BEGONE THOUGHT: TEMPTATION TO DESPAIR IN LATE-MEDIEVAL RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

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Abstract

Though despair and scrupulosity are often thought of as Early Modern or Protestant phenomena, they manifest as significant concerns especially in late medieval hagiography and pastoralia. This dissertation traces the threads of intrusive thoughts and scrupulosity as spiritual challenges through medieval religious literature, with a focus on the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as a type of "temptation to despair." I examine a range of medieval texts and their manuscript contexts from the twelfth through the fifteenth century including *The Profits of Tribulation*, *The Chastising of God's Children*, William Flete's *Remedies Against Temptation*, *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, Marie d'Oignies's *vita*, Birgitta of Sweden's *Revelations,* Catherine of Siena's *vitae* and *The Orcherd of Syon, The Book of Margery Kempe,* and *The Shewings of Julian of Norwich,* among others, with the lenses of the history of emotions and medieval gender to better understand the valences of medieval temptation to despair. I argue that temptation to despair was conceptually rooted in the tradition of tribulation as spiritually profitable; that temptation to despair could be conceived of as a nun's scrupulosity or worry over past sins on a lay person's deathbed; and that these modes of despair became more deeply intermingled by the late Middle Ages. Moreover, I demonstrate that temptation to despair—especially intrusive thoughts—held particular weight in female spirituality, given medieval anxiety over women's enclosure.

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Introduction

Anyone who has ever had a song stuck in their head has experienced on some level the irritation of unwanted thoughts. Fewer, however, have experienced the intense agony expressed in *The Book of Margery Kempe*, which spares no detail in its description of Margery's lurid fantasies:

> And so the devyl bar hyr on hande, dalying unto hir wyth cursyd thowtys, liche as owr Lord dalyid to hir beforntyme with holy thowtys. And, as sche beforn had many gloryows visyonys and hy contemplacyon in the manhod of owr Lord, in owr Lady, and in many other holy seyntys, ryth evyn so had sche now horybyl syghtys and abhominabyl, for anythyng that sche cowde do, of beheldyng of mennys membrys, and swech other abhominacyons. Sche sey, as hir thowt veryly, dyvers men of religyon, preystys, and many other, bothyn hethyn and Cristen, comyn befor hir syght, that sche myth not enchewyn hem ne puttyn hem owt of hir syght, schewyng her bar membrys unto hir. And therwyth the devyl bad hir in hir mende chesyn whom sche wolde han fyrst of hem alle, and sche must be comown to hem alle. And he seyd sche lykyd bettyr summe on of hem than alle the other. Hir thowt that he seyd trewth; sche cowde not sey nay; and sche must nedys don hys byddyng, and yet wolde sche not a done it for alle this worlde. But yet hir thowt that it schulde be don, and hir thowt that thes horrybyl syghtys and cursyd mendys wer delectabyl to hir ageyn her wille. Wher sche went er what so sche dede, thes cursyd mendys abedyn wyth hir. When sche schulde se the sacrament, makyn hir prayerys, er don any other good dede, evyr swech cursydnes was putte in hir mende. Sche was schrevyn and dedde al that sche myth, but sche fonde no relesyng, tyl sche was ner at dispeyr. It can not be wretyn, that peyn that sche felt and the sorwe that sche was inne.[1]

Because Margery often talks about her sexually active past and much of the central conflict of her life story concerns her attempts to reclaim virginity, it may at first seem this is temptation aimed at undermining her commitment to her newfound chastity. However, that would be looking exclusively at the content of these visions rather than the quality and experience of them. Rather than framing it as a struggle with her own lust, the author depicts a struggle with the devil who is showing her things she does not want to see: "sche myth not enchewyn hem ne puttyn hem owt of hir syght," indicating the thoughts are unwanted and intrusive. Moreover, "hir thowt that thes horrybyl syghtys and cursyd mendys wer delectabyl to hir ageyn hir wille," indicating

[1] Barry Windeatt, ed., *The Book of Margery Kempe* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 282-283.

she does not find them enjoyable or titillating, but rather, is in mental anguish because the devil is trying to convince her that she does find them so. Thus, on top of seeing these things she doesn't want to see, she's also doubting her own good will. Naturally, this tribulation brings her "ner at dispeyr."

It becomes clear that the main struggle for Margery at this point in her spiritual journey is not so much lust, but a more insidious temptation: despair. Yet merely labelling this as "temptation to despair" flattens her experience to the detriment of our understanding the complexity of her struggles. The experience of intrusive thoughts and the distress and subsequent spiritual doubt they can cause was certainly not exclusive to Margery Kempe and late-medieval hagiography, but is clearly an area of interest in pastoral sources of the same period. The fifteenth-century Middle English translation of William Flete's Latin treatise *Remedies Against Temptation* addresses, in a practical sense, a religious person who seems to be in some distress about the thoughts he or she experiences,[2] as he advises: "But often the temptynge of þe fend, þat maketh þe soule to erre in feyth and to fantasye in dispeir, semeth gret synne to a manis soule, and is not so… It is good þat a man take non heed of alle swiche trauelous fantasyes and sterings þat comen on this wyse, for god heydeth fro hem the knowleche for grete skeles, to here profyȝte of soule."[3] This text practically prescribes "treatment" for a spiritual/mental state, which we could consider a version of medieval mental health care. What is most interesting to me is that in

[2] Jessica Lamothe comments that the intended audience may have changed between the Latin and the Middle English translations: "While the Latin DR [*De Remediis*] was directed towards male religious professionals, the four ME versions found a broader audience that consisted largely of religious women but also included elite laywomen, regular and secular male clergy, and professional laymen." Jessica Michelle Lamothe, "An Edition of the Latin and Four Middle English Versions of William Flete's *De Remediis Contra Temptaciones (Remedies against Temptations)*," Ph.D. Thesis (University of York, 2017), 2.

[3] Edmund Colledge and Noel Chadwick, eds., *"Remedies Against Temptations": The Third English Version of William Flete* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1967), 222-223.

both cases, the experience of specific distressing thoughts is separated from the subject's identity and "true desires"—in this case her desire for God and identity as a chaste woman.

In this study I focus on unwanted, intrusive thoughts and how the anxiety they caused, akin to more modern scrupulosity, was configured in medieval vernacular theology and use that framework to understand individual episodes of tribulation in hagiography and mystic accounts. In order to understand these aspects of tribulation and medieval mental health, we need to look to both theology surrounding despair, where it is often configured as a sin connected to or identified with acedia (sloth), as well as the history of emotions.

Nicholas Watson comprehensively studied medieval despair in his 2010 essay entitled "Despair." Watson distinguishes two distinct forms of despair, the lay form and the monastic form. On one hand, the "wanhope" featured in *Piers Plowman* is a tool of Sloth, threatening the hope of an old man on his deathbed.[4] Watson notes that in this case, despair is a result of sins rather than a "generator of sins" as portrayed by Aquinas.[5] The other type of despair, which Watson identifies with acedia, is the monastic version where overly rigorous ascetic practice and spiritual perfectionism gradually erode "vocation, hope, and finally faith."[6] Watson argues that in the late Middle Ages, even for religious, despair increasingly took on the lay meaning exemplified by *Piers Plowman*. Yet a third version, present in the late Middle Ages, affected "religious specialists engaged in contemplative living," which can include laypeople such as

[4] Nicholas Watson, "Despair," in *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*, eds. Brian Cummings and James Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 343.
[5] Ibid. Watson refers to ST 2.2.20 article 1, in which Aquinas considers whether despair is a sin. He observes on the contrary: "That which leads men to sin, seems not only to be a sin itself, but a source of sins. Now such is despair, for the Apostle says of certain men (Ephesians 4:19): 'Who, despairing, have given themselves up to lasciviousness, unto the working of all uncleanness and [Vulgate: 'unto'] covetousness.' Therefore despair is not only a sin but also the origin of other sins." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Bezinger Brothers, 1922), https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3020.htm
[6] Watson, "Despair," 344.

Margery Kempe.[7] This drew more on the monastic version but "associated despair with a specific set of temptations that have a markedly post-Reformation ring, including doubt, blasphemy, an overscrupulous sense of sinfulness, and terror at an implacably predestining divine justice."[8] It is within this context that Watson positions Flete's *Remedies Against Temptations*, along with Julian of Norwich's *Revelations*, and various pastoral works of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and of course, Margery's *Book*.[9] Watson places the blame for this new rise in "tormenting thoughts" on fourteenth-century scholasticism in which "semi-Pelagian" ideas of grace had become popular, against which Flete seemed to be reacting.[10] Watson eventually argues that *The Book of Margery Kempe* and other such works represent a version of the same emotion of "despair" usually considered invented by Protestant double-predestination despair, i.e., despair over the supposition that God has predestined one for hell.[11]

Watson's overview invites us to examine the cultural context of vernacular theology after the Fourth Lateran Council. Alexandra Barratt asserts that "the importance of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 in the formation of the consciousness of Western Europe cannot be overrated," as it demanded of everyone "some minimum of basic knowledge in their faith."[12] Consequently bishops demanded their priests explain "the Decalogue, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Seven Sacraments, and all three Creeds" to their parishioners.[13] Moreover, it greatly increased the amount of "works of religious instruction" written both in Latin for clergy as well as "vernacular derivatives" for a broader audience.[14] This included "literature on Tribulation," as she terms it,

[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid, 345.
[10] Ibid, 352.
[11] Ibid, 357.
[12] Alexandra Barratt, "Works of Religious Instruction," in *Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1984), 413.
[13] Ibid, 414.
[14] Ibid, 415.

which she characterizes as "straightforward works of instruction with no mystical overtones and very little affective writing, solidly didactic in tone."[15] She singles out Flete's original Latin text as the most significant one, noting how popular it was in Middle English translation as well. Attempting to explain this popularity, Barratt compares temptation pastoralia to "the best-selling works on self-help of today."[16] Michael Sargent links Flete's work and its derivatives to *The Orcherd of Syon*, a Middle English translation of Catherine of Siena's *Dialogue,* since Flete was one of her advisors.[17] Sargent sorts *Remedies* with "tracts on temptation," many of which remain unedited.[18]

The little-studied subcategory of pastoral literature surveyed by Sargent and Barratt raises several questions. Does this body of work express common ideas about temptation, specifically temptation to despair, and the extreme anxiety this temptation can cause, such as Margery's distress at unwanted thoughts? How do these works address this mental, emotional, and spiritual distress? What do they say about the mind, identity, and how one can separate her true thoughts and identity from intrusive thoughts? What sort of moral value do these pastoral works assign to experiencing temptation or the feeling of despair? And how does the picture of tribulation that emerges from these texts reflect upon the stories of individual experiences of holy people at the time? In the subsequent sections of this dissertation, I attempt to answer these questions by close reading of primary sources and examination of their manuscripts.

[15] Ibid, 424-425.
[16] Ibid, 425.
[17] Michael G. Sargent, "Minor Devotional Writings," in *Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1984), 151.
[18] Ibid, 152.

Critical Context

Although some work has been done on temptation to despair, few scholars discuss the topic *per se*; I hypothesize this is largely due to the lack of consistent language to describe intrusive thoughts in medieval literature. Terms such as temptation, tribulation, acedia, despair, and others all overlap, to some extent, to describe this mental anguish—yet all of these terms are broader categories including other sins and spiritual distresses as well. Current scholarly discourses reflect this problem of language. As such I discuss below a few main areas of study that intersect with my focus on intrusive thoughts and temptation to despair. First, my interests intersect with broader discussions of temptation in medieval theology, though these scholarly conversations often gloss over the specific temptation to despair. Second, acedia, the deadly sin of sloth, has often been identified as despair, or, as an emotional condition leading to despair. Yet the burden of moral theology bestowed by the word "sloth" raises questions as to how it can be applicable to what seems to be an uncontrollable anxiety. Finally, many texts describe tribulation, despair, and other distressing mental states as treatable. Consequently, more recent scholarship has applied the history of emotions and the history of medicine as well as current psychology to try to understand these experiences in terms of mental illness and their treatments as therapeutic. In this dissertation, I draw up on each of these strands of interpretation, evaluating how they might apply to the texts I study.

Temptation

Throughout the Middle Ages, various theories of the source of temptation circulated, from demonic harassment, to humanity's fallen nature, to God's discipline. Henrietta Leyser surveyed various medieval texts on temptation and divides the source of temptations in the Middle Ages into internal and external: temptation can come from human nature and also from

the devil. Leyser suggests that the twelfth-century "discovery of the individual" led to optimistic interpretations of temptation as internal and an opportunity for growth. She gives Aelred of Rievaulx as an example of this; though he expresses disgust for his adolescent lust, he maintains that friendship is spiritually fruitful and that simply feeling physical attraction for a friend is not itself sinful or necessarily negates the good of the friendship, as long as the desire is subject to temperance.[19] This theme, well-noted by Leyser, is pervasive through the mostly later sources analyzed in the first section of this dissertation, especially the *Twelve Profits* group. Moreover, this philosophy of temptation influenced the hagiography that covers the same topic.

While the treatises I cover typically leave the nature of the difficult temptation vague (occasionally on purpose), sexual temptation seems to garner the most critical attention as exemplified here in Leyser's work. Along similar lines to Leyser, Kathryn Kelsey Staples and Ruth Mazo Karras analyze Christina of Markyate's sexual temptation (which I cover in Section Two) as they consider it unusual in the context of contemporary hagiography. Christina of Markyate, a twelfth-century holy woman who struggled to attain a religious vocation, is particularly relevant to this study, as she experiences, like Margery, anxiety due to unwanted thoughts, which she portrays as temptations. Before her consecration, for instance, her hagiographer reports:

> Disturbed by these events, the demon launched out into new warfare, so terrorizing the friend of Christ with horrible apparitions and unclean shapes that for many years afterwards, whenever she composed her weary limbs to rest, she dared not turn upon her side nor look about her. For it seemed to her that the devil might stifle her or inveigle her by his wicked wiles into committing some unseemly wantonness. … The demon… assaulted her with the spirit of blasphemy. He was confident that if he could cloud her faith with the slightest darkness, [he would win the fight]. He came by stealth and put evil

[19] Henrietta Leyser, "Two Concepts of Temptation," in *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to Henry Mayr-Harting*, eds. Richard Gameson and Henrietta Leyser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 320-321. It may be worth noting that Aelred's description of friendship is often read to be homoerotic.

> thoughts into her mind. He suggested horrible ideas about Christ, detestable notions about His Mother. But she would not listen.[20]

Christina's intrusive thoughts here as well as her earlier struggles with lust for a fellow hermit inflict intense worry as to the state of her soul after facing such temptation: "she was mindful of the thoughts and stings of the flesh with which she had been troubled, and even though she was not conscious of having fallen either in deed or in desire, she was chary of asserting that she had escaped unscathed."[21] Christina's temptation, though primarily with despair, intersects with her concern for her virginity, understood as purity of both body and soul.

It is Christina's concern with her virginity that primarily interests Staples and Karras. They note that for many male saints, "the saints' struggle against sexual temptation is emphasized and their sanctity is strengthened by their ability to overcome and control lust."[22] This reading accords with Leyser's analysis of temptation as an internal evil and a tool to become spiritually perfected through resistance, something they acknowledge in Christina specifically.[23] That being said, Staples and Karras emphasize that the sexual temptation trope is strictly gendered: "While the issue may appear in female saints' lives, or in other writings about virtuous women, the women are usually temptations to men but are not subject to temptation themselves."[24] They pin this unusual use of temptation in Christina's life on several historical shifts: "an increase in women religious, the movement for monastic reform, and the movement for the strict claustration of nuns."[25] They conclude her aberration from typical hagiographical

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[20] C.H. Talbot, ed. and trans., *The Life of Christina of Markyate, A Twelfth-Century Recluse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 128-131.
[21] Ibid, 126-127.
[22] Kathryn Kelsey Staples and Ruth Mazo Karras, "Christina's Tempting: Sexual Desire and Women's Sanctity," in *Christina of Markyate: A Twelfth-Century Holy Woman,* eds. Samuel Fanous and Henrietta Leyser (London: Routledge, 2005), 186.
[23] Ibid, 193.
[24] Ibid, 186.
[25] Ibid, 188.

tropes signifies either the veracity of the account to her actual lived experience or a reflection of "the anxieties among wider twelfth-century religious circles."[26] I argue, further, that intrusive thoughts, or even scrupulosity, can be seen as early as Christina's *vita* because of these particular cultural anxieties over religious women's claustration.

Despite this interest in sexual temptation, particularly with respect to women religious, scholarship is typically limited to sexual desire over the undesirable tribulation we see in Margery. Similarly to Staples and Karras, Juanita Feros Ruys discusses the gendered nature of sexual temptation, but with Christina's near contemporary, Heloise, who lusted for her erstwhile husband, Peter Abelard, as a nun. To contextualize her discussion of Heloise, Ruys looked at hagiography, but also accounts of temptations written by the Church Fathers and the *Vitae Patrum* with its exempla and advice regarding temptation. Often these temptations were configured as "diabolical attacks," or in Augustine's case, "images of things imprinted upon it [his memory] by my [his] former habits,"[27] recalling the duality of internal and external temptation described by Leyser. Yet despite the threat of these temptations, Ruys argues, monastic sources recognize them as normal and biological; as Ruys glosses the texts, "there is nothing untoward or remarkable in the affliction of sexual temptation; in fact, it is something that besets every Christian."[28] Ruys' research might pose a challenge to Staples and Karras in that using a broader monastic tradition of writings, the experience of sexual temptation for women might be less rare than it seems in hagiography. Nonetheless, as Christina's *Life* is presented as a hagiography (while Heloise's letters certainly are not) their observation about its generic

[26] Ibid, 192.
[27] Juanita Feros Ruys, "Heloise, Monastic Temptation, and *Memoria*: Rethinking Autobiography, Sexual Experience, and Ethics," in *Sexuality in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: New Approaches to a Fundamental Cultural-Historical and Literary-Anthropological Theme*, eds. Albrecht Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 388-389.
[28] Ibid, 389.

subversion remains salient in analyzing her specific case. Yet this conversation tends to elide the fascinating case when that temptation seems to be toward despair, rather than the sexual act itself. Such temptations, as I demonstrate in Chapters 3 and 4, are certainly not isolated to Christina's *vita*.

Focus on despair as a temptation, rather than sexuality, mainly crystallizes in discussions of Flete. Jessica Michelle Lamothe discusses this most directly in her doctoral thesis on the Latin and the various Middle English versions of Flete's *Remedies Against Temptations*. She claims that *Remedies* "is primarily concerned with the temptations of religious doubt and despair of salvation, along with the related experiences of a lack of devotional feeling and an over-strict conscience," very different from the sort of temptation coming from the flesh central to the aforementioned discussion.[29] This sense of temptation has a significant history before the writing of *Remedies*. She mentions an account from Caesarius of Heisterbach, in which an old nun "was so much troubled by the vice of melancholy [*vitio tristitiae*], and so much harassed by the spirit of blasphemy, doubt, and distrust, that she fell into despair [*desperationem*][30]," thus leading her to assume her own damnation and avoid the sacraments.[31] Rebecca F. McNamara and Ruys likewise comment on this account, noting that the nun attempted suicide via drowning (though she was saved by her sisters). Afterwards, the nun explained that the Prioress had told her she would not receive a Christian burial if she "continued in her current state of lack of faith," and she preferred her body rest in the river than be buried in a field "like an animal."[32] In fact, though

[29] Lamothe, "An Edition of the Latin and Four Middle English Versions of William Flete's *De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*," 39.
[30] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus* Miraculorum, ed. Joseph Strange (Cologne: H. Lempertz & Co, 1851), 209. Accessed March 2, 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20060508210455/http://gahom.ehess.fr/relex/dialogusmiraculorum1/CdH-Dialog.mir.-Vol1/
[31] Lamothe, "An Edition," 40.
[32] Rebecca F. McNamara and Juanita Feros Ruys, "Unlocking the Silences of the Self-Murdered: Textual Approaches to Suicidal Emotions in the Middle Ages," *Exemplaria* 26, no. 1 (2014): 66-67. It is worth mentioning,

suicide is infrequently the focus in medieval life writing, Ruys and McNamara suggest occlusion of the topic: "Discourses of despair, doubt, and mental and physical illness, either longterm or acute, in first-person life narratives of the Middle Ages can thus alert us to the presence of suicidal tendencies and give us an insight into the sorts of emotions that were understood either to impel or emerge from such a mindset."[33] Lamothe accounts for this looming if not explicit threat of suicide in her reading of *Remedies Against Temptation*, as she defines despair as "a weariness of life, often leading to suicide, along with a sense of sin so overwhelming that the despairing person cannot believe that they will be saved."[34] The most interesting part of her analysis is where she notes how the role of the will is given nuance by the text:

> It is repeatedly stated that feelings of doubt and despair are only sinful when they are deliberately entertained and consented to. Yet sinful inclinations may continue and blasphemous ideas may seem genuinely valid, making the presence or absence of consent difficult to perceive… Flete responds that a true will to reject sin may nevertheless be present, and can be recognized if nothing else by the actions of good deeds and affirmative speech.[35]

This effectively divorces the "true self" from "thoughts and feelings."[36] Lamothe remarks that Nicholas Watson had called these feelings of doubt and despair "synonymous" with scrupulosity.[37] In context, Watson was discussing despair before and after the Reformation and claims that *Pilgrim's Progress* was "normalizing" despair into "what Catholic theologians had long called 'scrupulosity.'"[38] The understanding of temptation brought out in Lamothe and Watson's discussion nuances the parallel conversation about sexual temptation, especially regarding *The Life of Christina of Markyate*; likewise, Leyser's classification of internal and

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as well, that they discuss Margery's self harm and potential for suicide as described early in her life, though the later passage that begins my prospectus is passed over in their analysis (67-68).

[33] Ibid, 73.
[34] Ibid, 42.
[35] Ibid, 46.
[36] Ibid, 47.
[37] Ibid, 48.
[38] Watson, "Despair," 349.

external temptation illuminates the dynamics of tribulation. As we observe in the sources below, these interpretations are compatible as in temptation focus is placed on the need for consent to constitute sin—relieving the Christian from despairing over uncontrollable thoughts. Moreover, anxiety over external temptation entering the soul fueled its inclusion in female spirituality, particularly concerning enclosure, as I discuss in Chapter 3.

Acedia

Connected to the temptation to despair is another related ethical concept—sloth ("acedia"), which morphed in meaning throughout the term's use in the Middle Ages. For instance, Morton Bloomfield observes that acedia is identified with despair (often "wanhope" in Middle English) in *The Scale of Perfection*.[39] Likewise, Moshe Barasch comments on the complex connection between despair and acedia in his survey of medieval art history. In the late Middle Ages, despair had two representations in art based on its two forms: the "passive, inert… Melancholy," identified with acedia, and the active and suicidal image of "desperation."[40] In the Renaissance, he argues, these two are then fused in artistic depictions of a single despairing person who shows both of these qualities.[41] He concludes, "instead of despair being considered as a kind of objective, if abstract, being, in the early modern age it comes to be understood as belonging to the domain of mental dispositions, of subjective experiences. Rather than a sin, it becomes an emotional condition."[42] His research reveals one of the prevailing narratives about despair as a medieval sin becoming an Early Modern emotion, though acedia was arguably seen as an emotional state rather than sin in some medieval texts as well. Bloomfield reminds us, for

[39] Morton W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins: An Introduction to the History of a Religious Concept, with Special Reference to Medieval English Literature* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967), 200.
[40] Ibid, 572-573.
[41] Ibid, 575.
[42] Ibid, 575-576.

instance, that Reginald Pecock, a fifteenth-century English theologian, identifies sloth as a morally-neutral "tendency" rather than a sin in *The Donet*.[43]

Nonetheless, acedia (and its attendant despair) was often conceptualized as a very serious sin. Building on Bloomfield's work, Siegfried Wenzel demonstrates that from the Carolingian period through the high Middle Ages, two views of acedia were present—acedia was either a state of mind (a feeling of "spiritual dryness") or a negligence of good works; in previous scholarship this was often posed as a narrative of "bourgeois views" taking over the original monastic concept.[44] Wenzel contests that "acedia not only started out as a monastic vice but remained so predominantly throughout the period of 700-1200," though even the eighth century saw several tracts attempting to relate it to laypeople.[45] He ascribes the different emphases to genre: "Masters of the ascetic and contemplative life would naturally concern themselves more with the inner attitude contained in Cassian's vice, as would speculative theologians in their attempt to penetrate to the psychological roots of sinful acts. On the other hand, the parish priest in his pulpit or confessional, and the layman who examined his conscience, were more interested in the vice's external appearance, its visible effects."[46] This shift in emphasis in formulations of acedia echoes that of despair, as described by Nicholas Watson in the article cited previously.

Therapeutic Reading

Of course, any medieval work meaning to "treat" despair or the temptation to despair essentially concedes that despair is some sort of emotional or mental condition (whether or not it is also a sin). This obviously puts it in a light similar to modern mental disorders and illness

[43] Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins,* 225. The section of *The Donet* Bloomfield refers to specifically proposes sloth might be considered a "passioun," and "þilk slouþe is no moral vice or synne, but it is natural and indifferent to moral vertu and moral vice, and may be a circumstance þat moral vertu be þe grettir and þe better" (106). See: Reginald Pecock, *The Donet*, EETS os 156, ed. Elsie Vaughan Hitchcock (London: Oxford University Press, 1921).
[44] Siegfried Wenzel, "Acedia 700-1200," *Traditio* 22 (1966): 74.
[45] Ibid, 98.
[46] Ibid, 102.

which can be treated through therapeutic regimes (whether through purely "mental" exercises practiced in therapy or physical means such as lifestyle changes or medication), so most of the scholars who discuss despair and temptation in these contexts often analyze the medieval texts within such frameworks. Therapies could include more "spiritual" treatments such as liturgies or reading as well as "physical" treatments seeking to recalibrate the patient's physiology.

Yet this divide between spiritual and physical is somewhat artificial. Medieval authors did not view the human person dualistically, as the spirit and body were deeply connected, and their emotional therapies reflected this understanding. As Julie Orlemanski observes, in the Middle Ages, "there was no entity, like a microorganism, that disease was understood to be—so medieval pathology dealt instead with the patterned conditions of the human body as the result of causal factors. A wide range of influences could affect an individual's physiology—from the planets to daydreams, from the west wind to the scent of flowers, from sexual intercourse to the recitation of prayers."[47] Naama Cohen-Hanegbi elaborates on this complex view of health and emotion via medieval theories on how body and soul interact—for instance, she mentions Aquinas asserting that the soul rationally decides the proper reaction to an event (e.g., deciding a stimulus is worth anger) and in turn the body feeling angry (manifested as raised heart rate, etc.).[48] This eventually moved into a "system of appetites of the intellect" where certain emotions could be viewed as originating entirely from the soul, rather than from both the soul and the body.[49] On the other hand, physicians embraced humoral theory, which was built on the Aristotelian assumption that states of the body influence the soul.[50] This led to fourteenth-

[47] Julie Orlemanski, *Symptomatic Subjects: Bodies, Medicine, and Causation in the Literature of Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 26.
[48] Naama Cohen-Hanegbi, "A Moving Soul: Emotions in Late Medieval Medicine," *Osiris* 31, no. 1 (2016): 51.
[49] Ibid, 52-53.
[50] Ibid, 54.

century physicians assigning "emotional regimens" attached to correcting the humors.[51] This could include lifestyle adjustments like "exercise and sleep" and "producing a calm, soft, and unexciting environment emotionally."[52]

Given the interconnectedness of soul and body in medieval medicine, even activities we would not consider as "medicinal" today could fall under the medieval umbrella as therapeutic. For instance, Daniel McCann explores spiritual reading as one dimension of this. McCann recalls Richard Rolle's description of his Psalter as "a medicyne of words," arguing that this phrase is not metaphorical but rather literal, "drawing upon widespread cultural understandings regarding the very definition of health, and the medicinal potential of reading itself."[53] On one hand, reading is often articulated as a sort of physical exercise (particularly with the emphasis on reading aloud); on the other, reading shapes the readers' emotions, and as McCann reminds us, "emotional disturbances are also physical disturbances" which can cause "profound changes in the body's internal balance of heat and fluids, and so by extension can change its overall humoral balance, thereby increasing the likelihood of disease."[54] Most relevantly to his study, this includes "fear, sorrow, and terror" which could potentially have a permanently detrimental effect on health.[55] Vice versa, harnessing the power of reading can create such emotional states to improve the health of one's soul. For instance, Ruben Pereto Rivas investigated liturgies specifically meant to treat a soul's anxiety, such as "The Office of the Crucifix against Anguish," an eleventh-century German text which was highly circulated.[56] This office included meditation

[51] Ibid, 61.
[52] Ibid, 63.
[53] Daniel McCann, *Soul-Health: Therapeutic Reading in Later Medieval England* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018), 5.
[54] Ibid 6-7.
[55] Ibid 7.
[56] Ruben Pereto Rivas, "Un office liturgique contre l'angoisse. Instances médiévales pour la guérison de l'acédie," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 56, no. 3 (2013): 8.

on the wounds of Christ and instructions that God will fill the participant's soul with "ineffable words" to overcome infinite despair, which Rivas frames as therapeutic.[57] Though eleventh-century German offices are a departure from the primary sources included in this dissertation, Rivas's work foreshadows the common therapeutic practice of reading and meditating on Christ's Passion to console a soul in tribulation.

On the other hand, some texts reframe negative emotions like dread toward spiritual benefit. One such text, found in several manuscripts with other primary sources relevant to this study, is Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection.* McCann argues the text encourages the reader to cultivate specific emotional states to manipulate the humeral system and, through the body, transform the soul.[58] *The Scale* seems to suggest "achieving such a state of [spiritual] health requires not just sacramental and liturgical observance, but also the programmatic experience of precise emotional states designed to alter the soul."[59] "Drede" specifically is meant to be redirected from earthly anxiety towards fear of God and "if properly controlled and directed, [becomes] a therapeutic feeling that can reform the soul."[60] Thus potentially negative emotional states can be strategically employed to address spiritual disorder. *Scale of Perfection* emerged in the same vernacular context as many of the texts included in this project, so it comes as no surprise that many of them use similar tools to help the reader reframe their negative experiences and emotions. Moreover, we can even look at this on a codicological basis, rather than simply on a text basis, as many miscellanies with these texts could themselves be used therapeutically.

[57] Ibid, 10.
[58] Daniel McCann, "Feeling Dredeful: Fear and Therapy in *The Scale of Perfection*," *Emotion, Affect, Sentiment* 30 (2014): 94.
[59] Ibid, 96.
[60] Ibid, 98, 103.

While reading could literally be "medicinal," medicinal metaphors likewise abound in texts purporting to treat despair, temptation, or tribulation. Catherine Batt examines *Le Livre de Seyntz Medicines*, a "penitential treatise" Henry, Duke of Lancaster wrote in 1354 in part to deal with sloth. Rather than itself being a medical treatment, the book uses medicine as a metaphor, in which "the narrator-sinner's spiritual self [is] imagined primarily as a physical body wounded by the deadly sins, the depredations of which are itemized in relation to the various parts of the body and the senses."[61] The therapeutic aspect comes into play with the solutions to these sins: "This abject body can be made whole only through the ministrations of Christ the physician, who offers up his own blood by way of healing balm, and the second part of the treatise describes the conditions necessary for the sinner/patient's healing, recuperation, and hope of spiritual health and salvation."[62] For sloth he prescribes "in addition to confession… active engagement with good deeds."[63] Yet the metaphorical and literal are not mutually exclusive in "therapeutic" texts; as well shall see, while "bitter medicine" metaphors proliferate *Profits of Tribulation* texts, the texts themselves also serve therapeutic purpose in preventing spiritual illnesses like despair.

Medieval Mental Illness?

Lacking clear definitions of medieval mental illness, some scholarship has attempted to connect medieval experiences more directly to modern psychological classifications. For instance, Rainer Jehl likens acedia to burnout, popularized in psychological discourse in the 1970s and 1980s.[64] Jehl describes the condition as exhaustion with one's work based on unachievable goals, and he observes many of the symptoms ascribed to burnout are likewise

[61] Catherine Batt, "Sloth and the Penitential Self in Henry, Duke of Lancaster's *Le Livre de seyntz medicines / The Book of Holy Medicines*," *Leeds Studies in English* (2010): 27.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid, 29-30.
[64] Rainer Jehl, "*Acedia* and Burnout Syndrome: From an Occupational Vice of the Early Monks to a Psychological Concept in Secularized Professional Life," in *In the Garden of Evil: The Vices and Culture in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard Newhauser (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2005), 465.

included in medieval monastic descriptions of acedia.[65] He even goes so far as to claim that "despite the different settings of the two concepts and the historical impossibility of comparing their language, their philosophical background, and their intellectual history, *acedia* and burnout share a common core of experience."[66] Andrew Crislip expands on this claim of "a common core of experience" but suggests "anomie" rather than "burnout" as a possible diagnosis, which he defines as "a type of disjunction in social structure that is especially likely in monastic communities of the lavra or semi-eremitic type."[67] Essentially this is "a wearying and disorienting disjuncture between the expectations of society (goals)," in this case, the rigors of asceticism, "and the individual's abilities to achieve these goals (means)."[68] This inability to meet social expectations often leads to suicide.[69] His description, moreover, seems to coincide closely with Jehl's definition of burnout. Alternately, Natalie Calder does not align a modern psychological diagnosis with acedia, but she nonetheless identifies it as a mental illness and speculates on its potential causes. Calder analyzes the sixteenth-century tract *A deuote treatyse for them that ben tymorous and fearefull in conscience* by William Bond, a treatise about despair and scrupulosity inspired by Flete's, and she argues that the text reflects a "concern for the mental health of readers exposed to the complexities of late medieval vernacular theology."[70] Her framing suggests an identification of these medieval phenomena with modern psychology.

Yet other scholars have pushed back against applying modern psychology to medieval texts. Iona McCleery highlights the fraught relationship between spiritual and medical

[65] 468-469
[66] 472.
[67] Andrew Crislip, "The Sin of Sloth or the Illness of the Demons? The Demon of Acedia in Early Christian Monasticism," *The Harvard Theological Review* 98, no. 2 (2005): 146.
[68] Ibid, 159.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Natalie Calder, "Remedies for Despair: Considering Mental Health in Late Medieval England," in *Medical Paratexts from Medieval to Modern*, eds. Hanna C. Tweed and Diane G. Scott (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 93-109.

understandings of mental health, and she questions scholars' attempts to retroactively diagnose medieval people using modern psychology. She focuses on King Duarte of Portugal and his reports of his melancholy, which have been retrospectively diagnosed as depression or hypochondria.[71] McCleery reports, though, that the situation was more complex than this, considering that Duarte saw his burdens in a primarily religious rather than physiological light, since he overtly "rejected the advice of some physicians to have sex, abandon his work and drink undiluted wine" as physical treatments for his melancholy.[72] Additionally, "He also linked his illness to that part of the soul located in the heart, so it is misleading to describe his condition as 'mental' illness since it was not connected to the 'mind.' Duarte seems to have felt the state of his soul to be 'abnormal,' but it is difficult to describe him as ill."[73] This leads McCleery to encourage the study of medical history through patients' testimony rather than physicians' representations.[74] Ultimately, this approach underlies her interpretation of Duarte's mental condition: "we ought to accept what he is telling us: he was young and overworked and terrified of dying, and religion helped heal a terror that his medical and theological knowledge encouraged him to label as melancholy and sin."[75]

Thus McCleery carefully avoids applying any sort of retrospective psychological categories to Duarte's experiences, limiting claims to the language used by the medieval patient himself. McCleery's methodological approach inspired my own; historically, many medieval religious women have been subjected to modern diagnosis of their mystical experiences—not least of which Catherine of Siena and Margery Kempe, whose *vitae* I examine in Section Two.

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[71] Iona McCleery, "Both 'Illness and Temptation of the Enemy': Melancholy, the Medieval Patient and the Writings of King Duarte of Portugal (r. 1433–38)," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 1, no. 2 (2009): 164.
[72] Ibid, 165.
[73] Ibid, 167.
[74] Ibid, 169.
[75] Ibid, 174.

This has been repudiated in recent scholarship, and in this tradition of scholarship, I would like to follow McCleery's lead in interpreting the "patient's" understanding of their own "condition" in the hagiography I examine.

As I have already demonstrated, though scrupulosity and unwanted thoughts have appeared in a multitude of medieval texts, studies dedicated to these experiences are limited by a lack of consistent language to describe them in the texts themselves. These tribulations have been connected to acedia when interpreted as a state of mind as well as described as a temptation to despair. Both the feeling of despair and the anxiety-inducing tribulation pushing one towards it had a host of interconnected spiritual, emotional, and physical "treatments." In modern terms, acedia and despair have been identified with a host of potential disorders including burnout and depression, though attempts at retroactive diagnosis have been questioned in more recent scholarship. Different scholars have proposed different causes for this "mental illness," often laying the blame at the feet of an overly challenging religious culture for devout Christians in the late Middle Ages. This study intervenes in the discussion by focusing specifically on medieval examples of unwanted thoughts, especially as they threaten the subject with despair, and comments on potential explanations and remedies as described in a host of religious material, including post-Conquest pastoralia and hagiography, with an emphasis on fourteenth- and fifteenth- century sources. Ultimately I expand on spiritual reading and books as objects of comfort. Moreover, I correlate the depiction of unwanted thoughts and temptation between hagiography and the pastoral texts these saints may have been exposed to, especially how that connection is uniquely articulated for female subjects.

Methodology

The overall methodology of this project consists of unearthing a vernacular theology of tribulation through close reading of primary sources. How is the tribulation of unwanted thoughts, and the spectrum of related conditions, interpreted theologically over time in sources circulating in England, especially vernacular sources, whether as a sin, spiritual condition, physical condition, etc.? How are those afflicted treated? After developing this framework, I then interpret literary depictions of it in terms of the theological context—how do individuals' experience of temptation to despair exhibit or critique the theology developed in the pastoral texts and to what literary purpose?

Another approach I will use will be the history of emotions. Rob Boddice defines the overall assumptions of the field as follows. First, emotions change over time—what's described as "fear" in 1300 is not necessarily the same as "fear" in 2022. Second, emotions are not just the effects of emotional events but are also real causes of them. Finally, "emotions are at the center of the history of morality" and "the history of the human being."[76] This leads a scholar to need cultural context in interpreting emotions. Refining this for medieval contexts specifically, Barbara Rosenwein is quick to observe that medieval accounts of emotions need to be understood to some extent as rhetorical. She rejects older theories, such as Huizinga's, that medieval emotions are often portrayed as particularly elaborate due to medieval people being psychologically childish.[77] Rather, she suggests emotions be examined within the context of "emotional communities," which entails looking at "systems of feelings" within broad communities.[78] Though this approach is most applicable to historical research and cultural

[76] Rob Boddice, *The History of Emotions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 2.
[77] Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Thinking Historically about Medieval Emotions," *History Compass*, vol. 8 (2010): 828-829.
[78] Ibid, 832.

studies, Sarah McNamer has described how to best adapt it for literary inquiry in Middle English. Critiquing the "flattening" of literary sources via cultural studies, McNamer observes: "while this model grants that literary texts may absorb and replicate theories or discourses of emotion (including discourses of dissent or resistance), the literary is not typically acknowledged as a primary site or mechanism for the making of emotion, in any direct or historically consequential sense."[79] To account for literature's propensity to not just replicate emotional scripts but create them, McNamer calls upon scholars to expand our understanding of the performativity of texts:

> The way forward, as I see it, is through performance. Performance is the means through which the feelings embedded in literary texts became, potentially, performative, thus entering and altering history. Historians of emotion have long used a vocabulary of performance; the term 'emotion scripts' has come to stand for the loosely affiliated cultural prescripts that aid in establishing and maintaining what they have helpfully termed 'emotional regimes' or 'emotional communities.' ... What I suggest is a more imaginative, large-scale experiment with the literal; with conceiving of a wide array of Middle English texts as literal scripts that vigorously enlist literariness as a means of generating feelings and putting them into play in history. To consider Middle English texts as scripts for the performance of feeling is, from one point of view, the most reasonable of propositions. Many Middle English genres (affective meditations, the drama, carols, conduct books, love lyrics, books of consolation) openly seek to 'write on the hearts' of their users.[80]

McNamer's suggested approach complements McCann's observations about the therapeutic purposes in reading devotional texts. Moreover, this approach offers an alternative to retroactive diagnosis for dealing with this issue of tribulation. To better understand not only this "system of feelings" but also the "performance of feelings" encouraged by texts that purport to "treat" despair and tribulation, I look at a range of religious texts. As regards the pastoralia and treatises, performativity "writes on the hearts" of the readers through encouraging them to actively

[79] Sarah McNamer, "Feeling," in *Middle English: Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature*, ed. Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 245.
[80] Ibid, 245-246.

reframe their emotions to spiritual benefit, and "perform" patience as an alternative to despair. I also use this theoretical background to analyze the hagiographical and mystical texts in section two, as the reading and replication of earlier saints' lives can "script" the emotional performance of the subject—the most obvious example being Margery "scripting" her gift of tears with explicit reference to earlier saints, and, as I argue, she herself writes a "script" for those challenged with despair.

