of god and of hymsilf and of al creatures."[24] The *Chastising*-author, rather than focus on the reforming of the soul like Hilton, focuses on the proving and tempting of the contemplative as the main theme of his work. He elaborates on how the exercise of the will under temptation purges the soul of sin and stabilizes it in order that it can "wele gadre togydre fruyte and erbis of uertues."[25] In other words, while the *Chastising* emphasizes on

[22] *Scale*, 1.314; *Chastising*, 124.
[23] *Scale*, 1.314-16.
[24] *Chastising*, 123.
[25] *Chastising*, 123.

the soul before it reaches the love of virtue, the *Scale* emphases on the soul's move away from loving sin toward loving virtue. All in all, both writers address how to establish the proper form of the contemplative life by describing how one ought to destroy sin and attain virtue in the soul.

Hilton uses the extended metaphor of idolatry to help readers imagine this process.[26] The destruction of sin in a soul is like the destruction of the image of "a foul dark wretched trinity" set up within the soul in the place of God. When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden "chosynge love and delite in himsilf and in creaturis, he loste al this worschipe and his dygnyte and thou lostest it in hym and felle from that blissid Trinite into a foule merk wrecchid trinite, that is into forgetynge of God and unknowynge of him."[27] Thus, the body of sin, which is later described limb by limb,[28] is a deformed idol of the image of God, which the soul ought to look like in its three principal parts, mind, reason, and will.[29] In part recapitulation of a mnemonic for confession, in part emphasis on the great effort needed to dismember it within the soul, this limned body of sin is also the very image of the devil, which makes it unequivocally an idol.[30] Those who would destroy it, then, fight directly against the schemes of the devil who sends temptations to make "hem forthenke here good purpos and turne agen to synne as they were wont to doo."[31] As Nicholas Watson points out, Hilton borrows the Wycliffite usage of "image" to highlight the "gap between appearance and reality."[32] Although the reader may have the appearance, or the form of life, of a contemplative, he or she may only be an "empty simulation" of the real thing.[33] This danger is obvious to Hilton and the *Chastising*-author who both address the possibility of hypocrisy and heresy in their works. The *Chastising*-author is especially keen on warning his reader about specific ways a contemplative might backslide into heretical views.[34]

The *Chastising*-author's use of the image of sickness highlights the signs of improper forms of contemplative life.[35] Sickness symbolizes the soul's stirrings to vices that impede spiritual health, that is, the attainment of virtues. He compares the "wicked humors" of dropsy and fevers to various sins—desire for worldly goods, lust and covetousness, weak conscience,

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[26] See Watson, "'Et que est huius ydoli materia? Tuipse,'" 95-111; Sarah Stanbury, *The Visual Object of Desire in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2008), 33-75; Vincent Gillespie, "Idols and Images: Pastoral Adaptations of *The Scale of Perfection*," in *Langland, the Mystics and the Medieval English Religious Tradition: Essays in Honour of S. S. Hussey*, ed. Helen Phillips (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990), 97-123.

[27] *Scale*, 1.1163-65.

[28] *Scale*, 1.2429 ff.

[29] *Scale*, 1.1150 ff.

[30] *Scale*, 1.2455.

[31] *Scale*, 1.969-70. Hilton describes the devil's machinations from chapters 40 to 76.

[32] Watson, "'Et que est huius ydoli materia? Tuipse,'" 101.

[33] Watson quotes Hilton's *Epistola de utilitate et prerogativis religionis* in *Latin Writings*, Vol. 1, ed. J. P. H. Clark and Cheryl Taylor (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg), 101-73, ll. 835-40.

[34] E. g. *Chastising*, 139ff.

[35] Caciola notes the importance of twelfth- and thirtheenth-century medical theories of the female body in setting forth a theoretical basis for *discretio spirituum* in *Discerning Spirits*, 129-222.

lack of the fruit of grace, instability—into which "negligent and sick" contemplatives fall.[36] Yet he makes a distinction between spiritual sickness (as metaphor) and physical sickness since "þouȝ þe bodi of a man be tormentid in infirmyte and traueilid wiþ foule doynges or contenaunce, or wiþ foule speche outward, he may stonde ful wel in soule; for þe soule of hym þat is so trauelid oft siþes gooþ streiȝt to blisse, for he is innocent of þat þat þe deuel spekiþ or werkiþ in hym."[37] These physical and even some spiritual stirrings are "spedeful to purge þe soule and kepe hem in uertues."[38] Nevertheless, the metaphorical spiritual illnesses result in compounding the contemplative's "indiscrete governance" of himself: "such a man desiriþ and seekeþ þe profite and þe ease to þe bodi more þan hym nediþ."[39] It is here that stirrings to sin lead to improper forms of life, where one desires comfort from God without labor or pain; another thinks himself too old for work and thinks it needful to get rest of the body whenever he can; another seeks comfort from other men and women more than necessary, and indiscreetly tends toward rest and welfare of the body.[40] In short, facing temptation, while a large and necessary part of the proper form of contemplative life, can also lead to improper forms of it.

In contrast, Hilton represents the rosier possibility that one might actually succeed at attaining the love of virtue. Contemplation, and all of the exercises leading up to it, is the remedy to reforming the soul back to the "fair" image of the created Trinity.[41] Thus, for Hilton the other half of the contemplative's work is learning how to find the image of Jesus in one's soul, which he summarizes as the attainment of the virtues of humility and charity.[42] While his specific advice about how to do so is beyond the scope of this comparative analysis, it resembles the *Chastising*-author's more preventative focus in two ways: endorsement of adhering to counsel and reason when performing bodily and spiritual exercises; and endorsement of semiotic evaluation, or tracking external signs, to categorize stirrings. The latter depends on the former, which is the accepted model of *discretio spirituum* amongst scholars.[43] Whereas most studies apply this model across all levels of the contemplative life, I seek to distinguish a different model in advice for the upper level of contemplation. A large distinction between the first and second model is the contemplative's dependence on reason.

Reason and Semiotic Evaluation

Hilton and the *Chastising*-author both teach that contemplatives ought to use their reason to direct their will in destroying sin and gaining virtues. Hilton describes the beginning of contemplation as the "knowynge of God and goosteli thynges geten by resoun, bi techynge of man and bi studie of Hooly Writ."[44] Reason works with the second part of contemplation, which

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[36] *Chastising*, 124-25.
[37] *Chastising*, 166.
[38] *Chastising*, 167.
[39] *Chastising*, 125.
[40] Ibid.
[41] *Scale*, 1.2281, 1159.
[42] *Scale*, 1.2456. He explains the process of attaining virtue in detail in chapters 14 through 36.
[43] See Introduction above.
[44] *Scale*, 1.56-57.

"lieth principali in affeccioun" or the will, to come to perfect knowing and feeling of God.[45] The *Chastising*-author likewise explains that affection, "a wilful lowynge or inclyneng of a mans hert wiþ loue to anoþer man," can come from spirits or be ruled by reason, which "dryueþ us for þree skilles to þe desire of þe loue of god and to þe loue of god."[46] The reason can even stir up love of God without "ful goostli affeccion," or being moved by divine or demonic forces. Indeed, "þe hoolier þat þe loue is, it is þe more sikerer and þe more resonable and þe more profitable."[47] In other words, perfect love of God requires reason to direct a stirred will or affection.

But as Hilton explains, the reason itself is weakened by sin and thus must be guided by God toward enlightened understanding in order to guide the weakened will. In the same passage above in which he describes the created Trinity of the soul, he describes the effects of the Fall of Man on "the resoun and of the love also, whiche was clene in goostli savoure and suettenesse; now it is turned into foule beestli lust and likynge into thisilf and into creatures and in fleischli savoures, bothe in the wittes, as in glotonye and leccherie, and in the ymagynynge, as in pride, veynglorie and covetise."[48] The enlightenment of the reason, he goes on, is not to be achieved by using one's five senses to understand the material world,[49] but by forsaking that world and following Jesus first into oneself, then into "a taast and a liknesse of goostli swettenesse and heveneli joie."[50] This foretaste of heavenly joy is contemplation.[51] He, therefore, justifies the contemplative life as the only way to come to an enlightened reason.

The *Chastising*-author calls divinely enlightened reason that directs the will the "will of reason" as opposed to the "will of nature." When a contemplative uses the will of reason, she patiently endures temptations as part of bodily and spiritual exercise "and desireþ not bi wil of reason to haue hem awei, but to þe plesynge of god, so longe þese temptacions bien no synne, but purgacion for the soule and hiȝ encres of merit."[52] Those who give into the will of nature, on the other hand, fall into spiritual sickness "for as myche as he desireþ his owne wil for his owne ease, he falliþ into anoþer temptacioun bi þat desire, and synneþ for as myche as he assentiþ to þat vnresonable desire aȝens þe wil of god."[53] This sickness is namely pride, and those who give in are ultimately in danger of heresy: "For summe bien harde of herte, þat þei woln nat be turned, and þanne bi suffraunce of god þe deuel haþ power of hem, and bi his power and techyng þei wexen so wise and so sotyl that þei mowen nat be ouercomen wiþ no reason."[54] Those who curb their will with reason, on the other hand, are akin to the angels who with their free will have continued to worship God according to the "kynde of reason."[55] Indeed, the comparison of heretics to fallen angels makes it clear that to the *Chastising*-author a reason-controlled will is the only effective way to proceed in living the contemplative life.

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[45] *Scale*, 1.92, 146.
[46] *Chastising*, 193-94.
[47] *Chastising*, 194-95.
[48] *Scale*, 1.1172-76.
[49] *Scale*, 1.2290-95.
[50] *Scale*, 1.2307-12.
[51] See Niklaus Largier, "Medieval Mysticism," in *Religion and Emotion*, ed. John Corrigan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 364-79.
[52] *Chastising*, 118.
[53] Ibid. See also *Chastising*, 201.
[54] *Chastising*, 142.
[55] *Chastising*, 132.

Nevertheless, reason has a more specific function in directing the will as well. It oversees the discernment between human and demonic stirrings and divine stirrings, which alone make the human will receptive to God's will. This process is otherwise known as *discretio spirituum.* Hilton, for instance, when describing "schewynges to the bodili wittis" explains the possible deception in trusting to bodily appearances or sensations that seem spiritual.[56] He argues that these "feelings" are not contemplation, but rather stirrings that ought to be discerned:

> For in vertues and in knowynge of God with love is noo disceit. But al swich maner of feelyng thei mowe by gode, wrought bi a good angil, and they may be deceyvable, feyned bi a wikkid angel whan he transfigurith him into an angel of light. Wherfore sithen thei moun be bothe good and yvel, it semeth that thei aren not of the beste; for wyte thou weel that the devyl may, whanne he hath leve, feyne in bodili felinge the liknes of the same thinges whiche a good angil may worche. For as the good angil cometh with light, so can the devel, and so of othere wittes. Whoso hadde felid bothe, he schulde kunne telle whiche were gode and whiche were yvele, but he that nevere feelid neither, or elles but that oon, may lightli be disseyved. (1.208-16)

The *Chastising*-author connects these sensual stirrings with the danger of "spiritual lechery." Contemplatives by a "grete singularite desiren of god sum special ȝifte aboue other . . . wherfor ofte tymes þei bien disceyued of þe deuel."[57] Instead of desiring true contemplation, these misled contemplatives use "an vnresonable and vnordynat wil aȝens reason, euermore bowyng doun bi þe loue of kynde to his owne profite and al ease and reste."[58] Just like heretics and fallen angels, these deceived contemplatives follow their "love of nature" rather than their reason. Reason, therefore, is the faculty of the soul primarily responsible for helping the will choose the good stirrings by way of separating the evil from the good stirrings.

In practice, however, the discernment of spirits for visions and revelations is less about relying on one's own reason and more about relying on the reasoning of others, that is, through their semiotic discernment. The *Chastising*-author lays out this meticulous evaluation by a spiritual superior when he lists signs and results of a contemplative's revelatory "stirrings." In fact, he borrows criteria from Alfonso of Jaén's *Epistola* for discerning the spirits.[59]

> First it is to take heede wheþer he þat seeþ be a goostli lyuer, or seculer and worldli. Also wheþer he lyueþ vnder obedience special or contynuel techyng or discipline of sum elder,

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[56] *Scale*, 1.200-7.

[57] *Chastising*, 135.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Bazire and Colledge note that chapter 19 is a translation of chapter 2 of Alfonso of Jaén's *Epistola*, while chapter 20 is drawn from chapter 6 of the *Epistola* (*Chastising*, 287, n. 173.17); they also include the incipit of an English translation of the *Epistola* in MS British Museum Julius F ii: "That solitary man who compiled the epistle for proving of the celestial books of blessed Birgitta was lord Alphonse of Jaen, a man of holy life and a doctor of divinity who leaving at the last his bishopric and office through the motion (mocyoun) of the Holy Ghost led a hermit's life." For an edition of the *Epistola*, see *Alfonso of Jaén: His Life and Works with Critical Editions of the Epistola solitarii, the Informaciones and the Epistola serui Christi*, ed. Arne Jönsson (Lund: Lund University Press, 1989), 115-71.

> discreet, uertuous, hooli and expert and proued man whiche is his goostli fadir, or ellis at his owne propir wil. Also wheþe(r) he submitteþ hym and his visions loweli to þe doom of his goostli fadir, or of oþer discreet and sad goostli lyuers, for drede of illusion, or ellis kepiþ hem priuey and shewiþ hem not, but stondiþ to his owne examyneng, and to his owne doom. Also wheþer he haþ any presumpcion of his visions, or makeþ any bost of hem wiþ veynglorie, or holdiþ hymsilf þe more of reputacioun, or haþ any oþer men in dispite or indignacion. Also wheþer any goode dedis of uertues, of obedience or mekeness (or charite) or besi preier be ioieful or likyng to hym for þat tyme. . . . Also wheþer þis man or womman be holde and proued amonge goostli lyuers hooli and triewe, obedient to his prelatis and souereyns and gouernours of hooli chirche, or ellis wheþer he be holde defectif or suspect in þe feiþ. . . . Also wheþer he haþ longe contynued in goostli lyueng, mekeli and in penaunce and in excercises of visions and reuelacions, or ellis wheþer he be but a novice as in þe bigynnynge. Also wheþer he haue ony goode kyndeli vndirstondynge or feelyng, or ony goostli knowyng, or any triewe or discreete doom of reason or of þe goostli matier þat longith to þe soule. Also wheþer he be liȝt in kynde, or liȝt of frealte in chiere, in worde or in dede . . . . Also wheþer he haþ be ofte siþes examyned in suche matiers of visions or reuelacions of wise men and lettred and discreete and goostli lyueng men or noon. (173-75)

Added to these ten criteria are four more about the manner of receiving revelations, and another six about the quality of visions.[60] Most, if not all, of these criteria assume the obedience of the visionary in submitting him- or herself to examination by a spiritual superior, specifically one who is expert in interpreting the signs of the visionary's life and the vision's results. This semiotic expertise is called the "special discresion" of holy men, which descriptor the *Chastising*-author attributes to St. Gregory.[61] And if it were not already clear enough to the reader, he explains the rationale for submitting to another's spiritual authority: "Þerfor he þat haþ visions or reuelacions, it is goode to shewe hem to oþer wise men bi mekenesse, and þat he stonde nat to his owne doom, for drede of pride or presumpcion."[62] Simply put, the contemplative's judgment and his motives are both questionable, and they put him at risk if they are not checked by his spiritual director.

Hilton is not as heavy-handed with explicit mention to submitting visionary stirrings to spiritual superiors, but nevertheless resists giving the contemplative full control of *discretio spirituum*. He admits that while there is a way to discern "yf a spirit, or a felynge, or revelacion" is from God or from "the enemye," he would rather the visionary disregard it:

> [Do] not suffre thyn herte wilfulli for to reste, ne for to delite hooli, in no bodili thynge of sich maner felinge, confortes or swettenessis, though thei were gode. . . . But thou schalt ay seke that thou myght come to goostli feelynge of God; and that is that thou myght knowe the wisdom of God, the eendelees myght of Hym, the grete goodnesse of Hym in Hymsilf and in His creatures. For this is contemplacion and that othir is noon. (1.280-90)

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[60] *Chastising*, 175-76.
[61] *Chastising*, 175.
[62] Ibid.

This change in topic is not completely condescending. He does give three criteria with which the contemplative can discern the source of her own vision: if it "knytteth the knotte of love and of devocion to Jhesu fastere, openeth the sight of the soule into goostli knowynge more cleerli, and maketh it more meke in itsilf, this spirit is of God."[63] The only problem is that Hilton makes the discernment process for visions irrelevant to contemplation, the height of the contemplative life.

But perhaps, this is only because he deems his readers too inexperienced to know the difference between contemplation and the way to it. When discussing other spiritual exercises such as prayer and meditation, Hilton conspicuously lifts his prohibition on self-discernment of stirrings. He instructs that if the stirring "maketh thee the more devoute and the more fervent for to pray, it maketh thee the more wise for to thenke goostli thoughtes . . . it turneth and quykeneth thyn herte to more desire of vertues and encreseeth thi love more bothe to God and to thyn evene Cristen; also it maketh thee more meke in thyn owyn sight. Bi thise tokenes may thu knowe thanne that it is of God."[64] Unlike the *Chastising*-author, he designates "signs" which the contemplative himself can read and interpret in order to continue following his stirring. Similarly, regarding meditation, he clarifies what is needed to discern the spirits:

> That schalt thou wite bi this tokene: whanne it is so that thou art stired to devocion, and sodeynli thi thought is drawen up from alle worldli and fleischli thinges, and thee thenketh as thu seighe in thi soule thi Lord Jhesu Crist in bodili liknesse as He was in erthe, . . . And thou in this goostli sight thou felist thyn herte stired into so greet compassioun and pité of thi Lord Jhesu that thou mornest, and wepist, and criest with alle thy myghtes of thi bodi and of thi soule, wondrynge the goodnesse and the love, the pacience and the mekenesse of oure Lord Jhesu, . . . wite thou wel thanne that it is not thyn owen werkynge, ne feynynge of noo wikkid spirit, but bi grace of the Holi Goost. (901-18)

This long passage includes details of a meditation on Christ's life on earth: how he was arrested, beaten, condemned to death, bore the cross, was crucified, and was tortured on the cross. Like the prayer passage before it, it reads more like a prompt to correct practice than a note of permission to discern the spirits, though it is effectively both. Thus, while Hilton permits his readers to discern the spirits sometimes, it is usually in the service of training them to pray or meditate more effectively. Moreover, these passages seem to point up the end goal of attaining virtues like meekness and charity. In other words, Hilton endorses the discernment of spirits only if it will help the young contemplative establish a proper form of life.

Delineating criteria for *discretio spirituum* is ultimately necessary for both authors because forsaking one's own will is characteristic of the perfect lover of God. Contemplatives can be deceived about whether they truly offer their will entirely to God, or whether they simply feel like they are doing so. Semiotic evaluation plays a key role in discerning the authenticity of such an offering. For example, the *Chastising*-author accuses those men who have "fredom of spirit" and "stondiþ upon his owne propre wil" of living "in a maner contrariouste to haue þe loue of god, for clene he is wiþouten charite."[65] More "contrarious lyueng" follows, including

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[63] *Scale,* 1.281-83.

[64] *Scale*, 1.252-57.

[65] *Chastising*, 138. For a general study on the heresy of the Free Spirit, see Robert Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press,

forgoing observances of the church, divine law, and "al uertuous werkis þat any man may haue in exercises."[66] These men are also free of obedience to any man, whether pope, cardinal or bishop.[67] Willfulness rules the lives of these "Free Spirits" since they refuse to live by counsel of spiritual authorities. Their "contrary" form of life ruled by "singularity" rather than obedience signals their deception. Similarly, another sect of heretics called "goddis pacientis" keep themselves from all exercises and believe that "whateuere þinge þei bien stired inward, wheþer it accordeþ to cristes techyng or noon, al it comeþ of þe hooli goost."[68] They signal their "contrarious lyueng" by subtle disputation and by holding their opinions so strongly that "þei woln raþer cheese þe deeþ þan leeue or forsake ony oo poynt or article whiche þei holden."[69] Hilton likewise warns of willfulness that results in erroneous forms of living: some whom he calls "weak and simple" believe any stirring of the enemy and "so for unkunnynge thei fallen sum tyme into grete hevynesse, and as it were into dyspeir of savacioun,"[70] even to the point of knowingly lying about mortal sin in confession in order to "haue truste of savacion" from his confessor.[71] For those deceived by the devil's "bodily feeling," he warns that "bi pride and presumpcion he myght falle into errouris or into fantasies or into othere bodili or goostli myschevys."[72] All of these external symptoms of a deformed contemplative life point to a refusal to give up one's own will, and thus result in a lack of regard for reason and counsel.

This willfulness or spiritual pride, however, can actually result in a seemingly correct, hypocritical form of life. Hilton describes the contemplative who "for this love [of self] and this veyn delite he praieth, he waketh, he fasteth, he wereth the heire, and othere affliccions, and al this greveth hym but litil. He looveth and thanketh God sumtyme with his mouth and sumtyme wringeth out a teer of his iyen, and thanne hym thenketh al saaf inowgh."[73] The problem with hypocrisy, he declares, aside from the sin of spiritual pride itself, is that it presents a case where semiotic evaluation fails. Neither the contemplative who "thinks all safe enough" nor her spiritual advisor can detect her "willful" state of mind based on her form of life: "but oo thynge I telle thee, there be many ypocrites, and neverthelees thei wene thei been none, and there ben many that dreden as ypocrites themself, and soothli thei ben none. Which is oon and whiche is othir, God knoweth and noon but He."[74] The only remedy that he offers is that all contemplatives ought to "mekeli drede" that they beguile themselves.[75] For this fear of self-deception can itself find remedy in obedience to one's spiritual director.

1972). For Free Spiritism in England, see Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion,* 260-71; and Anne Hudson, *Lollards and Their Books* (London: Hambledon Press, 1985), 113 ff.; J. P. H. Clark, "Walter Hilton and 'Liberty of Spirit'," *The Downside Review* 96, no. 322 (1978): 61-78.

[66] *Chastising*, 139.

[67] *Chastising*, 140.

[68] *Chastising*, 142-43. See Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion*, 260-71, esp. 268.

[69] *Chastising*, 143.

[70] *Scale*, 1.566-67.

[71] *Scale*, 1.573-74.

[72] *Scale*, 1.249-50.

[73] *Scale*, 1.1679-82.

[74] *Scale*, 1.1696-99.

[75] *Scale*, 1.1699-1702.

"Work by counsel"

The proper form of life is one in which the contemplative relies on his or her spiritual director for guidance about discerning the spirits for spiritual gifts, temptations, and penitential practices. This guidance by "discreet and experienced men," who are sometimes specified as the confessor, safeguards novices who presumably lack adequate experience in discerning and following divine stirrings. Hilton, for example, instructs his readers to confess "ugly stirrings" of despair or blasphemy "to sum wise man in the bigynnynge bifore thei ben rooted in the herte, and that thei leve here owen witte and folwe the counsel of him."[76] And likewise, with regards to stirrings of spiritual fervor, he advises that the contemplative "meke hymsilf and thanke God, and kepe it prevey, but yif it be to his confessour, and holde it as longe as he may with discrecion."[77] Confession in either case is not the first line of defense. The contemplative has a preliminary role to play in humbling himself and accounting the ambiguous impulses as nothing. In fact, confession requires meekness, as the *Chastising*-author explains, which protects the contemplative from persisting in error through spiritual pride: "in þis temptacioun [despair] speciali and such oþer perelous and dredeful temptaciouns, it is goode to shewe it to a mannes confessour, or ellis to oon or tweyne oþer gostli lyuers, and aske oft counseil, and to meke hym to oþer mens preiers, for þer falliþ no man ne womman in myschief but suche þat gooen forþ and wil nat shewe her herte to no man. . . . For he þat stondiþ muste drede discretli þat he falle nat."[78] Fear of error and willingness to submit to another's authority constitute the meekness that contemplatives demonstrate by asking for and following counsel.

Confession is, nevertheless, a necessary step in the process of receiving spiritual stirrings because action in the world inevitably hinges on interpreting those stirrings. The *Chastising*-author cautions that the overt danger of skipping examination about revelations is the self-deception that results from lack of correct judgment: "For if þei be demed sodeynli and vndiscretli, þanne shal sooþ be taken for fals, and fals sumtyme for sooþ, into gret perel."[79] Moreover, tempted readers' "ignorance" of their impulses' meanings can lead not only to their own error but also to the error of others. Hilton advises them that they ought "schewe hem not lightli to noon uncouth man, that is to seie, to noon unkunnynge man and worldli, which never hadde felid siche temptacions, for thei myghte lightli bringe a symple soule into despeir bi unkunynge of hemsilf."[80] Working by counsel in spiritual gifts and temptations, therefore, also acts as a sign of charity since receiving and following counsel are measures that prevent leading others to error.

While receiving spiritual direction is a sign of the virtues of meekness and charity, the moral ends of the lower level of contemplative life, it also prepares the novice or Proficient for the work of contemplation. This is because the external works "bien instrumentis of þe soule inwarde" which work against the wicked passions "whiche defacen þe soule."[81] The director's advice, first of all, helps the individual apply the self-knowledge of "what passions bien most

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[76] *Scale*, 1.1006-7.
[77] *Scale*, 1.121-22.
[78] *Chastising*, 155.
[79] *Chastising*, 177.
[80] *Scale*, 1.1007-10.
[81] *Chastising*, 215.

aȝens hym" to which exercise "is most accordyng to fiȝt wiþ þat passion."[82] For instance, the *Chastising*-author lists "wakynge aȝens vnstable herte, silence aȝens wraþþe, occupacion (and trauell) aȝens slouþe and heuynessse, abstinence and sharp disciplines aȝens þe passion of lecherie, and so forþ of oþer passions." While memorizing this list takes little expertise—lists of the seven cardinal sins and their remedies are standard fare in such works of spiritual advice—the authority to judge the aptness of exercises has something to do with spiritual authority.[83] The *Chastising*-author suggests that this authority depends on spiritual directors' expertise in *discretio spirituum.* Counsel about the discernment of spirits plays a significant role in helping the contemplative "be nat so feruent to quenche oo passion oonli þat þe instrument of þe bodi faile to fiȝt aȝens anoþer."[84] For instance, he warns regarding lechery, if it "comyth of þe liȝtnesse of fleisshe, it is nedeful þanne to tempre it wiþ wakyng or fastynge or sum oþer trauaile, and wiþ sharpe werynges and harde, so it be do discreetli, for it is nat goode to distrie þe more for þe lasse, ne þe substaunce for þe accident."[85] The danger of overworking the body is thus comparable to that of instability: false judgment.[86] While the first mistakes destroying the body for saving the soul, the second mistakes the ease of the body for saving the soul.[87] Working by an experienced director's counsel helps the contemplative avoid falling into either extreme and guides him in destroying the "passions" that lead to sin.

In fact, Hilton and the *Chastising*-author often describe the moderation of these bodily and spiritual exercises, what I designate as "ascetic prudence," as a sign of the correct form of contemplative life. For instance, Hilton describes how "grete bodili deedes whiche a man dooth to hymsilf, as greet fastynge, mykil wakynge, and other scharp penaunce-doynge for to chastise the fleissch with discrecioun for trespaces that been bifore doon, . . . though thei ben actif, not for thi they helpen mykel and ordaynen a man in the bigynnynge to come to contemplatif lif, yif thei ben usid bi discrecion."[88] "Discretion" here is not *discretio spirituum* but ascetic prudence, or what he later calls the principle of "the mean is the best."[89] It is working by this type of discretion that distinguishes such penitential practices as "the beginning of the contemplative life." Ascetic prudence, however, is also integral to the practice of contemplation, and thus the correct form of life for the Perfect as well: "For though it be so that bodili peyne, othir of

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[82] *Chastising*, 215.

[83] *Chastising*, 214: "but þis maner of satisfaccion longiþ to hym to knowe þat haþ cure of soule, as it is writen in holi chirche lawe. To ȝou it nediþ nat to knowe: þerfor I passe ouer of satisfaccion."

[84] *Chastising*, 215.

[85] *Chastising*, 212-13.

[86] Cf. *Chastising*, 190: "Þerfor a souereyn remedie to alle þese goostli feueris [of instability] . . . it is goode to wirche bi counsaile, þat he falle nat fro goode lyueng ne fro his deuocion, ne chaunge nat to worse bi his vnstablenesse."

[87] *Chastising*, 190: "Þei forsake al goostli trauel and excercise of uertues, and besien hem to gete ful reste of kynde."

[88] *Scale*, 1.36-41.

[89] *Scale*, 1.599-604: "For as anemptis thi bodili kynde, it is good to use discrecion in etynge, and drynkynge, and in slepynge, and in alle maner bodily penaunce, or in longe praier bi speche, or in bodili feelynge bi greet fervour of devocioun, eyther in weepynge or in swiche othere, and also in ymagynynge of the spirit. Whan a man feeleth no grace in alle thise werkes, it is good to kepe discrecion and for to breke of summe tyme, for the mene is the beste."

penaunce othir of siknesse, or ellis bodili occupaccion, sumtyme letteth not the fervour of love to God in devocioun but often encresith it. Sothli y hope that it letteth the fervour of lust in contemplacion, whiche mai not be had ne felid sadli, but in gret reste of bodi and soule."[90] He explains in this passage that ascetic prudence means performing penitential exercises while accommodating bodily need. Hunger is necessary and must be addressed in order to facilitate bodily and spiritual service to God.[91] Moreover, correct form does not necessitate holding a rigid schedule. For example, personal prayers and devotion need not be kept at the same time each day. The *Chastising*-author advises that "sum tyme it is spedeful to leue it [prayer] for a tyme, for goode entent, for what occupacioun it be, preier or meditacioun, redynge or writynge, or ellis goode comonynge or what þinge it be þat most stiriþ him to þe loue of god."[92] Hilton similarly advises his readers to leave their prayers for the love of fellow Christians who seek consolation from them.[93] In sum, ascetic prudence is a fundamental principle of the correct form of life for contemplatives of all levels. Spiritual advisors direct their disciples by it in order that they might maintain the ability to progress toward contemplation.[94]

Confession is not exempt from advice about using ascetic prudence. Although withholding information from one's confessor seems disobedient, the *Chastising*-author encourages discretion in confession to protect both the reader and the confessor from temptation: "Þerfor, as for a general remedie aȝens al temptacions, it is nedeful to showe it to oure confessours, or in general wordis or in special: for suche a confessour it myȝt be þat it were nat spedeful to shewe hym al such goostli temptacions in special þat falle to a goostli lyuer."[95] He warns readers to be careful about whom they confess to because he acknowledges that even spiritual superiors have varying degrees of experience. Instead they should wait to ask counsel from another "man more discreet and more expert in suche matiers."[96] He also cautions readers about what they confess in detail, not just to confessors but also to those whom they console. Contemplatives should restrain their speech from specifics, "for sum bien traueiled wiþ oo þouȝt þat anoþer man or womman wold neuer, ne perauenture shul neuer imagyne such a þouȝt, but bi oþer mennys tellynge."[97] Indeed, he even models this discreet speech in his own advice by refraining from elaboration on wicked spirits' power and explains that the reason for such

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[90] *Scale*, 1.2227-31.

[91] *Scale*, 1.2218-21: "But agen the ground of it [gluttony] that is nede, as kyndeli honger whiche thou schal nedelynges fele and tente thertoo in tyme, and helpe thisilf agens it bi medicyn of mete as thou woldest helpe thisilf resonabli agens bodili sikenesse, that thou myght ete and the more freli serve thi God bodili and goostli."

[92] *Chastising*, 111.

[93] *Scale*, 1.2388 ff.

[94] The only exception to ascetic prudence that Hilton admits is toward desiring the destruction of vices and the attainment of virtues, the basis of establishing the correct form of contemplative life: "But in destroyynge of synne bi kepynge of thyn herte fro alle maner of unclennesse, and in ay lastynge desire of vertues, and of the blisse of hevene, and for to have the goostli felynge and lovynge of God, halde thou noo meene, for the more it is of this, the betere is it" (*Scale*, 1.604-7).

[95] *Chastising*, 202. See Justice, "'General Words.'"

[96] *Chastising*, 202.

[97] *Chastising*, 119.

prudence is to facilitate both "ȝoure owne profite, and comfort of oþer."[98] Thus, while obedience to a spiritual director restricts the actions of contemplatives, the same obedience includes the responsibility to self-regulate thoughts and speech for the benefit of others.

End Goal: A Virtuous Life

Ultimately, Hilton and the *Chastising*-author teach that the contemplative purges her soul with bodily and spiritual exercise in order to cultivate virtues, particularly that of charity and meekness. Hilton argues that meekness "is the first and the laste of alle vertues," citing authorities like Augustine and Gregory who speak about the futility of gathering other virtues without it.[99] He concludes that doing good deeds without it is equivalent to doing nothing. Similarly, the *Chastising*-author claims that meekness is an end to spiritual exercise by explaining why Latin prayers are more worthy than other devotions. Their worth is not in the readers' comprehension of the words ("thoȝ ȝe vndirstonde no word þat ȝe seie") but in their demonstration of the readers' meekness and obedience to Holy Church.[100] Here, he does not demand rote recitation but rather emphasizes on the fact that saying Latin prayers "may be to ȝou more medeful" since, all things being equal, meekness is more important than comprehension. If you were to have only one of them in devotion, it should be meekness.

Charity is linked to meekness in that both authors consider it a reward or result of meekness. For Hilton, he explains, "that no good deede mai make a man sikir withoute charité; and that charité is oonli had of the gifte of God to hem that are meke, and who is parfightli meke."[101] Only meekness enables a man to love the sinner and hate his sin, "whiche mai not be leered bi techynge of man."[102] Thus, charity is a sign of God's acknowledgment of one's meekness. For the *Chastising*-author outward works or "any special grace put in us" are not for the merits of the readers but for "her profite that bien conuertid and comfortid wiþ suche ȝiftes that god sendiþ us."[103] Meekness is a prerequisite for orienting the work of exercises and of spiritual gifts toward the benefit of others, or in other words, in working in charity.

In effect, these authors teach that God's endowment of spiritual gifts is primarily for cultivating meekness and charity. With regards to visions and revelations, the *Chastising*-author teaches that "we shuln litel þanne sette bi reuelacions or visions . . . but as moche as þei stire us and encresen us into þe loue of god wiþ mekenesse and charite."[104] Moreover, he explains that meekness even trumps *discretio spirituum,* another gift of God, for discerning stirrings:

> It is harde to knowe of suche maner teeris whiche bien of kynde and whiche bien aboue kynde, for bicause thei bien so liche, þerfor as soone as þou feelist ony suche gladness or ioie in þi soule or ony suche swetnesse of teeris or of oþer tokenes of comfort, þou shalt lift up þin herte and hondis, as abel dide, in maner of sacrifice to hym þat sendiþ alle goodenesse . . . And þanne suche teeris and tokenes of grace, whiche parauenture were

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[98] *Chastising*, 168.
[99] *Scale*, 1.454 ff.
[100] *Chastising*, 222.
[101] *Scale,* 1.1918-19.
[102] *Scale*, 1.1938-39.
[103] *Chastising*, 184.
[104] *Chastising*, 185.

> first but of natural kynde, wiþout merite, mowen be made meritorie and aboue kynde. (186)

Whether or not the tears or other spiritual gifts were natural or gracious, or whether or not the reader can discern this using *discretio spirituum*, is beside the point. If the reader follows Abel's example and humbles himself before God who "sends all goodness," then even natural tears will be made gracious. The *Chastising*-author concludes, "for what man haþ mekenesse and charity, he is hooli and parfiȝt."[105] Hilton draws a similar conclusion from the antithetical example of Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the publican. He explains that the Pharisee sinned in that he "delitede willfulli by a pryvé pride in hymsilf of the giftes of God, stelande the worschipe and the loovynge from God and sette it in hymsilf."[106] Even though the Pharisee does have spiritual gifts, they are counted as nothing since he lacks humility for receiving them. On the other hand, if one maintains meekness, he would progress from one spiritual gift to another securely: "But he that worcheth in siche grace as he hath, and desireth mekeli and lastandli aftir more, and aftir felith his herte stired for to folwe the grace whiche he hath desired, he mai sikirli renne, yif he kepe mekenesse."[107] This progression in gifts and the execution of those gifts in bodily and spiritual exercise constitute the "ladder" of contemplation that Hilton describes. The two virtues also help with performing works and using gifts discreetly, which make them both a means to and an end of contemplation.[108] Charity and meekness, therefore, are the ends to the form of life prescribed to contemplative novices and Proficients.

