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"IN DIE SEPULTURE SEU TRIGINTALI": THE LATE MEDIEVAL
FUNERAL AND MEMORIAL SERMON

By SUSAN POWELL and ALAN J. FLETCHER

Mych haue many of vs bestowyd vppon rych men in
gold ryngys and blak gownys: mych in many tapers and
torchys: mych in worldly pomp and hygh solempne
ceremonyes about our funerallys/ wherof the brotle
glory standeth vs here god wot in very litle stede/
but hath on the tother syde done vs great dyspleasure
. . . for some hath there of vs whyle we were in
helthe/ not so mych studied how we myght dye penytent
and in good crysten plyght/ as how we myght be solempnely
borne owte to beryeng/ haue gay and goodly funerallys
wyth herawdys at our hersys/ and ofrynge vp our
helmetts/ settyng vp our skouchyn and cote armours on
the wall though there neuer cam harneyse on our bakkys/
nor neuer auncestour of ours euer bare armis byfore.
Then deuysed we some doctour to make a sermon at our
masse in our monthys mynde/ and there preche to our
prayse wyth some fond fantesy deuysed of our name/ and
after masse/ mych festyng ryotouse and costly/ and
fynally lyke madde men made men mery at our dethe/ and
take our beryeng for a brydeale.

It must have been at celebrations similar to those criticised
here by Sir Thomas More that the sermon was preached which is the
culmination of this article. Though the society pictured by More
is perhaps more affluent than that of "our gode ffrende N.", the
sermon's aptness for preaching at a month's mind is evidence of at
least limited wealth, as is the fact that it is wholly a lament
for the loss of earthly goods, summarised by the text, "Solum michi
superest sepulcrum", in paraphrase of which the dead man is imagined
to cry out:

Of all my goodis pat I was wont to haue
Is onely left me but my grave.

The sermon is a general one, whose forlorn subject awaits a
more specific title than "N." (= nomen). It does not, therefore,
"preche to our prayse", as More complained, though this is a
necessary feature of sermons preached after the deaths of specific
men, such as Sir Hugh de Courtenay, Earl of Devon; the Black
Prince; Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick; or Walter Froucester,
Abbot of Gloucester. For the same reason, it does not indulge in
"fond fantasie deuysed of our name", although this is indeed common
from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, so that Bishop Brunton, preaching in 1376 on the death of the Black Prince, shows his verbal ingenuity in "Edwardus, dum vixit, nos wardavit". And again, John Paunteley in his sermon for Walter Froucester juggles with the text, "Fluuius egrediebatur de loco, Genesis 2 capitulo. Anglicus sicut, 'Water is went out of the reuer'" (although he is rightly defensive of his interpretation of "water" as "Walter").

Perhaps the same man, in the funeral sermon for Thomas Beauchamp, interprets the text, "Pulcritudo agri mecum est", as "Beauchampe is with me" ("3if 3e wol medle Frensche with Englesch").

It might seem from More's criticism that he was condemning the whole business of ritual commemoration of the dead. This is in fact far from the truth. The Supplycacyon of Soulys was written in defence of masses, prayers, fasting and alms for the dead and in vigorous assertion (here repudiating the recently-printed Supplicacion of Beggers) of the existence of purgatory, so that More's souls cry out:

Consyder you our paynys/ and pyte them in your hartys/ and helpe vs wyth your prayours/ pylgrymagys and other almoyse dedys: & of all thyng in speyall procure vs the suffragis and blessyd oblacyon of the holy masse/ wherof no man lyuyng so well can tell the frute as we that here fele yt.

The plea is just that made to his audience by the preacher of the sermon edited here:

Right worshipfull ffrendis, it is a grete werk of pytte and mercy to helpe and comfort þem þat be bounde in bodely preson or temporall seruage. Mych more it is merytory and medefull to helpe, socour and releve þoo soules þat be bounde and payned in þe preson of purgatory, for þei may right nought help þemself. Wherefore tho Goddis prisoners abyding in purgatory haue moste nede of helpe and socoure and comforth and sonnest may be holpe by almus dedis of merci and pitee, with precius prayers of þeite ffrendis.

In late medieval religion the doctrine of purgatory assumed unprecedented importance. Based as it was on an essentially pessimistic conviction of the greyness of human morality, it offered a mid-way between heaven and hell to which most souls might be consigned after death:

There be many parfite sowles the whiche, as sone as they be passid here bodies, fleeb vp in-to heuene, and there be som that ben vtterly euel, and they go downe in-to helle, and there be som in the mene be-twyx there two weyes, and for þem is siche commendacion and prayers to be made.

The fate of even such important figures of Church and State as the
Abbot of Gloucester and the Earl of Warwick is uncertain. Of the Abbot, Paunteley hopes, "ad nostram instanciam acius, ut spero, habundanciam gratie anima illius refrigerabitur, si non dum fuerit a penis Purgatorii liberata". And prayers too are due for the Earl, "ne forte sit arestatus per viam pro debito spirituali que debet pro prima quam egisset, pro peccatis suis, et sit positus in praisis Purgatorii, et non est in sua propria potestate in tam breui tempore without gret dysese reddere omne quod debet".

If the fate of the good and famous was doubtful, what of the common multitude? For these, All Souls' Day was instituted, a general memoral sermon for the souls forgotten and abandoned in purgatory:

on Sowlemasse-day, holy chyrch makyth mynd, and syngyth, and redythe generaly for all þe sowles pat ben yn purgatory, havyng full beleue forto relesch hom of hor Payne, othyr yn parte, othyr yn all . . . for þe lest prayer þat ys made for hom dothe hom ese.

Sermons for the day frequently point out that it was first celebrated at the specific request of just one of these souls, and the Festial and Speculum Sacerdotale crowd their sermons with stories from the Legenda Aurea illustrating the benefit to the dead of the prayers of the living - the man who always said "De profundis" as he walked through a certain churchyard was one day saved from thieves by the grateful dead rising from their graves; the priest suspended by his abbot for knowing only the Requiem Mass was reinstated at the request of the dead; the soul imprisoned in a block of ice was released by the singing of thirty Masses.

Not only prayers and Masses help the dead - almost every sermon, whether it be for a specific soul or for All Souls' Day, cites four sources of help, according to a decree attributed variously to Augustine or to Gregory:

Seint Austen, þat famous doctour, in a decre, xiiij a q. 2a, "Anime defunctorum", seith þat soules in purgatory be releced and eased of þeire peynes by iiiij meanes and moste profiteoth to spede þem to bliss, videliciet, "fidelium et amicorum oracio, oblacionum et elemosinarum largicio, ieuniorum observacio, et, maxime, salutaris hostis immolacio".

"Maxime, salutaris hostis immolacio" - of the four means of help, the Mass is the most efficacious: "for alle þe prayeres þat ben don for helpe of mannes sowles, þe masse is chef and princepal sokur to alle soules". But the Mass is, after all, only the supreme example of prayer, and it is the encouragement of prayer which is the primary aim of these sermons: "The fyrste dede off mercye . . . ande the moste principall is to praye for hem". The two other deeds of mercy are much less important:

As Sent Gregory seythe and stondythe in the lawe, "Quamvis ieiunium prodest mortuis, ex deuocione ieiunantis,
In the *Festial* sermon for All Souls' Day, fasting is not even mentioned, although it is specified in the *Festial*'s source, the *Legenda Aurea*, and the *Speculum Sacerdotale* includes a story from that source which reports how the soul of a wicked woman who died in despair was saved by her son's fasting for seven years. When the *Festial* sermon is revised later in the fifteenth century and fasting is included among the other deeds of mercy, it is only cursorily treated in comparison with the others:

The third ping pat helpith sowles and eseth pem in peynes of purgatory it is fastyng of ffrendis for all Cristen sowles, ffor it is a custom used in dyvers londys and cuntreis, whan peire frendis be passed out of þe worlde, þei shall fast, wepe and morne certeyn dayes in þe weke and in þe yere after, as it is well figured, Iudicum xj°, how þe childre of Israel morned of custom after þe deth of þe daughter of Ieparte. Much more faith is placed in the power of almsdeeds, since, "as water quenchith fyre, so almes dedis quenchith pe hote ffyre bat brennyth þat be in peynes of purgatory". Often the fact is illustrated by the *Legenda Aurea* story of the man who ignored his cousin's request that his horse should be sold as alms if he died in battle, and who was in consequence damned. The *Festial* sermon which includes this story laments the general decline of almsgiving - "and þat is pytee, in speciall whan a man may not haue parte of his owne good þat he leveth here in his executour handis". The danger involved in entrusting ones spiritual welfare to possibly false executors of one's will looms large in the materialistic mentality of the late Middle Ages. In the sermon edited here, the soul is pictured crying to its executors: "'Miseremini mei, miseremini mei, saltem vos, amici mei, quia manus Domini tetigit me'. 'Haue mercy on me, ye þat my frendis be, ffor þe hande of God hath touched me'". In the same sermon, the uncertain fulfilment of one's will is illustrated by the narratio of children stealing from an orchard, who throw out their spoils to friends. Once apprehended, they lose everything unless those friends are willing to share with them:

Right so in like wise of worldly worshippis þat gaddre togedir many temporall goodis in þe gardeyn of pis worlde. But in his dethe, whan he hath gaddrid frutes ynow, then commyth þe porter, þe keper of þe gardeyn, þat is Deth, or þe owner of þe gardeyn, þat is God, and taketh from þem all þat þei haue. And aftir þeire dethe it is in þe free will of þe executours and of oper wheþþ þei woll gefe hym a parte of his temporall
Though false executors will not go unpunished - "they be in grete perell befor God and damned but if þei make a seethe", the implication is clearly that one should not trust overmuch in one's descendants releasing one from the pains of purgatory. And if one's descendants do not help, there is certainly no chance of helping oneself:

ffor as longe as þe soule and þe body bene knyt togedir, so longe may a man or a woman beynge in þis life help hymself and his soule. But whan þe soule is departed from þe body, hit may do no þing þat shuld mytigate, relese or ease þe peyn of hym or spede hym to blisse.³⁹

Bearing these facts in mind, the pragmatic solution is to do all one can for one's own soul before death.

