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Ancrene Wisse and the Life of Perfection

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The early Middle English guide for anchoresses, *Ancrene Wisse*, has traditionally been studied in departments of English rather than history. In recent years, however, there has been increasing interest in its institutional context, and what it can tell us about the history of women in the religious life. In particular, it has been seen as reflecting a common pattern of institutional development during the 'Medieval Reformation', the 'slide into cenobitism' of originally anchoritic groups; but the internal evidence of the text suggests that the relationship of both the author and his audience to traditional monasticism was more problematic than this interpretation assumes.

There are some difficulties in using *Ancrene Wisse* as a source of historical information; even after a century and a half of research, its exact date, localization, authorship, and audience have not been conclusively established. The balance of the evidence increasingly suggests an original date of composition after 1215,[1] and the revised version in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 402, which mentions visits by Dominican and Franciscan friars, must have been written after 1224, when both orders had established themselves in England. The dialect of the early manuscripts points towards an origin in the West Midlands, probably in northern Herefordshire or southern Shropshire. The internal evidence of the work suggests that its author was a regular cleric, following the Rule of St Augustine, and that its audience changed as time went on: the original version was composed for three well-born sisters, who 'in the flower of your youth renounced the joys of the world and became anchoresses',[2] but the revised version in Corpus 402 includes a passage which addresses a larger group of women, 'twenty now or more'.[3] Beyond these basic points, however, researchers have had to depend on limited and often ambiguous circumstantial evidence to identify a specific historical and institutional context.

In recent years the most widely accepted theory, closely argued by Eric

Dobson in his influential 1976 study, *The Origins of Ancrene Wisse*,[4] has been that *Ancrene Wisse* was written by an Augustinian canon, a member of the Victorine house at Wigmore Abbey in northern Herefordshire. Dobson argued further that the larger group of women addressed in Corpus 402 had become a more formally-organized religious community based on the nearby nunnery, Limebrook Priory, which is later recorded as a house of Augustinian canonesses: 'the twenty or more anchoresses, though they did not live in one place, nevertheless constituted a single community under a prioress and subject to the Augustinian Rule'.[5] If this were the case, *Ancrene Wisse* would offer a relatively late example of the recurring tendency of the 'Medieval Reformation' mentioned above, the 'slide into cenobitism' from anchoritism; Sally Thompson, drawing on Dobson's account in her 1991 study of post-Conquest English nunneries, *Women Religious*, takes it as suggesting 'that the transition from a group of anchoresses to a community of nuns was an easy process, with no rigid lines of demarcation dividing the different forms of vocation',[6] and Janet Burton makes a similar point in her 1994 survey of post-Conquest monastic and religious orders in England.[7] It is open to question, however, whether this particular group of anchoresses ever actually made the transition to a cenobitic life. In the period when *Ancrene Wisse* was written, external circumstances were less favourable to such a move than they would have been at an earlier stage of the 'Medieval Reformation'; and the textual revisions made for the larger group of women do not provide convincing evidence for a change in their institutional status.

By the early thirteenth century, two factors had made it increasingly difficult for women to enter religious communities. One was decreasing financial support for nunneries; as Bruce Venarde has shown, after a peak in the 1160s, the number of foundations and re-foundations of religious houses for women dropped sharply, and (at any rate in England and Wales) continued to decline until the 1230s.[8] The other was the increasing reluctance of existing religious orders to take responsibility for the *cura monialium*, a problem exacerbated by the prohibition of the foundation of new orders by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215.[9] A recurring feature of the 'Medieval Reformation' was the tendency for newly-founded male religious orders to move from the active encouragement of women members to a growing unwillingness to accept the financial, pastoral, and disciplinary responsibilities involved in their support – by the late 1220s even the Dominicans had renounced 'the care or custody of nuns or any other women' as an impediment to their preaching mission.[10] It would be oversimplifying to claim that the position was uniformly bleak: the official renunciation of the *cura*

monialium by some orders, including the Premonstratensians, Cistercians, and Dominicans, was not always followed through in practice, and the secular clergy and the laity provided alternative sources of patronage. Nevertheless, it is possible that the anchoresses addressed in *Ancrene Wisse* should be grouped with the increasing number of women across Europe who were adopting the solitary life as much from necessity as from choice. Brenda Bolton,[11] Ann Warren,[12] and Patricia Rosof[13] all link the sharp rise in female lay-anchoritism in the early thirteenth century with the shortage of available places in women's religious houses; and although Sharon Elkins has claimed that 'in 1215, religious women lived in a vast network of monasteries, so widespread that women of all social strata, in every part of England, could easily enter religious life',[14] this does not seem to have been the case for the Welsh Marches. In 1215, Cheshire, Shropshire, and Herefordshire could offer between them only three under-endowed nunneries, offering in total perhaps twenty places. The only nunnery in Cheshire was the Benedictine priory of St Mary in Chester, a mid-twelfth-century foundation. Little is known of its early history, but from the late fourteenth century onwards it is recorded as supporting between twelve and fourteen nuns, and records surviving from 1244 onwards indicate chronic financial problems (in 1253, the nuns complained to Queen Eleanor that they were so poor they had to beg daily for their food).[15] The only nunnery in Shropshire was St Leonard's Priory, Brewood (Brewood White Ladies), a late-twelfth-century foundation of Augustinian canonesses, 'a small, poor house' which 'normally supported about five nuns with the prioress'.[16] Limebrook Priory in Herefordshire, also a late-twelfth-century foundation, was still smaller, too poorly endowed before the early 1250s to support more than two or three nuns.[17] A second Herefordshire house, Aconbury Priory, founded in 1216, was rather better endowed, but seems in its initial stages to have been a hospital, and to have maintained its commitment to the care of the poor and sick for some time after its conversion to a single-sex priory of Augustinian nuns in 1237.[18]

The revised version of *Ancrene Wisse* in Corpus 402 cannot be used to demonstrate that its audience of anchoresses had overcome these obstacles and become an established community of nuns (whether based on Limebrook or elsewhere). One of the main passages used by Dobson to support his case, the addition addressing the larger group of women, can be interpreted quite differently, as emphasizing their extra-monastic status. It is inserted after an exhortation to the original anchoresses to live on good terms with each other, 'so that you may always be bound together with the unity of one heart and of one

will, as it is written about our Lord's dear disciples: *The multitude of believers had one heart and one soul* [Acts 4. 32]'.[19]