While *The Chastising of God's Children* ends with the soul still laboring to be purged, *Scale 1* ends with a vision of the soul reformed to Christ's likeness "in fullness of virtue."[109] In other words, Hilton segues from giving advice about how to establish a contemplative form of life to depicting contemplation, the most advanced spiritual exercise of that life. He does not, however, explain contemplation as just another work. Instead, he suggests that it constitutes a completely different state of mind: "And yif thou wolt wite what thou lovest, loke whereupoun thou thenkest; for where thi love is, there is thyne iye; and where thy likynge is, there is most thyn herte thynkynge. Yif thou moche love God, thee liketh to thenke moche upon Hym. Rule wel thi thoughtes and thyne affeccions, and thanne art thou vertuous."[110] The "fullness of virtue" that results from establishing the proper form of contemplative life is not simply exercised in bodily action but in mental processes. "Loving" is equated with the "sight" of the heart, and guiding this sight, or ruling one's thoughts and impulses, is equated with a "virtuous" life. By describing love as a way of thinking, he ties the theme of the first book, destroying sin and getting virtue, with that of the second book, the reformation of feeling or will by the Holy Spirit.

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[105] *Chastising*, 183.

[106] *Scale*, 1.514-15.

[107] *Scale*, 1.1087-89.

[108] *Scale*, 1.2255-60: "Gete to thee thanne mekenesse and charité, and yif thou wole traveile and swynke bisili for to have hem, thou schal mowe have inow for to doo in getynge of hem. Thei schal rule and mesure thee ful pryveli, hou thou schalt ete and drynke and socoure al thi bodili nede, that ther schal no man wite it but yif thou wole, and it schal not be in perplexité, ne in dwere, ne in angirnesse and hevynesse, but in a pees of glaad conscience with a sad restfulnesse."

[109] *Scale*, 1.2584 ff.

[110] *Scale*, 1.2506-9.

The *Cloud*-author like Hilton also shows how this virtuous inner life is gotten by the exercise of contemplation. While he does not highlight the transition between virtuous form of life and virtuous form of cognition as Hilton does, both use a model of evaluating stirrings that is more self-regulatory and internalized than mere semiotic evaluation. This new model, hermeneutic evaluation, endows the reader with the spiritual authority to dictate her own form of life.

Hermeneutic Evaluation for the Perfect

The second book of Hilton's *Scale* and *The Cloud of Unknowing* advise readers about a particular practice of the contemplative life, the exercise of the soul in contemplation. As Hilton explains at the end of the first book of the *Scale*, practicing this spiritual exercise trains the reader's mind, both the will and the intellect, to feel and think in a certain way. I call this form of cognition "hermeneutic evaluation," which both authors consider part of "discrecyon." Unlike semiotic evaluation, hermeneutic evaluation requires the contemplative to track internal mental processes rather than external signs in order to discern the source of spiritual feeling. As a result, he or she is primarily responsible for regulating it, and the exercise of contemplation itself. The responsibility of self-regulating contemplation and the corresponding danger of incorrect regulation are not lost on the authors of these works. While they describe the spiritual incentives they perceive as inherent to contemplation, they are obviously aware of its hazards and admit to the necessity of the spiritual director's intervention in extreme cases. Nevertheless, the work as a whole is self-directed and, if properly practiced, even results in the contemplative's attainment of the ascetic prudence needed to direct his or her own form of life. In other words, once the height of contemplation is reached, the contemplative is supposed to have gained the expertise in discernment (both semiotic and hermeneutic) and the spiritual authority to lead with little mediation the correct form of life.

Both authors consider "beholding God," or uniting with God in accordance of will, the height of contemplation. They use the metaphor of "beholding," among others, to describe the passive union with God in affect or will.[111] While the Middle English verb "biholden" has various transitive meanings (to gaze at; to observe, consider) and self-reflexive meanings (to pay attention; to perceive, understand; to have content or meaning),[112] these, as Maggie Ross claims, fail to get at the apophatic meaning of the metaphor: the opposite of self-conscious experience.[113] "Beholding" is more like passive receptivity to God's will than a conscious attentiveness. The *Cloud*-author explains it this way: "Abouen þiself þou arte: for whi þou atteynest to come þedir by grace, wheþer þou mayst not come by kynde; þat is to sey, to be onyd to God in spirit & in loue & in acordaunce of wille."[114] Grace, which denotes God's activity, not "nature," which denotes human activity, is responsible for allowing the contemplative to attain this unity of spirit in affect. Hilton portrays this God-given receptivity as "openynge the goostli iye into biholdynge of Jhesu bi inspiracion of special grace" that "werketh love outeward in a soule."[115] The ability

[111] For more examples of Hilton's metaphors, see *Scale*, 2.2863-71.

[112] *MED,* "biholden" (v.), http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED4526.

[113] Ross, "Behold Not the Cloud of Experience," 38-39.

[114] *Cloud*, 67.

[115] *Scale*, 2.2855-56.

to "behold" or receive Jesus is actually enabled by Jesus' love working "outward," or empowering, the soul; therefore, both the ability to receive and what is received comes from God. Hilton specifies what the contemplative receives as the "reformation of feeling," which he defines as the destruction of the "olde feelynges of this image of synne" and the attainment of "newe gracious feelynges thorugh wirkynge of the Holi Gost."[116] These "feelings" are the stirrings of the contemplative's will, which at contemplation's apex is so pliant as to be considered God's will moving directly within the soul.

"Beholding," however, is only momentary in this life. The *Cloud*-author and Hilton insist that readers must take preliminary steps toward the height of contemplation, which process taken altogether makes contemplation a work in perpetual progress. The *Cloud*-author portrays this process as a movement toward the "cloud of unknowing." First, one must "rise above" the "cloud of forgetting" or the remembrance of all earthly and heavenly things.[117] Then, one must enter the "cloud of unknowing," or the state of passive receptivity. Contemplation is achieved when God chooses to send his "blind stirring of love" to pierce the "cloud of unknowing," that is, when God enlightens the contemplative with a direct awareness of his will.[118] Hilton illustrates this process as a pilgrimage toward Jerusalem, which symbolizes the attainment of union with God.[119] Like the *Cloud*-author's process, Hilton's requires that the contemplative leave behind all other thoughts of the world as he enters the "lightsome darkness" of the "good night" that precedes the "true light" of Jerusalem.[120] The "good night" is equivalent to both the "cloud of forgetting" and the "cloud of unknowing."[121] It is the "cloud of forgetting," or the gateway to contemplation, in that it separates the contemplative from worldly desire and vain thoughts;[122] but it is also the "cloud of unknowing" in that it requires a "blind thinking" of Christ and enables the soul to perceive spiritual illumination from him.[123] Both authors explain that the final stage of contemplation is completed in heaven.[124] Although they agree that the length of the process makes contemplation the "moste sovereyn and moste sotil [craft], the highest, the hardeste for to come to the perfeccioun of it," they also declare how "it is moste profitable and moste of wynnynge to him that mai soothfasteli performe it."[125] This exercise is strenuous but well worth the effort.

Of course, contemplation is itself built upon the spiritual exercises established in the lower level of contemplation. Hilton reminds his readers that the "reformation of feeling" is an

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[116] *Scale*, 2.223-24.

[117] *Cloud*, 9.

[118] *Cloud*, 17.

[119] See Putter, "Moving Towards God," 338 ff.; Cervone, *Poetics of Incarnation*, 176 ff.

[120] J. P. H. Clark, "The 'Lightsome Darkness'–Aspects of Walter Hilton's Theological Background," *The Downside Review* 95, no. 319 (1977): 95-109; J. P. H. Clark, "The 'Cloud of Unknowing', Walter Hilton and St John of the Cross: A Comparison," *The Downside Review* 96, no. 325 (1978): 281-98.

[121] McGinn disagrees with Knowles and J. P. H. Clark that Hilton's "luminous darkness" corresponds to John of the Cross's "dark night of the soul" in *Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism*, 392. Cf. Knowles, *English Mystical Tradition*, 110-12.

[122] *Scale*, 2.1645 ff.

[123] *Scale*, 2.1471 ff.

[124] *Cloud*, 22, 29; *Scale*, 2.225, 1836 ff.

[125] *Scale*, 2.967-69.

upper rung of a tall ladder that cannot be reached without long exercise and skillful working.[126] Yet contemplation simultaneously surpasses the efficacy of all other spiritual works. Compared to fasting, vigils, rising early, wearing hairshirts, weeping for sin, or remembering the joys of heaven, it grants the contemplative much more good, help, profit, and grace.[127] The *Cloud*-author explains, "For þis is only bi itself þat werk þat distroieþ þe grounde & rote of synne. . . . It distroieþ not only þe grounde & þe rote of sinne, as it may be here, bot þerto it geteþ vertewes."[128] If destroying sin and attaining virtue is the goal of establishing a contemplative life, contemplation is the perfection of that goal. Hilton likewise suggests that contemplation is a more effective spiritual work than the rest. He advises that the contemplative cast aside all good deeds and bad and consider herself as having nothing until she have contemplation.[129] He explains that doing so will protect her from "robbers and thieves," or unclean spirits, who would tempt her on the road to Jerusalem.[130] In other words, these good deeds can become mere distractions from contemplation. For the devotional customs of the beginner are only an entryway into spiritual feeling, which must be abandoned when a better one come.[131] While these other works are essential in establishing the contemplative form of life, they are less effective tools in helping the contemplative attain union of will with God's will.

The *Cloud*-author explains exactly how contemplation surpasses the efficacy of the other works. Because it directly exercises the will, the faculty of the soul that is primarily responsible for the attainment of virtue, it moves the soul more closely and more quickly to union with God. In fact, he defines virtue as "not elles bot an ordeinde & a mesurid affeccion, pleinly directe vnto God for himself."[132] If affection is a "stirring of the will," then virtue is the result of the will directing that "stirring," or feeling, toward God. He proceeds to teach that contemplation is the work of "keping of þe sterynges of þe wille" and that this is work "þe whiche man schuld haue contynowed ȝif he neuer had synned, & to þe whiche worching man was maad."[133] If one's soul were reformed by grace back to its prelapsarian state, "þan þou schuldest euermore, bi help of þat grace, be lorde of þat stering or of þoo sterynges."[134] This work, then, is literally a "reformation of feeling" back to its paradisal state and the actual cultivation of virtue. As Hilton puts it, "Yif thou wolt witen thanne yif thi soule be reformed to the image of God or noo, bi that that I have seid thou maist have an entré. Ransake thyn owen conscience and loke what thi wille is, for thereinne stondeth al."[135] Here, he ties the stated end goal of the lower level of contemplation, reformation to the image of God, to the end goal of the upper level, reformation in feeling. He teaches that if one reaches the beginning of contemplation, one has already begun the work that all of the lower level's exercises can accomplish. Contemplation's direct action on the will, however, also means that it is strictly internally performed and thus requires self-regulation rather than external regulation by a spiritual advisor.

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[126] *Scale*, 2.882-89.
[127] *Scale*, 2.882-89.
[128] *Cloud*, 21.
[129] *Scale*, 2.1167 ff.
[130] *Scale*, 2.1180 ff.
[131] *Scale*, 2.972 ff.
[132] *Cloud*, 22.
[133] *Cloud*, 11.
[134] *Cloud*, 10.
[135] *Scale*, 2.382-84.

Moving Beyond Reason, and Hermeneutic Evaluation

A large part of contemplation includes the active suppression of the faculty of reason, which tries to understand God. Again, this activity is internally performed and self-regulated rather than externally regulated. While both authors acknowledge the use of reason in spiritual exercises, both also admit a limit of reason in progressing to true contemplation, or beholding God.[136] Hilton, for instance, suggests the limit of reason in contemplation by focusing intently on will and desire in his depictions of contemplative progress. While he describes the soul as a "reasonable instrument" wherein God works, it is desire, not thought, that leads the soul to contemplation:

> And therfore whanne thou feelist thi thought bi touchynge of His grace bi taken up with this desire to Jhesu with a myghti devoute wille for to plesen Him and loven Him, thynke thanne that thou haste Jhesu; for He it is that desireth. Biholde Him wel, He goth bifore thee, not in bodili liknesse, but unseabli bi privei hid presence of His goostli myght; therfore see Hym gostly yif thou myght, or ellis trowe Him and folwe Him whidirso He goth; for Hee schal leede thee in the righte weie to Jerusalem, that is, the sight of pees in contemplacioun. (2.1339-45)

Divine grace moves the will "to please him and love him." The metaphor of "beholding" does not denote actions of the reason like observing or considering since Christ leads the contemplative "invisibly." Instead, "beholding" relates to the action of the will, or rather its submission to God's will. He signals the will's passive receptivity by using verbs of "spiritual sight" like "believing" and "following" where Christ moves. It is Jesus who directs the soul toward contemplation by steering the contemplative's will. Indeed, Hilton depicts "spiritual sight" consistently as divine guidance of desire throughout the rest of the treatise.[137] He even quotes two biblical excerpts which support his claim that Jesus leads the soul to contemplation by desire, explaining that, "He schal lede me bi desire" and that "the mynde of Thee is printed in desire of my soule."[138] For him, the limit of reason in contemplation is based on the biblical testimony that God uses the human will alone to scale the height of contemplation.

The *Cloud*-author comes to the same conclusion about the limit of reason but by using a different textual basis: Pseudo-Dionysius' *Mystical Theology*. He quotes "Seynte Denis" saying, "Þe most goodly knowyng of God is þat, þe whiche is knowyn bi vnkowyng."[139] This "unknowing" is not simply ignorance but rather the active suppression of reason. He warns the reader that "þe sharp steryng of þin vnderstondyng, þat wile alweis prees apon þee when þou settest þee to þis blynd werk, behoueþ alweys be born doun" lest it "bere þee doun" under the "cloud of forgetting."[140] Contemplation, therefore, is "blind" because it does not use reason, or

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[136] *Scale*, 2.662-69; *Cloud*, 64-65.
[137] E. g. *Scale* 2.1433 ff., 1630 ff.
[138] *Scale*, 2.1348-49, 1353.
[139] *Cloud*, 70.
[140] *Cloud*, 18.

its servant, imagination, to unify the soul with God.[141] Instead it uses a "blynde steryng of love vnto God for himself, & soche a priue loue put vpon þis cloude of vnknowyng" which is felt "in þin affeccion goostly," that is, in the will alone.[142] Like Hilton's "spiritual sight," the "blind stirring of love" is the divine will acting on the soul's will which awaits divine stirring in a state of passive anticipation. The *Cloud*-author, however, is careful not to denounce reason outright: "Bot I say, þof al it [thought of any good and clean spiritual thing under God] be good & holy, ȝit in þis werk it letteþ more þen it profiteþ—I mene for þe tyme."[143] Contemplation unlike other bodily and spiritual works is a privileged spiritual work that exercises the will alone.

The prohibition of reason and imagination is particularly aimed at the Perfect, and is not advised for all levels of contemplatives. For instance, the Proficient contemplative is directed to regulate her own use of imagination, stopping or starting based on "seeing and feeling a better work." Hilton instructs that for some "it is good to hem that thei kepe forth here owen wirkynge in imaginacion with manli affeccions, until more grace come freeli to hem. It is not sikir to a man for to leven a good werk uttirli until he see and feele a betere."[144] Such working in imagination includes meditating on Christ's manhood, worshiping Christ in bodily likeness, hearing delightful song, feeling comfortable heat in the body, seeing light, and tasting sweetness or savor.[145] These are "not goosteli feelynges, for goostli feelynges aren felt in the myghtis of the soule, principali in undirstondynge and in love and litil in imaginacioun," but they may still help the maturing Proficient "to more stablenesse of thought in God and to more love."[146] God can even turn these imagination-driven feelings of love, that is, love gotten by use of intermediaries, into spiritual love despite the fact that imperfect lovers' work is not divinely but "manli doon bi a soule at the biddyng of resoun."[147]

Yet feelings in the imagination can be dangerous for those transitioning beyond this intermediate stage of life. Hilton goes on to explain, "whan thei [feelings in the imagination] are best and moste trewe yit aren thei but outeward tokenes of inli grace that is feelt in the myghttis of the soule."[148] As such, these "outward" signs felt in the imagination can be used to interpret whether or not individuals are predisposed to contemplation or not. But the danger lies in the possibility of a false positive; not all of these signs come from a divine source. The *Cloud*-author warns that some "wiþ þis coriouste þei trauayle þeire ymaginacion so vndiscreetly, þat at þe laste þei turne here brayne in here hedes. & Þan as fast þe deuil haþ power for to feyne sum false liȝt or sounes, swete smelles in þeire noses, wonderful taastes in þeire mowþes, & many queynte hetes & brennynges in þeire bodily brestes or in þeire bowelles, in þeire backes & in þeire reynes, & in þeire pryue membres."[149] Such imaginative feelings can be forced "indiscreetly,"

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[141] See Alastair Minnis, "Affection and Imagination in 'The Cloud of Unknowing' and Hilton's 'Scale of Perfection,'" *Traditio* 39 (1983): 323-66; and Denis Renevey, "'See by Ensaumple': Images and the Imagination in the Writings of the Author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*," *Micrologus* 6 (1998): 225-43.

[142] *Cloud*, 18-19.

[143] *Cloud*, 19.

[144] *Scale*, 2.2065-67.

[145] *Scale*, 2.1999-2004; 2068-70.

[146] *Scale*, 2.2070-72, 2091-92.

[147] *Scale*, 2.2458-69.

[148] *Scale*, 2.2070-74.

[149] *Cloud*, 53.

which act the devil can then use to mislead promising contemplatives to error. Ultimately, the work of contemplation is directing the will toward God only by the grace of God, not by force of reason. While the faculty of reason certainly has its place in the long process leading up to the beginning of contemplation, at its entryway the faculty of the will necessarily takes over.

Due to the inherent dangers of learning to practice contemplation, both Hilton and the *Cloud*-author emphasize on learning how to discern the spirits in their works. Hilton warns that discernment of spirits is necessary to test for the divine "stirring of grace" which the Perfect ought to follow: "For aftir that grace stireth and toucheth, so thei [those somewhat reformed in feeling] folwen and so thei werken, as the prophete seith. But thei han first a ful myghti assai and a trewe knowynge of the vois of grace, or thei mowen doo so, that thei be not disseyved bi ther owen feynynge, or bi the myddai fend."[150] Likewise, the *Cloud*-author points to the "scharpe double-eggid dreedful swerde of discrecion" as the tool to shear away the remainder of original sin, a constant source of ambiguous stirrings.[151] Such stirrings, however, can come from other sources apart from the devil and corrupt human flesh: "In pyne of þe original sinne it [the soul] schal euermore see & fele þat somme of alle þe creatures þat euer God maad, or somme of þeire werkes, wilen euermore prees in mynde bitwix him & God. & þis is þe riȝtwise dome of God . . . forþi þat he wilfuly maad him [man] vnderloute to þe steryng of his soiettes."[152] Here, the *Cloud*-author illustrates again that stirrings of the will, or its movements toward one thing or another, were part of how God originally created humanity to respond to all of the other creatures under its dominion. While discernment was the ability to distinguish the differences between various stirrings, contemplation was the practice of ordering or "kepyng" them. In the aftermath of the Fall, humans lost the innate ability of discernment and stopped doing the work of contemplation. Ironically, they needed it even more than before since original sin and the devil became new sources of stirrings.[153] The rehabilitation of contemplation, therefore, necessitates the recuperation of discernment not merely to avoid the danger of false stirrings of flesh and devil, but also to separate the stirrings of creatures from those of God.

The *Cloud*-author's explanation that having discernment is a prerequisite to contemplating also provides a clear basis for why each contemplative ought to learn the discernment of spirits for herself. In contrast to the emphasis of semiotic evaluation that *Scale 1* and the *Chastising* proposed to novices and Proficients, *Scale 2* and the *Cloud* describe *discretio spirituum* as evaluating a state of mind. Do the "stirrings" provoke desire or doubt? Does the resultant desire or doubt lead to more desire or more doubt? Hermeneutic evaluation requires the contemplative to track the whole thought process rather than just the physical end results of his or her impulses.

Hilton demonstrates how to track one's thought process in a chapter devoted to exploring the "wicked stirrings" that may tempt a contemplative.[154] He compares these stirrings of "fleschli desires and veyne dredes" to "enemies" who try to obstruct the path to Jerusalem.[155] First, they

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[150] *Scale*, 2.3413-16.

[151] *Cloud*, 37.

[152] *Cloud*, 35.

[153] Indeed, those contemplatives without discretion are imagined to have the fire of hell inflaming their brains. See *Cloud*, 57.

[154] *Scale*, 2.1220.

[155] *Scale*, 2.1228.

may accuse the pilgrim of ineffective shrift;[156] then, they may accuse him of being unworthy to receive the love of God;[157] then, they may warn him that he will fall into sickness or fantasy or poverty or temptations of the fiend if he continues on to contemplation;[158] lastly, they may turn other men against him, trying to tempt the pilgrim to "ire or malencolie or yvel wil agens thyn even Cristene."[159] The enemies' final turn to using other men to accuse the pilgrim signals that the earlier stirrings are doubts found within the contemplative's own thoughts which he must track himself. Moreover, the series of thoughts traces a psychological progression from guilt to self-deprecation to fear to external reinforcement of that fear, suggesting a mindset of fearing rather desiring the love of God. This fearful or doubtful mindset points to a fleshly or demonic source for the stirrings. Hilton's point, here, is to show that individual stirrings which seem based on truth—for they echo some of the real doubts from contemplatives that Hilton addresses in his Latin letters[160]—can still have a deceptive source. Keeping track of the trajectory of the stirrings can help the contemplative identify that deceptive source before he wrongly leaves the work of contemplation.

Unfortunately, the devil's stirrings can appear even in the form of various kinds of spiritual gifts. Thus, wicked stirrings can lead to love of self through spiritual pride, in addition to leading the contemplative away from the love of God through doubt. The *Cloud*-author gives an example of those who "knowe not whiche is inward worchyng, þerfore þei worche wronge."[161] Instead of forsaking their imaginations, they use it to feel pseudo-spiritual stirrings as mentioned above. They are so misguided, in fact, that even the devil will not hinder them with "veyne þouȝtes" because they do his work, and "wite þou riȝt wel þat him list not lette hymself."[162] In this case, their self-deception about the devil's stirrings toward incorrect contemplation leads to spiritual pride, which is a much greater sin than giving into vain thoughts during correct contemplation.

Self-deception about one's own holiness, however, can only spring from evaluating such stirrings semiotically rather than hermeneutically. For instance, Hilton warns of those who when they forsake the world outwardly and are able to keep God's commandments, would immediately teach and preach to other men "as though thei hadden receyved grace of undirstondynge and perfeccioun of charité thorugh special grace and gifte of the Holi Gooste."[163] Yet "yif thei wolen loken wel aboute hem, thei schullen wel seen that this light of knowynge and the heete that thei feelen cometh nought of the trewe sunne, that is oure Lord Jhesu; but it cometh fro the myddai feend that feyneth light and likneth him to the sunne."[164] These, although they feel much knowing without study and much fervor of love, are deceived by the devil through spiritual pride. Instead of tracking their thoughts about "highinge of himsilf" or "lowynge of his evene Cristen," they interpret their outward actions as signs of inward grace. By the time signs of demonic influence are outwardly apparent—"pride, presumpcion,

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[156] *Scale*, 2.1236 ff.
[157] *Scale*, 2.1242 ff.
[158] *Scale*, 2.1252 ff.
[159] *Scale*, 2.1269-75.
[160] See, for example, Clark and Taylor, *Walter Hilton's Latin Writings*, 230-31.
[161] *Cloud*, 53.
[162] Ibid.
[163] *Scale*, 2.1543-44.
[164] *Scale*, 2.1549-52.

unbuxumnesse, indignacioun, bac-bitynge, and othere siche synnes"[165]—an external intervention is already necessary.[166] The spiritually proud "aren so blynt with this feyned light that thei holden the highenesse of here owen herte and unbuxumnesse to the lawis of Hooli Chirche, as it were perfite mekenesse to the Gospel and to the lawes of God."[167] While semiotic evaluation has a useful role for directors in identifying heretics and hypocrites, both Hilton and the *Cloud*-author highlight the preventative measure of evaluating one's state of mind, which can only be done by oneself, at all times.

Still, semiotic evaluation of self is also useful up to a certain point. The *Cloud*-author illustrates the "unseemly countenances" that act as "tokenes of pride & coryouste of witte" in order that "a goostly worcher shal proue his werk by hem": writhing of heads; gaping of mouths; speaking with fingers; inability to sit, stand, or lay still; rowing of arms; constant smiling and laughing between words.[168] Although these signs are not in themselves sinful, they can be if they "ben gouerners of þat man þat doþ hem, insomochel þat he may not leue hem whan he wile."[169] The contemplative can evaluate these signs unlike those of the lower level of contemplation because they are specifically tied to control of the will. If he has control of leaving his mouth agape or the "wholeness of his voice," then it may be that he is being tempted but is not yet deceived by the devil.[170]

The signs of the proper form of contemplation, however, are not so clear. Even though the *Cloud*-author offers a description of "semely" countenance appropriate to the true contemplative,[171] he qualifies his description as a guard against hypocrisy: "His chere and his wordes shuld be ful goostly wysdam, ful of fiire & of frute, spoken in sad soþfastnes, wiþouten any falsheed, fer fro any feynyng or pipynge of ypocrites."[172] Here, the test of "truthfulness" and "falsehood" requires a comparison between the outward signs and the inner spirit, which requires the honesty of the contemplative to begin with. In other words, without a way to compare the "priue pride in þeire hertes wiþinne & soche meek wordes wiþoutyn" the contemplative who merely justifies herself by outward signs may be an unknowing hypocrite who "may ful sone sinke into sorow."[173] Hilton confirms the ambiguity of the signs of true contemplation by listing all the gifts of the Holy Ghost only to say that "thei aren not the Holi Goost, for a repreved soule and a dampnable myght have alle thise giftes as fulli as a chosen soule."[174] In short, signs of

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[165] *Scale*, 2.1576-77.

[166] Cf. *Cloud*, 12-13: They who labor in intellect "aȝens cours of kynde, & þei feyne a maner of worching, þe whiche is neþer bodily ne goostly: trewly þis man, whatsoeuer he be, is perilously disseyuid; insomochel þat, bot ȝif God of his grete goodnes schewe his mercyful myracle & make hym sone to leue werk & meek hym to counsel of prouid worchers, he schal falle ouþer into frenesies, or elles into oþer grete mischeues of goostly sinnes & deuels disseites."

[167] *Scale*, 2.1563-65.

[168] *Cloud*, 55.

[169] Ibid.

[170] *Cloud*, 59, 56.

[171] *Cloud*, 55.

[172] *Cloud*, 56.

[173] *Cloud*, 56.

[174] *Scale*, 2.2498-99.

incorrect contemplation can be useful checks for an ordered will, but signs of correct contemplation are useless without corresponding insight into the stirrings of the will.

The only exception to this ambiguity about proper form of life is contemplation itself. The stirring toward contemplation can only come from God. The *Cloud*-author explains that this is because only God can directly stir the human will.[175] The devil and the human reason cannot stir the will without an intermediary. Thus, divine stirring to contemplation is, as it were, without equal or name: "wiþoutyn þis werk a soule is as it were deed, & can not coueite it ne desire it. For as moche as þou wylnest it & desirest it, so mochel hast þou of it . . . & ȝit is it no wil, ne no desyre, bot a þing þou wost neuer what, þat steriþ þee to wilne & desire þou wost neuer what."[176] The *Cloud*-author's inability to name the stirring to contemplation, and his reliance on tautology to portray its mechanism—you can only have it if you have it—attempts to express its extreme otherness. He puts the passivity of receiving contemplation another way: "Lat it be þe worcher, & þou bot þe suffrer; do bot loke apon it, & lat it alone. Medel þee not þerwiþ as þou woldest help it, for drede lest þou spille al. Be þou bot þe tre, & lat it be þe wriȝt; be þou bot þe hous, & lat it be þe hosbonde wonyng þerin."[177] The repetition of "bot," or "only," reinforces the agency that the contemplative, already metaphorically reduced to an inanimate object, lacks in the face of this stirring. He cannot but help to allow it to work; any meddling on his part would disqualify him from receiving it.

Because of this apparently complete conquest of the contemplative's will, both authors consider the stirring to contemplation as unimpeachable. The *Cloud*-author writes: "& in erles of þat mede, sumtyme he wil enflaume þe body of a deuoute seruaunt of his here in þis liif . . . Soche a counforte & soche a swetnes schal not be had suspecte; &, shortly to sey, I trowe þat he þat feliþ it may not haue it suspecte."[178] Hilton likewise affirms the contemplative's inability to doubt the stirring to contemplation: "Yyf thou wilte witen thane what this desire is, sotheli it is Jhesu. For He maketh this desire in thee and He geveth thee it. He it is that desireth in thee and He it is that is desired."[179] Since contemplation is itself the directing of the will toward God, and only God can stir the will directly, it must be he alone who is the means to and end of contemplation.

The spiritual gift of contemplation also helps the contemplative discern other kinds of stirrings. For example, the *Cloud*-author instructs his reader that "þis blynde & deuoute & þis listy steryng of loue" will "wel kun telle" her about the ambiguous stirrings that "comen in by þe wyndowes of þi wittes."[180] Her discernment of the spirits will be so potent, in fact, that even before she is assured of the other stirrings' source by "þe spirite of God, or elles wiþouten by counsel of sum discrete fader" the "blind stirring of love" "schal bynde þin herte so fast þat þou

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[175] *Cloud*, 39.
[176] *Cloud*, 38.
[177] *Cloud*, 39.
[178] *Cloud*, 50.
[179] *Scale*, 2.1334-35. See also 2.3258-64: "Loke aftir noon nothir Jhesu but the same, bi feelynge of the selve grace more godli, that it myght wexe more and more in thee; and drede thee nought, though that Jhesu that thou feeliste be not Jhesu as He is in His ful Godheed, that thou schuldest therfore mow ben disseyved yif thou loned to thi feelynge. But truste thou weel, yif thou be a lovere of Jhesu, that thi feelynge is trewe and that Jhesu is truli feelid and seen of thee thorugh His grace, as thou maist seen him here."
[180] *Cloud*, 51.

schalt mowe on no wise ȝeue ful grete credence to hem."[181] Unlike the dismissal of these feelings in the *Chastising* and *Scale 1*, the ambiguous feelings are affirmed as part of the contemplative experience in the *Cloud*. Not only does she have the option to certify their source either by herself or by a spiritual director, but she is also allowed to "be in partye astonied of them" since the "blind stirring" will safeguard her from following headlong a false stirring.[182] The danger of paying attention to ambiguous stirrings is diminished because "þis meek steryng of loue . . . is not elles bot a good & an acordyng wil vnto God."[183] If the contemplative's will is already directed toward the right place, the "accydentes" of "alle swetnes & counfortes, bodily or goostly" are at worst superfluous.[184]

The accordance of will inherent to contemplation helps the contemplative practice ascetic prudence and leads to the proper form of life even without regulation by a spiritual director. Hilton, for instance, explains how contemplation takes priority over other works like fasting. The contemplative at this higher stage of life no longer needs to exert copious amounts of effort to establish the practices that maintain virtue. Instead, he works in "what manere that he mai most kepen his grace hool," that is, whatever helps him contemplate correctly.[185] In this way, he eats and drinks in moderation "lest [he] be letted fro the wirkynge in hit [contemplation] thorugh takynge of bodili sustenaunce."[186] The *Cloud*-author puts it this way: "Do þis werk [contemplation] euermore wiþoutyn cesyng & wiþoutyn discrecion, & þou schalt wel kun beginne & ceese in alle þin oþer werkes wiþ a grete discrecion."[187] He specifies that these other works—eating and drinking, sleeping, keeping the body from extreme cold or heat, long prayer or reading, communing in speech with fellow Christians—must be moderated in service of contemplation, which "askeþ a ful greet restfulnes, & a ful hole & a clene disposicion, as wele in body as in soule."[188] This God-given desire to direct the will to God is after all "þe substaunce of alle good leuyng, & wiþouten it no good werk may be bygonne ne endid."[189] In short, both agree that prioritizing contemplation helps the contemplative prioritize the other works in such a way as to support the main goal of directing the will. This means that apart from its contemplative core, the form of life at the upper level of contemplation is unfixed and self-directed.

End Goal: A "Meek" Mind

The pursuit of a new mental orientation toward God can be summed up as the cultivation of a "meek" mind. It is similar to the meekness gained via exercises of the lower level of contemplative life because it is received by grace, but it is different in that it works "wiþouten any special or clere beholding of any þing vnder God."[190] Specifically, the *Cloud*-author argues, imperfect meekness is "þat þe whiche is reysid of þe mynde of oure wrechidnes & oure before-

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[181] *Cloud*, 51.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid.
[185] *Scale*, 2.2795.
[186] *Scale*, 2.2796.
[187] *Cloud*, 45. See also *Cloud*, 44.
[188] *Cloud*, 44.
[189] *Cloud*, 51.
[190] *Cloud*, 23.

done synnes,"[191] while perfect meekness is that which occurs when one offers "a meke steryng of loue to his God, priuely puttyng apon þe cloude of vnknowyng bitwix him & his God," even without seeing "cleerly in þis liif bi liȝt of vnderstondyng in [his] reson, ne ȝit uerely fel[ing] in swetnes of loue in [his] affection."[192] Put another way, perfect meekness is loving God without reference to self. Despite Hilton's hesitance in following the *Cloud*-author down the rabbit hole of rejecting human language, he too asserts that "perfect meekness" is the annihilation of self in the context of divinely-oriented desire.[193]

> Ne though he seie or thenke that al that he dooth is of Goddis grace and not of hymsilf, he is not yit meke inow, for he mai not yit make himsilf nakid from al his good deedes, ne make hymsilf pore soothfastli in spirit, ne feelen himsilf nought, as he is. And soothli, until a soule can felabli thorugh grace noughten himsilf, and baaren himsilf from al the good that he doth thorugh biholdynge of soothfastnesse of Jhesu God, he is not perfighteli meke. (2.1057-62)

He emphasizes on the need to suppress the activity of reason (saying and thinking) in order to be completely emptied of all good deeds, which God does through the contemplative.[194] Thus, loving God "meekly" is recognizing his perfect goodness and power as manifested in the soul without self-conscious recognition of the soul.

The recognition of God without any other referent explains contemplation's formative power: its basis in truth. Contemplation is a "meek" form of thought because it reveals true knowledge of God. Hilton argues, "For what is mekenesse but sothfastenesse? Sothli, not ellis. And therfore he that thorugh grace may see Jhesu, hou He dooth al, and hymsilf dooth right nought but suffreth Hym werken in hym what Him list, he is meke."[195] Contemplation presupposes "truthfulness" because it is an exercise that separates the ultimate Source of all from its manifestation in all, that is, reaching God without intermediaries. The meekness that comes from contemplation, therefore, points to the recognition of "þe oueraboundaunt loue & þe worþines of God in himself" without the intermediary of comparing man's wretchedness in order to gain perspective or produce a scale of goodness.[196] In other words, "meeknes in itself is not ellis bot a trewe knowyng & felyng of a mans self as he is."[197] The recognition of the soul as "nothing" is not just a practical step in contemplation, but also a necessary step in reaching truth about God, or cultivating a "meek" mind.

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[191] *Cloud*, 24. Cf. *Scale*, 2.2537 ff.

[192] *Cloud*, 24-25.