In working with manuscripts, I draw upon this understanding of reading practices as therapeutic, expanding my consideration beyond the contents of the text to the manuscripts as holistic objects. As the objects of my study are almost all miscellanies, I draw on the work of scholars who have considered the implications for reading culture that codicological evidence in these manuscripts supply. Tony Hunt, in his study of trilingual miscellany manuscripts of late-medieval England, warns us not to assume that just because a manuscript contains many texts that it has no governing sense of structure—though that structure may be hard to discern or describe.[81] Surveying nine such manuscripts, he detects both a Franciscan connection as well as "a well balanced mixture of instruction and enjoyment... [that] reinforce[s] the view that they are the products of the secular clergy dealing with the needs of a cultivated household, baronial or not. Given the common outlook exhibited by many of them, we are perhaps lucky that they do not reproduce more works in common."[82] Hunt argues that these collections cannot be properly called "miscellanies," which implies haphazardness, because of these thematic trends in the content and apparently cohesive target audience, but rather than reject the term outright I follow

[81] Tony Hunt, "Insular Trilingual Compilations," in *Codices Miscellanearum: Brussels van Hulthem Colloquium 1999***,** ed. R. Jansen-Sieben and H. van Dijk (Bruxelles: Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, 1999), 51.
[82] Ibid, 66-67.

his methods at studying the structures of these miscellany manuscripts to discern common purpose and audience.

Inextricable from purpose and audience is the commissioning of books, and what this tells us about the reading culture surrounding them. Carole M. Meale, surveying fourteenth- and fifteenth-century books known to be owned by women, asserts that women's commissioning and patronizing of manuscripts was a major literary force in England at the time:

> Many of the finest psalters and books of hours dating from the fourteenth century were produced at the instigation of women, and this tradition seems to have continued into the fifteenth century, if the Hours owned by Anne Neville in the middle of the century, and those commissioned by Margaret, duchess of Clarence (d. 1439/40), may be taken as representative witnesses. Indeed, if the evidence presented by book-patronage is taken together with that of wills, it would seem that religion was by far the dominant reading interest of medieval women; they owned a variety of texts in addition to their service books, ranging from lives of the saints, to didactic works such as *The Prick of Conscience* and *Pore Caitif*, to various of the treatises of the fourteenth-century mystics, Walter Hilton and Richard Rolle.[83]

Such codices were often exchanged between lay and religious women, as Meale documents networks of book giving between wealthy lay women and female religious houses, as evidenced in extant wills.[84] Felicity Riddy goes so far as to assert "the literary culture of nuns in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and that of devout gentlewomen not only overlapped but were more or less indistinguishable."[85] She illustrates this claim with several miscellanies, inluding the Vernon Manuscript:

> The Vernon manuscript seems to provide substantial evidence for the existence of a certain kind of female readership, for which the Prioress can be said to function as a metonym. The book contains a strikingly large number of works written specifically for women readers, opening with an abridgement of Aelred of Rievaulx's *De institutione inclusarum*, addressed to his sister, a nun. Section IV contains Rolle's *Form of Perfect*

[83] Carole M. Meale, "'... alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, englisch, and frensch': laywomen and their books in late medieval England," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. Carole M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 137.
[84] Ibid, 143-144.
[85] Felicity Riddy, "'Women talking about the things of God': a late medieval sub-culture," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. Carole M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 110.

> *Living*, written for Margaret Kirkby, a nun of Hampole who became a recluse at Ainderby; his *Commandment,* also written for Margaret Kirkby or another Hampole nun, and his *Ego dormio*, composed for a woman entering the religious life; *The Abbey of the Holy Gho*st, which instructs the lay reader how to build a nunnery in his or her heart and is translated from a French text originally destined for women; a version of *Ancrene Riwle*, which was written for a group of female recluses; Book 1 of Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection,* which though here addresses a 'Ghostly brother or sister' was originally intended for a woman. The manuscript contains two other works by or attributed to Hilton, whose writings were owned by nuns throughout the fifteenth century and beyond. The A-text of *Piers Plowman*, also in this section, is not only the shortest of all the versions but the most accessible to those not literate in Latin. Other Vernon texts, such as Grosseteste's *Castle of Love,* were, we know, read by devout women, and Carol Meale, in her recent study of the Marian legends in the Vernon manuscript, argues that in the later Middle Ages vernacular miracles of the Virgin were part of a specifically female piety.[86]

Riddy argues that even if most of these texts are clearly written by male authors, "the women for whom the Vernon manuscript may well have been assembled would have had their own sources and networks for procuring texts."[87] Texts themed around tribulation and temptation are often found in manuscripts with similar contents (e.g. *Abbey*, *Form of Living*, and *Scale*). Much like Riddy, I examine patterns in the contents of these manuscripts as well as their implicit or explicit female audiences. While female readership and spirituality is not the prevailing lens through which I examine these manuscripts, its concurrence with these themes is too persistent to be ignored, which I attempt to account for in detail in the latter half of this dissertation. Moreover, these connections make it clear that the sliding scale of emphasis in these texts between different versions of despair and acedia, which I shall explain, might be considered as not only a product of but an aim of women's reading culture in the late Middle Ages.

A final methodological consideration that influences my treatment of the manuscripts in this project is the understanding of books as relics or spiritual intermediaries. Mary Beth Long offers the example of two manuscripts—Arundel 168 and Harley 4012—with nearly identical

[86] Ibid, 106-107.
[87] Ibid, 107.

contents, but vastly different construction; the latter is decorated, colorful, roomy and clean of marginalia, while the former is "stylistically inconsistent and often illegible" and lacks the clear design aesthetic of the other.[88] Long explains that "the individuality of each manuscript... suggest[s] a unique reading experience: each manuscript's particular layout, order of texts, and material construction provides for its reader a distinctive literary encounter."[89] For manuscripts containing devotional texts, the book itself as a physical object is even more important: "Hagiographical books in particular are important as physical entities because people tended to think of them as being holy objects."[90] She further notes the inclusion of hagiographical materials "in collections alongside religious devotional literature such as that by Richard Rolle and Walter Hilton."[91] Rebecca Krug expands on this concept of the manuscript as devotional object in her monograph *Reading Families: Women's Literate Practice in Late Medieval England*. Krug is particularly interested in reading practices at Syon Abbey, as codicological evidence demonstrates that nuns seemed to own books personally despite the order's prohibition on personal property.[92] Krug argues that

> this inconsistency can tell us a great deal about the sisters' literate practice and about how they negotiated between individual investment in books and the demands of communal, 'familial' life. ... Bridgettine emphasis on individuality as part of a collective identity, which is most strongly reflected in the liturgy and in Bridget's *Life*, was part of a religious, disciplinary program of lived performance. Private, devotional reading constituted one aspect of this program, and was intended to occupy the nun when she was not involved in liturgical performance. What seems to have changed over the course of the fifteenth century is the centrality of the material book—the actual, printed copy and its writing—to the lives of the sisters both before and after they entered the monastery. Increasingly, the nuns' private reading at Syon Abbey involved an intense experience of identification with books as both material and spiritual objects. What personal ownership

[88] Mary Beth Long, "Corpora and Manuscripts, Authors and Audiences," in *A Companion to Middle English Hagiography*, ed. Sarah Salih (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006), 47-48.
[89] Ibid, 49.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid, 53.
[92] Rebecca Krug, *Reading Families: Women's Literate Practice in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 156-157.

> of books offered the nuns at Syon was the sense, even as they were "mirrors" of Bridget and of one another, as daughters of Syon, of readerly individuality.[93]

Though Krug mainly examined incunables in her study, her point about material culture stands. Books, including manuscripts, served a greater material purpose to their devoted readers than just conveying their contents. Krug notes that these reading practices are made explicit in one fifteenth-century Bridgettine text, *Myroure of Oure Ladye*, which describes the discipline of reading as an avenue for spiritual advancement: "The assumption that drives the *Myroure*'s observations is that devotional reading involves a relationship between the reader, God, and the book itself. ... The book is the conversation, and in its contents the reader finds herself in God."[94] Moreover, as lay and Brigettine women's reading interests grew closer over the course of the fifteenth century, so did this implicit relationship with their books: "Individual readers of primers attended closely to their books, sometimes choosing their contents and, even when those contents were chosen for them, literally and imaginatively writing themselves into the books."[95] Evidence of this type of reading is found of this in fifteenth-century manuscripts as well, as I describe subsequently. Beyond contents implying this relationship between the reader and the book, I examine the physical condition and uses of the books to infer how the manuscripts themselves can be understood as wards against despair and comforts in tribulation.

Chapter Contents

Chapter 1: An Overview of Tribulation Discourse

Here I examine the group of tribulation treatises Barratt describes as "self-help." These Middle English and Latin texts circulated in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and remain popular even in sixteenth-century compilations. This section proceeds according to textual

[93] Ibid, 157.
[94] Ibid, 174.
[95] Ibid, 191.

groups. After establishing the monastic roots of this tradition with reference to the *Vitae Patrum* and *Ancrene Wisse,* I move to the "Twelve Profits of Tribulation" group, which includes interrelated texts such as "The Profits of Tribulation," *The Book of Tribulation*, "Six Masters on Tribulation," etc. This group of texts ultimately derives from a thirteenth-century Latin text, *Tractatus de tribulacione,* which, as far as I know, has never been edited or printed, as well as a shorter version, *De XII utilitationibus tribulacionis,* which appears in the *Patrologia Latina*.[96] The Old French *Livre de tribulacion,* deriving from the former, spawned the Middle English *The Book of Tribulation,* which Barratt edited,[97] whereas "The Profits of Tribulation" and "The Twelve Profits of Tribulation," edited earlier by Carl Horstmann, are direct translations of the shorter Latin version.[98] The Latin originals likely drew upon *Ancrene Wisse*, Laurent d'Orleans's *Somme Le Roi* (which eventually received its own Middle English translation as *Ayenbite of Inwit*), and William Peraldus' *Summa virtutum ac vitorum*.[99] The "Twelve Profits of Tribulation" texts are general in their advice, and do not focus exclusively on unwanted thoughts and despair. They offer a variety of metaphors meant to console the reader, such as the notion that tribulation cleanses and strengthens the soul like metal in a forge, or that it can be seen as a token of God's friendship.[100] Nonetheless, these texts do occasionally deal with the tribulation of unwanted thoughts, such as the remark at the end of the section on the second profit that "For [þof] þo let[h]er blasphemes tourmenten mykel monnes hert, but þai noye not als long as he answeres not."[101]

[96] Alexandra Barrat, ed., *The Book of Tribulation* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1983), 23-26.
[97] Ibid, 22.
[98] 29.
[99] 27-28.
[100] "Twelve Profits of Tribulation," in *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle and His Followers*, ed. Carl Horstmann, v. 2 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999), 49, 60.
[101] Ibid, 48.

In this chapter I argue that the *Profits* texts establish a discourse community of tribulation literature, the language of which is adapted to a highly specific purpose in helping vowed religious cope with intrusive thoughts and scruples in the texts I discuss subsequently. Moreover, I examine *Profits* and its cohort in codicological context, paying special attention to the *ars moriendi* text that often accompanied it, as well as the diverse styles and purposes of the manuscripts the group is found in. Ultimately I argue that *Profits* texts (and manuscripts) form the basis for therapeutic reading that trains the reader to reframe their response to tribulation from "grutching" into spiritually beneficial patience.

Chapter 2: Temptation to Despair

In my second chapter, I move to another close group of texts related to William Flete's fourteenth-century *Remedies Against Temptation*. Flete's Latin text covers many topics discussed above: scruples of conscience, spiritual dryness and acedia, despair, and unwanted thoughts. *Remedies* was also included along with *The Chastising of God's Children* in early printed editions, as well as in the manuscript tradition.[102] Moreover, many of these texts were read by lay readers. We even have evidence of sermons that are found often with Flete, such as "Against Wanhope," a hitherto unedited text appearing on its own or as part of an Easter sermon, occasionally alongside Flete or other tribulation pastoralia discussed here. University of Glasgow MS Hunter 520 includes both the excerpt of the sermon "Against Wanhope" and Flete's *Remedies Against Temptatation* (perplexingly, also entitled "Against Wanhope" in the manuscript). On the other hand, Cambridge, Magdalene College, MS Pepys 2125 contains the

[102] For instance, London, British Library, MS Harley 6615 from the second half of the fifteenth century and Wynkyn de Worde's sixteenth-century printed edition. The manuscripts and early printed editions of Flete are discussed at length in Lamothe, "An Edition of the Latin and Four Middle English Versions of William Flete's *De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*," 49-112.

sermon along with *The Chastising of God's Children*, while Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 210 includes the sermon as well as "Twelve Profits of Tribulation."

Such incidents demonstrate that these texts often travelled together in manuscripts, which included material for mixed lay and religious audiences. This is particularly true in the biblical and patristic examples common to the texts, the emphasis on patience, and the importance of defining consent in taking the agency out of being assaulted with wicked thoughts. My discussion will move on to cover the use of not just these texts, but their manuscript contexts. This will lead into an assessment of the other late-medieval despair, that of *ars moriendi* texts designed for lay readers, in a continuation of the themes developed in Chapter 1. I argue that these lay texts partake in this same discourse, as evinced by "Against Wanhope," edited in Appendix A. This text specifically demonstrates how lay readers often related to the issue of evil thoughts. The grouping of these texts in the manuscript tradition, along with (occasionally integrated) passion meditations, suggests that medieval compilers and readers pursued comfort through these texts in conjunction, and further, used the books therapeutically as holistic textual objects.

Chapter 3: Female Enclosure and Temptation

This chapter begins my analysis of how the personal experience of despair is represented in hagiography. First, I discuss medieval virginity and enclosure more broadly to establish the cultural-historical context of cultural anxieties surrounding female spirituality. Most importantly, I expound medieval beliefs of the "unbounded," "open," or "fleshy" nature of women, which was thought to leave women particularly vulnerable to spiritual influence or intrusion. Then I offer a close reading of the twelfth-century *Life of Christina of Markyate*. Much of her *vita* concerns her mental states and struggles with temptation, both physically and mentally. This is

the earliest source I am covering, which warrants special consideration. I argue that several sections of her *vita*, written by a monk of St. Albans, manifest an anxiety of thought and identity, but it lacks the language and complexity of the late-medieval sources as well as its practical solutions (though this difference is partially generic). Still her account demonstrates these spiritual illnesses were an area of concern before late-medieval devotional piety (challenging scholarship that asserts late medieval culture *caused* this fixation with tribulation).[103] Moreover, I argue that the aforesaid anxiety over women's "openness" to both divine and demonic spiritual influence and the consequent calls for enclosure made Christina's spiritual struggles particularly visible despite her *vita*'s early date.

The second *vita* I examine in this chapter is that of a late twelfth-century Beguine, Marie d'Oignies. In the Middle English version of Jacques de Vitry's account, though Marie is not portrayed as being tempted to despair herself, she saved others from such a tribulation on multiple occasions. For instance, a local virgin is accosted by the devil who "assayled hir with blasfemys and vnclene thoghtes at hee myghte caste her downe into dispayre by ferdefulnesse and vnordynate drede. ... Atte laste soothly, not suffrynge nor openynge to any othere the wounde of hir herte that she myghte receyue medecyn for feerdfulnesse, [she] felle as into despayre."[104] The sister avoids the sacraments and is only saved after being brought to Marie, who prays and fasts for her relief.[105] This is one of several incidents included in her *vita* which I hope to present in the theological context developed in my previous chapter. Ultimately I argue that though Christina and Marie seem to be opposites in how they encounter temptation to

[103] As in Natalie Calder, "Remedies for Despair: Considering Mental Health in Late Medieval England," 93-109.
[104] Jennifer N. Brown, ed., *Three Women of Liège: A Critical Edition of and Commentary on the Middle English Lives of Elizabeth of Spalbeek, Christina Mirabilis, and Marie d'Oignies* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 106.
[105] Ibid, 106-107.

despair, both ultimately are vindicated by their hagiographers in order to establish their chastity as unquestionable despite their initial lack of claustration.

Chapter 4: The Dark Side of Mysticism

In this chapter, I move to three late-medieval mystics to discuss not just hagiography, but their personal revelations about temptation to despair. While continuing to follow the emphasis on female "openness," I shift my discussion to consider how these mystics incorporated temptation (especially to despair) as spiritually fruitful and in balance with their ecstatic revelations. First, I examine two nearly contemporary fourteenth-century mystics: Birgitta of Sweden and Catherine of Siena. There are multiple moments in the fourth book of Birgitta's *Revelations* that speak to anxiety over intrusive thoughts, such as when the Virgin Mary defines tribulation of spirit directly: "Spiritual distress [*Tribulacio*] is when the mind is involuntarily disturbed by unclean and vexing thoughts, when it suffers anguish over dishonor shown to God and over the loss of souls, when one's heart is forced to occupy itself with worldly concerns for a good reason."[106] The advice the Virgin gives is incredibly similar to that offered in the "Profits of Tribulation" texts in chapter 2, including reminders that tribulation is a gift from God to push one towards spiritual progress.[107] Moreover, Lamothe notes that one Latin version of *Remedies Against Temptation* found in Cambridge University Library, MS Ii.6.3 incorporates excerpts from books II, III, and VIII from St. Birgitta's *Revelations*.[108] Birgitta is further implicated in

[106] Bridget Morris, ed. and trans., *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden: Volume II: Liber Caelestis, Books IV–V* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 48. It's also worth noting that an excerpt from this section is apparently found in Cambridge, University Library MS Ii.iv.9 in the margin of a poem about avoiding the seven deadly sins (IMEV 2059). This manuscript also contains "Six Masters on Tribulation," discussed in chapter 2. Contents of the manuscript are described in detail in Ralph Hanna, *English Manuscripts of Richard Rolle: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2010), #18.
[107] Morris, *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, 49.
[108] Lamothe, "An Edition of the Latin and Four Middle English Versions of William Flete's *De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*," 12.

this tradition by prayers against temptation specifically attributed to her in the marginalia of several tribulation manuscripts.

My analysis of Catherine of Siena will encompass her own mystical writings, specifically as they appear in the Middle English translation of *Il Dialogo*, titled *The Orcherd of Syon*, as well as her *vita* composed by one of her confessors, Raymond of Capua. I note in this section how Catherine's concerns with temptation and intrusive thoughts are treated differently in her own words versus those of her hagiographer. Moreover, I discuss how temptation to despair is portrayed as part of a "gauntlet" she faces in advance of her spiritual marriage. For Catherine, especially, I note how the anxiety of female enclosure is combatted in Raymond's portrayal of her tribulations, necessary given Catherine's uncloistered status as a Dominican tertiary.

Thus I argue that it is no coincidence that Margery Kempe articulates her tribulation of unwanted thoughts so vividly and similarly to the descriptions in these texts, as she was likely inspired by Marie and Birgitta. My reading illuminates Margery's struggle with the temptation to despair throughout her *Book* and contextualizes it in light of the hagiographical material that inspired her as well as the near-contemporary pastoral material she was likely exposed to. My reading of Margery's temptations will nuance our assumptions about her main spiritual struggles, moving away from merely seeing her as a worldly woman fighting against sexual urges, towards understanding her as an advanced lay practitioner of spirituality threatened by scrupulosity and despair. Her *Book* moreover purports to treat the despair of its readers, including meditation on the Passion and prayers for those similarly afflicted with temptation.

Chapter 5: Julian of Norwich on Sin and Loneliness

I close my study with a thorough analysis of despair in Julian of Norwich's *Shewings*. Julian, a contemporary of Margery and one of her admitted inspirations, places the threat of

despair and the solution of the Passion at the center of her text. My analysis will explore a hitherto neglected theme central to her theology—that of loneliness and its role as a tribulation in the spiritual life. I discuss how her unique view of sin and human versus divine agency as well as her conceptualization of Christ as a mother represents the mystical reframing of temptation to despair within the context of the Christian's enclosure within divine love.

Chapter 1: An Overview of Tribulation Discourse

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul reminds his audience of the tribulation faced by their ancestors in the desert after their escape for Egypt. In recounting these chastisements from God, he warns his readers of the peril of temptation:

> These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.[109]

Paul's carefully struck balance between admonition and consolation illustrates the inherent tension in facing tribulation and temptation specifically. The sufferer should be studious not to fall into temptation or lose patience in the face of tribulation; despite his or her peril, he or she ought to trust that God is limiting this temptation according to one's spiritual endurance. Patiently accepting this tribulation then leads to spiritual benefit. Medieval treatises that cover tribulation and/or temptation invariably quote this passage from Corinthians as an unbreachable scriptural bulwark against the reader's despair.

Despite a flourishing of tribulation treatises and pastoralia in the late Middle Ages especially, little scholarly work has addressed the texts outside of broad surveys or often vague citations in catalogs. In this section, I introduce tribulation texts in general, first through their monastic roots, and then by analyzing three Middle English versions of one of the most popular texts that engages in this discourse, *The Twelve Profits of Tribulation*. What defines these texts is their emphasis on tribulations not as mere tortures of the devil or scourges of God (though these notions are often involved), but as primarily neutral occasions for either sin or grace; the

[109] 1 Cor 10:11-13 (NIV).

fundamental orientation of the tribulation is determined by an act of the will by the sufferer. This act of the will is their choice to either embrace suffering patiently, or to "grutch" (i.e. grumble) against God impatiently. The texts themselves therapeutically aid the reader in reframing their thinking about their struggles so as to make this patience actionable. As such, the discourse on tribulation and temptation lays the groundwork for more specific treatments of temptation to despair among the spiritually advanced that we observe in *The Chastising of God's Children* and William Flete's *Remedies Against Temptation*, covered in Chapter 2.

The theme of patience has been commented upon by scholars before, in relation to religious texts adjacent to those covered in this dissertation. Douglas Gray uses this motif to connect "Books of Comfort" to the stoic philosophical tradition of the *consolatio*: "Some of the consolatory topics or *solacia* of pagan antiquity (e.g. 'death is man's common lot' or 'nothing is to be gained by immoderate grief') were adapted by Christian writers, and can be found in such later works as *Pearl*."[110] This is also observed by F. N. M. Diekstra in his introduction to *A Dialogue Between Reason and Adversity*, a Middle English adaptation of Petrarch's Latin text, *Remedies against Varying Fortune*.[111] Diekstra traces the *consolatio* genre from stoic philosophers like Seneca, and through Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* to later medieval texts, including the *Twelve Profits* tradition.[112]

It seems that in the process of this translation into Christian thought the *consolatio* assimilated features of moral theology into its conceptualization of emotion. Ralph Hanna discusses the medieval transformation of stoicism into patience with moral theology:

> The impatient man cannot face situations which demand heroic passivity: in such contexts he will lose his self-possession and forfeit his equanimity. This inner

[110] Douglas Gray, "Books of Comfort," in *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature: Essays in Honour of G. H. Russell*, ed. Gregory Kratzmann and James Simpson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1986), 210.
[111] F. N. M. Diekstra, ed. *A Dialogue between Reason and Adversity* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1968), 24.
[112] Ibid, 47.

> decomposition of a unific and controlled personality is the situation patristic writers identify as that of the "broken man." Typically, such a fracture is associated with lapses into two of the Seven Deadly Sins—either *acedia* (implicit in the widespread use of *dolor* or *tristitia* ['sorrow'] as alternatives to patience), or, almost universally, *ira*... Oppressive fear of pain, the emotional certainty that one cannot succeed at a certain task, a small faith that forgets that God tempts no man above his strength, or the melancholy that may result from such anxieties will lead the impatient man to doubt his own strength or the value of his own efforts. Eventually he may despair of any possible virtuous success.[113]

One's experience of emotions is not passive, in this paradigm, but involves active identification with these emotions, implying vice in assenting to certain emotions, such as excessive sorrow or anger, and conversely, virtue in resisting them. Hanna roots this moralization of emotion in Gregory the Great, who characterized patient endurance of tribulation as a form of martyrdom.[114] This lead to "the overwhelming tendency in later medieval discussions to treat patience in conjunction with two other themes—tribulation and temptation."[115] According to Hanna, "interrupting the direct praise of patience with the commendation of tribulation" is another feature this discourse derived from Peraldus.[116] Tribulation and temptation are typically connected in this discussion, as "many, but far from all [such late medieval treatises], include a discussion of temptation and of the passive warfare against the devil's blandishments."[117] For most scholars, as we see in Hanna here, patience is a "negative" virtue associated with *not* doing things—i.e., not complaining (typically "grucching" in Middle English) so as to prevent suffering from hardening the heart.[118] As such we see patience often characterized by modern scholars as a state of passivity in the face of hardship.

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[113] Ralph Hanna, "Some Commonplaces of Late Medieval Patience Discussion: An Introduction," in *The Triumph of Patience: Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Gerald Schiffhorst (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1978), 69-70.
[114] Ibid, 72.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Elizabeth D. Kirk, "'Who Suffreth More Than God?': Narrative Redefinition of Patience in *Patience* and *Piers Plowman*," in *The Triumph of Patience: Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Gerald Schiffhorst (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1978), 91.

Yet other authors have more recently argued that patience in these texts exemplifies a sort of agency in accepting the will of God. For instance, Sarah Macmillan argues that *The Book of Tribulation* (one of the Middle English *Twelve Profits* texts covered below) takes a particularly masculine tack in its approach to patience, asserting that these texts "present the active embrace of suffering as an expression of spiritual strength and of powerful self-control" and although "masculinity cannot be solely equated with power or desire for it, power was nonetheless fundamentally important to the religious activities of medieval men when it was directed towards the emotional control of their own minds and bodies as a spiritual exercise."[119] Macmillan bases this assertion on the fact that such literature features metaphors of God as liege lord or Christ as merchant, roles she identifies as characteristically masculine.[120] However, as she herself notes there are clearly more "feminine" metaphors in the text as well, such as God as lover.[121] Her paper emphasizes the section in which God is compared to a father but ignores the section in all three *Profits* texts in which God is likened to a mother. Nonetheless, she claims that the "preponderance of masculine imagery" in encouraging patience qualify it as a work of "masculine spirituality."[122] Although I question the strength of her claims regarding gendering of the text, her argument raises a good point about the everyday metaphors for God, which might appeal to a variety of laypeople in addition to religious, underlining how broad these texts were meant to be. Most important in her analysis is the active nature of patience in response to tribulation—submitting to God "is by no means passive, it is necessarily the reader's active choice."[123]

[119] Sarah Macmillan, "'Well saved in suffering': Male Piety in Late-Medieval Tribulation Texts," *Reading Medieval Studies* 43 (2017): 55.
[120] Ibid, 56.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid, 58.
[123] Ibid, 65.

Anna Baldwin makes a similar point about patience in *Piers Plowman*, Julian of Norwich's *Shewings*, and *Somme le Roi* (known as *Ayenbite of Inwit* in Middle English, and one of the major inspirations of *Profits*, as I discuss below). In such texts, patience is framed as an *imitatio Christi*, observing the suffering of Christ which He patiently endured despite his innocence, out of overflowing love: "In dividing the sin from the patient sufferer in this way, the writer moves from the retributive context of punishment and reward, which we have so far been discussing, to a much more positive account of patience transforming the world and giving man the victory. The patience of God expresses the love of God for man; the patience of man can transform his own sinfulness into an answering love."[124] As such the texts themselves—often even the whole books they comprise—turn patience from a passive or negative virtue into an active one; reading the tribulation texts actively enables one to reframe their mindset concerning their situation, and that active reframing is itself central to proper practice of patience—conforming one's will to the will of God, and at the same time, avoiding "grucching," so as to receive these profits of tribulation.

Monastic and Scholastic Roots

To fully narrate the beginnings of tribulation discourse, particularly relating to despair, sloth (acedia), and temptation, would expand this dissertation to an unmanageable scope. Yet its monastic origins are important enough to warrant a synopsis of its earliest formulations, especially as much of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century material plays with the different types of lay and monastic, medieval and Early Modern concepts of despair. As Watson observes in his

[124] Anna P. Baldwin, "The Triumph of Patience in Julian of Norwich and Langland," in *The Triumph of Patience: Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Gerald Schiffhorst (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1978), 74.

study of late-medieval despair, most penitential lay-oriented texts represented a shift from the earlier monastic model:

> [Lay despair shifted] gradually away from an earlier monastic understanding of acedia as the 'noon-day demon', the insidious undermining of vocation, hope, and finally faith that was the shadow side of the ascetic rigours of monastic discipline—from a version of which our crude modern picture of medieval acedia as mere torpor derives—and towards a laicized understanding of the sin as, exactly, a difficult passage in life's journey. Despair in this lay context had become a compound of personal panic and intellectual error for which it was crucial and possible to prepare in advance and which friends of the dying gathered around the deathbed for the very purpose of 'waiv[ing] awey', along with the clustered demonic presences that urged 'wanhope' on the departing soul.[125]

This chapter deals primarily with the latter two kinds—*ars moriendi* and intellectual despair—though I challenge Watson's claim that they represent entirely separate traditions. Yet Watson pertinently remarks on the relevance of early monastic acedia to this late-medieval despair of Flete and his cohort:

> Writers in this tradition maintained strong roots in the earlier conceptualization of acedia articulated by monastic writers from Cassian in the fifth century to Bernard of Clairvaux in the twelfth, and so understood (as many modern commentators do not) the existential nature of this sin, close kin as it was to the great theological sin of unbelief. Yet this tradition had also come to associate despair with a specific set of temptations that have a markedly post-Reformation ring, including doubt, blasphemy, an overscrupulous sense of sinfulness, and terror at an implacably predestining divine justice.[126]

Siegfried Wenzel elaborates in his article on early acedia that it "not only started out as a *monastic* vice but remained so predominantly throughout the period of 700-1200," as most authors covering it "were monks or had received monastic training... [and] with the exception of systematic theologians, they usually wrote for monastic audiences."[127] Moreover, usually the vice is described with respect to the monastic life.[128] Wenzel surveys mainly early penitentials and the writings of Carolingian authors such as Alcuin, who does in fact target a lay audience as

[125] Watson, "Despair," 344.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Siegfried Wenzel, "Acedia 700-1200," *Traditio* 22 (1966): 98.
[128] Ibid.

an exception to this overall narrative.[129] These penitentials are generally based on Cassian's descriptions of the seven deadly sins, *acedia* included, though they incorporate outside material, such as the seventh-century Irish *Poenitentiale Bigotianum*, which "gives six exempla from the *Vitae Patrum*."[130] The characterization, here, is very much of acedia as a "noonday demon"—a sense of weariness, loathing for a monastic's duty, or inner anxiety, best solved by "manual labor."[131] Much of this generally early monastic focus shifted, he assents, with the systematic theologians of the twelfth century given "their great interest in the psychology of the spiritual and moral life.... One can a priori expect to find *acedia* in their writings frequently and with a more 'spiritual' meaning."[132] Andrew Crislip likewise looks into this monastic acedia, alsonoting Cassian's influence. He observes, too, the connection to intrusive thoughts, including Cassian's inspiration's, Evagrius of Pontus', description of sloth as "the commander of the demonic host arrayed against the monastic, which distracts the monastic with persistent thoughts."[133] Besides inspiring laziness at the monastic life, "Acedia also manifests in an overwhelming desire in the afflicted to leave the cell," or can lead to attempts at over-asceticism.[134] While Crislip notes the standard prescription of manual labor to solve acedia, he also notes that for the latter, moderation in ascetic practice is recommended.[135]

As mentioned before, much of this material and its concerns about sloth are integrated into the *Vitae Patrum,* or *Lives of the Fathers,* an immensely popular collection of both hagiography of early hermits and general advice and exempla for monastics, translated into many

[129] Ibid, 79.
[130] Ibid, 77.
[131] Ibid, 75.
[132] Ibid, 84.
[133] Andrew Crislip, "The Sin of Sloth or the Illness of the Demons? The Demon of Acedia in Early Christian Monasticism," *The Harvard Theological Review* 98, no. 2 (2005): 143.
[134] Ibid, 150, 153.
[135] Ibid, 157.

languages throughout the Middle Ages. In this section, I will also briefly discuss *Ancrene Wisse*, designed for anchoresses, which served a similar purpose as instruction and encouragement for cloistered religious. These works left immense impacts on the tribulation tradition in general, including, most relevant to this dissertation, specific borrowings in *The Twelve Profits of Tribulation* and Julian of Norwich's writings.

The *Vitae Patrum* originates in the early Church and was written in Latin, apparently based on earlier Greek works, and attributed to Jerome, but found itself filtered through a variety of vernaculars in the later Middle Ages.[136] In England it circulated in incomplete form with various saints' lives and exempla, appearing in piecemeal form in collections like the *Golden Legend*, the *Northern Homily Cycle*, and *The Alphabet of Tales*, before it was finally published in full by Caxton.[137] That said, Ralph Hanna describes how a group of texts, originally from the *Vitae Patrum*, circulated together in Middle English in six fourteenth-century manuscripts, the most complete of which is San Marino, Huntington Library, HM 148. These texts included: "The Epistle of St. Machari," "The Epistle of St. John the Hermit," and the *Verba Seniorum.*[138] One manuscript containing the former two is London, British Library, MS Add. 33971, which primarily holds *The Chastising of God's Children*, followed by a blank leaf and then the two epistles. The manuscript is highly annotated and underlined; its reader's interest in temptation is further confirmed by noticeable underlining of temptation-focused sections in "Machari," such as the importance of consent in determining sin on folio 65r or reference to King David's temptations found on foilo 66r. Rounding out the manuscript is an epistle attributed to Walter Hilton primarily on the sacrament of confession. This demonstrates that though I discuss the

[136] Constance Rosenthal, "The *Vitae Patrum* in Old and Middle English Literature," Ph.D. diss. (University of Pennsylvania, 1936), 11.
[137] Ibid, 64.
[138] Ralph Hanna, "The Middle English *Vitae Patrum* Collection," *Mediaeval Studies* 49 (1987): 412-413.

Vitae Patrum as a sort of predecessor of *Chastising* and other later texts, the text and its themes did not disappear, but translations and adaptations continued to circulate alongside late-medieval pastoralia. The *Vitae Patrum* also received a partial Anglo-Norman translation, commissioned by the Templar Henri d'Arci as devotional reading for the Templar community, Temple Bruer, in the twelfth century.[139] Though designated the "Vitas Patrum" it mainly includes exempla from the *Verba Seniorum* section and occasionally circulates with "The Life of St. Thais." This text appears in both Paris, BnF, MS français 24862 (s. xiii) and London, BL, MS Harley 2253 (s. xiv), which though similar, are two redactions from a missing Old French original.[140]

The most direct tribulation material in the collection is the *Verba Seniorum,* which circulated in both vernaculars in England. Here I will focus the Anglo-Norman version. The *Verba Seniorum* deals quite frequently with both temptation and intrusive thoughts, connecting them to sloth/acedia. One of the earliest tidbits it offers as advice is from Abbot Pastor, who asserts that "Three things are needful to the solitary life: / That a man love poverty, mortify his body, / And not be lazy about working with his hands. / By means of these things he'll be able to expel / Bodily sloth, temptation, and weariness."[141] This abbot's advice follows the very typical monastic pattern of acedia as the "noonday demon" that one can defeat via ascetic practice and physical work. A similar assessment is delivered by Saint Syncletica, who likewise prescribes ascetic practice to defeat "wicked thoughts": "thoughts and temptations, / By good prayers, by frequent fasting, / Should each of you drive from your heart," similar to a doctor prescribing bitter medicine.[142]

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[139] Keith Sinclair, "The Translations of the *Vitas Patrum, Thais, Antichrist,* and *Vision de saint Paul* Made for Anglo-Norman Templars: Some Neglected Literary Considerations," *Speculum* 72, no. 3 (1997): 761-762.
[140] Susanna Fein, ed., and David Raybin, trans., "Vitas Patrum," in *The Complete Harley 2253 Manuscript,* vol. 1 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2015), 426.
[141] Fein, "Vitas Patrum," ll. 136-140.
[142] Ibid, ll. 819-828.

Yet the polyphonic text does not only prescribe bitter remedies, but encourages, in certain cases, a more compassionate approach to tempting thoughts, lest one fall into despair. Foreshadowing a major tactic of texts such as *Remedies* and *Chastising*, an anonymous "elderly brother" emphasizes the neutrality of "lustful thoughts" and the importance of consent in determining sin:

> You who're tempted by fornication
> Ought to act like someone
> Who wanders along the street
> Till he comes to the tavern district.
> There he can smell the odors of meat
> That people everywhere roast in their kitchens.
> And whoever wants to can enter to eat,
> And whoever doesn't can pass by.
> He who passes by and doesn't linger there
> Will have only the odor of the meat.
> The odors one smells in passing by them
> Signify the evil thoughts that pursue men.
> But you ought to throw evil thoughts far away,
> And you ought to say this, calling out to God:
> 'Lord Son of God, by your strength help me
> So that I not be defeated in this struggle.'
> So, too, against every other evil thought
> You must cry out to God and pray in this way,
> For we mustn't ever permit evil thoughts
> To take root in our hearts,
> But we must attack and fight against them.
> Thus may we drive evil thoughts from ourselves.[143]

The tempting thoughts are personified here, described as "pursuing" the Christian, and agency is taken away from the Christian accordingly, in terms of where the thoughts come from. The thoughts are also compared to the wafting odor of meat—an external entity sensed (unwillingly, of course) by the person. Thus, the agency is shifted not onto having the thoughts, but the level to which one walks into that tavern, i.e., consciously enjoys them. The remedies, as through much of this text, include fervent prayer. He subsequently scolds the reader: "Do you think you

[143] Ibid, ll. 988-1011.

may escape your flesh by sleeping, / By idleness, by sloth, or by lying down?"[144] Rather, the monk is once again admonished to pursue physical mortification.[145] Here sloth is linked as a sort of byproduct of temptation of the thoughts, or perhaps a cultivator of it, with much of the same traditional solutions.

That said, another exemplum in the collection demonstrates the need for mercy and patience on the part of the community, rather than a harsh approach to temptation. A younger brother was tempted with lustful thoughts, and went to an elder for counsel. However, the elder brother had "never been tested by the Evil spirit, / And therefore he was very disdainful / When this brother revealed his burden to him. / He reproached him and called him a wicked wretch / Because he persisted in such a purpose. / And he said that, because he'd harbored such desire, / He was unworthy of the monastic habit. / When the brother heard this, he despaired."[146] To quickly summarize the rest of the tale, this leads the brother to leave his cell, and on his road back to the ways of the world, Abbot Apollo speaks to him "like a true healer," and encourages him that all Christians experience temptation and that he ought to return to the monastery. Subsequently, Apollo prays that the rude older monk be tormented with temptations to teach him about his weakness, and the old monk falls into despair himself and likewise must be rescued by the admonishment of Apollo. Consistent with what we saw above, this anecdote is careful to take the agency out of receiving temptation, and puts the onus instead on one's persistence throughout it. Moreover, it encourages those who do not experience temptation to have compassion for those that do—emphasizing, in turn, the importance of reliance on a good community (and good

[144] Ibid, ll. 1014-1015.
[145] Ibid, l. 1019.
[146] Ibid, ll. 670-677.

spiritual leaders) in overcoming such a trial. Despair is carefully separated from temptation or sloth, and is understood as a state where one gives up work in the face of temptation.

While despair is remedied by participation in one's community, it may also be prevented by modulating his asceticism to his abilities, rather than overburdening himself. In a parable, an abbot tells to a brother who had fallen away from his order due to tribulation a tale of a young man who "lay down to sleep instead of working" on a farm, given the overwhelming nature of the task before him.[147] The man's father advises him : "A plot of earth the same measure as your height / I order you, son, to work every day, / And thus you'll advance the job, know this for certain, / And you won't be all worn out, as you are now."[148] Following such advice, moderating his acetic practice, the advisee "found repose without disturbance, / For God quickly delivered him from temptation."[149] Sloth is a biproduct of temptation here and an enabler of despair; in this case, though studiously working and praying delivered the monk, he had to practice moderation in order to cultivate perseverance in the task.

The *Verba Seniorum* and other monastic texts laid a clear groundwork for the relationships between these concepts of temptation, tribulation, sloth, and despair, though they had not yet developed quite a sense of scrupulosity and intrusive thoughts that could cause monk to despair—it is more of a biproduct, a slide into despair from more pedestrian lustful temptation. Another text, which builds upon the *Vitae Patrum* as well as many others, and is immensely influential to texts in this chapter and the next, is *Ancrene Wisse*, a guidebook for anchoresses.

[147] Ibid, ll. 1903-1907.
[148] Ibid, ll. 1920-1924.
[149] Ibid, ll. 1936-1937.