> *Pax uobis:* þis wes Godes gretunge to his deore deciples . . . ȝe beoð þe ancren of Englond, swa feole togederes (twenti nuðe oðer ma – Godd i god ow mutli), þet meast grið is among, meast annesse ant anrednesse ant sometreadnesse of anred lif efter a riwle, swa þet alle teoð an, alle iturnt anesweis ant nan frommard oðer, efter þet word is. For-þi ȝe gað wel forð ant spedeð in ower wei; for euch is wiðward oþer in an manere of liflade, as þah ȝe weren an cuuent of Lundene ant of Oxnefort, of Schreobsburi oðer of Chester, þear as alle beoð an wið an imeane manere, ant wiðuten singularite, þet is anful frommardschipe, lah þing i religiun, for hit towarpeð annesse ant manere imeane þet ah to beon in ordre. Þis nu þenne, þet ȝe beoð alle as an cuuent, is ower hehe fame; þis is Godd icweme; þis is nunan wide cuð, swa þet ower cuuent biginneð to spreaden toward Englondes ende. ȝe beoð as þe moder-hus þet heo beoð of istreonet. | [fol. 69ᵛ] ȝe beoð ase wealle; ȝef þe wealle woreð, þe strunden worið alswa. A weila, ȝef ȝe worið ne bide Ich hit neauer! ȝef ei is imong ow þe geað i singularite, ant ne folheð nawt þe cuuent, ah went ut of þe floc, þet is as in a cloistre þet Iesu is heh priur ouer, went ut as a teowi schep ant meapeð hire ane into breres teilac, into wulues muð, toward te þrote of helle – ȝef ei swuch is imong ow, Godd turne hire in to floc, wende hire in to cuuent, ant leue ow þe beoð þrin swa halden ow þrin þet Godd, þe hehe priur, neome ow on ende þeonne up into þe cloistre of heouene.[20]
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> [*Peace be with you:* this was God's greeting to his dear disciples . . . You are the anchoresses of England, in such a large group (twenty now or more; may God increase you in good), that most peace is among, most unity and constancy and community of united life according to a rule, so that you all pull together, all turned one way and none away from each other, so it is said. For that reason you are advancing well and making good progress; because each of you is turned towards the other in one way of living, as if you were a single religious

community of London and of Oxford, of Shrewsbury or of Chester, where all are united in one common way of life, and without singularity, which is individual waywardness, a shameful thing in the religious life, because it disrupts the unity and common way of life that there should be in an order. Now this, then, that you are all like one community, gives you your high reputation; this is pleasing to God; this has recently become widely known, so that your community is beginning to spread towards the border of England. You are like the mother-house from which they are generated. You are like a spring; if the spring grows muddied, the streams grow muddy too. Oh, if you grow muddy I could not bear it! If there is anyone among you who goes her own way, and does not follow the community, but goes out of the flock, which is as if in a cloister over which Jesus is the high prior, goes out like a straying sheep and wanders on her own into the thicket of brambles, into the wolf's mouth, towards the throat of hell – if there is anyone like that among you, may God turn her back to the flock, guide her back into the community, and grant to you who are in it so to keep yourselves inside that God, the high prior, may finally take you up from it into the cloister of heaven.]

There is no doubt that the author here is praising his audience in terms of what could be seen as a distinctively monastic, rather than anchoritic, ideal, 'community of united life according to a rule'. The text which he takes as his starting-point, Acts 4. 32, is invoked in the 'Rule of St Augustine'; and Ludo Milis, in his careful study of the 'slide towards cenobitism' of those twelfth-century groups of hermits who became Augustinian canons, sees the acceptance of 'the communal ideal inspired by the Acts of the Apostles', together with the adoption of a Rule, as a marker of the final, 'cenobitic' phase.[21] But the quotation from Acts 4. 32 is part of the original version of *Ancrene Wisse*; and there is no reason to suppose that the rule mentioned in the addition is anything other than the anchoresses' original, strictly unofficial guide to the anchoritic life, *Ancrene Wisse* itself.[22] Dobson's conclusion, 'the passage can only mean that the twenty or more anchoresses, though they did not live in one place, nevertheless constituted a single community under a prioress and subject to the Augustinian Rule',[23] takes its rhetoric too literally. There is no clear evidence either here or elsewhere in the

revised text in Corpus 402 (even in its extensively-modified version of Part 8, which deals with the anchoresses' outward observances), that the institutional context of the group had changed. The revisions continue to assume an anchoritic rather than communal life, and there is no mention of a prioress; as in the original version, it is assumed that the anchoresses are supervised by a male spiritual director (*meistre*).[24] The point the author is making in the passage quoted above seems to be rather that the women are exceptional *as anchoresses*, observing a common rule and functioning as a community in spite of their solitary way of life; they successfully emulate the virtues of cenobitic life outside its official structure. The passage is constructed around a series of similes, '*as if* you were a single religious community', '*like* one community', '*like* the mother-house', '*as if* in a cloister over which Jesus is the high prior'; what is being described is not a real but a virtual cloister.

There are reasons, then, for questioning the recent consensus on the institutional context of *Ancrene Wisse*; the women it addresses are not necessarily recapitulating a twelfth-century pattern of progression in the religious life, from anchoritism to cenobitism. I have suggested elsewhere that their situation may reflect instead a distinctively thirteenth-century development, the informal, extra-monastic collaboration of lay-anchoresses and friars. In recent years, the evidence has increasingly suggested a Dominican rather than Victorine origin for *Ancrene Wisse*. As Dobson himself noted, its legislative elements show the influence not of the Victorine *Liber ordinis* but of a different Augustinian tradition, the regulations developed by the Premonstratensian canons and later adopted by the Dominicans, and its closest parallels are with the earliest Dominican constitutions. Dobson suggested that these parallels might be explained by Victorine anticipation of Dominican practices; but subsequent research has broken the links he identified with Victorine tradition, and it now seems more likely that the parallels indicate direct influence.[25] This would be consistent with the general treatment of the religious life in *Ancrene Wisse*, which reveals a more ambivalent, sometimes even antagonistic, attitude to traditional monasticism than the contextualization discussed above would suggest. There is no doubt that the Dominicans owed much to both the institutional forms and the spirituality of earlier monasticism, and *Ancrene Wisse* reflects these influences, with a particular debt to two Cistercian writers, Aelred of Rievaulx (whose mid-twelfth-century rule for anchoresses, *De Institutione Inclusarum,* is one of its main sources) and Bernard of Clairvaux. However, the development of the Dominican order was also driven to some extent by a reaction against the structures and values of

traditional monasticism. The Dominicans' links with an existing tradition of extra-monastic reform may help to explain why the concept of the life of perfection in *Ancrene Wisse* is not wholly based on monastic models, and in some cases seems even to be defined in opposition to them.