[193] Burrow, "Fantasy and Language," 283-98; Johnson, "Feeling Time, Will, and Words," 345-68; Spearing, "Language and Its Limits," 75-86; Taylor, "Paradox Upon Paradox," 31-51; Lock, "Apophatic Discourse and Vernacular Anxieties," 207-33; Lees, *Negative Language.*

[194] See also *Scale*, 2.2568-72: "Thou schalte undirstonden that there is two maner of mekenesse. Oon is had bi wirkynge of resoun. Anothir is feelt bi special gifte of love. But bothe aren of love. But that oon love wirketh bi resoun of the soule; that othir wirketh bi himsilf. The firste is imperfight, that othir is perfight."

[195] *Scale*, 2.1063-65.

[196] *Cloud*, 22.

[197] Ibid.

The mindset of self-emptying also leads to the proper form of the contemplative life because its casts out deception. Hilton notes that those who "mai thorugh grace come to feelynge and knowynge of himsilf and holden mekeli in that feelynge [self-emptying of contemplation], he schal not be disceyved with noon erroures, ne heresies, ne ypocrisies, ne fantasies, for alle thise comen into a soule bi the gate of pride."[198] Although he refrains from specifying signs of "feeling and knowing of self," he highlights the signs of improper form of life that the contemplative will avoid like heresy and error. The *Cloud*-author similarly warns his reader at the beginning of his treatise that only meekness, or "see[ing] what þou arte," will help him perform his "singuler fourme of leyung" without falling for his enemy's tricks.[199] Only by knowing that he is a "weike wreche" who is called by a meek God can the reader "do þat in þee is goodly, bi grace & bi counsel."[200] Meekness from the start of the *Cloud* is aligned with truth, which guides the contemplative's form of living, singular though it may be.

Conclusion

The contemplative life can be defined as a training ground for the human will. At the beginning of the contemplative's career, the faculty of the will is assumed to be unruly and self-promoting. The novice's obedience to spiritual advice works in tandem with his or her faculty of reason to condition the will to become more malleable and self-effacing. By the time the contemplative is ready to move onto the next level of contemplation, the will is not only accustomed to reject evil (vices) and choose good (virtues), but it is also ready to receive special stirrings from God without the use of reason. Some, however, never reach the second level at all.

Advice for the lower level of contemplation describes how to establish a correct form of life. Whether the advice takes the shape of a tiered program of spiritual achievement like *The Scale of Perfection* or a collection of tips to face common challenges in a vowed, celibate, and enclosed lifestyle like *The Chastising of God's Children*, the contemplative life is founded on the goal of destroying vices and attaining virtues. The practical steps in achieving this goal are twofold: "work by counsel," or adhere to the advice of a spiritual director who is experienced in discerning the stirrings behind spiritual gifts and bodily works; and work by reason, which means to use intermediaries like fasting, comforting others, reading, meditation, and prayer to help direct the will's stirrings to God. Guidance about the lower level of contemplative life, in other words, is advice about reading external signs, or semiotic evaluation. In the early fifteenth century in places such as Sheen priory and the Brigittine Abbey of Syon, semiotic evaluation will be formalized as appropriate religious instruction for the laity as well as enclosed religious.

Advice for the upper level of contemplation instructs the reader about how to cultivate a form of cognition based on affect. Because the reason is incapable of understanding God completely in this life, the will is the faculty of the soul to which spiritual directors like Hilton and the *Cloud*-author turn in order to reach an affective "understanding" of God. Attaining knowlege of God is when God is recognized without intermediaries or external referents, which requires the contemplative to empty him- or herself of conscious recognition of self. This self-emptying of consciousness in order to simply desire God is what I call achieving a "meek mind," and what *Scale 2* and the *Cloud* generally designate as contemplation.

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[198] *Scale*, 2.1610-13.
[199] *Cloud*, 8.
[200] Ibid.

Contemplation is the process of being able to order and direct spiritual feelings to God, as well as being passively receptive to God's momentary and spontaneous stirrings of enlightening love. The height of contemplation is when the contemplative reaches a union with God in will. The practical steps in reaching this height are also twofold: suppressing the use of reason, especially the imagination; and using hermeneutic evaluation to keep track of mental processes in order to get at the source of the will's stirrings. Both of these steps require the contemplative to self-regulate her thoughts, which allows the Perfect more independence in theory and in practice from their spiritual directors. Nevertheless, advisors still act as a check on advanced contemplatives if they start to show signs of willful pride like "unseemly countenances," disobedience, indignation, contrariness, and heresy. Otherwise, the form of life for the Perfect is largely self-directed and varies from one individual to the next.

The Perfect's freedom to shape her form of life comes at the price of strict self-regulation of thought, which the fourteenth-century contemplative, Julian of Norwich, demonstrates in her revision of her *Revelations of Love.* Her concern about performing hermeneutic evaluation correctly in the short version of her work shows the pain-staking effort such discernment of the orientation of one's will was assumed to entail. In the fifteenth-century, hermeneutic evaluation becomes restricted to vowed contemplative readers in places like Sheen and Syon, although as Margery Kempe shows, those aspiring to the contemplative life also strove to master it probably with the help of their spiritual directors. However much Middle English spiritual advice changed over the course of a century, the coherence of the contemplative life's form of cognition seems to have remained intact for those wishing to become practitioners of contemplation.

Ch. 2 – *Discretio* as Form of Thought: Julian of Norwich's Revision

Unlike *The Scale of Perfection*, *The Chastising of God's Children*, and *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Love* teaches *discretio* implicitly. Rather than describing what the reader ought to do, it describes what Julian did as she learned how to discern the spirits for herself. In particular, she uses hermeneutic discernment and the more advanced phase of affective discernment to determine the source of her "stirrings" or impulses, which include her visions. What is striking in her case is that her use of *discretio* leaves its imprint on her revision, demonstrating that discernment could be used as an intellectual tool with which to reconcile theological problems that arise in contemplation.

Recent scholarship on Julian's *Revelations* has explained brilliantly and in detail the chronology, effects, and theological substance of the revisions by which she brought the Long Text from the Short. It has not explained so clearly, however, what motives emerging from the earlier version point toward the later and longer.[1] This chapter argues that *discretio spirituum*, the discernment of spirits, supplies that motive.[2] At various moments in her Short Text, she examines her stirrings for proof of divine or demonic inspiration. These moments, moreover, coincide exactly with those points in the Long Text where she inserts her most profound elaborations, the Lord and Servant parable and Mother Christ. These two visions, as many have already noted, are completely elided in the Short Text, and can be identified as the stirrings that initially upset her and that she must assess. The Short Text foregrounds this assessment, while the Long Text foregrounds instead its results and establishes her authority to proclaim them: the Two Judgments about sin, and their resolution in Julian's theology of love.[3] Although both

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[1] See Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, eds., *A Book of Showings to the Anchoress Julian of Norwich* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978), at 18-19; Barbara Newman, "Redeeming the Time: Langland, Julian, and the Art of Lifelong Revision," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 23 (2009): 1-32; B. A. Windeatt, "The Art of Mystical Loving: Julian of Norwich," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Papers Read at the Exeter Symposium, July 1980*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1980), 55-71; B. A. Windeatt, "Julian's Second Thoughts: The Long Text Tradition," in *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), 101-15; Marion Glasscoe, "Visions and Revisions: A Further Look at the Manuscripts of Julian of Norwich," *Studies in Bibliography* 42 (1989): 103-20; Nicholas Watson, "The Composition of Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*," *Speculum* 68, no. 3 (1993): 637-83; Denise Nowakowski Baker, *Julian of Norwich's Showings: From Vision to Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Michelle Karnes, "Julian of Norwich's Art of Interpretation," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 42, no. 2 (2012): 332-63. For a dissenting opinion about the chronology of revision, see Anna Maria Reynolds and Julia Bolton Holloway, eds., *Showing of Love: Extant Texts and Translation* (Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2001); and Julian of Norwich, *Showing of Love*, trans. Julia Bolton Holloway (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2003), xii-xv.

[2] For studies on *discretio spirituum* within Julian's works specifically, see Langum, "Discretion in Late Medieval England"; and Yoshikawa, "*Discretio spirituum* in Time," 119-32.

[3] For her theology of love, see Brant Pelphrey, *Love Was His Meaning: The Theology and Mysticism of Julian of Norwich* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik,

literary and theological scholars have explored this problem, none have linked it to the former and, I would argue, precedent problem of discernment.[4] As I will show, however, both problems are addressed and resolved in her theology of love, specifically through her idea of "homely love" and its relationship to the Holy Spirit.

"Stirrings" / Motus

This claim about the importance of discernment faces the obvious objection that Julian never names it. But she does something else that attests to her reliance on it more strongly than naming could: she takes it for granted and uses it in passing as something too obvious to need naming. The most concrete clue about her dependence on it is her use of the term "stirrings," undefined. Its usage is technical and consistent in both works. While the discourse of *discretio spirituum* seems to have lacked a consistent technical vocabulary that was broadly accepted by writers of spiritual advice, the words these writers informally use display a definite character, which Julian's "stirrings" capture precisely.[5] The first time it appears in the Short Text, for instance, she distinguishes the stirring from the vision she receives: "And so ys my desyre that it schulde be to euery ilke manne the same profytte that I desyrede to my selfe and þerto was styrryd of god in the fyrste tyme when I sawe itte."[6] She regards the stirring as a discrete impulse separate from the vision because she received it upon viewing the vision. In her description, she

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Universität Salzburg, 1982); Grace Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich: Mystic and Theologian* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 89-164; Joan M. Nuth, *Wisdom's Daughter: The Theology of Julian of Norwich* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 41-169; Kerrie Hide, *Gifted Origins to Graced Fulfillment: The Soteriology of Julian of Norwich* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 45-60. Cf. Watson, "Visions of Inclusion," 145-87; Jeanette Zissell, "Universal Salvation in the Earthly City: *De civitate dei* and the Significance of the Hazelnut in Julian of Norwich's *Showings*," *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture* 4 (2009): 331-51; David Aers, "The Humanity of Christ," in *The Powers of the Holy: Religion, Politics, and Gender in Late Medieval English Culture*, eds. David Aers and Lynn Staley (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 77-104; Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, *Julian of Norwich and the Mystical Body Politic of Christ* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 63-123; and Maria R. Lichtmann, "'God Fulfylled My Bodye': Body, Self, and God in Julian of Norwich," in *Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Jane Chance (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1996), 263-78.

[4] I am especially indebted to Claire Banchich's article, "'A Hevynly Joy in a Dredfulle Soule': Julian of Norwich's Articulations of Dread," in *Fear and Its Representations in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, eds. Anne Scott and Cynthia Kosso (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 311-40.

[5] See Introduction above.

[6] All quotations of Julian's Short and Long Texts are taken from Colledge and Walsh's edition, *A Book of Showings to the Anchoress Julian of Norwich*, at 220. Further citations will refer to this edition by page number. For other critical editions, see *A Revelation of Love*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1976, repr. 1993); *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman and a Revelation of Love*, eds. Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006); and Reynolds and Holloway, *Showing of Love: Extant Texts and Translation*.

folds into the report of the vision her interpretation of its experience, the "profit" that she and her fellow Christians gain, and treats it as a confirmation of the vision's truth because it comes from God. Her unexplained insistence that it has divine origins demonstrates the act of discernment that must have preceded her characterization of it.[7] More to the point, her usage of "stirrings" here demonstrates concisely not only the technical range it has throughout her writings, but also the metaphors by which the objects of *discretio spirituum* are described in major works of latinate spiritual counsel ("motus"; "impulsus"; "instinctus"; "cogitatio").[8] The diverse array of technical latinate vocabulary maps onto Julian's Middle English word, "styrryngs," to mean a sense of punctual change, a movement of the soul with a definite beginning and end; the perceptibility of the motion in response to a particular stimulus; and the activity of the soul that compels another discrete action, whether outside or within the soul.

Another example demonstrates more clearly this technical definition. After disclosing a "spiritual sight" in chapter 17 that sin is no shame but worship,[9] Julian in chapter 18 warns her readers, "Bot ȝyf thowe be styrred to saye or to thynke: Senn this is sothe, þan ware it goode for to synne for to hafe the mare mede, be ware of this styrrynge and dispice it, for it is of the enmy. For whate saule that wilfully takys this styrrynge, he may neuer be safe to he be amendyd as of dedely synne."[10] The vision of sin that she describes is literally separated from the stirring, or the reader's reaction to the vision, by the chapter divisions. She affirms that this thought ("it would be good to sin to have more reward") is itself a stirring because it is the reader's soul's response to the stimulus of the vision. Furthermore, this stirring has a definite beginning and end: she identifies it as a finite phrase "to say or to think." Because this finite phrase can lead to action, even "mortal sin," the thought itself is a stirring that can be equated with "mortal sin." Thus, having identified the interpretation of the vision as a stirring that ought to be discerned, she intervenes as an advisor to her readers by alerting them to its false source so that they resist succumbing to its persuasive force by committing sin.[11] While she does not reveal how she discerned its source, she tells them her verdict that it comes from "the enemy," which implies that one ought not follow it and even "despise it." Indeed, Julian is not explicit about her

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[7] See Sarah Beckwith, "Problems of Authority in Late Medieval English Mysticism: Language, Agency, and Authority in *The Book of Margery Kempe*," *Exemplaria* 4, no. 1 (1992): 171-99; Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 80-100, esp. 92; cf. Lynn Staley, "Julian of Norwich and the Late Fourteenth-Century Crisis of Authority," in *The Powers of the Holy: Religion, Politics, and Gender in Late Medieval English Culture*, eds. David Aers and Lynn Staley (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 107-78.

[8] See Introduction above.

[9] *Showings*, 255. For the social context of "worship" in Julian's works, see Alexandra Barratt, "Lordship, Service and Worship in Julian of Norwich," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England, Exeter Symposium VII: Papers Read at Charney Manor, July 2004*, edited by E. A. Jones (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 177-88.

[10] *Showings*, 257.

[11] Christopher Abbott affirms that "questions of thought, feeling, aspiration and motivation become questions of the most practical import" to contemplatives, and thus, "the question of discretion" is "one perenially significant aspect of spiritual praxis" (*Julian of Norwich: Autobiography and Theology* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), 170-71).

methodology anywhere, but the moments of "stirring" throughout the text reveal her use of hermeneutic and affective discernment.

Although there is little direct evidence for connecting Julian to any particular source for her knowledge of *discretio*, her usage of "stirrings" shows that she was familiar with the discourse used in Latin texts about spiritual discernment.[12] She frames her writings within that discourse, and as I will argue, leaves traces of the process of discerning the spirits in the objects and method of her revision. Especially in the Short Text, where a form of "stirrings" occurs thirteen times, she seems to emphasize the anxiety and care she takes when receiving and interpreting them. Taken in conjunction with her demonic encounters, these stirrings portray Julian as a novice or Proficient contending with doubts about her complex revelations. While the term appears in the Long Text sixteen times, twelve of these occurrences are directly retained from the Short Text. The word's relatively equivalent usage in both works despite the lengthy additions in her revision suggests a shift in emphasis in the Long Text. Instead of her doubt, she elaborates upon the resolution of her doubt, especially about the Two Judgments about sin, and how these are resolved by God's "homely love." Although the problem of discernment falls to the background in the Long Text, her switch in focus—just as with her omission of explicit mention of *discretio spirituum*—only shows more vividly what she takes for granted: her doubts about her ability to correctly discern the spirits are already resolved. By the time she writes the new conclusion that "love was his meaning," divine love provides her two answers in one, a resolution to both the problem of sin and the problem of discernment. The enveloping nature of this conclusion asserts the complexity of her theological understanding and the sophistication of her literary authority. She claims implicitly through its written form that her revelation was complete since its reception, and that *discretio* is helping her to realize its completion.[13]

The Problem of Discernment: Hermeneutic or Affective?

The problem of discernment is introduced most clearly in the Short Text when Julian is unsure of her stirrings. In reacting to a speech of Christ's "in her understanding," she realizes that "I sawe that nathynge letted me bot synn . . . and me thought ȝyf synn hadde nought bene,

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[12] There is little direct evidence to connect Julian to any particular source in general. See Anna Maria Reynolds, "Some Literary Influences in the *Revelations* of Julian of Norwich (c 1342–Post-1416)," *Leeds Studies in English* 7-8 (1952): 18-28; Annie Sutherland, "Julian of Norwich and the Liturgy," in *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy, (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), 88-98; Annie Sutherland, "'Oure Feyth Is Groundyd in Goddes Worde'–Julian of Norwich and the Bible," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium VII, Papers Read at Charney Manor, July 2004*, ed. E. A. Jones (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 1-20; Alan Deighton, "Julian of Norwich's Knowledge of the Life of St John of Beverley," *Notes and Queries* (1993): 440-43; Michael J. Wright, "Julian of Norwich's Early Knowledge of Latin," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 94, no. 1 (1993): 37-45; Vincent Gillespie, "'[S]He Do the Police in Different Voices': Pastiche, Ventriloquism and Parody in Julian of Norwich," in *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), 192-207; Michelle Karnes, "Julian of Norwich's Art of Interpretation," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 42, no. 2 (2012): 332-63.

[13] Barbara Newman argues that Julian uses an aesthetic of process that signifies "an atypical refusal to separate privileged from ordinary consciousness" in "Redeeming Time," 15.

we schulde alle hafe bene clene and lyke to oure lorde as he made vs."[14] This thought implicitly asks why God allows sin to exist. She seeks to reconcile Christ's love with his failure to remove the single barrier between himself and her. Her thought, however, does not go unchecked. A few lines afterward, she recognizes it as a stirring that "was mekylle to forsayke," and confesses to submitting to it by sorrowing "with outyn resone and dyscrecionn of fulle grete pryde."[15] In other words, she confesses that she failed to appropriately discern the impulse to begin with and subsequently failed to discover that it too originated from "the enemy," which is marked by its pride. This mental backtracking reveals her use of hermeneutic discernment. She evaluates phenomenologically her reactions to the stirring to get at its source. Pride is never a good sign. She doubts the impulse because she concludes that it led her pridefully to question God. "Nevertheless" indicates the disjunction between her rational evaluation and her conclusion that Jesus was still the originator of the vision (as distinct from her mental abhorrence to it). In a similar mode, she reasons that the vision proper led her to declaring herself "hungry and thirsty and needy and sinful and frail," a trademark of humility.[16] She evaluates the truth of the vision based on its effects on her actions, in this case, humility and continued submission to Holy Church.

Yet discretion for Julian also inhabits an affective register at this point. She turns to a different interpretation of Christ's words rather than elaborating upon the vision itself: "Jhesu in this visionn enfourmede me of alle that me neded."[17] While this new interpretation remains opaque, she, nevertheless, expresses a new stirring about the vision through it, satisfaction. The lack of rationale for her satisfaction apart from apparently blind trust of its source is evidence for affective discernment, which is distinct from hermeneutic discernment through the immediacy of its reassurance. Novices to the contemplative life are expected to seek spiritual comfort.[18] For them, as Margery Kempe makes famous, receiving such comfort represents the favor and presence of God.[19] As spiritual directors point out, however, spiritual consolation can be deceiving: demons can masquerade as angels of light and initiate interactions with humans filled with pleasure but ending in pain.[20] Of course, here in Julian's Short Text, Jesus could have explained the vision to her quite thoroughly, and she proceeds to elaborate upon it in her revision; but the only effect of this divine information that she is willing to disclose is contentment rather than explanation. The turn to affective discernment at this moment in her narrative is atypical compared to the rest of the work. In fact, her contentment with Christ's

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[14] *Showings*, 243-44.

[15] *Showings*, 244.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Spiritual advisors like Walter Hilton categorize affective contemplation as accessible to "simple and unlettrid men which gyven hem hooli to devocion" (*Scale*, 1.93). See also *Chastising*, 103-4: "Suche maner wirchynges god wrouȝt oft siþes to man and to womman in her first begynnyng. . . . Þei bien so necligent in his absence þat sum tyme þei leue of myche of her trauaile, bicause thei haue no likynge."

[19] For instance, Kempe tells the vicar of St. Stephen's, Richard Caister, "how sche was fed and comfortyd wyth holy medytacyons & specyal in þe mende of owyr Lordys Passyon" (*The Book of Margery Kempe*, EETS o. s. 212, eds. Sanford Brown Meech, Emily Hope Allen, and W. Butler-Bowdon (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1940), 39).

[20] Cf. Gerson, *De distinctione*, 36-56.

teaching shifts immediately to defensiveness about submitting herself to the church's teaching, which marks a shift back to hermeneutic discernment.[21] Its abrupt appearance, however, signals a competition, albeit a heavily one-sided one, between modes of discretion in her practice as revealed within the Short Text. As we will see, the affective mode returns more assertively in the Long Text expansions.

With one outstanding exception, the problem of discernment is presented using hermeneutic discernment throughout the rest of the work. Starting with her assertions on the authority of Holy Church's teachings, Julian continues to track her stirrings to uncover the source of her revelations as a whole. Perhaps her most startling discovery during this process is that doubt itself is a stirring. Although the significance of her disclaimers about Holy Church have been interpreted as a way for her to assuage doubt in others—like anti-Wycliffite clerics or other authorities who doubt her mystical authority—it appears that they mainly serve to assuage doubt in herself.[22] These disclaimers address precisely the difficulties that *discretio* brings to attention. Because she is sensitive to the possibility of her own deception while discerning the spirits, she worries over the apparent disjunction between the interpretation of the vision of her own sin and Holy Church's teachings about the goodness of God and the problem of evil.[23] As her contemporary Walter Hilton puts it, God is incapable of doing evil, thus mankind alone is responsible for the sin that darkens the image of God within themselves.[24] Yet for Julian, the responsibility that God has for sin exists in his creative prerogative. If God is incapable of doing evil but capable of allowing its existence, then how is he good? The seeming inconsistency between her interpretation (the initial stirring) and church doctrine is thus projected onto the possibly demonic source of her interpretation.

The process of this projection goes as follows. First, she affirms her doubt about sin by blaming her own lack of discretion. Then, when Christ affirms the vision but not her stirring (her doubt about the vision), he effectively affirms her reorientation of doubt away from the vision's source toward her own discretion. She, in turn, confirms that her indiscretion is corrected when she confesses her need for more teaching from Holy Church, implying the unnarrated reconciliation between her vision and church doctrine. Though the actual reconciliation remains undisclosed, the narration of her doubt in this moment of discernment marks a gap in the text that she can (and will) further develop in its revision.[25] In the meantime, the shifting of doubt toward various possible agents of her stirrings, whether those of the vision or her reactions to the vision, displays the hermeneutic evaluation of tracking her mental life.

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[21] *Showings*, 244.

[22] See Watson, "Composition of Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*," 659-66; Staley, "Crisis of Authority," 143-58; Reynolds and Holloway, *Showing of Love*, 695-97.

[23] See also Ritamary Bradley, "The Goodness of God: A Julian Study," in *Langland, the Mystics and the Medieval English Religious Tradition*, ed. Helen Phillips (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990), 85-95.

[24] *Scale*, 1.688-92.

[25] While scholars have sometimes claimed that *discretio spirituum* masks contradictions about literary authority in mystical texts in particular (Beckwith, "Problems of Authority," 171-99; and de Certeau, *Heterologies,* 80-100, esp. 92), Julian's writings suggest that late medieval writers used it to mark gaps within their own arguments or thoughts (McGinn, *Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism*, 437).

The most prominent moment of doubt tracking that she narrates as hermeneutic discernment occurs at the end of the Short Text after the end of the first fifteen revelations. She describes how she "falls into herself" and mourns over the bodily pains that have almost killed her.[26] Her doubt is revealed when an anonymous religious person visits her and asks what she did that day, to which she replies only that she "raved" and saw the cross bleed. Instead of elaborating upon her vision as she does in the Long Text, she implies the seeming disjunction between it and Holy Church through the confessor figure, who for whatever reason would probably not believe the vision. The exact nature of the doubt that she has projected onto her confessor remains unclear. What becomes clear is that she explicitly traces her own illness back to a distrust of God: because she replaces the divine source of the vision with her delirious "raving," she tells her readers, "I did not believe God."[27] In other words, she narrates her refusal to disclose her doubt as a failure of discernment at that particular time. Now, however, she rectifies that mistake though her Short Text. Her former enactment of doubt before her confessor becomes an occasion for tracking her mental processes before her readers. Her moment of disbelief becomes an opportunity to get at its source using hermeneutic discernment.

She narrates the resolution of this unknown doubt as a demonic attack. That night, the fiend strangles Julian and she wakes "and vnnethes hadde [she her] lyfe."[28] Although she regains comfort from the attention of her caretakers, she realizes that she needs to discern the spirits when no one else sees smoke, feels great heat, and smells stink: "For than wiste I wele it was the fende was commenn to tempest me. And onane I tuke þa that oure lorde hadde schewed me on the same daye with alle the fayth of hali kyrke, for I holde it as bathe ane, and fled þerto as to my comforth."[29] The comfort she takes from her demonic attack is odd outside of the context of her initial desires: remembrance of Christ's Passion; "alle manere of paynes, bodelye and gastelye"; and the three wounds of contrition, compassion, and desire for God.[30] This is not affective discernment resurfacing, but rather hermeneutic discernment reaching back across chapters and potentially across literal spans of her life.[31] In the third chapter, she confesses that she hoped that

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[26] *Showings*, 266. The phrase, "fell into myself," seems to align with what Ross designates as self-consciousness ("Behold Not the Cloud of Forgetting," 33-34).

[27] To "rave" has three medieval definitions: (1) to become mad, or behave or speak foolishly; (2) to be delirious (from wound, fever) or speak in delirium; (3) to experience religious ecstasy, see a vision ("raven, v.," *MED*, accessed November 18, 2016, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED36028). Julian's usage takes one or both of the first two senses, which Christ's reply later clarifies (269).

[28] *Showings*, 267.

[29] Ibid.

[30] *Showings*, 201-6.

[31] Domenico Pezzini suggests that Julian expressed these three desires earlier in life ("The Language and Doctrine of Desire in Julian of Norwich's *Revelations*," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (2011): 305-35, at 309). Denise Baker and Jennifer Bryan both attribute these desires to Julian's familiarity with affective piety (*From Vision to Book*; and *Looking Inward: Devotional Reading and the Private Self in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), respectively). Amy Appleford suggests that they are merely rhetorical gestures for situating the text within the context of the office for the dead ("The 'Comene Course of Prayers': Julian of Norwich and Late Medieval Death Culture," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 107, no. 2 (2008): 190-214, at 195).

"it myght be welle that I schulde be the suffyrannce of god and with his kepynge be temptyd of fendys or I dyede."[32] Thus, the demonic attack actually helps her confirm that the first fifteen revelations, the "showing" of comfort, originate from Christ and thus corrects her faulty discernment of the spirits before her confessor.

Furthermore, she seems to interpret demonic stirring as itself the source of her doubt. Shortly after her interview with her confessor, she acknowledges that "this was a grete synne and a grete vnkyndnes, that I for folye of felynge of a litille bodely payne so vnwyselye lefte for the tyme the comforth of alle this blissede schewynge of oure lorde god."[33] Aptly, her aborted confession manifests itself as physical silencing, namely, choking by a demon, smoke, and stink.[34] While this "bodily sight" cannot easily be categorized as being purely psychological, neither is it completely material. Phenomenologically, it has the same kind of effect as actual physical pain: belief or disbelief in her visions. She, therefore, backtracks mentally and associates her undisclosed doubt both with the physical pain that came before it and with the reiterated pain in her demonic encounter. Her undisclosed doubt is itself a stirring for which she finally discerns a demonic source only after her first demonic encounter.

In response to this epiphany that doubt is a stirring, Julian devotes the last chapter of the Short Text to the use of discerning "dreads," especially that of doubt. She compares discerning false dreads like doubt to testing the spirits.

> And hereby may thaye [false dreads] be knawenn and discerned, whilke is whilke. For this reuerente drede, the mare it is hadde, the mare it softes and comfortes and pleses and restes; and the false drede, it travayles and tempestes and trubles. Than is this the remedye, to knawe thamm bath and refuse (th)e fals, righte as we walde do a wikkyd spiritte that schewed hym in liknes of a goode angelle. For ryght as ane ille spyrit, þowȝ he comm vndere the coloure and the liknes of a goode angelle his daliannce and his wirkynge, þowȝ he schewe neuer so fayre, fyrst he travayles and tempes and trubles the personn that he spekes with, and lettes hym and lefeȝ hym alle in vnreste; and the mare that he commoneȝ with hym, the mare he travayles hym and the farthere is he fra pees. (276-78)

Discerning true "reverent" fear from false fears depends on how the encounter affects the visionary. Comfort indicates true "reverent" fear; trouble, false fear. Because the criteria for discerning good from bad spirits are the same, she proposes that the sources of fears, like those of visions, ought to be discerned by hermeneutic discernment. Moreover, because she draws the connection between doubt and its potentially demonic source when describing doubtful fear as a type ("spice") of despair earlier in the same chapter, she proposes that doubt is the most malevolent "false dread" that contemplatives ought to separate from reverent fear.[35] Among the four fears that she enumerates, doubtful fear is the one that God hates and that ought to be dispelled by knowing love. She, therefore, highlights hermeneutic discernment by describing both despair and its symptom, doubt, as demonic impulses that can be traced. Yet she also

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[32] *Showings*, 211.
[33] *Showings*, 267.
[34] Banchich, "A Hevynly Joy," 336.
[35] *Showings*, 276.

suggests that the biggest problem with doubt is an affective one: it separates one from knowing love, which effectively means being separated from God.[36]

Thus affective evaluation makes its return precisely because of a defect with hermeneutic evaluation. During the second demonic attack, she starts to distinguish a potential epistemological problem in tracing her stirrings. Heat and stink resume, but she also hears "bodely iangelynge and a speche, as it hadde bene of two bodyes, and bathe to my thynkynge iangled at anes."[37] Although she does not understand what the two voices say, she concludes that "alle this was to stirre me to dispayre, as me thouȝt."[38] As before, she associates the physiological signs with doubt. The disembodied doubled voices are just another stirring to lead her to despair, the "doubtful dread" that ought to be tested. This time, however, the doubt in question is not about the first fifteen revelations, as it was in the first demonic encounter; rather, it seems to mimic another doubt about her sixteenth revelation. In it, Christ is enthroned in her soul. The "sikernes of his endelesse dwellynge" convinces her "that it was he that schewed me alle before."[39] This final revelation acts as a sign for the truth of the first fifteen, and so the demonic attack is a sign of that sign. But the doubling up of signs signals Julian's awareness of the crux of hermeneutic discernment: if she traces the signs back to the source, how does she know when she reaches the source rather than just another sign? Thus, the doubled speech of the demon is a manifestation of her doubt about her own process of hermeneutic evaluation. Doubt, after all, is emblematic of the double-voiced mystic who is authorized by her vision but at the same time must gain authorization of that vision from clerical advisors.[40] Her experience of demonic double speech demonstrates her concern about validating the first fifteen revelations based on the sixteenth one. This doubt about hermeneutic discernment would have led her to despair were it not for her recognition that affective discernment is a way in which to gauge her proximity to God.

Julian demonstrates affective discernment most strongly by seeking God's presence within herself. The intervening enthronement vision, which she later designates the sixteenth revelation, confirms her nearness to God through visualizing divine union. Christ sits in the midst of a majestic city, which she recognizes as her soul. Unlike the first fifteen revelations, she sees Christ within her rather than before her, a contemplative union that diminishes the distance between herself and God. Indeed, it is the act of "beholding," she claims, that catalyzes a "likeness" between beholder and the one beheld.[41] The vision, therefore, is a tautological enactment of what she seeks to confirm in discerning the spirits, that is, that her impulses come from God. For if a vision of Christ within her soul (the impulse) inherently confirms its source (God), it is because it represents what she seeks to confirm (God in her soul).[42]

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[36] She also describes despair as a hellish "spiritual pain" stronger than physical suffering, which connects it to demons and temptation earlier in the Short Text (235).

[37] *Showings*, 270.

[38] Ibid.

[39] *Showings*, 268.

[40] Beckwith, "Problems of Authority," 171-99; and de Certeau, *Heterologies,* 80-100, esp. 92.

[41] *Showings*, 268.

[42] Arguably, her sixteenth revelation may be the best example of the non-figural "apophatic image" that Vincent Gillespie and Maggie Ross claim abounds in Julian's writing, "The Apophatic Image: The Poetics of Effacement in Julian of Norwich," in *The Medieval*

The second part of her vision works in the same way. It represents what she seeks to confirm with tautological logic: "And whenn I hadde behalden this with fulle avisement, thann schewed oure lorde me wordys fulle mekely: . . . Witte it welle, it was na rauynge that thowe sawe to day, botte take it and leue it and kepe þe ther to, and þou schalle nought be ouercomenn."[43] The adverbial phrase "with complete reflection or deliberation" marks her discernment of the spirits. She deliberates with herself about God in the city of her soul in order to "hear" Christ's words. These "words in her mind" are already their own interpretation because she has already discerned the divine source of her previous impulses (the first fifteen revelations) using another impulse (the sixteenth).[44] The result of her discretion is that the impulse (voiceless words) confirms its source (God) because it represents what she seeks to confirm (security that they came from Christ). Thus, the "beholding" process of both parts of the vision, the spiritual sight of Christ enthroned in her soul and the voiceless words, reassure her that affective discernment is the act of determining her closeness to God rather than just determining the source of her stirrings.

Julian's Short Text proposes that it is a combination of hermeneutic and affective discernment that orders her thought. As she traces one impulse from another, she affirms their source and her proximity to their source, God. This is one way in which *discretio spirituum* shapes her revelations. She depicts in the last four chapters of the Short Text her process of hermeneutic discernment as tracking successive spiritual encounters, which enables her—and she hopes will enable her "fellow Christians"—to contend with doubts and find a way beyond them. As we shall see, however, affective discernment also shapes her revelations in a different way: God's permission of sin (which in Julian's case is her doubt) is the biggest problem of the Short Text that she resolves through her expansions in the Long Text. In particular, we find that her most original ideas about sin, the Lord and Servant parable and Mother Christ, replace her moments of doubtful stirrings and anxiety about *discretio spirituum* in the Short Text.

The Problem of Sin: "Behouely" Judgments and Twin Discernments

The problem of how to practice discernment properly is apparently elided in Julian's revision. Where once she connected the "false stirring" of doubt to her incorrect discretion, she now in the Long Text connects it to the resolution of her doubts: "But Jhesu that in this vysyon enformyd me of alle that me nedyd answeryd by thys worde and seyde: Synne is behouely, but alle shalle be wele, and alle shalle be wele, and alle maner of thynge shalle be wele."[45] Instead of highlighting her uncertainty about the truthfulness of her vision due to its disjunction with the

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Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium V, Papers Read at the Devon Centre, Dartington Hall, July 1992, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1992), 53-77; and Vincent Gillespie, "Postcards from the Edge: Interpreting the Ineffable in the Middle English Mystics," in *Interpretation, Medieval and Modern*, eds. Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), 137-65.

[43] *Showings*, 268-69.

[44] Nicholas Watson, "The Trinitarian Hermeneutic in Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium V, Papers Read at the Devon Centre, Dartington Hall, July 1992*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1992.), 79-100, at 99.

[45] *Showings*, 405; Cf. 244.

church's teachings, she actually reveals what Jesus tells her, namely, that sin is "behovely."[46] Although the meaning of "behouely" is ambiguous—this she aims to unpack through the new episodes of the Lord and Servant parable and Mother Christ—what is certain is that this vision is from God.[47] No longer relevant is the competition between hermeneutic and affective discernment since the question of the source of her doubt is resolved in the Short Text. The ambiguity of the word "behouley," moreover, replaces the ambiguity about her doubt's source. This makes her earlier indiscretion of disbelieving God an analogue of "sin," which makes her disbelief one phase of the salvific teleology that Christ prophesies in declaring that "all shall be well." Already she suggests that the resolution of her particular doubts is at hand because her history of doubt, recorded in the two versions of her revelations, recapitulates but also participates in salvation history in general.[48]

Indeed, Julian's history of doubt about her vision of sin is concretized in the Long Text through the apparent disjunction and competition between vision and church doctrine, which I refer to as the Two Judgments. She portrays their disjunction as a paradox which she can now hold productively in tension through "beholding": "And thus I saw that what tyme we se nede wherfore we praye, then our lord god folowyth vs, helpyng our desyre. And whan we of his speciall grace pleynly beholde hym, seyng none other, nedys then we folowe hym, and he drawyth vs to hym by loue."[49] Here, where she discussed the sinner's blindness in the Short Text and suggested her unnarrated doubt about her discernment of the source of Christ's judgment, she elaborates upon her own experience of "beholding" and suggests her confidence about the judgments' reconciliation with each other.[50] If Jesus' claim is that "sin is behovely," and Holy Church's claim is that sin is wrong and committing it is therefore punishable, then the product of holding them together is a new vision of sin and, most importantly, increased desire for God. Furthermore, by using the word "dome" to describe both vision and doctrine, she transforms both into objects of equal weight and authority.[51] While she does this implicitly in the Short Text, she does so explicitly in the Long Text in order to erase any vestige of the doubt she once expressed.