Ancrene Wisse is one of the most important anchoritic writings in English from the early to mid-thirteenth century.[150] While not strictly "monastic," anchoresses "lived as 'enclosed hermits' in cells which were next to, or formed part of, churches."[151] As such, *Ancrene Wisse* manifests many of the same concerns and inspirations as clearly monastic works such as the *Vitae Patrum*. It is extant in four manuscripts, with several appearing to be a revision of the text by the original author at a later date.[152] Though only extant in early Middle English, scholars have hypothesized it might have many more copies, including some in Anglo-Norman French.[153] Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, in their introduction to their translation of the text, observe that the text "is a variation on the 'rules' that were commonly written for solitaries," but the broader appeal of the text suggests "It is as much what we call a 'handbook': a compilation of useful materials for living the anchoritic life, which includes directions for prayers and exercises, instructions for the inner life accompanied by long explanations and exhortations, definitions and illustrations of the meaning of enclosure, discussions of theology from an anchoritic perspective, and other kinds of writing, intended to inform, entertain, cajole, comfort, and otherwise assist its readers."[154] Savage and Watson thus sort it generically with Rolle's *Form of Living* and Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, two works highly intertextual and often found with many of the central texts of this dissertation.[155] Sources include works by the early Church Fathers, Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job* (a major inspiration in almost all tribulation literature) and "that great classic of the eremitic life, the *Vitae Patrum*," among many other contemporary texts.[156] Moreover, it

[150] Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, trans., *Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1991), 7.
[151] Ibid, 8
[152] Ibid, 41.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid, 42-43.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid, 44.

seems likely it was written by an Augustinian canon, as the rule bears many similarities with that of the Augustinians, and he was clearly well versed in contemporary scholarship at the University of Paris.[157] Bella Millet has since argued persuasively that the author was Dominican, finding many parallels with the Dominican rule upon close reading.[158]

While exploring the work exhaustively would be well beyond the scope of this dissertation, *Ancrene Wisse* articulates early examples of many of the themes of later medieval temptation and tribulation pastoralia as well as the female spirituality that concerns the second section of this dissertation. Most relevant is part four of the text, focused specifically on temptation. In *Ancrene Wisse*'s rendering, we can observe the strong influence of early monastic advice about sloth, similar to *Vitae Patrum*, as well as strikingly similar metaphors to the *Profits* texts, and finally, an early awareness and emphasis on female enclosure as a linked spiritual issue.

The first thing here of note is how *Ancrene Wisse* essentially identifies tribulations and temptation—while we shall see that temptations only make a portion of tribulations in most of the literature, here, they are one in the same. Even physical pains can be conceived of as temptations, as they are classified as outer temptations in contrast to inner temptations: "Temptation without is that from which comes outer and inner pleasure or pain: outer pain such as sickness, discomfort, humiliation, misfortune, and every bodily suffering that afflicts the flesh; inner, such as grief of heart, outrage, and also anger at one's pain."[159] The author reminds us that all these temptations "come from God... for God proves his beloved chosen ones, just as the

[157] Ibid, 9.
[158] Bella Millet, "The Origins of 'Ancrene Wisse': New Answers, New Questions," *Medium Aevum* 61, no. 2 (1992): 206-228.
[159] Ibid, 114.

goldsmith tests gold in the fire and destroys the false gold in it."[160] Here is only one place where we see the text use the same metaphors as the *Profits* and other such tribulation literature.

Another common metaphor *Ancrene Wisse* employs is God as a parent—both as a disciplinarian and as a loving mother, playing a game. All tribulations "are God's stick" and "he beats no one except the one he loves and regards as his daughter."[161] This metaphor became so popular that it eventually lent *The Chastising of God's Children* its title. Yet God is a mother as well as a father, since "when he allows us to be tempted, [he] is playing with us as the mother with her young darling. She runs away from him and hides herself, and lets him sit alone and look eagerly about crying 'Mother! Mother!' and crying for a while; and then with open arms she jumps out laughing, and hugs and kisses him and wipes his eyes."[162]

In this case, God as mother is temporarily allowing her child to "be alone and withdraws his grace, his comfort and his support, so that we find no sweetness in anything that we do well, nor savor in our hearts."[163] These periods of spiritual dryness are another major concern of this section of *Ancrene Wisse*, and the author often mentions them, sometimes classifying them under the deadly sin of sloth. The first mention of such spiritual anxiety is the delineation of different (deadly) responses to tribulation:

> The second worrying condition that a sick person has is quite different from this, which is when they feel so much pain that they cannot endure anyone handling the sore place, nor that anyone heal them. This is any anchoress who feels her temptations so painfully and is so sorely frightened that no spiritual comfort can gladden her, nor make her understand that she can and should be all the more confident of her salvation because of them. Does it not tell in the gospel that "the Holy Spirit led our Lord himself into a solitary place to lead a solitary life, in order to be tempted by the enemy of hell?" But the temptation of him who could not sin was only from without.[164]

[160] Ibid, 115.
[161] Ibid, 116.
[162] Ibid, 132.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid, 114. The "worrying condition" preceding this one was a simple unawareness of being in temptation.

This is the closest, perhaps, the text articulates to something akin to obsessive worry about sin leading to despair, which, as I will demonstrate below, is a meta-temptation based on one's response to more base-level temptations.

Despair itself is classified as a product of sloth, much as in the *Vitae Patrum*. The most deadly product of the sin is despair, "for it chews and devours God's sweet kindness and his great mercy and his measureless grace," but other offspring of sloth include "a dead and heavy heart" as well as "a complaining heart," among more typical monastic threats like idleness.[165] However, as in the *Vitae Patrum,* the author is careful to note that one can easily be tricked by the devil into over-asceticism, leading to the same result: "He is busy to make one of you flee the human comforts so much that she falls into deadly sorrow, that is accidia, or into such introspection that she goes mad."[166] Moreover, the text's reference to madness connects this spiritual ailment to a mental one, and in this case, both are caused by bodily deprivation.

It remains to consider *Ancrene Wisse*'s solutions to these temptations, and much like the *Profits* after it, it recommends: "Against the outer temptations patience, that is long-suffering, is needed; against the inner is needed wisdom and spiritual strength."[167] Further anticipating much of the later tribulation literature the author suggests, "in all your sufferings always think deeply on God's sufferings," subsequently listing in detail the pains of Christ's Passion.[168] Spiritual tribulations are best treated by "confession and penitence,"[169] and of course, the practices prescribed by *Vitae Patrum*: "holy meditations; heartfelt and continual and anguished prayers;

[165] Ibid, 122-123.
[166] Ibid, 131.
[167] Ibid, 115.
[168] Ibid, 117.
[169] Ibid, 119.

steadfast faith; reading, fasting, vigil, and bodily work; comfort from talking to someone else in times when things are difficult."[170]

The monastic concepts of acedia or sloth and despair and especially their connections to tribulation and temptation laid the groundwork for the development of this discourse in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as discussed throughout this dissertation. That said, we would be remiss not to note that these topics likewise worked their way into the moral theology of the scholastics. There are varying opinions on the importance of the scholastics in this development, as Watson claims that acedia "was already becoming part of this penitential nexus" by Aquinas' time, and "it held no special urgency for him."[171] But other authors have noted that questions of tribulations, as well as scruples, did make appearances in the works of other Dominicans of the high Middle Ages, in such a way that eventually influenced the composition of the *Profits* texts, as well as *Chastising*, etc. Without covering scholastic theology on this issue in detail, I will briefly trace its lines of influence upon late-medieval Middle English pastoralia.

Barratt discusses in detail the various influences on *The Book of Tribulation* and its Latin predecessors. For one, attempts at dating the Latin *Tractatus de tribulacione* usually rely on assumptions about *Ancrene Wisse* and *Somme Le Roi* being connected to the text.[172] Though she suggests "these similarities may well be no more than evidence of a common devotional and ascetic tradition," she asserts that "Of greater significance are parallels with the *Summa virtutum ac vitiorum* of Gulielmus Peraldus O.P. (c. 1200-1271)."[173] Specifically, in his section on fortitude, Peraldus lays out pristinely "seven 'vtiles effectus' of tribulation based on the properties of fire, of which illumination, the destruction of the bonds which tie us to the world,

[170] Ibid, 135.
[171] Watson, "Despair," 344.
[172] Alexandra Barratt, ed. *The Book of Tribulation* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1983), 27.
[173] Ibid, 27-28.

and the assaying and purification of gold and silver parallel passages from the *Tractatus*."[174] He also lists many other metaphors including tribulation as medicine, or profits based on water in a parallel to the beginning of his tract.[175] Barratt goes on to assert that both *Tractatus de tribulacione* and *Somme le Roi* were based in part on Peraldus, which she knows "was circulting by 1249," leading her to date this Latin source to the end of the thirteenth century.[176]

Somme le Roi, written by Laurént d'Orléans for the King of France, is also often titled "Book of Vices and Virtues" in English (and the author was another Dominican).[177] Moreover, *Somme* eventually received several Middle English translations, including *Ayenbite of Inwit*.[178] Further Dominican influence on this tradition can be observed via Henry Suso's *Horologium Sapientiae*; though it was later than most of the other texts, composed in the fourteenth century, it received a Middle English translation, and *The Chastising of God's Children* clearly borrows from it.[179] The influences are evident, even in the Middle English translation—Chapter three is dedicated to the topic of tribulation entirely, and includes many of the same tropes: tribulation's origin in providence, 1 Cor. 10:11-13 (which opens this section), the tantamount importance of practicing patience in response so that it is turned to good. It also lists many of the same twelve Profits, likely drawing some mutual influence from this tradition.[180] All in all, though it is clear that this topic was more of a concern in the pastoral realm than that of professional scholastic

[174] Ibid, 28.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid, 28-29.
[177] Leo M. Carruthers, "Lorens of Orleans and The Somme le Roi or The Book of Vices and Virtues," *Vox Benedicta* 5 (1988): 194.
[178] Ibid, 194-195.
[179] Marleen Cré, "'ȝe han desired to knowe in comfort of ȝoure soule': Female Agency in *The Chastising of God's Children*," *The Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 42, no. 2 (2016): 165.
[180] K. Horstmann, ed., "Orologium sapientiae or the seven poyntes of trewe wisdom, aus ms. Douce 114," *Anglia: zeitschrift für Englische philologie* 10 (1988): 347-351.

theology, I would urge other scholars to consider that these two traditions of theology were intertwined starting in the thirteenth century and beyond.[181]

Profits of Tribulation

I move now to the vernacular pastoral realm, beginning with *The Twelve Profits of Tribulation* and associated texts. As I described in the introduction, there are three distinct Middle English translations that stem ultimately from a Latin treatise of the same name. This tract existed in a long and a short form; the long form, through Old French, inspired *The Book of Tribulation* in Middle English, while the short form received two independent Middle English translations, *The Profits of Tribulation* and *The Twelve Profits of Tribulation*, as Horstmann refers to them in his edition.[182] As discussed at length above, a major theme of these texts is the importance of patience—without it, one cannot receive any of these profits, and the texts themselves can help cultivate such patience. As such, *Twelve Profits* is relevant to discuss in order to properly contextualize *Chastising* and *Remedies*. Though *Chastising* and *Remedies* deal with "temptation" more directly than the *Profits* texts, the "tribulation" and patience discourse codified through the *Twelve Profits* texts forms the paradigm *Chastising* and *Remedies* use to discuss temptation as a subtype of tribulation. Moreover, it is clear these texts are interrelated. They contain many shared metaphors, such as God as a parent (often mother specifically), tribulation as purgation (medical or metallic), etc., and rely upon a similar set of authorities

[181] A final scholastic influence to note is that of Jean Gerson, who though the latest of these, writing in the fifteenth century, helped codify the idea of "scrupulosity" specifically in his Middle French tract, "Contre conscience trop scrupuleuse." See Jean Gerson, *Œuvres Complètes*, ed. Palémon Glorieux, vol. 7A (Paris: Desclée, 1960).
[182] Barratt, *The Book of Tribulation*, 23-29. For the sake of clarity, I retain Horstmann's titles, but often refer to *Profits* or *Twelve Profits* to discuss the entire group. *The Profits of Tribulation* corresponds to Joliffe J.3 (b) and IPMEP 142, while *Twelve Profits of Tribulation* is Joliffe J.3 (c) and IPMEP 141. *The Book of Tribulation* is IPMEP 143. Cross-referencing Horstmann and Barratt, from what I can tell *The Profits* is extant in Harley 1706 (Douce 322), Rawl. C 894, Royal 17.C.xviii, CCC Oxford 220, *Twelve Profits* in Laud. Misc. 210, Royal 17.B.xvii, and *The Book* in Bod. 423, Harley 1197, Arundel 286 (though Horstmann seems to mistake a cropped version of *The Book* in Arundel 286 for *Twelve Profits*).

(often the same biblical quotations, such as 1 Cor 10:13 or references to Job). Whether this is a case of borrowing between or borrowing from the same sources (such as *Ancrene Wisse*) is up for debate, as we see Jessica Lamothe and Edmund Colledge and Noel Chadwick offer different opinions on this matter, particularly regarding *Remedies*, as discussed below. Yet it is clear the texts partake of the same discourse, though *Remedies* and *Chastising* tailor that discourse to a reader beset with intrusive thoughts about sin and salvation.

Furthermore, it is clear that these texts tend to travel together.[183] As Hanna reminds us, "'book history' has resurrected the power of 'transmission,' broadly privileging reception, various forms of textual promulgation, annotation, and readership."[184] Hanna argues that considering the manuscript history of texts can challenge the application of modern generic conventions to medieval texts, giving the example of *The Siege of Jerusalem*, often interpreted as a "learned alliterative history," although it appears in many manuscript contexts aside from merely "learned historical ones."[185] This includes its presence in manuscripts with "biblical" concerns, leading Hanna to argue that "the majority appropriation of *The Siege* suggests something less than the power of genre or even gross form... as categorizing technique. All the other witnesses appear to categorize the poem in terms of what moderns would call 'theme' or 'subject matter.'"[186] This is even more evident when considering what Hanna dubs "textual clumps," groupings of usually 4-5 texts that are typically found together, and in the same order, in manuscripts. Noting these clumps can be useful, Hanna argues: "These bunches might be particularly useful in joining English reading communities, since they presuppose small common

[183] Note too that many of the texts found with both *Twleve Profits* and *Chastising* and Flete are likewise descendants of or inspired by this moral theology group aforementioned—such as *Form of Living* or *Pore Caitif*. See Mary Teresa Brady, "Rolle's 'Form of Living' and 'The Pore Caitif,'" *Traditio* 36 (1980): 426-435.
[184] Ralph Hanna, "Middle English Books and Middle English Literary History," *Modern Philology* 102, no. 2 (2004): 157.
[185] Ibid, 163-164.
[186] Ibid, 166.

(yet perhaps multiply dispersed) archetypes; these would have facilitated the construction of individualistic miscellanies through the combination of small textual bundles."[187]

Of course, Hanna's 1987 article on the *Vitae Patrum* material in Middle English prose translation—a grouping of *The Epistle of St. Machari, The Epistle of St. John the Hermit,* and the *Verba Seniorum* —would fall under this classification. However, in his 2004 article he observes another, directly relevant to this chapter: the grouping of *Six Masters on Tribulation* and *The Profits of Tribulation,* plus *The Craft of Dying* and *A Treatise of Ghostly Battle*.[188] While typically all four are found together, sometimes the first pair and the second pair are separated by several texts (and Hanna also notes *Six Masters* and *Craft of Dying* are the most likely to be found on their own in manuscripts).[189] Hanna eventually uses this fact to posit a claim relevant to late medieval book production, that "the pairs in fact reflect separable, and thus mobile, booklets, short runs of quires, if in format comparable to the survivors, probably units of five and three quires. They were variously available to book producers to be integrated with similar briefish units in building up their codices."[190] Applying this insight to his earlier point about *The Siege*, we understand that miscellany construction was often motivated more by thematic unity than generic, and it seems certain thematically related clumps of texts, then, were used in this thematic compilation.

Remedies and *Chastising* are not "textual clumps" in the same way as *Profits* and the three texts Hanna lists. Nonetheless, there are instances of overlap in transmission with each textual group and the others' derivatives. To give some examples, Worcester, Cathedral Library, MS F. 172 contains *Remedies* ME3 and *Six Masters on Tribulation*. Bristol, Bristol Public

[187] 167
[188] Ibid, 169.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid, 169-170.

Library, MS 6 has ME2 and a text identified as Joliffe J.14, which draws upon *Six Masters on Tribulation*.[191] Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 210 has *Twelve Profits* and *Against Wanhope*, a tract against despair which I will argue takes inspiration from ME3, and I transcribe in full in Appendix A. Compilers of medieval miscellanies clearly thought these texts had some relevance to each other—thus it is essential to regard them together as contributions to the same discourse, and use that understanding to illuminate their purpose.

In this section, then, I offer a by-chapter comparison of the three Middle English versions of *Profits*, with occasional reference to the French (supplied by Barratt in her edition) and the Latin (from the *Patrologia Latina*). Generally these texts are naturally quite similar, with essentially the same profits assigned per chapter, though they often include different exempla, and *The Profits*, particularly, contains subtle, but important, additions compared to *Twelve Profits*. To begin with, all three have an introductory section that justifies the work, quoting a key authority on the benefits of enduring tribulations. All three reference Seneca, though only *The Profits of Tribulation* (MS Rawl. C 894) quotes the Latin as well as supplying a Middle English translation: "Non est ita magna consolacio sicut illa que ex desolacione extrahitur, There is none so gret comforte as is þat þat is drawen oute of discomforte."[192] The indebtedness to stoicism is clear, then, from the start of the text. As Diekstra observes, the text reflects the classical stoic genre of the *consolatio.* Diekstra identifies the Latin *De duodecim utilitatibus*

[191] The text begins: "Tribulacyon is the best thing that ony many may have yn thys world For yef ther hadde be any bettur thyng in thys world than tribulacion oure lord god wolde haue yeuen hit to his owne son for he suffred the grettest tribulacyon yn this world that ever dyd." Compare the opening lines of "Six Masters" after the incipit, as in Horstmann: "The frist maistir seyde þat if eni þinge hadde be bettir to eny mannis lyuynge in þis world þan tribulacioun, god wolde haue ȝeue it to his sone; but for he say wel þer was no þinge better þan it, þerfore he ȝaf it to him, and made him to suffre moost tribulacioun in þis wrecchid worlde, more þan dide euere eny man or euere schal." See "The Profits of Tribulation," in *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle and His Followers*, ed. Carl Horstmann, v. 2 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999), 390. Note that Horstmann includes this text under the same title as "The Profits of Tribulation" (i.e., IPMEP 142) given their close textual grouping as observed by Hanna.
[192] "The Profits of Tribulation," ed. Horstmann, 391.

tribulacionis from which these texts derive as a medieval example alongside the text he edited in his volume.[193] Diekstra traces the history of the *consolatio* as developing out of the diatribe, a form of philosophical discourse intended for popular appeal.[194] This genre eventually picked up aspects of "the sermon and the didactic treatise" in the Middle Ages.[195] As Diekstra observes, "It was especially Stoic philosophers who preferred to avail themselves of this type of composition. ... The subjects entered for discussion consist invariably of a limited number of recurrent themes, whose treatment acquired a stereotyped form. The same consolations are presented again and again, the most frequent being those concerning death, exile, old age, blindness, loss of possessions, bereavements, etc."[196] A lot of the *consolatio*'s responses to these grievous issues tend to be "sophistic" or dependent on wordplay—for instance, Seneca consoles blindness with "habet et nox suas voluptates."[197]

While the lines of influence are clear, in one respect I would challenge Diekstra's inclusions of the *Twelve Profits* texts as a "consolatio," as they are not organized by different tribulations, but by different ways in which tribulations represent God's care—and while the responses definitely operate on reframing one's view of negative events, the author's responses are not so flippant to the person suffering. Yet the stoic heritage of the text remains in its emphasis on "man's mortality" allowing him to focus on "concentrating his strength to face disaster well-prepared and lessens the risk of losing his equanimity."[198] Moreover, the *consolatio* operates on the assumption of reading as therapeutic: "Concordant with faith in Reason, and indeed a special aspect of it, is the faith in the power of the word. The word is able to evoke a

[193] Diekstra, *A Dialogue Between Reason and Adversity*, 47. Interesting to note, too, is that this text was found in the same manuscript as the *Dialogue* he edits as well, Cambridge University Library MS Ii.VI.39 (7).
[194] Ibid, 47.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid, 48.
[197] Ibid, 49.
[198] Ibid, 50.

possibility in a compelling way so that it may become almost magically present."[199] While the sophistic truisms of the *consolatio* "may appear harsh towards the selfpitying sufferer... [the author of the consolatio] has understood the secret that grief has a purifying effect when viewed as a part of the human condition. Instead of despair the *consolatio* offers the rule of Reason."[200] While *Twelve Profits* employs plenty of "reason" in reframing the negative emotions of tribulation, ultimately it does not attempt to dispel emotion, but rather, promote other emotions such as gratitude or love. Nonetheless, as the remnants of Seneca scattered through the text and highlighted in the introduction remind us, the stoic heritage of the text is renovated to serve the Christian reader's formulation of their relationship to God into one of trust and acceptance rather than complaint. One difference between the three texts within the introduction section is that both *Twelve Profits* and *The Profits* incorporate a reference to 2 Corinthians 12:9 ("Sufficit tibi gratia mea; nam virtus in infirmitate perficitur").[201] This quotation is excluded from *The Book of Tribulation*, as the French version on which it is based instead cites Psalm 59 ("Da nobis domine auxilium").[202] The change stems directly from the shorter Latin version of the text. In general, *The Book* seems to tend towards more Old Testament examples than its counterparts.

Moving to the first chapter, the first profit of tribulation is that God sends tribulation as "succor" to deliver a person from the false joys of this world. The three texts all use similar biblical quotations but *The Profits of Tribulation* adds St. Anthony's temptation, which is included in neither its Latin source nor its cousin, *Twelve Profits*. The anecdote is inserted before the same quotation from Tobias:

[199] Ibid.
[200] Ibid.
[201] "The Profits of Tribulation," ed. Horstmann, 391; "Twelve Profits of Tribulation," ed. Horstmann, 46.
[202] Barratt, ed., *The Book of Tribulation*, 39.

> And vnderstonde well, þat comforte of grace in tribulacion is for he shulde dred god and trist in hym to be delyuerde; as we rede in the boke of holy fader seint Anton,[203] how he after many gret spirituall temptacions was troublyd of ffendis, bodyly betone and woundid all hys body, so þat whan his seruaunt cam to viset hym he found hyme lying ded & so he toke hym vp and bare hym to the next towne where he watched tyll abowȝt mydnyȝt; and þan by the will ofe god he releued and bad his seruaunt preuyly, all other sclepyng, bere hym aȝen; and so he did. And whan he was brouȝt ayen thedir so feble þat he myȝt not stonde, but sittynge vp he said þus: 'Where bene ye euill spirits, wicked feendis? Lo I am here be þe myȝt of god redy to withstond all youre malice'. & after þes and many [othir] wonderfull temptacions: oure lord appered to hym in wonderful lyȝt & comfortable. To whom hooly Antone seid: 'A lord Ihesu, where hast þou bene? Good lord, where hast þou be so longe fro me in tribulacion?' And oure lord answered and seyd: 'here with the, beholdynge thi fyghtynge, redy to reward the and comforte the after thi uictory, as I am wont to do for my chosin childerne'. For wit þou well þat comforte oweth not to com, tyl that a place be rayed therto by tribulacion.[204]

This inclusion puts more emphasis on temptations, specifically, as a form of tribulation, whereas the tract is otherwise general in its advice. These temptations are brought by demonic influence (external) rather than internal forces, but the text consoles the reader that the presence of Christ follows tribulation. Moreover, it is worth noting that *The Profits* is the only version of the text that seems to incorporate hagiography. The inclusion of a desert father's life might also suggest that this version of the text was relevant to audiences with religious vocations specifically, though as discussed above, it is typically found in a textual clump with *The Craft of Dying* as well as the more chivalric *Treatise of Ghostly Battle*, unsettling our categorization of the text for a narrow audience of either lay or religious readers. Such assumptions are challenged by the manuscripts of *The Profits* as well—for instance, Rawlinson C 894 contains the entire group as well as *The Profits*, as well as vocationally-oriented texts dealing with the active and contemplative life or Pelagius's letter to the virgin Demetrias. Yet, the book itself clearly appealed to a lay audience, not only through its inclusion of more "lay" texts like *Craft* and

[203] Horstmann notes another manuscript has "faders," here which makes me wonder if "boke of holy faders" refers to *Vitas Patrum*. This intuition is supported further by the inclusion of episodes from the VP later in the text.
[204] "The Profits of Tribulation," ed. Horstmann, 392.

Ghostly Battle, but before the first folio, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century owners had included family records of marriages, births, and baptisms, indicating how one book—and the texts therein—could appeal to multiple demographics throughout its history.[205]

The second chapter doubles down on the theme of fighting the devil—but oddly enough, in the second profit, tribulation itself fights the devil, instead of the reader fighting the devil's onslaught of tribulation. This chapter also sees *The Profits of Tribulation* including more hagiographical material in the form of Abbot Sistoy. *Twelve Profits* asserts that tribulation "stoppis þo deuels mouthe, þat he ne dar speke ne tempte þo soule þat is in tribulacion; for he dredis to be put agayne & ouer-comen," and cites the Book of Job in which Job's friends (here, the devil) refuse to talk to him because of his troubles (here, tribulation)—a confusing and highly allegorizing interpretation, given the fact that Job's issues are literally due to Satan's machinations.[206] In this example, tribulation seems to be exclusively referring to physical troubles, as the text sets tribulation in opposition to temptation specifically. *The Profits of Tribulation* fleshes out this section a bit more. Tacked on to this gloss of Job, the author argues that since the devils are driven off by tribulation, tribulation also invites the attendance of angels and saints. To support this claim, he recounts an anecdote about Abbot Sisoy, included in the *Vitae Patrum* VI.iii.5,[207] in which Sisoy, after suffering many tribulations, sees angels and saints come to him at his moment of death, but even asks them for more time for penance.[208] This inclusion offers further evidence of *The Profits* incorporating hagiographic material, especially desert fathers material, into its adaptation of its Latin source.

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[205] Interestingly enough, the book seems to have belonged to the Roberts family; William Roberts, one of the owners, was an MP in the seventeenth century and a follower of Oliver Cromwell, who nonetheless retained his wealth and power into the Restoration.
[206] "Twelve Profits of Tribulation," ed. Horstmann, 47.
[207] Jacques-Paul Migne, ed. "Vitae Patrum." *Patrologia Latina* 73 (Paris: Garnier, 1879), col. 1007.
[208] "The Profits of Tribulation," ed. Horstmann, 393.

Given the mutual exclusivity between temptation and tribulation suggested by this chapter's profit, all three versions of the text swiftly digress to clarify that the temptations of the enemy themselves are not themselves sin; in support, all three use the Isaiah 36 story of the blasphemies of Rabshakeh, which the prophet instructs people to ignore, here likened to ignoring the devil's tempting thoughts. *Twelve Profits* further foregrounds consent by reminding the reader that although ridding oneself of temptation is a profit of tribulation, temptation itself is not inherently evil: "Noght þat temptacion of þo fend be perilouse to þe but by þo folowand answere, þat is, by delite & assent; as þo speche of þo cursid mon noyes þe noght, but if þou hym answere."[209] In advice we will see expounded in *Remedies*, one should simply ignore these thoughts rather than try to respond to them in any way in order to prevent consenting to them and falling into sin. *The Book of Tribulation* fleshes this concept out more than the other two versions:

> by the writyng it is not comaunded þe that thou make him be stylle, but [it is] comaunded the that thou aunswer him not by assentyng. Thou soule, whaneuere thou be in suche poynt, put the not than into dissese ffor the arraygnynges that he maketh the in abhomynable thoughtes that he settith bifore the; but that thou kepe the from aunsueryng by plesaunce and by assentyng; ffor as longe as his arreynynges displesen the, thei mowen of nothinge greuen the."[210]

Here the method of how to avoid responding to tempting thoughts is made explicit. *The Book* focuses on one's emotional response to the thoughts, maintaining that the Christian should be displeased rather than pleased by them. While we may consider emotional responses uncontrollable to an extent, this does not seem to be fully the case in medieval Christian moral theology; the act of application of one's senses to a thing is considered consent, and as such,

[209] "Twelve Profits of Tribulation," ed. Horstmann, 47.
[210] Barratt, ed., *The Book of Tribulation*, 51.

deriving emotional enjoyment from a stimulus would be considered an act of the will.[211] The one way to ensure this consent is not granted, according to this text, and underlined in Flete, is the measure of one's own distress at these tempting thoughts. The author takes this emotional burden and its toll on believers very seriously: "But yit though he greue not to thilke that aunswer not, he [werieth] ofte the hert of the innocent and abaissheth it and discomfortith hit. But than shuldest thou, soule ybeten and sorwful, comforte the ayenwarde in thilke tribulacion that departith the and delyuereth the from the arreynynge of þe temptatcion."[212] Thus, even absent consent to these thoughts, the author acknowledges the long-term emotional drain of facing intrusive thoughts: being wearied, perplexed, and discomforted. This recognition is used to support the central claim of the second profit—physical tribulations are preferable to temptation, even if they too cause weariness, as physical tribulations can at least drive off the much more spiritually exhausting and threatening temptations.

All three texts develop the third profit extensively—that being, tribulation purges and purifies the believer. The texts use five metaphors to communicate this: (1) the body being cleansed by medicine, (2) metals being refined by fire, (3) trees being pruned, (4) grain being separated from chaff, and (5) wine squeezed from dregs in a press. This profit lends a particularly good example of the texts' treatment of patience. Regarding patience, this section emphasizes one's response to tribulation in determining whether the experience grants spiritual merit. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, tribulation texts tend to separate out good and bad tribulation based on whether the person experiencing it chooses to use it for their spiritual benefit, or chooses "grucching," i.e., complaining to God or resenting him for it. *Twelve*

[211] Aquinas ST 2-1.15. This is discussed in more detail in the final section of the chapter, below, as *Against Wanhope* deals with the difference between assent and consent to temptation explicitly.
[212] Barratt, ed., *The Book of Tribulation*, 51-52.

Profits reminds the reader that just as one should swallow medicine rather than holding it in their mouth, "so tribulacion ne shuld not fro his course with grutching be þoght on."[213] All three texts also present the example of the Pharaoh being hardened by the tribulation of the plagues that struck Egypt—*The Book of Tribulation* glosses this biblical event as an instance of a patient resisting his spiritual treatment:

> right as the body somtyme of him that resceiueth the medicyn is not ypurged therwith, and cometh no in defaute of the meicyn, but cometh of lettyng of the body of thilke that resceiueth the medicyn, that is not wel disposed and arayed ayenst the medicyn, ffor the matere that shuld be purged is to harde and to sad; in suche manere the medicyn of the tribulacion purgeth not the harde hertes ne the thwart, that with nothynge that God doth to hem, thai meken him not but harden hem ther ayenst by impacience and by ire and by rebelship, as did the hert of Pharao the kynge of Egipte, that for noo tribulacion that come on him cessed not of his harmes but harded.[214]

Patience, rather than "grutching," is the key to making this medicine take. In this light, the texts place emphasis on the person under tribulation as a subject to determine, for themselves, how suffering affects their spiritual wellbeing. This is a ubiquitous theme in the literature, and it is articulated especially clearly here.

On the other hand, the medical reference here may give scholars pause regarding the current conversation surrounding medieval medicine. Some scholars have asserted that spiritual and physical health were inextricable given the humoral theory that dominated medieval medicine.[215] Daniel McCann, especially, has argued for eliding metaphorical and literal interpretations of "spiritual medicine," citing Richard Rolle's description of his psalter as "medicine" as an example, which I discussed in the introduction to this dissertation.[216] However,

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[213] "Twelve Profits of Tribulation," ed. Horstmann, 48.
[214] Barratt, ed., *The Book of Tribulation*, 57-58.
[215] For instance, see Julie Orlemanski, *Symptomatic Subjects: Bodies, Medicine, and Causation in the Literature of Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019); Daniel McCann, *Soul-Health: Therapeutic Reading in Later Medieval England* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018).
[216] McCann, *Soul-Health*, 5.

these texts separate the two explicitly. The author of *Twelve Profits* asserts: "For why as wicked humours are clensid with bitter medicyne, so þo wicked maners of þo soule are clensid with tribulacion; for as seynt Gregor saies, wicked humours are wicked maners."[217] It seems the author is referring to *Moralia in Job* in which Gregory glosses Job's "saniem" (i.e. diseased blood—"humour" in the Middle English) as "the sins of the flesh, rendered worse by length of time."[218] Gregory splits up *Moralia* in three sections given the different levels of exegesis, and this is found in the second level—allegorical. Job's "wicked humors" here are purely allegorical, and could not be applied to Job literally, as in the biblical text it is established Job is just and does not have sinful habits. Although at first glance, *Twelve Profits* may look like a case of medicalization of emotional or mental health, the use of Gregory's allegory makes it clear physical and spiritual infirmity are sharply distinguished. As such, there is no suggestion that physical care would affect one's propensity to deal with tribulation or that tribulation might change one's physical state. Such rhetoric is typical of this textual tradition, which might use medical metaphor, but makes no suggestion that tribulation is literally medical, as McCann might suggest. That being said, McCann's insight about therapeutic reading being used by the devout to train or "manipulate the emotions" [219] to promote the health of the soul is still highly pertinent to the *Twelve Profits* tradition. As discussed in the previous paragraph, the value of tribulation is determined, in fact, by one's response to it—either patience and gratitude or impatience and grutching. Reading this text, instructing the reader in the potential profits of their tribulation, can train the reader's emotions towards the latter rather than the former, actively enabling the reader to reframe their mindset to embrace suffering, and thereby take the advice of

[217] "Twelve Profits of Tribulation," ed. Horstmann, 48.
[218] Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job*, trans. John Henry Parker (London: J.G F. and J. Rivington, 1844), Accessed October 25, 2020, http://www.lectionarycentral.com/GregoryMoralia/Book03.html, Book 3, section 33.
[219] McCann, *Soul-Health*, 10.

the *Twelve Profits* and reap those benefits. Thus, *Twelve Profits* is geared towards the therapeutic reading that McCann theorizes, even if it is not physicalized or medicalized in such a way as he observes in Rolle's psalter.

Moving into the fourth profit, we can see the influence of affective spirituality quite clearly, as all three texts contain various metaphors of God in terms of human relationships. Ostensibly, the chapter is centered on knowledge—namely self-knowledge as well as knowledge of God. This knowledge, however, is a "familiar" knowledge rather than cerebral. For one, Jesus is likened to a lover for the reader—a ubiquitous metaphor in late-medieval spirituality—yet the application of this metaphor is unique. Though normally we might expect to read this metaphor as conveying an intense desire for God as a religious' spouse, in the *Twelve Profits* texts, God doles out the tribulations themselves as love tokens to keep the Christian from forgetting him. All three texts deal with this similarly. *Twelve Profits* likens the tribulations God sends to love letters addressed to a beloved; and on his end, "Iesu Crist withholdis in mynde of [þe] þo tokeny[s] of þo woundis þat he suffrid for þe, as if a knot were made on a girdul to holde some þing in mynde."[220] Thus, "if Crist withholdes tekny[s] of his woundus for mynde of þe: ne wrathe þe not if he sende to þe tribulacion to hold þo mynde of hym."[221] *The Profits* makes this more explicit, reminding the reader "þe maner of louers is for to send yeftis, tokens and prevy letters ecch of hem to other, for to kepe love & mynde of knowynge eche to oþer," and refers to Jesus as "a trew louer."[222]

Another relationship metaphor in chapter four is that of the child being made to remember their lesson through physical chastisement.[223] *The Book* implies this metaphor by

[220] "Twelve Profits of Tribulation," ed. Horstmann, 51.
[221] Ibid.
[222] "The Profits of Tribulation," ed. Horstmann, 398.
[223] Ibid.

referencing physical chastisement, but God is not explicitly likened to a parent, whereas "The Profits" and "12 Profits" specifically liken the sinner to a child, making the connection more explicit. This metaphor is one of many features "Twelve Profits" shares with *The Chastising of God's Children*, which is named after this metaphor, as well as *Remedies*, discussed later in this chapter. The common heritage of these texts, which all take some influence from *Ancrene Wisse* and *Somme le Roi*, can be seen in the prevalence of this metaphor among them. Moreover, it signifies the texts' participation in the same discourse around tribulation, even as *Chastising* and *Remedies* are far more specific about the mode of tribulation.

The next few chapters are less relevant to this project, but I offer brief synopses for the sake of completeness. The fifth tribulation asserts that tribulation hastens the soul towards God, whereas worldly success slows it down. This argument is exclusively the content of "Twelve Profits," but "The Profits" also includes self-knowledge in the fifth profit, rather than as part of the fourth as in "Twelve Profits" and *The Book*. Chapter six argues that earthly tribulation pays off the debt one would owe in Purgatory, and all three are quite similar in that regard, including biblical quotations from Ecclesiastes and the gospel, though *The Profits* adds a citation at the end from St. Bernard as well.[224] Chapter seven is similar to chapter three in that it also operates on a metalworking metaphor, here the heart being enlarged like a vessel to receive more grace rather than purification, as in chapter three.

Most importantly, this chapter sees the return of the emphasis on one's response to tribulation determining its spiritual value. All three versions deal with this, though perhaps *The Book* expresses this theme most eloquently: "loke that thi metal be not gedret and euel to strecche, as ben the hertes without discipline in whiche God fynt noo place. Ne also be not as an

[224] "The Profits of Tribulation," ed. Horstmann, 402.

oold panne, that for his eld and for his drienesse breketh vnder the hamer, and of oo breche makith many, ffor in suche maner the harde hertes and drye encrescen her herme vnder tribulacion."[225] Again we see agency placed in the hands of the person suffering; rather than designating tribulation itself as evil, *The Book* contends that tribulation is only evil if the sufferer responds with grutching, yet it can be positive if he or she responds with patience. Here *The Book* demonstrates profound ambivalence to suffering, which is itself a neutral phenomenon. As such, tribulations maintain this neutrality, with their effects contingent on the sufferer's willed response, regardless of their source. *The Book* reminds us thereafter such tribulations that can purify a person are not just from God but "also alle the aduersaries of whiche he maketh hamer to serue with,"[226] thereby including mistreatment by one's neighbors or even the machinations of the devil potential sources of sanctification.[227]

Another interesting feature of this chapter is that temptation, specifically, resurfaces as a source of tribulation. All three texts quote a very popular scriptural passage, 1 Corinthians 10:13, ubiquitous throughout the temptation tracts discussed in this chapter: "And God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able."[228] In this case, the "temptation"

[225] Barratt, ed., *The Book of Tribulation*, 100.
[226] Ibid, 102.
[227] This metaphor and the attitude towards suffering associated with it were apparently popular in medieval texts. For instance, in *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* John Lydgate personifies Tribulation as a blacksmith: "In hyr hand, (by gret duresse), / A gret hamer I beheld; / And in the tother hand she held / A peyre off pynsouns ek ther-wyth; / And a Barmfel off A smyth, / At her brest she hadde vp-bounde" (ll. 15824-15829). As a blacksmith, she "fforge the crownys of paradys" by working the metal this is human souls. Her ambivalence is demonstrated by the effects of her metalworking: "Yiff yt be good, I make yt bet. / Yiff yt be wykkë, (trustë me,) / I make yt wors (as ffolk may se)" (ll. 15866, 15878-15880). Patience seems to be a key factor here as well in determining whether this metal is good and will be improved by her beating, as Job "whilom by pacyence, / Hadde yt On in hys dyffence, / And other seyntys, fer and ner / Rehersyd in our kalender" (ll. 15889-15892). Lydgate does not emphasize choice as clearly as the metaphor in *The Book*, given objectification of the sufferer as inert metal which, in the logic of the metaphor, does not have control over its own natural quality. Yet this text attests to the common ambivalence medieval authors held towards the spiritual quality of tribulation itself and their tendency to place the onus on the person experiencing tribulation to ensure its fruitfulness by practicing patience. See John Lydgate, trans., *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, ed. F.J. Furnivall and Katharine B. Locock, EETS, es 77, 83, 92 (London: Oxford University Press, 1899, 1901, 1904).
[228] D-R.

the texts specifically refer to is the temptation to grutch under tribulation rather than persevere in patience. *The Profits* clarifies, just as a frying pan breaks, "right so farin frele & impacient hertis in tribulacion by a litille stroke in temptacion of assayinge þei fall in to many gret harmys of apayrynge [damage]."[229] While not a perfect analogue, the language echoes Flete's and *Chastising*'s discussion of temptation to despair, at times—being so hard pressed by tribulation, especially intrusive thoughts and scrupulous worry, that one despairs of their relationship with God. That could be interpreted as a more specific and deadlier version of the temptation to impatience described in the seventh profit of *Twelve Profits*, since both indicate a lack of trust in God given some hardship, whether physical (as typically described here) or spiritual (as in *Chastising* and *Remedies*).