In the sermons there is little specification of the behaviour by which one may store up sufficient treasure in heaven to avoid hell, perhaps even purgatory. Most preachers are content with the vague phrase, "gode werkis":¹⁰¹

For his [the dead man's] merytorie dedis and his gode werkis þat he hath do in his life shull now stonde vnto hym to grete remedy, help and gostely comfort. And þe gode werkis he berith with hym. But of all his temporall goodis he hath right nought with hym.¹²

The stripping of all man's worldly accretions, until all that is left him are his good deeds, is the usual metaphor by which the preacher stresses man's total dependence on those good deeds at his death.¹³ One preacher attributes the germ of the idea to Chrysostom:

Ande therffore take gode hede qwhat Crisostom seythe: Qwhen we dye, owre ffrendys ffeyen, owre kyn weende aweye, all yat we off erthe have reseyed in erthe it leefe, ande no man xall wee have with vs save onlye owre deedyds - yff yei be gode, to ioye; yff theye bee yvell, to peyne.¹⁴¹

Often the personification of the forlorn dying man is sufficiently fully-developed as to be only a step away from its complete dramatisation in Everyman. In one sermon, the old man cries: "'I axe of all you: Who is he þat woll go and dye with me and bere me felyshep and company? And now euyry ffrende þat I haue forsaketh me and letteth me dye alone'".¹⁵ In another, Everywoman, "Lady de Blacworth", complains:

'My frendys, my godes me hav forsake. To wyrmes mete now am I take. Of al the word now haf I no3th Bitt gode dedes that I wroght.
It has already been pointed out that the sermon edited here is built solely around this theme. It culminates in two narrationes which have as their moralisation the fact that one should prepare for heaven by good deeds on earth. Here the good deeds are specified more directly than in other sermons, in a way which reinforces the theme of late medieval materialism, in that, in a sermon addressed to a very property-conscious audience, they amount to the giving of money to the poor and needy, on the understanding that the man who "with his handis dothe almus dedis and spendith his goodis to Goddis worship" "may fynde þem in be kyngdam of heven after þat he be banysshed and put down bi deth oute of þis worde".

It will be clear already that the scope of the funeral sermon is severely limited. Its aims are, first and foremost, to promote ritual acts for the dead, and in this the doctrine of purgatory so encumbered religious writing that it left little room for the encouragement of active good, as opposed to mechanical charity. But if the aims of the sermons are limited, so are the methods by which those aims are achieved. The intellectual scope of the funeral sermon is much more seriously restricted than other sermons, for there is but one driving force behind it. The medieval preacher of such a sermon can never resist playing the one certain card which always enables him to win the game — "memento mori":

remembre þe bat þou shalt dye, þou wotis not whan, nor whedir þou shalt go to saluacion or to dampnacion, to heven or to hell. And prynte þis wele in þy mynde, and þou shalt haue lytell cause of myrth but grete cause of hevynes, þat well induce, meve and stirre þe to devocion to pray for þe soule of N. and all Cristen sowles . . .

Where appeals for charity may fail when they are made on the grounds of pity and unselfishness, the practical reminder that one too will be in the position of these "Goddis presoners, abiding be oure of his mercy", never fails:

Therefore knowe þou wele þiself, what þou art and what þou shal be, and whidir þou shall goo. Full sekir, þi body to þe erthe and perhappis þi soule to þe paynes of purgatory. Aray þe þen and make redy þi way þat þou may cum to þe life þat is everlasting . . .

In the Festial sermon for Septuagesima Sunday, of three medicines for the "sekenes of synne", the most efficacious is thought of death, which "ys a pryncypall salue to ych man þat takeþe hit to hert, to put away all maner worlds vanyte, and vayn murthe, and reuell". In an elaborate allegory in the course of the funeral sermon for Thomas Beauchamp, man fighting on the battlefield of life is depicted, according to scriptural authority, clothed in leather, the skin of dead animals. "Sed forte tibi
videtur that pis ys a sengul aray for to goo to batel ym" - no, on
the contrary, "videbis que nullum reperitur securius", since this
leather armour is thought of death and, as Augustine says, "Memoria
mortis est defensorium sufficiens contra quecumque peccata". And, if the Biblical exemplum is not enough, the preacher reinforces
it with one from natural life. Just as the peacock, "be he neuer
so proud of his gay fethurus, wen he loketh over hys fowle fet
deponit caudam et obliuiscit tocius glorie sue", so man is saved
from pride and other sins by thought of death. More prosaically,
another sermon cites Seneca on the salutary effect of thought of
death: "For as Senec saythe, noo thyngye xall profytt to thee so
myche to temperawnce as offte thynkenge on thye dethe." In promoting constant thought of death, the aim is, of course,
to inculcate fear. It is this "timor servilis" which is to the
medieval preacher the most effective means of promoting good, so
debased is man's concept of man in the late Middle Ages. And fear
is most effectively aroused, not by abstract discussion of death (for death is, after all, comfortingly remote for most men, and may
even, in a time of pain and privation, be a welcome release), but
by the concrete visualisation of Death.

The importance of pictures to the medieval imagination needs
no stressing. Before literacy was widespread, pictorial represen-
tation was the essential tool of the Church. For this reason images
are defended as "libri laicorum" and sermons stuffed full of
exempla and narrationes are defended:

In the same way, thought of death is encouraged visually by paint-
ings of corpses and double tombs, where the recently-dead man rests
in splendid but unquiet repose above his own cadaver or skeleton. Sometimes the plastic image is reinforced by the written word in
epitaphs of the "As I was, so are you; as I am, so will you be"
varyity, while in literature proper these visual representations of
death are paralleled in images of the stripping of Everyman's
possessions at death; descriptions of hell, purgatory and the Day
of Judgment; listing of the stages of old age or corruption;
narratives of death-bed scenes and warnings from the tomb; the
personification of Death. In the more sophisticated sermons,
elaborate allegories will compare man's life to a battle where
"nostri spirituales inimici, diabolus, caro, et mundus han pi3th
here tentus, rerud and displaied here baners, et fortiter pugnant
contra gonus [sic] humanum" or to a ship which appears stable and
unmoving - "sed non est ita". Even the set-pieces, such as the
originally pre-Christian invocation of transience through the "ubi
sunt" motif, depend for their efficacy on the visual creation of the
figures of the past great - Alexander, Aristotle, Richard II, Abbot
Walter himself - and then the reduction of these images to food for
worms:
Auertas bene et audies que nunc rex, nunc regina moritur, nunc prins vel dux, nunc episcopus vel abbas, nunc baro et burgenses, pauper et diues transeunt ut aqua in cloacha mortis. Ha, Domine Iesu, vbi est nunc magnus Alexander et iste sapiens philosophus Aristoteles, ipsius magister; illi fortes milites Hector et Troilus qui tam viriliter pugnarunt in obsidione Troie? ... Iesu, auctor pietatis, vbi sunt gloriuous princeps rex Richardus, comites et barones, et alli recentes milites, quos infra paucos annos hic vidimus oculis nostris qui fuerunt magis detectabiles et pulcri in oculis hominum qua aqua decurrens in riuo sane? ... Sed si queramus propinquius nostro propositio, vbi est Walterus Froucester qui fuit hic nobiscum infra tres septimanas? ... Mortuus est et sepultus, et nunc vermes se depascunt in suis visceraibus. Et cum quales vos estis nunc, tales fuit ipse; et qualis nunc est ipse, tales vos eritis. Quia mortuus est et sic vos eritis.

In presenting Death as vividly as he can, the preacher of the funeral sermon is of course aided by the presence of the dead man himself: "Gode men, as 3e alle se, here is a myrroure to vs alle: a corse browth to be chyrch". In default of such immediacy, the image of the corpse is still invoked as a memento mori: "Lat bem be pi mirroure pat be dede and passed oute of pis worlde, and bere pou shall undirstond what pou art and what pou shalt be". The facts of death may be presented most vividly by that common lyric topos, the Signs of Death, whether in intact lyrical form, as in the sermon edited here, or in prose:

Vndurstonde howe in yi dethe thyne nyen xall turne in thyme hede, yi veynes xall breste in thye bodye, ande yine herte xall be departed ff[or] soroo ... Ande therffore yche prowde man take hede to thyse wordys yat Sent Austyne seythe off the dede man. Hys noose, he seythe, waxethe colde and hys fface pale, and noothyng is more horrible yan is a dede body. Ande therffore it is nogh3t syfferde to be aboven the erthe, bot as dedlye venom is throwen in a dyche with erthe stopped and with stones, yat it no more be seen, and therwith all toodes are noryshed ande wormes, the qwych xall cum off itselff and ete it to nogh3t."