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[46] Some scholars translate "behovely" as "necessary." See Jantzen, *Mystic and Theologian*, 173; Nuth, *Wisdom's Daughter,* 118-29; Hide, *Gifted Origins*, 97-98; and Watson and Jenkins, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich,* 208, n. 5-6. Denys Turner, however, stresses the translation of "conveniens" or "fitting" just as events in a story fit together ("'Sin is Behovely' in Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*," *Modern Theology* 20, no. 3 (2004): 407-22).

[47] *Showings*, 405.

[48] See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 204-8; and Ritamary Bradley, "Julian of Norwich: Everyone's Mystic," in *Mysticism and Spirituality in Medieval England*, eds. William F. Pollard and Robert Boenig (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 139-58.

[49] *Showings*, 479.

[50] Cf. *Showings*, 262.

[51] "Dome" can mean "the administering of justice; the act of judging" (1a); "a judicial decision, a sentence at law" (2); or "an order, or command" (3) ("dom, n.," *MED*, accessed November 18, 2016, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED12338). See Banchich, "A Hevynly Joy," 328.

In fact, her doubt about reconciling the judgments is turned to ineffable “desire” to depict disjunction as “behovely” to the process of her enlightenment.[52]

Both of these revisions expressing Julian's newfound desire show the resurfacing of affective discernment. Her turn to reassurance explicitly obviates explanation of the "higher dome" in which Jesus declares sin as “behovely.” Rather than explain it, she considers how the “first judgment” is "that feyer swete dome that was shewed in alle the feyer revelation" whose sweetness should have "completely eased" her.[53] On the contrary, it fails to do so because of the second “lower” judgment, which is also “behovely”: "And therfore by this dome me thought that me behovyth nedys to know my selfe a synner. And by the same dome I vnderstode that synners be sometyme wurthy blame and wrath, and theyse two culde I nott see in god."[54] God’s “fair revelation” affixes no blame to sinful humans, while the church’s does; God’s judgment allows for continued communion, whereas the church’s does not. This latter point is stressed by Julian's attempt to discern the lower judgment's truth using affective discernment. The fact that she "could not see" the church's judgment in God means that it does not give her evidence of its truth based on the delight of visionary tautological representation. Instead, she must rely on hermeneutic discernment to find a basis for its truth.

Julian uses a mixture of hermeneutic and affective discernment in describing and explicating the Lord and Servant parable, which in the Long Text replaces the doubt engendered by the apparently contradictory Two Judgments.[55] The parable itself makes no overt references to the Two Judgments that came before.[56] A servant stands before a lord who sends him on an errand. The servant “nott onely he goyth, but sodenly he stertyth and rynnyth in grett hast for loue to do his lordes wylle,” but falls into a “slade” without anyone to help him get out.[57] When reading the story, the reader gets a sense of cause and effect since the servant's seeming recklessness results in a dire accident. This apparently causal relationship between the two events is the rehearsal of the church's "lower" judgment, which Julian seeks to justify by backtracking through the parable (hermeneutic discernment). At the same time, however, the lord continuously beholds “full tenderly” the servant and to rejoice “for the wurshypfull restyng and noble that he wyll and shall bryng his seruannt to by his plentuous grace.”[58] This alternate perspective is the rehearsal of God's "higher" judgment, which she seeks to justify through her own experience of visionary comfort (affective discernment). Through this part of the vision, she authenticates the divine source of Christ's words that "sin is behovely" by seeing what she seeks to confirm, the continuous communion between the fallen servant and his lord.

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[52] *Showings*, 487-88.

[53] *Showings*, 487.

[54] *Showings*, 487.

[55] Some notable studies on the Lord and Servant parable include Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 204-8; Staley, "Crisis of Authority,” 107-78; Newman, "Redeeming the Time,” 1-32; Bryan, *Looking Inward,* esp. 73-74; Baker, *From Vision to Book,* 83-106; M. L. del Mastro, "Juliana of Norwich: Parable of the Lord and Servant–Radical Orthodoxy,” *Mystics Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (1988): 84-93; Bauerschmidt, *Mystical Body Politic of Christ*, 125-90; Barratt, "Lordship, Service and Worship,” 177-88.

[56] This may be explained by Newman’s argument that the exemplum was “the last piece that Julian added to her book” (“Redeeming the Time,” 18).

[57] *Showings*, 514-15.

[58] *Showings*, 517.

The simultaneous judgments are only reconciled, however, by solving the precedent problem of how correctly to discern the spirits in question. In the Short Text, Julian admits to a failure of hermeneutic discernment in her initial visionary experience by narrating her aborted confession and subsequent demonic attacks. In the Long Text, she admits to insufficiently practicing affective discernment during the writing of the prior text by finally including the narration of the Two Judgments, the initial stirring that triggers her various impulses to doubt in the Short Text. In other words, the Short Text's lopsided use of hermeneutic discernment fails to help her reconcile the Judgments and resolve the meaning of the Lord and Servant parable. Only through affective discernment, which she uses for the sixteenth revelation in the Short Text, does she find a way to do so. Indeed, for Julian, the servant's "fallyng," or sinful act, and resultant "feylyng of comfort" are figures for her own. His accident is a figure for her (apparently) failed questioning about sin and resultant fear about losing God's presence, a failure of both types of *discretio spirituum*.[59] The lord's constant gaze, however, is a tautological representation of what she seeks to find: God's presence even when she fails to "behold" him. Once she is able to apply affective discernment to the vision, she is able to affirm its divine source.

Julian's failure at discernment is deeply intertwined with her failure to see truth in God. Shortly preceding her recounting of the parable, she muses about the Two Judgments in terms of seeing truth: "And yf it be tru that we be synners and blame wurthy, good lorde, how may it than be that I can nott see this truth in the, whych arte my god, my maker in whom I desyer to se alle truth?"[60] She frames her failure in knowing the truth about sin as a failure in seeing God. Or, put another way, her fear of losing sight of God's presence is a consequence of two kinds of failures pertaining to the Two Judgments: "failure of knowing this truth" about sinners not being blameworthy, and the failure to "see this truth in you, who are my God." Her failure to trace the competing arguments about sin to God (hermeneutic) is effectively a failure to see God himself (affective) because she expects to see all truth in him. Her failure to see truth and thus God, is connected to her "need to know" good from evil, the distinctions she is able to make using the discernment of spirits.[61] Thus, her anxiety about being separated from God due to lack of discernment is mediated through the figure of the falling servant. Although the servant falls, the lord still loves and seeks to honor him; although Julian cannot see truth, God still loves and "continuously beholds" her.

In fact, her emancipation from her personal "falling" is demonstrated in the revisions of the demonic attacks that initially compelled her to discern the spirits. What she formerly describes as simply "the fende" who grabs her throat becomes:

> A vysage fulle nere my face lyke a yonge man, and it was longe and wonder leen . . . the coloure was reed, lyke þe tylle stone whan it is new brent, with blacke spottes there in lyke frakylles, fouler than þe tyle stone. His here was rede as rust, not scoryd afore, with syde lockes hangyng on þe thonwonges. He grynnyd vpon me with a shrewde loke, shewde me why teth and so mekylle me thought it the more vgly. Body ne handes had he none shaply, but with hys pawes he held em in the throte. (635-36)

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[59] Banchich, "A Hevynly Joy," 328-30.
[60] *Showings*, 512.
[61] Ibid.

As Judith Dale has already rightly pointed out, Julian's demon takes on the distorted features of Christ's bleeding face from the first fifteen revelations.[62] In the context of her doubt, however, the appearance of a Christ-like demonic face displays her understanding of the vision's embodiment of her doubt about the truth of the prior revelations. She herself is the one who imposed the potentially demonic source on the divine vision; thus, it is that self-imposed image that haunts her and prompts her to seek God's mercy for her unbelief.

Julian also acknowledges that during the second demonic attack God was already leading her to the source of her doubt about the vision, namely, her doubt about sin. In describing her incomprehension of the demon's doubled speech, she adds, "and all this was to stere me to dyspere, as me thought, semyng to me as they scornyd byddyng of bedys whych are seyde boystosly with moch faylyng devout intendyng and wyse diligence, the whych we owe to god in oure prayer."[63] As in the sixteenth revelation, she adds "as me thought" and "semyng to me" to portray not her doubt but her self-deliberation. The scorn that the double-voiced demon heaps on those praying "with much failing" recalls the lesson about "fayling/fallyng" that she learned from her fourteenth revelation. Here, she shows that she recognizes the real target of the demon's attack as the blameworthiness of humans, one of the arguments about sin which she reconciles through the vision of the Lord and Servant and Mother Christ. In the Long Text both demonic attacks represent her struggle with but also recognition of her doubts. Since "seeing" is "knowing" for her, the demon's attacks are no longer threatening because the battle with her doubts has already been won, which is demonstrated by the more lucid details of her demonic encounters.

Julian's other new exemplum, Christ as Mother, also reaffirms her redeemed *discretio* through the complementarity of affective and hermeneutic discernment.[64] She uses the shared

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[62] Dale, "'Sin Is Behovely': Art and Theodicy in the Julian Text," *Mystics Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (1999): 127-46.

[63] *Showings*, 648.

[64] For general studies on the motherhood of God, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); and Jennifer Heimmel, "'God Is Our Mother': Julian of Norwich and the Medieval Image of Christian Feminine Divinity," Ph. D. Diss., St. John's University, 1980. For specific studies of Mother Christ in Julian's writings, see Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 222-44; Ritamary Bradley, "Mysticism in the Motherhood Similitude of Julian of Norwich," *Studia Mystica* 8, no. 2 (1985): 4-14; Sarah McNamer, "The Exploratory Image: God as Mother in Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*," *Mystics Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (1989): 21-28; Reynolds, "Some Literary Influences," 18-28; Nancy Bradley Warren, "Incarnational (Auto)Biography," in *Middle English*, ed. Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 369-85; Nicholas Watson, "'Yf Wommen Be Double Naturelly': Remaking 'Woman' in Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*," *Exemplaria* 8, no. 1 (1996): 1-34; Rachel Jacoff, "God as Mother: Julian of Norwich's Theology of Love," *Denver Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (1984): 134-39; Judith Coiner, "The 'Homely' and the Heimliche: The Hidden, Doubled Self in Julian of Norwich's *Showings*," *Exemplaria* 5, no. 2 (1993): 305-23; Liz Herbert McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body in the Writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 64-95; Margaret Ann Palliser, *Christ, Our Mother of*

metaphor of falling and the emotion of fear to connect Mother Christ to Servant-Christ. In the Lord and Servant parable the servant experiences several types of pain after his fall, including fear.[65] This dread, however, is not without purpose as the Mother Christ metaphor explains. If the reader dreads the fact that he has fallen using "the condition of a child" as the servant does, then he will "run hastily to the mother" as Mother Christ intends.[66] This if-then construction is Julian's way of tracing the child's hypothetical "stirrings." The dread from falling causes it to seek reassurance from its mother, returning it to a pre-fallen state. Similarly, Julian's initial doubt about sin as "behovely" separates her from God due to her difficulty in distinguishing the sin-vision's divine source via hermeneutic discernment. In turn, affective discernment helps her affirm the sin-vision's truth since it stirs her soul toward God all the harder. Her turn to affective discernment is illustrated by Mother Christ's embrace; akin to Christ's enthronement in Julian's soul, it represents and confirms simultaneously intimacy with God. She only sees the sin-vision's utility, however, by tracking the if-then construction of the fallen child using hermeneutic evaluation. Unlike the sixteenth revelation's immediacy of union, the Mother Christ metaphor requires the use of hermeneutic discernment to get Julian as child/sinner/servant to that embrace.

Indeed, the two new episodes of the Lord and Servant parable and Mother Christ metaphor reveal that the balance that Julian strikes between the once-competing modes of discernment is crucial to her reconciliation of doubts about the Two Judgments. She concludes that both judgments are "behovely" just as both modes of discernment are necessary in reconciling them. The ultimate source of the resolution to the problem of sin, however, is found in a different set of revisions in which she replaces her doubt about discernment with the Holy Spirit, which she encodes in the Lord and Servant parable as the lord's gift.

The Lord's Gift: The Holy Spirit as "Homely Love"

The lord's gift addresses the crux of the Two Judgments by transforming punishment into reward. In the parable, Julian recounts a "beholding" within a "beholding" in which she marvels "how this seruannt myght thus mekely suffer all this woo."[67] She "beholds" the parable "with avysement" to ascertain whether she "culde perceyve in hym ony defauȝte, or yf the lorde shuld assigne in hym ony maner of blame; and verely there was none seen, for oonly hys good wyll and his grett desyer was cause of his fallyng."[68] Her self-deliberation results in a reprise of the Two Judgments but with a new emphasis: her failure in tracking a cause for blaming the servant results in seeing the truth, *verely*, about the servant's faultless "good will and great desire." Her new understanding is reaffirmed when the lord's explanation echoes her "beholding" a few lines later: "Lo my belouyd servant, what harme and dysses he hath had and takyn in my servys for my loue, yea, and for *his good wylle*. Is it nott reson that I reward hym his frey and his drede, his hurt and his mayme and *all his woo*? And nott only this, but fallyth it nott to me to geve hym a ȝyfte that be better to hym and more wurschypfull than his owne hele shuld haue bene?"[69] Just as

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Mercy: Divine Mercy and Compassion in the Theology of the 'Shewings' of Julian of Norwich (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992); Baker, *From Vision to Book*, 107-34.

[65] Banchich, "A Hevynly Joy," 333.

[66] *Showings*, 605.

[67] *Showings*, 516.

[68] Ibid.

[69] *Showings*, 517-18, my emphasis.

she becomes aware of the blamelessness of the servant (and thus, her own blamelessness), so too does the lord. This is a version of the tautological visionary representation that her sixteenth revelation enacts, but with a twist. Rather than simply represent what she seeks to confirm, that both of the Judgments are true viz a viz the lord's refusal to blame the servant for falling, the lord seeks to explain that the servant's fall is the reason for a yet-undisclosed gift, an apparent non sequitur regarding the reconciliation of Julian's doubts. But on the contrary, the lord's gift, the purported telos to the servant's failure, is the very cause of resolving both of her foregrounded problems.[70]

Although there is no explicit mention of the lord's gift again, the textual analogue of the lord's transformation of punishment to reward is Julian's transformation of God's hatred of doubtful dread into God's maternal concern for mankind, especially through the Holy Spirit.[71] She explains elsewhere that the Holy Spirit is the source of love and goodness.[72] As such, he is responsible for turning "doubtful dread" into love: "For the kynde propyrte of drede whych we haue in this lyfe by the gracious werkyng of the holy gost, the same shall be in hevyn afore god, gentylle, curteyse, fulle swete; and thus we shalle in loue be homely and nere to god, and we in drede be gentylle and curtesse to god, and both in one manner, lyke evyn."[73] This assertion of the Holy Spirit's "homely love" on earth comes at a point in her revision where she transforms the effect of "false dread" like doubt. No longer is "false dread" that which "torments and tests and troubles,"[74] but rather, it is that which hinders "reverent dread," or the love of the child toward its mother, God.[75] Julian's new focus is elaborating upon this "true dread," and she even highlights two ways in which "to know them both [false and true dreads], and refuse the wrong."[76] First, she assumes that her readers recognize that fears are impulses to be discerned, for false fears "come under the color of holiness."[77] This is her subtle allusion to hermeneutic discernment, which is exactly what she omits from this passage. Then, she provides a new affective rule of thumb for distinguishing the false dreads from true dread: only true dread makes Julian and her audience "with all [their] intent and with all [their] understanding" fall to the breast of Mother Christ, and cleave to him "in faithful trust."[78] Not only does she replace discerning doubtful dread with discerning reverent dread, but she also replaces her warning about discerning the spirits with a reference to Mother Christ. Her newfound trust in her revelations has changed the

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[70] Alexandra Barratt argues that the lord of the parable is the Holy Spirit in "Julian of Norwich and the Holy Spirit, 'Our Good Lord,'" *Mystics Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (2002): 78-84.

[71] Julian explicitly calls the "the inwarde gracious werkyng of the holy gost" a gift at 707. The word "gift" ("gefte"/"yefte"/"gift"/"geft") appears in several other instances: 285, 292, 314, 383-84, 469, 476, 564, 565-67, 591, 619, 677, 700, 723, 731.

[72] *Showings*, 582-83. Banchich argues that "reverent fear" is the gift of the Holy Spirit ("A Hevynly Joy," 316).

[73] *Showings*, 676.

[74] *Showings*, 277.

[75] *Showings*, 675-76.

[76] *Showings*, 676.While the Short Text also includes the goal to "know them both and refuse the false" (277), Julian in the Long Text elaborates on the "security in love" that she mentions in the final line of the Short Text (278).

[77] *Showings*, 675.

[78] Ibid.

emphasis of her spiritual advice from warning about deception to affirmation of her readers' ability to behave correctly based on their own discretion.

Julian, therefore, resolves her doubt through the Holy Spirit's "homely love," which resolution resembles the Long Text's conclusion. Many have written on her theology of love and her famous declaration that "love was his meaning."[79] Claire Banchich, however, adds that Julian is so sensitive to God's turning fear into love that "she turns each kind of dread to positive effect."[80] This astute observation suggests that Julian rhetorically mimics God's transformative work. More specifically, I would argue that she omits God's hatred entirely in order to reflect the reconciliation between the Two Judgments and the Holy Spirit's intimacy with humans. Instead of highlighting her fear of God's hatred for her doubts about sin in the Long Text, she highlights God's love, which is demonstrated by her personal attainment of a "true knowing of love."[81] God's grace transforms the "bitterness of doubt" into "sweetness of natural or compassionate love," which assigns agency both to God and the individual who gains "true knowledge of love." Her "true knowledge," therefore, makes her an enlightened "servant" who cooperates with God in his salvific work, which constitutes their intimacy, or "homely love."[82]

In fact, intimacy between God and man, "homely love," is so important to the resolution of her doubt that she rephrases the warning about false stirrings to highlight God's love rather than his hate. She associates "homely love" to "true knowing" again, which is described in terms of discretion. "All that we see or feel, within or without" depicts stirrings that cause humans, as Julian stresses, to act, whether "more recklessly" or not.[83] Rather than emphasizing God's dislike of incorrect discernment as she does in the Short Text, she highlights correct discernment that leads to the close union humans have with God such that his hate of "deadly sin" becomes man's hate of false stirrings.[84] This union, therefore, is not just one of knowledge—that of differentiating true or false stirrings, or correct or incorrect actions—but one of affect, namely, loving what God loves and hating what he hates. Human synchrony with divine knowledge and feeling culminates in knowing God's will. Intimacy between God and humans, then, comes to replace the distance between them that Julian once anticipated through her warning about incorrectly discerning the spirits.

If the lord's gift, the Holy Spirit, is what Julian ultimately claims as the source of her own ability to practice discernment and to resolve the problematic theology of sin, it is because he is love. The Holy Spirit, God's power ("vertu") in the soul, enables her to trace the origins of her

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[79] See n. 64 above.

[80] Banchich, *"*A Hevynly Joy," 339.

[81] *Showings*, 673; cf. 276.

[82] On "homely love" as intimacy, see Patricia Vinje, "An Understanding of Love According to the Anchoress Julian of Norwich," Ph. D. diss., Marquette University, 1982, 106-17; Paul Molinari, *Julian of Norwich: The Teaching of a 14th Century English Mystic* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1958), 149-86; Palliser, *Christ, Our Mother of Mercy*, 172-74. For the intersection between "homely love" and courtesy, see Hide, *Gifted Origins*, 48-52; Mary Olsen, "God's Inappropriate Grace: Images of Courtesy in Julian of Norwich's *Showings*," *Mystics Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (1994): 47-59; and Anna Maria Reynolds, "Correspondence," *14th Century English Mystics Newsletter* 5, no. 2 (1979): 6-20.

[83] *Showings*, 705.

[84] *Showings*, 705; cf. 257.

stirrings.[85] As the endower of all gifts, it bestows contemplation and *discretio spirituum* to whom it wills.[86] Although she refrains from explicitly naming the Holy Spirit as the source of discernment, she often omits ambiguous stirring from the Long Text in order to emphasize positive descriptions of the Holy Ghost's stirring elsewhere. For instance, while she retains being stirred to charity in her Long Text ("In alle this I was much steryde in cheryte to myne evyn christen, that they myght alle see and know the same that I sawe…")[87] she omits the second questionable stirring that follows ("And so ys my desyre that it schulde be to euery ilke manne the same profytte that I desyrede to my selfe and þerto was styrryd of god in the fyrste tyme when I saw itte.").[88] The generality of being "stirred in charity" shows her confidence in being a teacher to her fellow Christians, but the specificity of time in the second omitted statement, "in the first time when I saw it," displays her initial doubt about the vision.[89] The omission of the second statement frames the stirring as unambiguously true rather than a justification of a dubious impulse. Likewise, she omits the word "stirs" altogether in a moment where the Holy Ghost does not move: "yett there dwellyth a drede þat lettyth vs, by þe beholldyng of oure selfe and of oure synne afore done . . . and we can nott dyspyse it as we do another synne that we know, whych comyth thorugh lack of true jugement, and it is agayne truth."[90] In the Short Text this hindering dread had been a "stirring" dread. Now in the Long Text it is stopped by "true judgment," which replaces the subjunctive phrase "for if we knew it." She shows that *discretio,* a contemplative's "true judgment," allows him or her to discern the Holy Spirit's stirring rather than just false stirrings. Though she still admits moments of evil stirring in the Long Text, she makes the editorial decision to attach the agency of "stirring" primarily to the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Spirit is also the messenger of love who turns "doubtful dread" into "true knowing of love." His "homely love" turns human failure into motivation to seek out Mother Christ more diligently, and elevates sinful human nature as a "behovely" part of God's salvific work of grace. Specifically, the Holy Ghost empties the agency of the formerly "stirring" dread of despair brought on by self-loathing, by turning it into contrition of heart and desire for penance. Julian highlights this transformation by omitting the enemy's act of stirring humans to the mortal sin of despair: " . . . if any man or woman be steryd by foly to sey or to thynke: if this be tru, than were it good for to synne to haue the more mede, or elles to charge the lesse to synne, beware of this steryng. For truly, if it come, it is vntrue and of the enemy."[91] Instead of

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[85] *Showings*, 564.

[86] *Showings*, 567, 700. For the biblical precedent of discernment as a gift of the Holy Spirit, see Anderson, *The Discernment of Spirits*, 17-22.

[87] *Showings*, 319.

[88] *Showings*, 220.

[89] Susan Hagan argues that Julian takes the posture of a teacher in the Long Text in "St. Cecilia and St. John of Beverly: Julian of Norwich's Early Model and Late Affirmation," in *Julian of Norwich: A Book of Essays*, ed. Sandra J. McEntire (New York: Garland, 1998), 91-114.

[90] *Showings*, 668-69. Cf. 275: "ȝit þere dwelles a drede that styrres thamm to behaldynge of thamm selfe and of þer synnes before done . . . and we cann it nouȝt dispyse, for ȝif we knewe it, we schulde sodaynly dispice it as we do ane othere synne that we knawe, for it commes of the enmy, and it is agayne the trewthe."

[91] *Showings*, 456. Cf. 257: "Bot ȝyf thowe be styrred to saye or to thynke: Senn this is sothe, þan ware it goode for to synne for to hafe the mare mede, be ware of this styrrynge and

warning about the condemnation of deadly sin as before in the Short Text, she elaborates upon the love of God, which she introduces earlier in the chapter through Christ's friendship with the soul, "My dere darlyng, I am glad thou arte come to me in alle thy woe. I haue evyr ben with the, and now seest thou me louyng, and we be onyd in blysse."[92] All in all, the Holy Ghost's stirring initiates a chain reaction of love rather than wrath in which the soul turns to Christ and Christ is found to be already turned to the soul. The omission of the soul's fall into despair further limits the power of evil stirring by reframing its effects as a brief detour on the path to receiving grace. For what is most important is being able to discern the true stirring of the Holy Ghost, which makes the enemy's stirring and its results a moot point.

Discernment plays an integral role in God's salvific work since through it the Holy Spirit bridges the gap between humans and God in terms of both knowledge and love. For example, he plays a large part in stirring Julian to the right interpretation of her visions. After delineating the Two Judgments of God and of Holy Church, she admits, "And the more knowyng and vnderstondyng by the gracious ledyng of the holy gost that we haue of these ij domes, the more we shalle see and know oure felynges."[93] "Feelings" can be read strictly as her impulses or visions, which Colledge and Walsh gloss as "our feeling of woe and pain (491.10-12) that we lack the self-knowledge whereby we might truly and clearly know God (491.13-15)."[94] Or, they may also refer to the "failings" of human nature, which relate to "fallyng" in the "example of a lorde and of a seruannt" that she uses to gloss the Two Judgments.[95] In fact, the Sloane manuscripts seem to suggest the latter by using "faylyngs" rather than "feylnges."[96] In either case, the "feelings" or "failings" still point to her awareness of using visions to interpret other visions, or hermeneutic discernment. In particular, this quote explains that the Holy Ghost helps her to perform *discretio spirituum* by helping her "see and know" the successive visions that comment on preceding visions. She implicitly acknowledges that she has mastered discerning the spirits by recognizing the guiding force behind her vision's stirrings.

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dispice it, for it is of the enmy. For whate saule that wilfully takys this styrrynge, he may neuer be safe to he be amendyd as of dedely synne." See pp. 72-73 above.

[92] *Showings*, 455.

[93] *Showings*, 489.

[94] *Showings*, 489, n. 38.

[95] *Showings*, 488. Cf. Banchich, "A Hevynly Joy," 329.

[96] While Colledge and Walsh note that the Sloane manuscripts "seem, exceptionally, to have erred" in using "faylyngs" rather than "felynges," Marion Glasscoe intentionally uses them as her base texts in order to keep alive Julian's "tendency to ambiguities which coalesce two meanings and thus embody the unity of experience that both point to" (Glasscoe, *A Revelation of Love*, xvii). In addition to her language, Glasscoe describes Julian's visions as embodying a unity of experience: "a special and direct knowledge of love, divine in origin but human in response, which although it can thus be expressed in dual terms, is experienced as an indivisible unity which bridges the gap between God and man and gives a certainty of purpose to the failures and contradictions in human experience" (xiii).

Conclusion

The replacement of her explicit anxiety about discernment in the Short Text with the lengthy elaborations about the Lord and Servant parable, Mother Christ, and the "homely love" of the Holy Spirit in the Long Text is the result of a decades-long process of exploration and qualification of the Trinitarian hermeneutic.[97] Her visionary authority, however, derives not from the Trinity generally but from the Holy Spirit in particular: "This boke is begonne by goddys gyfte."[98] After all, it is "our good lorde the holy gost" who "ledyth vs in this passing lyfe."[99] It is the Holy Spirit who, like the lord in Julian's parable, gives the gift of himself to his earthly servants. It is because he leads her discernment that the process shapes her thought in the Short Text. Since she is able to return to it in that form, she is able to articulate and find meaning in apparently contradictory and disjoint visions of God and sin, which compels her to write her Long Text.

Moreover, Julian uses the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as God's love to explore the twin registers of discernment, affective and hermeneutic, in her revelations. Her resultant theology of love is an orthodox resolution of doubts about the meaning and sources of her revelation through its reconciliation of affect and reason. Although she foregrounds the problem of discerning the spirits in the Short Text, and the problem of sin in the Long Text, both are in her mind resolved by love. For the problem of discernment, love is both the reassurance of the presence of God and the phenomenological standard by which she affirms her mental processes. For the problem of sin, love is again the reassurance of the presence of God and, on the other hand, the vehicle that God uses to deliver his divine pronouncements about turning punishment into reward.

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[97] Watson, "The Trinitarian Hermeneutic," 79-100.
[98] *Showings*, 731.
[99] *Showings*, 724. See Barratt, "Our Good Lord."

Ch. 3 – Adapting *Discretio*: Holy Reading in Sheen and Syon

In the late fourteenth century, the contemplative emphasis of specific authors changed the discourse about *discretio*. For instance, for writers like Walter Hilton, the *Chastising*-author, and the *Cloud*-author, *discretio* was a foundational skill for practicing contemplation. As such, it was necessary to teach it to all levels of contemplatives, from novices to the Perfect, which compelled these writers to distinguish semiotic and hermeneutic discernment based on readers' expertise in contemplation. For Julian of Norwich, while her level of expertise played a role in initiating the record of her revelatory visions, it was her theological doubts that compelled her to use and distinguish a complementary dynamic between hermeneutic and affective discernment, ultimately resulting in an expansive revision of her first work. In sum, *discretio* was both a skill that directly influenced one's interaction with others, and a personal tool to help one order one's thoughts.

In the fifteenth century, the discernment discourse changed once again due to a new contemplative emphasis on holy reading, particularly for the new monastic foundations of Sheen Priory and Syon Abbey. The Syon-Sheen writers were already adapting *discretio* for a mixed life audience, which they, like the fourteenth-century writers before them, did by distinguishing between appropriate forms of discernment based on contemplative expertise. Nevertheless, the new twist to the discourse came with applying *discretio* to holy reading: new literary hermeneutics assumed readers' ability to deploy them without the aid of an advisor. Now *discretio* was a personal tool that all readers could use to order their thoughts.

Although *lectio* was by no means a new spiritual exercise by the early fifteenth century, its popular appeal had grown in England during the late Middle Ages. For instance, monastics were not the only audience for texts of spiritual advice. Nicole Rice shows how lay spiritual aspirations had already increased the market for such texts by the end of the fourteenth century.[1] Moreover, contemplative guides were being adapted from older monastic and anchoritic sources for lay audiences.[2] The most well known example of such an adapted work is the vernacular Life of Christ written by Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*.[3] Although the *Mirror* is now famous for being the first work approved by Archbishop Arundel before the

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[1] Nicole R. Rice, *Lay Piety and Religious Discipline in Middle English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Rice mainly uses donations in wills and guilds' corporate upkeep of parish chapels as evidence of "lay piety," but devotion to personal cult, like that of the Holy Name, and the popularity of pilgrimage and of seeking out anchorites for spiritual advice are other pieces of recorded evidence of lay piety. See Jeremy Catto, "Religious Change under Henry V," in *Henry V: The Practice of Kingship*, ed. G. L. Harriss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 97-115.

[2] Rice examines how fourteenth-century guides "reimagine cloistered modes of discipline," and argues that translations of clerical guides teach the idea of lay *imitatio clerici* (*Lay Piety and Religious Discipline*, 47-80, 81-132).

[3] Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ: A Reading Text*, ed. Michael Sargent (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2004). All further citations to this work refer to this edition by page number.

Constitutions of 1409,[4] new studies reveal how even this "censored" work draws on traditional affective meditation on the life and Passion of Christ to become the first step to higher meditation for a mixed readership.[5] Not only did the Constitutions have little effect on diminishing demand and textual supply of spiritual advice, but the ambit of lay devotion was widening and even overlapped with that of the enclosed as writers adapted contemplative texts to suit a lay audience.[6]

Works teaching *discretio* were no exception. For those addressed in this chapter, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, the *Speculum devotorum*, the *Speculum inclusorum*, *The Orcherd of Syon,* and *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*, it becomes clear that *discretio* was an important step for an array of devotional exercises practiced by monastics and aspiring lay readers alike, among which was holy reading. Writers of spiritual advice accommodated a wider non-enclosed readership by separating semiotic and hermeneutic discernment along vocational lines, a tactic used to introduce an inherently contemplative concept to non-contemplatives. Yet even what constituted the contemplative life in the early fifteenth century was changing due to Henry V's reform of the monastic landscape with the foundations of Syon and Sheen. After the establishment of this monastic complex, both the mixed life and increased regular interaction between laity and monastics became an institutional reality that Syon-Sheen's monastic writers had to address. The blurring of vocations within the community afforded an opportunty to redraw lines of spiritual authority, which Syon-Sheen's writers apparently did by applying *discretio* to holy reading. As these works show, the Syon-Sheen writers still opt to guard against overly zealous religious enthusiasm by relegating hermeneutic discernment to monatics, but they also establish a lay hermeneutic of biblical sentential reading and a monastic hermeneutic of self-reflection in the text, both of which assume an advisor-free context.

Syon-Sheen and Monastic Reform

The reform of the contemplative life realized by "the King's great work at Sheen," the nickname of the Syon-Sheen complex adopted in contemporary sources, was due in large part to Henry V's posture of self-reformation, whether politically motivated or not. The possible motivations for his founding of the monasteries of "Jesus of Bethlehem" at Sheen and "the Monastery of St. Savior and St. Bridget of Syon" in 1414 and 1415, respectively, are legion. The

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[4] Article 7 of Arundel's Constitutions—which prohibits the translation or reading without permission of any book, pamphlet, or tract that includes biblical translation, including texts translated for the laity from monastic and anchoritic texts of spiritual advice (for the Latin, see David Wilkins, ed., *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae* (London: R. Gosling, 1737), 3: 317)—is expanded upon in Watson, "Censorship and Cultural Change," 822-64. For responses to Watson, see Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh, *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011).

[5] See Ian Johnson, *The Middle English Life of Christ: Academic Discourse, Translation, and Vernacular Theology* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 95-146; Ian Johnson, "Prologue and Practice: Middle English Lives of Christ," in *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, ed. Roger Ellis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989), 69-85.

[6] For a succinct account of the limited effect of Arundel's Constitutions, see Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, "Appendix A: Arundel's Constitutions of 1407-9 and Vernacular Literature," in *Books Under Suspicion,* 397-401.

recent consensus among historians is that he was facing crises of legitimacy on political and ecclesiastical fronts. As the King of England, he sought to defend his claim to the English and French thrones using "incarnational politics," for which both St. Brigit's revelations and the Blessed Virgin Mary, the central focus of Syon's worship, brought him symbolic capital.[7] On the ecclesiastical front, he hoped to mark the English church as "different from Lollardy in its orthodoxy and full participation in the life of the universal church" at the Council of Constance.[8] With the founding of Carthusian Sheen and Brigittine Syon, he called attention to the new religious beginnings of the nation.[9] Moreover, since they were built close to the royal-manor house, he seemed to have attempted to "place the monarchy at the spiritual centre of English life."[10] After all, he had great personal affection for St. Brigit,[11] and practiced devotion to the Five Wounds of Christ as Brigit did; the feast of the Five Wounds was even incorporated into England's liturgical year during his reign.[12] Furthermore, like other European nobility, he built and sponsored a Carthusian charterhouse for the purpose of increasing his own access to texts about the mixed life and maintaining a moral consciousness in governance, a gambit to reinforce his political ambition with his spiritual devotion.[13] All in all, Syon-Sheen was built with Henry V's representational and personal spiritual benefit in mind. It was, moreover, the royal layman's portrayal of self-reformation that also inadvertently led to the increased interaction between the common layman and the devotional mode of self-reform that pervaded the life of the two monastic communities.

Syon-Sheen set the stage for monastic reform by reasserting the centrality of prayer, meditation, and reading in the life of the enclosed. Syon Abbey was an exemplary model of this reform due to its rule of life. Whereas obedience to the Benedictine Rule tended to relax across the largest English monasteries in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries,[14] St. Brigit's rule, the *Regula Salvatoris*,[15] prescribed an austerity stricter than the Benedictine Rule did.[16] To achieve

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[7] Nancy Bradley Warren argues that Henry V associated himself with holy women who would legitimize matrilineal succession in "Kings, Saints, and Nuns: Gender, Religion, and Authority in the Reign of Henry V," *Viator* 30 (1999): 307-22. See also Neil Beckett, "St. Bridget, Henry V and Syon Abbey," in *Studies in St. Birgitta and the Brigittine Order*, ed. James Hogg (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1993), 125-50.