The eighth profit of tribulation is that tribulation eliminates worldly solace to replace it, eventually, with God's superior comfort. The main aspect to note in this section is the God-as-lover motif returns, though it only appears in *The Book of Tribulation* (which is generally more elaborated than its cousins). *The Book* primarily cites verses from the Psalms where David's heart calls out for the Lord; the text uses feminine pronouns to refer to the soul and at one point directly addresses it as "Lady." She uses the appellation the "God of myn hert" to indicate "that God is the suffisaunce of the herte. Ffor ther neded to say many wordes what that God is to the hert, as yeuere of lyght, gouernour, payer, hyre and suffisaunce, and many other þinges. But it nedith not now al to say, ffor custume of louers is muche to conceyue and litel to speke."[230] *The Book*'s use of the God-as-lover trope in this instance, in which God's gifts to the soul are described in romantic terms, is more typical than the "tribulations as tokens" metaphor employed

[229] "The Profits of Tribulation," ed. Horstmann, 402.
[230] Barratt, ed., *The Book of Tribulation*, 111.

earlier in the text. That being said, tribulation still plays an integral role in driving the eros the soul feels for God, adding a layer of complexity to *The Book*'s use of this familiar motif.

Reversing the dynamics of the previous profit, the ninth profit is that tribulation puts the sufferer in mind of God more frequently, as they have to ask for his help more. Often because of this dependence on God due to one's tribulations, it also makes them less likely to be damned. Once again *The Book of Tribulation* treats this topic most fully and is the only one of the three versions to indicate temptation specifically as a form of tribulation: "saith holy writ that he [God] thenkith vpon, which he cometh to in socour and in delyueryng of temptacions, or in encrescyng of grace or of gostly comfort."[231] The Christian beset with temptation in this way is more likely to understand the necessity of God's grace, and their dependence on him for salvation, rather than relying on their own merits.

The tenth argument is quite similar to the previous two, as it asserts that God will be more likely to hear one's prayers if they experience tribulation. Medical metaphors return in this chapter as well. All three texts include a citation from Job connecting physical tribulation to medicine for the soul. This argument is expressed most fully in *Twelve Profits*: "Iob, þat prayes þat god ne spare hym not here, in an oþer stede prayes he þat god spare him afterwardes, sayande: 'Lord, spare me!' Þerfore suffre þou here tribulacion þat god spare þe afterward; for tribulacions heelen þo soule, as Iob saied: 'He woundus & heelis,' for why he woundes þo body in sendande tribulacion, but in þat he heeles þo soule."[232] The metaphor employed here is geared more toward physical tribulation, rather than spiritual, as is typical with this textual tradition. However, it suggests a connection between physical mortification and spiritual health that may be more than metaphorical, unlike chapter three. Whereas in chapter three, bodily health was

[231] Ibid, 113.
[232] "Twelve Profits of Tribulation," ed. Horstmann, 59.

parallel to soul health through allegory, here, bodily and spiritual health are put in opposition as the text shifts to a more literal mode. This may be a bit at odds with medical texts that suggest correcting bodily infirmity through the humors to treat emotional infirmities like excessive melancholy,[233] but it nonetheless reaffirms the connection between the health of the body and health of the soul, however inversely.

The final two profits mark a shift back towards the language of human relationships in describing God. The eleventh profit is "þat hit kepis, & norisshis, þo hert."[234] This is in accordance within all three texts. Moreover, all three argue this through the God-as-mother metaphor. As observed in *The Profits*,

> as a moder with chyld cheweth hard mete, which the chyld may [not] chewe, & drawith it in to her body where þat mete is turned into mylke to norissh the chyld, so Crist, þat in holy chirch is clepid oure moder for þe gretnesse of hys tendyr love þat he hath to vs, he chewed for vs bitter paynes, hard wordis, repreves & sclaundrys, with bitternesse of his passione þat he suffred for us, to noryssh us & strengh us gostly by ensample of hyme to suffer tribulacions & aduersitees of þis world.[235]

The language here recalls the God-as-parent metaphor used in chapter four, where God chastises his children, despite the more affectionate parental portrayal in the above comparison. This version of God as mother is perhaps more traditional, with Jesus supplying nourishment for his children with his blood. As Caroline Walker Bynum reminds us, medieval authors often had "a complex sense of Christ's blood as the nourishment and intoxication of the soul," particularly apt, as in medieval physiology, "breast milk was transmuted blood."[236] Pertinently, "[w]hen

[233] For instance, see those texts studied by Naama Cohen-Hanegbi in "A Moving Soul: Emotions in Late Medieval Medicine," *Osiris* 31, no. 1 (2016), or contrast the disagreement between King Duarte of Portugal and his physicians regarding his melancholy, as described in Iona McCleery, "Both 'Illness and Temptation of the Enemy': Melancholy, the Medieval Patient and the Writings of King Duarte of Portugal (r. 1433–38)," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 1, no. 2 (2009).
[234] "Twelve Profits of Tribulation," ed. Horstmann, 59.
[235] "The Profits of Tribulation," ed. Horstmann, 405.
[236] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 270.

Catherine of Siena spoke of drinking blood from the breast of mother Jesus, she explicitly glossed blood as suffering—both Jesus' suffering and her own."[237] Flete, himself a close associate of Catherine of Siena, likewise incorporates the valence of suffering as God's maternal nourishment in *Remedies*. The twelfth profit shifts back to the God-as-lover motif, describing tribulation as a "tokyne of loue" in *The Profits* or a "certain witnesse... of the loue of God" in *The Book* and *Twelve Profits*.[238] God-as-parent returns as well, but in the role of a disciplinarian father. All three quote Ecclesiastes 30 where it says a good father chastises his son, anticipating *Chastising*. The author then mixes metaphors to refer to these tribulations as gifts of the Father to his Son and his adopted children: "the fader of heuen wil not yiue his children of the werst, but he wil yeue hem gostly good... aduersitees and þe tribulacions to his grettist frendes and to his moost biloued. Moor yaf he not to his endeles sone Jesu Crist, to whom he yaf the grettest aduersitees and tribulacions."[239] All three texts then end with a reminder of the suffering Christian's solidarity with Jesus, who suffered more than his afflicted followers. Thus this suffering serves as their admittance to his kingdom after death.

Altogether the *Profits* texts take a very general approach to tribulation and suffering. Most of the tribulations they assume their readers are suffering are physical or worldly, though a couple times they allude to the issue of temptation being a tribulation, or undergoing tribulation itself being a temptation towards impatience. The advice given is not geared towards eliminating tribulation, but instead conforming oneself to God's will so as to put the experience towards spiritual benefit rather than detriment. As such, tribulation itself is profoundly neutral, regardless of its source—whether directly from God, the persecution of one's neighbors, or the harassment

[237] Ibid, 271.
[238] "The Profits of Tribulation," ed. Horstmann, 405; Barratt, ed., *The Book of Tribulation*, 129.
[239] Barratt, ed., *The Book of Tribulation*, 130.

of the fiend. The texts frequently quote Ecclesiastes and other biblical sources as consolation, reminding one that worldly suffering equals spiritual growth. Moreover, they both rely heavily on metaphor to aid the reader in reframing their understanding of their suffering; these images include purification of metal, purgation of the body through medicine, and relationships with God as a lover or a parent. These arguments through analogy are common throughout the tribulation discourse, and the latter two are ubiquitous in affective spirituality more generally, though they take on occasionally surprising configurations here. Ultimately, the *Twelve Profits of Tribulation* texts' primary concern is to encourage the reader to embrace patience rather than grutching when faced with tribulation. Furthermore, their extensive and occasionally redundant work throughout all twelve chapters give readers the framework to rethink tribulations as signs of love—whether in the form of nourishment, medicine, or discipline—in order to enable them to embrace that suffering actively and put the generic advice to "be patient" into practice. Therefore the texts function as therapeutic reading, instructing their audience how to properly train their emotions so as to promote their spiritual wellbeing. While *Chastising* and *Remedies* rely on many similar scriptural and traditional sources and metaphors as "The Twelve Profits of Tribulation," this schema of therapeutic reading geared towards promoting patience in suffering is perhaps the crucial connection between these texts as participants in the discourse of tribulation and temptation.

Manuscript Contexts

It remains to consider the practical applications of *Profits* texts. As I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, *Profits* texts tend to be closely linked with *Six Masters* as well as *The Craft of Dying* and *A Treatise on Ghostly Battle* to a slightly lesser degree. Hanna gives special consideration to a few manuscripts that use the textual clump in its entirety: "Rawlinson C.894,

Harley 1706 (I) (along with its twin/source Bodleian Library, MS Douce 322), and Royal 17 C.xviii include all four... as do also Manchester, John Rylands University Library, MS Eng. 94, and Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 220, but no other known Middle English books."[240] Among these, Hanna observes different groups of manuscripts will include the texts sometimes in different orders, or with others filling the sequence in between—that said, *Six Masters* and *Profits* are never separated, nor are *Craft* and *Ghostly Battle*.[241] This indicates that there's even a further level of association and joint transmission between the pairs, which might have circulated independently of each other.[242] Nonetheless, their connection is undeniable.

Six Masters's connection to *Profits* is too obvious to warrant elaborating. The short text is often included as if it were an introduction to *Profits*, and makes many of the same points about the benefits of tribulation in encouraging spiritual growth.[243] Its main difference seems to be a greater Christological focus, citing Jesus's own virtuous suffering. The other text that shares *Profits*'s broad outlook on tribulation, *A Treatise of Ghostly Battle*, is a clever text where a knight and his accoutrements are allegorized to the different struggles one might face trying to get to heaven—i.e. the horse is the body, which has to be tamed, the reins have to be held steady, not veering too far one way or another (representing indulgence and asceticism), etc. Most relevant here is that patience is again a key figure. The saddle of this horse is patience, necessary to keep one's seat on the horse: "thow muste be pacient in aduersyte, both in sclaunders and reproues, in sekenes, in temptacion, in tribulacions, and in alle aduersytees."[244] The stirrups keeping a person in the saddle are then "lownes and sadnes; lownes ayenst pryde, and sadnes

[240] Ibid, 169.
[241] Ibid.
[242] Ibid.
[243] "The Profits of Tribulation," in *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle and His Followers*, ed. Carl Horstmann, v. 2 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999), 390.
[244] "A treatise of ghostly battle," in *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle and His Followers*, ed. Carl Horstmann, v. 2 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999)," 422.

ayenst wordly couetyse and flesshly lustis," taking a rather stoic approach to patience in recollection of the *consolatio* genre that preceded "The Profits."[245] Eventually the text transitions from accounting all the spiritual armor and reminds readers of the three options for the end of their battle (hell, purgatory, and heaven) in a somewhat simplistic and material way (focusing on quite literal fire and brimstones in hell, the fulfillment of any desire in heaven, etc.). Quite naturally, we can see why this text was paired closely with *The Craft of Dying* in particular, given its interest in the afterlife.

The Craft of Dying is still the most specialized in topic out of the *Profits* textual clump. Though the origins of the *Profits* tradition reaches back to the thirteenth century or even earlier, *ars moriendi* is a distinctly late-medieval phenomenon. Donald Duclow observes that though there have been liturgical rites for the dying recorded as early as the tenth century, "only in the fifteenth century did specific treatises on the ars moriendi or art of dying emerge."[246] Duclow hypothesizes that the *ars moriendi* tradition came about for a few reasons: the prevalence of the Black Plague, a shift in doctrine from God's judgment happening at the end of time to an individual's moment of death, and a general increase in pastoral education.[247] The latter, he argues, sparked Jean Gerson's *De arte moriendi*, which the Middle English *The Craft of Dying* was based on.[248]

Even so, *ars moriendi* texts borrow thematically from tribulation discourse, conceiving of the deathbed as a place of temptation and spiritual battle. The second chapter of *The Craft of Dying* is entirely dedicated to the temptations a dying person will face. These include temptation

[245] Ibid, 423.
[246] Donald F. Duclow, "Dying Well: The *Ars moriendi* and the Dormition of the Virgin," in *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages*, ed. Edelgard DuBruck (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 379.
[247] Ibid, 379-380.
[248] Ibid, 380.

against faith, in which "þe deuyll with all his myȝte is besy to auerte fully a man fro þe feiþe in his last ende, or yf he may not þat he laboriþe besily to make hym douȝt þerin... or disceyue hym with som maner of supersticiose & false errouris or herisies."[249] Of course, the consolation offered here for the dying is similar to what we see in tribulation literature, which is to emphasize the necessity of consent: "But witt þou well withowte doute þat in þis temptacion, & all oþer þat followene after, the deuyll may not noy þe ne prevaile ayence no mane in no wise as long as he hath vse of his free will & of reason well disposed."[250] Because of the pivotal role of consent, the text asserts Christians "ouȝt not to dred eny of his illusions or his false persuasions or his feyned feryngis or gastyngis, for Crist hym-selfe seiþe in þe gospell... The deuell is a lyar & fader of all lesyngis; but manly þerfor & styfflye & stedfastly abyde & perseuyr & dey in þe verrey feiþe & vnite & obedyence of oure moder holy chirch."[251] *The Craft* also recommends reciting the creed to reinforce one's commitment to faith despite the devil's tempting.[252] This externalization of temptation in *The Craft's* tendency to envisage a battle between the dying person and the devil is also primary motif of *Against Wanhope*, as I discuss in Chapter 2.

The second temptation the dying face is despair (that is, to abandon hope, as the first was to abandon faith). This temptation occurs when "þe deuell is most besiest to superad (or put-vpone) sorrow to sorrow, with all þe weyes þat he may obiectynge his synnes ayence hym for to induce hym into dispeire."[253] In particular, the devil might point out to the dying person the sins they had never confessed, but no worry:

> ther schuld no man dispaire in no wyse, for þough eny o man or woman had do als many theftis or manslauters or as many other synnes as be droppis of water in the see &

[249] "The Craft of Dying," in *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle and His Followers*, ed. Carl Horstmann, v. 2 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999), 408-409.
[250] Ibid, 409.
[251] Ibid.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Ibid.

> grauell-stones in the stronde, though he neuer had do pennaunce for hem afore ne neuer had bene shreven of hem afore, neither þan myȝt haue no tyme for syknesse or lacke of speech or schortnesse of tyme to be shreuen of hem, yette schuld he neuer dispeire; ffor in such a cas verry contricion of herte with-in, with wyll to be schreven if tyme sufficed, is sufficient & acceptable to god for to saue hym with euerlastyngly.[254]

Regardless of the time of conversion, "In what oure þat euer it be þat the synful man is sory inward & conuerted fro hs syne, he schalbe saued. & þerfor seynt Bernard seith: The pite & þe mercy of god is more þen eny wickidnesse."[255] God's mercy effaces all of these difficulties, and the rites of the sacrament of confession are not necessary if the dying cannot access it—what is essential instead is true contrition. The text's assurance of mercy for past sins borrows from a major theme in the distinct strand of anti-despair literature represented by *Chastising* and *Remedies*. It even references several of the same biblical examples of those who had gravely sinned but were redeemed—Peter, Paul, and Mary Magdalene (among others, including Mary the Egyptian).[256] Though the situation of a desperate layperson on their deathbed is clearly different from a scrupulous religious who might experience a similar agony every day, *The Craft* uses many of the same techniques to allay this anxiety.

Though its focus on despair seems to link it more clearly to the texts discussed in my next chapter, *The Craft*'s connection to *Profits* is evinced in the third temptation the dying might face—impatience, set in opposition to the third and greatest principal virtue, charity. The reader is reminded of their worst spiritual enemy: "grucching" against the pain of their terminal illness.[257] The text goes so far as to portray "final patience" as the deciding factor of salvation: "as be pacience mannys soule is trewly had and kept, so be vnpacience & murmuracion it is loste & dampned, witnessyng seynt Gregory.... Ther schal no man haue þe kyngdom of heuen þat

[254] Ibid.
[255] Ibid, 410.
[256] Ibid.
[257] Ibid.

grucchith & is inpacient, and ther may no man gruch þat haue it."[258] As in "The Profits," the value of tribulation is not determined by its sources, but by the person's active response to it—whether acceptance or resistance. The legacy of the tribulation tradition is clear in the text, advising Christians on what is perhaps their greatest tribulation by late-medieval definition—facing death.

The rest of the text contains essentially instructions for the priest, the dying themselves, and others attending them for how the rites should go and what prayers should be said. The most interesting point of this is the communal aspect—as Duclow observes, "death should not be a private affair, but a town meeting. ... Here the treatise most explicitly affirms the public drama which surrounds death and demands specific actions and attitudes from the dying and their companions."[259] The "public" and performative nature of this text in particular brings us to our next major consideration in terms of *Profits* context—the physical evidence of manuscripts.

Now as Hanna observes more than just the selection of texts but various physical properties of these manuscripts can give us ideas as to their use as objects. Bodleian Library, MS Douce 322 (late fourteenth-century) provides the most illuminating example of this, pun intended. Douce 322 was explicitly intended as a gift—before the first folio, there is a note dedicating it as such: "These booke in whome is contente dyuers deuowte tretis and specyally þe tretis þat is callid ars moriendi ys of þe ȝifte of Wylliam Baron Esquyer to remayne for euyr to þe place and nonrye of Detforde and specially to the use of Dame Pernelle Wrattisley sister of þe same place by licence of her abbas þe whiche Pernelle is nece to þe for seyde gentylman William Baron." *The Craft of Dying*, rather than *Profits*, is the centerpiece, though the latter is included.

[258] Ibid, 410-411. It's worth noting that the last temptation is presumption, fairly unsurprising, since it is often depicted as the other side of the coin to despair, as I discuss in the subsequent chapter.
[259] Duclow, "Dying Well," 385.

The book itself is large in size though not thick, and well-decorated, including illuminated initials as well as larger illustrations taking up the width of one of the two columns—for instance, a "memento mori" type image of a skeleton holding a spear and bell, surrounded by the word "death" in different forms, completing a short treatise about signs to know you are meek on folio 19v. *Craft* itself begins with an illuminated initial on folio 27r depicting a dying person in bed with another person standing over them, suggesting the roles other people have to play in preparing the dying person. The margins are clear of any annotation or doodles. In general, there is an apparent focus on tribulation as well as the art of dying in particular. Besides the main group, the manuscript also includes an excerpt from Suso's *Horologium sapientiae* on folio 20r—chapter five, on learning to die. Other contents include a ballad encouraging penitence, selections from Richard Rolle's *Emendatio Vitae,*[260] including those specifically dedicated to tribulation and patience on folios 84v-86v, and a meditation of St. Augustine about trust in God's mercy overcoming despair on folio 94r—a theme we will see becomes inseparable from discussion of despair along with its laicization.

From this evidence we might surmise that not just the texts and the practices they encourage were communal/performative, but the manuscript is such an object in it of itself. The gifting of the manuscript was clearly meant to communicate the relationship between the uncle and his niece in the convent, with the abbess as noted intermediary. We can infer that the thematic focus on preparing for death and tribulation communicates the "dying to the world" and the sacrifices she embraced on her entrance to the monastery. However, the book was not likely

[260] Identified in manuscript description in the library's catalog, accessible at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Harley_MS_1706. Harley's first booklet is a copy of Douce, including even a copy of the skeleton illustration on 19v, also on 19v in this text. It is less elaborately decorated, however, including only puzzle initials and less range of colored ink—mainly red and brown—and no gold leaf. Interestingly the second booklet is bound with has ME3 of *Remedies*, though they were initially separate books.

intended or used as a personal and practical study manual, given its large size, careful planning and illustration, and lack of annotation. Instead, we can infer that it was intended for appreciation as a work of art in itself, perhaps among Dame Pernelle's community. The public gifting of the book and its likely use as an object itself in the convent accord with the themes of the *Craft* as well as the larger tribulation discourse encouraging communal action as a bulwark against despair. Moreover, its ownership by a woman reminds us of the relevance of despair as a spiritual concern in female spirituality, which I explore more fully in Chapter 3.

Yet this is hardly the only context and possible use of the *Profits* and its accompanying texts. For instance, British Library Arundel MS 286 (fourteenth-century)s contains *The Book of Tribulation* in a cropped form and a treatise that seems heavily derivative of *Ghostly Battle*. The manuscript is easily held in one's hands. It is written neatly but lacks decoration outside of some larger red initials and a much later painting on a previously blank folio. The manuscript is annotated by readers, however, including several styles of manicules throughout, as well as doodles on catchwords and other little annotations. The contents suggest female readership, including a treatise on virginity and a Passion meditation addressed to a lady. Amusing moments from readers include one aggressively underlining "reason" and drawing a manicule pointing to the word in a passion meditation on folio 17r, in a passage suggesting reason as a good keeper against temptation to sin. Another amusing annotation is found in *Of Maydenhede* on folio 143v, next to a reminder that proper virgins ought to mind their manners. Though one might venture to say the manuscript, much like Douce 322, was owned by a nun, its use seems to be more personal and practical, based on the physical design of the book as well as its quirky annotations.

Ultimately, the textual and manuscript contexts of the *Profits* suggest that the texts could be communal or personal in use. They seemed to hold a special significance for nuns, but were

clearly known to and appreciated by laypeople, especially considering the connection to *ars moriendi*. Finally, it is clear that the texts and manuscripts constructed a discourse aimed at therapeutically reframing one's emotions—either towards tribulation generally or the threat of despair on the deathbed specifically—so as to cultivate patience and trust in God. In my next chapter, I will argue that a more specialized discourse about scrupulosity and intrusive thoughts experienced by devout religious develops on the strategies of the *Profits* and tribulation discourse to treat its more specialized audience. Nonetheless, the focus on patience, community, consent in the will, and trust in God form the backbone of the discussion. Moreover, the texts still have strong associations with female religious communities and in some cases, *ars moriendi*, indicating lay interest in this narrower textual tradition as well.

Chapter 2: Temptation to Despair

The third Middle English version of William Flete's *Remedies Against Temptation* begins with talking points similar to those found in *Profits*—tribulation is like a forge purifying the metal of one's soul, tribulation is a path to virtue—yet within its first few lines, its focus crystallizes quite directly:

> Oure enmy the fend is besy day and nyght to tarye and trauaylen goode men and women with diuers temptaciones, in doutes of the feythe, and dredes of sauacion, and other many mo in diuers maneris, and specially now in these dayes he is ful besy to dysese and to disseyve mannes soule; and þerfore wysely reule ȝou to with stondyn the fend in eche fonndynge or vyolent temptynge of temptacion, and þeue þe no fors of alle his asawtes, of doughtes ne of dredis, ne of erroures ne of dyspit, ne of false lesynges ne of fantasies, ne of no maner trauaylynge of the fend.[261]

The tribulations *Remedies* purports to deal with all originate from the fiend, and all manifest as mental temptations—doubts, dread, errors, fantasies, and lies designed to make the believer miserable. Quite different from being tempted by something desirable, the temptation warned of in *Remedies* seems directed at purely harassing the object into spiritual detriment. Most telling, this is referred to as "vyolent temptynge of temptacion"—the temptation itself isn't directed towards a specific sin, but rather, to lose hope in the face of experiencing this mental distress, described as "temptation." The syntax highlights what is so fascinating about *Remedies*'s approach to despair—that the temptation to despair is a meta-temptation based in wearying the object through a base-level "temptation" that appears to be best described as an "intrusive thought."

Both *Remedies* and its associated companion text, *The Chastising of God's Children*, take their therapeutic purpose further than the more general tribulation texts represented by *Profits*,

[261] Edmund Colledge and Noel Chadwick, eds., *"Remedies Against Temptations": The Third English Version of William Flete* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1967), 221.

facilitated by their narrower subject matter. Both of these texts focus on temptation as a tribulation, especially temptation to despair as a meta-temptation, and both offer a variety of practical advice, such as ignoring those thoughts that might lead one to despair and trusting in the authority of one's spiritual director. Moreover, we see these texts often together in manuscripts with not only other tribulation texts, but with mediations on the Passion—another typical remedy offered for a soul in tribulation. Eventually, this discourse around despair fuses with the lay-oriented *ars moriendi* tradition described in Chapter 1, where despair is primarily a threat for a sinner on his deathbed burdened by a past of what are apparently insurmountable sins. Like *Profits*, *Chastising* and *Remedies* rely on patience as a key virtue in reframing one's emotional experience of tribulation. However, the texts also tend to have a more compassionate tone, given the dedication of their specialized audience, and their sensitivity to the special challenge of being faced with despair, dread, and fear of sin and predestination. We can observe from the textual and manuscript evidence the key role these texts played in offering relief to those encountering this emotionally taxing spiritual challenge.

The Chastising of God's Children

Then how exactly do these texts adopt and transform the discourse of tribulation outlined above, given the somewhat niche nature of the spiritual problem they address? To answer this question, I first turn to *The Chastising of God's Children*, a text that addresses this specific concern that dominates *Remedies Against Temptation*, yet stretches to maintain the broader appeal of *The Twelve Profits of Tribulation*. *The Chastising of God's Children* is a long composite text, dating to around 1390, which "was designed to guide female religious in contemplation and the discernment of spirits while equipping them to resist both temptation to exuberant displays of excess and, more dangerous still, contemporary heresies spurred by

revelatory theology."[262] Like *Twelve Profits*, *Chastising* is often found in manuscript compilations with other temptation- and tribulation-focused texts; most notably, *The Chastising of God's Children* was published with Flete's *Remedies Against Temptations* in several printings by Wynkyn de Worde and it also appears alongside *Remedies* in MS Harley 6615. Additionally, it traveled with some *Vitae Patrum* material identified by Hanna in London, British Library, MS Add. 33971 and with *Against Wanhope* (Joliffe K.9, transcribed from University of Glasgow MS Hunter 520 in the appendix to this chapter) in Cambridge, Magdalene College, MS Pepys 2125.

Indeed, I argue that construction of temptation-focused manuscripts was as programmatic as that of the *Profits* group. Perhaps the strongest example can be found in London, British Library, Harley MS 6615. Harley MS 6615 contains *Chastising*; the second chapter of Walter Hilton's *Eight Chapters on Perfection*; Book 7, Chapter 5 of Birgitta's *Revelations* in Middle English translation; the first Middle English translation of Flete's *Remedies*; Book 1 of Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*; *The Lay Folk's Catechism*; "Sayings about clerical duties"; and *De tribulacione electorum* (i.e., J.11). At first glance, only a few of these texts seem to be related thematically. However, the selections of longer works included are specifically tribulation or temptation related. The excerpt from *Eight Chapters* discusses feelings of desolation when God withdraws his presence; the selection from *Scale* tackles temptation, and follows ME1 as if it were practically part of the same text. The Birgitta excerpts describe guarding the soul from temptation, which I analyze in detail in Chapter 3. Finally, the J.11 text is essentially a summary of *Profits*. Only the sixth and seventh items in the manuscript are not dedicated to tribulation and temptation, and they fill only 14 folios out of the manuscript's 152. Clearly, the purpose of this manuscript is to fortify a soul undergoing the tribulation of intense temptation, and I venture to

[262] Steven Rozenski, "*The Chastising of God's Children* from Manuscript to Print," *Études Anglaises* 66, no. 3 (2013): 369.

surmise the book itself may have been an object of comfort. Though the manuscript is very well preserved and readable, folio 21r is particularly weathered, even in comparison to folio 20v, as if a reader had run their fingers over those lines of *Chastising* in particular. This folio contains chapter six, which is crucial to the text's depiction of despair, as I discuss below. At any rate, the manuscript offers evidence that the tribulation and temptation discourses were often combined to form manuscripts of consolation for the reader, reaching beyond the implications of any one text therein.

Still, *Chastising* apparently circulated more widely in print than manuscript, with eighteen printed copies, compared to ten complete and one incomplete manuscript.[263] Steven Rozenski hypothesizes that de Worde's printed editions may have been based on a now lost late fifteenth-century manuscript that might have spawned the set of variants seen in the printed editions.[264] Those variants seem to transmit the text fairly faithfully, but certain crucial wording omissions or changes often give these later printed editions a different "tone" that "can be characterized as somewhat more pessimistic and skeptical about divine judgment and human missteps when compared to the text found in the manuscript tradition."[265] To appeal more to the audience on the cusp of the Reformation, in the print version of the text "[t]he distinction between corporeal and non-corporeal experience grows in importance and the attention to the social regulation of revelations is diminished, even as the 'voice of sobriety and restraint'... so prominent in the manuscript versions, becomes still more pronounced."[266]

[263] Rozenski, "*The Chastising of God's Children* from Manuscript to Print," 370.
[264] Ibid, 371.
[265] Ibid, 371-372.
[266] Ibid, 376.

Chastising is deeply embedded in the tradition of tribulation and temptation texts not just in its transmission, but in its heritage as a composite text. Cré identifies all the sources for the text as follows:

> In *The Chastising* the thematic structure is the compiler's decision to write "a short letter on the subject of temptations" [a short pistle . . . of the matier of temptacions] (95/1– 2), and he uses fragments from (in the order in which they occur in the text) *Quandoque tribularis* , a Latin compilation using material from *Ancrene Wisse* (chapters 1, 2, 5, and 27), Henry Suso's *Horologium sapientiae* (chapters 1 and 21), John Ruusbroec's *Die geestelike brulocht* (chapters 2 to 4 and 7 to 12, by way of Geert Grote's translation into Latin, *Ornatus spiritualis desponsationis*), Alphonse of Pecha's *Epistola solitarii ad reges* (chapters 19 and 20), Aelred of Rievaulx's *Speculum charitatis* (chapter 23), and *Stimulus amoris* (chapters 15 and 22). The compiler also works with older, patristic sources and uses fragments from Isidore of Seville's *Liber Sententiarum* (chapters 13, 14, 16, and 24), Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Iob* (chapters 13, 18, and 25), John Cassian's *Collationes* (chapters 16, 17, 24, 26, and 27), and Augustine's *De genesi ad litteram* (chapter 18). He also works in shorter passages, taken from Augustine's *Enarrationes in psalmos* (chapter 14), John Chrysostom's *Ad Theodorum Lapsum* (chapter 14), Gregory the Great's *Letter to Saint Augustine of Canterbury* (chapter 21), the decretals of Pope Gregory IX (chapter 22), Bernard's *Sermones in Canticis* (chapter 24), and Anselm's *Meditatio ad concitandum timorem* (chapter 24).[267]

Many of these texts are influential to several of these works covered in this project—for instance, *Remedies* typically concludes with a section from *Stimulus Amoris, Moralia in Iob* is referenced in *Twelve Profits of Tribulation* as discussed above, and *Ancrene Wisse*'s influence is pervasive throughout this discourse. The compiler's reliance on patristic sources, especially Cassian, could account for the frequent reference to the lives of the fathers, in addition to the *Vitae Patrum*. Part of the appeal of the text was its delivery of its synthesized material; as Colledge suggests in his introduction to the critical edition, the text "must have gained its fame because in it the author marshals his authorities to treat in masterly fashion... topics which were then agitating and continued to agitate the minds of contemplatives, and because, in his treatment, he himself

[267] Cré, "'ȝe han desired to knowe in comfort of ȝoure soule,'" 165.

displays an attitude which was original, moderate, and beneficial."[268] Furthermore, Cré observes that several chapters appear to be original to *Chastising* rather than patchworked from other sources, namely "6, parts of 14 and 15, 24, 25 and parts of 27."[269] These chapters, to quote the table of contents, are: "Of sixe general temptacions, and of oþer in special," "Of the temptacion of dispeir, and of remedie aȝens suche temptacions," "Of predestinacion and prescience of god; and of remedie for hem that bien trauailled wiþ suche maner matiers," "Hou pacience is a general remedie aȝens alle trauels and temptacions; and of oþer general remedies aȝens alle oþer dredeful goostli temptacions," "Of special remedies aȝens diuerse trauailles and passions that comen of the seuen principal vices," and "Recapitualcion of alle þese materis bifore; and of foure maners of praiers."[270] As it happens, these chapters comprise the most relevant contributions *Chastising* makes to the discourse on temptation to despair and intrusive thoughts.

Chastising's roots in tribulation literature are clear by its common emphasis on cultivating patience in response to spiritual challenges. More specifically, Marleen Cré interprets the text as a work of female agency. *Chastising* is ostensibly addressed to a religious sister and covers all the different remedies for people suffering temptation and tribulation. While the advice often exhorts the reader to embrace patience, as I discuss below, the text enables the reader to put this advice into practice. The text's usefulness as a tool can be observed in its careful classification of the thoughts one experiences in religious life:

> One of the most striking features of the text is that the compiler gives her exactly what she wants: *knowledge* that will help her to find comfort of soul. Even though in the prologue the value of knowledge is put into perspective — in the contemplative life, after all, *sapientia* triumphs over *scientia* — *The Chastising* is a cerebral text that instructs the religious sister in the finer points of *discretio spirituum*, the ability to distinguish between

[268] Joyce Bazire and Eric Colledge, eds., *The Chastising of God's Children and The Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), 47.
[269] Cré, "'Ȝe han desired to knowe in comfort of ȝoure soule,'" 165.
[270] Bazire and Colledge, eds., *The Chastising of God's Children*, 92-94.

> spiritual experiences given by God and those generated by the sister herself or suggested to her by the devil.[271]

The information and consolation the text provides makes patience *actionable* as the text can account for the different sources of visions and enable the spiritual director to provide relevant advice to those sisters under her guidance. *Chastising* is imminently practical, and the patience it urges is not a passive but an active virtue.

This apparent female readership of *Chastising* has also raised scholarly interest. Not only is the tract addressed to a female reader, but wills have established a record of both lay and religious women who owned the book:

> In 1448, the York widow Agnes Stapilton bequeathed a copy of *The Chastising* to the Cistercian nuns of Esholt, near Leeds. In 1451, Mercy Ormesby left a copy of *The Chastising* to the Benedictine nuns of Easebourne, Sussex. In both cases, we see lay-women leaving books to convents, which suggests a mixed readership but also that two laywomen owning the book may have considered it more useful for a religious reader.[272]

Cré also notes that several early printed copies include the names of female owners, and the text was especially popular among sisters of Syon Abbey.[273] We can even observe the text's apparent Birgittine associations even in our previous example, Harley 6615, which included excerpts from her *Revelations*. Cré argues convincingly that the intended reader was likely a religious sister who "had a position of some spiritual authority within her community and that the text would help her diagnose and remedy spiritual difficulties in the people entrusted to her."[274] More specifically, "she will comfort others in temptation and support her fellow sisters in the carrying out of their religious service."[275] One might imagine, for instance, this tome being useful to a

[271] Marleen Cré, "'ȝe han desired to knowe in comfort of ȝoure soule': Female Agency in *The Chastising of God's Children*," *The Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 42, no. 2 (2016): 172.
[272] Cré, "'Ȝe han desired to knowe in comfort of ȝoure soule,'" 167.
[273] Ibid.
[274] Ibid, 168.
[275] Ibid, 170.

religious woman such as Marie d'Oignies, who performs this very duty for several sisters and brothers tempted to despair, as reported in her *vita.*

Chastising's Delineation of Mental Tribulation

But in order to discuss the practical solutions the text supplies, we must first establish how *Chastising* defines temptation generally and temptation to despair and intrusive thoughts especially. The first exposition of mental temptation arises when describing the experience of feeling desolate of God's presence near the beginning of the text:

> Þei han also grete infirmitees boþ in body and in soule. Summe fallen in perplexites for a þinge þat nouȝt is to charge or litel, and þere þei coude counseile oþer in þat and other doutes, þei stande þanne hemselfe desolate and in grete doute. Summe bien so hard preued wiþ goostli temptacions, whiche passen al disease, þat what for drede and doute al comfort is lost, saue oonli hoope and mercy; of whiche goostli temptacions and tribulacions ȝe shullen see more opinli aftirward.[276]

Here the author enumerates what he means by "goostli temptacions and tribulacions," as he typically refers to this set of interrelated phenomena in the text: being troubled by perplexity, doubts, and temptations. These "goostli temptacions and tribulacions" has devastating emotional consequences, wherein the reader's only consolation is trusting in the mercy of God. This singular consolation suggests they likely believe themselves to be in grave sin. *Chastising*'s description of these ghostly tribulations echoes the classic definition of scrupulosity—something only hinted at in *Twelve Profits,* and earlier texts, such as *Verba Seniorum,* in their emphasis on consent determining the moral value of tempting thoughts. *Chastising* is able to convey this concept directly given the specificity of its treatment. Indeed the text limits itself explicitly to exploring temptation as a tribulation, situating itself within tribulation discourse: "Chastisynge may be in many maners, but bicause youre entent is oonli to heere of temptacions, þerfor at þis

[276] Bazire and Colledge, eds., *The Chastising of God's Children,* 110.

tyme I leue al oþer maner of chastisynge, plainli to speke and write of þe sharpnes of þese goostly roddis, whiche I clepe temptaciouns."[277]

Chastising's fullest exploration of temptation is developed in chapter six, the first section original to the text. Here the author taxonomizes the types and roots of temptation, classifying them symbolically according to different orientations around a person—"bifore and behynde, aboue and bineþe, on þe riȝt side and on the lift side."[278] The first, from beneath, "comeþ of oure owne flesshe;" the second, from above, "is of oure owne reason," when reason "assentiþ and deliteþ and is draw to serue þe flesshe," a clear reference to disordered mind/body hierarchy.[279] The third type of temptation switches from internal to external sources—the temptation "before" is from the devil. The fourth, behind, is the temptation to think back happily on previous sins.[280] This is interestingly paired with the temptation "before" in which the devil tempts a person with "false suggestions." Both temptations have a temporal quality—the latter urges one towards a sinful future, the latter traps them in a sinful past—and the juxtaposition suggests fondness for past sins is externally rather than internally generated, despite having some similarity to the two internally generated temptations listed previously. The fifth temptation, on the right, "is of grete prosperite," fittingly contrasted with the sixth, on the left, "grete aduersite."[281] The last two connect mostly clearly with the themes of *Twelve Profits*, recalling on one hand the benefit of tribulation in eliminating the temptations of worldly prosperity, and on the other, the warning against the temptation to grutching in the face of tribulation. *Chastising*'s formulation of the issue expresses the need for equilibrium in preventing the wheel of fortune from disturbing one's

[277] Ibid, 115.
[278] Ibid, 116.
[279] Ibid.
[280] Ibid.
[281] Ibid, 117.

spiritual health. Too much prosperity can lead the Christian to forget God, but too much adversity "eiþer ... makeþ him soore to grucche aȝens god, or ellis to þenke or seie amys aȝens god, and al is to brynge him into dispeir."[282] Thus *Chastising* hints at the ambivalence of tribulation, wherein its spiritual value hinges on the person's response of either patience or grutching, which is developed more fully elsewhere in the tract.

The sixth temptation thereby becomes the centerpiece of the section, due to its complexity as a sort of "meta-temptation." Enduring other temptations is itself a temptation to despair or deny God in the face of that adversity. This temptation, as grievous as it is, is also fruitful. This leads the author to discourse upon the emotional effects of temptation, and in doing so, he enumerates specifically the distressing, unwanted thoughts that often constitute temptation to despair:

> Þerfore as I seide bifore, to sum goostli lyuers þer fallen many dredis, boþ wakynge and slepynge: to sum bi dredeful bodili felynge. Also to sum in her bigynnynge comen imagynacions of dredeful þinges which þei mow not put awei, but bi a special grace of god. To sum, suche þouȝtis bien so dredeful and greuouse þat gladli þei wolden suffre al maner bodili peines, if it pleasid god, so þei miȝt be deliuered of suche maner þouȝtes; for þanne þe soule drediþ so soore þat it rekiþ nat of þe bodi. As longe as þe soule pacientli suffreþ suche temptacions, and desireþ nat bi wil of reason to haue hem awei, but to þe plesynge of god, so longe þese temptacions bien no synne, but purgacion for the soule and hiȝ encres of merit.[283]

Here, *Chastising* manifests the connection between intrusive thoughts and temptation to despair. The passage is also reminiscent of the treatment of temptation in "The Twelves Profits of Tribulation": on one hand, it reassures the sufferer that only consent can make experiencing these thoughts sinful, rather than the thoughts themselves. On the other, it further reinforces the general advice for those hard-pressed by tribulation more generally—which is to "pacientli

[282] Ibid.
[283] Ibid, 117-118.

suffreþ suche temptacions." Subsequent advice delineates specifically when one's response becomes sinfully impatient and selfish:

> but whan a man disereþ hem awei for his owne ease, and nat (to þe) pleasynge (of) god, al be it he wolde gladli suffre alle bodili peynes for to be delyuered of hem, ȝit for as myche as he desireþ his owne wil for his owne ease, he falliþ into anoþer temptacioun bi þat desire, and synneþ for as myche as he assentiþ to þat vnresonable desire aȝens þe wil of god. And þan suche temptacions of þouȝtis bien nat meritorie to þe soule, bi cause of þe vnresonable grucchynge.[284]

According to *Chastising*, there is nothing wrong with wanting to be rid of such intrusive thoughts—as in both cases the soul wants to be delivered of them. Rather it is the person's motivation—has this desire to be rid of the thoughts slid into grucching against God? Is it motivated by one's own ease and desire to avoid suffering, or would they even accept alternative suffering, such as in the first paragraph when they would easily replace it with "bodili peines" if possible? It seems hard for this to be practically applied—either way the person doesn't really want to suffer, but the author tries, at least, to make patience a more specific action and impatience, in turn, diagnosable, by the sufferer's spiritual director.