Even in the sixteenth century the style is not forgotten in Fecknam's sermon on the death of Queen Joanna of Spain:

At whose [i.e. Death's] first entrye and breakeynge into our houses, beholde howe the conscience begynneth to dreade, howe the hearte quaketh, the head stoupeth, the witte wasteth, the strengthe faileth, the visage waxeth pale, the tonge fombleth, the breath goeth away, the speche very rare and thynne, all the beautie of the body cleanse tourned into a grisely and fylthye corruption: and after that the bodye is buried, it falleth into a cationlyke stench the fleshe cleanse tourned into grubbess
These descriptions of the dead or dying body are closely related to the device of meditation on the actual moment of death, when the soul departs from the body. At the moment of death man will be assailed by doubt:

ffeor, as dyverse doctours seyne, at the owre off owre dethe ffeendys xall bee theyr ande all the synnes yat wee have doon thei xall schewe tyll vs in all yat theye meye to brynge vs in dyspeyre, ande syn off dyspeyre is neuer ffor3even i[n] thys worlde ne in the todur.70

The arch-sin, despair, has Biblical precedent to the medieval mind in Judas, who hanged himself in disbelief of forgiveness, and is the subject of numerous sermon stories, such as that attached to the name of Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, who only narrowly avoided despair,71 or that found in the Speculum Sacerdotale sermon for All Souls' Day, which shows a sinner succumb: "But or the preste come deuelles were come in-to hire, and prou3 terrour and drede of whome sche dyede ne my3te no lenger a-byde."72 In the sermons at any rate, advice for coping with this moment is, as usual, practical. The resurrection of the soul is ensured by unswerving faith in the teaching of Holy Church, and by the fact that one has received the sacrament of the last rites before death:

One is yat - qwhen he passethe owte of thys warlde with perffyte charyte anense God ande hys negh3bour with hope and stedffaste in the ffeythe and rygh3t beleve in all the xij articulls as Holye Chyrche techethe . . . The secunde is yat man xulde vse that he departe with verre contricion ande confessyoun off his synnes . . .74

It was faith that saved Grossetestete:

But pen was oure lady redy, pat ys ay redy in nede, and sayde to hym: "My seruand, say pou beleuyst as holy chyrch dope." And he cried and sayde: "Y beleue as holy chyrch beleuyth." And þerwyth þe fendes vanechid away anon; and he þaf vp his spyryte.75

As for the last rites, their importance lies both in the sacrament of penance and in the swallowing of the Host. Incomplete fulfilment of the former was enough to send a soul to purgatory, as is the case of the soul who begs for the institution of All Souls' Day: "ffor as yeett I haue not done my penaunce whan I was lyvyng in erth þat answered to myn offencis and grevous synnes þat I did in my life tym4e".76 Conversely, the safe passage of Thomas Beauchamp's soul is more likely because he died "tamquam bonus Christianus miles, armatus cum scuto bone fidei, confessus et valde contritus pro peccatis suis".77 On the importance of communion with God through the Eucharist, Mirk in particular is most insistent. In his burial sermon he includes a story on the possession by a devil of an unhoused corpse as evidence that "hit is often sene pat
fendis han pouste to trobolon a cors pat hath not hys ful sacrament of holy chyrch. In a Corpus Christi story one man is so convinced of the efficacy of the Host at the moment of death that, unable to swallow it for vomiting, he prays that it may enter his body through his side:

And þerwyth, in sy3t of al men, þe syde opened, and þe ost glode into þe body; and þen þe syde closet aþen, hole as hit was befor, and so sone aftir he 3af þe gost vp.

Death is cruel and inevitable, but there is a further irony, in that its hour is unknown and often unexpected: "'Nichil enim morte cercius, nec hora mortis incercius' . . . 'For noping is more certeyn nor sykyr as deth, nor noping so vnsekyr as þe oure of dethe'". The uncertain hour of death may be expressed by the common literary device of the Three Ages in which man may be seized from the world. In the sermon edited here, the three letters sent by Death to the king in his castle are interpreted as the three assaults made by Death on man at different stages of his life. In a Latin sermon on the text, "Dies mei transierunt quasi nauis", the ship represents man's life, in which Youth sits at the forecastle, Middle Age at the topcastle, Old Age at the hindcastle. Though these are the traditional divisions, one sermon gives a variant of this in the deaths of young men, children and old men, describing these deaths as "bytter ande more esye and kynde dele dethe". Where the threefold division is not made, the random arrival of Death is illustrated in exempla such as the one edited here, where the archer shoots around the target till finally he hits the bull's eye:

By þis but is vndirstond euery man lyving. þe archere is Deth. And þan shotith he above þe prik whan he sleeth one þat is oldere þan þou, sumtyme lower whan he sleeth youger þan þou, sumtyme on bothe sydes of þe butte whan he sleeth þi broþer, þi suster, wife or childe or eny of þi kyn. And so longe he shoteth, þe atte last he hittith þe prik whan he sleeth þe.

A further uncertainty surrounds the death of medieval man - whether his soul is destined for heaven, hell, or, most likely, purgatory. The sermons deal little with heaven, since their aim is fear of punishment rather than hope of reward. The description of hell is conventional:

all the wyttys off man schulde soroo ande be afferde off the horrible sygh3tys off the duellys ande nogh3t xall be herde bott soroynge and weyligne and gneystynge off tethe, and yer xall be man in all hys v wyttys. Yer been markenes ande myche stynke, stronge colde and heet, hunger and schryste [sic], tempestes and stormes, and theye be ffedde with dragons gall ande drynke venom with moo peynes ande sorows than all thys world can tell . . .
Purgatory is no better, save that its torments are at least finite:

The fffyre off purgatorye ouerpasseth the kyndelye thys fffyre here withowte comparyschoun in hete more yan yis fffyre ouerpasseth the kyndelye hete the hete off the sun. Mervel no man yff it so schulde be yet the same fyre is theyr as it is in hell withowten anye dyfarence with the syche odyr peynes, owte-take yis, yat in hell is noone hope off dylyverawnce and yel yat been in purgatorye arne comforted bye [hope].

In comparison, the Day of Judgment is remote and indeed to be desired, promising the end of purgatory and the translation of purged souls to heaven. It is therefore rarely treated in these sermons, where much more immediate horrors are available, but where it is found, again the depiction is concrete and the aim is to arouse fear of the day "quando tota terra schal tremble and quake for drede fere, et sepulcra et monimenta aperientur et mortui resurgent". On that day not even the living will escape death but must die only to rise again - even Enoch and Elijah who were translated from life without suffering death "3ytt xall yei dye and be sleyne in the eende off the worlde".

In presenting death vividly to his audience, the preacher in the late Middle Ages resorts to an often naive and soon outworn personification of Death. The Protean shape of death lends itself to many comparisons - the king, the thief, the summoner - and its visual creation may be achieved by many concrete aids - the bow and arrow, the sickle, the hour-glass, the mirror. Of these, Death as king and tyrant is the most powerful and constant image evoked, as in the sermon here, where Death is "a grete kynge, hardy, stronge and dredefull", who "hath regnid from Adam and yett he shall regne vnto pe worldis ende vpon all mankynde." The image of Death as thief informs the whole of that sermon, the theme of which is the theft of man's earthly goods, and much of which devolves around the question, "Quis eum spoliauit?" - who has robbed him? The answer is Death:

Deth takith away and privith a man of all his goodis and revith hym of his life which is a thinge pat is moste desyrous to euery man. Wherefore Deth may wele be called dredfull, for he hape spoyled hym. So shall he robbe bothe pe and me and euery creature, yonge and olde.

The personification is so familiar that it needs no explanation in Pecknam's description of the spoliations of Death ("at whose first entrye and breakynge into our houses") or in such a sentence as: "How sleyly the deth schal robben ham: how apertely he schal a-teyn ham: how diversely he schal towche hem!" Here, Death as thief is paired with Death as summoner or sergeant, the latter most familiar from Thomas Wimblendon's Paul's Cross sermon of 1388, where Death is imagined as the last of "pre somoners ober seryauntis" who call man to his reckoning. Both images are used in the acrostic on "mors"
in one of the Latin sermons, where each letter is interpreted as
an image of the whole, Death - "m" as "myrrur", "o" as "orolage",
"r" as "rubber" (i.e. robber), "s" as "sumuner".

An attempt to summarise the funeral or memorial sermon of the
late Middle Ages may serve as an introduction to the sermon edited
here. Up until the final overthrow of Catholicism after Mary's
reign, the aim of these sermons is a narrow one. Such a ritual had
built up around the doctrine of purgatory that the placation of
souls in purgatory had become a never-ending task which many
preachers saw as sufficient end in itself. Sometimes indeed, prac­
tical charity for the living is urged as well as mechanical charity
for the dead, but even so, both are urged for selfish reasons -
"talis qualis vos estis . . .". Where pragmatism and materialism
determine the content of the sermon, the style is generally charac­
terised by an unsubtle and concrete approach to one over-riding
emotion, fear of death. This approach expresses itself in standard
visual representations of aspects of death, designed originally to
present death vividly and fearfully to the ordinary man, but over­
worked and outworn by the end of our period. Aimed at the mean of
the people, neither the labouring classes nor the clergy or
University men, the sermon edited here captures the essence of late
medieval preaching on death. It is not without merit as a piece of
literature, even if its limited intellectual aims are stereotyped
in their realisation. It may fairly, though perhaps negatively,
be introduced by reiterating Huizinga's damning summary of the late
medieval vision of death: "The desire to invent a visible image
of all that appertained to death entailed the neglecting of all
those aspects of it which were not suited to direct representation.
Thus the cruder conceptions of death, and these only, impressed
themselves continually on the minds. The macabre vision does not
represent the emotions of tenderness or of consolation. The elegiac
note is wanting altogether. At the bottom the macabre sentiment is
self-seeking and earthly. It is hardly the absence of the departed
dear ones that is deplored; it is the fear of one's own death, and
this only seen as the worst of evils."