The tension emerges most clearly from the discussion in the *Preface* to *Ancrene Wisse* of the meaning of *religiun*, the Middle English equivalent of Latin *religio*. In the early thirteenth century, the word *religio* had a variety of senses, some of them conflicting;[26] the author focuses particularly on the tension between two of these senses. The earlier and more general one has been usefully defined by a French scholar:

> In Christian Latin, *religio* is the life of faith, realizing and proving itself in action, above all in the exercise of charity, the first commandment of the Gospel: 'Pure and immaculate *religio* before God and the Father is this: visiting orphans and widows in their tribulation and keeping oneself unspotted from this world' [James 1: 27].[27]

From the early Middle Ages onwards, however, *religio* also came to be used in a more specialized sense, as a description for the monastic life, and the adjective derived from it, *religiosus*, became a near-synonym for 'monk', since monks were seen as followers of the religious life *par excellence*. During the period of the 'Medieval Reformation', this usage was also extended to cover the members of more recently-established types of religious order. Canon 13 of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 neatly illustrates in its wording how far the more specialized sense of *religio* had developed by the early thirteenth century:

> Ne nimia *religionum* diversitas gravem in ecclesia Dei confusionem inducat, firmiter prohibemus, ne quis de caetero novam *religionem* inveniat, sed quicumque voluerit *ad religionem converti*, unam de approbatis assumat. Similiter qui voluerit *religiosam domum* fundare de novo, regulam et institutionem accipiat de *religionibus* approbatis . . .[28]
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> [So that too much diversity *of religious orders* should not introduce serious confusion in the Church of God, we strictly forbid anyone to establish a new *religious order* in the future; anyone who wishes *to take up the religious life* should adopt

one of the approved forms instead. Similarly, anyone who wants to found a new *religious house* should accept a rule and organization from the approved *religious orders . . .*]

The canon both reflects and responds to the major institutional changes of the previous two centuries, during which a widespread movement of religious enthusiasm had produced an increasing variety of religious ways of life, either modifications of traditional forms or newly developed. The passage assumes a variety of rules (*regulae*), of which the commonest would be the Rule of St Benedict, followed by most (though not all) monastic houses, and the 'Rule of St Augustine', followed by regular canons; in addition, it takes for granted the existence of different religious orders, groups of houses whose common practice was defined by more specific regulations (*institutiones*). But it also attempts to restrict this variety, both defining and delimiting the acceptable forms of religious life. The word *religio* (which is used here interchangeably to mean 'religious way of life' and 'religious order') carries a clearly-defined technical sense: *religio* involves the renunciation of the world (as the phrase *ad religionem converti* suggests),[29] the adoption of a rule, and the acceptance of the regulations of a particular religious order. This definition could be seen as no more than a reflection of contemporary institutional realities; Jacques Hourlier, in his study of the legal and institutional position of religious in this period, comments, 'With the exception of marginal elements, hermits and others, every male or female religious of the classical period [1140-1378] belongs to an order.'[30] But the provisions of Canon 13, forbidding the foundation of new orders and actively discouraging any attempts to redefine further the nature of the religious life, inevitably raised problems for those who were, for one reason or another, marginal to the existing system.

This applies, in different ways, to both the author and the audience of *Ancrene Wisse*: the author because of his association with a newly-developed order whose central preaching mission set it apart from more traditional forms of religious life, the audience because of their borderline status as lay-anchoresses. The earliest mendicant orders did succeed in gaining Papal approval after the Fourth Lateran Council: the Dominicans in 1216 adopted the Rule of St Augustine and a (considerably modified) form of the customs of the Premonstratensian canons, and the Franciscans managed to bypass the requirements of Canon 13 altogether, receiving an approved Rule of their own in 1223.[31] The effect of Canon 13, however, was to marginalize further those

religious who did not belong to an approved order. Hourlier comments on the tendency for the members of religious orders from the twelfth century onwards to be marked off increasingly from the secular clergy and laity by their habit, their behaviour, and their outlook, common features more significant than the differences in clothing and observance between monks, canons, and mendicants: 'As a result, a wider gap opens up between regulars and other religious, solitaries, hermits, whom [canon] law seems to neglect a little.' He adds, 'In reality, canon law does not forget solitaries; but their condition by definition does not require general legislation; all it needs is a few principles and personal regulation, left to the control of the local authority'.[32] Neither the author nor the audience of *Ancrene Wisse*, however, seems to have found this situation wholly satisfactory. The author is pessimistic about the quality of pastoral care available to the anchoresses: in Part 2 he says:

> To sum gastelich mon þet ȝe beoð trusti upon – as ȝe mahe
> beon o lut – god is þet ȝe aski read . . . *Set multi ueniunt ad uos*
> *in uestimentis ouium, intrinsecus autem sunt lupi rapaces* . . .
> Worltliche leueð lut, religiuse ȝet leas.[33]
> [It is a good idea for you to ask some spiritual man that you
> trust – and there are few that you can – to give you advice . . .
> *But many people come to you in sheep's clothing, while inside*
> *they are ravening wolves* [see Matt. 7. 15, 24. 5, 11]. . . Trust
> seculars little, religious still less.]

In a passage added in revision, this warning is qualified, but only by a warm recommendation of Dominican and Franciscan friars, who are also exempted from the special permission required for other visitors.[34] The anchoresses themselves seem to have been uncomfortably conscious of their marginal status as religious – an unease apparently shared by those around them. The author tells us in the *Preface* to *Ancrene Wisse* not only that the anchoresses had requested a Rule from him (in itself a standard introductory *topos* to this kind of work) but that they had complained that people kept asking what order they belonged to, and whether it was 'white' or 'black'.[35] They had taken formal vows of chastity, obedience, and stability of abode, and the author consistently refers to them as *religiuse*. But as lay-anchoresses, entering the anchor-house directly from the world rather than (in the more traditional manner) from a nunnery, they were not attached to any religious order; they did not follow an approved Rule and

customs, and had no distinctive habit. This problem is directly addressed in the *Preface* to *Ancrene Wisse*, which takes the nature of the religious life as its central theme, discussing not only what constitutes a rule but the broader concepts of *religio* and *ordo*.

The dominant theme of the *Preface* is the importance of inner disposition rather than outward observance. The author begins by a discussion of the term *riwle* (Latin *regula*), concentrating on two kinds of rule: the 'Inner Rule', the divine commands governing the heart, which 'everyone must keep, and you above all',[36] and the 'Outer Rule', the humanly-devised regulations governing physical observances ('how you should eat, drink, dress, say your prayers, sleep, keep vigil').[37] He emphasizes that the 'Outer Rule' only exists to serve the 'Inner Rule', as a maid serves her lady. Its prescriptions may be modified, and the anchoresses are advised against vowing to observe them; it has significance only as a means to an end. He then turns to the question of what is meant by *religio* and *ordo*:

> ȝef ei unweote easkeð ow of hwet ordre ȝe beon – | [f. 3ʳ] as summe doð, [ȝ]e telleð me, þe siheð þe gneat ant swolheð þe flehe – ondswerieð: of Sein Iames, þe wes Godes apostel ant for his muchele halinesse icleopet Godes broðer. ȝef him þuncheð wunder ant sullich of swuch ondswere, easkið him hwet beo ordre, ant hwer he funde in Hali [W]rit religiun openluke[r] descriue[t] ant isutelet þen is i Sein Iames canonial epistel. He sei[ð hwet] is religiun, hwuch is riht ordre. *Religio munda et immaculata apud Deum et Patrem hec est: visitare pupillos et viduas in necessitate sua, et immaculatum se custodire ab hoc seculo*; þet is, 'Cleane religiun ant [wið]ute [w]em is iseon ant helpen [widewen ant feder]lese children, ant from þe [w]orld [w]iten him cleane ant unwemmet.' Þus Sein Iame descriue[ð] religiun ant ordre. Þe leatere dale of his sahe limpeð to reclusen; for þer beo[ð] twa dalen, to twa manere þe beoð of religiuse. To eiðer limpeð his dale, as ȝe mahen iheren. Gode religiuse beoð i þe world summe, nomeliche prelaz ant treowe preachurs, þe habbeð þe earre dale of þet Sein Iame seide; þet beoð, as he seið, þe gað to helpen [wi]d[ewen ant fea]derlese children. Þe [saw]le is widewe þe haueð forloren hire spus, þet is, Iesu Crist, wið eni heaued-sunne. Þe is alswa federles þe haueð þurh his sunne forloren þe Feader of heouene.

Gan iseon þulliche ant elnin ham ant helpen wið fode of hali
lare – þis is riht religiun, he seið, Sein Iame. Þe leatere dale of
his sahe limpeð to ower religiun, as Ich ear seide, þe witeð ow
from þe worlt ouer oþre religiuse cleane ant unwemmet. Þus þe
apostle Sein Iame, þe descriueð religiun, nowðer hwit ne blac
ne nempneð he in his ordre.[38]

[If any ignorant person asks you what order you belong to
– as you tell me some do, straining out the gnat and swallowing
the fly – answer: of St James, who was God's apostle and called
God's brother because of his great holiness. If such an answer
seems strange and unorthodox to him, ask him what constitutes
order, and where he could find the religious way of life
[*religiun*] more clearly described and explained in Holy
Scripture than it is in St James's canonical epistle. He defines
religious life and true order. *Pure and immaculate religion
before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows
in their need, and to keep oneself unspotted from this world*
[James 1. 27]; that is, 'Pure and immaculate religion is to visit
and help widows and fatherless children, and keep oneself pure
and unspotted from the world.' This is how St James describes
religious life and order. The second part of what he says applies
to recluses; because there are two parts, corresponding to the
two different kinds of religious. Each kind has its own part, as
you may hear. Some people in the world are good religious,
especially prelates and true preachers. The first part of what St
James said applies to them; they are, as he says, those who go
to help widows and fatherless children. The soul is a widow
who has lost her spouse, that is, Jesus Christ, through any
mortal sin. Those are also fatherless who through their sin have
lost the Father of heaven. Going to see such people and
comforting them and helping them with the nourishment of
holy instruction – this is true religion, says St James. The
second part of what he says applies to your kind of religious
life, as I said before, keeping yourselves pure and unspotted
from the world more than other religious. So the apostle St
James, describing religion, mentions neither white nor black in
his order.)

The author goes on to point out that the earliest hermits, male and female, wore no distinctive habits, although they could be seen metaphorically as 'black but comely' (Cant. 1. 4), black outside and white within; and that 'this is what the religious life consists in, not in the wide hood or the black cape, or in the white rochet or in the grey cowl'.[39] He concedes, echoing a passage from the Prologue to the Premonstratensian / Dominican regulations which itself echoes the 'Rule of St Augustine', that uniformity of habit in a religious community may have a purpose as an outward indicator of *cor unum et anima una*, the 'one heart and one soul' that its members should share;[40] but he argues that unless the unity is there in the first place, it signifies 'fraud and hypocrisy'[41] instead, and that in any case there is less need of such external indicators for anchoresses, who are concealed from the public gaze.

The treatment of the concept of *religio* in this passage consciously exploits the tension between its older, more general sense and its newer and more specialized meaning. This emerges particularly from the author's interpretation of James 1. 27. The standard medieval interpretation of this verse goes back to Bede; it can be found in his commentary on James's epistle,[42] and, more fully elaborated, in *De tabernaculo et vasis eis*:

> Haec habet longitudinem, cum perseverantiam nobis coeptae religionis . . . insinuat. Et bene longitudo duorum est cubitorum quia actualis nostra conversatio in duabus maxime virtutibus consistit, misericordia videlicet et innocentia: dicente apostolo Jacobo: Religio . . . saeculo. In eo namque quod pupillos ac viduas in tribulatione eorum visitare praecipit, cuncta quae erga proximos necesse habentes, misericorditer agere debemus, ostendit: in eo vero quod immaculatos nos ab hoc saeculo custodire admonet, universa in quibus nos ipsos caste vivere oportet, exprimit.[43]
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> (This [table] has length, when it encourages us to persevere in the religious way of life we have undertaken . . . And it is appropriate that it is two cubits long, because our active way of life consists mainly of two virtues, that is, mercy and innocence; as the Apostle James says, *Religio . . . saeculo*. For when he advises us to visit orphans and widows in their tribulation, he shows that we should compassionately carry out all our duties to our neighbours; and when he exhorts us to keep

ourselves unspotted from this world, he refers to all those respects in which we ourselves should live chastely.)

Bede's interpretation here holds in balance the broader and narrower senses of *religio*. Although he links the verse with perseverance in the monastic vocation ('perseverantiam . . . coeptae religionis'), and applies it to the way of life of the monks ('nostra conversatio'), he also sees it as defining the virtues of the active life (*actualis*). In Bede, as in early medieval writers generally, the active life was not seen as opposed to the contemplative life, but as a necessary foundation for it; it was an ideal to be followed by all Christians, both within and outside the monastery.[44] However, an increasing tendency in the later Middle Ages to associate the active life with those living and working in the world, and the contemplative life with enclosed religious (whether cenobitic or anchoritic),[45] made the relationship of James's definition of *religio* to the monastic life more problematic. Some twelfth-century Benedictine writers attempted to reclaim it for monasticism by reading the first half of the verse either metonymically (as love of one's neighbour in general) or allegorically,[46] and relating the second half particularly to monasticism: Bernard of Clairvaux linked it to the renunciation of the world involved in *conversio* to the monastic life,[47] and his fellow-Cistercian Isaac of Stella argued that 'because in practice it is difficult to lead one's life in the world without being contaminated by it, it is also necessary on this account to flee from the world'.[48] Writers outside the Benedictine tradition, however, sometimes applied the verse partly or wholly to other ways of life; the regular canons Haymo of Halberstadt and Gerhoh of Reichersberg linked the reference to 'widows and orphans' to the obligation of priests and bishops to protect the poor,[49] and Gerhoh also applied the verse as a whole to the laity, as a 'rule of the disciples' sustainable even by married laypeople, living in their own homes, as opposed to the more demanding 'apostolic rule' (*regula apostolorum*) of communal religious life and the renunciation of personal property implied by Acts 4. 32.[50] It could also be used to argue specifically against the identification of *religio* with monasticism, or with the regular life in general. Arno of Reichersberg in his defence of the regular canons, *Scutum canonicorum,* maintained that manual labour, coarse and inadequate clothing, and being bitten by fleas were not essential requirements for a truly religious life (*vera religio*), and that the prescriptions of James 1. 27 could be carried out as well by the regular canons as by monks, 'whatever colour of clothes they wear'.[51] The secular cleric Peter of Blois, attacking a regular canon who had criticized his work, claimed that he did not wish to deny the greater

spiritual security of the religious way of life (*religio*) compared with the secular (*nostra saecularitas*), but nevertheless cited James 1. 27 as an affirmation of the validity of the secular life ('not everyone is obliged to fight in the army of regulars'),[52] arguing that inner disposition was more important than *habitus et tonsura*, and that Martha's occupation had its value as well as Mary's.[53]