Chastising eventually elaborates upon the nature of these thoughts themselves, though they are censored; that itself gives us an indication of the sort of content:

> Suche dredeful þouȝtis þat I haue spoke of it nediþ nat to specifie, for thei þat han bien chastised wiþ suche goostli temptacions mowe wite in her soule what I wolde mene. Also, it is perilouse to specifie suche þouȝtes, for sum bien traueiled wiþ oo þouȝt þat anoþer man or womman wold neuer, ne parauenture shul neuer imagyne suche a þouȝt, but bi oþer mennys tellynge.[285]

This leads one to assume he is speaking primarily of profane, blasphemous, or graphic thoughts of some sort, especially considering the attestations in other material (such as Margery's visions of genitalia). Chapter six also covers the more classic definition of "scruples." These temptations

[284] Ibid, 118.
[285] Ibid, 119.

can lead people to "wasten awei for drede of þe soule," including those who worry about predestination and dread over previously committed sins.[286] As a result of such scrupulosity, "sum bien in poynt to falle in dispeir: sum aȝens hir wil bien traueiled wiþ dispeir, natwiþstondynge þei knowen wele oure lordis mercy passiþ al her synnes."[287] Others suffer a similar tribulation in the form of doubt: "Summe also bien traueiled wiþ poyntes of þe feiþ, myche aȝens her wil, and wiþ suche þouȝthis stonden and abiden in grete drede, and douten what god wil do wiþ hem. Wiþ suche maner hardnesse oure lorde assaieþ his children in þe bigynnynge, aftir þeir conuersion."[288] This seems to suggest that doubt, at least, can be a more of a beginner's spiritual problem, though it is unclear whether this applies to all the "scruples" contained in this paragraph. The worst of these "goostly roddes" with which God disciplines his children is the temptation to despair: "Oþer roddis þer bien þat summe dreden sorer; for to summe of tendre kynde þei bien moche more dredeful, saue oonli þe temptacioun of dispeir, whiche comonli comeþ of hem or wiþ hem. Þese temptacions þat I meane bien orrible siȝtes, and dredeful gastenesse of wicked spirits, whiche comen to sum as wele wakynge as slepynge."[289] The author then delineates the different experiences that can come from this, listing not just thoughts or visions, but also illusions enacted on other senses, such as sapping bodily strength or constantly smelling or tasting "stynckes" or "spices."[290]

Chapter six concludes with the sin of presumption, the other side of the coin to despair, defined here as someone pursuing spiritual advancement based on pride: "Sum men also and wymmen bien tempted wiþ presumpcioun or stirynges of veyneglorie, for bodili uertues and

[286] Ibid.
[287] Ibid, 120.
[288] Ibid.
[289] Ibid.
[290] Ibid, 120-121. It seems the discourse here might be referencing physical harassment by demons, such as was experienced by the desert fathers in hagiography. If so, this allusion constitutes more evidence of the tribulation discourse's reliance on the lives of the fathers.

goostli, for special ȝiftis and comfortis, or for special grace þat þei haue to conforte oþer bi writynge or comonynge, or for reuelacions or visions or sum oþer special ȝiftis of god whiche þei haue bi grace more passingli þan oþer."[291] The author insists these temptations are "more perilous" than those previously discussed.[292] The connection between presumption and despair is clear—in either case, the Christian is "giving up" at reaching salvation because they have assumed the result (either negative or positive). Moreover, in Middle English, "wanhope" as a term can refer to either.[293] Despite (or perhaps because of) this linguistic feature the word "wanhope" does not appear in this section, nor in *Chastising* at all until the closing chapter, though it is ubiquitous in other texts partaking in this discourse.

Chapter fourteen elaborates on the temptation to despair introduced in chapter six, and it is again one of the few chapters original to *Chastising* rather than compiled from another source. In its iteration in this chapter, temptation to despair is primarily a threat to Christians on their deathbeds.[294] This theme is often brought up in contemporary scholarship as an example of the laicization of despair in late-medieval texts.[295] *Chastising* quotes Church Fathers such as John Chrysostom, Isidore, and Augustine invoking the mercy of God in overcoming whatever sins one has committed. This is a separate sort of temptation to despair, based upon despairing of God's mercy for sins already committed—a separate issue from despairing due to scrupulous fear of sin, without actually having committed any. The emphasis on mercy comprises one of *Chastising*'s remedies for temptation to despair, which I discuss below.

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[291] Ibid, 121.
[292] Ibid, 121.
[293] *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. "wanhope," accessed October 30, 2020, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED51656/track?counter=1&search_id=4538906.
[294] Bazire and Colledge, eds., *The Chastising of God's Children*, 151-155.
[295] Nicholas Watson, "Despair," in *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*, eds. Brian Cummings and James Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 343-344.

The final chapter as well discusses thought-based temptation, and again, it is one of the few chapters with significant original material. As the chapter is primarily focused on prayer, the author addresses times in which a religious person cannot seem to say the psalter or their prayers because they are "lettid and taried wiþ diuerse þouȝtis."[296] The author diagnoses these troubles twofold: "In þis obieccion I perceyue two diseasis: þe first is grete dred in conscience, and þe secunde is a tedius trauaile bi temptacions in þouȝtis."[297] In response, the author consoles the reader and cautions them against obsessing over losing focus while praying, noting that "whanne he perceyueþ þat his mynde was aweie, and turneþ þanne his herte anoon aȝen to god, þouȝ þanne he fare so ofte in a litel tyme, hym neditþ nat to reherse aȝen, so þat he be siker þat he seide it, or wite where he left; for suche ofte rehersynge may be a taryeng of þe fiend to heuy a man in conscience, and bi þat to lette hym fro oþer gostli besynesse."[298] Much as with the temptation to despair in chapter six, the threat in this scenario is a step removed from the temptations suggested by the thoughts themselves—the believer is more in danger of being tarried in their spiritual progress by obsessively repeating prayers for fear their distracting thoughts inhibited their prayers' validity.

Chastising thus covers a variety of different sorts of temptation within one's thoughts, from the blasphemous intrusive thoughts meant to drive the Christian to despair, to the temptation to despair of God's mercy in the face of their overwhelming sin, to quotidian intrusive thoughts that interrupt one's prayer life. Yet in all cases, these different experiences are referred to as temptation. Perhaps because of this lack of specialized terminology, *Chastising*'s treatment of spiritual tribulations is broad. While the text does cover all types of temptation and

[296] Ibid, 222.
[297] Ibid.
[298] Ibid, 223.

tribulation, the most original parts of it focus on these intrusive or distressing thoughts and temptation to despair. These mental tribulations include unspeakable illusions and visions, doubt, and distraction from prayer, and any of these spiritual difficulties can easily lead to despair.

Chastising's Solutions

Given the diversity of spiritual problems the text addresses, *Chastising* accordingly offers a multitude of solutions. Generally, *Chastising* takes the "Twelve Profits" approach in recommending patiently suffering mental tribulations. However, the text also includes a variety of practical, day to day practices. Chapter four recommends solutions for desolation or spiritual dryness. It lists confession especially as useful in a period of desolation: "ȝit goode it is to drede, and as openli as he can ofte declare his conscience to his goostli fadir, in special if he kan, or ellis in general wordis; and þis is a souereyn remedie to al temptacions."[299] Another suggestion is varying one's prayer routine, as different forms of devotion might be useful for spiritual health at different times: "and ȝit I wil nat cou(n)ceile þat he kepe alwei / the same tyme of preier. For sum tyme it is spedeful to leue it for a tyme, for goode entent, for what occupacioun it be, preier or meditacioun, redynge or writynge, or ellis goode comonynge or what þinge it be þat most stiriþ him to þe loue of god, þat I holde spedeful for þat tyme, for þat shal dryue awei heuynesse, and comforteþ þe soule."[300] These devotional habits should, moreover, be practiced in moderation. Reminiscent of the *Verba Seniorum*, *Chastising* warns against extreme over-asceticism, reminding its reader that "it is nedeful in al suche tyme to take bodili sustenaunce and other nedeful reste in resonable maner."[301] This advice might be most relevant for a woman in an religious community potentially reading this, as Cré suggests its original intended audience was.

[299] Ibid, 111.
[300] Ibid.
[301] Ibid.

Chapter fourteen as well focuses on potential solutions. The chapter is more specific and focused on despair, instead of mental tribulation in a broad sense. In order to classify his remedies to despair, the author proposes the three roots of despair: "first ȝe shul vndirstonde þat þis dispeir comeþ of þre þinges: of þe gretenesse of synne, and of þe nowmbre of synnis, and of þe continuance and longe abydynge in synne. Aȝens þese þre maners of dispeir, / þer bien þre maner of remedies."[302] The author's accounting of roots of despair implies that despair is always caused by actual sins that have been committed, but as seen in chapters six and twenty-seven, one may be tempted to despair through the tribulation of unwanted thoughts or scruples. Indeed, the representation of despair in this chapter as a result of previous sins is much closer to the laicized, *ars moriendi* version of despair, which may seem contrary to the text's primary audience of religious specialists. Yet it speaks to the composite nature of *Chastising,* which seems practically exhaustive in its approach to despair and related issues. The broadness of this approach would allow for the greatest usefulness and applicability for a spiritual advisor meaning to treat someone afflicted with one of these many interrelated spiritual problems.

All of chapter fourteen's remedies are actually different meditational foci. The first is: "As for the gretenesse or quantitie of synne, it is goode to þenke on þe passion of crist iesu, whiche passion was strenger to vnbynde þan ony synne may bynde."[303] The reader may have been assisted in applying this advice, as *Chastising* was often printed with such a meditational text, *The Tretyse of Love*, which adapts material from *Ancrene Wisse* as well as adding its own elaboration on the Passion. I discuss this more at length near the conclusion of the chapter, but the inclusion of meditational texts with the manual advising their use makes the entire book a self-contained, practical object for therapeutic reading. The chapter also includes several

[302] Ibid, 152.
[303] Ibid, 152-153.

meditational focuses emphasizing God's mercy: "As for þe nombre or multitude of synne, it is goode to þenke on þe techynge of crist, whiche biddiþ us nat oonli forȝeue seune siþes, but seuenti tymes seune siþes. As for þe longe contenuaunce in synne, it is goode to þenke on þe wordis of oure lorde, where oure lorde seiþ: A man þat turnyth hym from al his wikkidnesse þat he haþ do, he shal lyue and he shal nat die."[304] The emphasis on mercy connects *Chastising* with lay texts such as *ars moriendi* that use reminders of God's mercy as a treatment for despair.

Despite including this lay version of despair, *Chastising* does not neglect what seems to be the primary audience for this text (at least in terms of *Chastising*'s original material)—those who experience temptation to despair based on scrupulosity, intrusive thoughts, or doubts, rather than due to past sins that have actually been committed. Here the author considers the believer who might question whether he himself deserves mercy:

> But now parauenture sum man wolde seie: I woote wele þat goddis mercy is aboue al his werkis, but hou shal I knowe þat I am able to receyue his mercy? To þis me þinkiþ eche man may se and feele þat he shal þenke hymsilf able to receyue mercy, if he wole aske it, as þus: if ȝe weren brought bi temptacion into so grete perplexite þat ȝe weren in dredeful doute hou it shulde stonde wiþ ȝou, þanne ȝe miȝten þenke and aske ȝoure owne silf in ȝoure soule wheþer ȝe wolden forȝiue ony man his trespas whiche greuousli had offendid ȝou, if he askid ȝou lowli mercy, and proferide ȝou al his herte to make ȝou amendis. To þis ȝoure reasoun wolde seie and graunte þat nedis ȝe wolden forȝeue it hym, and take hym to mercy. Ȝe shullen þenke þanne or aske ȝoursilf, of whom haue ȝe þis wil and þis mercyful herte? Needis ȝe must seien þat ȝe han it of god. Þanne may ȝe conclude þus bi reason, and þenke, god haþ put in me and ȝoue me / suche a wil and uertu, and he ȝeueþ noþinge but þat he haþ hymsilf. Þanne must it nedis folwe, if I aske hym mercy, he wil take me to mercy.[305]

The problem described here is more complex than the sinner not believing God has mercy for sins. Instead, the person is afraid that their soul is not in such a state to be able to receive that mercy. The anxiety for the subject is not guilt, but uncertainty in the unknowability of the state of one's relationship with God, despite the serious consequences predicated on that relationship.

[304] Ibid, 153.
[305] Ibid, 154-155.

This issue recalls the previous discussion, in that one can fall into despair based on their doubts over whether they properly have faith, or whether their intrusive thoughts are their own fault. The consolation supplied by this section moves the onus from ambiguous thoughts to measurable action: if one can find in themselves the ability to forgive others, it's likely she is following God's will closely enough and in the correct spirit.

The author recommends two more remedies for despair in chapter fourteen. One is that "in eche doute and drede euermore a man shulde caste his herte to god wiþ a sad trust," invoking God's mercy once more.[306] The final piece of advice recalls the advice given for spiritual dryness in chapter four:

> Also for a nedeful and a general remedie, in þis temptacioun speciali and suche oþer perelous and dredeful temptacioun speciali and suche oþer perelous and dredeful temptaciouns, it is goode to shewe it to a mannes confessour, or ellis to oon or tweyne oþer gostli lyuers, and aske oft counseil, and to meke hym to oþer mens preiers, for þer falliþ no man ne womman in myschief but suche þat gooen forþ and wil nat shewe her herte to no man, and so þei bien acombred, for ellis shulden þei nat falle into temptacioun.[307]

Such advice reminds the reader that she is not living alone, but in a community, with the direction of a spiritual superior and the support of her sisters. This solution highlights the power of prayer—not just praying for oneself to be rid of temptation, but to be assisted in that temptation by the intercessory prayer of others. This theme is relevant in the saints' lives such as that of Marie d'Oignies who seems to have a gift for this sort of prayer, as well as recalling the frequent commendation of good spiritual direction and condemnation of harmful relationships among monks in the *Verba Seniorum*.

The parallels between *Chastising* and the *Verba Seniorum* do not end there. Chapter seventeen ties in hagiographic material about desert fathers and their famous temptations,

[306] Ibid, 155.
[307] Ibid.

manifested by literal attacks by evil spirits, likely derived from Cassian, according to Cré. Naturally it also has advice similar to that in the *Verba Seniorum*; for instance, "we shuld nat dispise hem þat bien traueiled wiþ stronge temptacions, neiþer hem þat bien vexed wiþ wikked spiritis,"[308] that is, avoid judging those for the temptations they experience:

> sum men bien trauelid of goddis suffrance bi þe wicked spirit wiþ bodili sikenesse, as wiþ a palesie, dropesie and oþer sikenessis, as iob was, but euermore bi grace þei haue her wittis and reson wiþ hem. Also sum bien but stired and priked: sum bien taried and troublid wiþ sum temptacions aȝens her wil, wiþouten any assentyng, as wiþ dispeir and obstinacie, or ellis wiþ a spirit of blasphemye, or wiþ doute of predestinacion, or wiþ drede of þe prescience of god, what shal falle of hem, or wiþ oþer doutis and dredis þat neediþ nat reherce in special.[309]

In recalling the temptations of the desert fathers, who were often depicted struggling with demons both physically and mentally, *Chastising* consoles the troubled reader by comparison. Just as these saints were not guilty by merely experiencing temptations, but were sanctified by their suffering and refusal to consent to them, the reader is not failing spiritually due to their own mental tribulations, but rather winning merit in heaven. Doubt and "drede" (the unhealthy kind, as opposed to the healthy kind that encourages true penitence) make their reappearance as one such form of unwanted thoughts and mental suffering; this notably includes doubt of predestination specifically, which is covered in *Remedies* and other late-medieval texts. Most significant is how the consent discourse is connected clearly to disease through this passage. We see the emphasis that these thoughts are "aȝens her wil, wiþouten any assentyng," foregrounding consent as the governing factor in determining whether these thoughts are sins; just as one suffers from disease without moral failing, one can suffer mental temptation and tribulation. *Chastising* thus depicts tribulation as a mental or spiritual illness, as a condition that naturally affects someone rather than a punishment or a simple result of moral failing. *Chastising*, like

[308] Ibid, 165.
[309] Ibid, 166-167.

Twelve Profits, maintains a highly ambivalent view of tribulation itself, with its value dependent on one's response to it.

The solution chapter seventeen proposes combines some monastic themes along with those of the *Twelve Profits* tradition: "Al suche temptacions bien ful nedeful to men and / wymmen, and spedeful to purge þe soule and kepe hem in uertues, and for many oþer skilles, as I shewid bifore in þe þritteneþ chapitle; remedies to which is oft confession, and besi preier and receyung of þe sacrament, wiþ oþer comfortis, as I wroot bifore aȝens the temptacion of dispeir and of suche oþer dredeful temptacions."[310] On one hand, the author extolls the value of temptation in purging the soul of imperfection, however, he is quick to note that intense tribulation can easily lead to despair. Thus practical actions—confession, reception of the Eucharist, prayer, and a relationship with a confessor—can give one strength to endure this purgation. *Chastising* stitches together the monastic and lay understandings of temptation and tribulation, and in doing so, re-centers practical, actionable advice in a more explicit way than the stoic reframing of *Twelve Profits*. For those who do fall and subsequently despair, little changes, with the text again focusing on living in community and on specific actions based on funneling grace into the sinner's life: "To al suche men whos inward wittis bien blynded and so stoppid for þe tyme, oþer mens preiers and wymmens bien nedeful: also fastynges and oþer bodili affliccions of her friendis, and speciali of her confessours and of oþer hooli men in charite: also to lede hem to hooli relikes and to seintis þat bien shryned; also comonyng of goode men and wymmen wiþ hem, and spryngyng of hooli watir."[311] Communication, friendship in community, prayer, pilgrimage, sacraments and sacramentals are the tools of recovering from sin generally, and despair especially.

[310] Ibid, 167.
[311] Ibid, 168.

Another chapter that covers the solutions to mental tribulations is the twenty-fourth. Chapter twenty-four is another one of the more original chapters according to Cré, and it largely seems to follow the lead of *Twelve Profits* in its reframing tribulation as profitable as a means to practice patience, though it specifies the issue to focus on temptation, especially mental temptation. The metaphor from which the text draws its title emerges: "In al tribulacions and temptacions it is nedeful to be pacient as for a principal remedie aȝens al diseasis, bodili and gostli. Eche man, if he serche wele his defautes for þe whiche riȝtfulli he is chastised, he shalle bere moche þe more liȝter þe chastisynge þat he suffriþ."[312] The author then goes on to cite spiritual authorities reaffirming that one should not "grucche in goddis scourgynes."[313] *Chastising*'s purgatorial paradigm here is fairly traditional, even if it is apparently at odds with the claim in chapter seventeen that temptation is not the result of any moral failing.[314] Despite the implication here that such chastising is due to one's own sin, this does not mean God has abandoned that person: "and þouȝ þe soule be tormentid wiþ goostli temptacions of þe wicked spirit, we shul nat suppose þerfor þat we bien aliened or forsake of oure lord, but we shuln tristili hoope þat we bien þe more acceptable to god, whanne we so deem ouresilf, and worshippe god, and þank hym of his riȝtwisnesse."[315] Chastising his children is part of God's agenda as a loving parent, and in fact, proof of his love, integrating familiar imagery from *Ancrene Wisse* and

[312] Ibid, 199.
[313] Ibid.
[314] That said, the text reiterates that consent is necessary for sin, and that experiencing temptation is not itself a sin: "Þerfore whateuer temptacion a man haue, wheþer it be of feiþ or of any drede, or of any stiryng of dispeir or of blasphemye or ony wicked temptacion, bodili or goostli, as longe as þe wil of reason fiȝtiþ þerwiþ þer is no drede, for it is no synne" (201). Its inclusion here might further reflect this chapter's indebtedness to "Twelve Profits," as this reassurance is one of the only times temptation is acknowledged as a form of tribulation in that text.
[315] Ibid, 200.

Profits. Because of the loving intention behind this chastising, one should not neglect "to þanke god for his riȝtful chastisyng, for he chastisiþ us neuere but for oure greete profite."[316]

Many of the other solutions offered here are redundant, as *Chastising* shows its frequent seam-lines as a composite text—they include meditating on the Passion, and "in al temptacion it is a remedie souereynli to vse and to clepe þis name iesu."[317] The citations in the text indicate the section is drawn primarily from Anselm. Along with injunctions to recite specific psalms, chapter twenty-four primarily recommends reading material to fortify one's patience in suffering temptation, recalling, perhaps, McCann's observations about therapeutic reading. Indeed, *Chastising* is especially useful for practical application as it does not simply instruct the reader to "read psalms," but it offers a specific bibliography. This bibliography also includes hagiographic material. Appropriately, the text makes reference to St. Birgitta of Sweden, given its apparent connections to Syon Abbey: "And I rede hou oure lady tauȝt seint bride, whanne she was temptid wiþ ony wickid spirit, þat she shuld seie wiþ a loude voice to þe fiende, dispisyng hym: Recede a me, maligne spiritus: nolo uias tuas; þat is for (to) sei: Go from me, þou wicked spirite: I wil nat of þi weies."[318] St. Birgitta does seem to suffer temptation, and intrusive thoughts specifically,

[316] Ibid. Something of interest is how the text essentially places the sufferer as in the middle of two supernatural agents' intentions, which appear contrary to their effects—on one hand, the devil seems to inspire penitence when reminding a scrupulous Christian of their sins, yet he intends, by this action, to make the Christian to despair unto damnation. On the other, God appears to have abandoned his children or punishes his faithful, but his intention is to purge them of sin to make them more able to receive his love in the long run.

[317] Ibid, 203. We see much of this content repeated, again, later in the text, in chapter twenty-six. That said, twenty-six primarily discusses how to deal with the fleshly passions that may tempt a person (as opposed to temptation from external forces, as apparently covered in twenty-four and elsewhere). It continues the purgation metaphor popular in this discourse: "bodili trauails and affliccions speciali purgen þe soule from filþes of passions, and goostli trauels, as exercises of preier and meditacions and redyng, fulfillen þe soule most specialli of swetenesse of loue" (217-218). The tribulations of the body, typically the focus of *Twelve Profits*, here purge the soul of passions. On the other hand the positive work one performs—meditation, reading, and prayer—then fill the soul back up. In this configuration, once again, reading, as well as meditation and prayer, are a form of medicine. What follows, then, is presumably the reading portion the text itself recommends, as the author gives instruction as to how to properly read and pray to properly administer this medicine: "Tofore ȝee goo to preier, occupieþ ȝoure inward wittis wiþ sum maner meditacioun of goostli matier, þe whiche ȝe haue red bifore or herd bi communicacion, þat bi sum goostli sauour ȝe mowen þe sunner be stired and þe bettir disposed to deuocion" (244). Again we see how eminently practical *Chastising* is as a therapeutic text, which actually enacts the therapy it recommends.

[318] Ibid, 204.

based on sections of the revelations, and Mary does in fact come to comfort her during those sections. It is difficult, however, to identify this specific quote. St. Birgitta does remark in Book 4, Chapter 68, that the devil is like a fox and uses anxiety to wear his victims down.[319] My hypothesis is that this prayer given to Birgitta by the Virgin is apocryphal, but apparently well-known. This specific prayer appears on its own in Cambridge University Library MS Ii.iv.9, written in the margin of folio 169r, oriented vertically compared to the main text (apparently a Marian verse).[320] Interesting to note is that Ii.iv.9 also includes *Six Masters on Tribulation* and pseudo-Bonaventure's *Meditations on the Passion*. Fittingly, meditation on the Passion is highly endorsed by *Chastising*, as I have covered, so it seems *Chastising* represents a fairly consistent "toolkit" of texts used to deal with this spiritual challenge, including alleged prayers associated with St. Birgitta. Overall, *Chastising* offers a broad range of potential remedies for the different spiritual problems classified under mental tribulations, partially a consequence of its nature as a composite text.

Mental Tribulation, Acedia, and the Emotions

A final aspect of the text I would like to explore before analyzing *Remedies* is how *Chastising* characterizes the emotional effects of mental tribulations. In discussing the emotional consequences of prolonged temptation to despair, *Chastising* unites physical and spiritual dimensions, tying in humoral theory with moral theology. The text's approach illuminates the role of acedia, specifically, along with consolation and desolation, in the discourse of tribulation generally and despair specifically. These issues are primarily explored in chapters eight and four. Chapter eight introduces humoral theory, linking the four humors to the seasons and their

[319] Dennis Searby, trans., *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden: Volume II*, ed. Bridget Morris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 124.
[320] Hanna identifies this verse as IMEV 2059 in *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Medieval Manuscripts of St. John's College, Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

associated diseases. These diseases metonymically represent different sins, including sloth (acedia). The chapter opens with the claim that "Suche men as I spak of, which bien so replete of wiked humours, þat is to seie to vnskilfulli and vnresonabli bien enclyned to lustes and eesis of þe bodi, fallen oft siþes into foure maner of feueres, dyuers men into dyuers feuers as þei bien disposid."[321] On one hand, while the author himself is admitting his medical terminology is "likening" spiritual to body conditions rather than identifying them, he does connect medical and spiritual conditions in the locus of the body, with all its fleshly passions. The first "feuer," "cotidian," is having a variable and changeable heart "liche to þe wynde," which does not always incline to mortal sin but risks abandoning devotion.[322] The second, "tercian," seems fairly similar as it is characterized by "vnstablenesse," and linked to temperature: "Þis feuer tercian comeþ sum tyme of an vnordinat heete, and sum tyme of coold."[323] Body temperature serves as a metaphor for moving in between extremes of devotion and lukewarmness. The most dangerous disease, however, is sloth:

> Of an vnresonable inclynenge of þe fleshli kynde, and a derk pride priueli hid, bicause of suche vnstabilnesse in sum men the quartan feuere is causid. Of þis vnstabilnesse, þat is to seie, whan a man is aliened, or wilfulli gooþ out fro god, fro hymsilf, fro al sooþfastnesse and fro al uertues, suche a man comeþ liȝtli into a biwei, and for many errours he / slidiþ ful folili, so þat he wot neuere where he is ne whider he shal, ne what he hath ne what he schal do. Þis sikenesse is more perlous þan ony of þe oþer whiche I haue reherced, for out of þis quarteyn þat is clepid alenacioun sum men fallen into anoþer feuere, þat is clepid double quarteyn, þat is to seie, necligence or sleuth, whiche is lyueng wiþout charge of besynesse. Þan is þe fourþ dai doubled, and fro þat unneþis he shal geete hele, bicause he is slow and necligent in al maner þinges þat longen to euerlastyng hele. Also bi suche slouþ and necligence he is lichi to falle into synful lyueng, as a man þat neuer had knowe god tofore. And sum men in þis sikenesse holde false opynyons in her owne conceitis, and dampnable tofore god.[324]

[321] Bazire and Colledge, eds., *The Chastising of God's Children*, 126.
[322] Ibid.
[323] Ibid, 127.
[324] Ibid, 129-130.

Chastising's take on acedia exhibits the late-medieval version, defined as slacking off in one's duty to do good works, and in the subsequent chapter, the text diagnoses Free Spirit heretics of such slothful presumption.[325]

Since sloth is defined according to laziness rather than the monastic "spiritual dryness" often more associated with despair, the latter phenomenon is instead designated as "desolation," an emotional state in contrast to consolation. Chapter four describes God withdrawing his presence as sort of spiritual autumn, where it seems God has abandoned a person for whatever reason. This is related to but distinct from sloth, showing a clear division between acedia as emotion and as sin:

> Þus we faren as men vnwise, þat þenken oure trauaile lost; and sum tyme in sum men and wymmen the bodili kynde is fiebled bi a sodein heuynesse in her bigynnynge, and þei witen nat whi, and þat is sum tyme for a strif þat is betwixt þe spirit and þe flesshe. Sume bi slouþ and folie leuen her trauale: sum fallen in doute wheþer þe shullen traueile or nouȝt: summe, whan þei shuld wake and preie, þanne hem lust to slepe; but many bi grace kepen her iourney, and þanne falliþ to hem whiche wolen abide and trauele þat sum tyme oure lord for grete loue preueþ hem soorer þan oþer.[326]

The emotional heaviness of desolation, as it is described, can lead to sloth or even despair, but sloth/acedia and desolation are distinct. This desolation in turn can lead to an onslaught of doubts as well as "ghostly temptations and tribulations" as described throughout the text. Thus the author examines the emotions' relationship to one's spiritual difficulties, suggesting the two are inextricable. Sloth (and temptations) can result from desolation, but they are conceptually distinct.

In conclusion, as a composite text *Chastising* attempts to fit the entire tribulation discourse into a handbook for dealing with temptation and tribulation of all kinds, but especially

[325] Chapter 22 expands on this more fully, primarily relying on Bonaventure's connection of sloth to false presumption, the other side of the coin to despair, as discussed above.
[326] Ibid, 109-110.

focused on spiritual tribulations, including intrusive thoughts. The lack of linguistic distinction for these subtleties of different spiritual tribulations and temptations results in a complex text with a variety of different treatments, requiring the discernment of an individual spiritual director to best select the many remedies the text offers for a suffering sister. That said, the text reveals a developing consciousness of scrupulosity and intrusive thoughts as separate from fleshly temptations and a thorough compendium of different types of temptations to despair. The constant theme throughout is a reaffirmation of patience as codified in "The Twelve Profits" tradition. *Chastising,* with its myriad of practical advice for Christians suffering from ghostly tribulations and temptations, moves patience and purification from the abstract into the practicable.

Remedies Against Temptation

William Flete's *Remedies against Temptations* is perhaps the most specific tribulation text in its attention to intrusive thoughts. While it has many similarities with *Chastising,* the Latin original is much more unified in theme as a single-author text. Flete was an English Augustinian friar, "best known as a follower of St. Catherine of Siena," with whom he started a friendship in 1368.[327] Lamothe hypothesizes that given the provenance of most of the *Remedies Against Temptation* manuscripts, Flete wrote the Latin tract before he left England for Siena in 1359.[328] Those manuscripts were exceptionally well circulated, as "twenty-nine manuscripts of the Latin text survive or are recorded"; additionally, "Eighteen copies survive of the four ME versions, within fourteen manuscripts—two of which contain two versions each—and two early printed editions," not counting excerpts from Flete included in other texts.[329] The four Middle English

[327] Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones,*" 7-8.
[328] Ibid, 9.
[329] Ibid, 2.

versions are dated to "around the turn of the fifteenth century."[330] As explained by Lamothe, the ME1a and ME1b versions (previously considered the same version of the text but demonstrated in her dissertation to be translations of separate families of the Latin text) closely follow the Latin with few additions.[331] On the other hand ME2 is "adapted" in that "material has been omitted from the source, and the rest is partially rephrased and reorganized, with the apparent aim of imposing a clearer structure."[332] This version is the basis for ME3, which expands significantly on ME2 by "twice its length... making ME3 largely original."[333] Given the significant changes in and length of ME3, I will examine it side by side with the Latin *Remedies* in my analysis of the text's portrayal of temptation to despair.

Lamothe observes that there are "two long additions in chapters 4 and 9-10" in ME3, and it is explicitly "directed to a religious female recipient, addressed as 'sister.'"[334] College and Chadwick note that in general, these changes serve to transform the work from "sparse, concise, and scholarly" to "a highly charged piece of affective writing."[335] The only significant omission, according to Lamothe, is "the physiological origin of melancholy."[336] This she suggests may be "part of ME3's tendency to universalize its audience and its advice on the profits of tribulation."[337] Her word choice here is very telling, as it highlights how ME3 draws more heavily upon "Twelve Profits" tradition. Still, ME3 is only general in its advice compared to other versions of *Remedies*—this textual tradition's level of specificity in dealing with

[330] Ibid, 1.
[331] Ibid, 15-16
[332] Ibid, 17.
[333] Ibid, 21.
[334] Ibid.
[335] Colledge and Chadwick, eds., *Remedies Against Temptations*, 5.
[336] Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*," 21.
[337] Ibid.

temptation to despair and troubling thoughts is much higher than in any other text discussed in this dissertation.

Despite a seemingly closer thematic connection between ME3 and the wider body of tribulation tracts, different versions of the text do not show any clear patterns in their inclusion with other sources. No *Twelve Profits* text is found with a Middle English version of Flete at all, but "Six Masters" is found with ME3 in Worcester, Cathedral Library, MS F. 172. *Chastising*, of course, is found with it often in manuscript and print editions, though in all cases, with ME1b and ME2 (London, British Library, MS Harley 6615, Printed book of Wynkyn de Worde c. 1492-1493[338]). The Latin manuscripts do not seem to be specifically grouped with tribulation material at all—most copies are found in larger, clerical volumes of sermons. Two Latin copies are found with *Vitae Patrum* material—specifically the *Epistle of St. Machary* (Oxford, St. John's College, MS 77 and Paris, BnF, MS lat. 3603).[339] Point being, though ME3 in particular seems to be plugged into the tribulation framework in its discussion of temptation to despair, it does not seem that compilers of texts into manuscripts found those differences particularly significant. Yet ME3's uniqueness might shed some light on questions of mutual influence between *Chastising* and *Remedies*, as I discuss more below.

One addition that evinces ME3's increased sense of connection to the tribulation tradition is a "new opening... with a message on the general profits of temptation: temptation is sent as a chastisement for sin, to prove worth, and to allow for growth in virtue," the underlying ethos of

[338] Ibid, 70-71.

[339] The Latin manuscript apparently most dense with tribulation or temptation related material tends to be the former, Oxford, St. John's College, MS 77, which includes multiple tracts that deal with temptation and consent in sin; several are identified by Hanna by their incipits and numbered by Bloomfield in his 1979 index of incipits of works on virtues and vices: "'incipit tractacus de temtacionibus carnis contra delectaciones carnales' on ff. 8-10v (Bloomfield no. 4709), 'incipit tractatus de utilitate temptacionum et tribulacionum quibus deus electos suos temporaliter affligi et fatigari permittit' (ff. 13v-16)--excerpt of *Speculum Spiritualum* 2.14 (Bloomfield no. 2111). See Ralph Hanna, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Medieval Manuscripts of St. John's College, Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 101.

the *Profits* tradition.[340] The additions to chapters 4, 9, and 10 also suggest intertextuality. The additions in chapter 4 "give proofs against despair of salvation," posed as arguments against the devil.[341] This approach suggests a connection to *Against Wanhope,* a tract found alongside ME2 in Glasgow, Glasgow University Library, MS Hunter 520, as discussed below. Other additions include the dual-will concept in chapter five, which Lamothe attributes to potential influence from Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* or Pseudo-Hugh of St. Victor's *De pusillanimitate*.[342] The most substantial changes come at the end: "Chapters 9 and 10 of ME3 are entirely new, apart from the very end of the treatise" and a brief quotation.[343] These chapters include the God-as-mother Metaphor and then the exemplum about the knight who despairs of his salvation.[344]

This raises the question of the extent to which we can identify texts as direct influences on *Remedies,* both the original and ME3, and vice versa, how different versions of *Remedies* influenced other texts. Lamothe notes that, for the most part, *Remedies Against Temptation* is original in contrast to *Chastising*:

> In most of the Latin texts and in ME1a and ME1b the work ends with a devotional chapter taken directly from the treatise *Stimulus amoris,* which compares God to a mother and affirms his love and mercy. *DR* is otherwise original besides a number of mainly acknowledged quotations. Scriptural verses on the themes of temptation and God's mercy are cited throughout. There are long quotations from Isidore of Seville's *Sententiae,* Leo the Great's *In nativitate Domini*, Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job,* and writings by or attributed to St Augustine. Other passages are quoted or derive from the *Somme le roi,* the medical treatise *De melancholia* by Constantinus Africanus, and Bernard of Clairvaux.[345]

Many of these sources were quoted by *Chastising* and even *Twelve Profits*, such as *Moralia in Job*. The influence of *Somme le roi* is natural, given its pervasive influence on this discourse, as

[340] Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones,*" 21.
[341] Ibid, 22.
[342] Ibid, 23.
[343] Ibid, 24.
[344] Ibid, 24-25.
[345] Ibid, 2.

described above. Lamothe notes that in the Latin A2 family of the text, there are more "lengthy quotations from other works" including, most interesting to me: "two passages from St Bridget's *Revelations*: book III, ch. 19, 1-6, beginning 'hec est vera iusticia,' and book II, ch. 27, 10-12, beginning 'nisi enim interuenirent cogitaciones male.' Both passages deal with the temptation of evil thoughts, which are not sinful unless they are delighted in and are permitted so that sufferers recognise their own weakness."[346] St. Birgitta seems to be implicated in this tradition based on how the Virgin's advice to her is found in *Chastising,* as well as in several tribulation-text manuscripts. Her association with this specific spiritual challenge could also explain somewhat its relevance to Margery, her great admirer, as discussed in chapter three of this dissertation.

Vice versa, scholars have debated the extent of the influence of this text on its contemporaries. Lamothe briefly notes that Flete might have influenced "Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection, The Chastising of God's Children*, and Julian of Norwich's *Revelations*."[347] This has been a point of contention for scholars of the text. Lamothe boldly claims "the author of *Chastising* apparently knew of *DR* [*De remediis*] and drew on it as a source."[348] She primarily suspects influence on *Chastising*'s chapter twenty-four, in its emphasis on consent in determining the sinfulness of thoughts and its use of some of the same Isidore quotes.[349] Furthermore, "the remedies suggested are to speak of temptations to confessors and to think of Christ's passion" and it forwards the concept that "spiritual comfort can be given at the beginning of religious life but then taken away, accompanied by the quotation 'lac dedi vobis' from I Corinthians 3. 2."[350] While these are certainly similarities between the texts, I hesitate to

[346] Ibid, 11-12.
[347] Ibid, 2.
[348] Ibid, 28.
[349] Ibid, 37-38.
[350] Ibid, 38.

immediately assume influence or borrowing since many of these seem to be common ideas in this discourse surrounding tempting thoughts. College and Chadwick caution against the assumption that *Chastising* directly borrowed from *Remedies*, writing:

> Flete wrote *De Remediis* at least twenty years, probably more, before the anonymous *Chastising of God's Children*, and *The Chastising* may well have derived some of its inspiration for its theme, the profits of tribulation, divinely sent or permitted, and the theme's treatment, from Flete, even though there are no direct borrowings. (A word of caution may here be not out of place; in the notes to the *Chastising* it was observed that though both treatises use the same simile of the loving mother who seems to ill-use her child when all that she seeks is its betterment, it does not derive from a common source. Flete borrows it from the *Stimulus Amoris*, the *Chastising* from the early thirteenth-century English *Ancrene Riwle*).[351]

That being said, "the final section of the English text now published [in this volume], with its superb passages of affective writing and its deeply moving vernacular prayers, plainly reflects the style and treatment of the closing chapters of the *Chastising.*"[352] Thus, they suggest that while *Chastising* may have been inspired to an extent by the Latin *Remedies,* ME3 itself might have taken at least stylistic cues from *Chastising*. Ultimately, these texts were definitely part of the same discourse and probably used similarly in pastoral contexts (especially ME3), but it is hard to pin down any concrete influence or explicit borrowings between them.