The article is intended as a preliminary study only of the late medieval funeral and memorial sermon, a field neglected not only because such sermons are comparatively rare but also because very few indeed are available in print. It may, therefore, be of value to list here the sermons studied at first hand in the compilation of this article, as a short check-list of fifteenth-century sermons for funerals, anniversaries of deaths, or All Souls' Day. Printed texts of vernacular sermons: Mirk's Festial, ed. Th. Erbe, EETS, ES 96 (London, 1905), All Souls' Day sermon pp.269-71, burial sermon pp.294-97, notes on church burial pp.297-99; Speculum Sacerdotale, ed. E.H. Weatherly, EETS, OS 200 (London, 1936), All Saints' Day sermon (containing All Souls' Day material) pp.218-24, All Souls' Day sermon pp.224-32, explanation of the Office of the Dead pp.232-35. Printed texts of macaronic sermons: P.J. Horner, F.S.C., "John Paunteley's Sermon at the Funeral of Walter Froucester, Abbot of Gloucester (1412)", American Benedictine Review 28 (1977), 147-66 and "A Sermon on the Anniversary of the Death of Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick", Traditio 34 (1978), 381-401. MSS of vernacular sermons: British Library MS Harley 2247, All Souls' Day sermon (a revised version of the Festial All Souls' Day sermon) ff.205v-07r, sermon for a burial or a trental or an anniversary (a revised version of the Festial burial sermon with a new introduction) ff.207r-10r, sermon for a burial or a trental (edited here) ff.210r-13v; Cambridge University Library MS Gg.vi.16, burial sermon ff.22r-26r (also found in MSS John Rylands Library Manchester Rylands English 109, ff.6v-9r; Bodley 95, ff.107r-11r; Sidney Sussex College Cambridge 24, ff.202r-04r). MSS of Latin sermons with English tags: Bodleian Library Oxford MS Bodley 649, burial sermon ff.119v-24r; Bodleian Library Oxford MS Barlow 24, burial sermon for a man ff.206r-08r, burial sermon for a woman ff.208r-09r, burial sermon for man or woman ff.209r-10v, anniversary sermon ff.210v-12r, All Souls' Day sermon ff.212r-13v. For references to other funeral sermons and related material, see G.R Owst, Preaching in Medieval England (Cambridge, 1926) and Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England (second revised edition Oxford, 1961) passim.

1 This quotation is from the sermon edited in this article (hereafter referred to as Sermon), 11.12-13.

2 T. More, The supplycacyon of soulys made by syr Thomas More knyght counsellour to our souerayn lorde the kyngye and chauncellour of hys Duchi of Lancaster. Agaynst the supplycacyon of beggars. Quotation is from the Bodleian Library Oxford edition of 1529.

3 This quotation is from the sermon edited in this article (hereafter referred to as Sermon), 11.12-13.

4 The title of the sermon ("In Die Sepulture seu Trigintali") suggests that it may be preached either at the burial service or at the memorial service on the thirty-first day after burial (the "trental" or "month's mind"). Such a service presupposes the ability to pay.
Sermon, 11.26-27.

The Earl's funeral sermon was preached by Bishop Grandisson of Exeter in 1341 (see Owst, Preaching, p.265).

Ibid., pp.268 and 329.

The sermon, which was preached in 1401, has been edited by Horner, "A Sermon".

The sermon, which was preached in 1412, has also been edited by Horner, "John Paunteley's Sermon". In the same genre is the sermon preached by Bishop Sheppey of Rochester on the death of Lady Cobham, who was a personal acquaintance. Sheppey's macaronic sermons, perhaps in his own hand, are preserved in New College Oxford MS 92. Several of the sermons, including Lady Cobham's, have been edited by G. Mifsud, John Sheppey, Bishop of Rochester, as Preacher and Collector of Sermons, unpublished Oxford B.Litt. thesis (1953).

Owst, Preaching, p.329.

Horner, "John Paunteley's Sermon", 149, 11.3-4.

Ibid., 151, 11.48-64. The interpretation needs defending, not because of the "1" (which was not pronounced in "Walter"), but "quia nomen suum fuit Walterus et non aqua, id est Wateer et non Watur. Differentia est inter has vocales E et V."


More, The supplycacyon.

Its Biblical authority is tenuous, based in the Old Testament on the second Book of Maccabees xii, 39-45 and in the New Testament on inferences drawn from Matthew xii, 31 and Paul's first letter to the Corinthians iii, 11-15. The foundations of medieval teaching on purgatory were laid by Augustine (De Civitate Dei, xxi, 13 and 24) and defined at the Councils of Lyons (1274) and Florence (1439).


Horner, "John Paunteley's Sermon", 153, 11.149-51.


The universal observation of All Souls' Day on the 2nd November, the day after All Saints' Day, was established through the influence of Odilo of Cluny (c.962-1048), who in 998 commanded its celebration in the Benedictine houses at Cluny. This founding of the feast is briefly mentioned in the Legenda Aurea sermon for All Souls' Day, which served as a model for the All Souls' Day sermons in the Festial and the Speculum Sacerdotale.

Festial, p.269, 11.6-12.


MS Harley 2247, f.208v. Though the sermon is a revision of Mirk's burial sermon, the attribution to Augustine is not found in the Festial sermon, which cites only three sources of help for the dead and is entirely in the vernacular (cf. Festial, p.269, 11.14-16). The fourfold division is standard, cf. Legenda Aurea, p.732; Speculum Sacerdotale, p.225, 11.30-33; MS Cambridge University Library Gg.vi.16, f.22v; MS Barlow 24, f.206v (here the decree is attributed to Gregory the Great, who indeed ratified Augustine's teaching on the subject). See too Sermon, 11.182-5 and Note to 11.184-208.


"Trentals", seyde he, "deliveren fro penance
Hir frendes sole, as we olde as yonge . . .
Delivereth out", quod he, "amon the soules:
Ful hard it is with fleshhock or with soules
To been yclawed, or to brenne or bake.
Now spede yow hastily, for Cristes sake!"

Langland, too, doubts the superiority of Masses over other ways of helping the soul (Piers Plowman, ed. A.V.C. Schmidt (London, 1978), Passes VII, 11.180-81):

... to trust on thise triennals - trewly, me thynketh,
It is nought so siker for the soule, certes, as is Dowel.

Nevertheless, faith in Masses survived well into the era of the Reformation, and Thomas Cromwell, for example, left money in his will for 3,000 Masses for his soul as late as 1540. In 1555 at least two clergymen "independently revived the pre-Reformation practice of saying a trental, or series of thirty requiem masses" (A.G. Dickens, The English Reformation (Fontana, London, 1967), p.21). Dickens notes (p.20) that "some Englishmen felt profound offence when the government of Edward VI forbade organised intercession for their dead parents and benefactors; they hastened spontaneously to restore the practice when the accession of Queen Mary made it safe".

The most concrete manifestation of this belief in the efficacy of Masses for the dead is, of course, the typically English institution of the chantry chapel from the second half of the fourteenth century on.

MS Cambridge University Library Gg.vi.16, f.22r.

Ibid., f.22v.

See Festial, p.269, 11.14-16.

Legenda Aurea, p.732.

Quotation is from the revised Festial sermon (MS Harley 2247, f.209r), which is here more cogent than the version edited by Erbe (cf. Festial, p.270, 11.16-17).

On false executors and the dangers involved in trusting one's family and friends, both before and after death, see the Septuagesima Sunday sermon in MS Royal 18 B XXIII (Middle English Sermons, ed. W.O. Ross, EETS, OS 209 (London, 1940 for 1938), pp.83-91). The total desertion of a man by his family is especially pertinent: "But what frendshiphe sheweb pise vn-to hym? Wepon and cryon and veylon is dethe and bryngep hym to ys grave, and pei leven hym; and aftur pat pe moneth mynd is do, anon aftur pei haue forget hym" (p.87, 1.35-88, 1.3). See too the speech of Lazarus in the Towneley play dealing with his resurrection (The Towneley Plays, ed. G. England and A.W. Pollard, EETS, ES 71 (London, 1897), pp.390-2). The theme is very common and is, of course, closely connected with that of Everyman, the desertion of man by all but his good works (see below, p.199).

The origin of the phrase may be traced to Revelation xiv, 13 ("Beati mortui, qui in Domino moriuntur. Amodo iam dicit Spiritus, ut requiescant a laboribus suis: opera enim illorum sequuntur illos").

John Bromyard in his Summa Predicantium compares the plight of the dying man leaving his mourning family to a visitor leaving a fine court - for the dying man "all that remains to him then are his deeds and short-comings" (quoted Owst, Literature and Pulpit, p.529).

MS Cambridge University Library Gg.vi.16, f.25r.

MS Harley 2247, f.208r.

MS Worcester Cathedral Library F.10, f.208r (quoted Owst, Literature and Pulpit, p.530).

Sermon, 11.19-23.

The Biblical locus classicus for thought of death is Ecclesiasticus vii, 40 ("Memorare
nouissima tua; et in aeternum non peccabis"). In the lyrics the refrain from the Office of the Dead, "Timor mortis conturbat me", is much exploited, e.g. William Dunbar’s "Lament for the Makaris" (The Poems of William Dunbar, ed. W.M. Mackenzie (London, 1932), pp.20-3).

MS Harley 2247, f.207r.

Sermon, 11.289-94.

Festial, p.64, 11.20-2.


Ibid., 388.

MS Cambridge University Library Gg.vi.16, f.25r.

Of those sermons studied here, the one to discuss death in the most abstract and academic way is that in Cambridge University Library MS Gg.vi.16 and other MSS (see footnote 1), which includes discussions on topics such as why one should die since baptism washes away original sin (for which death is the punishment), and why men die with different degrees of suffering since all carry the same burden of original sin.

See Mirk’s defence of images in his sermon for Corpus Christi Day (Festial, p.171, 11.18-29), which is based on John Beleth’s Rationale Divinorum Officiorum (PL 202, col.89), cf. "Nam ut ait Greg., quod clerico littera, id laico est pictura".

Festial, p.166, 11.2-6.


As Dickens points out (English Reformation, p.26), it was not until the Reformation that “emphasis in religion shifted steadily from the image to the printed word, from pictures to literary ideas”.


Horner, "John Paunteley’s Sermon", 150, 11.29-30.

Ibid., 160, 11.380-98.