[8] Gillespie, "Chichele's Church," 3-42.

[9] As Gillespie points out, "no house of Birgittines or Celestines had ever before been founded in Britain. Nor had the Carthusians ('never reformed because never deformed') featured prominently in either side's [John Wycliff and anti-Wycliffites'] arguments" (Gillespie, "Chichele's Church," 5).

[10] Catto, "Religious Change under Henry V," 110.

[11] Beckett, "St. Bridget, Henry V and Syon Abbey," 139-41.

[12] Beckett, "St. Bridget, Henry V and Syon Abbey," 130.

[13] Jeremy Catto, "Statesmen and Contemplatives in the Early Fifteenth Century," in *Studies in Carthusian Monasticism in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Julian M. Luxford (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 107-14.

[14] James G. Clark, "The Religious Orders in Pre-Reformation England," in *The Religious Orders in Pre-Reformation England*, ed. James G. Clark (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002), 3-33.

[15] For the Latin translation of the Old Swedish rule, see Sten Eklund, ed., *Opera Minora I: Regula Salvatoris* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1972).

such an ideal, one of the largest reforms instantiated by the *Regula* was of the Divine Service. The community was expected to perform a constant flow of musical worship daily, alternating between the Syon brethren singing the monastic hours and the sisters singing the Marian hours.[17] Furthermore, in addition to singing the Office, the nuns were expected to contemplate, confess, and be absolved;[18] read holy literature privately and communally; and for the men, perform Mass and duties of pastoral care, which included copying and composing texts for the sisters.[19] The full schedule of Brigittine regular life thus left little time for anything else.

Arguably, the largest Brigittine reform of English cenobitic life was its community structure, which facilitated increased interaction with the laity. As a double-house, Syon represented both an inward and outward spiritual focus. While the sixty Syon sisters were central to the contemplative life of Syon, the whole community of Syon that existed to support them was composed of four lay sisters, thirteen priests, four deacons, and eight lay brethren, at its maximum capacity. These other community members demonstrate Syon's para-monastic piety.[20] Despite the fact that the Syon brethren were enclosed religious, the *Regula Salvatoris* gave the priest-brethren the duties of preaching Sunday Mass to the nuns; advising the nuns and an elite group of laypeople; preaching publicly on major feast days, which included administering the *ad vincula* plenary indulgence;[21]and accepting confessions.[22] The deacons and lay brethren also had

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[16] For differences between the the traditional Benedictine rule of life and Birgitta's idealized rule, see Roger Ellis, "The Visionary and the Canon Lawyers: Papal and Other Revisions to the *Regula Salvatoris* of St Bridget of Sweden" in *Prophets Abroad: the Reception of Continental Holy Women in Late-Medieval England*, ed. Rosalynn Voaden (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996), 71-90.

[17] Anne Bagnall Yardley, "Bridgettine Spirituality and Musical Practices at Syon Abbey," in *Studies of St. Birgitta and the Brigittine Order*, ed. James Hogg (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1993), 199-214. See also Ann M. Hutchison who argues that the preeminence of the Divine Office in the life of Syon was a response to Lollardy in "The Nuns of Syon Abbey in Choir: Spirituality and Influences," in *Medieval Spirituality in Scandinavia and Europe,* eds. Lars Bisgaard, Carsten Seich Jensen, Kurt Villads Jensen, and John Lind (Odense: Odense University Press, 2001), 265-74.

[18] All religious at Syon were required to confess three times per year, but provisions were made for the sisters if they wanted to confess daily (Peter Cunich, "The Brothers of Syon, 1420-1695" in *Syon Abbey and Its Books: Reading, Writing and Religion, c.1400-1700*, eds. E. A. Jones and Alexandra Walsham (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010), 39-81, esp. 51).

[19] Vincent Gillespie, "'Hid Diuinite': The Spirituality of the English Syon Brethren," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium VII, Papers Read at Charney Manor, July 2004*, ed. E. A. Jones (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 189-206.

[20] Jones and Walsham argue that the Brigittine order was not alone in its para-monastic piety in "Syon Abbey and Its Books: Origins, Influences and Transitions," in *Syon Abbey and Its Books: Reading, Writing and Religion*, eds. E. A. Jones and Alexandra Walsham (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010), 1-38. See also James G. Clark, ed., *The Religious Orders in Pre-Reformation England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002), and Janet E. Burton and Karen Stöber, eds., *Monasteries and Society in the British Isles in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008).

[21] Jones and Walsham explain that the *ad vincula* indulgence was originally only made available to pilgrims to the Church of St. Peter ad vincula in Rome on his feast day and octave.

important roles in helping Mass run smoothly. While the deacons assisted the priest-brethren directly, the lay brothers were required to follow the actions of the priests and deacons whenever they rose, sat down, or bowed.[23] The fact that all of these members lived as one monastic community—albeit with regulations and spaces designed to separate the women from the men—demonstrated to the visiting laity the performance of both the enclosed and the mixed life.[24] The monasticism of Syon Abbey thus served as a thriving model of mixed community, which could have only fueled lay aspirations for *imitatio clerici*, or living a mixed life.

The Carthusian charterhouse of Sheen also housed a unique community that exemplified both the contemplative and mixed life. The Carthusian order, guided by the *Consuetudines* of Guigo I, the fifth prior of the Grande Chartreuse,[25] was dedicated to living a life in solitude and silence for the sake of individual devotional reading, meditative prayer, and contemplation.[26] While the *Consuetudines* limited communal interaction with fellow monks during Mass and meals, and even then breaking silence only when needed, they also allowed monks indirect interaction with fellow monks and the outside world through bookmaking.[27] Apart from producing texts for their own community of prospective and practicing monks, the Carthusians at Sheen fulfilled their duty to "preach with their hands" by copying and editing texts for the nuns of Syon.[28] The Syon brethren copied and composed texts for the Syon sisters as well, but the

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Pope Martin V issued a bull in 1425 granting plenary (or full) remission of sins by visiting Syon on Mid-Lent Sunday, and partial remission (a third of all sins) by visiting the monastery on any day of the year. Margery Kempe, for instance, visited Syon on St. Peter's feast day in 1434. Furthermore, three hundred days of pardon were available to pilgrims who heard a Syon brother give a sermon ("Syon Abbey and Its Books," 6).

[22] Vincent Gillespie, "The Book and the Brotherhood," in *The English Medieval Book: Studies in Memory of Jeremy Griffiths*, eds. A. S. G. Edwards, Vincent Gillespie, and Ralph Hanna (London: British Library, 2000), 185-208. See also Alexandra da Costa and Ann M. Hutchison, "The Brethren of Syon Abbey and Pastoral Care," in *A Companion to Pastoral Care in the Late Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 235-60.

[23] Cunich, "The Brothers of Syon, 1420-1695," 52.

[24] Gillespie argues that Syon was hospitable to more than the Rule's prescribed community as well, such as the lay brethren's families, royal visitors, and lay vowesses in "The Haunted Text: Reflections in *The Mirror of Devout People*," in *Medieval Texts in Context* (London: Routledge, 2008), 136-66, esp. 152.

[25] Guigo I, *Coutumes de Chartreuse*, SC 313 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1984).

[26] A good summary of the history of the foundation of the Order is found in Jessica Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness: Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 28-46.

[27] *Consuetudines Cartusiae* 28.3 (Guigo, *Coutumes de Chartreuse*, 224): "Adhuc etiam, libros ad legendum de armario accipit duos. Quibus omnem diligentiam curamque prebere iubetur, ne fumo, ne pulvere, vel alia qualibet sorde maculentur. Libros quippe tamquam sempiternum animarum nostrarum cibum cautissime custodiri et studiosissime volumus fieri, ut quia ore non possumus, dei verbum manibus predicemus."

[28] Gillespie, "The Haunted Text," 148. See also Paul J. Patterson, "Preaching with the Hands: Carthusian Book Production and the *Speculum devotorum*," in *Medieval Latin and Middle English Literature*, eds. Christopher Cannon and Maura Nolan (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011), 134-51.

Carthusian monks across the river were better known for annotations and textual criticism;[29] the two communities, in fact, shared resources for the purpose of serving the Syon sisters.[30]

Yet pastoral care, in reality, did not stop at bookmaking. Both the prior and procurator (and deputized monks) gave sermons to the lower house composed of lay brethren, hired servants, novices, and lay visitors.[31] Sheen also had a reclusory that housed an anchorite that acted as a priest and spiritual advisor for the community.[32] It is likely that Sheen, like the charterhouses of London and Mount Grace, also participated in lay burial and lay sponsorship, which would have increased interaction with the world outside the monastery.[33] In other words, Sheen Charterhouse like its twin foundation, Syon Abbey, had a staggering array of religious vocations mingling under its roof. In order to minister to its unique mixed community of monk-anchorites, monk-priests, nuns, anchorites, and laity, Syon-Sheen had to adopt rules and techniques to maintain its vocational distinctions. Adapting *discretio* for non-contemplatives was one of those techniques.

Luckily, the fourteenth-century writers of spiritual advice set a precedent for maintaining vocational distinctions in practicing *discretio*. They emphasized on a distinction of appropriate discernment based on the contemplative's level of experience. For a novice or Proficient, semiotic discernment guided him to seek out his director's judgment about the external signs of virtue or vice. This included having his director moderate the amount of his ascetic and devotional exercises. Indeed, we saw in the first chapter how Walter Hilton and the *Chastising*-author encouraged contemplative readers to work toward a proper form of life through the moderation of daily regimens of prayer, holy reading, and meditation. Nevertheless, hermeneutic discernment in the same works was never completely separated from its counterpart. For the Perfect contemplative, hermeneutic discernment guided her to track the trajectory of her own thoughts and impulses in order to discern a divine or demonic source for them. While the *Cloud*-author equated this discernment with contemplation itself, Julian of Norwich demonstrated its mechanism through the form of her texts. Proper execution of hermeneutic discernment also allowed the Perfect contemplative freedom to regulate her own form of life with minimal intervention from her director.

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[29] Veronica Lawrence, "The Role of the Monasteries of Syon and Sheen in the Production, Ownership and Circulation of Mystical Literature in the Late Middle Ages," in *The Mystical Tradition and the Carthusians*, ed. James Hogg, Analecta Cartusiana 10 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1996), 101-15. See also Michael Sargent, "James Grenehalgh as Textual Critic," Ph. D. diss., Universität Salzburg, 1984.

[30] See Patterson, "Preaching with the Hands," 136-37.

[31] Vincent Gillespie, "Cura pastoralis in deserto," in *De cella in seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, ed. Michael Sargent (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989), 161-81.

[32] See E. A. Jones, "A New Look into the *Speculum inclusorum*," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium VI*, *Papers Read at Charney Manor, July 1999*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), 123-45.

[33] Glyn Coppack, "'Make Straight in the Desert a Highway for Our God': The Carthusians and Community in Late Medieval England," in *Monasteries and Society in the British Isles in the Later Middle Ages*, eds. Jane Burton and Karen Stöber (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008), 165-79.

Since Syon-Sheen practiced its pastoral care distinctively through bookmaking, even adapting older works for their broader readership composed of a contemplative, active, and mixed-life audience, it is no wonder that the Syon-Sheen writers followed their predecessors' example. Not only was the division between semiotic and hermeneutic discernment re-imposed on a wider readership—hermeneutic discernment was reimagined to be strictly monastic, while semiotic discernment was adopted as suitably lay—but also, *discretio* was applied to devotional reading, which gave all levels of readers agency to interpret beyond what was written on the page. In short, I aim to show how the monastic complex maintained its vocational distinctions with the help of teaching *discretio* for the practice of holy reading, especially through the development of biblical sentential reading and of self-reflection in the text.

The Vocational Divide

The Life of Christ genre provided laypeople an exemplar of the perfect life.[34] In the words of one writer, Christ took on humanity so "þat he wolde ȝeve vs exsample of parfeccyon in hys owen persone not only in wordys but also in parfyth werkys þat we schulde folowe hym here in thys lyf be goode werkys, yf we wolde be partenerys wyth hym in ioye euyrlastynge."[35] It is, therefore, unsurprising that advice about *discretio* can be found in two fifteenth-century Lives of Christ, Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* and an anonymous Carthusian monk's *Speculum devotorum,* since both "perfection" and *discretio* imply the contemplative life specifically.[36] In applying these devotional frameworks of enclosed religious to the life of the lay reader, both of these works follow a late medieval trend in which the laity were becoming conceptually more like the "perfect." Rather than endorsing precise imitation, however, the works introduce discernment as semiotic evaluation, highlighting especially the sign of meekness.

In Love's *Mirror* and the *Speculum devotorum* only meekness is explicitly associated with "discretion." Whether the practice exemplified is fasting, solitude, meditation, or contemplation, these works propose that meekness is the best sign of the proper form of life and of the moderation of ascetic exercise. For instance, Love ties discernment to bodily penance,

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[34] The Life of Christ genre had also provided monks and clerics the exemplar of "perfection" since the second century. For an extensive overview of the history of the genre, see Elizabeth Salter, "Medieval Lives of Christ," in *Nicholas Love's "Myrrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ,"* ed. James Hogg, Analecta Cartusiana 10 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1974), 55-118.

[35] James Hogg, *The Speculum devotorum of an Anonymous Carthusian of Sheen, Edited from the Manuscripts Cambridge University Library Gg. I. 6 and Foyle, with an Introduction and a Glossary*, Analecta Cartusiana 12-13, Vols. 2-3 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1973). All further citations of this work refer to this edition by page number. Paul J. Patterson's edition was unpublished when I completed this research (Patterson, *A Mirror to Devout People (Speculum devotorum*), EETS o. s. 346 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[36] According to the Middle English Dictionary, a "parfit" life is "life governed by religious (especially monastic) vows" or "the life of those religious taking vows as contrasted with others whose position required no vows" (*MED*, s. v. "parfit," adj. 6b).

which in turn is tied to the monastic image of the "wilderness."[37] The association between the categories of bodily penance and "wilderness" would have been particularly familiar for a Carthusian writer like Nicholas Love.[38] Indeed, he alludes to the Desert Fathers' performance of bodily penance ("þat is to sey, Solitary being, Fastyng, Prayere, & Penance of þe body") in imitation of Christ when he narrates Christ's temptation in the desert in Chapter 15. He points out that these practices are the basics of monasticism for the purpose of cultivating "clenesse of herte" according to several reliable sources, Cassian's *Conlationes* and St. Bernard's writings.[39] Yet, in his Prologue, Love acknowledges his non-monastic readership, the "symple creatures" who need the "mylke of lyȝte doctryne" rather than the "sadde mete of grete clargye & of h[ye] contemplacion."[40] Thus, he ushers the "simple" into the realm of the "wilderness" when he introduces them to the "good works" of bodily penance rather than of "high contemplation."[41] Moreover, he specifies that bodily penance be performed "with discretion":

> Bot for als miche as praiere with glutony or with þe lust & þe likyng of þe body & ydulnesse is litel worþe; þerfore it behoveþ þat þere be þerwiþ Fastyng & bodily penance, & þat with discrecion. For bodily penance withoute discrecion; letteþ alle gode werkes. (70)

> Wherefor þat we mowe be so knit to [Christ] by grace; be we about wiþ alle oure wille & miht to folowe him, þat is to sey. In trewe solitarye beinge as it is seid & in deuoute praiere. In fastyng & discrete bodily penance doynge. (71)

He teaches his readers first of all that "discretion" is a monastic virtue by contrasting it with specific vices.[42] Just as gluttony or idleness paired with prayer "is of little worth," so fasting or penance without the virtue of "discretion" is of little effect. "Discretion" is thus essential to performing "all gode werkes," by which his readers might follow "þe maner of luyung of oure lord Jesu crist in desert so in penance þo xl dayes."[43] While the chapter nowhere specifies what makes bodily penance discreet, the explicit model it finds in Christ's bodily penance suggests that it is a fundamental aspect of following Christ's example even for his lay readers.

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[37] For the medieval associations of the "wilderness," see Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 47-59.

[38] For an example of a Carthusian text that elaborates upon the difficulty of a penitential life in the "wilderness," see Brantley, *Reading in the* Wilderness, 79-120.

[39] *Mirror of the Blessed Life*, 69.

[40] *Mirror of the Blessed Life*, 10.

[41] Ian Johnson asserts, however, that Love's *Mirror's* readership included "the social equals of the Prior of Mount Grace and his superiors" as well as "all clerics, all nobility, even royalty" (Johnson, *The Middle English Life of Christ*, 116-17).

[42] For Cassian, "omnium namque uirtutum generatrix, custos moderatrix que discretio est" (*Conl.* 2.4 in Pichery, 116). For St. Bernard, "Est ergo discretio non tam virtus, quam quedam moderatrix et auriga virtutum, ordinatrix que affectum, et morum doctrix" (*Sermones super Cantica Canticorum* in *S. Bernardi Opera* 3, eds. Jean Leclercq, Charles H. Talbot, and Henri M. Rochais, Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1963) 49.5, at p. 76).

[43] *Mirror of the Blessed Life*, 71.

Only several chapters later does Love specify that discreet penances entails ascetic prudence. In Chapter 24 within the meditation on "how þe dysciples of Jesu plukked þe eres of corn & etyn yt for hunger on þe sabootday," Christ and his disciples practice "discrete Abstinence" as opposed to gluttony, "keping þe body & fedyng as it is nedful þerto, after þe kynde þereof & þe trauaile þat longeþ þereto."[44] This description of abstinence which is checked by natural need and bodily work is elaborated upon using a horse analogy. On its journey it neither fails in its work by too much abstinence nor becomes proud by too much pampering. Instead it keeps "in a gude mene of abstinence." Here, the following references to "discretion" that Love attributes to St. Bernard ("kepere & ledere of al oþer vertues") and then St. Gregory ("modere & kepere of alle vertues") seems to mean "prudence."[45] Just as in the fourteenth-century works of spiritual advice examined above, "discretion" takes on a sense of physical moderation. Moreover, Love models the reliance on a spiritual director's guidance that his lay readers might apply to their lives by explaining to them little by little what he means by "discretion." Just as the disciples followed Christ's prudent actions in the world, the readers realize that they too can follow Christ's actions by submitting to the advice of a more experienced spiritual director, Nicholas Love.

To further reinforce the meekness of submitting to a human director, Love's *Mirror* also represents Christ as the monastic spiritual advisor that teaches his disciples to become prudent for themselves. Chapter 25 uses "discrete" to show Christ regulating fasting for his followers. When he feeds the crowds of four thousand and of five thousand people, he demonstrates his wise judgment of the crowds' capacity to fast: "seyng þe perile of þe peple in to miche fasting; bycause of þe gret trauaile þat þei sholden haue in hir goyng aȝene; seide þus, *If I suffre hem go home aȝeyn in to hir owne house fasting*; *þei shole faile & perish [in] þe wey*."[46] His foreknowledge of the crowds' bodily limitations is demonstrated by the near echo of his speech with the description of his perception of the crowds ("peril"/ "perish," "fasting"/"fasting," "trauaile"/"faile," "goyng"/"go," "aȝene"/"aȝeyn"). It is as if the narrative's objective reality and his knowledge are one in the same. As fully man and fully divine, Christ would know the limitations of the human body from personal experience, as well as the outcome of future events before they unfold. Due to his prescient knowledge of the crowds' bodily limitations, Love describes him as "discrete & circumspect, seying be fore hir nede & unmihte."[47] In other words, Love defines "discretion" in penance as knowing the point at which moderation exists, which in this case belongs to Christ as advisor. He sets up the authority of the advisor as the basis for discernment. This accords with his dedication of this "ensaumple of discretion to prelates & hem þat þat haven cure of oþer."[48] With a nod to his mixed readership, he proposes that his lay readers cultivate their own spiritual formation with a *real* spiritual advisor.

The necessity of having a real spiritual advisor comes to the foreground in dealing with *discretio spirituum* for visions. While Love's *Mirror* refrains from referring to it, the anonymous

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[44] *Mirror of the Blessed Life*, 98-99.

[45] St. Gregory often highlights that "prudentia eius percussit superbum" as in Love's horse analogy in *Moralia in Iob* (CCSL 143A, bk. 17, para. 45, p. 877). St. Bernard calls prudence the mother of fortitude ("sicut hoc loco vides fortitudinis matrem esse prudentiam") in *De consideratione ad Eugenium Papam* (*S. Bernardi Opera* 3, bk. 1, para. 9, p. 404).

[46] *Mirror of the Blessed Life*, 102, my emphasis.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

Carthusian monk from Sheen who writes the *Speculum devotorum* for the mixed monastic-lay community of Syon Abbey does so multiple times but by a different name.[49] For example, while discussing the spirit of prophecy, he replaces hermeneutic discernment with meekness. In the sixteenth chapter, the Pharisees take counsel about what to do about Christ's growing popularity among the people. The "bishop" Caiaphas proposes a solution "þat one man dye for the pepyl, & not þat alle the pepyl peryische," which the author reminds his readers is a moment of prophecy.[50] Referring to St. Augustine, however, the author warns that "the spyryt of prophecye, or myraclys wyrkynge, or vysyonys, or reuelacyonys, or sueche othyr ȝyftys . . . maye be hadde othyrwhyle of eyul men & wymmen as wel as of goode."[51] Instead, such gifts of the Spirit should not be desired since even the reprobate can have them; and even if they "be hadde they bee not myche to be sett by wythoute othyre holy vertuys & holy lyuynge therwyth; but mekenesse & charytee wyth feythe hope & perseueraunce in goode & alle othyr vertuus lyuynge inwarde & outwarde been gretly & contynualy to be desyryed of ȝow."[52] Rather than bothering to mention guidelines about "testing the spirits" or about using the said spiritual gifts for the benefit of fellow Christians or of the church, the *Devotorum*-author subsumes the readers' need for "discretion" under their need for desiring the virtues that Christ exemplifies, especially meekness. For in giving advice about redirecting desire away from the "discernment of spirits" and toward virtue, he highlights the reader's need for meekness—that is, the willing submission of one's will in obedience to another's—in broaching the topic of prophecy in the first place.[53] Thus, meekness becomes the prerequisite to "discretion." In short, the *Devotorum*-author deploys a fail-safe system of regulation with regards to the spirit of prophecy: first, he dissuades readers from desiring it; then, even if readers have visions without desiring them (like Caiaphas), they will be able to "discern" the significance of the visions as a result of their meekness, that is, by submitting their visions to their spiritual advisors.

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[49] For cultural context, see Gillespie, "The Haunted Text." See also A. S. G. Edwards, "The Contents of Notre Dame 67," in *The Text in the Community: Essays on Medieval Works, Manuscripts, Authors and Readers,* eds. Jill Mann and Maura Nolan (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 107-28; and Jessica Brantley, "The Visual Environment of Carthusian Texts: Decoration and Illustration in Notre Dame 67," in *The Text in the Community: Essays on Medieval Works, Manuscripts, Authors and Readers,* eds. Jill Mann and Maura Nolan (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 173-216.

[50] *Speculum devotorum*, 196. For the biblical prophecy, see John 11.51-52: "Hoc autem a semetipso non dixit: sed cum esset pontifex anni illius, prophetavit, quod Jesus moriturus erat pro gente, et non tantum pro gente, sed ut filios Dei, qui erant dispersi, congregaret in unum."

[51] *Speculum devotorum*, 196.

[52] *Speculum devotorum*, 197. See Augustine, *In Iohannis epistulam ad Parthos tractatus* 7, PL 35, col. 2032: "Invenimus Saulem regem habuisse prophetiam: persequebatur sanctum David, et impletus est Spiritu prophetiae, et prophetare coepit (1 Reg. xx) . . . Ergo habere sacramenta ista omnia et malus potest; habere autem charitatem, et malus esse, non potest."

[53] The sense of radical obedience comes from *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire,* s. v. "Douceur" 1.2 (eds. Marcel Viller, F. Cavallera, and J. de Guibert (Paris: Beauchesne, 1937), 1675-76): "Alors que le méchant est dur et hautain, le pauvre, au sens religieux que l'Ancien Testament et les béatitudes donnent à ce terme, est un être sans défense. Conscient de sa faiblesse, il se soumet docilement et sans révolte aux événements qui le lèsent et aux hommes qui l'oppriment."

To get directly to the point of replacing hermeneutic discernment with meekness, the *Devotorum*-author turns to the "approved women," Catherine of Siena and Brigit of Sweden, and their visions.[54] In an exposition about the Virgin Mary's troubled spirit when she hears the angel Gabriel's message, the *Devotorum*-author quotes Catherine of Siena's defense of her own visions:

> My vysyonys begynnyn wyth a threde but euyrmore be processe they ȝeuyn more sykyrnesse; they begynnyn also wyth a manur bettyrnesse, but alwey be processe they wexe more suettyr. The vysyon of the enmy hath the contrarye for he ȝeuyth in the begynnynge as hyt semyth a manyr gladnesse sykyrnesse or suetnesse but alwey be processe threde & byttyrnesse growen contynuwally in the mynde of hym or here that seyth. (46)

The process of sweetness to dread, or vice versa, is a trope originally used in St. Athanasius' *Life of St. Antony*, and one which Henry of Langenstein lists among the tenets of *discretio spirituum.*[55] Both of these source texts place the process of semiotic discernment squarely in the hands of spiritual advisors, which is not lost on the *Devotorum*-author when advising his mixed monastic and lay audience.[56] After recalling Catherine's defense, he shuns any possibility of his readers' practicing the discernment of spirits by themselves through proposing a sign "more vndeseyuable & sykerer": "Thow therfore alwey dylygently be examynynge mayste perseyuve from whennys the vysyon cam, fro trewthe or fro falsnesse; for trewthe alweye makyth the soule more meke, but forsothe falsnesse makyth hyt prowde."[57] His valorization of meekness aligns with the stance of the preeminent fifteenth-century scholar of *discretio spirituum,* Jean Gerson.[58] In his letter *De distinctione,* Gerson argues that the virtue of meekness is the best sign of a true vision,[59] and one that requires another's (especially a religious superior's) presence to affirm its existence.[60] In fact, he defines *discretio* as the "willingness to believe counsel, which is the

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[54] Catherine of Siena died in 1380, and was canonized by Pope Pius II in 1461 (Edmund Gardner, "St. Catherine of Siena," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908)). Bridget of Sweden died in 1373, and was canonized by Pope Boniface IX in 1391 (Johann Peter Kirsch, "St. Bridget of Sweden," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907)). For a summary of the difficulties of either saint's papal approval see Anderson, *The Discernment of* Spirits, 148-57 and 126-38, respectively.

[55] Anderson, *The Discernment of Spirits*, 173, 26-27.

[56] Gillespie, "The Haunted Text," 148.

[57] *Speculum devotorum,* 47-48.

[58] Jean Gerson, chancellor of the University of Paris from 1395 to 1418, attempted to systematically theorize *discretio spirituum* according to Anderson, *The Discernment of Spirits*, 190-224. See also, Anderson, "Free Spirits, Presumptuous Women, and False Prophets," 234-299.

[59] Gerson, *De distinctione*, 50: Hoc est primum et praecipuum signum inter signa nostrae monetae spiritualis discretivum. . . . Humilitatis ergo signum si perfecte nosceretur, frustra multiplicarentur alia; quoniam superbia et humiltas numisma spiritualium operationum sufficienter condistingunt."

[60] Gerson, *De distinctione*, 38: "Et quoniam haec similitudo [quod erimus sicut nummularii seu campsores spirituales] satis idonea est ad id palpabilius ostendendum quod

daughter of humility."[61] Similarly, the *Devotorum*-author replaces hermeneutic discernment, or the "gostly knowynge & vnderstandynge of god & gostly thyngys wythinne in the myghtys of the soule be resun & vndyrstandynge & not wythoute in the bothyly wyttys," with meekness.[62] All in all, the *Speculum devotorum*'s insistence on the meekness of the "approved women" places emphasis on the lay reader's need to obey the judgment and counsel of a spiritual advisor.

In contrast, spiritual advice addressed to monastics retains both semiotic and hermeneutic discernment. Yet even in these works, what seems like a small adjustment to the presentation of hermeneutic discernment proves to initiate a complex and sophisticated reflection on self-observation and self-understanding. Furthermore, in the development of that reflection, these works come to explore and explain how the two types of discernment are connected. For instance, while the *Speculum inclusorum* marks the discernment of spirits as a site for both the advisor and contemplative to pass judgment, *The Orcherd of Syon* emphasizes the contemplative's judgment alone based on her self-knowledge. In contrast to the laity, monastic audiences are encouraged to develop discretion with and apart from an advisor, which shows how the Syon-Sheen writers used *discretio* to regulate the different but overlapping vocations of the mixed and contemplative lives in their community.

The *Speculum inclusorum* is an early fifteenth-century Latin guide to the anchoritic life that demonstrates the coexistence of hermeneutic and semiotic discernment within one text.[63] From the beginning of the work, the *Inclusorum*-author emphasizes the importance of using semiotic discernment. For instance, he warns readers of the need for "prudencia circumspecta" in determining whether the anchoritic vocation is the right fit:[64] "angelo Sathane mediante—qui se in angelum lucis sepius transfigurat, ut prius sub specie sanctitatis instabilem animum alicuius eleuans postea deterius atque periculosius cadere faciat in profundum."[65] Already he is using the discourse of semiotic discernment, which is marked by the anxiety of correctly discerning the spiritual cause of the would-be anchorite's desire for enclosure. He warns that danger lies in the

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intendimus, prosequamur eam dicentes primum quod examinator huius monetae spiritualis debet esse theologus arte pariter usuque peritus."

[61] Gerson, *De distinctione*, 3.42: "Secundum signum in legitimo numismate spirituali, est discretio quae dat flexibilitatem. Hanc flexibilitatem intelligo promptitudinem ad credendum consilio, quae humilitatis est filia."

[62] *Speculum devotorum*, 62.

[63] E. A. Jones, ed., *Speculum inclusorum: A Mirror for Recluses: A Late-Medieval Guide for Anchorites and Its Middle English Translation* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013). Jones' edition includes a facing-page Middle English translation composed later for a female anchoritic audience. All further citations refer to this edition by page number.

[64] Ambrose of Milan's *De fuga saeculi* uses a similar phrase when describing correct flight from the world: "Conualescite manus remissae et genua dissoluta, id est non corporis, sed animae genua conualescite, ut directum ad caeli altissima mentis uestigium possit adtolli, ut sit ductus solidior, uita maturior, gratia plenior, prudentia circumspectior" (ed. K. Schenkl, CSEL 32:2, ch. 7, para. 37, p. 193).

[65] *Speculum inclusorum*, 16. In Middle English: "prudent circumspeccion, þat is to sey to take good avis and deliberacion in this caas"; "by þe stirynge of þe angel Sathenas, þat ofte-tymes transfigureth hym into þe aungel of lyȝt, and sleyȝli vnder þe colour of holynesse areiseth þe herte of sum vnstable persone, excitynge hym to entre into þat heyg charge, & aftirward makeþ h[y]m falle adoun more perilously" (17).

reader's impulse, which needs to be examined by the reader's actual advisor.[66] He reinforces this point by encouraging the novice that "quod sanctum propositum reuelet simul duobus aut tribus discretis uiris & uite laudabilis, qui suam intencionem cum omnibus pertinentibus examinent diligenter."[67] Moreover, apart from the calling to enclosure itself, he calls attention to moderating the vocation's physical austerity: "sed iuxta discrecionis arbitrium sic corpus castigetur alterius uicibus & alatur, ut & imperio spiritus sit subditum & sufficiens perficere laborem iniunctum."[68] The director's help is thus recommended to guide the novice in performing the bodily labor of his enclosed vocation.

Yet, self-evaluation is also implicit in the *Speculum inclusorum*'s use of *discretio*.[69] In the second chapter of the third part, "prudencia circumspecta" is invoked again to help guard against the deceits of the devil and against the pride that often accompanies receiving a revelation or spiritual gift from God.[70] The Middle English translation, however, has changed "prudencia circumspecta" from meaning "good avis and deliberacion" to "a wys syȝte seynge byfore & behynde." Here, the role of the spiritual advisor is downplayed in the performance of discerning the spirits; rather than taking advice, the reader is prompted to "see" or critique for himself his own impulses. This is demonstrated further by the biblical reference to David at the beginning of the same chapter: "Vnde de viro contemplatiuo dicit Propheta quod 'Sedebit solitarius, & tacebit, & leuabit se supra se.'"[71] The contemplative is imagined to be solitary in the practice of contemplation, as well as in the practice of evaluating the performance of his contemplation. While novices are encouraged to seek advice from spiritual advisors about entering the vocation,

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[66] *Speculum inclusorum*, 18: " quia nescio quis spiritus eum mouet"; "For I woot nat by what spirit he is led, ne what meuyth ne steryth hym" (19).

[67] *Speculum inclusorum*, 19. (Let him show that holy purpose simultaneously to two or three men who are discreet and of laudible life, who might diligently examine his intention with all related circumstances.)

[68] *Speculum inclusorum*, 22; "But, aftir þe doom & arbitrement of discrecion, chastise & nursche ȝoure body in diuerse tymes þat it be soget on þat on side to þe commaundement of ȝoure spirites, & suffisaunt on þat oþir part to performe & fulfille þe labour eniuyned to þe body" (23).

[69] While the association between *discretio spirituum* and self-knowledge is new, the concept of self-knowledge in mysticism is not. See Pierre Paul Courcelle, *Connais-toi toi même: De Socrate à Saint Bernard*, 3 vols., Vols. 2-3 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1974-75).

[70] *Speculum inclusorum*, 80-81: "duo iugiter sunt timenda, pro quibus neccesaria est prudencia circumspecta . . . Vnum est ne angelus Sathane . . . Aliud in hac materia timendum est, ne videlicet magnitudo reuelacionis, siue alterius beneficii diuini graciosi, superbiam pariat in aliquo, ut nimis reputet de seipso"; "to þinges ben gretly to dreede, for þe which a circumspect prudence (þat is to seyn a wys syȝte seynge byfore & behynde) is necessarie . . . On ys: lest the angel of Sathenas . . . Anoþir þyng ys also to dreede in this matere: þat ys to seyn lest þe gretnesse of reuelacion or sum oþir gracious ȝefte or schewynge of God swelle or bolne so greetly in a man þat he sete ovir-mochil by hymself."

[71] *Speculum inclusorum*, 78. It should be noted that this passage is missing from the Middle English translation, which was addressed to female anchorites. On the clerical anxiety about the need to supervise female visionaries, see Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices*; and Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*.

those beyond their novitiate are exhorted to evaluate their own performance of contemplation by using hermeneutic discernment without a spiritual advisor.

The Orcherd of Syon, a Middle English translation of the Latin translation of Catherine of Siena's *Il dialogo*, also introduces hermeneutic discernment as self-knowledge. For instance, when discussing whether an impulse comes from the devil specifically, God, the Beloved Soul's interlocutor, defines "discretion" as knowledge of self and of God.[72] In Part 3, Chapter 1, God warns the soul how the devil often catches souls "with a fals hook of delectacioun vndir colour of good."[73] The blindness of the soul is explained by "his propre loue," or self-love, and due to the fact that it "no discrecyoun haþ to knowe þe verry goodenes, ne what is profitable to þe soule ne to þe body."[74] In essence, the soul has incorrect knowledge of itself and of God, "þe verry goodenes." Because God goes on to portray this blindness as specific to each man's vocation ("Sum fals suggestion he putted to a religious man, anoþir þing he putted to prelates, anoþir to seculars, anoþir to lords, and anoþir to servants"), each soul is deemed responsible for herself, which suggests self-evaluation rather than evaluation by others. Again, in Chapter 4, Part 1, when God warns the soul about the devil's trick of transforming himself into an angel's likeness,[75] he adds knowledge of self and of God to the sign of dread before sweetness: "And if it is verily visitid of me þat am sooþfastnesse euerlastynge, þe soule in þe first appeerynge resceyueþ an holy dreede, and with þe same drede sche resceyueth goostly gladnesse and sykirnes . . . & þanne sche gooþ forþ to praier, euere mekely holdynge hirsilf vnworþi siche visitaciouns, oonly as I haue seid considerynge þat it comeþ of me."[76] Here, knowledge of self is marked by the soul meekly considering herself unworthy of a divine vision, while knowledge of God is marked by the soul's acknowledgement of the vision's source ("from me"). Like Love's *Mirror* and the *Speculum devotorum*, meekness is highlighted as a correct reaction to a vision, but it hardly displaces hermeneutic discernment as knowledge of the vision's source. Instead, the soul (or the reader) reflects on herself and on God in prayer, which seems to preclude the need for an advisor's judgment of the vision.