Other than the work done by Lamothe and, earlier, Colledge and Chadwick in preparing their editions of *Remedies*, the text has garnered scant critical attention. For one, Gabriella Del Lungo Camiciotti offers a generic analysis of ME3 as epistolary vernacular theology, though she conflates the translator-adapter with Flete himself.[353] Essentially Camiciotti argues that the epistolary features of the text are characteristic of vernacular theology aimed at women: "The topic treatment is sober, sympathetic, and grounded on sound theological and psychological

[351] Colledge, and Chadwick, eds., *Remedies Against Temptations,* 205.
[352] Ibid.
[353] Gabriella Del Lungo Camiciotti, "Vernacular Authorship in Late Medieval Religious Discourse: The Case of William Flete's *Remedies against Temptation*," *Journal of Early Modern Studies* 1, no. 1 (2012): 60-61.

principles; this may indicate that the author knew that his main addressees were simple-minded women who should attempt to avoid the excessive manifestations of medieval spirituality and achieve a certain spiritual and emotional stability."[354] Although her discussion of the gendered stylistic choices of the translator-adapter are often patronizing, as exemplified by such comments, she does well to point out the particularly "therapeutic" and personal nature of the ME3 text. Moreover, the fact that ME3 is ostensibly addressed to a woman aligns with *Chastising*'s intended audience, as well as the fact that in the hagiographic/narrative sources this seems to be a spiritual problem particularly experienced by women in the later Middle Ages, as discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

Watson likewise covers this text in his discussion of despair, as I noted in the introduction. He offers a biographical reading of *Remedies* based on Flete's decision to abandon his advanced theological studies:

> It is possible that the emphasis in the *De remediis* on the need to avoid tormenting thoughts formed part of Flete's wider rejection of academic theology, even his public statement of that rejection.... Indeed, the *De remediis* tradition as a whole is partly about keeping at bay some of the same threatening theological ideas—'wordes that ye have herde or redde inbookes by the whiche ye doute of salvacion', as the expanded *Remedy Ayenst the Troubles of Temptacyons* [i.e. ME3] puts it—that were to inform the Protestant understanding of despair.[355]

He argues this by pointing to a passage in the ME3 version of *Remedies* in which Flete (or rather, his translator-adapter) emphasizes consent of the will in determining whether one has fallen to the temptation of a sinful thought; thus Flete's foregrounding of consent is proof that Flete "depend[ed] on a doctrine of single predestination" that emphasized human agency, but that he "nonetheless permitted a degree of unconcern about inner doubts and perversities unusual in an

[354] Ibid, 66.
[355] Watson, "Despair," 352-353.

age dominated by penitential theology."[356] Watson's reference to these unnamed works of penitential theology elide the important distinction between appealing fleshly desires and the intrusive thoughts and doubts addressed by Flete. That said, Watson insightfully identifies despair as an overwhelming concern in this text, and his historically contextualizing Protestant despair in this late medieval framework is insightful.[357] Moreover, he identifies Margery Kempe as experiencing the same spiritual challenge discussed in *Remedies*, ultimately positioning Margery as the lynchpin connecting Flete and the Reformation-Protestant experience of despair:

> Yet I am still not sure how confidently we could distinguish the unease that fear of reprobation bestows on the moment-by-moment movement of Bunyan's early life told in *Grace Abounding* from the unease, equally caused by fear of reprobation, that gives such restless energy to *The Book of Margery Kempe*: a work in which we see the lessons of the *De remediis* tradition repeatedly applied and as repeatedly come unstuck. Its protagonist is a lay woman whose status and past life long makes the assurance of election the lover of God is meant to feel an unsteady ground on which to stand; the *Book* represents the long journey, very much like Bunyan's, the protagonist must undertake to rid herself of the temptation to despair—whether caused by her early lechery, her fear that the signs of grace she receives are diabolical illusions, or her occasional refusal of that grace—and to become, at last, a bulwark against despair for her community and the *Book*'s readers.[358]

Certainly, Margery (and Flete, to an extent) deal with a lack of spiritual confidence based on past sins, but Watson's narrative misses half the picture, namely, of intrusive thoughts. Watson essentially flattens the complex portrayal of the different types of "temptations to despair" portrayed in *Remedies* (and *Chastising*, for that matter), along with their tailored solutions. In this section I unpack Flete's characterization of tribulations and temptation to despair, as well as the adapted treatment in ME3, and the remedies given therein. In line with the tradition of tribulation literature established thus far, *Remedies* emphasizes patience in turning mental tribulation to spiritual benefit, yet it also gives spiritual advice to help one endure such a trial.

[356] Ibid, 353.
[357] Ibid, 356.
[358] Ibid, 357.

While Flete's original Latin text is specifically focused on intrusive thoughts and scrupulosity especially, the ME3 version expands somewhat to gesture towards the "laicized" version of despair arising from guilt over past sins. Yet both represent a significantly more focused discussion than either "Twelve Profits" or *Chastising*.

Defining the Threat of Despair in *Remedies*

First it is necessary to establish how each text characterizes tribulation and temptation. The introduction to the texts sees the source of these challenges as the devil: "Ooure enmy the fend is besy day and nyght to tarye and trauaylen goode men and women with diuers temptaciones, in doutes of the feythe, and dredes of sauacion, and other many mo in diuers maneris."[359] Though the ME3 introduction is rather different from Latin, Flete himself describes the phenomenon similarly:

> Because, as the apostle says, without faith it is impossible to please God, hence it is that the ancient enemy, our adversary, strives to attack that very faith, which is the foundation stone of the church and the origin of all virtues, with false suggestions and erroneous ideas, in many strange ways; and when he cannot bring someone down out of the firmness of faith, he endeavours, with his tricks, to disturb him incessantly even so. His stratagems and temptations must be met cautiously and spiritually: namely, by not worrying about any of the fanciful ideas conceived, whether erroneous or foul; that is, blasphemies, whether seen or heard, and by ignoring and resisting them, as it were gently, not struggling against them.[360]

The diverse thoughts the fiend uses to harass believers include, in ME3, temptations, doubts and worry over salvation/predestination, while Flete includes these as the "false suggestions and erroneous ideas" ("falsis inmissionibus et erroneis ymaginacionibus"[361]) but also blasphemies (seen or heard)—which corresponds more closely with *Chastising*'s description in chapter six of the "many dredis, boþ wakynge and slepynge: to sum bi dredeful bodili felynge," suggesting

[359] Colledge, and Chadwick, eds., *Remedies Against Temptations,* 221.
[360] Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones,*" 161. Here I cite Lamothe's facing page translation of the Latin.
[361] Ibid, 160.

intrusive thoughts of blasphemy that seem to assault various senses. Both Flete and ME3 consider the primary threat of these unwanted thoughts to be despair, rather than actually giving into these heretical ideas, doubts, or blasphemies: "it falleth somtyme þat þe fend tempeth and trauaileth a rightful soule so scharply þat it is ouere leid with care and dreuen to dispeir."[362] Ergo the temptation to despair is a "meta-temptation," a secondary threat due to the exhaustion of withstanding the primary temptation to blasphemy. Yet given this temptation to blasphemy tends to affect the spiritually advanced who have no ostensible desire to blaspheme, the meta-temptation of despair becomes the more pressing threat.

The fact that despair is the true danger in these thoughts is further underlined by where the struggle for the Christian is situated. Neither Flete, nor ME3, encourages the sinner to struggle against their desire to blaspheme, for instance—as we see in the above section of Flete, he specifically instructs one *not* to give these temptations any worry or "struggl[e] against them," but rather to let them go.[363] However, both Flete and ME3, after expressing that despair can result from suffering this tribulation, convey that "if the soul remains in the fear and love of God, even this very distress earns merit."[364] Indeed, the struggle for the Christian is to "remain in the fear and love of God" despite this mental and emotional distress; the spiritual challenge lies in resisting the temptation to despair of God's love, not resisting the heresy or blasphemy that the thoughts themselves suggest. The "meta" quality of this temptation separates it from both other forms of temptation, and even the "lay" form of temptation to despair (where the devil argues to the sinner he does not deserve mercy for the many sins he committed). While this meta-

[362] Colledge, and Chadwick, eds., *Remedies Against Temptations,* 222.
[363] Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones,*" 163.
[364] Ibid.

temptation is the primary focus of *Remedies*, it also appears as the sixth type of temptation in *Chastising*'s chapter six, as discussed above.

That said, ME3 does broaden somewhat to include other sorts of temptation as well, particularly relevant to the lay version of temptation to despair. This can be seen most clearly, for instance, in the novel exemplum inserted before chapter 10: "This squier þat I haue named had ben a synful man, and soo at þe laste, þoruȝ the beholdynge of his synnes and be the feendes temptacions, he feel in to dispeir, soo deeply and so greuously þat he had ny lost his mynde; and þus he was trauiled fourty dayes, þat he myght neyther slepe ne ete, but wasted awey and was in poynt to spille hym self."[365] In the squire's case, many sins were actually committed, and the devil uses reminders of that to tempt him to despair directly. As such this exemplum aligns more with the lay version of despair common in *ars moriendi* texts than with the meta-temptation to despair that forms the core of Flete's concern. This separate challenge requires its own solution, as I discuss at greater length below.

Flete's Latin version eventually expands on the narrower characterization of temptation to despair in the introduction, as he discusses anxiety over the validity of confession; yet his expansion is still a form of "meta-temptation," unlike ME3's. Chapter thirteen deals with the latter, once again emphasizing the anxiety caused by intense doubt: "Sometimes he [the fiend] also suggests that sins which have already been erased by true confession and pure contrition are not yet remitted, or at least calls into doubt what one had once known to be true. And he does this by clouding over one's memory of the confession that was made before or of other good works, striking fear and timidity into the mind."[366] The devil's machinations here are not ordered toward encouraging penitence, but rather, despair of God's mercy. Ultimately, then, this

[365] Colledge, and Chadwick, eds., *Remedies Against Temptations,* 236.
[366] Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones,*" 173.

scrupulous doubt is classified as itself a temptation, and he compares it to the devil's tempting Jesus to throw himself off the temple to prove his divinity—their "appearance of good" notwithstanding, their origin makes it clear these obsessions are in fact temptations to despair. Flete's careful delineation of the devil's intentions are echoed in chapter twenty-four of *Chastising*, which likewise makes the distinction between the appearance of good and the intentions of the supernatural actor behind it.

Flete further cautions against "erroneous conscience" in the next chapter, warning the reader about "the spirit of error... showing that something is forbidden and sinful which is in itself indifferent or good, or that something is a mortal sin which is in itself a venial sin."[367] This is the definition of scrupulosity, even if Flete does not use that word. Ultimately the sin is found in assenting to scrupulous anxieties, not the supposed-sins that formed the basis for this temptation. In fact, Flete considers scrupulosity a temptation to not just despair, but also heresy: "sometimes he [the fiend] drives one to consent to an erroneous conscience rather than humbly obey the discernment of another, which is heretical."[368] It is also clear that Flete distinguishes between merely experiencing the pangs of an over-zealous conscience and consenting to the rulings of that conscience. This is only one example of Flete's constant reassurance that consent is the governing determinant in arbitrating the sinfulness of thoughts.

Consent and Mental Temptation

Consent plays a key role throughout the text in distinguishing between intrusive thoughts and sinful thoughts, and this carries over into the Middle English versions. Per usual this is supported with a quotation from St. Augustine in the ME3 version, ubiquitous within this discourse:

[367] Ibid, 175.
[368] Ibid.

> And þerfore, for as moche as a mannes þought is often veyn and diuers, and non ende hathe, it oweth not to ben charged ne to be taken heed off, ne a man schulde not angre hym self with al, ne blame ne arette it to his owne defaute þat he is so traueiled, for swiche trauailes ben peyneful and not synful, for as moche as þei ben gretly ageyn his wil.[369]

This reminder is followed by typical reminders that God does not allow someone to be tempted above their ability to resist, and an injunction to "alwey haue a good wil to wilne weel and to do wel, and god wil kepe vs and ȝeue vs þe victorye, and þe fend schal ben confounded."[370] Reading this reassurance itself could be seen as a version of that spiritual direction this text and *Chastising* both highly recommend for scrupulous individuals, as an outside voice of reason which delineates sin from mere intrusive thoughts. The agency is located in one's will towards the good, rather than whatever one might think or feel.

In the Latin, Flete asserts that the proof of one's lack of consent to sinful thoughts may be found in his or her emotions:

> Such a person therefore is not separated from God, but joined to him, however much he may be tortured by distress. For the just man suffers many afflictions in his soul at the instigation of evil spirits, but he cannot perish from eternal life through such trials, because in temptation our merciful Lord does not account as a crime that which, with the permission of his majesty, one suffers unwillfully.[371]

The proof of guiltlessness is the miserable anxiety the reader is facing: their emotional state of distress at the intrusive thoughts is proof of their lack of consent. ME3 includes a similar reassurance:

> For oure lord of his endles mercy arettiþ not to the soule þat synne þat hym self suffereth the fend to wirche in the soule; but quan we be oure owne wikkid wil fully don aȝens þe wil of god with deliberacion, þanne synne we, but quan we ben drawen with wykkyd vilenous þoughte, and turmented with dispeir and þoughtes aȝens oure owne wil þurgh fondynge or violent temptynge of þe fend, we sufferen peyne but we don no synne. And þe sely soules knowliche is hid be þat turment.[372]

[369]Colledge, and Chadwick, eds., *Remedies Against Temptations,* 222.
[370] Ibid.
[371] Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones,*" 163.
[372] Colledge, and Chadwick, eds., *Remedies Against Temptations,* 222.

Despite this close adherence to Flete, ME3 later seems to contradict this assumption of negative emotions associated with temptations. ME3's third chapter advises "þat a man take non heed of alle swiche trauelous fantasyes and steringes þat comen on this wyse, for god heydeth fro hem the knowleche for grete skeles, to here profyȝte of soule. Suyche passyons is no synne, but mater of grace and of grete merite, and so þenke alwey."[373] The text makes essentially the same point, but by referring to the thoughts as "passions," it elides Flete's careful division discussed above, which separates intrusive thoughts and "meta-temptation" from simple temptations such as fleshly passions. Notably, this section is also where ME3 starts to diverge quite dramatically from Flete's text, as Flete's chapter 3 addresses the reader fearing they have lost faith because of "hesitation."[374] Nonetheless, both texts locate the moral action in the will, not in merely experiencing a feeling or thought, and, in fact, turn what might seem like damning anxiety on its head by repurposing it as proof of innocence and thus as a spiritual remedy.

Given this consistent focus on the division between thought and will, *Remedies* is particularly adamant to discourage the cognitive distortion of thought-action fusion, to use the modern psychological term. Rox Shafran, Dana S. Thordarson, and S. Rachman observe that thought-action fusion (TAF) is significantly common in people with OCD, and define the "moral type of TAF" as follows:

> The interpretation of obsessional thoughts and forbidden actions as morally equivalent. The person feels that his or her unacceptable thoughts, images or impulses are.(almost) as bad as the actual events they describe. For example, if a mother with this belief experiences the intrusive thought that she is going to harm her child, she is likely to feel as though she is as morally responsible as if she had really harmed her child. It is possible that the mother interprets such an intrusion as revealing her "true" nature, that is, "only

[373] Ibid, 223. Note the "Profits of Tribulation" rhetoric here as well.
[374] Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones,*" 163.

> wicked people have this type of thought; I am wicked,' or, "perhaps I really want to do this; I am wicked."[375]

The authors suggest that "aspects of TAF may be culturally determined," and give an (over-simplified) example of Catholic moral theology about thoughts being potentially sinful—essentially the same doctrine troubling Flete's readers.[376] In their interviews with scrupulous participants, they found that "a person may misinterpret the feeling of guilt by thinking 'Because I feel so guilty, the thought and the consequences must be my fault.'"[377] Though the participants in Shafran's study and Flete's spiritual dependents are separated by six hundred years, their tribulations and thought processes are strikingly similar. In this case, the modern may help us shine a light on the medieval—the Christian suffering meta-temptation to despair experiences not just an anxiety over sin, but an anxiety of their identity as a Christian and a "good person." Flete works to disentangle thought and action by divesting merely experiencing thoughts of their moral quality and re-centering the will as the locus of morality, and thereby, the locus of the Christian's identity.

This technique, meant to reassure the Christian of their identity as a child of God, is taken to an extreme in ME3, in which the translator-adapter suggests everyone has two wills, one good and one evil; Watson comments that this concept is most famously expressed in the writings of Julian of Norwich.[378] In ME3, the dual-will concept comes into play for the Christian questioning whether they have actually somehow consented to their thoughts because of the

[375] Rox Shafran, Dana S. Thordarson, and S. Rachman, "Thought-Action Fusion in Obsessive Compulsive Disorder," *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* 10, no. 5 (1996): 380.
[376] Ibid, 381.
[377] Ibid, 388.
[378] Watson, "Despair," 353-354.

strength of their temptations.[379] The solution is to dissociate one's true desires from uncontrolled thoughts and feelings:

> ȝe schuln vnderstonde þat euery man or woman hath too willis, a good wil and an yuel wil. Þe yuel wil cometh of the sensualite, the whiche is euere dounward enclynynge to synne, and þe good wil cometh of grace, þe which is alwey whanne resoun cometh to ȝou a good wil to do weel, and ben myspayd with all yuele þoughtes and sterynges þat ȝe feele, and wold neuere feele ne don other þanne is the wil of god, þouȝ suche wikked þougthes and sterynges come among in to ȝoure herte, and be gret violens of scharpnesse of trouble and disese ȝe ben enclyned to þe wil of þe sensualite, þet do it ȝe not ne ȝe consente not þerto, but it is þe sensualite þat dooth it in ȝou, and ȝoure good wil stondeth stille in ȝou onbroke, þouȝthe cloudes of yuel þoughtes stoppe awey ȝoure sight fro þe felynge of youre good wil, as ȝe may see be exumple of the sonne.[380]

ME3 goes on to argue by analogy: Just as the sun does not stop shining, even if it is invisible behind the clouds, likewise, one's good will remains unextinguished, even if it is clouded by intrusive thoughts and temptations. This assertion seems to suggest one is incapable of sin, given this "good will" is portrayed as incapable of violating God's wishes. It also seems to conflate the "evil will" with the experience of temptation itself, suggesting this will has already consented merely with a person experiencing a fleshly desire, for instance.

ME3's dual-wills concept represents a significant departure from standard moral theology. Augustine located the will as separate from the body and its desires, as well as the reason, to give an apparatus for moral choice between the two (or rather, an apparatus to choose the ordering of the two). Here, the will seems to be subsumed by the body and reason each, leaving the believer with two wills—evil and good, respectively. Such a formulation seems to contradict the point of emphasizing consent of the will in the first place. This contradiction raises the question of the purpose of this section's inclusion. Watson argues that in ME3, as well as Julian, dual-will expresses late-medieval predestination:

[379] Colledge, and Chadwick, eds., *Remedies Against Temptations,* 229.
[380] Ibid.

> This doctrine explicitly invokes a predestinarian soteriology in affirming Julian's claim that what she elsewhere calls the "substance" of the souls of the elect remains hidden and eternally sinless in God, awaiting the redemption of the "sensuality" at death. But as in the *Chastising*, predestination is here completed, and made secure, by a deliberate and thus knowable act of human choice: "What man or woman wilfully choseth God in this life for love, he may be seker that he is loved without end, with endless love that werketh in him that grace."[381]

Watson's explanation accords with *Remedies*'s general emphasis on patience—patience extending past immediate tribulation but lasting for a lifetime plagued by the tribulation of "sensuality" and the "evil will." In the immediate present, the reader is called to identify with the "good will," and dissociate the "evil will" from their identity as a devout person. Much like the consent being foregrounded, even if this concept apparently contradicts that, it nonetheless serves the same purpose of separating the thoughts and feelings of the individual from themselves as a person.

Reframing Emotions and the *Profits* Tradition

While he primarily externalizes these temptations, attributing them to the devil, Flete considers the propensity of certain personalities—with certain humoral balances—to experience certain kinds of tribulations. Flete and ME3 both reference Pope Leo's claim that "the feend aspyeth in euery man in which wyse he is disposed in complexion, and aftir þat dispocicion he tempeteth a man in his complexion; for þer as he fyndeth a man ful of humor of malencholie, he tempteth hym most with gostly temptacions."[382] Although temptations are not primarily generated by the body, the devil is clever enough to use a person's own bodily complexion against them. *Remedies*'s use of medieval medicine fuses the external and the internal motivations for despair and temptation. Flete himself gives a much fuller and more academic explanation of this than the shortened version in ME3:

[381] Watson, "Despair," 354.
[382] Colledge, and Chadwick, eds., *Remedies Against Temptations,* 224.

> he [the Devil] tests the worth of each one's constitution, and whomever he sees to be excessively dampened with the melancholic humour he vexes and disturbs with spiritual temptation in many different ways. For the natural philosophers say that the smoke of the black choler, rising to the brain, comes to the locus of the mind and obscures and disturbs its light, preventing the soul from discerning. Such people are sad and fearful without a reasonable cause, and fainthearted and dry, because of their constitution. Nor is such fear or sadness a fault, since it is painful and involuntary and often inflicted by the devil. And such people imagine that false things are true. For they are impeded because of the black smoke spreading over their brain, so that they cannot discern the truth... he knows to whom he should apply the fire of greed, to whom to suggest the enticements of gluttony, whom to offer the incitements of lust, to whom to impart the venom of envy; he knows whom to dismay with grief, whom to deceive with joy, whom to oppress with fear, whom to lead astray with wonder: he inquires into the habits of all, searches out their cares, scrutinises their feelings; and he seeks out opportunities of harming them in just those places where he sees them more earnestly occupied.[383]

Here Flete uses ancient medicine to discuss how the bodily humors can in turn affect the mind, make it less keen, and create certain emotions; moreover, the devil can use these specific emotions, which are not generated by him, but by one's own "complexion," against them. In fact the devil even uses this to tempt people to suicide: "Hence it is that he often sends such great bitterness into the minds of the faithful, by exciting their constitution and striking in fear, that they believe that life is torture and death is a remedy, so that it comes to pass that they often despair of the life of body and soul."[384] This contemplation of suicide is clearly the worst possible outcome, though ME3 also warns that "Þus speketh þe fend with jnne hem, and afrayeth som sely creaturis þat þei wenen þat thei schuln gon oute of here mynde."[385] In this case, the solution is calling the devil a liar to send him away (a motif that is strongly developed in "Against Wanhope," as discussed below). In both these cases, despite the devil exploiting one's bodily complexion, the advice is primarily spiritual, rather than medical, yet as McCann reminds us, reading itself as a therapeutic practice could potentially address problems we may think of as

[383] Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*," 165, 167.
[384] Ibid, 167.
[385] Colledge, and Chadwick, eds., *Remedies Against Temptations,* 224.

purely of the body. Given the specificity of the text, more so than "Twelve Profits" and even *Chastising, Remedies* addresses this threat of despair, going out of one's mind, and potential suicide by giving them the tools and advice needed to withstand the temptation and reframe their mindset towards patience to be able to benefit from it.

This use of patience is one of many instances in which the language of ME3 echoes *Twelve Profits* quite closely—it often brings up the same purgation metaphors, the chastising-parent metaphor (probably borrowed from *Ancrene Wisse* in both cases), admonitions against "grucching," and emphasis on patience turning temptation toward spiritual benefit. Flete deals with this theme briefly in chapter seven, mainly through reference to this discussion about the threat of suicide. In facing temptation to suicide, "spiritual fortitude is necessary: namely, by patiently and humbly enduring the aforesaid bitterness or the tribulation that has been sent, and to say with Job, the figure of patience: *If we have received good things from the hand of the Lord, why should we not receive evil?*"[386] Furthermore he urges the reader to embrace "the merit of patience in the present and the reward of joy in the future."[387] This theme is fully developed by chapter nine, in which Flete portrays spiritual desolation as an opportunity for great merit: "Even if he should not feel any devotion of the senses, let him endure this with humility; he still nonetheless has devotion of the will, which is enough in itself for salvation. Indeed, actual or sensible devotion is withdrawn to one's advantage, so that one's prayer may be made more meritorious."[388] Once again, Flete emphasizes the role of consent of the will in determining the moral value of an action. While before it was used to emphasize the lack of consent to intrusive thoughts, here, it is used in a positive sense: the proper use of the will in this situation is to

[386] Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*," 167.
[387] Ibid.
[388] Ibid, 169.

choose, willfully, patience—that is, enduring in one's devotion without any emotional consolation. For Flete, a Christian does not simply endure suffering passively, withholding consent to temptations, but rather, she actively participate in her spiritual life, making the willful choice to practice patience.

The emphasis on patience and the purgation metaphors that accompany it especially in the "Twelve Profits" tradition are frequently employed in ME3. Indeed, this version of the text invokes this motif in its very first sentence: "Our merciful lord god chastyseth hese chidirn and suffereth hem to ben tempted for many profytable skeles to here soule profiȝte."[389] The introduction continues with a purgation metaphor: "as the goold is purged and pured be fier, and a knight in hard batail is proued good but if he suffre hym selff to ben ouere come, right so is a man be temptacion preued for good but if he suffre hym self to ben ouere come, þat is to seye but if he consente ther to be deliberacion."[390] This clear tie to the "Twelve Profits" is important enough to the translator-adaptor to set the theme for the entire text with it, yet it is absent from the Latin.

ME3's entrenchment in "Twelve Profits" discourse continues throughout its length. In chapter four, in which ME3 had covered Pope Leo's comments on the devil tailoring temptations to one's complexion, such tribulation "asayeth and proueth his chosen frendes by temptacyons and angres."[391] This language again compares tribulation to purifying metal: "But these fondynges or vyolent temptynge and angwischis ben but purgynges and preuynges of the soule, for as I sette and seyde at þe begynnynge of þis wrytynge, right as þe feir purgeth gold, and a knyght also is preuyd good and hardy be bataile, right so temptacions and trubles preueth and

[389] Colledge, and Chadwick, eds., *Remedies Against Temptations,* 221.
[390] Ibid.
[391] Colledge, and Chadwick, eds., *Remedies Against Temptations,* 224.

pureth þe rightful man."[392] Yet this is not the only metaphor ME3 uses from the third profit of tribulation. Near the end of this chapter, ME3 describes God as a doctor and tribulation as medicine; ME3 introduces this amidst a discussion about God's mercy saving a Christian even if they do consent to temptation. In this case, "God werketh lyke a good lyche, for a lyche suffereth somtyme the dede flesh to growe on hym þat he hath in cure, but aftirward he taketh awey the dede flesh and maketh the qwyk flesh to growe, and so he heleth þe man."[393] As such, he will permit "somtyme a man or a woman to falle in dedly synne but aftirward of his gret pyte and mercy he putteth to his hond of grace, and him þat weren dedly wounded þoruȝ synne, he heleth hem and wascheth away here synnes in þe welle of his mercy, and maketh in hem the quik vertues to growe, wher þoruȝ he ȝeueth hem lyfe."[394]

The ultimate motivation behind this rhetoric, of course, is urging the sufferer to patience. Much like the "Twelve Profits" tradition, ME3 uses these metaphors to help the reader reframe their mindset around the tribulation they are experiencing. This goal is made explicit in the following chapter, which admonishes the reader: "And þerfore grutche no man aȝens the will of god, ne merueile not of þese maner of temptacions, for the more a man or woman is tempted in this maner or in ony other maner aȝens here wil, and thei with stonden it, þat is to seye not with a quemeful wil consentynge þerto, but mekely suffereth it, þe more thei ben sadded in good vertues and profyten in þe syghte of god, þouȝ it be hyd fro hem."[395] The temptation in the situation is double—on one hand, the temptation to whatever the sin is, often unwanted, and then the meta-temptation to "grutche" against God for experiencing the temptation in the first place. Withstanding the first is a given, whereas the meta-temptation is potentially profitable given the

[392] Ibid.
[393] Ibid, 228.
[394] Ibid.
[395] Ibid, 229.

sufferer cultivates patience. The beneficial or detrimental spiritual quality of the first level of temptation depends upon whether the meta-temptation is withstood. In this way, the meta-temptation to "grutche" is very similar in structure to the meta-temptation to despair as discussed above.

Another connection to the tribulation discourse, both the Latin and ME3 depict God as a parent. In Flete's original, the chosen metaphor is a mother weaning a child: "So God feeds some at first with the milk of sweetness and devotion, just as if they were children to be fed with sweet milk, and afterwards strengthens them with the food of disturbance and tribulation."[396] Ergo, tribulation as a high-level spiritual problem, and depicts God-as-mother not chastising her children, but raising them and providing for them. While temptations are clearly the work of the devil, and ought to be ignored, the suffering that arises from these temptations is a potentially beneficial tribulation sent from God, though, of course, patience is still necessary to reap the benefits. The reference to weaning also recalls the discussion in "The Profits" of Christ nursing his people by making milk from the hard meat of tribulation he ate himself, first. ME3, on the other hand, takes *Chastising*'s main angle and references God as a disciplinarian mother and a father:

> þenketh þat þarauenture it is don þoruȝ temptacion of the fend to distroblen ȝou and lette ȝou, or it is a chastysyng of god for som word or for dede þat ȝe haue don or seyd. For oure lord god dooth lyke a lovynge modir; a louynge modir þat is wys and weel tauȝt, sche wole þat here chidern be vertuouse and weel norischid, and if sche may knowe ony of hem with a defauȝte, sche wole ȝeue hem a buffet vndir the cheke, and if thei haue don a grettere trespas, sche wole bylasche hem scharpey.[397]

Although both versions of *Remedies* liken God to a mother, they use entirely different configurations of the trope. Valerie Lagorio comments that this nursing/weaning dynamic is

[396] Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones,*" 171.
[397] Colledge, and Chadwick, eds., *Remedies Against Temptations,* 235.

common in tribulation literature, including "*The Seven Points of True Wisdom,* in the similitude of a young fawn..., *The Chastising of God's Children..., The Orcherd of Syon..., Remedies Against Temptations...,* and in *The Profits of Tribulation*" specifically the eleventh profit, as described above.[398] She also notes in the *Chastising* and *A Remedy Against the Troubles of Temptations* (a derivative of Flete) the use of a mother or father disciplining a child, to teach them a lesson, or to prompt desire for the love of the parent in the child (in *Chastising's* case) as Lagorio calls it, "the maternal game of love."[399] Lagorio attributes the popularity among late medieval tribulation literature largely to "the cult of the Blessed Virgin" and "the rise of affective spirituality" popularized in the twelfth century and later.[400] Naturally, as discussed previously, the trope is connected especially to many female saints, such as Birgitta of Sweden, Catherine of Siena, Julian of Norwich, Margaret Porete, and Margery Kempe.[401] The centrality of this feminine language in the understanding of suffering tribulation might be means of connection between this spiritual challenge and female saints, as I will discuss in Chapter 3. Ultimately, in *Remedies* and other tribulation texts, the portrayal of God as a loving but occasionally disciplinarian parent is yet another tool to help the reader reframe their mindset—one's suffering becomes the loving action of a trusted parent, however it may hurt in the present, meant to provide nourishment or growth. This paradigm helps the reader embrace patience, as tribulation takes on meaning beyond the immediate pain of the present. Using the same metaphors of the "Twelve Profits" tradition, Flete and his translator-adapter embed their discussion of temptation within a larger context of coping with tribulation more generally.

[398] Valerie M. Lagorio, "Variations on the Theme of God's Motherhood in Medieval English Mystical and Devotional Writing," *Studia Mystica* 8, no. 2 (1985): 25.
[399] Ibid 26-27.
[400] Ibid, 16.
[401] Ibid.

Practical Remedies for Temptation to Despair

That said, much like *Chastising*, Flete also gives more practical solutions to dispel the anxiety of intrusive thoughts outside of the injunction to practice patience. One of the most common pieces of advice given is to simply ignore the thoughts, rather than struggling with them and thereby lending them any credibility. This advice might be iterated most clearly in the ME1b version, printed alongside *Chastising* by Wynkyn de Worde (and found alongside it in Harley 6615):

> it is to vndirstonde þat as seiþ þe prophete Dauyd, þe þouȝth and þinkynge of men ben ofte ydel and veyn; and as seyn doctoures þervpon, suche þenkyng of men ben diuerse and wiþoute noumbre. And þerfore a man schal not tary ne dwelle in suche þouȝt ne wondre moche þeron ne enserche hem in hys soule ne dispute þe causis þerof. For þe more bisilyche þat he medeliþ hym wiþ suche erroures and falsnessis for to anyntischen hem or flaye h[e]m onelyche by soueraynte of hys owne witt, þe more and furþer he wadiþ into hemward and dewpiþ hymself in hem.[402]

With the support of scripture and tradition, the moral weight of these thoughts is minimized—characterizing them as empty and essentially meaningless—and the advice is actually to try not to worry about them. The more one obsesses over the cause or argues with the fantasies presented by the devil, the more likely they are to corrupt him. In the Latin, Flete similarly urges the reader in chapter four to pay them no mind and only respond to them in case of emergency:

> But if the aforesaid temptation grows stronger and does not stop because of the disregard given to it according to the rule of initial caution, but rather disturbs one almost continuously, through the malice of the ancient serpent, who speaks of fantastic things, suggesting and spreading them in many ways, by asserting that false things are true or by clouding over and burdening the mind by means of the physical constitution—then sometimes, but only seldom, one ought to meet the opposing error by expressing one's faith in speech, by way of repudiation and assertion to the contrary, even if one's erroneous understanding does not agree in it.[403]

[402] Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*," 202-203.
[403] Ibid, 165.

What is most surprising is how closely the advice given here corresponds with modern treatment for obsessive-compulsive disorder, which even today often takes on religious themes, including intrusive blasphemous thoughts and obsessive scruples. Exposure and Response Prevention therapy, the first line treatment for OCD, is a process of exposing oneself to obsessions, the intrusive thoughts that are a source of anxiety, but then refraining from performing compulsions (in the case of religious OCD these can include saying specific prayers, replacing thoughts with certain holy images, going to confession excessively). This is because performing compulsions reinforces to the brain that the obsession that sparked them is legitimate, thus actually worsening OCD; as such the only way to recover is to habituate oneself to the anxiety and let the thoughts go, so as not to form the neurological pathways that assign the thoughts their weight.[404] Modern advice for dealing with intrusive thoughts due to OCD throws into relief Flete's warning of the corrupting influence of over-examining these "temptations." In both cases, one should ignore the thoughts to divest them of their power. In the second example, while repeating certain prayers or the creed would likely be considered a compulsion and thus bad advice today, Flete's recommendation reinforces his main strategy, refocusing the reader on concrete action over thoughts, which, along with his emphasis on consent, dismantles thought-action fusion. One should assess the state of their soul via their deeds rather than their uncontrollable thoughts: "But the mind is sometimes clouded over, so that a person cannot see his own will; nor should one worry about this, because good works prove a good will, and evil works an evil will, and it is always presumed to be good until such time as it may reasonably be proved evil."[405] Flete's

[404] International OCD Foundation, "Scrupulosity." Accessed November 5, 2020, https://iocdf.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Scrupulosity-Fact-Sheet-1.pdf.
[405] Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones,*" 163.

focus on deeds serves a similar purpose to ME3's dual-will—allaying anxiety over the reader's identity as a good Christian.

Another important aspect to Flete's advice is reliance on community, specifically, communal prayers and direction: "For someone is sifted when he is examined inwardly and thoroughly; but he is strengthened or perfected when he is confirmed in good through the virtue of patience and of prayer and through the wholesome advice of his brother. Therefore it follows: *But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers*."[406] Moreover, participating in communal life can help enact the injunction to avoid overthinking about temptation: "And because suffering of this sort often arises in part from a person's constitution, he should take care not to remain alone too much or to scrutinise any matter by thinking about it too deeply, but rather make profitable use of the advice and conversation of discreet persons by telling them his thoughts."[407] Thus the Christian submits themselves obediently to a director rather than their faulty discretion. Freeing oneself from self-discernment helps abate the temptations: "In fact, the highest proven remedy for getting rid of fanciful ideas and destroying spiritual temptations at times of requisite prayer is, as far as possible, not to pay attention to them in any way."[408] This is similar to *Chastising*'s treatment, as relying on communal prayer and directions of an authority are recommended in that text as well.

ME3 as an adaptation includes these recommendations and more, given its somewhat broader treatment of spiritual tribulation. The translator-adapter follows generally the same line as Flete in discouraging overthinking and expands somewhat on his recommendation for spiritual direction. For instance, ME3 recommends "to taken the councel and techynge of wys men þat

[406] Ibid, 169.
[407] Ibid, 171.
[408] Ibid, 173.

ben goode and discrete, and be no weye þat thei folwe here owne wielde fantasyes, for þat wold vttirly schende hem," but also suggests remedies for the intervening period of finding such a director: "And in the mene tyme of suche troubles, þei musten ȝeue hem to som good liȝt occupacion, and somtyme to redynge and syngynge the seruse of god, and to other good dedes, and euere among preyenge to god of help, and þat he sende hem strength and pacyence."[409] This program is clearly modeled on Flete's advice to focus on good deeds over thoughts, and to willfully choose patience despite being burdened by negative emotions, though ME3 is more specific in its recommended activities. Those recommendations include reading and praying psalms—which are often facilitated by the text and its book itself, further underlining the role of reading as therapeutic in cultivating patience. ME3 makes many such recommendations; in the next chapter it further advises, like Flete, when faced with these thoughts to "be not myche alone," to "þenke not ne seche no þhing deeply, but fully reule hem... be som good discret persone," to persevere in worshipping God to foil the devil, and to "strengthe hym self to be glad and mery, þouȝ it be aȝens herte."[410] ME3 then instructs the reader on *why* she should be glad (given the difficult charge of the latter remedy)—essentially recalling the *Profits*'s language of meritorious suffering, as well as reassurance that if the devil is the reader's enemy, then the enemy of her enemy, God, is her friend.[411] Once again, the text manifests its purpose as therapeutic reading: it gives advice to be happy and then helps the reader reframe their mindset to make that change in emotion actionable, much as in the *Profits* tradition.

Another remedy espoused by ME3 in particular is to meditate on the Passion. The translator-adapter reminds the reader of the solidarity she has with Christ in tribulation:

[409] Colledge, and Chadwick, eds., *Remedies Against Temptations,* 230.
[410] Ibid, 231.
[411] Ibid, 232.

> A man þat stondeth in disese, he is holden to seken alle þe weyes he may to comforte hym self. Oure lord Jesu Crist cam from him fadris bosom in to þis see of tribulacions and temptacions to be oure ledere: he goth beforn vs, and with his precyous passyon he smyteth awey the pereles of our tribulacions and temptacions, so þat we schal not perische, but it schal brynge vs to safte, þat is euere lastynge blisse; and þerfore synge we to hym þankynges and herynges or preysynges as the childern of Israel deden.[412]

ME3 reminds the reader here that Jesus preceded her in suffering, and that solidarity should lead the reader to thank God for salvific tribulation. Flete does not address this specific issue himself, but the section of the *Stimulus Amoris* typically appended to *Remedies* accords with ME3:

> Approach Christ therefore and entreat him faithfully that, since it is not right for him to be wounded again, he might condescend to renew his wounds in his blood, and make you red all over in his blood. And thus clothed in purple, you will be able to enter the king's palace. O you who are tempted, meditate on these wounds daily, and they will always be a refuge and a solace for you. And do not doubt that if you print them well in your heart, no entrance will be found for any temptation.[413]

Both texts point toward the suffering of Christ as a way to relieve one's own suffering, eternally through his sacrifice, but temporally, as well, in meditation. The inclusion of this theme accords well with the manuscript tradition of *Remedies*, as this text was often packaged with meditations on the Passion, as I discuss at greater length below.

Besides meditations, ME3 in particular gestures frequently to other late-medieval texts, often pushing back against them. For one, ME3 clearly positions itself as a "tribulation text" based on its implicit response to "The Profits" tradition in its final chapter, asserting: "if a man seith þat bodily tormentis ben medeful and not gostly tormentis, he seyth nouȝt right, for dredeles þe gostly tormentis ben werse, ore peyneful and more aȝens wil þan ben the bodily toormentis, and in so moche thei ben þe more medeful."[414] Though the "Profits" tradition did not claim this about ghostly temptations, and at several points as I note above it addresses them specifically,

[412] Ibid, 226.
[413] Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones,*" 179.
[414] Colledge, and Chadwick, eds., *Remedies Against Temptations,* 239.

the overall focus of that text tradition seems to eschew spiritual tribulations and temptations and highlight physical tribulation. Through this assertion at an important moment in the text, the translator-adapter of ME3 justifies his text's relevance by highlighting the relative neglect of spiritual tribulation in the literature of the time; moreover, he argues that spiritual tribulation is the *most* important and dangerous form of tribulation and thereby the most in need of remedying.

Yet even as ME3 clearly emphasizes spiritual temptations, it broadens significantly from Flete's original focus on scrupulosity and intrusive thoughts. In this aspect too, ME3 references other texts the reader may have encountered. This is often observable in passages extolling God's mercy as a resort in case one actually does fall into temptation. This emphasis underlines the broader approach ME3 generally takes in the types of tribulation covered compared to Flete's text. This is one piece of evidence for ME3 appealing to a broader audience, as it seems to offer a connection to the "lay" version of temptation to despair—which is a doubt in God's mercy in the face of a person's many sins, usually on one's deathbed. For one the text recalls biblical examples of faithful people who sinned grievously (perhaps more grievously than the reader conceivably could) and who yet received abundant mercy: David, Peter, and Mary Magdalene. Just as these figures received God's mercy, "alle tho þat haue be or mow be and sculen ben contrite for here synnes and cryen god mercy" will also receive it.[415] Thus the reader is recommended to "meke you louly to þe sacramentis of holy cherche, and þanne ȝe owen to beleuen trustily þat thei ben forȝouen."[416] Of course, this reassurance is presented as a contingency after chapter two, which emphasizes thoughts do not constitute sins in absence of consent. While this seems like a helpful reassurance, one could easily imagine it would cause confusion in the reader who is elsewhere encouraged not to confess compulsively; the reader

[415] Ibid, 223.
[416] Ibid.

would ultimately have to rely on a spiritual director, as the text recommends, to decide which of these scenarios apply to her. Even so, the inclusion of this scenario indicates a wider intended audience than Flete's *Remedies*, where the lack of consent to these sins is generally assumed and the solution is more specialized.