Festial, p.294, 11.2-3. Wynkyn de Worde’s 1509 edition of the funeral sermon preached on the death of Henry VII has an engraving which shows the preacher, the Bishop of Rochester, facing his audience from the pulpit, while between them lies in state, in robe and crown, with sceptre and orb, the body of the King (reproduced Owst, Preaching, p.267).
Despite the seeming inappropriateness to poetry of both subject matter and style, the Signs of Death are "the most popular of all Middle English death lyrics" (Woolf, English Religious Lyric, p.78). The motif is adapted to drama in Lazarus' Towneley Play speech on the horrors of the grave. The origin of the device is Job xvii, 14 ("Putredini dixi: Pater meus es, mater mea, et soror mea, verribus").

Sermon, 11.162-73. The insertion of whole lyrics into sermons, as opposed to rhymes as mnemonic devices, is not unusual. See A.J. Fletcher, "A Death Lyric from the Summa Predicantium, MS. Oriel College 10", Notes and Queries, n.s. 24 (1977), 11-12 and "'I Sing of a Maiden': A Fifteenth-Century Sermon Reminiscence", Notes and Queries, n.s. 25 (1978), 107-8. Cf. too Lady de Blacworth's complaint quoted above (pp.199-200).

MS Cambridge University Library Gg.vi.16, f.25r-v. Cf. the description in the Festial sermon for the first Sunday in Quadragesima (p.84, 11.20-30).


MS Cambridge University Library Gg.vi.16, f.24v. In The Faerie Queene, Despair tries to persuade the Red Cross Knight to kill himself.

In the Artes Moriendi, it is more meditative. For a typical example, see the section on dying well in the Book of Vices and Virtues (the section is edited by N.F. Blake, Middle English Religious Prose (London, 1972), pp.132-8).

Speculum Sacerdotale, p.227, 11.19-20. The narratio originates in the Legenda Aurea (pp.735-6).

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MS Cambridge University Library Gg.vi.16, f.24r.

Speculum Sacerdotale, p.227, 11.19-20. The narratio originates in the Legenda Aurea (pp.735-6).

For the Three Ages convention and its elaboration as the motif of the Three Living and the Three Dead, see Gray, Themes and Images, pp.206-9; Tristram, Figures of Life and Death, pp.162-7; Woolf, English Religious Lyric, pp.344-7.
In MS Cambridge University Library Gg.vi.16, f.24v, this is the third of three reasons to fear death: "One ffor peyne in dyynge, the secunde in departynge off etheyr ffro other [i.e. body from soul], ande the thyrde at qwhat plyte yei xall been qwhat been dede".

Though the text of the funeral sermon in MS Cambridge University Library Gg.vi.16 and other MSS (see footnote 1) is "Mortuus vivet", the fear of mortality is a more potent force in it than confidence in resurrection.

The personification of Death in literature seems to appear first in the fourteenth century. Cf., for example, Death as warrior in Passus XX of Piers Plowman and the pursuit of Death by the three rioters in Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale. For Death the archer, see Sermon, 11.105-16; for Death as harvester, see Horner, "A Sermon", 393; for Death as time-piece and mirror, see MS Barlow 24, f.212r.

Sermon, 11.77-80. The same image of Death as "a myghti and a stronge tiraunt" informs the narratio of 11.117-57. It is grounded in texts like Romans v, 14 ("Sed regnavit mors ab Adam usque ad Moysen . . .") and Revelation vi, 8 ("Et ecce equus pallidus: et qui sedebat super eum, nomen illi Mors, et infernus sequebatur eum, et data est illi potestas super quattuor partes terrae, interficere gladio, fame, et morte, et bestiis terrae").


The personification is common, cf. the lyric beginning "Ffare well, this world! I take my leve for evere. / I am arrested to apere at Goddes face" (Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century, ed. C. Brown (Oxford, 1939), pp.236-7); John Waldeby's reference to Death as "God's bailiff" (quoted Owst, Literature and Pulpit, p.532); Hamlet's description of Death as "this fell sergeant" (Act V, Scene ii). For the reference in Wimbledon's sermon, see I.K. Knight, Wimbledon's Sermon (Pittsburgh, 1967), p.99.

The acrostic is taken from the Fasciculus Morum and
This common warning uttered to the living by the dead is here used by Paunteley of Walter Froucester: "Talis qualis vos estis ipse fuit; et tales qualis ipse nunc est vos eritis" (Horner, "John Paunteley's Sermon", 153, 11.127-8).

This comment on the late medieval funeral sermon may fairly be applied to late medieval religion in general. In Dickens' view, "the Catholic party lost the struggle in England not simply because they temporised with Henry VIII but also because, in an age when an increasing number of men were thinking for themselves, the intellectual slackness of much late medieval religion played into the hands of Protestant critics" (English Reformation, p.22).

"Solum michi superest sepulcrum", lob 17.
Right worshipfull ffrendis, it is a grete werk of pytee and mercy to helpe and comfort þem þat be bounde in bodely preson or temporall seruage. Mych more it is merytory and medefull to helpe, socour and releve poo soules þat be bounde and peymed in þe preson of purgatory, for þei may right nought help þemself. [210v] Wherefore the Goddis prisoners abyding in purgatory haue moste nede of helpe and socour and comfort and sonnest may be holpe by almus dedis of merci and pitee, with precius prayers of þeirre ffrendis. And for þis cause I suppose we be all now cum hyddir at þis tyme to remembre and help and comfort þe soule of our gode ffrende N., whose body hath his sepulture in þis sanctuary, whose soule God hath departed from þe erthly careyn and take it vnþo his mercy; that if 'hit' be in peynfull preson of purgatory, lat vs do oure dewtye devoutely and specially to pray for þat soule and all Cristen soules, þat allmyghti Ihesu þat is mercifull, by our mediacions and meane prayers, þe raper he woll take it vnþo his infinyte mercy. For his merytory dedis and his gode werkis þat he hath do in his life shall now stonde vnþo hym to grete remedy, help and gostely comfort. And boe gode werkis he berith with hym. But of all his temporall goodis he hath right nought with hym. Wherefore he may well say with þe holy prophete lob, "Solum michi superest sepulcrum", þat is to say: "Of all my goodis þat I was wont to haue Is oonly left me but my grave".
And þat ye may be more be meved to mercy and pytee to pray for þat soule and all Cristen, ye may se at þe1 eye what is reft hym and what is left hym.
What is reft hym?
Certis, all þat he was wont to haue.
What is left hym?
Undirstonde it, verrey riʒt nought but his grave.
So of all his goodis he hath nought But a lทยll place in þe erth wrought, which is his grave. Wherefore consydrre þe wrecchednes of þis vnstabill worlde.
It is necessary to gode men to remembre þat þe ioye of þis transytory lyfe is right nought worth noper to be trusted vpon. Which worldely ioyes stande in iiij: in ricches, in worshippis and in delitis.
But as for worshippis and rycches, be þou neuer so worshipfull, be þou neuer so riche, all shall be take from þe in þi dethe and right not shalt þou haue but a sengle shete and oonly by grave, but þi gode werkis, as I seye de beforne, yf þere be eny.
It is of them þat trusten in worldis worship and rycches
as it is of wanton childre bat breke into a mennis gardeyn to
gadder applis, peris, nuttis or oper frute. Sum gone in and
sum stand withoute and dare not entir pe gardeyn for betyng or
rebuking. And þei þat be within cast applis and such frute
as þey haue to þem þat be withoute. But atte last commyth
þe owner or keper of þe gardeyn and fyndith þem þat be within
breking his gardeyn. He takyth from þem all þe frute þat þei
haue gaderid and leve þem not oon. Nor noon þey [21lr]
shall haue, but if þei woll gife þem eny þat stande withoute,
and yett þat is in þeire ffre wyll whebir þei woll gfe þem
parte or noo. Right so in like wise of worldey worshippis
þat gaddre togedir many temporall goodis in þe gardeyn of
þis worlde. But in his dethe, whan he hath gaddrid frutes
ynow, then commyth þe porter, þe keper of þe gardeyn, þat
is Deth, or þe owner of þe gardeyn, þat is God, and taketh
from þem all þat þei haue. And aftir þeire dethe it is in
þe free will of þe executours and of oper whebir þei woll
gfe þym a parte of his temporall goodis or noo.
I seid also þat þe ioye of þis worlde stondith in delytis.
But take hede. He þat ioyeth and inforsith hym in delytis
he shall be tormentid in peynes and his stynking careyn to
wormys mete.

Than sithen our welbeloued ffrende N. seyth and
compleyneth þat of all his goodis þat he was wont to haue is
oonly left hym but hisgrave, I axe a question - "Quis eum
spoliauit?" - who hath spoyled hym of all his goodis, of his
ricches, of his honours and his delytis, whebir bi infortune
of ffire or water or thevis? It is answerd, nober ffire,
water nor thevis, but oon þat is a grete kynge, hardy, stronge
and dredefull. His name is Deth, and he hath regnid from
Adam and yett he shall regne vnto þe worldis ende vpon all
mankynde. He woll no man nor woman spare, grete noire smale,
tyme nor place. Ad Romanos 5°. "Audax et fortis est mors,
quia nulli parcit persone magne vel parue, nec loco, nec
tempore." This king Deth is dredefull, ye, noþer so dredefull.
And cause whi seith þe philosophir, ffor Deth takith away
and privith a man of all his goodis and revith hym of his
life which is a thinge þat is moste desyrous to euery man.
Wherefore Deth may wele be called dredefull, for he hape
spoyled hym. So shall he robbe bothe þe and me and euery
creature, yonge and olde.