The *Orcherd* also insists that even ascetic prudence is founded on self-knowledge, which highlights the extant to which the work endorses independence from advisors. For example, when it emphasizes on the "virtue of discretion" when explaining the correct usage of bodily penance, God explains to the soul that it should not confuse the means of getting virtues with the end of getting them: "for penaunce schal be as an instrument to worche for encrees of vertues, as it seemeþ it be need, and as a man may worch aftir resonable mesure of hys myȝt."[77] A distinction is set up between the outward working of virtues, or the bodily works performed by one's "myȝt" that can be observed by an advisor, and the "inwarde vertues of þe soule," which are unobservable and gotten by setting one's intent "principaly in affeccioun and desier of

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[72] Catherine of Siena, *The Orcherd of Syon*, eds. Phyllis Hodgson and Gabriel M. Liegey, EETS o. s. 258 (London: Oxford University Press, 1966). All further citations refer to this edition by page number.

[73] *Orcherd*, 103.

[74] Ibid.

[75] *Orcherd*, 154: "if sich a transformacioun of liȝt þat visiteþ þe soule be of þe feend: anoon þe soule in þe comynge of it leseþ goostly gladnesse; and þanne leueþ noþing ellis but heuynesse and derknesse and scharpe prickynges in þe soule."

[76] *Orcherd*, 154-55.

[77] *Orcherd*, 37.

loue."[78] Hermeneutic discernment is thus invaluable to practicing bodily penance because it is the individual soul's knowledge of how to translate the outward into the inward. Indeed, God posits *discretio* as such knowledge immediately following his explanation of penance:

> For if [penance] were do in ony oþir maner, as to sett his ground and fundament principaly vp þat penaunce, þanne sculde his perfeccyoun be let and hyndred. And þe cause is, for þe penaunce was not doon discreetly wiþ þe knowynge of my sooþfastness, ne wiþ þe liȝt of his owne knowyng, neiþir wiþ þe cleer liȝt of my goodnes. . . . For discrecioun is not ellis but a sooþfast knowyng which a soule schulde haue of hymsilf and of me. In þis knowynge discrecioun haldiþ and kepeþ hise rootis. (37)

Self-knowledge and knowledge of God form the basis of hermeneutic discernment. The soul practices perfect penance by it when recognizing her own human limitations and God's righteousness and goodness, which in turn motivates affection and desire for God. In other words, because ascetic prudence results from having understanding of oneself and God, it can be attained apart from using an advisor's judgment or counsel.

Furthermore, the *Orcherd*'s advice about human judgment diminishes contemplatives' reliance on semiotic discernment. God shows the soul that in the case of judging her neighbor false judgment comes out of improperly recognizing what belongs to God and what to man. God warns that "oftentymes þe feend schulde make þe see manye dyuersitees, and al for to bryngen þe into lesynges. And þat wolde he do to make þee a deemer of hertis and of inwarde þingis of resonable creaturis, þe whiche doomes, as I haue seid to þee, ben oonli reserued to me."[79] The soul uses semiotic discernment when she attempts to determine whether the "manye dyuersitees" that she sees about her neighbor are true or false. God points out the flaw in her discretion, however, not only when she believes the devil's "falsehoods," but also when she attempts to judge her neighbor by external signs rather than the internal impulses which only God can "see." Yet the specter of an advisor's faulty judgment about the authenticity of visions or of visionaries is exactly Gerson's anxiety in his works on *discretio spirituum*, one of which addresses the Brigittine cult specifically.[80] In other words, God's caution about judgment in the *Orcherd* reflects a contemporary concern about the indiscreet judgment of advisors as well as advisees.

Thus, the *Orcherd* endorses self-evaluation. In an extension of the example above, the *Orcherd*'s God problematizes the judgment of others while praising self-judgment. After giving the soul a vision of her neighbor, God comforts her by saying that her neighbor may sometimes seem "ful of derknes and heuynes" because he is testing her neighbor. Instead of advising the soul to judge her neighbor for sin, God tells the soul "[þat] þou schuldist wilne, boþe þou & alle my oþire seruauntis, þat ȝe knowe parfiȝtly ȝousilf, by þe which knowlech ȝe mown knowe parfiȝtly myn eendelees goodnes; and reserueþ to me boþe þis and oþire maner of doomes, for to me it longeþ."[81] Here, God repeats his warning about indiscretion, or judging others; that judgment belongs to him. Moreover, this time the phrase "all my oþir seruauntis" implies that spiritual advisors are checked for their judgment of others just as the soul is. God also reminds the soul (and spiritual advisors) about correct discretion: judgment of self belongs to both the self

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[78] *Orcherd*, 36.
[79] *Orcherd*, 231.
[80] See Anderson, *The Discernment of Spirits*, 190-224.
[81] *Orcherd*, 233.

and God. Ultimately, for contemplatives at least, practicing *discretio* only requires the interplay among the reader, the text, and God.

Applying Discretio *to Holy Reading*

The *discretio* texts addressed to monastics take a different position on the need for spiritual advisors than those addressed to the laity. In the lay-oriented works, "meekness" not only replaces visionary discretion, but is also equated with obeying the judgment and counsel of a spiritual advisor. For instance, in the *Speculum devotorum*'s Passion narrative Christ's exemplary "meekness" is connected to his obedience to his calling. After the author describes Christ's refusal to save himself, he explains that "att þys tyme he mekely fulfylde the obedyence to hys fadyr in heuene, the whyche was þat he schulde dye for þe saluacyon of mankynde."[82] Christ's "meekness" is associated with submission to God the Father and to death, a radical penance for sin. Aptly, the single instance of the word "discretion" in the work occurs in the passage following, which explains the significance of his meekness:

> And in thys he ȝaf vs exsample þat we schulde not leue the state of good lyuynge þat we haue onys take for hys loue be hyt neuyr so strayte for no temptacyonys of þe fende . . . but we schulle perseuere in þat goode weye of penaunce wyth dyscrecyon & othyre goode werkys into oure lyuys ende, the whyche weye of penaunce maye be callyd gostly a crosse inasmyche as hyt ys a punyischynge to a man or a womannys senceualyte. (274)

Like in Love's *Mirror*, "discretion" is associated with penance and bodily "werkys." Here in the discussion about the "weye of penaunce," the *Devotorum*-author relates Christ's meekness to "discretion" through the image of a "gostly crosse," the emblem of Christ's suffering, patience, and compassion in maintaining obedience to his calling to die for humanity's sins. The author exhorts his readers to mimic Christ's perseverance by retaining the calling that they have taken up, "the state of good lyuynge." While this spiritual cross can be physically painful, it represents a calling less severe than Christ's because it primarily rests in meekness, or the submission of the will.[83] Thus, for mixed life audiences, "discretion" is aligned with the proper form of life, that is, one that is penitential and obedient to spiritual directors.

Yet in discussing Christ's exemplarity in meekness, the lay reader gets a glimpse not of mere obedience but of self-possession and self-control.[84] For example, in the *Speculum devotorum* Christ calls attention to his own exemplarity in "meek" self-control. In the Last Supper meditation after Peter refuses to allow Christ to wash his feet, the *Devotorum*-author depicts Christ's response as exemplary: "But oure lorde Ihesu maystyr and ȝeuare of mekenesse & of alle othyr vertuys wolde ȝeue vs prowde & synful wrecchys a parfyth exsample of

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[82] *Speculum devotorum*, 273.

[83] *MED* s. v. "sensualite," n.: "(a) The natural capacity for receiving physical sensation understood as an inferior power of the soul concerned with the body; (b) physical desire or appetite, lust; a sinful, passionate emotion; also, lustful, sinful nature; (c) the body."

[84] *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire*, s. v. "Douceur" 1.3 and 1.4: other senses include *lenitas*, or gentleness in deed and word, and *clementia*, compassion and humble patience, especially towards social or religious inferiors.

mekenesse."[85] Christ is not just characterized as meek, but actively gives readers an "exsample of mekenesse" to follow. Furthermore, though Christ lowers himself to the state of a servant, his meekness still entitles him to be called “our lorde” and “maystyr,” which contrasts to the readers’ implied weakness that comes with being “sinful wrecchys.” In other words, Christ’s “meekness” originates not from his feebleness but his strength. Then, a few lines later, Christ echoes the *Devotorum*-author’s sentiment in different words: "Ȝyf I thanne þay am maystyr & lorde haue weyische ȝoure feete, myche more thanne schulle ȝe weyische euyryche othyrys feete for forsothe I haue ȝeue ȝow ensample þat rygth as I haue doo to ȝow, that ȝe doo so also."[86] Though Christ does not explicitly state "be meek as I am" to his disciples, the repetition of "maystyr & lorde" and Christ's description of his own exemplarity draws the connection between the virtue of meekness and self-control.[87] It is the reader of the meditation that catches this riddling echo, and in the process of working it out, submits himself to the authority of the text. Thus, the imagined reader becomes "meek" in the act of reading as he applies interpretative self-control.

The *Speculum devotorum*'s imagined readers also begin to imitate Christ in his meekness as clemency. Within the meditation about Christ carrying his cross, the author asks his readers to "takyth goode heede & consyderyth dylygently how oure lorde Ihesu cryste mekely goyth thorow the cytee of Ierusalem."[88] Here, Christ is implicitly portrayed as meek due to his “pacyence & charyte” in obeying his Father's will to endure contempt and suffering, a pattern that was set up in earlier chapters of the Passion narrative.[89] Instead of grieving or avenging himself on his accusers, Christ bears *clementia* towards his enemies. Again, as in the Last Supper episode, Christ’s meekness is produced out of his moral superiority rather than his inferiority. Among the imaginative details that the readers are given to associate Christ's journey with his meekness is the astonishment of onlookers: "Some wondryde on hym & they were the commue peple of the cytee."[90] This astonishment is repeated again with little change some lines later: "& othyr sympyl peple that wondryd on hym."[91] As the readers watch Christ's spectators, however, they begin to take on the positions of both the "simple" spectator and Christ himself. While the readers "wonder" at Christ's meekness and the spectators’ lack of charity, they start to "meekly" imagine Christ's feelings: "ȝe maye mekely consyue þat he hadde gret heuynesse in hys herte þat neuere thowgth mys."[92] Suddenly, through participating in imaginative meditation, the readers have become as meek as Christ through seeing his enemies as Christ saw them, with compassion.

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[85] *Speculum devotorum,* 210.

[86] *Speculum devotorum*, 212. Cf. Luke 13.13-15: "Vos vocatis me Magister et Domine, et bene dicitis: sum etenim. Si ergo ego lavi pedes vestros, Dominus et Magister, et vos debetis alter alterutrum lavare pedes. Exemplum enim dedi vobis, ut quemadmodum ego feci vobis, ita et vos faciatis."

[87] Though Christ does say, "discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde" (Matt. 11.29).

[88] *Speculum devotorum*, 259-60.

[89] *Speculum devotorum*, 237: "for hoo mygthte see god in alle thys despyte & not merueyle hys mekenesse pacyence & charyte"; "but alle these wrongys despytys & false accusacyonys he mekely & pacyently suffryde for the helthe of mannys soule & to ȝeue vs exsample of verry mekenesse & pacyence" (241); "takyth goode hede how mekely & pacyently oure lorde suffryth alle þese false accusacyonys despytys & wrongys" (246).

[90] *Speculum devotorum*, 260.

[91] *Speculum devotorum*, 262.

[92] Ibid.

With Christ as the exemplar of meekness under duress, readers of the *Speculum devotorum* are expected to cultivate clemency and self-control.

As suggested through these examples, sentential biblical interpretation is a means by which lay readers applied *discretio* in holy reading.[93] This kind of interpretation is based on knowing the "sentence" or meaning of the Bible and demonstrating self-control and mastery over it. The *Devotorum*-author marks moments in which he expects readers to do this by the adverb, "diligently." For instance, while he uses the Gospel of John for his source text of the Last Supper,[94] and the Gospels of John and Luke for the bases of Christ's bearing his cross,[95] he uses Matthew 11.29 as a thematic link between the two: "discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde." Though this verse is not explicitly cited in the work, the *Devotorum*-author draws attention to its emphases, namely, learning meekness and humility from Christ's example, through his repeated exhortation in both passages to behold "dylygently."[96] The word "diligently" underscores the attention needed to note the exhortation in the first place. Unlike the rest of the *Devotorum*-author's "process" of translating the Gospel narrative in which he uses the imperatives "beholdyth" or "thynkyth," or "ye maye thynke," he differentiates the act of interpreting outside the source text—and in this case, intertextually with another Gospel narrative—with an adverb.

This kind of imaginative obedience to the text is what Ian Johnson calls "beholding." He remarks in his study of the *Speculum devotorum*, "beholding (seeing) becomes more than a visual imagining of narrated events. Beholding, normally a perceiving of events or an attentive watching within the soul, is now classed as the hermeneutic and ethical act of inferring from the narrative (in other words interpreting) the virtues of Christ and His parents."[97] The *Devotorum*-author's distinction between the act of visualizing the narrative and the act of interpreting beyond the narrative assumes that readers are paying attention and, moreover, that they are able to switch between those two modes of "beholding" in an instant. They can thus infer Christ's meekness from these Gospel-based passages by visualizing the narrated scenes and simultaneously remembering the words of Christ's declaration of his own exemplarity, though they are not literally contained within the texts in question.

Sentential biblical interpretation is also a tool that Love's *Mirror* assumes lay readers can use. In Chapter 13 Love overtly highlights the reader's assumed self-control in interpretive technique by narrating events in Christ's life that have no literal source. He describes how Jesus between his twelfth and thirty-third year often went to synagogue, helped his mother and father with chores, and was scorned as "an ydiote & an ydul man & a fole" for failing to perform "dedes of comendacion outewarde."[98] Love's sourceless "process," or narrative, is an especially interesting moment since as he notes, "we fynde noȝht expressed in scripture autentike, what he

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[93] For a detailed study of the translation method used in the *Speculum devotorum*, see Johnson, *The Middle English Life of Christ*, 147-75.

[94] See John 13.

[95] See John 19 and Luke 23.

[96] *Speculum devotorum*, 21: "And thanne beholdyth dylygently how the lorde of alle the worlde knelyth downe att a poure fyisharys feete & mekely & lowly weyischyth hem"; "Now I praye ȝow takyth goode heede & consyderyth dylygently how oure lorde Ihesu cryste mekely goyth thorow the cytee of Ierusalem wyth the forseyde heuy crosse on hys schuldyr" (259-60).

[97] Johnson, *The Middle English Life of Christ*, 164.

[98] *Mirror of the Blessed Life*, 61-62.

dide or how he lyued, & þat semeþ ful wonderful."[99] In context "þat" seems to refer to the fact that Christ's deeds were not written down; it is the apparent lacuna in the text that Love describes as " wonderful," or incomprehensible and curious.[100] The fact that he points out this curiosity to his readers is not, however, a sign of his expectation of their blind obedience to following his made-up "process." On the contrary, though there is not a literal source from which to translate, Love supplies starting points for his readers' imaginative "processes" because he assumes his readers capable enough to follow his theory of translation rather than just his narration. Indeed, his faith in his readers' interpretive control is displayed in his claim that Christ performed deeds unknown for the purpose that they participate in "deuyoutly ymaginyng to edificacion & stiryng of deyocion, as it was seid in þe proheme of þis boke at þe beginning." His explicit reference to the proem is actually a reference to his translation theory, which he invites the reader to understand and use for her personal benefit.

The theory is outlined in the way Ian Johnson describes.[101] Love first "develops an argument of points in the vernacular," namely, by finding biblical evidence for Christ's virtue during this period of his life in "shewyng him self in þat tyme as ydul & unkonnyng & abiecte in þe siht of men."[102] Love cites Luke 2.52 to set up a point of contrast that will be harmonized later with his narrative: "Et Jesus proficiebat sapientia, et aetate, et gratia apud Deum et homines." Then, he gathers evidence for Christ's abjection as a boy with a whole string of vernacular biblical references, the climax of which is the revelation of why Christ lived in this way in the first place: to be an example to his followers.[103] At this point, the vernacular argument harmonizes with the Latin text. Love notes, "without [eny] symulacione he lowed him self in alle maner of mekenes & abiectione in þe siht of oþere fulfillyng first in dede, þat he taght aftur by worde when he bade hees disciples to lerne of him fort be meke & mylde in herte."[104] It is no coincidence that the end of Love's vernacular argument is that Christ's exemplarity lies in his meekness, as in the *Speculum devotorum*. This is, after all, the kind of discretion that he is teaching his lay readers.

Nevertheless, "meekness" is also the basis for the reader's final act of interpretation in which he demonstrates self-control by bridging the textual lacuna using Love's interpretive theory at the right times. After modeling interpretive continuity, Love advises the reader to "take gode hede to alle his dedes & we sal se in hem algate shewed gret mekenes, as we mowe se if we haue in mynde in alle þe processe þat is seide ȝit hidere to. And also here aftur shal be shewed

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[99] *Mirror of the Blessed Life*, 61.

[100] *MED,* s. v. "wonderful" adj. 2a: "astonishing, incredible; also, incomprehensible; also, curious."

[101] Johnson argues that Love not only translates into English Romans 15.4 literally, but also *sententially* to provide the theoretical model for the rest of the work: to "develop an argument constructed from points in the vernacular arranged in harmony with the Latin text" (*Middle English Life of Christ*, 122-24).

[102] *Mirror of the Blessed Life*, 61.

[103] Marginal glosses note Ps. 21.7 ("Ego sum vermis & non homo"), Prov. 16.32 ("Melior est paciens viro forti"), Gal. 6.3 ("Qui se existimat aliquid esse"), Matt. 13.55 ("Nonne hic est fabri filius?"), Matt. 12.23-24 ("Numquid hic est filius David? . . . Hic non ejicit daemones nisi in Beelzebub principe daemoniorum").

[104] *Mirror of the Blessed Life*, 62; cf. Matt. 11.29 and p. 128 above.

more & more in to his hard deþ."[105] Here, ”process" takes on a dual meaning: while the literal translation of the narrative of Christ's Passion is certainly performed in succeeding chapters, the *sentential* narration that Love demonstrated and that the reader must perform in “tak[ing] good hede” fills in the gaps within Scripture itself. Just as with the word “diligently” in the *Speculum devotorum*, the phrase “take good heed” signals to readers that they must distinguish between “process” as literal narration and “process” as *sentential* narration. As the readers demonstrate self-control in distinguishing between the two, they bridge the lacuna and “see" Christ in the mirror of Scripture as a whole, by which they learn meekness.

Yet, at the end of the chapter, Love further clarifies the context of Christ's meekness by calling his deeds of abjection "penance in wakyng in slepyng, abstinyng, etyng."[106] In other words, Christ is not just an exemplar of meekness but also prudent asceticism. As in the *Speculum devotorum*, Christ's biblical exemplarity of meekness ties the lesson of “meek” discretion to the lessons of semiotic discernment in later chapters of the work. Both works show how spiritual advice geared toward the laity apply *discretio* through sentential interpretation of the Bible. Ultimately, while lay readers are not prompted to determine the sources of visionary revelations by themselves using hermeneutic discernment, they are still required to follow Christ’s example using semiotic discernment, which implicitly assumes that they know his example well enough to do so.

For the enclosed religious, the Syon-Sheen writers also proposed using meekness in reading, or sentential biblical interpretion. But unlike in Love’s *Mirror* or in the *Speculum devotorum*, “discretion” in these texts also takes the form of hermeneutic discernment of impulses, self-knowledge, and the knowledge of God. The use of both types of discernment is demonstrated in the *Speculum inclusorum* when the anonymous author tests his readers' skills and ranges of reading by distancing his excerpts from literal translation of the Bible. In the chapter on holy reading, he encourages them that "in sacris literis inspicere debemus statum nostrum, prout hortatur Christus (Marc. 13) dicens, 'Videte vosmetipsos.'"[107] While this exhortation to "see yourselves" is placed in between a command to evaluate one's state in the reflection of virtue and vice in holy literature on the one hand, and an apostrophe to holy reading as the most noble of mirrors on the other,[108] the biblical reference is taken out of context.[109] Instead of using the biblical injunction as an exemplum like Love or the *Devotorum*-author does, the *Inclusorum*-author uses it to refract an image of another mirror by which the biblical reader is invited to evaluate him- or herself: a social world lacking faith and hope in Christ. By comprehending the context of the cited verse, the gaze of the reader becomes aware of the gaze of the world looking back at them as the text’s governors, kings, and councils test the faith of

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[105] *Mirror of the Blessed Life*, 63.

[106] *Mirror of the Blessed Life*, 64.

[107] *Speculum inclusorum*, 66-67: "we should contemplate our condition in holy literature, as Christ tells us (Mark 13), saying, 'See yourselves.'"

[108] *Speculum inclusorum*, 66-67: "O nobilissimum sacre leccionis speculum! O ueritatis testimonium! O perfeccionis forma!" ("Oh holy reading, you are the noblest of mirrors! Oh you're a witness to the truth! Oh you're a model of perfection!")

[109] Mark 13.9: "But look to yourselves. For they shall deliver you up to councils, and in the synagogues you shall be beaten, and you shall stand before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony unto them."

Christ's followers. The sentential interpretation of the verse, in short, is the critical nature of the process of evaluation.

However, the *Inclusorum*-author's sentential interpretation of "videte vosmetipsos" points to readers' self-awareness of using the Holy Scriptures as a tool for self-evaluation. Indeed, he proposes holy reading as a frame for ordering the reader's thoughts: first, the reader recognizes the biblical injunction to evaluate himself; then, in the process of figuring out the verse's sentential interpretation, that he, as a Christian model to a faithless social world, ought to evaluate himself critically, he actually does so starting with whether or not he understands the verse's sentence; finally, he recognizes the process that the biblical injunction initiated in the first place. The main lesson that he learns is that reading more will prepare oneself to better discern how much one knows, or does not know, about oneself.

Yet within the *Speculum inclusorum*, the Bible is not the only kind of holy reading that its readers are encouraged to use to gain self-knowledge. In Part 2, Chapter 3, the *Inclusorum*-author develops the argument that different kinds of holy reading are mirrors of virtue and vice for different kinds of audiences.[110] First he starts with the Law of God and its exemplary biblical readers: Josiah, the men and women of Israel, the Blessed Virgin, and the Ethiopian eunuch. While all of these readers are exemplary because their lives demonstrate the power of the written form to move the human mind to compunction and devotion,[111] the other commonality among them is that they are all biblical equivalents of laypeople who receive the word of God from another.[112] Then, when addressing his monastic readers, the *Inclusorum*-author broadens the scope of holy literature to include "sacras litteras, sanctorum uitas, martirum passiones, deuotorum meditaciones; &, inter hec omnia, frequencius illud legas quod per experienciam tuam deuocionem magis accendere consueuit."[113] The wide variety of edifying reading material means that reading the *Speculum inclusorum* or any other work of spiritual advice puts the monastic reader in the position of gaining self-knowledge. The first step to doing so, however, is evaluating to which readership one belongs. Thus, the *Inclusorum*-author makes a distinction between reading holy literature, and in extension learning its kind of *discretio*, for the laity and for monastics.

The Myroure of Oure Ladye, a guide to the Brigittine Office, or the Hours of the Blessed Virgin and Masses, makes explicit the process of using reading to order thoughts using

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[110] *Speculum inclusorum*, 64-65: “aliqua leccio edificatoria protinus requiratur . . . cum sit speculum viciorum omnium & uirtutum” ("Immediately seek out some edifying reading . . . since it is a mirror of all vices and virtues").

[111] The writer argues that "hinc est quod lex Dei dabatur in scriptis, ut magis moueret mentem humanam labilem & distractam" ("This is why the law of God was given in written form, so that it might work more effectively on the unstable and distracted human mind") (*Speculum inclusorum*, 64-65).

[112] The Law is read before Josiah who moves the hearts of the people; the Virgin Mary hears the prophecy from the angel Gabriel while reading for herself; and the Ethiopian eunuch has Isaiah explained to him by Philip (*Speculum inclusorum*, 64-65).

[113] *Speculum inclusorum*, 64-67: "holy literature, saints' lives, the passions of the martyrs, devout meditations; and, from amongst all these, you should read particularly frequently whichever tends in your experience most to increase your devotion."

hermeneutic discernment.[114] In it, the process of reading always already assumes that the reader has evaluated herself. While it includes references to the discretion and judgment of the spiritual advisor, it recognizes the reader's lack of discretion within the context of self-evaluation.[115] For instance, when the *Myroure*-author describes the attention that ought to be paid to singing the Hours of the Virgin, he advises four ways that the reader might improve attention to the service, including "to kepe the mynde and to entende to the inward gostly vnderstondynge of the wordes that ar sayd or songe. And this ys ful harde to do contynually . . . But yt is full confortable, and yt geueth grete gostly foude to the soulle yf yt be laboured dyscretely in meke and clene conscyence."[116] The first assumption that he makes is that the reader has acknowledged a problem with flagging attention to singing the service in the first place. Self-evaluation is the basis for this assumption, which becomes part of his advice. To be aware of "attending to the inward spiritual interpretation" is to assume that the chantress has already and will continue to evaluate where her mind focuses while singing. The second assumption that the *Myroure*-author makes is that the reader is so aware of self-evaluation that she can evaluate the evaluation process. When he refers to "laboring discreetly in meek and clean conscience," he refers to the evaluation of the chantress's conscience itself. Not only is she to evaluate her level of attention and to what she attends while singing, but she is also supposed to evaluate whether or not she is being honest with herself to begin with. Thus, the *Myroure*'s application of discernment in reading is self-critique and self-judgment.

The *Myroure*'s treatise on reading, moreover, articulates clearly the relationship between reading and hermeneutic discernment. In it, "discretion" is named as one of five keys to gain profit from reading:

> The fyfte thynge ys dyscressyon. So that after the matter ys, therafter ye dresse you in the redyng. For ye shall vnderstonde that dyuerse bokes speke in dyuerse wyses. For some bokes ar made to enforme the vnderstondynge & to tel how spiritual persones oughte to be gouerned in all theyr lyuynge that they may knowe what they shall leue & what they shall do . . . And when ye rede eny suche bokes; ye oughte to beholde in yourselfe sadly whether ye lyue & do as ye rede or no. (68)

Unlike the *Orcherd*, the knowledge of God does not seem to play a role in "discretion." Instead, the knowledge of the "dyuerse bokes" should make the reader adjust, direct, or guide herself

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[114] John Henry Blunt and Thomas Gascoigne, eds., *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*, EETS e. s. 19 (Milwood, NY: Kraus Reprint, 1981). All further citations of this work refer to this edition by page number.

[115] Semiotic discernment appears in a discussion of penance for inattention to singing the hours and for absence from service: "But this doyng of penaunce bothe here and in other places after; vnderstandyth repentaunce of harte and shryfte, wyth fulfyllynge of suche penaunce as hys goostly father enioyneth hym. For yt standyth in hys dyscrescyon to enioyne hym penaunce for hys neglygence" (40); "If eny be in doute whether he myght haue saide yt [their service] or no; yt is good in suche case to be gouernyd by the consayle of a dyscrete gostly father leste the dome of hys owne conscyence be other to scrupulous or to recheles" (52).

[116] *Myroure of Oure Ladye*, 49.

according to the reading materials.[117] Not only is the existence of different genres of spiritual advice affirmed here, but also more importantly, the use of books is affirmed as a matter of self-examination. The labor of reading includes categorizing the book by its intended purpose—to "enforme the ynderstondynge" or to "sturre vp your affecyons"—and moreover, categorizing one's life as being "rewled in vertu" or not.[118] If the reader's life accords to what is read, she is to praise God; if not, she is advised "to abyde thervpon & inwardly sorow for the defaulte & lacke that ye se in yourselfe."[119] After reading "holy books," the reader herself becomes either an example of discretion or indiscretion by the accordance between the ordering of her thoughts by the text and the actions of her life. In other words, she is forced to reflect on her practice of hermeneutic discernment.

Reading is thus a two-fold process of knowing oneself and understanding the text at hand. One understands oneself better as one understands the text better; self-evaluation through reading informs self-knowledge, and vice versa. Furthermore, because the *Myroure*-author comments that "in thys wyse [discreetly] oughte ye to rede the fyrste parte of thys boke," that is, the singing of the hours of the Blessed Virgin, self-evaluation is confirmed as the governing assumption and *modus operandi* of the *Myroure*. In effect, the *Myroure* models the reader's self-awareness of applying hermeneutic discernment. It asks her to track whether her thought life conforms to the text.

The *Speculum inclusorum* also models the reader's self-awareness of applying hermeneutic discernment by its literalization of being a mirror of virtues for the reader. In the same section on using holy reading as a mirror of virtue and vice, the *Inclusorum*-author includes a long list of virtuous exemplars in the form of rhetorical questions:

> Quis vnquam potuit seriose legere & intelligere diuine misericordie multitudinem & magnitudinem, & de uenia desperare, dum in Petro negacio Christ, in Magdalena prostitucio corporis sui, & in latrone iniuriacio proximi, veniam promeruit modica penitencia precedente? Quis in serie sacre scripture considerans humilitatem Iesu Christi & Luciferi superbiam, non ex hoc humilior reddetur? Quis cogitans Saulis iram & inuidiam, sancti Dauid caritatem, Iob pacienciam, non fieret proximis benignior, in aduersis paciencior, & beneuolencior vniuersis? (66)[120]

The repeated interrogative pronoun, "quis," is a rhetorical device that reminds the reader that the reading subject is just as much the object of virtue as the listed biblical figures. For not only does

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[117] *MED*, s. v. "dressen" v. 8b: "to guide (sb.) spiritually; guide or direct (the heart, thoughts, actions)."

[118] *Myroure of Oure Ladye*, 68.

[119] Ibid.

[120] *Speculum inclusorum*, 67: "Who could ever seriously read and understand the range and magnitude of divine mercy, and lose hope of forgiveness, when Peter for his denying of Christ, the Magdalene for the prostitution of her body, and the thief for the harm done to his neighbors, all gained pardon after a little penitence? Who, earnestly considering in Holy Scripture the humility of Jesus Christ and the pride of Lucifer, would not by that be made more humble? Who, thinking on Saul's anger and jealousy, holy David's charity, Job's patience, would not become more generous to his neighbors, more patient in adversity, and better-disposed to all people?"

he recognize the names of Peter, Magdalene, Christ, Lucifer, Saul, David, and Job, but he presumably also knows about the effects of their stories on readers. The combination of "potuit," "non reddetur," and "non fieret" insinuate that no one who has read these stories could *not* know these exemplars' virtues, and moreover *not* be moved to virtue by them. The emphasis on the effect of holy reading relies on the assumption that the *Inclusorum's* readers can evaluate the process of translating what they learn through reading, into action in the first place. The *Inclusorum*-author also assumes readerly self-evaluation by translating the sentence of the biblical passages without citing or copying the passages themselves. Unlike Love's *Mirror* and the *Speculum devotorum*, the interpretive step of "beholding" is literalized on the page: Peter and Magdalene are penitent; Christ is humble, while Lucifer is proud; Saul is angry and jealous; David is charitable; Job is patient. By acknowledging what the reader presumably knows, the reader sees himself as an exemplary reader, or not, in the mirror of the *Inclusorum*. He is forced to reckon which stories are within his realm of experience, and to evaluate whether or not he has performed holy reading correctly.[121]

Not all of the works geared toward monastics explicitly give advice about the practice of holy reading. Nevertheless, even those that do not, signal their self-awareness of being a text in which hermeneutic discernment can be applied in reading, that is, a text in which self-knowledge is gained through self-evaluation. *The Orcherd of Syon* does so through the metaphor of the "orchard." In its prologue, the translator calls "þis book of reuelaciouns . . . a fruytful orcherd," and tells his readers "to assaye & serche þe hool orcherd, and taste of sich fruyt and herbis resonably aftir ȝoure affeccioun, & what ȝou likeþ best, aftirward chewe it wel & ete þereof for heelþe of ȝoure soule."[122] Though the majority of the work concerns itself more with a bridge than an orchard, the translator literalizes the metaphor of tasting various fruit by discussing different concepts using tree metaphors across several of the work's pages. Indeed, the first tree metaphor is about discretion itself.[123] God explains to the Beloved Soul that the "inwarde vertues of þe soule" like meekness and patience should take precedence over the outward working of bodily penance in his readers' attention.[124] Hermeneutic discernment and the self-knowledge that results from it, therefore, become the keys to using penance correctly for the purpose of gaining those inward virtues.

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[121] It should be noted that the fact that the evaluation of holy reading in Part 3, Chapter 3 comes after the description of holy reading in Part 2, Chapter 3, also reinforces the *Speculum inclusorum*'s purpose of making its readers evaluate the extent of his or her knowledge of holy literature. See *Speculum inclusorum*, 88-93.

[122] *Orcherd*, 1. The "orchard" imagery is original to the Middle English translation. For more on how the translator changes the tone of Catherine of Siena's *Il dialogo,* see Denise Despres, "Ecstastic Reading and Missionary Mysticism: *The Orcherd of Syon*," in *Prophets Abroad: The Reception of Continental Holy Women in Late-Medieval England*, ed. Rosalynn Voaden (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996), 141-60.

[123] *Orcherd*, 37: "Naþelees sooþ it is, discrecioun haþ manye children or sones, as a tre þat haþ manye bowes or braunchis; but he þat ȝeueþ liif to þe tre and to þe braunchis is þe rote, so þat it be plaunted in þe erþe of mekenes (which is modir & nors of charite), where þis sone and tre of discrecioun is sett & plaunted. For ellis it were no vertu of discrecioun, and also it schulde not brynge [forþ] qwik fruyt, but it were plauntid in [þe] vertu of mekenes, for mekenes comeþ of þe knowyng which a soule haþ of hymsilf."

[124] *Orcherd*, 36.

Even as the reader is learning what discretion is through one tree metaphor, however, the tenor changes a few pages later. The soul itself is compared to a tree, and discretion is compared to its branch: "Riȝt so þinke þat a soule is a maner tre which comeþ out of loue; þerfore þe soule, þat is þe tre, may not be norischid but of a loue of þe soule ooned to þe loue of God. . . . Thus þanne of al þis þat is seid tofore, þou maist se þat þe tre of charyte is norischid in mekenes, bryngynge out of hym bisyde þe tre an ympe of parfiȝt discrecyoun."[125] The sudden shift from the tree of discretion to the tree of the soul highlights the "inwarde virtue" of meekness in which both trees grow. But moreover, the juxtaposition of the trees calls attention to the possible reconciliation between the tenors. After all, since the root of the first tree is self-knowledge, the act of deciphering the differences between the trees enacts hermeneutic discernment, that is, a tracking of thought as the reader attempts to reconcile the disjunction between the images. In effect, the multiplication of tree metaphors helps the reader gain self-knowledge as she performs the translator's task of tasting the different "trees" of the book.