Nonetheless, ME3 clearly feels the need to present, above all, a merciful God, and sets itself in contrast to more foreboding sentiments. Chapter four emphasizes again that anyone who ever asked for God's mercy has received it, regardless of how serious the sin.[417] The text then reminds the reader of her own good will: "Þe mercy of god is so gret þat it passeth alle his werkes, and þouȝ somtyme ȝe heren speke or reede i bokes sharpe wordes and harde sentencys, counforteth ȝoure self, and þenke weel þat alle swiche harde wordis ben seyd and wretyn to chasteise synneres, and to with draw hem from wikkednesse, and also to purge and pure goddis specials, as is the metal in furneys, and of hem god wil make his hous."[418] This reminder is followed by the suggestion that if the reader is worried the harsh words apply to herself, she should assume that they are actually intended for Jews and Saracens.[419] In this section, ME3 intervenes between the sister and her spiritual reading, which she may be taking too close to heart given her tendency toward anxiety. As such it positions itself in a conversation with other works of fifteenth-century spirituality as a more authoritative and therapeutic option.

This gesture is often found in sections of the text invoking God's mercy, such as its recommendation to trust in God's mercy "if ȝe fele ȝet ony dredis be ymagynacion or

[417] Ibid, 225.
[418] Ibid. Note the text again employs a purgation metaphor, though the hard words that might spark these anxieties are directly conflated with the tribulations of the anxieties themselves in this instance.
[419] Ibid.

temptacion, or for wordes þat ȝe haue herde or haue rede in bokes, be þe which ȝe dowte of sauacion."[420] The translator-adapter goes so far as to claim:

> I dare safly seye þat þer is non so synful a caytef þat is cristen or wolde be cristen þis day on erthe, and þough he were for synne in the seyght of god dampnable, and in the sight of alle creaturis also, ȝha and were juged to be dampned be alle scripture, and he wolde for sake his synne and be contrite and asken god forȝeuenesse, he schuld haue mercy and forȝeuenesse of hym, and if he stode soo or hadde a good wil to stonde soo in þe tyme of deth, he schulde be saued.[421]

This claim further draws the attention to the *ars moriendi* interpretation of the temptation to despair. Moreover it does so in response to anxieties based in other texts' harshness about the judgment of God. Perhaps the continual emphasis on mercy, besides speaking to a wider audience than Flete's original, also means to engage more specifically with the texts the reader had encountered, giving her the proper lens through which to interpret the other readings.

In conclusion, Flete's text, and its expanded translation, ME3, both apply tribulation discourse to a specific sub-topic—scrupulosity, fear of sin, intrusive thoughts, and the temptation to despair. *Remedies* is inextricable from this intertextual context, especially ME3, which draws most strongly from this tradition in its metaphors and somewhat broader appeal. More so than other texts, *Remedies* addresses temptation to despair (and temptation to impatience, a somewhat milder version) as a "meta-temptation" in which the spiritual danger is located in one's reaction to suffering temptations, rather than caving to those base-level temptations themselves. The advice *Remedies* offers for its suffering readers is, for one, to embrace patience and suffering for greater merit, but more practically, not to give heed to these thoughts, but rather ignore them, busy oneself, and surrender to a spiritual director's instructions. In fact, paying attention to the temptations is itself the first step in falling prey to the meta-temptation—the real threat—despair,

[420] Ibid, 227.
[421] Ibid.

and potentially suicide. ME3 includes a contingency, where even if one does fall to the base-level temptation, God's mercy should prevent her from despairing. In that way ME3 connects Flete's text to the laicized version of temptation to despair, most commonly faced on the deathbed, as discussed in *ars moriendi* texts. In the next section I will examine some of these peripheral texts that often travel with tribulation texts, including these *ars moriendi* texts as well as meditations on the Passion, within the larger book contexts.

Manuscript and Print Contexts

Besides each other, *Remedies* and *Chastising* often travel in manuscripts with many of the same texts. Themselves often incorrectly ascribed to Rolle or Hilton, they are often found alongside other texts legitimately by Rolle or Hilton, particularly *Form of Living*, *Emendatio Vitae*, and *Scale of Perfection*. Of course, given their obvious theme, there are other tribulation texts aside from these main ones found as well, typically listed in catalogs by the number assigned to them by Joliffe, excerpts from the *Revelations* of St. Birgitta, and meditations on the Passion.

One good example of this manuscript context is Cambridge, Magdalene College, MS Pepys 2125. As Hanna notes, the large tome was likely two manuscripts originally, with the first manuscript containing only *Chastising* and pseduo-Bonaventure's (i.e., Nicholas Love's) meditations on Christ's life and Passion.[422] Nonetheless, the second manuscript within the book is thematically related, as it contains *Against Wanhope*, book 6 chapter 25 of Birgitta's *Revelations*, assorted short treatises on tribulation and patience, materials for confession, and various other materials. Many of the marginal notes in both portions of the manuscript highlight the importance of the book in counseling a soul encountering this type of mental tribulation.

[422] Ralph Hanna, *English Manuscripts of Richard Rolle*, 8.

Chastising's marginalia mainly consists of corrections to the main text and citations to scriptural quotations, but two sections are pointed out by marginal doodles. One is a manicule accompanied by "hic" for extra emphasis in Chapter 22 on folio 20r, pointing to a quotation from Richard of St. Victor: "Þei erren foule and goon fer out of þe hiȝ weie whiche tristen so moche on grace þat þei leuen þe wirchyng of þer owne fre wil; but ȝit þei erren moche more þat stonden vpon her owne fre wil, and taken noon heede of grace."[423] In context, this grace is one remedy to the ills caused by sloth. The other is a small cross or "x" in Chapter 24 on folio 22v, marking the place in the text that states that despite a man undergoing various doubts, intrusive thoughts, or temptations, "as longe as he is sori þerof, þat he may nat bileeue it fulli, but fayne he wolde, þis man þe whilis synneþ nat in þat, and þus it fairþ bi al hiȝ temptacions."[424] A treatise on the mercy of God has a "nota bene" in the margins next to a reminder that "And what synne may be so dedley þat he may nat be losyd and [defornyed?] þorwe deþ of ihu crist," while a text on patience begins with a manicule next to the first line, extolling patience as an answer in tribulation and suffering. *Against Wanhope* too contains various little crosses, notes and manicules, especially near warnings of the devil's machinations, especially near the hour of death.

While varied texts coalesce in Pepys 2125 to treat tribulation, the clearest association is still between *Chastising* or *Remedies* and the meditations. This is common elsewhere in the text's manuscript and print tradition. One such example is Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Holkham Miscellany 41—a manuscript easily held in one's hands, only containing two significant items: *The Festis and the Passion of Oure Lord Ihesu Crist*, as Lamothe titles it, and ME3. Lamothe notes that the manuscript is addressed to a female reader, and the former text

[423] Quote from Bazire and Colledge, eds., *The Chastising of God's Children*, 188.
[424] Ibid, 201.

shares similarities to the *Oes* of Birgitta, leading her to extrapolate a connection to Syon.[425] The text includes both meditations on Christ and a form of confession.[426] Though the parchment has been eaten by mold, one can clearly discern the elaborate initials decorating the texts, and it lacks intentional markings on the folios, indicating the book was itself a cherished object. This manuscript could be considered an example of a self-contained therapeutic book—containing both the advice for dealing with temptation to despair paired with a meditation to enact that advice, in easily handheld form.

In the print tradition, *Tretyse of Love* appears alongside *Chastising* almost constantly in printed editions; supposedly translated from French into English in 1493, and printed by Wynkyn de Worde, *Tretyse* is found alongside *Chastising* in eight of its ten surviving copies.[427] *Tretyse* is largely based on *Ancrene Riwle*, with influence from Burgundian sources.[428] These borrowings largely draw on *Ancrene Riwle*'s treatment of the four loves, though as the critical editor notes, this is altered significantly in *Tretyse:*

> [T]he order of the four loves in the *Tretyse* is changed from between (1) good friends, (2) men and women, (3) mother and child, and (4) body and soul, to between (1) friends, (3) mother and child, (4) body and soul, and (2) man and wife. The shift may be explained in two ways. In the first place, the author clearly had no intention of discussing carnal love. He dispensed with the discussion of this type found in the *Riwle*, and the final position and cursory treatment of the love between man and wife may reflect this attitude. Furthermore, bringing 1, 3, and 4 together made it possible for him to present a continuous and logical discussion of the Passion into which 2 could not be fitted.[429]

Moreover, "This discussion of the Passion runs through the whole of the *Tretyse* up to the 'Remedies Against the Seven Deadly Sins.'"[430] Other sources that influenced *Tretyse*'s particular

[425] Ibid, 101.
[426] Ibid.
[427] J.H. Fisher, ed., *The Tretyse of Loue*, EETS, os 223 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), ix-x. While *Tretyse* was clearly tied to *Chastising* in print, *Chastising* often appeared without *Tretyse*—and *with* Flete in Wynkyn de Worde's 1492 edition. See Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*," 70-71.
[428] Ibid, xv-xvi.
[429] Ibid, xxi.
[430] Ibid.

focus on the Passion are the *planctus Mariae* (there are many versions, one of which is found alongside Flete in Warminster, Longleat House, Marquess of Bath MS 29), as well as *Meditations on the Hours of the Cross* (which "resemble closely in subject matter and treatment" the meditations of pseudo-Bonaventure).[431]

The thematic overlap between *Tretyse* and the tribulation literature studied here is significant; for instance, *Tretyse* urges the reader to interpret their own suffering in solidarity with Christ's:

> ye may well thinke for trouthe that yt behoueth vs to suffyr sum penaunce for hym & for our sauacoun how be yt he hath no nede of vs of our good dedys... But for all that, god wyll not saue a man yf he help not thereto hym self... And the glose uppon seynt powle,... 'God shed hys blood for alle, but to them only shall hys blood profyte in redepcion þat leue the delyte of ther flesh & chastyse their bodies in penaunce.' For yt shulde be no reson that he shulde suffyr all the peyne & we shulde haue all þe ioye here & ellys wher. For trewly yf we suffir not som penaunce, The father wyll no more spare vs, hys ylle chyldyrn, than he dyd the swete Ihesu cryst, hys good chylde.[432]

The comparison between Christ, the "good child" of God, being rewarded with suffering from the Father is identical to the twelfth and final profit in *The Profits*. Moreover, the assertion that suffering merits future joy is integral to the entire discourse. Naturally, *Tretyse* fits thematically with these texts. Besides this thematic resonance, one of the remedies to temptation/tribulation in both *Chastising* and *Remedies* is meditation on the life of Christ, especially his Passion. The inclusion of such meditational guides in the very same anthology as *Chastising* is user-friendly; the book becomes a self-help manual, with practical exercises included.

The other main theme that tends to be associated with both tribulation literature generally and temptation to despair specifically is *ars moriendi*. As I discussed *The Craft* in more detail in the previous chapter, I do not plan to rehash it here, especially as *The Craft* specifically is not

[431] Ibid, xxii-xxiv.
[432] Ibid, 25.

found with either *Chastising* or *Remedies* in the manuscript tradition (to my knowledge). Nonetheless, medieval authors and compilers were well aware of the thematic resonances between the threat of deathbed despair and this group of texts. To that end, I would like to present an analysis of *Against Wanhope*, also known as Joliffe J.9, a text found in four manuscripts: Glasgow, MS Hunter 520 (which also contains ME2 of Flete's Remedies, which is also confusingly rubricated as *Against Wanhope* in the manuscript); Oxford, Bodelian Library, MS Laud Misc. 210 (which also contains *The Twelve Profits of Tribulation*); as well as the aforesaid Pepys 2125 and its likely relation MS Harley 2398. I base my analysis on my transcription of the text from MS Hunter 520, with reference to the other three (especially Harley 2398, which was the most legible). While *Against Wanhope* frequently seems to borrow language from Flete and *Chastising*, it is clearly intended for a lay audience. The tract is found as part of an Easter sermon in the Pepys and Harley Manuscripts, and even in its separate form, it retains the galvanizing rhetoric and broad appeal of a sermon; at the same time, as Thomas Heffernan and Patrick Horner note, the sermon can clearly be split in half.[433] As an ambiguous sermon-treatise, *Against Wanhope* reveals how concepts amalgamated from tribulation literature from *The Profits* to *Chastising* to Flete to *ars moriendi* were presented for a lay audience in a popular context before being repackaged as a tract alongside its sources in devotional miscellanies.

Against Wanhope operates on the assumption that the reader had actually committed many sins rather than merely experienced temptations to do so, and though it covers a person's entire life, and was clearly addressed towards a healthy audience as a sermon, it mainly portrays the temptation to despair as a deathbed issue, much like *The Craft of Dying*. Nonetheless, the text

[433] Thomas J. Heffernan, and Patrick J. Horner, "Sermons and Homilies," in *A Manual of Writings in Middle English*, vol. 11, ed. Peter G. Beidler (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2005), 4151.

begins with the assertion "þat al a mannes lyf, from þe furste poynt ynto þe laste, þe fende is aboute to brynge a man or a womman to þe cursid synne of wanhope."[434] The text moves on to explain the stages of sin that lead one along to that worst stage, despair. First, there is "suggestioun or profer to synne" alike to how "þe fende proferide to Eue þe appil, and Eue to Adam."[435] This early stage of temptation is not a sin, according to the text—reinforcing the emphasis on consent in this discourse—and "if it be wiþstonden, þat is wondir medeful," recalling *Profits*'s language about the benefits of patiently withstanding tribulation.[436] The next stage is thornier, as it distinguishes the extents to which one internally consents to a sinful thought. The text makes a distinction between "likynge of any of þe fyue wittis," a venial sin, and the mortal sin of assenting with reason: "ȝif a man laste in þis likyng so longe til his resoun accord and assente to þis likyng, þanne is þe synne dedly."[437] The distinction here seems to be scholastic and somewhat more nuanced than even the discussion of university-trained Flete. Aquinas differentiates between consent, which is the willful application of the "appetitive power" to "something," and assent, which is "the application of the intellect to something."[438] *Against Wanhope* follows this logic that consciously applying one's senses to the temptation, enjoying it in that appetitive way, would constitute consent, and therefore a venial sin. In the next stage, applying reason to that temptation and assenting to it, would be mortal, since the sinners lets his or her reason be dictated by the pleasures of the appetitive power.

The next degrees of sin take it from the purely mental to the physical realm; "more perelous" is to "fulfille after in dede þat yuel work þat his wille bifore assentid to."[439] This is

[434] "Against Wanhope," 297. The page numbers given refer to the page numbers in the Appendix of this dissertation.
[435] Ibid.
[436] Ibid. It also specifically refers to this as "gostly chyualrie," recalling the rhetoric of "The Treatise of Ghostly Battle" included with "The Profits."
[437] Ibid.
[438] ST 2-1.15.1.
[439] "Against Wanhope," 297.

followed by "falle in to wickid custom" due to habitual deeds, then from custom to something akin to addiction ("him þinkeþ þat he moste nedis synne") and then despising God and his law.[440] The final outcome of this descent is despair: "whan a man haþ forsaken God and al goodenesse, þanne he fallyþ to wanhope. And he falsly weneþ þat oure God may not or kan not or wil not forȝeue him his synne, and þerfore he hopiþ no mercy and he wole no mercy. And þan as a beest he foloweþ his lustis and abideþ his dampnacioun.."[441]

Against Wanhope is distinct from the other tribulation/temptation texts in its placement of despair in a narrative of sin. The text begins similarly to many of these temptation texts in that it reminds the reader that having the "profer" of the devil is not itself a sin as it lacks consent. It then goes on to bifurcate sin into venial and mortal in progressive stages as the mind concords with consenting senses. These sins in the thoughts then turn physical in varying degrees—but ultimately, the final sin, is again mental—despairing of God's mercy given the weight of these sins. Essentially, the sinner must progress through this entire sinful gambit before they reach the despair that awaits them at the end. By contrast, in Flete and elsewhere, the very first stage could still threaten despair if the temptations themselves are agonizing enough. This is one way *Against Wanhope* adapts for its broader lay audience. Yet similar to *Remedies* and *Chastising,* temptation and the threat of despair are a part of one's everyday life rather than relegated to the deathbed.

Another way in which *Against Wanhope* is lay-oriented is its emphasis on God's mercy. While this is prevalent in both ME3 and *Chastising,* both of those texts present mercy as more of a contingency plan, whereas *Against Wanhope* assumes one has already succumbed to temptation. Nonetheless, it employs the same consolation. *Against Wanhope*'s reassurances of

[440] Ibid.
[441] Ibid.

mercy take the form of a disputation one might have with the devil, who, as the author assures the audience repeatedly, is a liar. Despite the text's apparently quotidian concern, one will encounter this sleazy lawyer at the moment of death—bringing in the *ars moriendi* tradition: "And it is to suppose þat þees fendis ben most aboute to tempte men and wymmen in þe houre of here deeþ, and neuere in here lyf so faste aboute to combre men as at þe laste stonde to make hem to haue an yuel ende and so to be dampnyd. And it is licly þat þan þei wolen most tempte men to þat synne þat þei ben þan most enclyned to, and þat licly is most to synne of wanhope and for to uttirly for sake God."[442] "Against Wanhope" gestures towards the chivalric language of battle—referring to one's hour of death as a "laste stonde" against the lifelong onslaught of the devil, trying to make the Christian "crie crauaunt."[443] Moreover, it makes despair the primary issue of deathbed temptation. This flattens a bit the fourfold temptation presented in "The Craft of Dying" but mirrors the prominence of despair in tribulation literature.

The text then outlines three main arguments the devil will put to the sinner as to why they should despair: that one's sins are too many or too awful for God to forgive, that one is predestined for damnation, and that God's justice demands retribution for their sins. It then offers solutions to these issues as well as arguments to rebuke the devil. For the first, the main advice it gives is to live well *before* one faces this accusation. First, one must live moderately, neither too indulgently nor too ascetically.[444] Second, one must build up the habits of virtue during life, "For al a mannes lyf schulde be to lerne a lessoun to dye wel. For þer is no better remedye to scoumfite þe fende þan is þrouȝ þe grace of God stedfast bileue on Crist and his lawe."[445] The

[442] Ibid, 298.
[443] Ibid, 297.
[444] Ibid, 298. This recalls the moderation encouraged in monastic texts as well as the reins in the "Treatise of Ghostly Battle."
[445] Ibid, 299.

third is connected to the second—to "bisily trauele him in good occupacions and seruyce of God."[446] The text reminds the reader that Eve fell when she was tempted alone; thus one should surround themselves with holy companions or with the angels and beseech God for help to withstand this. To support this claim, the text cites a favorite verse for *all* these temptation texts: 1 Cor. 10:13: "'Fidelis autem Deus qui non pacietur uos temptari super id quod potestis set faciet cum temptacione etiam proventum.' This is to seie God is trewe whiche schal not suffre ȝou to be temptid ouer þat þat ȝe may, but he schal make wiþ þe temptacioun ȝe a profit."[447] Bringing in the idea of meritorious suffering through withstanding temptation, *Against Wanhope* clearly echoes tribulation literature.

Even if one failed at fully preparing oneself to die during his or her lifetime, God's mercy remains as the ultimate recourse, and the tempted should call the devil a liar when he casts doubt on that mercy: "seie here boldely to þe fende þat he lieþ upon God falsly. For we must bileue þat god is endeles myȝtti, endeles witti and, endeles welwilly. And þerfore bileue stedfastly þat god is wiþoute mesure more miȝtti to forȝyue þi synne þan þou art of power to synne."[448] This is another moment in which the text's similarites to ME3 are clearest; *Against Wanhope*'s obsession with calling the devil a liar are nearly identical to the language of ME3 chapter four:

> But som men quan thei haue dredes of sauacion, or ben tempted to dispeir, or if thei haue ony vycious gostly sterynge or grete felynges of here owne frelte, thei wenen anon þat thei haue synned in the holy gost; and þanne fend putteth in hem þat it may neuere ben forȝouen, and þerfore thei may not be saued. Þus speketh þe fend with jnne hem, and afrayeth som sely creaturis þat þei wenen þat thei schuln gon oute of here mynde; but ȝe þat ben þus tempted, answere þe fend aȝen þat he is fals and a lyer: it his nature to ben soo.[449]

[446] Ibid, 299.
[447] Ibid.
[448] Ibid.
[449] Colledge, and Chadwick, eds., *Remedies Against Temptations,* 224.

ME3 then goes on to assure the reader that final impenitence is the sin against the Holy Ghost, so they have not committed it. ME3 and *Against Wanhope* use the same language in different situations. In *Against Wanhope*, the author addresses how general anxiety over one's sins at death might cause one to fear they cannot be forgiven; ME3 addresses the anxiety of one having committed the unforgivable sin against the Holy Ghost, though this is literally impossible for them. Nonetheless, both texts present the devil as the adversary, tempting a scrupulous person or else tempting a person on their deathbed to think God's mercy cannot reach them. The proper response of rebuking the devil is the same.

Against Wanhope commits to this motif throughout the text. The second accusation of the fiend, as observed above, is the threat of predestination. This was a major issue in the aforesaid texts—*Chastising* has entire chapters debunking predestination-based anxiety, and Flete addresses the issue as well. As Watson asserts, both ME3 and *Chastising* rebuke double predestination in favor of single predestination, that is to say, "predestination is here completed, and made secure, by a deliberate and thus knowable act of human choice."[450] This late-medieval sotierology is duplicated in *Against Wanhope* as well, as it reminds the listener: "tristily knowe þou þat þe fend falsly lieþ whan he seiþ þat nedis þou schalt be dampned. For it may not be þat þou be dampned wiþ þis lyf and þis hope in crist and stedefast good purpos to þi lyues ende."[451] Moreover, the listener is reminded that the fiend, of all creatures, is not all-knowing as God is:

> But syn þe day of dome is so priuey þat noon pure man nor aungel woot þer of but god alone, and as myche or more priuey and hid fro hem it is what schal be doon singulerly to euery man at þat day, than myche raþer and miche more þe cursid fende of helle knoweþ no þing of þat grete priuete of god. How knoweþ he þan what schal be doon on þat day of þee or of any oþir of whom þe dome of god is not ȝut fulfillid?[452]

[450] Watson, "Despair," 354.
[451] "Against Wanhope," 302.
[452] Ibid, 300.

The author then spiritedly calls the listener a "fool" for believing someone who was literally damned for lying and continues to lie.[453] This section summarily rejects the Reformation-era double predestination, that nonetheless seemed to tempt many to despair in the late Middle Ages, as evidenced in *Chastising* and *Remedies*.

The final argument of the fiend is a standard objection—that God's justice demands retribution—with a standard solution: "þe synnes of hem þat schulen be safe, be þei neuer so grete nor so manye, ȝut þei schulen be quenchid and washen awey þrouȝ vertu of þat blood and watir þat cam out of Cristis side."[454] Responding to the devil with one's credence is enough to buy into the mercy Christ purchased with his Passion: "Seie aȝeyn to him þat þou tristest so myche in goddes goodnesse and in þe vertu of þe harde passioun and in þe precious blood of crist þat siþ þou hast lafte þi synne; þi synne haþ an ende and is or schal be fully washe awey."[455] The argument with the devil then delves into scriptural examples. On one hand, the devil may give the example that Cain was damned for one murder, Judas for one betrayal, etc., whereas "þou perauenture hast doon many manslaughtes boþe bodily and goostli. And also perauenture ofte siþes þou hast bitraied crist falsly and so of many oþere synnes," such accusations make the dying person worse than these infamous biblical figures.[456] This is contrasted with positive biblical figures and saints who had parallel sins, yet became saints:

> þe holy prophete Dauid and Seint Petre, Seint Poule, and Marie Magdaleyne synnede so horribly and so grisely bifore god. And ȝit for þei lafte here synnes wiþ gret sorow and forþinkyng, þrouȝ þe merci of god þei ben sett now hiȝe in heuene blis. And of hem specialy makiþ al holy chirche myche ioie and solempnyte for cause þat alle synful men and wymmen after þe ensaumple of hem schulden leue here synne and triste þan in þe endeles mercy of god. For siþ Dauid þat was so foul auoutrer and after þat a mansleer, siþen was so holy a prophete. And siþ Seint Petre so foule and so falsly forsook crist, and ȝit aftir was so holy apostil. And also Seint Poul þat was first so foul a pursuer of cristen

[453] Ibid, 301.
[454] Ibid, 302.
[455] Ibid.
[456] Ibid, 301.

> men, and after he was þe chosen vessel of god to preche and to bere aboute goddis lawe to þe folke. And also siþen Seint Marye Magdaleyne was furst so synful a womman þat as seiþ þe gospel Crist kest out of hir seuene deuelis. And ȝut heuene and erþe makiþ ioie and blisse of hir. And siþen goddes goodnesse and his mercy is not dryud ne drunken up for mercy schewed to hem, but siþen he is als redy to vs as he was to hem ȝif we leuen synne and turne us holly to him, alweldynge god, where is any mater of wanhope or desperacioun?[457]

These same figures turn up in the discussion of mercy in ME3, which likewise emphasizes specifically David, Peter, and Mary Magdalene (while "The Craft of Dying" has a somewhat longer list) as recipients of God's mercy for grave sins. "Against Wanhope," which tends to assume less good will and more guilt on the part of its reader than ME3, concludes the discussion with an extra note on God's mercy being contingent on the human choice: "þer fore ȝif any man be dampnyd it is holly long on him silf and god is not to blame."[458] The text's obsession with choice sets it apart, which we can also see in its earlier emphasis on choosing not to sin in the first place, so one will not be faced with the temptation to despair. In reaching a broader, less spiritually advanced audience, the content is tailored more to the assumption of grave sins having been committed, rather than addressing the irrational fear of committing grave sins.

We see this in the final few pages of the sermon-treatise, which quotes Psalm 136: "'Beatus inquit qui tenebit et allidet parvuulos suos ad petram." Þat is so seie, 'Blessid be he þat schal holde and knocke his smale or his ȝong children to a stoon.'"[459] The author interprets away the violence of the psalm by glossing the children as one's sins, and the stone as Christ: "blessid be he þat whan stirynge of synne comeþ in to his soule holdiþ him þat he go not furre in to þe dede. But also blessid be he þat takiþ þat stiryngis þat ben as smale children and anoon knockeþ

[457] Ibid, 302-303.
[458] Ibid, 303.
[459] Ibid.

hem to þat stoon of riȝtwisnesse þat is Crist Ihesu, þe whiche is als stedefast as any ston."[460] Thus the text returns to the schematic of despair given at the beginning of the treatise; at this very early stage of stirring, before one has consented, one should immediately crush temptation by clinging to Christ. Essentially, *Against Wanhope*'s solution to despair is to never commit the sins that might cause you to despair in the first place.

There are clear fault lines between the types of temptation to despair discussed in Flete and *Chastising* and the type discussed in *Against Wanhope*. While the deathbed motif obviously distinguishes the two traditions, what is more fundamental is the question of to what extent guilt is assumed. In Flete's *Remedies*, temptation to despair is caused by unfulfilled, unwanted temptations—intrusive thoughts. While "hybrid" texts such as *Chastising* and ME3 discuss the possibility of guilt to an extent, it is not the main focus, and they generally follow the template set by Flete. But with texts such as *Against Wanhope*, clearly aimed at lay audiences, the main focus is not on intrusive thoughts but rather doubts of God's mercy that naturally arise from a life full of imperfect living. Yet clearly many of the same scriptural references and rhetoric can help sufferers of either of these problems. In short, while both *Against Wanhope* and ME2 share a title in the same manuscript and call the problem they address by the same name (temptation to despair), they describing two different spiritual challenges that happen to look very similar. Parsing out scrupulosity or intrusive thoughts in texts even very manifestly directed towards "temptation to despair"—what might be the most concise way of stating the problem in medieval texts—is complicated by linguistic equivocation stemming from a lack of distinct terminology. In the late Middle Ages, the lack of vocabulary to define this problem clearly leads to a mix of texts, some of which seem even self-contradictory because they address both these problems or

[460] Ibid.

both these audiences (especially ME3). In my discussion of intrusive thoughts and temptation to despair in hagiography in the following chapter, it will be necessary to maintain the nuance of the diverse textual tradition explored above. Nonetheless, as these concepts of despair collided in late medieval pastoralia, what remains is an overarching focus on patience as operative in transforming the spiritual danger of temptation to despair to spiritual merit.

Chapter 3: Female Enclosure and Temptation

> Be not afraid of these horrible temptations, for the key of your heart is in my safe keeping, and I keep guard over your mind and the rest of your body. No one can enter except by my permission.[461]

So Jesus reminds Christina of Markyate, assaulted by unwanted blasphemous thoughts, of his enclosure of her heart, mind and body. With this metaphor, Jesus stands as defense against all manner of intrusion—especially intrusive thoughts. Despite originating in the twelfth century, *The Life of Christina of Markyate* portrays extremely similar mental tribulation to that addressed by the temptation to despair pastoralia discussed in my previous chapter. There I examined the texts' coverage of intrusive thoughts and scrupulous anxiety and found that these tribulations are generally characterized as the "meta-temptation" to despair. This meta-temptation was closely connected to the meta-temptation to impatience or "grucching," so it is natural that this specific tribulation of the mind was situated within the greater tribulation and patience discourse outlined in Chapter 1. While those texts did not necessarily portray temptation to despair as a gendered problem—though manuscript evidence suggests these texts were often owned by women—in hagiographical sources the issue of intrusive thoughts is overwhelmingly an issue that seems to trouble holy women like Christina.

In fact, many of their meta-temptations, or intrusive thoughts, are sexually inflected, but are not sexually desirable; the temptation is not to imitate the lewd contents of the thoughts, but to despair in the face of this challenge to their identity as good Christians, which for women was very often centered around their chastity or virginity. In this chapter I argue that medieval conceptualizations of the female body and virginity were particularly apt to intersect with meta-temptation to despair. Virginity was often seen as a corrective enclosure of a dangerously

[461] Talbot, *The Life of Chirstina of Markyate*, 133.

accessible female body and mind. The same "accessibility" that allowed for emotive, charismatic mystics likewise threatened interventions of demons, as we see in the great amount of time *Chastising* devotes to discerning the difference between these supernatural incursions into the mind. Given this understanding of female physiology, the issue of intrusive thoughts is pressing for female religious, especially those aspiring to sainthood.

In this chapter I will first discuss the medieval concept of bodies vis-a-vis humoral theory and its implications for gender. Drawing on feminist scholars, I argue that enclosure and virginity were especially relevant to female spirituality as a way to "correct" and protect the female body from dangerous spiritual influences, increasingly in the High Middle Ages. I then examine the vitae of two female saints—one of whom was English, the other continental, but popular among English religious women—for their conceptualizations of the female body, enclosure, and temptation (especially temptation to despair). The first of these two saints is Christina of Markyate, whose experience of temptation to despair shines an early light on conceptualizations of despair due to anxieties surrounding her virginity, given her unusual path to religious life. The second is Marie d'Oignies, in whose vita temptation to despair appears as a spiritual challenge that Marie herself does not experience, but rather, miraculously solves for others through her intercession. This validates her own virginity and "enclosure," spiritual rather than physical, considering she was a Beguine. In both cases, temptation to despair and intrusive thoughts are integrated into these saints' lives earlier than they garner focus in the pastoralia discussed previously, because of the scrutiny these women would have experienced for their complicated paths to religious life.

Medieval Virginity

While virginity was a concern for many religious devotees of the Middle Ages, it seems to have had a particular resonance with female spirituality. Ruth Evans, in her study of the various "types" of virginity in the Middle Ages, offers several explanations for the reason virginity overlapped so heavily with female spirituality, though the Pauline epistles extoll virginity for both sexes:

> Partly because of increased devotion to Mary and the rise of women in monasticism; partly because virginity was a precious object to be guarded by the senses and the feminine was synonymous with the sensual; partly for economic reasons: within medieval systems of inheritance and land tenure, the woman's body is male property and the virgin wife guarantees the purity of the family line. Virginity's yearning for purity owes a great deal to clerical anxieties about ritual pollution, anxieties that are linked to the misogynistic view of women – and women's sexuality in particular – as dirt.[462]

Nonetheless, Evans argues, women "appropriated its [virginity's] representations in bold and sometimes radical ways."[463] This is noticeable in the general evolution of medieval virginity from a woman "becoming like a man" to a more "feminine" bridal model. As Sarah Salih relates:

> This narrative goes as follows: the early Christian period produced a gender-neutral model of virginity, in which dedicated virgin women were thought of as manly or even as male, and virginity was a worthy ambition and meaningful category for a man. Virginity was a form of martyrdom, and virgins *miles Christi*. In or around the twelfth century virginity began to be feminised. St Anselm's humanisation of Christ and St Bernard of Clairvaux's erotic mysticism contributed to the creation of a climate in which female virgins could be reclaimed for the heterosexual economy and urged to take Christ as their husband in a specifically feminine form of erotic devotion.[464]

Salih goes on to challenge the "stability" of these two separate types of virgins, and brings up cases in which they overlap in the same saints' legends: "the two types do not combine, but occupy the same texts side by side. It is, however, more a difference of emphasis than of

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[462] Ruth Evans, "Virginities," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing*, ed. Carolyn Dinshaw and David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Specifically, Evans was interested in how virgin martyrs tend to have unbreakable bodies even when subjected to gruesome torture.
[463] Ibid.
[464] Sarah Salih, *Versions of Virginity in Late Medieval England* (Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 2001), 10.

category."[465] That being said, scholars have taken this strange way virginity interacts with gender for female virgins to put forward a theory of virginity as an alternate gender. For instance, Evans remarks that virgin martyrs' *vitae* "stage gender as fluid and performative: not as an essence but as a continual acting out of female sexual and social identity."[466] Salih takes a similar tack but pushes it further, suggesting that "the strategy of chastity" may constitute "virginity as potential regendering" rather than "simply as a subcategory of women."[467] How could a commitment to abstention from sex potentially be seen as a third gender to scholars? Most of these arguments come from virginity's strange status as an ideal somewhere combining the physical and the spiritual and its arguable opposition with medieval views of female physiology.

To that point, despite virginity's roots in a physical status—of not having had sex—virginity is rarely interpreted materially or literally in that way in medieval culture. For instance, Evans brings up apocryphal infancy legends in which the midwife Salomé does not believe Mary could be a virgin mother and touches her to try to test it; yet the confirmation of Mary's virginity is not in Salomé feeling physical evidence but when Salomé's hand miraculously withers because of her presumption.[468] As Evans explains, "It is implied that Zelomye must have found some physical proof: the hymen perhaps ? But how can Mary's body offer irrefutable empirical proof of her virginity? Only Salomé's shrivelled hand can do that, ironically signifying the Virgin's wholeness. Despite Salomé's explorations, virginity can never be a sure thing. Faith and miracle plug the gap between suspicion and certain knowledge, but they only displace the

[465] Ibid, 13.
[466] Evans, "Virginities."
[467] Salih, *Versions of Virginity*, 8.
[468] Evans, "Virginities."

questions on to other sites, other bodies, other texts."[469] In fact, virginity ultimately depends more on the will than the body:

> *Of Maydenhede* defines three 'degrees' of virgins – those who are pure in body but who like to talk about sex or indulge in 'vnleful [unlawful] touchynge' ; those who are pure in body and speech, but who do not intend to remain virgins for ever (the chaste pre-marrieds) ; and those 'gostly [in spirit] maydens' who are not corrupt in either word or will but who intend to live chaste for ever. Of these three categories, the last are the best. Even if they are raped and no longer technically virgins, they will nevertheless get all the rewards of virginity if they resist their rapists... Bodily intactness is less important than the will to remain chaste. The virginal female subject wills her virginity, overturning the proprieties of linear chronology.[470]

Virginity thus has a spiritual quality outside of bodily state, though they are connected. Moreover, virginity's unstable marriage of these two dimensions likewise make it unknowable—how can someone know or actually test someone's internal willed commitment to chastity, outside the miracles of hagiography? How can one say, in a crass sense, the lack of a hymen equals a lack of virginity, when innocent circumstances may have been the cause of losing the literal physical "integritas"? If virginity can exist even in these circumstances, who is to say that Margery Kempe, a literal mother, cannot be a virgin? As Evans observes, "non-virginity is supposedly irreversible, but you can – just about – become a virgin again, by willing yourself to live chastely" in this theological tradition.[471]

Yet even as virginity is a spiritualized concept, it is intimately connected to the body, and in fact, can be conceived of as a "correction" to the body. This is particularly relevant for female religious whose bodies were seen as dangerous or taboo based on medieval understandings of physiology. Karma Lochrie observes that for medieval physicians, women were men's

[469] Ibid.
[470] Ibid. Evans was working from her own edition of the text in British Library MS Arundel 286, and cites this passage to folio 135r.
[471] Ibid.

"anatomical mirror"—the female sexual anatomy was seen as an inversion of the males', and compared unfavorably against it as "deficient":

> Women's sexual construction is clearly secondary. The analogy of male and female instruments of reproduction to the seal and wax impressions also constructs difference in terms of activity/passivity and exteriority/interiority. Even more importantly, the *Anatomia vivorum* establishes the female reproductive system as a pale image of the male anatomy. Like a wax impression, it is always recalling its seal and the seal's symbolized identity.[472]

Medieval privileging of male anatomy can also be seen, according to Lochrie, in the medieval theory of conception, in which the man's gametes supply the form of the offspring, while the woman's body supplies merely the matter.[473] This passivity is supported by humoral theory; men were seen as having hot and dry humors while women were cool and wet.[474] The supposed choleric energy of male humors "succeed[s] in thrusting his organs outward," unlike the female melancholic temperament.[475] Nancy Caciola likewise observes this highly gendered application of humoral theory, noting that the melancholy and "impressionability" of female physiology was believed to lead to spiritual passivity or impressionability; this "impressionable" melancholic temperament was thought to make women less rational and more sensual for its coldness, and "changeable, inconstant, and highly impressionable" for its moistness, as suggested in Albertus Magnus' *Quaestiones de animalibus*.[476] These assumptions about female anatomy, Caciola argues, set women as "fundamentally more changeable, more highly impressionable, and thus as more receptive to outside spiritual influences than the male. Women, in short, were considered to have a weaker claim to deictic integrity than men, a less sharply bounded self. This debility, in

[472] Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and the Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 16-17.
[473] Ibid, 17.
[474] Ibid.
[475] Ibid, 18.
[476] Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 145.

turn, rendered them more prone to spiritual influences and invasions."[477] The understanding of the female self as lacking integrity de facto underlined the importance of *discretio spirituum* to determine the nature of these influences, whether demonic or divine, and the issue was highly fraught for women claiming to experience supernatural visions.[478] And as Cré reminds us, *discretio spirituum* is one of the highest priorities of *Chastising*, even with its emphasis on temptation to despair and intrusive thoughts, which can be framed as another form of potentially demonic intrusion.

In establishing this argument, Caciola draws on Lochrie's work, particularly Lochrie's comments as to the "unbounded" nature of females; Lochrie develops this in her discussion of the "flesh." Drawing mainly upon Pauline epistles and Augustine, Lochrie asserts:

> As Augustine points out in *De civitate Dei*, Paul often used the term 'flesh' as a synecdoche for the entire human being. In addition, Paul locates the source of man's evil in the flesh, rather than in the body. The body's role in human sin is merely that of a sort of lackey to the restless, rebellious, and intransigent flesh. The primary human conflict is one of flesh against spirit, or rather, the life of the flesh against the life of the spirit.[479]

Flesh is that unruly selfishness, as she reads Augustine—the "urge" that exists in the "fissure" between body and soul, God's will and man's will, that resulted from original sin.[480] In metaphors used by both Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux, Lochrie notes that the flesh is represented by an abhorrent woman, Eve.[481] This connects with the medieval impression of woman as fickle, or vulnerable to temptation, by her very nature: "Woman, then, occupies the border between body and soul, the fissure though which a constant assault on the body may be

[477] Ibid, 130.
[478] Ibid, 16-17. She develops the historical "crisis" around female lay mystics significantly in chapter six, and while she does not refer to *Chastising* specifically, she does deal with Gerson and other "discerning" works.
[479] Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh*, 19.
[480] Ibid, 19.
[481] Ibid, 20-21.

conducted. She is a painful reminder of influx alienating body from soul."[482] This "unbounded" nature of women is "sealed" by enclosure and virginal practice:

> The identification of woman with flesh, and hence with excess, permeability, and disruption, produces a different model for chastity than that invoked for men. Integrity, viewed as a repairing of the natural but dangerous accessibility of the female body, becomes the spiritual and moral standard for religious women in the Middle Ages. The natural grotesqueness of the woman's body is thus corrected through moral and physical enclosure.[483]

Lochrie's observation makes some scholars, such as Salih, go so far as to suggest virginity is a re-gendering separating virgins from women as a category, as described above. I find the claim that medieval people conceived of gender as a separate social category from biological sex somewhat dubious; moreover, it is clear in the sources dealt with in this chapter and elsewhere that the physical femaleness of enclosed virgins (whether spiritual or physical) remains relevant to how they are treated in their *vitae*, by both the characters interacting with them and by their confessor/narrators themselves.