Therefore euery man make hym redy, for sodenly dredefull
Dethe shall cum whan man binkeb lest. Ecclesiastici xj°,
"Memor esto, quoniam mors non tardabit." Hereto accordyth
Seint Austen, "De Spiritu et Anima", saying þus, "Nec inicium,
nec fines meum scio. Nescio aut quo venio aut quo vado, sed
plane scio quod mortales sumus, et quamuis volumus quamuis
omnes moriemur. Nichil enim morte cercius, nec hora mortis
incircius". Seint Austyn seith, "I knowe nober my begynnynge
nor my last ending, ffor I wote not from whens I cum, nor

54 within] with (hym cancelled) in MS.
98 my] nor my repeated MS.
whidir I shall go. But playnly oon þing I knowe well þat ys
certeyn and sekir, þat all we be mortall and dedely, and 
wheder we will or no we shall dy. For noþing is more 
certeyn nor sykyr as deth, nor noþing so vnsekyr as þe cure 
of dethe". Therefore he reþy, for Dethe hath spoiled and 
slayne elder þan þou art and yonger þan þou art.

Wherefore Deth may be assembled and likenyd vnto an 
yonge archere or a schoter. Sumtyme he shotyth ouer þe 
butt, sumtyme vndir, sumtyme on þe side, and sumtyme he 
hittith þe prik with þe garlond. By þis but is vndirstond 
every man lyving. Þe archere is Deth. And þan shotith he 
above þe prik whan he sleeth one þat ys olde þer þou, 
sumtyme lower whan he sleeth yonger þan þou, sumtyme on 
bothe sydes of þe butte whan he sleeth þi brorþþ, þi suster, 
wife or childe or eny of þi kyn. And so longe he shoteth, 
þe atte last he hittith þe prik whan he sleeth þe. For Þou art vnto þe sharp arrowe of Dethe as a prik or a mark in 
þe butte. Trenorum 30, "Posuit me quasi signum ad sagittam".

I rede in a story how on a tyme þere was a myghti and a 
stronge tyrant þat longe tyme beseged a kynge in his castell 
wher he lay. Whan þe tyrant perceyved þe kynge wolde not 
yelde vp his castell to hym, he ordeynyd gunnes 
and engynes and at euery stroke of þe engynes he cast in a lettre writen to þe kynge. The first 
scripture and writing was þis:

"Kynge, be þou redy, wach and wake; 
Or þou be ware I wol þe take".

[The seconde tyme he wrote þus:]

"Though þou be stovt, noble and gay, 
Thou shalt yelde þe castell, yf I may".

The þird tyme he wrote þus:

"O þou kynge, aslake þi boste, 
For Deth is ny to take þi goste".

Gostely þi þus [tyrant is] vndirstond dredefull Deþ þat no 
man he sparith, riche, pore, yonge nor olde. This kynge in þe 
castell ys vndirstond þe kynge pat is closid in þe body 
as a kynge in þe castell. This tyrant Deth yevith iii sawtis 
to þe kynge, mannis soule. First Deth seyth in yeþþe þus, 
"Yonge man, be þou redy, wache and wake; or þou be ware I wol þe take". But whan seith Deth þus? Pleynly, whan he sendith 
þe sikenes, by the which þou maiste vndirstond evidently 
þink, notwithstanding in þe yowþþ. [212r] Ecclesiastici 
70, "Ne impie agas et noli esse stultus ne moriaris in tempore 
non tuo". The wise man seyth, "Do þou not wikkedly, be þou 
no fole þat thow dye not in þat tyme þat is not thyne". As 
who sey: suche tyme as þou art not redy to Godward. The 
secunde tyme, Dethe leyth a sawte in þe myddis of þi life in 
thy best lyking seying þus, "Though þou be stronge and gaye, 
þou shall yelde þe castell, if I may". And þis ys whan he 
sendith the not onlonly bodily sikenes but also tribulacions,
diseases, slaundrys, motyng, pletyng, by which pou maiste 
well vndirstond that pe worlde is fals and disseyvable. 

Ecclesiastici xij°, "Nescit homo quod tempus pretereat et mors 
appropinquat et relinquat omnia alijs et morietur." As who 
sey: man woll not knowe in his best liking pat deth ys nygh, 
and all that he hath he shall leve behynde hym to othir and 
hy shall dye. The thrid tyme, Dethe leyth a sawte to the in 
thyne age, sending pe nowe hard tokens seying thus, "O pou 
man, slake pi boste, ffor Dethe is ny to take pi goste". 

Whan spekith thus Dethe vnto pe? In byn age withoute [doute], 
whan þere apperith in þy body tokenys and signes þat þou 
maiste well knowe þat þou art atte þe pyttyis brynk. Þat is 
to sey:

When þi handis quaketh,
þi lippes blaketh,
Thyne hed rokkyth,
165
By nose droppith,
By shynnes sharpith,
By synnewes starkith,
By brest pantith,
By breth wantyth,
170
Thy tethe rattlyth,
Thi prote rotelyth.
Anon þou thenkkest þyn hert wolde brast 
For þy life may not last.

Ecclesiastici 14, "Homo, memor esto quoniam mors non tardabit."

The secunde question may not be axed of þis man þat 
Dethe hath þus spoyled - whereby he may be rather helpe and 
make hym riche ageyn? It may be anserwed, withoute fayle 
[212v] bi the speciall suffrages and precious prayers of 
Holy Chirch he may be releved, holpe and socoured and be 
restored to moo and gretter riches, delytes, honoures, 
dignitees, ffrendshippes, ioyes and salaces þen euere had 
beforn. In which suffrages be these: prayers, ffastingis, 
almus and þe immolacion in offering of Cristis body, þe holy 
sacrament of þe awter. As Seint Austyn wryteth in a decree, 
185 
xij° q. ij°, "Anime defunctorum 4Γr modis soluuntur." 
Doctours seyn bo soules þat lyen in purgatory þei must be 
holpe from peyn ober þe way of grace or ellis by þe way of 
rightwisnes. Bi þe way of grace as þus, by devout, besy and 
diligent prayers of rightful men. Iacobi 2, "Multum valet 
deprecacio iusti assidua." And þi immolacion vnto God whan 
verrey Goddis body is offerid in þe messe. Figure of þis, 
190 
Machabeorum 12, de Iuda Machabeo, how þat a myghti prince 
called Iudas Machabeus was meved of pyte þat he sende to 
Ierusalem xij millia dragmys of syluere to offre þere in 
195 
messis for þe defawtis of þem þat were dede, where it is seid 
in þe text folowyng, "Sancta et salubris est cogitacio pro 
defunctis exorare vt a peccatis soluuntur." That is to sey, 
it is full holy, mertry and medefull to pray for þem þat 
be dede, þat þei may be relevid of þeire synnes and take 
vnto Goddis mercy. Secunde, soules in purgatory be holpe

158 doute] omitted MS.
per viam iusticie, bi way of rightwisnes thus, in giving almous, Thobie 40, "Elemsina ab omni peccato et a morte liberat", or ellis bi he way of rightwisnes as bus, payng peyne for peyne by ffastingis, pilgrimagis and ophir grete werkis of penance ffor po soules bat be in peynes, Prouerbiorum 10, "Justicia liberauit a morte animas defunctorum." By his way of rightwisnes soules in purgatory be delyuered from endeles dampanacion.

The bird question is his - who is bounde to helpe and releve oure ffrende N.? It is answerd, his executours, chosen of trust to do for hym, and oper ffrendis pat he gafe a parte to of his goodis, to whom he soule cryeth day and night, "Miseremini mei, miseremini mei, saltem vos, amici mei, quia manus Domini tetigit me" - "Haue mercy on me, Ye pat my frendis be, For he hande of God hath touched me".

And peire executours and peire frendis helpe bym not with his owne godes at his nede, they be in grete perell befor God and damned but if he make a seethe. Nota narracio de milite in prelio interficto supra in alia exortacione. For oure ffrende N.-

Of all pat he was wont to haue Is left hym oonly but his grave.

For if it be axed whose be pe londis or þese houses, þis grounde, þis wife, þis childe, I shall answer: it were his, but not his now. But goo to his grave and axe: who is this? It shall be answerd and seyd: þis is his grave. And all oper goodis and catellis he shall leve to ope men pat he was wont to haue, and oonly left hym but his graue. Psalmo 48, "Relinquent alienis diuicias et sepulcra eorum domus illorum in eternum." These wordis ben seyde of þis man and of all ope pat be dide - thei haue left þeir goodis and ryche to ope men, but þe graues of þem is þeir houses into þe worlde ende. For all þeir ryche, dignytees, honouris, delites, ffrendshippis ben goodis of þe worlde and þe worlde wolle kepe þem to deceyve ope as it deceyved hym.

Wherefore þe worlde wele may be likenyd and assemblid vnto a certeyn citee, þat of custom þei wolde chese þem euery yere a new kyng þat knewe not of þeir lawes. And whan þe yere was com to an ende, þat king shuld be banysshed into straunge lande and neuer cum ute after, nor haue gode of þem, nor after to be putte to worship with þem. Vpon a tyme þei chose þem a newe king and he vndestode wele þat he shuld regne vpon þe cite but oon yere. And so by grete policie and wisdom he gaderyd togedir all þe ryche and tresoure þat he myght spaire and sent all þat ryche into þat iclelnde where
he shuld be putte in to helpe hymself withall in his nede as longe as he lyved. This wise kynge pat sent before hym his ryckhes, goodis and tresour into a straunge londe [i]s every wise man [pat] must remembre pat he shall dye, that with his handis dothe almus dedis and spendith his goodis to Goddis worship pat he may fynde þem in þe kyngham of heven after þat he be banished and put down bi deth out of þis worde. [213v]

I fynde þere was a grete lorde upon a tyme þat had a fool. The lorde dyd make a babull and gafe it vtnto þis fool and commaundid neuer to gefe his babull vtnto he founde a more fool þan he was. So by þe visitacion of God, þe lorde was passing sike vtnto þe dethe. His meaneall men seide oon to anoþer, "Mi lorde goeth; he may not abide". De fool herd þis. He toke his babull and went into þe chambre. He come to þe lorde and axed hym, "Whidir shall pou goo, lorde?"