The last tree metaphor in the *Orcherd* especially helps the reader perform hermeneutic discernment. In Part 2, Chapter 3, after the Beloved Soul wonders about the mercy of God, and God in turn commands her to "opene þe iȝe of þin intellecte" to behold the path that sinners take, another tree is described: "I made hem fayre trees of loue wiþ þe liif of a special grace. . . . But now þei woxen rotyn trees, for þei ben dede as I seyde tofore. And þis deed tre fastneþ hise rootis in hiȝnes of pryde, which pryde norischeþ venym of þe loue of his propre sensualyte; and þe marowȝ withynne is inpacience; and of alle þese comeþ indiscrecioun."[126] Here, the soul is compared to a tree, but it is damned. Instead of being grounded in meekness, the tree grows in pride; instead of growing branches of discretion, it grows indiscretion. The moral is straightforward, but the pluralization of "trees" puts a new pressure on the metaphor. The reader realizes that she is no longer reading about an ideal (or worst) exemplar of a soul, but rather about souls of actual people, potentially of those she knows. The disjunction of this image with the singular trees of discretion and of the good soul also beg the question whether those trees exist in her reality as well. Thus, the reader is confronted not only with the possibility of the "dead trees" among the people she knows, but also with the possibility that her own soul is among them. Within the context of the translator's prologue, the fruit of this image is of the variety that is "scharpe, hard, or bitter, ȝit to purgynge of þe soule þei ben ful speedful and profitable."[127] Yet the process of comparing and contrasting these details among the tree metaphors of the *Orcherd* activates self-evaluation and self-critique within the reader, that is, hermeneutic discernment.

Hermeneutic discernment for the enclosed includes the discernment of impulses, self-knowledge, and the knowledge of God. It is based on using self-evaluation as a tool of contemplation. This endorsement of self-evaluation is repeated in the chapter on holy reading in the *Speculum inclusorum*, the tree metaphors in *The Orcherd of Syon*, and the treatise on reading in *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*. As outlined in the *Myroure*'s portrayal of discretion, the reading material itself explicitly becomes the frame on which the contemplative hangs her thoughts and impulses. *Discretio* for monastics is, therefore, also a literary hermeneutic that helps readers interpret the self as he or she interprets the text.

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[125] *Orcherd*, 39.
[126] *Orcherd*, 79-80.
[127] *Orcherd*, 1.

Conclusion

The possibility of living a mixed life became more and more a reality for laypeople aspiring but without means to take religious vows in the early fifteenth century. Through lay-monastic communities like Syon-Sheen, not only did these aspiring religious interact with enclosed religious during sermons on feast days and in the confessional, but they also gained access to *discretio* in texts produced by these communities. In works like the *Speculum devotorum* and Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, in which semiotic discernment is prescribed as ascetic prudence and as "meekness," lay penitents were initiated into devotional practices and relationships with Holy Church once reserved only for monks, nuns, and anchorites. While writers of spiritual advice could not emphasize enough the importance of the spiritual advisor for both types of *discretio*, the reader's performance of "meek" discretion when reading these works gave them tools to interpret the Bible sententially, even when the Holy Scriptures were literally silent.

For the enclosed religious, the Syon-Sheen writers continued to develop hermeneutic discernment more fully, which is clearly articulated in works like *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*, *The Orcherd of Syon*, and the *Speculum inclusorum*. In these works, the relationship between discernment and reading consists of self-evaluation. Through seeing and evaluating oneself in the mirror of the spiritual advisory text, one could attain better knowledge of self and of God. This hermeneutic of using the self to interpret the text and the text to interpret the self, is the main difference between the *discretio* taught to aspiring laity and that taught to enclosed religious. Despite lay introduction to semiotic discernment, hermeneutic discernment remained exclusively in the realm of the contemplative life.

Yet, the story of *discretio* does not end with the separation of the two senses of discernment along vocational lines. Because the laity were allowed a wider ambit into the life of perfection in the early fifteenth century, even hermeneutic discernment was appropriated in lay texts that sought to explore the concept of increasing knowledge of oneself. As Margery Kempe's *Book* suggests, the ideal of living a mixed life was in full view for aspiring religious.

Ch. 4 – Unifying *Discretio*: Margery Kempe's Pursuit of the Mixed Contemplative Life

In the beginning of the fifteenth century, new vocational contexts spurred adaptation of *discretio* in texts of spiritual advice, as several Syon-Sheen works attest. *The Book of Margery Kempe* is no different. Like the Syon-Sheen works, Kempe's *Book* seeks to apply *discretio* in a mixed lay and monastic context. The main difference, however, is that the *Book*'s admixture of vocations takes shape in her own irregular life. Kempe's *Book*, in other words, asks a question that these other works do not: can the contemplative act of training the will be exercised effectively outside of enclosure? Kempe's exploration of getting and maintaining meekness in her *Book* suggests that it can. Moreover, she addresses the question of the basis of *discretio* itself: whose authority lies behind it? Through her exploration of the "speech of God," she shows that it is God alone who authenticates individual's impulses, and simultaneously demonstrates her attainment to hermeneutic discernment by using the production of her *Book* to work through theological concerns about *discretio* itself.

As a laywoman, the historical Margery Kempe would have been exposed to the contemplative life through works of spiritual advice and her interactions with monastics like nuns, monks, and anchorites. Her life, like other gentry woman in East Anglia, would have primarily revolved around managing her household, which is portrayed in the *Book* through her marriage to John Kempe, a merchant and burgess;[1] the birthing of fourteen children;[2] and her attempts to start businesses in brewing and milling.[3] According to Sanford Meech's chronological table of the *Book*'s events, it takes about twenty years before she can persuade John to agree to chaste marriage, which is as long as it takes her to live out the rest of her spiritual career as a pilgrim.[4] Yet while the historical Margery likely participated in expected forms of lay devotion—attending Mass, praying, and processing during feast days[5]—the *Book* depicts her as one who practices the whole range of *discretio*, from that of the mixed life to that of full contemplatives.

The hagiographic form of the *Book* presents the mixed contemplative form of life that she imagines herself to pursue. It follows the general structure of a saint's life: it begins with what seems to be her spiritual rebirth during her post-partum psychosis; then, she progresses through temptations and struggles against enemies; then, the story ends with the prayers of the would-be saint for believers and non-believers alike, instead of post-mortem miracles since she had not yet died when it was written.[6] Although she is not a martyr, a confessor, nor a virgin, her sanctity

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[1] All further citations to *The Book of Margery Kempe* refer to the edition by Sanford Brown Meech, Emily Hope Allen, and W. Butler-Bowdon, EETS o. s. 212 (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1940), at 6.

[2] *Book of Margery Kempe,* 115.

[3] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 9-10.

[4] *Book of Margery Kempe*, xlviii-li.

[5] Yoshikawa argues that Kempe's meditations, and the *Book* as a whole, are structured on the liturgical calendar, which shows the extent to which Margery attended Mass (*Margery Kempe's Meditations*, 2).

[6] For more about how the *Book* has affinities with hagiography, see Rebecca Krug, "The Idea of Sanctity and the Uncanonized Life of Margery Kempe," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Culture*, ed. Andrew Galloway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

like many other Continental female mystics of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries stems from the visions and revelations she had during her life, along with her holy conduct, including chastity in marriage.[7] In the second preface, her scribe lists her special signs of grace as tears of contrition, contempt of the world, high contemplation and "dalliance" with God, and prophecy;[8] while in the first preface, her scribe sums up her gifts as "her felingys," and her conduct as "þis creature had forsake þe world."[9] In short, the success of the hagiographic framework of the narrative depends on how clearly she proves to live a contemplative life in the world.

This singular form of life, however, demonstrates the eponymous hero's somewhat eccentric religiosity.[10] Indeed, the *Book*'s limited circulation—it exists only in a single manuscript of Carthusian origin[11]—suggests that the singularity of her form of life was worth suppressing, though the extent of her orthodoxy has also come to light.[12] This chapter aims to contribute to the argument for Kempe's orthodoxy by demonstrating how her *Book* unifies

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2011), 129-45; Brad Herzog, "Portrait of a Holy Life: Mnemonic Inventiveness in *The Book of Margery Kempe*," in *Reading Memory and Identity in the Texts of Medieval European Holy Women*, eds. Margaret Cotter-Lynch and Brad Herzog (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 211-33; and Samuel Fanous, "Measuring the Pilgrim's Progress: Internal Emphases in *The Book of Margery Kempe*," in *Writing Religious Women: Female Spritual and Textual Practices in Late Medieval England*, eds. Denis Renevey and Christiania Whitehead (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 157-76.

[7] There is no proof, however, that a real cult of Margery Kempe ever existed, see Katherine J. Lewis, "Margery Kempe and Saint Making in Later Medieval England," in *A Companion to the Book of Margery Kempe*, eds. John H. Arnold and Katherine J. Lewis (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 195-215. For Margery's comparison to Continental women mystics, see Janette Dillon, "Holy Women and Their Confessors or Confessors and Their Holy Women? Margery Kempe and Continental Tradition," in *Prophets Abroad: The Reception of Continental Holy Women in Late-Medieval England*, ed. Rosalynn Voaden (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996), 115-40; Valerie Lagorio, "*Defensorium contra oblectratores*: A 'Discerning' Assessment of Margery Kempe," in *A Leaf from the Great Tree of God: Essays in Honour of Ritamary Bradley*, eds. Margot H. King and Valerie V. M. Lagorio (Austin, TX: Peregrina Press, 1994), 99-123; Ute Stargardt, "The Beguines of Belgium, the Dominican Nuns of Germany, and Margery Kempe," in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. Thomas J. Heffernan (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 277-313; Susan Dickman, "Margery Kempe and the Continental Tradition of the Pious Woman," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Papers Read at Dartington Hall, July 1984*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1984): 150-68; and Roger Ellis, "'Flores ad fabricandam...coronam': An Investigation into the Uses of the *Revelations* of St Bridget of Sweden in Fifteenth-Century England," *Medium Aevum* 51 (1982): 163-86.

[8] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 2.

[9] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 6.

[10] For a list of important scholarly critiques of Kempe's eccentric religiosity, see S. S. Hussey, "The Rehabilitation of Margery Kempe," *Leeds Studies in English* n. s. 32 (2001): 171-94.

[11] *Book of Margery Kempe*, xxxii.

[12] Raymond A. Powell, "Margery Kempe: An Exemplar of Late Medieval English Piety," *The Catholic Historical Review* 89, no. 1 (2003): 1-23.

discretio, which as I have argued throughout this project has inherent unity. As I show in the last chapter, *discretio* was taught to both laity and monastics as a way to practice meekness; and to monastics as a way to distinguish for oneself the sources of internal stirrings, including visions and revelations. According to the reader's status as lay or monastic, he or she would be taught *discretio* through the means of meekness or self-evaluation, respectively. For Kempe, who is clearly aware of *discretio*'s vocational distinctions, connecting the two types of *discretio* becomes a way to demonstrate her attainment of the status of a Perfect contemplative outside of the monastic cell. By internalizing what should be judged by others (form of life) and by externalizing what should be judged by self (form of thought), she demonstrates the spiritual authority she gains as she progresses through an unenclosed contemplative life.

Discretio*'s Underlying Unity*: *Meekness in All Things*

As discussed in the last chapter, works like Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* and the *Speculum devotorum* taught semiotic discernment rather than hermeneutic discernment to lay readers, valuing especially the virtue of meekness. Obedience to spiritual advisors was an integral part of this meekness, but it also meant humbling oneself to the authority of the text, which in practice meant using sentential biblical interpretation. For the laity like Kempe, ascetic exercises like fasting, prayer vigils, wearing a hairshirt, as well as holy reading, were supposed to be directed by a cleric, monk, friar, or anchorite. While Kempe demonstrates this obedience through her visualizations during Mass and performance of married chastity, she also demonstrates it by her performance of hermeneutic discernment of visions. Meekness, Kempe suggests, is the underlying goal of evaluation by others and by oneself. Her unification of semiotic and hermeneutic discernment through it sets the stage for her deconstruction of the proper ways to practice *discretio*, and ultimately, of the proper form of contemplative life.

Aspiring laity like Kempe were encouraged to participate in meditation on and imaginative reading of the Bible using Life of Christ texts. Reading the gospels sententially was, after all, the first step toward higher contemplation.[13] Kempe demonstrates sentential biblical interpretation when she learns meekness directly from Christ in her visualizations or meditations, which she calls her "thowtys."[14] She experiences one such meditation when she visualizes the Passion during the Palm Sunday Mass.[15] As other *vita Christi* texts would suggest, her portrayal of Christ is centered on his humility.[16] For instance, she calls him the "meke lombe" in contrast

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[13] *Mirror of the Blessed Life*, 10. See Chapter 3 above.

[14] She uses other forms of the word to denote biblical meditation also, like "thynke" and "thynkyng." For instance, in the Nativity meditation, she asks Christ, "Ihesu, what schal I thynke?" Later, she lists "thynkyng" among her "god werkes" (*Book of Margery Kempe*, 18, 20).

[15] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 187. On Margery's form of visual contemplation, see Denise Despres, *Ghostly Sights: Visual Meditation in Late-Medieval Literature* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1989); Santha Bhattacharji, "Medieval Contemplation and Mystical Experience," in *Approaching Medieval English Anchoritic and Mystical Texts*, eds. Dee Dyas, Valerie Edden, and Roger Ellis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), 51-59; and Mary L. Morse, "Contextualizing Spiritual Authority in *The Book of Margery Kempe*," Ph. D. diss., Marquette University, 1999.

[16] See Chapter 3 above.

to the mob, which she describes as speaking "wyth a sharp spiryt";[17] and she also describes him as "meek" when he goes forth stripped and silent to be whipped.[18] While her vision of the Passion already shows her sentential interpretation at work by adding the descriptions of Christ's "meekness" to the Gospel accounts, one other stylistic detail demonstrates her adept interpretive control over the narrative:

> Owr merciful Lord as a meke lombe seying on-to hem, " Whom seke ȝe?" þei answeryd wyth a scharp spiryt, "Ihesu of Naȝareth." Owr Lord seyd a-ȝen, "Ego sum." And þan sche sey þe Iewys fallyn down on þe grownde, þei mowt not stondyn for drede, but a-non þei resun a-geyn, askyd, "Whom seke ȝe?" And þei seyd a-geyn, "Ihesu of Naȝareth." Owr Lord answeryd, "I it am." (189)

Like the Gospel passage that narrates Christ's arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, her account includes Christ asking twice about whom the mob seeks, the mob replying twice "Jesus of Nazareth," and the mob falling to the ground after the first "I am."[19] The only difference between her text and the biblical one is the *Book*'s shift in language from Christ's first answer to his second. The first latinate "ego sum" emphasizes Christ's high priestly authority; it mimics sermon expositions of Latin pericopes, which even the real Kempe would have been familiar with. This reference to clerical authority makes sense of the biblical mob's fear of Christ's linguistic claim to divine authority in referring to the Hebrew God's holy name. Kempe casts the mob's response as recognition of the possibility of divine presence or retribution. The vernacularization of "ego sum," on the other hand, explains the crowd's lack of fear in proceeding with the arrest: when Christ uses English to identify himself, he begins to speak the language of the other Jews. Christ demonstrates humility by giving up the latinate register of power for the mob's (and Margery's) vernacular register of everyday human existence. She thus imitates Christ in her submission to the authority of the text. Her stylistic choice to represent Christ in this way performs an interpretive leap based on biblical understanding, namely, the humiliation that Christ is about to undergo in his Passion.

Because Margery's is a mixed contemplative life, however, her meditations do not remain on the page. Her visualizations are at times so visceral that they elicit a correspondingly visceral response, usually in the form of excessive tears and convulsions.[20] Though her physical

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[17] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 189.

[18] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 190: "& he went forth ful mekely a-forn hem al modyr-nakyd as he was born to a peler of ston & spak no worde a-geyn hem but leet hem do & sey what þei wolde."

[19] John 18.4-8: "Jesus itaque sciens omnia quae ventura erant super eum, processit, et dixit eis: Quem quaeritis? Responderunt ei: Jesum Nazarenum. Dicit eis Jesus: Ego sum. Stabat autem et Judas, qui tradebat eum, cum ipsis. Ut ergo dixit eis: Ego sum: abierunt retrosum, et ceciderunt in terram. Iterum ergo interrogavit eos: Quem quaeritis? Illi autem dixerunt: Jesum Nazarenum. Respondit Jesus: Dixi vobis, quia ego sum: si ergo me quaeritis, sinite hos abire."

[20] See Denis Renevey, "Margery's Performing Body: The Translation of Late Medieval Discursive Religious Practices," in *Writing Religious Women: Female Spiritual and Textual Practices in Late Medieval England*, eds. Denis Renevey and Christiania Whitehead (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 197-216; Sarah Salih, "Margery's Bodies: Piety, Work and Penance," in *A Companion to The Book of Margery Kempe*, eds. John H. Arnold and Katherine

response may seem alike to onlookers, I would argue that she demonstrates narrative control over her body in specific ways in order to amplify the meekness she learns through biblical sentential meditation. The externalization of her meditation on Christ's and the Virgin Mary's humility, especially in her participation in Mass, reveals an idiosyncratic expression of her pursuit of contemplation outside the cell or anchorhold.

For instance, in Kempe's meditation on the Presentation of Christ and Purification of the Virgin during Candlemas, both Christ's and the Virgin's humility become a mirror for her own:

> Þan was sche so comfortyd be þe contemplacyon in hir sowle þat sche had in þe beholdyng of owr Lord Ihesu Crist & of hys blissyd Modyr, of Simeon þe preyste, of Ioseph, & of oþer personys þat þer weryn whan owr Lady was purifyid . . . þat sche myth ful euyl beryn vp hir owyn candel to þe preyste, as oþer folke dedyn at þe tyme of offeryng, but went waueryng on eche syde as it had ben a dronkyn woman, wepyng & sobbyng so sor þat vn-ethe sche myth stondyn on hir feet for þe fervowr of lofe & deuocyon þat God putte in hir sowle thorw hy contemplacyon. (198)

In her mind's eye she sees Mary offer Jesus to Simeon the priest, which provokes her own offering of a candle and tears. Her offering of tears is likely related to the Virgin's sorrow, which is foretold in the recited Purification canticle, the "Nunc Dimittis."[21] While the Virgin does not prematurely grieve in her vision, Kempe asserts her own intepretive mastery by linking the Purification with the Crucifixion. The Passion desecration of Christ's virgin flesh becomes a trigger for "the fervor of love and devotion that God puts in her soul" toward Christ's humility. Moreover, because the act of offering a candle symbolizes the imitation of Mary's meekness as a virgin, Kempe is reminded through biblical sentential interpretation simultaneously of Christ's humility and of the Virgin's. Naoë Yoshikawa points out, "above all, the moral dimension of the Purification is best exemplified by the Virgin's humility and obedience" since "she has neither cause nor need for purification."[22] In Margery's vision, "owr Lady" is contrasted against Simeon, Joseph, and others who do not undergo ritual purification. She is portrayed as humliating herself by refusing to claim the purity of her virgin flesh, and by doing so before others who are less pure than she is. Like the Virgin, Margery is compared to the other congregants. To humiliate herself, however, she must refuse to claim not virgin flesh, which she does not have, but rather the interpretive mastery that she deploys in contemplation. Instead of acting out deft mental control she "ful euyl" and "vn-ethe" performs the offering, and portrays her trek to the altar "as it had ben a dronkyn woman." Her act of losing her wits is successful because it provokes

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J. Lewis (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 161-76; Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture, and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (London: Routledge, 1996), 74-106.

[21] Luke 2.34-35: "Et benedixit illis Simeon, et dixit ad Mariam matrem ejus: Ecce positus est hic in ruinam, et in resurrectionem multorum in Israel, et in signum cui contradicetur: et tuam ipsius animam pertransibit gladius ut revelentur ex multis cordibus cogitationes."

[22] Yoshikawa, *Margery Kempe's Meditation*, 108. Here, Yoshikawa cites Mirk's *Festial* as evidence: "sche conceyuyd without spott [, and] sche childed hure child withoute spote also" (John Mirk, *Mirk's Festial: A Collection of Homilies by Johannes Mirkus*, ed. Theodor Erbe, Part I, EETS e. s. 96 (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1905), 60); cf. Edward H. Weatherly, ed., *Speculum sacerdotale: Edited from British Museum MS. Additional 36791*, EETS o. s. 200 (London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1936), 27.

bystanders' critique of her meditation.[23] She uses this moment of externalized contemplation to release her competent authority to others.

Nevertheless, Margery does not submit her interpretive authority to others in the same way each time. When she uses her parish priests' gaze during Palm Sunday Mass as the formal model for her own, she allows her spiritual superiors to guide the form of her meditation. First, she notes the spatial contrast between the priests and the Crucifix when "sche beheld þe preystys knelyng be-forn þe Crucifixe";[24] they are down below and the Crucifix high above. Then, the priests become a physical exemplar for the congregation and for herself as she sees one of them "drow up" the veil from the Crucifix "[so] þat þe pepil xulde se þe Crucifixe."[25] Here, she focuses on the unity of the priests' and the people's gazes drawn upward. Her mental alignment with the priests continues through the upward movement reenacted in the description of her contemplation: "þan was hir mende al holy takyn owt of al erdly thyngys & set al in gostly thyngys, preying & desyryng þat sche myth at þe last han þe ful syght of hym in Heuyn whech is boþin God & man in oo persone."[26] She highlights that she imitates mentally the priests' physical posture by figuratively drawing her mind from low to high, meditating away from earthly things to heavenly ones.[27] She demonstrates meekness not merely through the physical imitation of their upward gaze, but also in deferring to their authority in a space which she alone has control over, namely, her imagination. Thus, by the juxtaposition of physical sight and the metaphor of "seeing" in the passage, she depicts her performance of meekness through her narration of seeing her parish priests model meekness toward Christ's death.

Furthermore, Margery's formal mimicry leads to her imitation of the "spiritual" gaze that the ritual expects of the priests. According to Yoshikawa, the unveiling of the Crucifix in Sarum Use would have been accompanied by the anthem "Hail, our King . . . For thee the Father sent into the world to be the saving victim."[28] This song emphasizing the honor befitting Christ in his role as sacrificial offering seems to corroborate with Margery's description of Christ, "both God and man in one person."[29] In this moment when she declares her belief in the two natures of Christ, she marks her recognition of the priests' response to the divine offering as her own, that of the sinner who acknowledges the profundity of a crucified God: the highest power brought low to powerlessness, the ultimate demonstration of humility.[30] This understanding of Christ's

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[23] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 198: "& sumtyme sche myth not stondyn but fel downe a-monge þe pepil & cryid ful lowde, þat many man on hir wonderyd & maruylyd what hir eyled."

[24] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 187.

[25] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 187.

[26] Ibid.

[27] The process of drawing her thoughts to heavenly subjects is repeated in the Candlemas episode as well: "Hir mende was al drawyn fro þe erdly thowtys & erdly syghtys & sett al to-gedyr in gostly syghtys, whech wer so delectabyl & so deuowt þat sche myth not in þe tyme of feruowr wythstondyn hir wepyng" (*Book of Margery Kempe*, 198).

[28] Yoshikawa, *Margery Kempe's Meditations*, 76-77.

[29] According to the *Book*, the priests sang while lifting the veil: "þe preystys knelyng be-forn þe Crucifixe, and, as þei songyn..." (*Book of Margery Kempe*, 187).

[30] Phil. 2.6-8: "Qui cum in forma Dei esset, non rapinam arbitratus est esse se aequalem Deo: sed semetipsum exinanivit, formam servi accipiens, in similitudinem hominem factus, et habitu inventus ut homo. Humiliavit semetipsum factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis."

humility is the spiritual "gaze" that she learns to perform in the Palm Sunday Mass: "for hir thowt þat sche saw owr Lord Crist Ihesu as verily in hir sowle wyth hir gostly eye as sche had seyn be-forn þe Crucifixe wyth hir bodily eye."[31] She includes the theological statement of the unity of Christ's two natures to demonstrate her understanding of the reciprocated humility inherent in the ritual forms of the Mass. Just as she uses spiritual sight to see Christ humble himself, she uses physical sight to see the priests and congregation humble themselves. By claiming that she could not have had one kind of vision without the other, she attests to her own participation in the ritual humiliation of Mass and in the meek obedience to her spiritual advisors through imitation of them.

Yet even her narration of devotional exercises in the world, such as chastity in marriage, is done in such a way as to gain meekness. Kempe's motivation for pursuing chastity is at best overdetermined.[32] Yet it is worth noting how she uses all of the infamy she gains from her white clothing and chaste marriage to help her acquire meekness in particular. When she is first inspired to wear white, she contests the plan because of the possibility of being accused of hypocrisy.[33] But then, after being called a hypocrite again she elucidates what is really at stake: her meekness. While in Rome an English priest "steryd meche pepyl a-ȝen hi & seyd mech euyl of hir, for sche weryd white clothyng mor þan oþer dedyn whech wer holyar & bettyr þan euyr was sche as hym thowt. Þe cawse of hys malyce was for sche wold not obeyn hym."[34] While the first statement narrates what the English priest said through indirect speech, the second statement seems to be an instance of free indirect speech in which the narrating Kempe interprets the priest's actions. This rhetorical technique of reported speech and then commentary on it, would seem to be useful in justifying the slandered party, but instead both statements accuse her of pride: the first, accusing her of vainglory, and the second, accusing her of self-righteous disobedience to her spiritual superiors. In other words, she does not do a very good job of

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[31] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 187.

[32] The most comprehensive study on the subject is Sarah Salih's *Versions of Virginity in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001). The cults of Anne, Margaret, and Mary Magdalene also provided a cultural milieu in which physical and spiritual virginity were highly valued; see Carole Hill, *Women and Religion in Late Medieval Norwich* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010). Some scholars argue that Kempe's desire for chastity stems from her social class and its valuation of economic independence: David Aers, *Community, Gender, and Individual Identity: English Writing 1360-1430* (London: Routledge, 1988), 73-116; Nona Fienberg, "Thematics of Value in *The Book of Margery Kempe*," *Modern Philology* 87, no. 2 (1989): 132-41; and Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body,* 74-106. Others trace her desire to her dissatisfaction in her marriage or her queer sexual identity: Shiela Delany, "Sexual Economics, Chaucer's Wife of Bath and *The Book of Margery Kempe*," in *Feminist Readings in Middle English Literature: The Wife of Bath and All Her Sect*, eds. Leslie Johnson and Ruth Evans (London: Routledge, 1994), 71-86; Nancy F. Partner, "Reading the *Book of Margery Kempe*," *Exemplaria* 3, no. 1 (1991): 29-66; Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 143-82.

[33] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 32: "A, der Lord, yf I go arayd on oþer maner þan oþer chast women don, I drede þat þe pepul wyl slawndyr me. Þei wyl sey I am an ypocryt & wondryn vp-on me."

[34] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 84.

clearing her name of pride even with her readers. Rather, she elaborates her bad repute in order to place her readers in the same position as her opponents.

Indeed, it is as if her reputation of being proud is itself the means by which Kempe seeks to undermine it for her readers. By the time she returns from escorting her daughter-in-law across the sea, she no longer needs to wear white clothing to be identified as proud. "Clad in a cloth of canvas as it wer a sekkyn gelle," that is, as a pilgrim, she is recognized by "sum dissolute personys" who recite a piece of slander, implicitly accusing her of pride: "A, þu fals flesch, þu xalt no good mete etyn." The story behind this phrase is then rehearsed twice for the reader:

> Sum on person er ellys mo personys, deceyuyd be her gostly enmy, contriuyd þis tale not long aftyr þe conuersyon of þe sayd creatur, seying þat sche, sittyng at þe mete on a fisch-day at a good mannys tabyl, seruyd wyth diuers of fyschys as reed heryng & good pyke & sweche oþer, þus sche xulde a seyd, as þei reportyd, 'A, þu fals flesch, þu woldist now etyn reed heryng, but þu xalt not han þi wille.' (243-44)
>
> Þei seyd, "Nay for-soþe, but we haue herd telde þat þer is swech a fals feynyd ypocrite in Lynne whech seyth sweche wordys, &, leeuyng of gret metys, sche etith þe most delicyows & delectabyl metys þat comyn on þe tabyl." (244)

The close proximity of the retelling of this rumor in particular performs a specific kind of work: establishing her credibility as a meek narrator.[35] In the first passage, by acknowledging the extent of her ignorance she demonstrates care in attributing the rumor to the correct party or parties, "sum on person *er* ellys mo personys." Her willingness to use the subjunctive mood, "þus sche xulde a sayd, as þei reportyd," also conveys full disclosure of the story as far as she knows. By repeating the story again but in the words of the culprits, who in contrast seem assured of the truth of the rumor—"þer *is* swech a false feynyd ypocrite"—she demonstrates the truth of her first claim that she was slandered. The credibility she builds before the slanderers realize their mistake, therefore, only corroborates the sincerity of her defense, "for I am þat same persone to whom þes wordys ben arectyd, whech oftyntyme suffir gret schame & repref & am not gylty in þis mater, God I take to record."[36] Here, she not only denies the pride associated with the rumors, but she demonstrates the humility she learns from contending with those false words by refraining from reproving her slanderers directly. Her meekness in bearing with their offense even provokes their own meekness in apologizing for slandering her: "Whan þei beheldyn hir not meuyd in þis mater, no-thyng repreuyng hem, desiryng thorw þe spirit of charite her correccyon, [þei] wer rebukyd of her owyn honeste, obeyng hem to a-seeth makyng."[37] Thus, she attains meekness through even her narration of her pursuit of married chastity.

Kempe's intention to get meekness overlaps in her visions and her narration of them. First, she practices semiotic discernment of visions by offering the reader evidence of her

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[35] Interestingly, this is not the only piece of slander that she passes along to the reader. After Margery feels called to wear white for the first time, she experiences slander "of thyngys þat sche was neuyr gylty in" (*Book of Margery Kempe,* 32). Much later, the "thyngys" in question are revealed to be rumors that Margery has had sexual liaisons with her husband in "woodys, grouys, er valeys" despite their informal vow of chastity (180).

[36] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 244-45.

[37] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 245.

meekness.[38] For instance, in the last chapter of Book 1, her scribe lifts the authenticating device of experience from Gerson's *De distinctione*:[39]

> Sum-tyme sche was in gret heuynes for hir felyngys, whan sche knew not how þei schulde ben vndirstondyn many days to-gedyr, for drede þat sche had of deceytys & illusyons, þat hir thowt sche wolde þat hir hed had be smet fro þe body tyl God of hys goodnesse declaryd hem to hir mende. For sumtyme þat sche vndirstod bodily it was to ben vndirstondyn gostly, & þe drede þat sche had of hir felyngys was þe grettest scorge þat sche had in erde & specialy whan sche had hir fyrst felyngys, & þat drede made hir ful meke for sche had no joye in þe felyng tyl sche knew be experiens wheþyr it was trewe er not. (220)

Her "experience" is aligned with emotions like "heuynes," "drede," and "joy," while her "felyngys" are aligned with her revelations, which can be interpreted in a material ("bodily") or spiritual ("gostly") way. Meekness, the best sign of a vision and of a visionary's authenticity according to Gerson, is the ultimate result of her experience. But moreover, her meekness is demonstrated in the very rhetoric of the passage itself. The repetition of "sometimes" mimics the experience of repeated doubt that she presumably faces when thinking one way and then another about her "felyngys." Furthermore, the metaphor of the "scourge" of dread encapsulates the experience of the repetitive torment of doubt, "wheþer it was trewe er not." Her experience of doubt is reproduced for the reader as evidence of her meekness, which is itself evidence of the veracity of her revelations. Thus, through a transitive property of affect, the reader verifies both her meekness and revelations.

Even in practicing hermeneutic discernment of her vision, however, she emphasizes on her meekness, an attempt to bridge the vocational divide of *discretio*. In this same passage, a curious phrase complicates the nature of her experience: "hir thowt sche wolde." The first half of the phrase, "it seemed to her," communicates as before her sense of doubt due to the possibility that the following event could be untrue. Yet the second half, "she wished" or "she willed," namely, the action that she imagines, also has a connotation of unreality, a desired but as-yet unattained goal. The goal in question is a variation of the "scourge" metaphor, decapitation.[40] She apparently wishes a violent death on herself repeatedly "tyl" God confirms her visions, which again encapsulates her experience of the repetitive torment of doubt. Taken all together, the short phrase describes Margery doubting her doubtful action of experiencing doubt. Do three doubts resolve into a single doubt? Possibly. More importantly, however, the thickness of the reported experience betrays its artifice. She portrays herself as one who thinks too hard or too much about the veracity of her own experiences. This overwrought self-consciousness performs in an instant what *discretio spirtuum* by an advisor, or semiotic discernment, would over the

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[38] Yoshikawa argues that Kempe and her scribes revised the first book to incorporate *discretio spirituum* after her second pilgrimage through Europe ("The Making of *The Book of Margery Kempe*," 119-37).

[39] See Introduction above.

[40] Margery's Christ also recites the possibility of repeated decapitation: "Dowtyr, it is mor plesyng vn-to me þat þu suffyr despitys & scornys, schamys & repreuys, wrongys & disesys þan ȝyf þin hed wer smet of thre tymes on þe day euery day in sevyn ȝer" (*Book of Margery Kempe*, 131).

course of several conversations: an in-depth inquiry into the reality of her "felyngys." In obedience to the Church, however, she still submits her revelations (and doubts about them) to her spiritual advisors and her readers though she is seemingly capable of critical introspection, or hermeneutic discernment, herself. The masterful portrayal of being able to release one's competent authority to others embodies meekness in a nutshell.

As we see from these examples, Kempe shows how meekness is the end to both types of discernment. In the case of semiotic discernment, she submits her thoughts and actions to the authority of priests, the text, and her readers. When she visualizes Christ's and the Virgin Mary's humility during Mass, she uses the priests' motions and sentential biblical interpretation to direct her thoughts. Even when narrating her devotional life in the world, as she does in her pursuit of married chastity, she portrays herself as seeking her readers' judgment to verify her meekness. In the case of hermeneutic discernment, she demonstrates that she can perform critical introspection of her own visions, but submits them to others in order to gain meekness. In short, she unifies semiotic and hermeneutic discernment by exposing their underlying connection, the goal of cultivating meekness.

Internalizing Form of Life: From Ascetic Prudence to Meek Speech

In order to prove that she could attain the goal of contemplative life—that is, to train one's will to be receptive to God's will—outside of enclosure, Kempe transforms the proper form of life into meek speech. Through narrating acts of ascetic prudence, she demonstrates that meekness is an internal trait for which outward show becomes less important than inward cultivation. Moreover, she uses meekness as a mode of speaking to be judged internally rather than externally by an advisor. As we shall see, meek speech dovetails seamlessly with her use of mystical speech and her act of authorship.

As a mixed-life contemplative, Kempe learns to judge the prudence of her ascetic exercises from her spiritual advisors whose injunctions she obeys as a sign of meekness. For instance, in one of her visions, the Virgin Mary, one of her primary exemplars of meekness, appears to her and commands "hir gon to hir confessowr & seyin þat sche wolde han hir dischargyd of hir vow [to fast one day per week] þat sche xulde ben mythy to beryn hir gostly labowrys."[41] Here, Margery's ability to accommodate her spiritual gifts, namely, her revelations and meditations, entails ascetic prudence. Not by coincidence, this very knowledge comes to her in the form of a vision, which must be verified by her spiritual director. Thus, she practices meekness three times on account of ascetic prudence: first, by believing and obeying the Virgin Mary, the patroness of her vow and vision; secondly, by submitting her vision about ascetic prudence to spiritual authorities; lastly, by performing the ascetic penance enjoined by them. Meekness provides both the form and content of the vision even before she plays an active role within it. It is as if she is already defining meekness as something not actively done but passively acquired, despite the fact that her subject matter, ascetic penance, is by definition a deed.

Yet Kempe also illustrates how her actual performance of ascetic acts helps her gain meekness. Like Julian of Norwich, she undergoes a near-death illness, though she reports it much later in her *Book*.[42] But unlike Julian, she prays that her physical infirmity will end.[43]

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[41] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 162.

[42] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 137: "Sche was so febyl þat sche myth not heldyn a spon in hir hand." Following this ordeal, she also experiences "a gret sekenes in her heuyd and sithyn in

While Kempe realizes that her slew of illnesses makes her Christ-like in human suffering, she asks Christ, "Why woldist þu be-comyn man & suffyr so meche peyne for my synnes & for alle mennys synnes þat xal be sauyd, & we arn so vnkynde, Lord, to þe, & I, most vnworthy, can not suffyr þis lityl peyne?"[44] She associates his Passion with the penance that he has undergone for her (and all of humanity's) sake. Using the same logic, she counts her sickness as a penance as well, but her threshold for pain is exceeded by its discomfort. Its utility seems to have no bearing on the frequency or quality of her contemplation either.[45] The only value she attributes to her physical ailments is the meekness she gains through it: "for þe gret peyne þat þu suffredyst ȝef me not so meche as I am worthy, for I may not beryn so meche as I am worthy."[46] The way she articulates her petition reveals her goal to become more humble. At first, she only suffers finite pain ("lityl") compared to Christ's indefinite pain ("so meche"). Then, she rearticulates her limitation to bear pain as a moral limitation by taking the position of a sinner "worthy" of more. In other words, she shows that humility is the means to avoiding a penance (illness) that increases humility, which only makes sense if gaining humility is her ultimate goal. She thus concludes that meekness is the means to and end of ascetic penance.