The interpretation of James 1. 27 in *Ancrene Wisse* reflects these tensions, but does not exactly follow any earlier model. Its reading of the first half of the verse is unusual both in its interpretation as referring to the care of souls (rather than to the practical support of one's flock, the corporal works of mercy, or love of one's neighbour in general), and in in its emphasis on preaching. It is probable that the author is borrowing here from a different exegetical tradition, drawing on Jerome's allegorical reading of two other Scriptural texts which mention widows and orphans, Psalm 145. 9 ('The Lord . . . will raise up the orphan and widow') and Isaiah 10. 2 ('That widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless'). Jerome interprets the first as 'He will raise up the orphan who had lost his father, God, through sins. And he will raise up the widow . . . that is, that soul which had lost her husband, Christ',[54] and the second as 'Every heretic writes iniquity, so that he may deceive the poor and humble of the people'.[55] The author's reading of the second half of the verse is also unusual in the emphasis it lays on anchoritism as the religious life *par excellence* (a point normally applied, as in the Benedictine Rule, only to those anchorites who had graduated from a monastic training, and not usually linked with this verse). The effect of his interpretation is to produce a distinction between two ways of life, one active, one contemplative, rather than the single ideal of the active life envisaged by Bede. The author says that these ways of life belong to 'two kinds of religious', but he is not necessarily referring only to *religiosi* in the narrower sense; although monks and (more particularly) regular canons might engage in preaching and pastoral care, the phrase *prelaz ant treowe preachurs* looks like an echo of the Latin collocation, *praelati et praedicatores*, traditionally used to describe the secular clergy. He seems rather to be reasserting the value of extra-monastic forms of *religio*, with traditional monasticism (*religio* in the narrowest sense) almost disappearing into the gap between 'prelates and true preachers' on the one hand and the anchoresses, who keep themelves unspotted from the world 'more than other religious', on the other.

Another modification of earlier material in the same direction can be found at the beginning of *Ancrene Wisse* Part 6, on Penance, in the author's adaptation of Bernard of Clairvaux's sixth sermon in Lent.[56] Although the author claims that

'nearly all of this is what St Bernard says',[57] and often follows his original closely, his version of the sermon makes significant changes to the emphasis of the original.

Bernard tells his audience of monks that there are three levels (*gradus*) of detachment from the world: as *peregrini*, as *mortui*, and as *crucifixi*. Those who are like pilgrims in the world may keep themselves unspotted from it, but can still be distracted by its pains and pleasures; those who are dead to the world are also dead to its pains and pleasures, and alive only to Christ; those who are crucified to the world willingly reject its pleasures and embrace its pains, because they, like St Paul, have been 'caught up into the third heaven'. Bernard concludes, 'Let each of us consider which level he is at, and try to make progress from day to day', and he adds that this applies particularly in Lent; monks are the household troops of God, fighting permanently against the Devil, but in Lent the 'general army' of the Church joins the battle, 'even the ignorant' (*et ipsi rudes*), so monks should make a special effort. In Bernard's sermon, the three levels of detachment from the world are differentiated spiritually, not socially: they all apply to his audience of monks ('Let each of us consider which level he is at'). Those who are not part of this spiritual élite are mentioned only briefly, and in slightly contemptuous terms (*et ipsi rudes*).

In *Ancrene Wisse*, however, the three spiritual levels are also aligned with different ways of life. The *peregrini* are defined as 'holy people who, although they are in the world, are in it as pilgrims . . . those people who have worldly property and are not attached to it, but give it away as it comes to them, and travel light without baggage, as pilgrims do, towards heaven':[58] that is, they are identified with seculars (it is not clear whether the author has in mind the laity, the secular clergy, or both), who, unlike regulars, were allowed to own personal property. The *mortui* are identified with religious in general: 'So properly every religious is dead to the world, but nevertheless alive to Christ'.[59] As for the *crucifixi*, 'this is the anchoress's level'.[60] Unlike Bernard, the author of *Ancrene Wisse* does not present this level as marked off from the previous two by mystical experience; instead, he stresses its penitential nature, so that it becomes less an inner disposition than an outward way of life, the anchoress's inclusion and the austerities she practises. Although he retains Bernard's hierarchy of good, better, and best, there is still some implicit devaluation of monastic spirituality in comparison to other, extra-monastic ways of life. At one extreme, the monks are displaced by 'holy people . . . in the world', who had no place in Bernard's categorization; at the other, anchoresses are set above other religious. The monks'

monopoly of spiritual distinction is replaced by a three-term system which seems to allow them a place only on the second of its three levels.

Giles Constable, in his study *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, defines the essential feature of the 'Medieval Reformation' as 'the application of monastic life to all people, and the interiorization of monastic values and spirituality . . . There was a common concern at that time, and especially in the period from about 1100 to 1160, with the nature of religious life and the ideal of personal perfection. A set of values as well as a way of life, embodied in various institutions, was at the heart of the movement of reform, which can be seen as an effort to monasticize first the clergy, by imposing on them a standard of life previously reserved for monks, and then the entire world.'[61] But the treatment of the life of perfection in *Ancrene Wisse* reflects a more ambivalent attitude to the monastic ideal than this summary suggests; it seems to involve not just the diffusion of an existing ideal to new circles, but a conscious attempt to reclaim *religio* (defined as the life of perfection) from its identification with traditional monasticism. Precedents for this approach can be found from the earliest stages of the 'Medieval Reformation'. It might involve simply an appropriation of monastic values and practices by reformers who appealed over the authority of established monastic rules to that of the New Testament and the Desert Fathers; but it could also entail a reassertion of the value of extra-monastic forms of religious life, such as peripatetic preaching, or an eremitic life entered directly from the world rather than from the monastery.[62] The mid-twelfth-century *Life* of Norbert of Xanten, founder of the Premonstratensian canons, reports that when he was denounced at the Council of Fritzlar in 1118 for preaching without authorization and wearing a religious habit to which he was not entitled (he was a secular canon at the time), he defended his preaching by an appeal to James 5. 20 (which asserts that saving souls can cover a multitude of sins) and his *religio* by citing James 1. 27.[63] The hermit Stephen of Muret (*c.* 1054-1124/5) is said in the mid-twelfth-century prologue to the Grandmontine rule to have advised his semi-eremitic followers to observe the precepts of the Gospel, 'so that to those who ask what profession you have made, or what rule or order you belong to, you can say that you follow the first and principal rule of Christian religious life (*religionis*), that is, the Gospel, which is the fount and origin of all rules';[64] John of Salisbury commented on the Grandmontine order, 'Some have Basil, some Benedict, some Augustine as their master, but these have only Lord Jesus Christ.'[65]