He answerd, "I wote not". "Whan shall þou cum ayene?" De lorde seid, "I wote not". "How longe shall þou abide þere?" "I wote not". "Now certes, I may wele sey þou art a fole if þou go þou wote not whidir, nor how shal ffare whan þou commyst þere, more wotist not whan þou shall cum ageyn, nor how longe tyme þou shall abide þere. Whi sendist þou not" befor þe caryage with vitayll and such pingis as were necessari vtnto þe whan þou commyst þere? I holde þe a more fole þan I am. Have þou now my babull." De lorde vnderstode þat wisdam was in his wordis, so forthwith he gafe grete almos and gafe away with his handis a grete parte of his goodis and disposid hym all to Godward and made an holy ende. So in like wyse euery Cristen man, þat shall dye and passe oute of þis transitory life whidir he wote not, how he shal fare þer we knowe not. We must þerefore send before us almos and dedis of merci and pyte into þe tresory of God, ffor almos is a grete sikernes and trust to all þem þat do it befor God. Thobie 4°, "Fiducia magna erit coram Deo elimosina omnibus ffacientibus eam." For on peny gife in bi life profetip more pan many after pi dethe.

Lat þem be þi mirroure þat be dede and passed oute of þis worlde, and þere þou shall vnderstond what þou art and what þou shal þe bel. For beaute, ffayrenes, wisdam, fffrendeship, ricches, delites, honours, dignytees and all such be take from þe in þi dethe, ffor þi body is but stynking careyn þat from þe erthe it come and to þe erth it shall turne ageyn. Therefore knowe þou wele þiself, what þou art and what þou shal be, and whidir þou shall goo. Full sekir, þi body to þe erthe and perhappis þi soule to þe peynes of purgatory. Aray þe þen and make redy þi way þat þou may cum to þe life þat is euerlasting, which graunte vs þat gracius and mercifull Savioure Criste Thesu that dyed for mercy vtnto man. Amen.
I synne ye was a greet lorde, upon a space ye had a sool, the sool dyd make a sebagge of space to ye and ye took a sebagge of space to yoursef, ye founde a mare seol ye made, Os by ye revens of yeol ye seol was muring, the ye seol of yeol. His meanest men, ye son to an of yeol, the seol seol, he may not abide, ye seol in yeol, he seol in yeol and went in yeol chamber. He came to ye seol and hid not, then seol ye seol, he sayd, I synne ye, then seol ye seol, then seol ye seol, then seol ye seol, then seol ye seol, I synne ye, then seol ye seol, then seol ye seol, then seol ye seol, then seol ye seol. Not seol ye seol, then seol ye seol, ye may seol say, ye may not seol say. Not seol ye seol, then seol ye seol, ye may seol say, ye may not seol say. Then seol ye seol, then seol ye seol, ye may seol say, ye may not seol say. Not seol ye seol, then seol ye seol, ye may seol say, ye may not seol say. Not seol ye seol, then seol ye seol, ye may seol say, ye may not seol say. Not seol ye seol, then seol ye seol, ye may seol say, ye may not seol say. Not seol ye seol, then seol ye seol, ye may seol say, ye may not seol say. Not seol ye seol, then seol ye seol, ye may seol say, ye may not seol say. Not seol ye seol, then seol ye seol, ye may seol say, ye may not seol say. Not seol ye seol, then seol ye seol, ye may seol say, ye may not seol say.
Notes to the Text

In Die Sepulture seu Trigintali The sermon is suitable for preaching at either a burial ("in die sepulture") or a trental or month's mind ("seu trigintali"). It is perhaps more apt for the latter, since the body seems already to be buried ("whose body hath his sepulture in his sanctuary", 1.13).

The sermon is edited from MS Harley 2247 and emendations are conjectural. Punctuation, capitalisation and word-divisions are modernised throughout. The MS's use of ff has been retained except where modern usage requires a capital. Suspensions and contractions have been expanded and the expanded letters italicised. { is expanded as is. Superscript additions are indicated by half brackets.

1-27 In that it begins and ends with the text of the sermon, and requests the audience for prayer, this opening section performs the function of the prothema of the more structured "University" sermon (see Ross, Middle English Sermons, pp.xliii-lv).

1 Solum . . . 17] Job xvii, 1. This opening sentence, from a sapiential book used extensively in the liturgy for the dead, serves as the thema for the sermon. Job xvii, 1 begins the first reading of the third nocturn of the Office of the Dead (see Breviarium ad Usum Insignis Ecclesiae Sarum, ed. F. Proctor and C. Wordsworth (Cambridge, 1879), II, col. 277).

2 Right worshipfull ffrendis] The opening tone of address is respectful and suggests a prosperous lay audience. One may contrast the more familiar formula, "Good men and women", favoured in the Festial, which was aimed at a largely illiterate audience.

2-7 it . . . bemself] One of the seven deeds of corporal mercy, helping those in prison, is used as an exemplum of the importance of helping prisoners in purgatory. A reference may be intended to one of the seven deeds of spiritual mercy, praying for the sinful. The preaching of both sets of deeds of mercy was an essential requirement of the curatus after the Lambeth Constitutions of 1281 and their endorsement by Archbishop Thoresby of York in 1357. (For the English translation of Thoresby's decree, which includes a section on the deeds of corporal and spiritual mercy, see Blake, M.E. Religious Prose, pp.73-87).

Patterns of alliteration are apparent in these opening lines ("bounde in bodely preson", "merytory and medefull", "peyned in pe preson of purgatory") and elsewhere in the sermon. Alliteration as an ornament for local effect is, of course, common in medieval sermons.

13 N."] "N." designates "Nomen", a cue for the preacher to insert at this point the name of the dead man (cf. the funeral sermons of MS Barlow 24). The use of "N." is a further indication of the adaptability of the collection for preaching requirements.
whose . . . sanctuary] This line affords no precise indication of the nature of the burial, lavish or modest, in church or outside. The word "sanctuary" is recorded in OED from the fifteenth century on, meaning either "churchyard" or, perhaps less commonly, "chancel". Mirk in his Instructions for Parish Priests (ed. E. Peacock, EETS, OS 31 (London, 1868), p.11, l.330) seems to differentiate "chyrche" and "seyntwary", while in his Festial notes on "Qui sunt sepeliendi in cimiterio", "sentuary" is used for the general enclosure of church and churchyard (ed. Erbe, pp.297-9).

At this point in the MS a marginal "nota bene" has been added in a hand other than the scribe's.

26-7 Couplet translation of the Latin thema was a common practice of medieval sermon writers (see Wenzel, Verses in Sermons, p.80). The couplet has been noted by Wenzel in "Unrecorded Middle English Verses", Anglia 92 (1974), 68, no.47, and again (together with other vernacular tags from the sermon) by K. Bitterling in "Signs of Death and Other Monitory Snatches from MS Harley 2247", N S Q, n.s. 26 (1979), 102. It is repeated at 11.72-3, 223-4 and 229-30 below.

MS Barlow 24 in the Bodleian Library, Oxford includes a funeral sermon which introduces the text from Job xvii, 1 and translates it with a similar couplet (f.207r-v):

"Of all pat I was wont to haue
To me alone ys lefte my graue".

The couplet has been printed by A.J. Fletcher ("'I Sing of a Maiden'", 108), who notes that it is also found in two other sermons in the collection. More sustained verbal connections may be discovered in the two MSS (see Notes to 11.77-83, 105-14 and 184-208), which are also connected by their dependence on the Fasciculus Morum. (An article on its relation to the Barlow MS is in preparation by S. Powell. For its relation to the Harley MS, see Fletcher and Powell, "Origins", 78-80, 88-90.)

28-70 This section seems to serve as an introduction to the principal three-fold discussion of the theme which is the sermon proper. The rhyming antonyms, "reft" and "left", are used in the questions asked about the dead man, "What is reft hym?" and "What is left hym?" (11.31, 33). The answer to each question introduces one line each of the thema couplet - "Certis, all pat he was wont to haue" and "Undirstonde it, verrey ri3t nought but his grave" (11.32, 34). The summing-up in 11.35-36 involves the rhyming of "nought" and "wrought", facilitated by the postponement of the past participle "wrought". Cf. Note to 11.215-17.

The rest of the section deals with those worldly joys of which the dead man is reft, and these are treated in what may be a corruption of an original three-fold division into riches, worships and delights, the first two dealt with together (11.43-66) and the third mentioned only cursorily (11.67-70).

39-42 The scribe here comments in the margin: "quod gaudium istius transitoriij mundi nichil valet et consistit in tribus, scilicet, in diuicijs, in honoribus et delicijs".
This exemplum is the first of three portions of the text which may have been derived from the Destructorium Viciorum of Alexander Carpenter (see Fletcher and Powell, "Origins", 91). However, Siegfried Wenzel has pointed out to us the existence of the exemplum in the Fasciculus Morum (cf. Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C.670, f.81v), and for further modification of the Destructorium evidence see Note to 11.105-14 below.

The final -p of the third person singular has probably been assimilated to the initial p- of the following word, "pem".

A verb may be missing from the second half of the co-ordinate clause ("his . . . mete"), although it is possible that the referent of "shall be tormentid" is "his styning careyn", as well as "he".

This is the first division of a three-fold division of the main body of the sermon. It is unusual, however, that there is no indication at this point that the sermon is to be divided in this way, and the text is perhaps corrupt (see Note to 11.175-208). Certainly, the second and third divisions seem to presuppose such an initial explanation ("The secunde question", 1.175; "The bird question", 1.209).

Alongside the first question ("Quis eum spoliauit?", 11.73-4) the scribe has noted in the margin, "prima questio quis istum mortuum spoliauit". The question is answered by a description of Death through Biblical and patristic quotation, an exemplum and a narratio.