Kempe also learns how to get more meekness by humbling herself toward people other than her advisor. While in Rome her confessor, Wenslawe, commands her "be vertu of obediens & also in party of penawns þat sche xulde seruyn an hold woman þat was a poure creatur in Rome."[47] Like before, she performs her enjoined penance, but now the benefit of her deeds extends beyond just herself:[48] first, she does manual labor for the woman by drawing water, hauling firewood, and begging food; then, she gives the old woman her good wine and takes the woman's sour wine.[49] Before listing her actual service to the old woman, however, she lists two other deeds in the same way as the others: "& sche had no bed to lyn in ne no clothys to be cured wyth saf hir owyn mentyl. & Þan was sche ful of vermyn & suffyrd gret peyn þerwyth."[50]

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hir bakke"; then, she endures a chronic pain in her right side, "duryng þe terme of viij ȝer, saf viij wokys, be diuers tymes" that was sometimes so painful that she "must voydyn þat was in hir stomak" until it ended.

[43] Margery asks, "Ȝyf Þu wilte, Lord, þat I ber it, send me pacyens, for ellys I may not suffyr it," in an implicit request for the end of her illness (*Book of Margery Kempe*, 137).

[44] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 137.

[45] Margery contemplates *despite* her sickness rather than because of it: "Sumtyme, notwythstondyng þe sayd creatur had gret bodily sekenes, ȝet þe Passyon of owr merciful Lord Crist Ihesu wrowt so in hir sowle þat for þe tyme sche felt not hir owyn sekenes" (*Book of Margery Kempe*, 138).

[46] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 137.

[47] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 85.

[48] Pat Callum explains in detail how this episode works as penance in "'Yf Lak of Charyte Be Not Ower Hynderawnce': Margery Kempe, Lynn, and the Practice of the Spiritual and Bodily Works of Mercy," in *A Companion to the Book of Margery Kempe*, eds. John H. Arnold and Katherine J. Lewis (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 177-93, at 190.

[49] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 86: "Also sche fet hom watyr & stykkys in hir nekke for þe poure woman and beggyd mete and wyn bothyn for hir. And, whan þe pour womans wyn was sowr, þis creatur hir-self drank þat sowr wyn & ȝaf þe powr woman good wyn þat sche had bowt for hir owyn selfe."

[50] Ibid.

Instead of focusing only on her charity, she focuses on her voluntary humiliation. She emphasizes the lack she endures, "no bed" and "no clothys," as part of the penance. She also portrays her "great pain" due to "vermin" as penitential.[51] Meekness is the means by which she is capable of bringing comfort to the old woman,[52] at the cost of her own comfort.[53] Thus, her practice of prudent asceticism, or the exercises of self-denial accompanied by meekness toward her confessor, leads to showing meekness toward a poor woman.

Ascetic exercises imposed on her by enemies especially transform her meekness. In these instances, her ability to demonstrate ascetic prudence through inaction shows more clearly her understanding of meekness as an innate characteristic rather than the result of outward deeds. For instance, at the second sermon of a Franciscan preacher, she cries so loudly that he wants her removed from the audience.[54] From then on, the friar becomes the antithesis of meek as he incites people against her in his sermons even after four clerics on two separate occasions petition on her behalf;[55] his slander eventually turns so many people against her that her friends tell her to leave town.[56] Nevertheless, she imagines her avoidance of the friar not only as an act of obedience to her advisors, but also as "þe ryth wey to Heuyn," that is, the way of "sorwe & schame" that Christ himself suffered before his death and resurrection.[57] In fact, Christ appears to her and affirms the meekness of her actions:

> And, dowtyr, I telle þe forsoþe he xal be chastiȝed scharply. As hys name is now, it xal ben throwyn down & þin schal ben reysed up. & I xal makyn as many men to lofe þe for my lofe as han despisyd þe for my lofe. Dowtyr, þu xalt be in cherch whan he xal be wyth-owtyn. In þis chirche þu hast suffyrd meche schame & reprefe for þe ȝyftys þat I jaue ȝouyn þe & for þe grace & goodnes þat I haue wrowt in þe, and þerfore in þis cherche & in þis place I xal ben worschepyd in þe. (156)

The dichotomies Christ uses to describe her ordeal and the friar's pending chastisement—down/up, loved/despised, within/without, shame and reproof/grace and goodness—establish Kempe and the friar's opposition as that between the meek and the proud. While her ascetic penance of social isolation is painful, it is redeemed by the fact that she imitates the perfect

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[51] Margery's aversion to "vermyn" recurs in her second pilgrimage to the Continent (*Book of Margery Kempe*, 92).

[52] When Kempe takes leave of the old woman, "þe powr woman was ryth sory & mad gret mone for hir departyng" (*Book of Margery Kempe*, 237).

[53] Delany even states, "once she is moneyless, moving among the common people of Rome without the security and social advantages conferred by wealth, she is deeply frightened" ("Sexual Economics," 80).

[54] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 149.

[55] Two of them approach the friar specifically to "assayn ȝyf he myth mekyn hys hert" (*Book of Margery Kempe*, 150-51).

[56] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 154.

[57] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 156. For more on Margery's imitation of Christ in her social rejection see Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body,* 74-106; and Karma Lochrie, "*The Book of Margery Kempe*: The Marginal Woman's Quest for Literary Authority," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 16, no. 1 (1986): 33-55.

exemplar of meekness, Jesus.[58] But the passive verb construction such as "be chastised," "be raised up," and "be thrown down" highlights the passivity she associates with her ordeal; she simply endures rather than acts. Her meekness translates into inaction. Therefore, when she envisions how her present meekness will promote the friar's eventual meekness, all she can say is, "I am not worthy þat þu xuldist schewyn sweche grace for me."[59] In this instance, she acknowledges becoming an exemplar of meekness to her enemies by no merit of her own.

So far, we have followed the outward show of Margery's meekness through her practice of ascetic prudence. Like other laypeople or enclosed religious, she first learns ascetic prudence through obeying her spiritual advisors in the performance of acts of penance. As she continues to practice asceticism, however, she begins to underscore the goal of getting meekness over doing penance. Especially after facing the possibility of gaining meekness through inaction, she begins to forgo external ascetic deeds altogether. She eventually categorizes meekness as a mindset by using meekness as a mode of speaking.

For Margery, intention matters, which if wanting, negates the efficacy of the ascetic exercise. When her prayer to receive the gift of tears in private is denied, she concludes that her neighbors' rebuke of her tears is deserved: "A, Lord, blissyd mote þu be, for me thynkyth þu dost þiself al þat þu biddist me don. In Holy Writte, Lord, þu byddyst me louyn myn enmys, & I wot wel þat in al þis werld was neuyr so gret an enmye to me as I haue ben to þe."[60] Here, she reveals the logic behind her request in a highly condensed and convoluted way. The deed that Christ bids her do, as she clarifies, is to "louyn myn enmys," that is, the people who rebuke her for weeping profusely in Mass and sermons. Because her tears are for her enemies' sins, she demonstrates through weeping her love for her enemies; but, since they rebuke her for this act of love, they sin. She asks Christ that her gift of weeping in public stop so that her enemies stop sinning. Her request, however, also implicitly asks to end the opportunity to demonstrate her charity toward her enemies. Christ will not allow this because, in the words of Margery, "þu dost þiself al þat þu biddist me don," that is, he loves her enemies. Ultimately, she attributes to Christ penitential merit for her ascetic deed of crying since she professes to want it to stop, while he will not allow it.

Margery's professed desire to end her gift of tears, however, is at least as much a verbal gesture of meekness as a real desire. After all, she accepts her moral weakness though her professed desire to end the gift of tears springs from her neighbors' complaint of her moral weakness to begin with: "I am in gret perel, for, as þei seyn, I am cawse þat many men synne on me."[61] Rather than justify herself in her response to Christ's denial of her desire, she calls herself "so gret an enmye" to make the extent of her wickedness indeterminate. She also compares her own enemies to Christ's enemy (that is, herself) in order to emphasize how she is more worthy than they are of punishment. In short, she admits that she has no reason to ask Christ for the removal of her tears since she deserves much more than the rebuke she receives. Not only is her response counter-productive toward achieving her original goal, namely, to be able to attend

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[58] Her confessor charges her to stay away from the places where the friar preaches, which she describes, "was to hir þe grettest peyne in erthe whan sche myth not heryn it" (*Book of Margery Kempe*, 151).

[59] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 156.

[60] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 183-84.

[61] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 181.

sermons with everyone else,[62] but it also disregards Christ's words of consolation to her that "þu art no-thyng cawse of her synne."[63] The inconsistency of her response expresses not waywardness but deference toward Christ's will, a meekness that submits to him even her desires, which in this case looks like a lack of self-consistency.

Margery demonstrates how far meekness operates as a way of speaking when confronting the limitations of physical penance itself. After being denied the end to her tears, she offers Christ her intention to do physical or social penance rather than doing the actual deeds: "Þerfor, Lord, þei I wer slayn an hundryd sithys on a day, ȝyf it wer possibyl, for thy loue, ȝet cowde I neuyr ȝeldyn þe þe goodnes þat þu hast schewyd to me."[64] Here, she shows her recognition of the impossibility of her imagined penance and the futility of such acts since they are not equivalent compensation for her sin. Yet her fixation on the imaginary highlights the question about the efficacy of imagining the penance in the first place. She answers her own question by illustrating that even the act of vivid imagining is futile penance by connecting the limit of physical penance to that of her imagined penance: "Now trewly, Lord, I wolde I cowde louyn þe as mych as þu mythist makyn me to louyn þe."[65] Here, she uses subjunctive verbs in order to set up a verbal gesture of meekness. By "I would I could" she marks the imagined penance, that is, her wish to love Christ as much as he could make her; while "you might" refers to the presumed reality of his power, that is, that he actually has the ability to make her love him. The limit of her penitential intention in the first clause is set by his willingness to use his power in the second. In short, her deference to his will takes precedence over the exercise of the power of her own imagination. Although she acknowledges the impossibility of her imagined penance, the reality of the penance or even the possibility of imagining it is less important than the humility she attains by doing so.[66]

Margery practices ascetic prudence when she demonstrates that she intends to gain humility through acts of penance.[67] As her meditations show, the virtue of meekness is the underlying link between external penitential deeds that others can judge and internal

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[62] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 181: "Lord, þe worlde may not suffyr me to do thy wil ne to folwyn aftyr þi steryng, & þerfor I prey þe, ȝyf it be thy wil, take þes cryingys fro me in þe tyme of sermownys þat I cry not at þin holy prechyng & late me jauyn hem be my-self alone so þat I be not putt fro heryng of þin holy prechyng & of þin holy wordys, for grettar peyn may I not suffyr in þis worlde þan be put fro þi holy word heryng."

[63] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 183.

[64] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 184.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Despite the alleged futility of imagining, Margery's third penitential wish is based on her unspoken desire to gain meekness through social humiliation: "And I wolde, Lord, for þi lofe be leyd nakyd on an hyrdil, alle men to wonderyn on me for þi loue, so it wer no perel to her sowlys, & þei to castyn slory & slugge on me, & be drawyn fro town to town euery day my lyfe-tyme, ȝyf þu wer plesyd þerby & no mannys sowle hyndryd, þi wil mote be fulfillyd & not myn" (*Book of Margery Kempe*, 184).

[67] Salih argues that Margery finally privileges the "inner certainty of contemplation" over "the body and its pieties" and has "no need of 'penawns'" in "Margery's Bodies," 161-76. But I would argue that the idea of "penance" is integral to both her asceticism and contemplation specifically due to its relation to the virtue of meekness.

contemplative ones that only she can judge.[68] Furthermore, she indicates that while meekness is certainly demonstrable in deed, it is also provable, or perhaps even more so, in word. The efficacy of the ascetic exercise does not lie in the reality of the deed, which applies even to the act of imagining. On the contrary, its efficacy lies in the intention to gain humility from it, which she performs by using meekness as a way of speaking. Thus, she unifies semiotic and hermeneutic discernment by turning meek deeds into an opportunity to judge her own intention of becoming more meek. In this way meekness becomes less a thing done than speech that one offers to God in contemplation.

Externalizing Form of Thought: Mystical Speech and the Act of Authorship[69]

Meek speech, however, also establishes enclosed *discretio*, or hermeneutic discernment. As the last chapter argued, spiritual direction for the enclosed at Syon-Sheen taught its monastic audience both semiotic discernment, or meekness and ascetic prudence, and hermeneutic discernment, or the authority of God's judgment and self-judgment.[70] In *The Book of Margery Kempe* both God's authority and self-judgment are marked by Kempe's portrayal of doubt in mystical speech and the act of authorship. As she attempts to discern the source of her visions and revelations for herself, she exposes *discretio*'s flawed reliance on human judgment, including her own. Her questioning of human authority in *discretio*, in turn, becomes an occasion for her to perform a third critical voice outside of mystical speech, which she calls the "speech of God." Her critique of the basis of *discretio* shows how she uses hermeneutic discernment as a tool to work out theological problems, which ultimately authorizes the words of her *Book* and demonstrates the authenticity of her contemplative life in the world.

Mystical speech is inherently meek.[71] As Sarah Beckwith explains, it incorporates one voice which stands outside of the authorizing institution yet is within what authorizes it (in this case, Margery Kempe), and another which stands inside the authorizing institution (for instance, her scribes and advisors).[72] Although Beckwith does not mention *discretio spirituum* explicitly, the structure of double-voicedness cannot but be directly related to it because such a structure enables the performance of the meekness necessary to authenticate visions in semiotic discernment. In Kempe's day, the chancellor of the University of Paris, Jean Gerson, pronounced the discernment of spirits as the tool to distinguish true from false revelations,[73] and meekness as

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[68] Although Callum does not discuss intention, she argues that Margery prioritizes the spiritual works of mercy over the corporal acts of mercy ("'Yf Lak of Charyte,'" 193).

[69] The following section on mystical speech and Kempe's act of authorship is the basis of my article, "'Þe speche of God': A Re-Assessment of the Double-Voicedness of Mystic Speech in *The Book of Margery Kempe*," *Magistra* 23, no. 2 (2017): 42-58.

[70] Kempe visits the monastery of Syon on St. Peter's feast day in 1434 (*Book of Margery Kempe*, li; 246). For more on Kempe's connections with the Brigittine order specifically, see Charity Scott Stokes, "Margery Kempe: Her Life and the Early History of Her Book," *Mystics Quarterly* 25, no. 1/2 (1999): 9-68, at 13, 16, and 42-43.

[71] Beckwith, "Problems of Authority," 171-99.

[72] Beckwith, "Problems of Authority," 180.

[73] Gerson states that *discretio spirituum* is especially useful for discerning ambiguous revelations (*De distinctione*, 48): "Et in hoc casu maxime necessarium est donum quod Apostolus vocat discretionem spirituum. Quaeres quid agit hoc donum quod discretionem

the premier authenticating criterion of that spiritual test.[74] Because theologians were the main interpreters of the "spiritual coin" of revelation, their "voice" was critical in legitimizing mystical speech.[75] Thus, Kempe demonstrates her recognition of how mystical speech works by voicing both the inside role and the outside role of *discretio spirituum*, the interrogator and interrogated, respectively, through the doubt she has about her spiritual "feelings."

First, she shows the typical portrayal of doubt by seeking out authorities of semiotic discernment. When Margery travels to meet with spiritual authorities to authenticate her visions for the first time, her doubt is revealed in the multiplication of judges:

> Þan went þei forth to-Brydlyngton-ward and also to many oþer contres & spokyn wyth Goddys seruawntys, boþen ankrys & reclusys & many oþer of owyr Lordys louerys, wyth many worthy clerkys, doctorys of dyuynyte, & bachelers also in many dyuers placys. & þis creatur to dyuers of hem schewyd hir felyngys & hyr contemplacyons as sche was comawndyd for to don, to wetyn yf any dysseyt were in hir felyngys. (25)

The "many other" people and places that she visits highlights the diversity of opinion she thinks she needs in order to lend credence to her claim of being an authentic visionary. Although the following stories do not universally corroborate her claim of the truth of her revelations, she sets up the diversity of the collection of tales in order to stress the goal of finding a common verdict among them all.[76]

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spirituum appellamus? Agit equidem ut sapore quodam intimo et illuminatione quadam experimentali sentiat homo differentiam inter veras revelationes et deceptorias illusiones." (And in this case, the gift that the Apostle calls discernment of spirits is especially necessary. You ask what does this gift do that we call discernment of spirits? Truly, it works so that by a certain internal taste and by a certain illumination of experience a person feels the difference between true revelation and deceptive illusions.) All of the following Latin translations are my own.

[74] Gerson, *De distinctione*, 50: "Hoc est primum et praecipuum signum inter signa nostrae monetae spiritualis discretivum. . . . Humilitatis ergo signum si perfecte nosceretur, frustra multiplicarentur alia; quoniam superbia et humiltas numisma spiritualium operationum sufficenter condistingunt." (This is the first and especial sign among our signs of discerning spiritual coin. . . . If the sign of humility, therefore, is perfectly recognized, all others are multiplied in vain; because pride and humility together sufficiently distinguish the coin of spiritual works.)

[75] Gerson, *De distinctione*, 38: "Erimus sicut nummularii seu campsores spirituales, ad solerter et acute examinandum numisma pretiosum et extraneum divinae revelationis. . . . Et quoniam haec similtudo satis idonea est ad id palpabilius ostendendum quod intendimus, prosequamur eam dicentes primum quod examinator huius monetae spiritualis debet esse theologus arte pariter usque peritus." (We will be like spiritual moneychangers or merchants to examine skillfully and clearly the precious and foreign coin of divine revelation. . . . And because this [the metaphor of money changers] by likeness is palpable enough to show what we intend, let us describe it in detail, saying first that the examiner of this spiritual money ought to be a theologian fully expert in that art.)

[76] One story, for instance, has less to do with her revelations than her scriptural recitation. Here, a Canterbury monk is skeptical about whether she speaks from inspiration of the Holy Ghost or the devil (*Book of Margery Kempe*, 28).

But Kempe also presents her own doubts as a sign of her knowledge of hermeneutic discernment, or the self-critique and judgment implicit within the discernment of spirits. When she asks God about her gift of tears she demonstrates that *discretio spirituum* occurs within herself: "'Lord, why wilt þu ȝyf me swech crying þat þe pepil wondryth on me þerfor? & Þei seyn þat I am in gret perel, for, as þei seyn, I am cawse þat many men synne on me."[77] Her question reveals the process of self-discernment at work. As she cites the supposed outcome of her impulse, that is, others' sin, she gathers evidence for why the impulse may not be of divine origin. Her address to God in the second person, "þu," helps solidify her position as a critic, expressing intelligibly an argument for or against a divine origin. Though she takes her cue for self-critique from others, "as they say," she shows here that discretion is an ongoing process of judgment that takes place, perhaps especially, after the fact within oneself.

The process of hermeneutic discernment is laid out in Margery's contemplation on the dancing virgins. Here, despite her serious doubts about her non-virginal reward, she celebrates her skill in it through the point by point analysis she undertakes with Christ in her soul. The chiasmus of his answers to her own doubts regarding her heavenly reward—"A, Lord, maydenys dawnsyn now meryly in Heuyn. Xal not I don so?"[78]—frames his answers as a direct reflection of her own thoughts, all of which centers on his grace. She structures her complaint as follows: (a) virgins dancing in heaven; (b) her own lack of virginity; (c) her death wish; (d) confession of her failure to love; (e) confession of her separation from Christ; (f) confession of despair. In response, Christ structures his consolation as follows: (1) his forgiveness of all sins; (2) unity with Margery; (3) praise of her "singular" love; (4) narrative of her actual death, including Purgatory on earth and heavenly entrance; (5) her inclusion in the virgins' blessing; (6) she dances with the virgins.[79] In this way, Christ matches each of her doubts in reverse order (1-f, 2-e, 3-d, 4-c, 5-b, 6-a). Thus, Kempe shows that she tracks the trajectory of her thoughts, and confirms a divine source when his words mirror hers.

Furthermore, the centrality of Christ's grace in her contemplation also indicates how his consolation is patterned on Margery's doubts. In the three complaints located in the middle of the chiasmus (d, e, f), she hints at what he will say in his consolation: "A, der God, I haue not lovyd þe alle þe days of my lyue, & þat sor rewyth me; I haue ronnyn a-wey fro þe, & þow hast ronnyn aftyr me; I would fallyn in dyspeyr, & þu woldyst not suffer me."[80] She reveals her contemplative crux in the three secondary clauses of each complaint. Each clause ends in "me," but each clause's action belongs to Christ: he does not allow her to despair; he runs after her; he loves her. These three actions set the mold for Christ's own words which follow directly after her three complaints: "A, dowtyr, how oftyn-tymes haue I teld þe þat thy synnes arn forȝoue þe & þat we ben onyd to-gedyr wyth-owty ende? Þu art to me a syngular lofe, dowtyr, & þerfor I behote þe þu schalt haue a synguler grace in Hevyn."[81] Even though his voice is separate from her own in her vision, his speech seems to emanate from her own. In this way, as she processes her doubts about her lack of virginity, she also reminds herself in the voice of Christ that he has already and will continue to extend grace to her. She makes, therefore, a subtle argument for a different type of judgment: judgment of self by self.

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[77] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 181.
[78] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 50.
[79] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 50-53.
[80] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 50.
[81] Ibid.

Nevertheless, Kempe's *Book* problematizes even her own judgment. For instance, Christ compromises human judgment, especially her own, while explaining why he deprives her of contemplative gifts: "in alle oþer thyngys þu maist ben an ypocrite yf þu wilt, þat is to sey, in vndirstandyng, in many bedys byddyng, in gret fastyng, in gret penawnce doyng wyth-owtyn-forth þat men may se it, er in gret almes dedys doyng wyth þin handys, er in good wordys spekyng wyth þi mowth."[82] The words "hypocrite" and "if you will" mark her intention. Although Christ does not explain that she would be a hypocrite in doing willed works, he insists that she could ("maist") be. The possibility of her false intention in willed works contrasts the impossibility of false intention in unwilled works. He makes a distinction between actions given to her (weeping, crying, sweetness, devotion, remembrance of the Passion, other spiritual graces), and those she wills to do herself, setting up a further distinction between which acts she might clearly distinguish a true intention for or not.[83] He intimates that the willed works, namely, ascetic penitential practices, obscure her true intention from herself. Moreover, Christ's accusation of potential hypocrisy contrasts divine and human judgment: he alone has the ability to distinguish whether or not she has a false intention, and therefore solely has the right to call her a hypocrite.

Then, Christ compromises her judgment about her own authorship by warning her about the danger of inexpressibility. He contrasts the contemplative's failure to identify true intention in willed actions to the contemplative's failure to express intention in involuntary "spiritual graces." He tells Margery that "þe Deuyl knowith not þe holy thowtys þat I ȝeue þe ne no man in erde knowyth how wel & holily þu art ocupijd wyth me, ne þi-self can not tellyn þe gret grace & goodnes þat þu felist in me."[84] Here, the first clause regarding the knowledge of the Devil or other men suggests that others must know about her ascetic penance—at least confessors, if not others who benefit from the penance directly—while no one else apart from God and herself need know about her contemplative gifts. In other words, contemplative gifts are safer because one can never really know how far one performs ascetic deeds for the admiration or edification of others. The second clause regarding Margery, however, emphasizes on the distinction between knowledge and expressibility. The Devil and the World are incapable of "knowing" her gifts, while she is only incapable of "telling" the goodness she feels inside her.[85] This distinction is important because it leaves open the possibility of self-knowledge in contemplation. Thus, while God's judgment of the contemplative's willed and unwilled devotional exercises is perfect, the contemplative's judgment of willed actions is imperfect. In the case of the unwilled actions, the largest barrier to judgment for the contemplative is not the ability to judge per se, but the ability to convey the judgment to others and to make his or her intention intelligible.

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[82] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 205. I take "vndirstandying" to mean "interpreting," specifically the bibical interpretations Margery makes when chastising others.

[83] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 205: "þu maist be no ypocryte for no wepyng, for no criyng, for no swetnes, for no deuocyon, for no mynd of myn Passyon, ne for non oþer gostly grace þat I ȝeue er send to þe."

[84] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 206.

[85] Margery refers to the inenarrability topos two chapters previously: "it [her revelations] wer so holy & so hy þat sche was abaschyd to tellyn hem to any creatur, & also it weryn so hy abouyn hir bodily wittys þat sche myth neuyr expressyn hem wyth hir bodily tunge liche as sche felt hem" (*Book of Margery Kempe*, 201).

Both the danger of faulty human judgment and the danger of inexpressibility highlight the danger inherent to Kempe's act of authorship. Even in the realm of holy thoughts self-judgment could be hypocritical if one reveals one's holy thoughts to others, or reveals them in an inappropriate way. Kempe reveals her awareness of these dangers throughout her *Book*. For instance, she pairs Christ's disclaimer about hypocrisy with Christ's praise of how well and holily she is occupied with him.[86] How then can her meek intentions be reconciled with her willed deed of authorship? One answer is that she must resort to an authorship that establishes its authority in God. In other words, she must claim that the narration of her revelations is involuntary: "And I telle þe trewly, dowtyr, euery good thowt & eyery good desyr þat þu hast in þi sowle is þe speche of God, al yf it be so þat þu her me not spekyn to þe sumtyme as I do sumtyme to þi cler undirstondyng."[87] She reveals that the basis of her text is Christ's inspiration. Even if the "good thought" or "good desire" in her soul is not comprehensible as such, that is, revealed in the form of human speech—more specifically, her speech—all is "the speech of God." She must then use hermeneutic discernment twice to shape "the speech of God" into a comprehensible form while writing her text. First, she must discern the source of the revelation to begin with. Then, she must translate her unintelligible impulses into revelations, namely, the contents of her *Book*: God's advice and comfort about Margery's trials, tribulations, and contemplative gifts. To maintain her meekness, she must submit her impulses before and after textual translation to her spiritual advisors.

Margery's final step in externalizing the self-doubt of hermeneutic discernment, therefore, is undermining her advisors' authority through narrating the competition between divine authority and human authority. Because she is unenclosed and must live out her obedience to spiritual advisors in the world, the world itself becomes the stage for testing her knowledge of God. As in the Syon-Sheen works addressed to the enclosed, the *Book* defines the contemplative's knowledge of God by what belongs to his judgment alone. It differs drastically from these works, however, in the role that God's judgment plays in authorizing the text itself. Instead of a God who acts as a vehicle for the human advisor's *discretio*, Kempe's Christ openly opposes human judgment in Book 2. Thus, he provokes her own doubts as well as readers'. It is the dubiousness of his judgment, however, that allows her to demonstrate her knowledge that while God's judgment is always perfect, human access to it is not. She plays up the possibility of human error in *discretio spirituum* to show her mastery of using hermeneutic discernment as an intellectual tool for sorting out theological questions.

The argument that Kempe insists on displaying intervention by spiritual advisors in her text in order to authorize it is not new.[88] Yet in order to demonstrate her mastery of hermeneutic discernment she must simultaneously verify her revelations through her advisors' approval and show the authority of God's judgment alone. Doing both at the same time seems paradoxical since the authority of one must ultimately top the other. But savvily, she circumvents the paradox of establishing her authorial credibility solely on the authority of God's judgment by separating her obedience to earthly authority from divine authority. Through making Christ subvert his own judgment about her advisors' authority, she creates a situation in which God's judgment reigns supreme while still getting her advisors to approve her disobedience to human spiritual authority.

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[86] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 206.

[87] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 204-5. Here, I take "undirstondyng" to mean her revelations in which Christ speaks to her.

[88] See Staley's *Dissenting Fictions* and "Trope of the Scribe," 837.

The disjunction between divine and human spiritual authority is the main problem framing Book 2.[89] In the second chapter, Margery sets up the contest of human and divine authority by modeling the expected confluence of divine and human authority in her contemplative life. First, she receives the impulse to get permission from her confessor to escort her daughter-in-law across the sea: "Than sche went to hir confessowr for to be schreuyn, &, whil sche was in þe schryuyng, þe sayd creatur, hir eldmodir, went vp & down in þe qwer, thynkyng in hir mend, 'Lord, ȝif it wer þi wille I wolde takyn leue of my confessowr & gon wyth hir ouyr þe see.'"[90] However, Christ replies, "Dowtyr, I wote wel, yf I bode þe gon, þu woldist gon al redy. Þerfor I wyl þat þu speke no word to hym of þis mater."[91] In this brief exchange in her thoughts, the reader sees her practice hermeneutic discernment. She receives an impulse (to cross the sea with her daughter-in-law), then tests it by asking its source whether she should submit her impulse to her spiritual advisor, her confessor. Because her advisor ought to "bid her do what Christ does," she gains confidence that the revelation is divine when it advises her to keep silent;[92] in the logic of hermeneutic discernment, had Christ wanted her to cross the sea, her confessor would have already granted her permission and she would have, therefore, already been gone.

Kempe reveals the real crux of the problem, however, when her "thynkyng" provokes disobedience to her earthly advisor. After gaining permission to accompany her daughter-in-law to Ipswich, she stops at a church to hear Mass. Instead of receiving tears of devotion, she "euyr was comawndyd in hir hert for to gon ouyr þe see wyth hir dowtyr."[93] She portrays her contemplative experience as doubtful since she expects spiritual comfort in the form of tears but gets a command to disregard her confessor's authority instead. Moreover, the advice to cross the sea without her advisor's permission is unnarrated unlike before. She purposefully leaves the source of her impulse obscure to highlight the trouble that she has in interpreting her impulse using hermeneutic discernment this time.

Her second round of discernment just reinforces her impulse toward disobedience. When she translates her obscure feelings as a conversation with Christ the dubiousness of the source of her impulse reaches a climax:

> Sche thowt it was heuy to hir to takyn sweche labowr [to cross the sea] vp-on her & excusyd hir-self to owr Lord in hir mende, seying, "Lord, þu wost wel I haue no leue of my gostly fadyr, & I am bowndyn to obediens. Þerfor I may not do thus wyth-owtyn hys wil & hys consentyng." It was answeryd a-geyn to hir thowt, "I bydde þe gon in my name, Ihesu, for I am a-bouyn thy gostly fadyr & I xal excusyn þe & ledyn þe & bryngyn þe a-geyn in safte." (226-27)

The formerly cooperative, discreet voice in her thoughts becomes at once openly opposed to the authority of her spiritual father. Although she seeks to reconcile the voice with Christ's, she has difficulty in believing it since it goes against Christ's former words that "he bids you do

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[89] For another study on the significance of Book 2, see Yoshikawa, *Margery Kempe's Meditations*, 120-33.

[90] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 225.

[91] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 225-26.

[92] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 218.

[93] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 226.

whatever I bid you do."[94] Is Kempe's God capricious? She provokes doubt in her God and her own judgment to demonstrate that the only reliable judgment of self and others is God's judgment. The doubt she experiences and that she fosters in the reader is purposeful in demonstrating the incommensurability of human judgment and God's judgment. By opposing her earthly advisor's authority to God's judgment, she shows that her deeds and accordingly her words about the deeds depend solely on divine authority.

Yet paradoxically her deeds and words, "the speech of God," end with re-establishing her confessor's spiritual authority. The narration of her chastisement and reconciliation with her advisor takes place quickly within Book 2's final lines: "He ȝaf hir ful scharp wordys, for sche was hys obediencer & had takyn vp-on hir swech a jurne wyth-owtyn hys wetyng. Þerfor he was meuyd þe mor a-geyn hir, but owr Lord halpe hir so þat sche had as good loue of hym & of oþer frendys aftyr as sche had be-forn, worschepyd be God. Amen."[95] Indeed, this tidy ending starkly contrasts her reaction to his "ful sharp wordys" at the beginning of the *Book*.[96] At that point, she goes mad and is tormented by demons whose mouths are flaming, swallowing, threatening, crying, and bidding her. She undertakes a penance of sorts by illustrating her response to their threats as acceptance of their suggestions, which act is itself an extension of her acceptance of her confessor's words: "Sche slawndred hir husbond, hir frendys, and her owyn self; sche spak many a repreuows worde and many a schrewyd worde."[97] Whether or not she really internalized cruel statements by a mean priest is beside the point since it is her misdirected meekness that is central to the narrative; she unwisely obeys her indiscreet advisor's words in imitating them both in her visions and her own speech. Obviously, obeying the Devil's injunctions cannot but be wrong, but here, Kempe's point is her confessor's complicity in the Devil's advice. Her refusal to internalize his sharp words or repeat his curse on her friends, family, and readers at the end of her *Book* demonstrates how her discernment has matured regarding obedience to him.[98] She concludes that while human authority is flawed, it is also necessary in order to provide a context for cultivating discreet meekness.

And, of course, the real fruit of his rebuke is not only good favor from him and "other friends" but *The Book of Margery Kempe* itself. It is only through the maturation of Kempe's discernment that she is able to narrate her journey at all. According to her advisor she "takes upon herself such a journey," depicting her disobedience as a self-willed action. As Christ warned, willed actions can be hypocritical since the contemplative may act for the intention of gaining approval. In this case, however, her self-willed action of disobeying her advisor shows her sole intention to love God by taking on censure. This externalized intention eliminates the possibility of her hypocrisy in crossing the sea. Thus, she, in the process of telling her tale as ordered and directed by God, and as fitting within a narrative of establishing a contemplative life in the world, demonstrates her expertise in the discernment process and her meekness in submitting to her advisors' spiritual authority. Hermeneutic discernment, or tracking one's

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[94] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 218.

[95] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 247.

[96] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 7. According to Stokes, the confessor at the end of Book 2, Robert Spryngolde, may be the same confessor who catalyzes Margery's conversion in Book 1 (Stokes, "Her Life and Early History of Her Book," 16).

[97] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 7.

[98] Instead she offers a prayer for all, including her spiritual advisors and her enemies (*Book of Margery Kempe*, 248-54, at 251).

thoughts and impulses to discern its source, is what her human advisors have taught her to explore theological questions, and their words as well as God's dictate her life.

The *Book*, therefore, acts as a record not only of Kempe's obedience to human spiritual authorities, but also of her disobedience to them. The logic of the *Book*'s premise, that she received divine revelations and lived a holy life without underlying hypocrisy, depends on the need and ability to verify her narration of the "speech of God." The text's authority lies simultaneously in God's speech, which she accesses through hermeneutic discernment, and in her advisors' approval of that speech, even when it undermines human spiritual authority. By opposing God's judgment to her advisor's—a disjunction of the assumed unity of authorities in mystical speech—she heightens the reader's sense of doubt in herself as an author, which in turn begs the question of whether or not she is a true contemplative. In other words, she foregrounds the theological problem of discernment itself: why use it at all when the spiritual authority it confers can be used (and abused) by sometimes-faulty human agents?

The existence of her *Book* answers this question. The "speech of God" articulated in and through her *Book*, while ultimately denying the relevance of human authority and questioning the relevance of the discernment discourse that establishes it, also enables her to think through the limits of the discourse. Kempe demonstrates that *discretio* is not only a way to order one's form of life—whether purely monastic, purely lay, or a mixed contemplative life in the world—but it is also a way to order one's form of thought. Although she does this differently than how Julian of Norwich does so, by framing her theological problem about discernment's spiritual authority through lived experience, she nevertheless uses discernment as an intellectual tool to understand its mechanism. She demonstrates her mastery of both semiotic discernment, or meekness through sentential biblical meditation and ascetic prudence, and of hermeneutic discernment, or self-judgment and dependence on God's judgment, in order to establish the divine authorship of her *Book* and to verify the spiritual agency that such a singular life narrated within it grants her as a layperson.

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