During the early and mid-twelfth century, the tendency was for extra-monastic religious movements to be assimilated to traditional monastic structures

(as in the case of both the Premonstratensians and the Grandmontines); the 'slide into cenobitism', initiated by the need of growing communities for firmer organization, a rule to perpetuate their chosen way of life, and financial security,[66] was actively facilitated both by the Church authorities, who saw the formation of enclosed orders as an effective means of containing the activities of the reformers and their followers,[67] and by lay patrons, who valued the spiritual prestige conferred by the new communities.[68] By the early thirteenth century, however, the gap between extra-monastic religious movements and traditional monasticism had widened, with a proliferation of new forms of religious and semi-religious life less easy to accommodate, either in principle or in practice, within existing structures – a development recognized but not effectively halted by the Fourth Lateran Council's prohibition of new orders. An early Dominican *exemplum* recorded by Stephen of Bourbon (who joined the order *c.* 1223) reflects a mendicant redefinition of the life of perfection in terms of preaching rather than monasticism: a Dominican novice who was being encouraged to by some monks to transfer to their order 'asked them whether the Lord Jesus Christ had given us a pattern of right living which excelled all others, and whether his own conduct was to be our rule. They said "Yes". "So", he replied, "when I read that the Lord Jesus Christ was not a white monk or a black monk, but a poor preacher, I want rather to follow in his footsteps than in those of anyone else."'[69] The *Preface* to *Ancrene Wisse* refers its audience of lay-anchoresses to the model of the early desert solitaries, whose *religio* was defined not by wearing black or white habits, but by keeping themselves unspotted from the world, following 'the order of St James'. And the reforming preacher James of Vitry in his *Historia Occidentalis*, composed during the early 1220s, extends the image of the 'virtual cloister' beyond its use in *Ancrene Wisse* to cover seculars (including the laity) in general:

> Non solum hos qui seculo renunciant et transeunt ad religionem regulares iudicamus, sed et omnes Christi fideles, sub euangelica regula Domino famulantes et ordinate sub uno summo et supremo Abbate uiuentes, possumus dicere regulares.[70]
>
> [We do not consider regulars (*regulares*) only those who renounce the world and go over to a religious life (*ad religionem*), but we can also describe as regulars all the faithful of Christ who serve the Lord under the evangelical rule and who live in an ordered way (*ordinate*) under the one highest

and supreme Abbot.]

It is clear from the discussion of the various secular 'orders' (*ordines*) that follows that James is not thinking only of specifically 'monastic' virtues or habits of life as practised, to a greater or lesser degree, by the secular clergy or pious laity; his emphasis is more on their devoted performance of the roles proper to their station in life, as preachers, fighters, or workers in the world. After pointing out that 'clerks and priests living in the world have their own rule and the observances and regulations proper to their order',[71] he goes on to list the 'orders' of married, widows, and virgins, as well as soldiers, merchants, farmers, craftsmen, 'and various other kinds of people [who] have their own various rules and regulations (*regulas et institutiones*) according to the various kinds of talent granted to them by God', explaining that the body of the Church must be composed of a variety of different people with different occupations, 'so that the true Joseph [i.e., Christ as head of the Church] may be clad in a coat of many colours, and the queen [i.e., the Church as his bride] may stand at his right hand wearing multicoloured garments'.[72] He adds that in his opinion no *religio* or *ordo* of regulars, however strict, is as much valued by God as 'the order of priests faithfully and carefully keeping watch over their flock'.[73] There was nothing new in James's time about the idea that all Christians could be seen as belonging to their own 'orders', each carrying its own duties and obligations.[74] More significant is James's rhetorical exploitation of the tension between the older, more general sense of *ordo* and its more recent and specialized sense of 'religious order.' Like the author of *Ancrene Wisse,* James plays on the ambiguity of the terms *ordo, religio,* and *regula,* reclaiming them from their increasing contemporary specialization for the Christian community as a whole, and using the metaphor of the 'virtual cloister' to offer a less exclusive and hierarchical model of the life of perfection. Instead of the uniformity that 'the application of monastic life to all people' might be taken to imply, he celebrates variety; his imagery presents the Church as *uarietate circumdata,* clothed not in black or white but in many colours.

Of all the writers quoted above, the one who shows the closest similarities in both style and approach with the author of *Ancrene Wisse* is James of Vitry, and James's better-documented life and works may help to illuminate the historical and intellectual context from which *Ancrene Wisse* emerged. Both men were influenced by the Paris-based movement of pastoral reform initiated by Peter Cantor and his circle;[75] both supported extra-monastic groups of religious women (in James's case, the Beguines of the diocese of Liège); both separated the

roles of contemplative religious and preachers;[76] and both were enthusiastic advocates of the mendicants (James saw the Dominicans as a branch of his own order, the Augustinian canons). The ambivalence towards traditional monasticism which characterizes *Ancrene Wisse* can be better understood in the context of the broader European movement of reform reflected in James's works, a movement impatient with the deficiencies of the contemporary clergy (both religious and secular), closely involved with preaching and pastoral care, and actively supporting the development of extra-monastic forms of religious life. Taken in isolation, the emphasis in *Ancrene Wisse* on the unimportance of outward forms for true *religio* could be seen as no more than an appropriate consolatory *topos* for an audience who were dissatisfied with their borderline status as *religiosae*; or alternatively, as Constable explains it, 'a collective topos of good will and tolerance', emphasizing how much different forms of the religious life had in common.[77] But *Ancrene Wisse* is more than a *liber confortatorius*, and its approach to the religious life is less eirenic than Constable's reading implies; the evidence of the work as a whole suggests that its author is not simply reasserting but redefining the nature of the life of perfection.

NOTES

[1] See Bella Millett, *Ancrene Wisse, the Katherine Group, and the Wooing Group*, Annotated Bibliographies of Old and Middle English Literature 2 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1996), pp. 7-13, for discussion and references.

[2] 'ine blostme of ower ʒuweðe uorheten alle wor[l]des blissen and bicomen ancren', *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwle, edited from Cotton Nero A. xiv* by Mabel Day, EETS 225 (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 85/26-27.