This passage is very close to part of one of the Latin funeral sermons in MS Barlow 24, f.212r: "Et merito est mors terribilis, cum sit rex magnus et fortis qui regnat ab Adam super totum genus humanum, sicut dicit Apostolus, Romanos 5. Isté rex terribilis est quia nulli parcet, ymmo, nec filio Dei". It seems that in translating this passage from Latin into English, it was assumed that the Biblical reference referred to the following, rather than the preceding, quotation. The Harley MS therefore cites the second sentence ("Isté . . . Dei") in the original Latin, while translating into English the actual quotation from Paul's letter to the Romans v, 14. Moreover, later re-arrangement of the text, involving the insertion of "He . . . place" (11.80-1), has meant the separation of the Biblical reference (1.81) from the text to which it refers ("His . . . mankynde", 11.78-80).

"Cause whi" is a frequent idiom in the Harley MS (cf. ff.38v, 85v, 86r, 107r, 107v, 109r, etc.). Where it occurs without a dependent verb, it seems to mean "why?", but in other cases, as here, the interpretation might be "the reason why" (see MED, cause). A translation of the sentence might be: "and the philosopher gives the reason why - because . . .".

The quotation is indeed from Augustine's De Spiritu et
Anima (PL 40, col. 800). The sentence "Nichil enim morte cercius nec hora mortis incercius" (11.96-7) refers to two of the Three Sorrowful Things (see Note to 11.256-75). In the Prick of Conscience it is variously ascribed to Bernard and Augustine (see Owst, Literature and Pulpit, pp.531-2). It appears too in the Meditatio vii of Anselm (see Woolf, English Religious Lyric, p.86, note 2).

105-14 This exemplum has been suggested as the second borrowing from the Destructorium (see Fletcher and Powell, "Origins", 91). It also occurs, however, in the sermon "in annuiersario culuscumque defuncti" in MS Barlow 24, f.211v: "Et mors non solum senes capit, sed et iuuenes, senes et fortes. Vnde est de morte sicut de sagittante ad signum qui quandoque mittit sagittam ultra signum, quandoque citra signum, et quandoque signum percutit. Sic mors quandoque senes, quandoque iuuenes, infantes et fortes in maxima prosperitate accipit".

114 pe (1)] This seems to be a survival of the Old English relative pronoun (recorded as late as cl460 in OED, The, particle, 3). Cf. f.123r of the same MS ("be brennyng love and fervent charitee pe we must haue").

116 Posuit . . . sagittam] Lamentations iii, 12.

117 The scribe here notes "Narracio" in the margin.

132 Gostely] This word is often used in sermons and other devotional works to introduce an interpretation of a text which is not after the literal sense. Here its meaning may be rendered, "tropologically" (for this and other types of medieval exegesis, see H. Caplan, "The Four Senses of Scriptural Interpretation", Speculum 4 (1929), 282-90).

132-57 This tropological interpretation of the three assaults of a tyrant upon a castle as the assaults of Death on the "Castle of Mansoul" is a variation on a traditional theme used in, for example, Part Seven of the Ancrene Wisse, and the Castle of Perseverance. See Owst, Literature and Pulpit, p.80. On the Three Ages of Man mirrored in the three assaults, see p.204 above.

141-2 Ne . . . tuo] Ecclesiastes vii, 18.


158 doute] As at 1.132 above, the omission may be explained by the fact that "without" and "doute" have similar endings in "oute".

162-73 This lyric in the extremely popular Signs of Death tradition has probably been taken from the Fasciculus Morum (cf. MS Rawlinson C.670, f.148v). This relationship was noticed independently by
Fletcher and Powell ("Origins", 90) and Wenzel (Verses in Sermons, pp.44, 198-9). It has been printed by Wenzel (p.199) and by Bitterling ("Signs of Death", 102). The Fasciculus text is printed by Wenzel (p.197) and in English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century, ed. C. Brown (Oxford, 1932), p.222.

174 Homo . . . tardabit] Ecclesiasticus xiv, 12.

175-208 The confident statement, "The secunde question" (1.175), suggests that the three questions on which the sermon is based have already been mentioned. The fact that this is not the case in our extant version, together with the strange use of "not" in the same line, suggests corruption. See Note to 11.71-174 above.

The second question to be introduced is: "whereby he may be rather helpe and make hym riche ageyn?" (11.176-7), and the scribe augments the text by the marginal comment "2a questio hec est per quid potest iste defunctus leuius iuuari". Four ways are cited, according to a decree attributed to St Augustine, and these four ways are shown to correspond to either the way of grace (in prayers and the Mass) or the way of righteousness (in alms, fasting, etc.). The whole is illustrated by Biblical quotation.

181-2 pen . . . beforn] The omission of the pronoun in such a context is not uncommon (see T.F. Mustanoja, A Middle English Syntax (Memoires de la Societe Neophilologique de Helsinki 23, Helsinki, 1960), pp.138ff.).

184-208 The whole passage bears close comparison with part of the funeral sermon for a dead woman in MS Barlow 24 (f.208r); "Vnde ad hoc sepulturam huc venimus ut animam istius de pena reuelemus [sic] per 3a que habentur in Can. 13. q. 2a, 'Anime defunctorum', quod sunt oraciones et missarum celebracio, ielunia, elemosinarum largicio. Et causa est quod anime existentes in purgatorio liberari a pena non possunt nisi per viam gracie aut viam iusticie. Per viam gracie ut per devotam oracionem et missarum celebracionem. Iacobi 2°, 'Multum valet deprecacio iusti assidua'. Per viam iusticie liberari possunt per modum redempcionis quod fit per penie implecionem et elemosinarum largicionem . . .".

The decree cited here is from Causa 13, Quaestio 2, Cepitulum 22 of Gratian's Decretum (see Corpus Iuris Canonici, ed. E. Friedberg, (Leipzig, 1879), I, p.728). For further details, see p.197 above.

186-8 The scribe glosses the passage in the margin: "doctores dicunt liberari non possunt a penia nisi aut per viam gracie aut per viam iusticie".

189-90 Multum . . . assidua] James v, 16.

191-7 The incident is recorded in 2 Maccabees xii, 43, and the quotation is from v.46. The doctrine of purgatory is partly grounded on this passage (see footnote 16). A later hand has noted in the margin: "nota de Iuda Machabeo".

206-7 Iusticia . . . defunctorum] Proverbs x, 2.

209-83 The third question is: "Who is bounde to helpe and releve oure ffренde N.?" (11.209-10). The scribe notes in the margin: "3а questio quis enim tenetur et debet eum iuare vel relevare a miseria sua". If a man's executors fail him, he himself no longer possesses the help of worldly goods. The importance of good works as compensation for worldly goods is then urged through two narrationes.

213-14 Miseremini . . . me] Job xix, 21. These words, used in the Office of the Dead, are commonly put into the mouth of the dead man, as here. One of the funeral sermons in MS Barlow 24 is entirely built around the text, each part of which ("Miseremini", "vos", "amici mei") is analysed. The quotation is used in the prothema to the preceding funeral sermon in the Harley MS, f.207v. In a poem on the death of Edward IV it is put into the mouth of the dead King, who begins, "Miseremini mei, ye that ben my fryndys . . . " (Brown, Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century, p.159).

215-17 Haue . . . me] The Latin is translated into a sentence of rhymed prose, achieved by the postponement of "be" in "ye bat my frendis be".

220-1 The reference is to a narratio from the Legenda Aurea found in the preceding funeral sermon in the MS, f.209r (see p.198 above and footnote 34).

225-8 These lines may be compared with part of the Destructorium Viciorum (see Fletcher and Powell, "Origins", 92).

231-2 Relinquent . . . eternum] Psalm xlviii, 11-12.

238-55 Although this narratio circulated widely, a marginal note in the scribe's hand specifies its immediate source as the Gesta Romanorum ("In Gestis Romamorum" in scribe's hand and "Narracio" in a later hand). See F.C. Tubach, Index Exemplorum (Helsinki, 1969), no. 2907 ("King, for a year") and H. Oesterley, Gesta Romanorum (Berlin, 1872), p.224.

255 worde] The omission of l in "worlde" is amply recorded in OED (World, sub S). Cf. too the quotation from MS Worcester Cathedral Library F.10 at pp.199-200 above.

256-75 This narratio (marked in the margin by a scribal "Narracio") may be a modified version of one in the Fasciculus Morum (see Wenzel, Verses in Sermons, p.44 and footnote 148). Certainly Wenzel's earlier statement ("Chaucer and the Language of Contemporary Preaching", SP 73 (1976), 150), that the story here is a literal rendering of the Fasciculus text, is not correct.

The fool's three questions are connected with the common topos of the Three Sorrowful Things (see Woolf, English Religious Lyric, p.86). One of the funeral sermons in MS Barlow 24 introduces an English verse on the same subject (f.211v):
"Whan I thyng [sic] on thyngys iiij,
Sory may my hert be.
One ys, þat I schall away;
The second ys, I note how sone ne what day;
The iiijd ys þen my moste care,
That I wote neuer heder to fare."

(For other examples of the verse, see Woolf, *English Religious Lyric*, p.86 and Wenzel, *Verses in Sermons*, p.90.) The Barlow MS sermon continues with a narratio about Philip of France, in which the sentiments of the dying king may be compared with those of the king in the previous Harley MS narratio (11.238-49): "'Karissimi, magno tempore vobiscum vixi in diuicijs, delicijs et honoribus, ampla palacia et castra fabricaui quibus, cum michi placuit, nuncios misi ad hospicium michi preparandum. Sed ista vice non habeo nuncium ad hospicium michi preparandum quia ignoro quo ibo.'" (f.211v).

281-2 Fiducia . . . eam] Tobit iv, 12.

284-95 The sermon concludes with an exhortation that the memory of the dead may prepare the living for their own dissolution.