[3] 'twenti nuðe oðer ma'; see *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwle: Ancrene Wisse, edited from MS. Corpus Christi College Cambridge 402* by J. R. R. Tolkien, EETS 249 (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), fol. 69^r/14, p. 130. All references to *Ancrene Wisse* are to Corpus 402, unless otherwise indicated; the quotations and translations are from the edition of Corpus 402 on which I am currently working.

[4] E. J. Dobson, *The Origins of Ancrene Wisse* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976).

[5] Dobson, *Origins of Ancrene Wisse*, p. 270.

[6] Sally Thompson, *Women Religious: The Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), p. 31.

[7] Janet Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain 1000-1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 91.

[8] Bruce Venarde, *Women's Monasticism and Medieval Society: Nunneries in France and England, 890-1215* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 180.

[9] See pp. 59-61 below.

[10] The 'cura vel custodia monialum vel quarumlibet aliarum mulierum' was prohibited by the General Chapter in 1228, and again, in stronger terms, in the mid-1230s; see Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages* (2nd edn, 1961), trans. by Steven Rowan (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), ch. 5, § 2, pp. 92-109.

[11] Brenda M. Bolton, 'Some Thirteenth Century Women in the Low Countries: A Special Case?', *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*, 61 (1981), 7-29.

[12] Ann K. Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons in Medieval England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), ch. 2.

[13] Patricia J. F. Rosof, 'The Anchoress in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', in *Peaceweavers: Medieval Religious Women*, vol. 2, ed. by Lillian Thomas Shank and John A. Nichols, Cistercian Studies Series 72 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1987), pp. 123-44.

[14] Sharon K. Elkins, *Holy Women of Twelfth-Century England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), p. 164.

[15] See *A History of the County of Chester*, ed. by B. E. Harris, VCH (London: Oxford

University Press, 1980), 3, 146-50.

[16]   Marjorie M. Chibnall, in *A History of Shropshire*, ed. by A. T. Gaydon, VCH (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 2, 83-84.

[17]   See Dobson, *Origins of Ancrene Wisse*, ch. 4.

[18]   See Thompson, *Women Religious*, pp. 50-52, and Mary Scott, 'A Herefordshire nunnery: a calendar, with introduction, of the Aconbury Cartulary', M. Phil. thesis, University of Southampton, 2001; H. J. Nicholson, 'Margaret de Lacy and the Hospital of St John at Aconbury, Herefordshire', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 50 (1999), 629-51, argues that it was not a hospital in the early stages but an enclosed community, but this is not the most obvious reading of the written evidence.

[19]   'þet ȝe beon aa wi∂ annesse of an heorte ant of a wil ilimet togederes, as hit iwriten is bi ure Lauerdes deore deciples: *Multitudinis credentium erat cor unum et anima una.*' Corpus 402, fol. 69^r/9-12.

[20]   Corpus 402, fols 69^r/12-69^v/11.

[21]   Ludo Milis, 'Ermites et chanoines réguliers au XIIe siècle', *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale,* 22 (1979), 39-80, p. 63.

[22]   On the 'unofficial' status of *Ancrene Wisse* as a Rule, see further Bella Millett, 'The Genre of *Ancrene Wisse*', in *A Companion to Ancrene Wisse*, ed. by Yoko Wada (Cambridge: Brewer, forthcoming).

[23]   Dobson, *Origins of Ancrene Wisse,* pp. 267-70.

[24]   It is possible that a single *meistre* was responsible for the larger community; an addition only in Corpus 402, fol. 117^r/18-19, advises the anchoresses to refer potential quarrels to *him þe loke∂ ham alle* ('the man who supervises them all').

[25]   See Bella Millett, 'The Origins of *Ancrene Wisse:* New Answers, New Questions', *Medium Ævum,* 61 (1992), 206-28, and '*Ancrene Wisse* and the Book of Hours', in *Writing Religious Women*, ed. by Denis Renevey and Christiania Whitehead (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 21-40.

[26]   See Peter Biller, 'Words and the Medieval Notion of "Religion"', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History,* 36 (1985), 351-69, and Réginald Grégoire, '"Religiosus": Étude sur le vocabulaire de la vie religieuse', in *A Giuseppe Ermini*, Studi Medievali, ser. 3, 10 (3 vols), vol. 2 (Spoleto, 1970), 415-30.

[27]   'En latinité chrétienne, la *religio* sera la vie de foi, se concrétisant et se vérifiant dans les actes, surtout dans l'exercice de la charité, première commandement de l'Évangile: "Religio munda et immaculata apud Deum et Patrem haec est: visitare pupillos et viduas in tribulatione eorum et immaculatum se custodire ab hoc saeculo."' Grégoire, '"Religiosus"', p. 417.

[28]   Canon 13, *De novis religionis prohibitis*, in *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, ed. by Giuseppe Alberigo et al. (Bologna: Istituto per le Scienze Religiose, 1973), p. 242.

[29] On *conversio*, see Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 15.

[30] 'À l'exception des éléments marginaux, ermites et autres, tout religieux ou religieuse de l'époque classique, appartient à un ordre.' Jacques Hourlier, *L'Age classique 1140-1378: Les Religieux*, Histoire du Droit et des Institutions de l'Église en Occident, 10 (Paris: Editions Cujas, 1974), p. 357.

[31] On Innocent III's facilitation of the acceptance of both orders, see Brenda M. Bolton, 'Via Ascetica', in *Monks, Hermits and the Ascetic Tradition*, ed. by W. J. Sheils (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), pp. 187-91.

[32] 'Par voie de conséquence, un fossé plus profond se creuse entre les réguliers et d'autres religieux, isolés, les ermites, que le droit semble un peu négliger. En réalité, le droit n'oublie pas les isolés; mais leur condition m'me n'appelle aucunement une législation d'ensemble: elle se suffit de quelques principes et d'une réglementation personnelle, laissée au contrôle de l'autorité locale.' Hourlier, *Les Religieux*, p. 531.

[33] Corpus 402, fol. 16^r/27-16^v/10.

[34] See Corpus 402, fols 16^v/13-17^r/2 (also in the earlier of the two French translations of *AW*); and Corpus 402, fol. 112^v/11-12.

[35] i.e. more or less strict – the white habit, for both monks and canons, indicated a greater degree of austerity. See Corpus 402, fols 2^v/28-3^r/2.

[36] 'euch mon mot . . . nede halden, ant ȝe ouer alle.' Corpus 402, fol. 2^v/12-13.

[37] 'hu eoten, drinken, werien, singen, slepen, wakien.' Corpus 402, fol. 1^v/5-6.

[38] Corpus 402, fols 2^v/28-3^v/1.

[39] 'Her-in is religiun, nawt i þe wid hod ne i þe blake cape, ne i þe hwite rochet ne i þe greie cuuel', Corpus 402, fol. 3^v/17-19.

[40] Acts 4. 32, as cited in the 'Rule of St Augustine'; see *Les Statuts de Prémontré au milieu du xiie siècle*, ed. by Pl. L. Lefèvre and W. M. Grauwen, Bibliotheca Analectorum Praemonstratensium, 12 (Averbode: Praemonstratensia, 1978), p. 1, and *De Oudste Constituties van de Dominicanen*, ed. by A. H. Thomas, Bibliothèque de la Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique, 42 (Louvain: Bureel van de R. H. E. Universiteitsbibliothek, 1965), p. 311. The allusion was first noted by Dobson, *Origins of Ancrene Wisse*, pp. 19-20.

[41] 'trichunge ant a fals gile', Corpus 402, fol. 4^r/10-11.

[42] Bede, *Super Epistolas catholicas expositio: Super divi Jacobi epistolam*, ch. 1, *PL* 93.18.

[43] Bk. 1, ch. 6, *PL* 91. 407.

[44] See Bede, *Hom.* 8, *PL* 94. 48: 'Namque activa [vita] non solis in coenobio monachis, sed et cuncto . . . populo Dei generaliter ingredienda proponitur.'

[45] See the detailed study, 'The Interpretation of Mary and Martha', in Giles Constable,

Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 1-141.

[46] The black Benedictine Godfrey of Admont explained the 'orphans' as the senses, the 'widows' as bodily actions or affections; see his *Homiliae dominicales, Hom.* 50, *PL* 174. 363-64, and *Hom.* 68, PL 174. 480.

[47] *Sermones de diversis, Sermo* 11, *Sancti Bernardi opera,* vol. VI, 1, *Sermones* III, ed. by J. Leclercq and H. Rochais (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1970), 126.

[48] 'Sed quoniam actu difficile est in saeculo conversari, et ab eo non contaminari, etiam propter hoc fugiendum a saeculo', *Sermo* 25, *PL* 194. 1773.

[49] Haymo of Halberstadt, *Hom.* 88, *PL* 118. 522; Gerhoh of Reichersberg, *De aedificio Dei,* ch. 12, *PL* 194.1230.

[50] 'Isti, si recte vivunt visitando pupillos et viduas in tribulatione eorum, et immaculatos se custodiendo ab hoc saeculo, etsi non currunt cum apostolis . . . ambulant tamen cum eorum discipulis sub custodia mundae et certae religionis', *De aedificio Dei,* Ch. 42, *PL* 194. 1299.

[51] 'Cujusque coloris utantur vestibus', *Scutum canonicorum, PL* 194. 1496.

[52] 'Non oportet omnes regulari militiae manum dare.'

[53] *Invectiva in depravatorem operum Blesensis, PL* 207. 1121.

[54] Pupillum suscipiet, qui patrem deum perdiderat per peccata. Et uiduam suscipiet . . . hoc est, eam animam, quae Christum uirum perdiderat', *Tractatus* 59 *in Psalmos, PL* 26. 1252.

[55] 'Omnis haereticus scribit iniquitatem, ut pauperes et humiles populi decipiat', *Commentarii in Isaiam,* Bk. 4, *PL* 24. 133.

[56] *Sermo 6 in Quadragesima, Sancti Bernardi opera* IV, *Sermones* I, ed. by J. Leclercq and H. Rochais (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1966), 377-80.

[57] 'for al meast is Sein Beornardes sentence', Corpus 402, fol. 94^r/27.

[58] 'hali men þe, þah ha beon i þe world, ha beoð þrin as pilegrimes . . . þeo men þe habbeð worltlich þing ant ne luuieð hit nawt, ah ȝeoueð hit as hit kimeð ham, ant gað untrusset lihte, as pilegrimes doð, toward heouene', Corpus 402, fols 94^v/13-14, 95^r/6-9.

[59] 'Þus riht is euch religius dead to þe worlde, ant cwic þah to Criste', Corpus 402, fol. 95^r/27-28.

[60] 'þis is ancre steire', Corpus 402, fol. 95^v/7.

[61] Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century,* pp. 7, 6.

[62] See Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy: The Western Church from 1050 to 1250* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), pp. 68-74.

[63] 'Si de religione impetor, "Religio munda. . ."', *Vita S. Norberti,* ch. 8, *PL* 170. 1270.

[64] 'ut quaerentibus cuius professionis, uel cuius regulae cuiusque ordinis, uos esse dicatis Christianae religionis primae et principalis regulae, Euangelii scilicet, quod omnium regularum fons est atque principium', *Regula Stephani Muretensis, Prol., CCCM* 8. 67.

[65] 'Alii Basilium, alii Benedictum, hi Augustinum, at isti singularem magistrum habent Dominum Jesum Christum', *Polycraticus,* bk. 7, ch. 23, *PL* 199. 699. On the Grandmontines as an *ordo peculiaris,* unwilling to be categorized as monks, canons, or hermits, see Carole A. Hutchinson, *The Hermit Monks of Grandmont,* Cistercian Studies, 118 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1989), pp. 45-46.

[66] See Milis, 'Ermites et chanoines', pp. 57-62.

[67] See Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages* (2nd edn, 1961) trans. by Steven Rowan (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), ch. 1, § 2.

[68] See, e.g., Jane Herbert, 'The Transformation of Hermitages into Augustinian Priories in Twelfth-Century England', in *Monks, Hermits and the Ascetic Tradition,* ed. by Shiels, pp. 131-45.

[69] *Anecdotes historiques tirés d'Étienne de Bourbon,* ed. by A. Lecoy de la Marche (Paris, 1877), § 74, trans. by Simon Tugwell, *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), p. 139.

[70] *The Historia Occidentalis of Jacques de Vitry,* ed. by John Frederick Hinnebusch, Spicilegium Friburgense 17 (Fribourg: Fribourg University Press, 1972), ch. 34.

[71] 'Habent enim clerici et sacerdotes in seculo commorantes regulam suam et proprias ordinis sui obseruantias et institutiones.'

[72] 'ut tunica polimita uerus Ioseph induatur [see Gen. 37. 3] et regina uarietate circumdata a dextris eius consistat [see Ps. 44. 10 (Septuagint)]', *Historia Occidentalis,* ed. Hinnebusch, ch. 34.

[73] 'ordo sacerdotum super gregem suum fideliter et sollicite uigilantium', *Historia Occidentalis,* ed. Hinnebusch, ch. 34.

[74] See Constable, *Three Studies,* III: 'The Orders of Society', particularly the discussion of this passage from James of Vitry, pp. 330-31.

[75] See Bella Millett, '*Ancrene Wisse* and the Conditions of Confession', *English Studies,* 80 (1999), 193-215.

[76] For a thorough analysis of the development of James's views on this topic, see Jessalynn Bird, 'The Religious's Role in a Post-Fourth-Lateran World: Jacques de Vitry's *Sermones ad status* and *Historia Occidentalis*', in *Medieval Monastic Preaching,* ed. by Carolyn Muessig, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, 90 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 209-29.

[77] Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century,* p. 172.