Yet this academic squabble is not the main interest of this study. What is most relevant to this dissertation is that cultural constructions of virginity as well as womanhood already draw special attention to women as vulnerable to intrusion—yet few have drawn the explicit connection between women and intrusive thoughts. I do not mean to suggest, whatsoever, that women actually were more vulnerable to intrusive thoughts, temptation to despair, etc., based on medieval medicine. Instead, I argue that these medieval constructions of women and virginity made intrusive thoughts and other "invisible" mental tribulations visible given their relevance in the lives of the women pursuing this sort of "enclosure" or chastity, in multiple ways. For one, the "unknowability" of virginity lends itself to uncertainty, which is fertile ground for a

[482] Ibid, 21.
[483] Ibid, 4.

scrupulous mind to cultivate doubts—especially since one's thoughts play an important role in determining the quality of one's virginity, as observed by Evans. Another connection is the correlation between intrusive thoughts as temptation to despair and the importance of *discretio spirituum* for holy women, as observed by Caciola; intrusive thoughts are one of the many outside influences threatening female religious. Finally the issue of enclosure as corrective, especially for a dangerously unbounded mind, finds special significance in female vitae, especially Christina's, to which I now turn.

Christina of Markyate: A Mind Under Christ's Protection

Based on historical records of important churchmen mentioned in her *vita*, it is surmised that Christina of Markyate was born between 1096-1098, left home around 1115-1116, professed as a nun at St. Alban's Monastery in 1131, and died at some point after 1155.[484] Her *vita* was written by a monk at St. Alban's, though the exact author and composition date are unknown.[485] This *vita* survives in a single manuscript, MS Cotton Tiberius E. I., and can be dated to the fourteenth century.[486] Christina herself "came from a family of Anglo-Saxon nobles which had relatives spread over the whole county of Huntingdonshire."[487] C.H. Talbot surmises the ethnic politics of the Anglo-Saxons versus the Normans has subtle influences on the text, as most of her circle seems to be English in name and language, though the text is written in Latin.[488] Ultimately, though, the central conflict of *The Life of Christina of Markyate* concerns Christina's desire to be a consecrated virgin despite her family's pressure on her to marry and their collusion with corrupt clergy to assure that. What is most pertinent to this project, though, is Christina's

[484] C.H. Talbot, ed. and trans., *The Life of Christina of Markyate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 13-15.
[485] Ibid, 6.
[486] Ibid, 1.
[487] Ibid, 10.
[488] Ibid, 12.

struggles with temptation and intrusive thoughts specifically, as well as scrupulosity. At various points Christina is tempted sexually, subsequently worries about her chastity (despite not having physically failed in that regard), and consequently experiences intrusive thoughts and temptation to despair. These forms of temptation are explicitly connected to her validity as a virgin. While these separate episodes of temptation function distinctly, often the latter is conflated with the former, or ignored entirely by scholars. Nonetheless, Christina's temptation has on some level received critical attention, some of which I have covered in the introduction to this dissertation, which I will now discuss in greater detail.

Kathryn Staples and Ruth Karras note that before the twelfth century, it was unusual to read in hagiography about women being sexually tempted; women were themselves temptations to male saints, or men might physically threaten women sexually, but women did not experience lust themselves.[489] They suggest that Christina's *vita* is a turning-point for this, mainly because of cultural anxieties over double monasteries in the twelfth century, moving into the thirteenth where "individual orders began to shut their doors to female religious communities seeking affiliation. Orders offered a variety of reasons for this, including financial strains, the weak and heterodox nature of women religious, and the issues of sexual temptation and female sexuality."[490] Increasingly, female religious in hagiography were seen as combatting temptations of lust, and "this concern about the sexual temptation of women led to increased calls for claustration" due to women's "natural vulnerability to lust."[491] This cultural anxiety evinces the aforementioned narrative about female impressionability and weakness that necessitates

[489] Kathryn Staples and Ruth Karras, "Christina's tempting: sexual desire and women's sanctity," in *Christina of Markyate: A Twelfth-Century Holy Woman*, eds. Samuel Fanous and Henrietta Leyser (New York: Routledge, 2005), 186-187.
[490] Ibid, 189.
[491] Ibid, 189.

enclosure. Christina, as a forerunner of this trend, can be conceived of as an early subject of this virginity discourse, explaining, perhaps, why this issue of intrusive thoughts and temptation is visible in her *vita* as relatively early as it is.

Staples and Karras suggest subsequently that the portrayal of Christina's sexual temptation had two potential sources: that it is likely accurate biographically, and more to the point, that it justifies her platonic relationship with Abbot Geoffrey, as she is shown having overcome lust at a much earlier stage in life.[492] Yet the fact remains that those cultural anxieties over women's enclosure were alive during the twelfth century. While this aspect of their work will certainly influence my analysis, Staples and Karras overlook, to an extent, the temptation to despair, in their intense focus on the question of her temptation to lust.

Jane Geddes likewise observes a concern over the platonic nature of Geoffrey and Christina's relationship in examining St. Alban's Psalter, a brilliantly illuminated manuscript gifted to Christina from the said abbot.[493] Christina's *vita* tells us that she and Geoffrey were very intimate, emotionally and spiritually, and this was often "misconstrued" as a sexual or romantic relationship by onlookers, even as they were "at pains to insist on the thoroughly chaste nature of the relationship."[494] The Psalter, Geddes argues, conveys Geoffrey's and Christina's feelings and spiritualization of their relationship.[495] One such section that deals with sexual temptation is Psalm 75:

> The details of Psalm 75 would have a strong personal resonance for Christina, with memories of her earlier passions. Here, the letter 'N' is formed by four beasts stuffed through the uprights. Their strangled heads pant frantically, their bodies are encased and only their feet protrude. Between them, Christ breaks the weapons of worldliness, 'There hath he broken the powers of bows, the shield, the sword, and the battle' (verse 4). The

[492] Ibid, 191-192.
[493] Jane Geddes, "The St. Alban's Psalter: Sex, Desire and the Middle Aged Woman," in *Middle-Aged Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Sue Niebrzydowski (Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 2011), 69-82.
[494] Ibid, 71.
[495] Ibid, 71-72.

> beasts are not mentioned but they symbolise the sins of the flesh. St Augustine understands verses 3-4 as the struggle of the sinful body to overcome desire, 'Sinful thoughts and the pleasure they arouse will not leave you alone ... You must keep your members under control when your evil cravings arise. Suppose anger has surged up; hold your hand, keeping close company with God. Surge up it may, but it will have found no weapons." Christ is destroying the weapons of desire: the broken spear, the shield, bow and sword.[496]

Such a sexually charged image in a psalter for Christina, especially given Christina's explicit experience of sexual temptation as described in the life, does seem quite targeted. That said, Geddes focuses entirely on her physical, "desirable" temptation, rather the meta-temptation as distinguished in my previous chapter. Yet we find a similar Augustinian emphasis on consent being withheld from tempting thoughts as the prominent piece of advice, and a reminder that God will himself free one from temptation and passions in His own time, suggesting patience, and trust and prayer in God, as is reiterated in pastoralia.

Still, approaching the issue of temptation from this purely sexual angle flattens the complexities of temptation to despair. Another way scholars have brushed close by this issue is approaching Christina's *vitae* with an eye toward her mental and emotional health. For instance, C.H. Talbot dedicates a significant portion of the introduction to his edition of *The Life of Christina of Markyate* discussing Christina's mental and physical health, but his analysis of the issue shows its age. Talbot takes Christina's life at her hagiographer's word as a historian, in part because it is "low-miraculous" compared to other *vitae*: "One of the more pleasant aspects of the Life of Christina is its comparative freedom from the miraculous elements which invariably creep into hagiographical literature. ... as a result one is not plagued with a series of incredible occurrences calculated to tax the imagination."[497] Talbot assesses the text on the basis of its reliability as a historical primary source, which leads him to extol its modern-flavored sense of

[496] Ibid, 79.
[497] Talbot, *The Life*, 30-31.

realism. This reductive view of the purpose of medieval literature also colors his assessment of Christina's health. Given the prominence visions, both good and ill, claim in the narrative, Talbot feels the need to try to rationalize them: "Whether these visions had any mystical content or were merely her own intuition sharpened by anxiety we have no way of knowing; but it is significant that at one point the writer... is at pains to point out that these experiences were not imaginary."[498] Nonetheless, Talbot arrogantly surmises:

> [S]ome readers may find her temptations, which are the normal stock-in-trade of the lives of the saints, rather exaggerated. It is difficult to believe in the monstrous appearances of the devil which were so frightening that, according to the biographer, they would have driven any normal person out of his mind. This we should now perhaps ascribe to a disturbed imagination.[499]

Reading the text entirely literally, Talbot rationalizes Christina's experiences rather than trying to understand their portrayal in historically situated and gendered spirituality.

There is also a tendency, even as early as Talbot, to discuss disability. As to her physical illnesses, several of which she makes miraculous recoveries from, they "give us a complete picture of a woman, highly strung but not hysterical, overcoming her disabilities and finding her equilibrium in a life of prayer and contemplation."[500] Lara Farina has taken serious issue with this old assessment. In a highly theoretical article for *postmedieval*, Farina pushes back against diagnosing Christina, or other medieval individuals, in today's terms via a larger critique of modern medicine's "homogenizing" tendencies:

> While most medievalists are aware of the historically adverse consequences of applying modern medical categories to describe premodern conditions, the wider public discourse among nonspecialists favors modern definitions of psychiatric disability over historically contextualized interpretations of 'symptoms.' I thus think it undesirable to recruit medieval literature to a modern medical project of 'homogenizing the way the world goes

[498] Ibid, 31.
[499] Ibid, 33.
[500] Ibid.

> mad' (Watters, 2010, 2), particularly if the mad (or disabled or different) find ourselves that much worse off for it.[501]

The modern analogue she supplies is phantom limb syndrome, in which a certain patient, who experienced pain in his missing left arm, was prescribed a mirror box to make his right arm image superimposed on the left, and retrain his mind to relieve his pain.[502] Farina asks, "Is the pain in his phantom limb really cognitive 'difference' or simply a preservation of normal feeling? Or is the return to feelings of movement (which Phillip says is like being in the past) a return to normal despite there being no 'real' limb? Or is the acceptance of the visual image of the arm as absent a return to normal modes of sensing?"[503] Yet the case study Farina refers to has much more practical, clinical concerns than her, and she is left questioning, "But what if the 'cognitive alterity' involves not just an estrangement from the normal sensory hierarchy, but a challenge to it?"[504] It is this alterity that she proposes Christina might be read as experiencing after her bouts of paralysis and physical illness.[505] Farina boldly suggests:

> Martyred bodies are sense-sational ones: powerfully fragrant or radiant, gushing milk instead of blood, more vital and vibrant after death than before it. Christina does not die, yet she certainly emerges from her debilitation transformed. Might we say that, after a long period of sensory deprivation/alteration and a traumatic illness (resembling what we would call a 'stroke') Christina has acquired different powers of sensation? I am thinking not only of the clairvoyance, which is not really clairvoyant as much as it is clairaudient, but of the beating Geoffrey gets when he rebuffs her. Could it be that Christina's phantom limbs have reached out and given the abbot a good thrashing?[506]

Farina has a bit of a sense of humor in making this claim, and backtracks somewhat into a more restricted reading of the text in the subsequent section:

> In Christina's *Life*, there is some ambiguity about whether her sensory alterity is a response to her ascetic practice or a pre-ordained gift. We are told that Christina's

[501] Lara Farina, "Once more with feeling: Tactility and cognitive alterity, medieval and modern," *postmedieval* 3, no. 3 (2012): 292.
[502] Ibid, 294.
[503] Ibid.
[504] Ibid, 295.
[505] Ibid, 296-297.
[506] Ibid, 297.

> sickness is the result of her harsh confinement, and her miracles are placed immediately after her physical trials, but there is no explicit causal connection between illness and newfound abilities. Further, her 'visions' are, from the start, highly tactile in nature.[507]

Even so, Farina ultimately hopes to use the medieval texts more for reframing our modern thinking about disability and bodies, expressing, "My hope is that, if taken seriously – and not written off as credulous fables or religious propaganda – saints' lives may help us think about the dynamism and shifting potential of bodies in general."[508] While her observations and purposes are rather far afield from my own, Farina nonetheless makes a highly salient point about the medieval understanding of the body, and the relationship between body and mind, as much more mutable and unbounded than it is understood today. This critical approach is easily applied to the anxieties over virginity, and the special mutability of female bodies, as discussed above. Perhaps more crucially, it underlines the centrality of Christina's thoughts and visions to the text and to her sanctity, rather than sidelining them or rationalizing them away as in early scholarship such as Talbot's. In my discussion, likewise, I will be lending particular weight and prominence to Christina's experience of visions and especially of intrusive thoughts, though situating them more in the moral theology established in the previous chapter.

I will focus this analysis on three sections of *The Life of Christina of Markyate*: the sexual temptation she experiences prior to her consecration, her scrupulous anxiety leading up to her consecration due to the former, and finally, her experience of blasphemous intrusive thoughts. The first episode of temptation was initially caused by Christina's lodging with a cleric after the death of her hermit guardian, Roger.[509] The arrangement initially seemed convenient for both parties until carnal passions arose: "And certainly at the beginning they had no feelings

[507] Ibid, 299.
[508] Ibid, 300.
[509] Talbot, *The Life of Christina of* Markyate, 112-115.

about each other, except chaste and spiritual affection [*castem et spiritualem amorem*]. But the devil, the enemy of chastity, not brooking this for long, took advantage of their close companionship and feeling of security to insinuate himself first stealthily and with guile, then later on, alas, to assault them more openly."[510] This leads to the cleric himself succumbing to lust and trying to seduce Christina (including walking around undressed).[511] In contrast, Christina is affected by the temptations but does not yield to them: "he [the devil] could not wrest consent from the maiden, though he assailed her flesh with incitements to pleasure and her mind with impure thoughts."[512] The author is at pains to insist that though Christina experiences these thoughts and passions, she does not consent to them. This echoes the crucial point made in the tribulation pastoralia that thoughts are not sinful in the absence of consent; while this is remarked upon by virtually all the pastoralia I covered as a form of consolation, it is perhaps most clearly communicated by the ME3 version of *Remedies* with reference to Augustine: "And þerfore, for as moche as a mannes þought is often veyn and diuers, and non ende hathe, it oweth not to ben charged ne to be taken heed off, ne a man schulde not angre hym self with al, ne blame ne arette it to his owne defaute þat he is so traueiled, for swiche trauailes ben peyneful and not synful, for as moche as þei ben gretly ageyn his wil."[513] Additionally, the fact that the devil "assailed her flesh" ("carnem") recalls Lochrie's point about the pursuit of virginity being a correction of the feminine "flesh" in all its unruly concupiscence. This does seem to have gendered resonance in the text, too, as the narrator remarks: "he [the cleric] sometimes said that she was more like a man than a woman, though she, with her more masculine qualities, might more justifiably have

[510] Ibid, 115.
[511] Ibid.
[512] Ibid.
[513] Colledge, and Chadwick, eds., *Remedies Against Temptations,* 222.

called him a woman."[514] It is fairly clear that this author associates women with the flesh, desire, and concupiscence, and men with self-control and rationality, along the lines Lochrie observed. As we shall see going forward, it is this very paradigm that makes Christina's experience of intrusive thoughts notable and visible in a text much earlier than *Chastising* or *Remedies*.

Christina deals with this temptation "manfully [*viriliter*]" by "violently [*violenter*] resisting the desires of her flesh" through ascetic practice.[515] Eventually the Virgin Mary visits the cleric in a vision and has to threaten him with eternal damnation to convince him to stop sexually harassing his charge; yet "neither this nor anything else was able to cool the maiden's passion."[516] Christina's temptation to lust is only solved when she is granted a vision of the Christ-child, which eliminates her passion for her cohabitant.[517] The question remains, why does the text place such emphasis on the internal source of these temptations? Though Staples and Karras suggest it merely reflects reality and vindicates her relationship with Geoffrey as pure, I argue it also manifests cultural constructions of virginity at the time and contemporary emphasis on not just bodily but spiritual purity.

Christina's anxiety over her spiritual purity is manifested in her subsequent worry after the episode of intense temptation, since she seems to experience an obsessive sort of scrupulosity over her virginity, inherently unprovable given its unobservable spiritual basis. This is apparent after Christina eventually is freed of this situation and is able to profess in the monastery of St. Albans. Before her consecration, she experiences doubt and worry over her status as a virgin:

> But inwardly she was much troubled, not knowing what she should do, nor what she should say, when the bishop inquired during the ceremony about her virginity. For she

[514] Talbot, *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, 115.
[515] Ibid, 114-115.
[516] Ibid, 117. As Karras and Staples point out, Christina's carnal trials have a significant internal component unlike those of the virgin martyrs, though the externalized sexual threats associated with virgin martyrs still appear, for instance, in her husband Burthred, to whom she actually recites the story of virgin martyr Cecila in an attempt to convince him to accept a sexless marriage (51).
[517] Ibid, 117.

> was mindful of the thoughts and stings of the flesh with which she had been troubled, and even though she was not conscious of having fallen either in deed or in desire, she was chary of asserting that she had escaped unscathed.[518]

The author lays emphasis on Christina's lack of consent to the potentially sinful thoughts, but it appears her will is not as clear to her in memory as it was at the time. The strength of the temptations had almost themselves felt like a sinful act, polluting her bodily and spiritual virginity. It seems that here Christina is experiencing a similar phenomenon to Thought-Action Fusion, as discussed in my previous chapter in reference to Flete's treatment of it *Remedies*. As I discussed there, the first line of defense against this medieval version of TAF is to emphasize the role of consent in determining the moral value of thoughts—and the *vita* has already assured the reader there was no consent in this scenario. That said, Christina still worries she may have been irreparably polluted by these intrusive thoughts somehow. Indeed, this exact anxiety is likewise addressed in the ME3 version of *Remedies*: "sumtyme mannes þoughtes and womannes ben so travailed and ouerleid þat they knowen nought here owne wil; and þough it so be, thei auten not to care, for goode dedes schewen alwey a good wil, and euele dedes yuel wil."[519] Anticipating Flete's solution, Christina's good grace with God is assured with her charitable acts as recorded in the *vita*, curing people, sending visions to set Geoffrey on the right path as an abbot, etc. But more immediately, her anxiety is soothed by a vision in which Jesus sends her a vision of three young men delivering her a crown of virginity.[520] This reassures her "that Christ had preserved her chaste in mind and body."[521]

Mind and body—two components of virginity; the latter is more or less obvious, at least to the virgin herself, but the former is practically ineffable. Even if consent may be considered

[518] Ibid, 127.
[519] Colledge and Chadwick, eds., *Remedies Against Temptation*, 222.
[520] Talbot, *The Life of Chirstina of Markyate*, 129.
[521] Ibid.

clear cut in the sources, it was clearly not clear cut to Christina herself, in determining her response to her thoughts, nor to the suffering readers of *Remedies*. Yet this mental aspect of virginity consistently recurs in Christina's *vita*. For instance, in a scene potentially meant to mirror St. Katherine of Alexandria's legal defense of Christianity, Christina defends her vow of virginity that invalidates her marriage: "I will not merely take an oath [to reject earthly marriage], but I am prepared to prove it, by carrying red-hot iron in these my bare hands."[522] Evidenced by Christina's suggestion here, virginity as a concept may only be tested through miracle, spiritual as it is, similar to the withering of Salomé's hand as described by Evans. Elsewhere this mental aspect is emphasized—e.g., Christina's ally Edwin assuring the bishop of Canterbury that "she was inviolate in mind and body" ("incorrupta mente et corpore").[523] Given this clear concept of virginity and integrity being both corporal and mental/spiritual, it is natural that not just physical penetration, but mental penetration by temptation, intrusive thoughts, the devil, etc., would be a major concern for Christina in her vocation as a virgin. Tying the incident back to temptation to despair, it is clear in the text this does not drive her quite that far; that said, her worry over her virginity does have the potential to inhibit her taking the vows formally that she had dedicated herself to so long ago. In that sense, the temptation is similar—it is a meta-temptation to abandon the calling God set her on for worry over the purity of her thoughts.

This moves us to the next instance of this sort of meta-temptation, which is Christina's subsequent experience of intrusive blasphemous thoughts. Sexual temptation defeated, the devil assaults her mind with blasphemy. The description of these temptations is particularly vivid:

> Disturbed by these events, the demon launched out into new warfare, so terrorizing the friend of Christ with horrible apparitions and unclean shapes that for many years

[522] Ibid, 63. This statement is also reminiscent of the romance genre, recalling tests of fidelity such as that the wife of Athelston was subjected to in the eponymous fourteenth-century romance, or Isolde and Tristan's technical truths about the latter's faithfulness tested through ordeal.
[523] Ibid, 84-85.

> afterwards, whenever she composed her weary limbs to rest, she dared not turn upon her side nor look about her. For it seemed to her that the devil might stifle her or inveigle her by his wicked wiles into committing some unseemly wantonness. … The demon… assaulted her with the spirit of blasphemy. He was confident that if he could cloud her faith with the slightest darkness, [he would win the fight]. He came by stealth and put evil thoughts into her mind. He suggested horrible ideas about Christ, detestable notions about His Mother. But she would not listen.[524]

Clearly Christina does not want to think evil thoughts about Christ and Mary, though she did, on a very basic level, want to have sex with the young cleric despite her more elevated desire for virginity. Therefore we should distinguish between these two kinds of thoughts in our analysis of Christina's spiritual state. In this case, the temptation is reconfigured not as a temptation to accept the blasphemous thoughts themselves, but to give into despair. This is made clear by Christina's reaction to them. Whereas, when faced with sexual temptation, she chastised her flesh, when faced with this new temptation, she instead responds with fear and helplessness: "Harassed by these and other matters, the handmaid of Christ was inwardly disturbed and feared that God had abandoned her." Of course, she starts fearing she has these thoughts because of some sin, due to her over-active conscience: "But when she recalled that God leaves no sin unpunished, she wondered whether these many and grievous ills might not have come upon her through her own fault." She does not take preventative measures not to consent to blasphemy, as she did with the sexual temptation—instead her real temptation, though she does not seem to realize it herself, is to despair.

There are a few obvious ways in which Christina anticipates exactly the issue of temptation to despair as presented in *Chastising* and *Remedies*. For one, *Chastising* lists horrible sights and temptations as actually a temptation to despair, the description of which sounds highly similar to Christina's unwanted thoughts: "to sum goostli lyuers þer fallen many dredis, boþ

[524] Ibid, 131.

wakynge and slepynge: to sum bi dredeful bodili felynge. Also to sum in her bigynnynge comen imagynacions of dredeful þinges which þei mow not put awei, but bi a special grace of god."[525] In mentioning these thoughts, the narrator avoids specificity in both Christina's *vita* and *Chastising*, presumably to spare the reader from experiencing dangerous ideas themselves: "it is perilouse to specifie suche þouȝtes, for sum bien traueiled wiþ oo þouȝt þat anoþer man or womman wold neuer, ne parauenture shul neuer imagyne suche a þouȝt, but bi oþer mennys tellynge.[526] The fact that despair, not blasphemy, is the danger at hand is covered by Flete. He describes intrusive thoughts similarly, but mentions blasphemy specifically: "His [the devil's] stratagems and temptations must be met cautiously and spiritually: namely, by not worrying about any of the fanciful ideas conceived, whether erroneous or foul; that is, blasphemies, whether seen or heard, and by ignoring and resisting them, as it were gently, not struggling against them."[527] Moreover, as discussed previously, the key to whether a thought is voluntary or not lies in the thinker's emotional reaction to it—"Such a person therefore is not separated from God, but joined to him, however much he may be tortured by distress. For the just man suffers many afflictions in his soul at the instigation of evil spirits, but he cannot perish from eternal life through such trials, because in temptation our merciful Lord does not account as a crime that which, with the permission of his majesty, one suffers unwillfully."[528] In this case, Christina's experience maps onto Flete's assessment quite clearly, with her emotional state highly disturbed and troubled. Moreover, the biographer specifies explicitly that she never consented to the intrusive thoughts ("she would not listen"), yet Christina, overlaid with this tribulation, fears abandonment by God. This, too, anticipates the literature discussed in my previous chapter, such

[525] Bazire and Colledge, eds., *The Chastising of God's Children*, 117-118.
[526] Ibid, 119.
[527] Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones,*" 161.
[528] Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones,*" 163.

as *Chastising*'s warning that tribulation is not a sign of abandonment but love of God: "and þouȝ þe soule be tormentid wiþ goostli temptacions of þe wicked spirit, we shul nat suppose þerfor þat we bien aliened or forsake of oure lord, but we shuln tristili hoope þat we bien þe more acceptable to god, whanne we so deem ouresilf, and worshippe god, and þank hym of his riȝtwisnesse."[529] Despite predating *Chastising* and *Remedies* by several hundred years, Christina's problem maps onto those texts' assessment of temptation to despair and mental tribulation quite neatly.

In *Chastising*, people may be freed from such thoughts "bi a special grace of god"; likewise Christina is saved through God's consolation. Responding to her prayers, Jesus declares: "Be not afraid of these horrible temptations, for the key of your heart is in my safe keeping, and I keep guard over your mind and the rest of your body. No one can enter except by my permission."[530] This does not stop the temptations from occurring, but it does give her great consolation in those moments: "during the rest of her life, as often as she was assailed by temptation or wearied with suffering, she remembered the key and as confirmation of Christ's promise to His handmaid she instantly experienced divine consolation."[531] Moreover, given the difficulty of her tribulation, her perseverance can be read as resulting in an "increase of merit" promised in *Chastising* and elsewhere, further validating her status as a holy woman. Christina's struggle with intrusive blasphemous thoughts and subsequent despair radically distinguishes her from the iron-clad virgins of hagiography. Whereas God miraculously grows St. Agnes' hair and supplies her with a shining garment to prevent men from accessing her body, He promises Christina to guard her "mind and body" so "No one can enter except by my permission." Yet she

[529] Bazire and Colledge, eds., *The Chastising of God's Children*, 200.
[530] Talbot, *The Life of Chirstina of Markyate*, 133.
[531] Ibid, 133.

still experiences the temptations. God's enclosure of the virgin in Christina's *vita* is more metaphorical, and encompasses not just the body but the mind, which is now also under threat. Yet the same anxiety over the enduring importance of enclosure in female spirituality brought visibility to Christina's specific tribulation, far before pastoralia caught up with the problem of scrupulosity and temptation to despair via intrusive thoughts.[532]

Marie d'Oignies: Intercessory Prayer Against Despair

The next holy woman I cover is not an example of facing temptation to despair herself, but of remedying this temptation in others. Marie d'Oignies lived from around 1170-1213 and her vita was written by her confessor, Jacques of Vitry.[533] Marie is notable for being considered "the first beguine"—i.e., she was a vowed religious woman who was not a part of a specific monastic order, but rather "lived in a community of women in a beguinage in Oignies."[534] While the *vita* was written in Latin in Liège, it received several Middle English translations from the thirteenth century to the fifteenth (the latter of which Jennifer Brown bases her edition on), as part of a "flourishing trade" of books between Flanders and England.[535] Moreover, this Middle English translation seems to have "popularized" the text's appeal compared to the original:

> A female or lay audience may also be indicated in the mystics' *vitae* by the scribe's claim that he will not be translating some of the more difficult glosses on scripture, because he

[532] An interesting parallel to note here is Christina's thoughts themselves seem to penetrate others', even as her own thoughts are dangerously penetrable by evil spirits. For instance, her gift of clairvoyance seems to give her access to her sisters' thoughts just as supernatural powers attempt to access hers: "Thou [the Lord] gavest her the power to know the secret thoughts of men, and to see those that were far off and deliberately concealed as if they were present. This was made manifest in what follows. One of her maidens was thinking of doing something or other secretly: and the handmaid of God, seated in another house, saw it through the walls and forbade her saying: 'Do it not, do it not,'" etc. (191). Christina's "outward" orientation, spiritually, here, might be correlated with the narrator's tendency to describe her as behaving manfully or contrasting her with "timid" other sisters, such as when she "thrust out" ["eiecit"] a vision of a demon in the chapel (178-179). While Christina must obviously be conceived of as a woman for these comparisons to make sense, it underlines how virgins were often treated as *viragines* in the early Middle Ages, even as we begin to see Christina as a more late-medieval "romance heroine" type virgin in the text, as well.

[533] Jennifer Brown, ed., *Three Women of Liège: A Critical Edition of and Commentary on the Middle English Lives of Elizabeth of Spalbeek, Christina Mirabilis, and Marie d'Oignies* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 1.

[534] Ibid, 2.

[535] Ibid, 10-11.

> expects his readers would not fully understand the biblical quotes or the commentaries accompanying them. Indeed, several biblical references are excised from all four mystics' lives [in MS Douce 114] , and the *vita* of Marie d'Oignies lacks the entire, theologically subtle introduction.[536]

One potential member of this audience was Margery Kempe, who "cites Marie d'Oignies as one of her main two models (along with Bridget of Sweden)" specifically in justifying her gift of holy tears.[537] Thus Marie d'Oignies's *vita* is clearly connected with women's spirituality in England; it also provides another example of concern about temptation to despair in Middle English hagiography.

Though there has been plenteous scholarship on Marie (and the beguines in general), the incidents in which her prayer saves people from despair have been relatively passed over. In general what interests scholars is the dynamics of her relationship with her confessor and then the issue of orthodoxy versus heterodoxy and questions of authority given her status as a beguine, albeit an early one. These concerns, nonetheless, betray a continued relevance of *discretio spirituum* and how gender plays into her spirituality. Alastair Minnis, for instance, examines female preaching (or lack thereof) throughout the high to late Middle Ages and cites Marie as an example as a woman carefully positioned within the structures of Church authority. Marie, despite her desire to preach, could not do so as a woman, and instead, found her voice in advising Jacques:

> Jacques... 'arranged his sermons for his audience in an agreeable and beneficial order through the merits of the handmaid of the Lord'. In other words, he sought her advice about the most effective way to organize his sermons. Furthermore, while he was actually preaching, Mary would supplicate 'the Lord and the blessed Virgin by saying the Hail Mary a hundred times'. These prayers seem to have been heard, since Jacques became one of the foremost preachers of his day.[538]

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[536] Ibid, 17. This manuscript includes the lives of Elizabeth Spalbeek, Christina Mirabilis, and Marie d'Oignies, and "a letter written by Stephen of Siena... in support of the canonization of Catherine of Siena" (15).
[537] Ibid, 21.
[538] Alastair Minnis, "Religious Roles: Public and Private," in *Medieval Holy Women in the Christian Tradition c.1100-c.1500*, eds. Alastair Minnis and Rosaylnn Voaden (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 62-63.

In fact, "The power of the prayers of holy women was widely acknowledged, and exploited."[539] Most scholars seem to emphasize the "power of prayers" especially in regards to purgatory, as Minnis does subsequently in his essay. Barbara Newman terms female intercessory prayer as a special "apostolate to the dead," citing Marie d'Oignies as a prolific example of such an intercessor for the souls in purgatory.[540] These authors emphasize Marie's gift for preserving hope in souls—but it needs to be emphasized that Marie's prayer extends to those living and struggling with despair, rather than just the dead.

Others likewise take up the difficulties in parsing out Marie's personal power or spirituality from the framing imposed on it by her hagiographer. Melissa Brown for instance contrasts Marie to a later Beguine, Marguerite Porete, who was executed for the Free Spirit heresy. According to Brown, Marguerite Porete's lack of clerical approval, and her persecution to the point of death, makes her a more "authentic" voice of female spirituality than Marie's hagiographical example, which was crafted with and for clerical approval.[541] In Brown's historical assessment of the Beguines (especially mendicant beguines), she notes that a major reason for Church suspicion of them was their "lack of enclosure."[542] Cloistering, she argues, could often protect a woman from accusations of heresy, citing Mechtild of Magdeburg as an example.[543] As discussed in the above virginity section, their activity in the world at large had implications for chastity: "The imputation that many female mystics were actually Free Spirits and thereby sexually permissive, against this background, must have carried some weight in the

[539] Ibid, 72.
[540] Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 109, 118.
[541] Melissa Brown, "Marie d'Oignies, Marguerite Porete and authentic female mystic piety in the Middle Ages," in *Worshipping Women: Misogyny and Mysticism in the Middle Ages*, eds. Francesca C. Bussey and John O. Ward (Sydney: Department of History, University of Sydney, 1997), 188-189.
[542] Ibid, 199.
[543] Ibid, 202.

minds of Church leaders around Marguerite Porete's time."[544] For Marie, who herself was not technically cloistered, emphasis was still laid on her submission to clerical authority, partially, she notes, because Jacques wrote her *vita* as part of a campaign for her canonization.[545] Even so, Brown argues that Marie's erotic, "bodily-oriented" or "fleshly" mysticism, under the supervision of Jacques, was not subversive, but actively promoted by the Church as a suitable alternative to Marguerite's flirtation with Free Spirit rejection of "the Church and its sacraments."[546]

More recent scholarship has moved away from assessing the "authenticity" of Marie's mysticism or questions of how we should evaluate her life in light of feminist theory. Yet interest in her sexuality has only continued. For instance, Jennifer Brown also wrote an article on Marie's sexuality (and the apparent sexual tension between her and her confessor/hagiographer, Jacques of Vitry). In many ways, Marie is a foil of Christina of Markyate—unlike Christina, she actually did marry, and that marriage was likely consummated.[547] Unlike Christina, she was successful in her attempt to convince her husband of a chaste marriage.[548] Also unlike Christina, she was often described as being impervious to the experience of lust or sexual temptation—rebuking Jacques' own attraction to her, yet being so innocent of lust she didn't realize what, exactly, she was rebuking in him.[549] Part of this is due, Brown argues, to her "masculine" physiology, revealing how crucial this humoral understanding of men and women was in discourses surrounding chastity. Jacques describes Marie's body as "dried out" like a drum skin stretched between the poles of her asceticism:

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[544] Ibid, 199.
[545] Ibid, 219.
[546] Ibid, 233-234.
[547] Jennifer Brown, "The Chaste Erotics of Marie d'Oignies and Jacques de Vitry," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 19, no. 1 (2010): 83.
[548] Ibid, 84.
[549] Ibid, 77.

> Marie's body was also described as dried out (*desiccaverat*), desiccated. According to the medieval classification of men's and women's temperaments, women were expected to be moist but not dry, which was how men were supposed to be. By making Marie completely dry, Jacques further desexualized her by making her more masculine in the medieval mind. Indeed, as Joan Cadden has pointed out in her book on medieval medicine and gender, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages*, the twelfth-century mystic Hildegard of Bingen took these classifications to the conclusion that women of dry temperament could more easily abstain from sex and were thus more suited to the chaste life. In producing no moisture, Marie was less likely to fall prey to the physical deficiencies (such as lust) usually inherent in the female body.[550]

As I argued in the previous section, Christina is often described in masculine terms as well, though ultimately the "openness" and "fleshiness" of her female body leaves her on many occasions vulnerable to temptation and mental interference by demons and other outside influences. Not so for Marie, apparently. Marie herself is on many occasions explicitly said to be "sealed" and exempted from this female unboundedness, and it is not her body and mind that are under threat, but her friends, whom she miraculously saves.[551]

For instance, in Book II of the *vita* in the chapter describing her "spirit of Goddes drede," Jacques describes her fear of the Lord in the following way:

> Therfore she hadde holy drede in herte, as a brest bande that streynid togadir hir thoghtes; and in mouthe, as a brydel that refreyned hir tunge; in werke, as a prikke, lest she shulde be flowe thurgh sluggednesse. In alle thinges, drede was rule, leste she shulde excede mesure. This drede as a besome swepyd and clensed hir herte fro doubilnesse, hir mouth fro falsenes, and hir werkes fro alle vanite. She sothely as a gardyn closed and a welle couerid receyued nothinge lightely but Criste and thoos thinges that perteyned to Cryste.[552]

The language describing Christina here is that of enclosure—and primarily mental/spiritual enclosure. Her thoughts are bound, speech restrained by a bridle. Overall, a sense of "drede"

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[550] Ibid, 78.

[551] Of course, Marie still seems to experience a very feminized, erotic mysticism, which typically constitutes the other side of the coin of the "feminine flesh" concept articulated by Lochrie. Brown's point regarding this is essentially that this is a product of Jacques' male gaze in narrating her *vita*: "The seductive nature of Marie's asceticism for both Jacques and his readers is understandable in two ways. On the one hand, it confirmed Marie's heightened spiritual status, but on the other, it placed her firmly in her body and showed the physical understanding of God that women, especially, were supposed to have" (89).

[552] Brown, ed., *Three Women of Liège,* 124.

creates for herself a "gardyn closed" to all incursions except those of Christ. This language recalls Christina's *vita* in which only Christ held the key to the lock he placed on her mind. For Marie, this does not seem to be in response to intrusive thoughts, but it does cement her as part of traditional thinking about virginity as mental and physical enclosure. Another thing to note is that "drede" is filling that purpose here, which seems to be a negative emotion, but is used positively here as a way to restrain her flesh. This is seen elsewhere in her life, in Book I, where Jacques recounts Marie's tendency for tearful and overly critical confessions:

> [she] rekenyed and comitid streitly atte euene alle hir deedys. If she myghte perceyue that she hadde excedid neuer so litil, she shroue hir and a wondirful contricyone of herte. She, punyshynge hirselfe often, dredyd there where was nouther drede ne doute. And in this allone wee, sekynge solas to oure slouth, otherewhile reprehendid hir that she shrof hir of siche smale thinges oftener thanne we wolde.[553]

Interestingly enough, this behavior might qualify for what Flete describes as one of these temptations to despair—overly-scrupulous fear of venial sins being more serious than they are, or non-sinful acts being sinful, as Marie dreads "where was nouther drede ne doute." While such dread is occasionally conceptualized as the sign of an overactive conscience or a melancholic temperament obscured by black smoke, here Jacques instead frames it as protective. His own reservations about Marie's behavior are portrayed as a sign of his own sloth rather than a spiritual problem for Marie. Though it is true that Marie seems ironclad compared to Christina, the depiction is complicated by Jacques's depiction of Marie as one to be admired rather than imitated.

Marie's *vita* touches on the issues of intrusive thoughts and scrupulosity, but more typically in reference to others. One of her miracles involves a young Cistercian sister who draws the attention of the devil for her holy living. Satan then assaults her with intrusive thoughts:

[553] Ibid, 96.

> sythen he knewe that virgyne dreedful and meke, hee assayled hir with blasfemys and vnclene thoghtes at hee myghte caste hir downe into dispayre by ferdefulnesse and vnordynate drede. Then, as she was dreedful and not vsed to siche thoghtes, in the firste entre of the thoghte [she] leued that she hadde loste feith and withstood longe tyme with mykel sorowe. Atte laste soothly, not suffrynge nor openynge to any othere the sounde of hir herte that she myghte receyue medecyn for feerdefulnesse, [she] felle as into despayre.[554]

This excessive worry deters her from prayer and confession, and she even considers suicide at multiple times.[555] It is only through Marie's intercession accompanied by forty days of fasting that "hee—that most hidous spirite—lafte the virgyne."[556] When Marie drives this demon to hell, the virgin can then receive confession and Eucharist once more.

As we can observe in this incident, the Cistercian virgin seems to have issues similar to those faced by Christina and those described in *Chastising*. Assailed by a spirit of blasphemy, she questions whether she has brought this tribulation on herself through a lack of faith. The threat is not the initial horrible thoughts, but rather, despairing about them and abandoning faith in God. In this case she does fall to the temptation to despair. Why? One reason is a lack of communication with others, since she initially bears this burden alone. This goes directly against the advice given in *Chastising* and *Remedies* that recommends trusting in a spiritual director when confronted with temptations such as these. The solution is the miraculous prayer of Marie (not her sisters)—though the text notes that this was not meant to snub the virgins, but rather, demonstrate the sanctity of Marie.[557] Still, it is the intercessory prayers of a holy woman that help overcome this difficulty. This recalls *Chastising*'s admonition as discussed in my previous chapter:

> Also for a nedeful and a general remedie, in þis temptacioun speciali and suche oþer perelous and dredeful temptacioun speciali and suche oþer perelous and dredeful

[554] Ibid, 106.
[555] Ibid.
[556] Ibid, 107.
[557] Ibid, 106-107.

> temptaciouns, it is goode to shewe it to a mannes confessour, or ellis to oon or tweyne oþer gostli lyuers, and aske oft counseil, and to meke hym to oþer mens preiers, for þer falliþ no man ne womman in myschief but suche þat gooen forþ and wil nat shewe her herte to no man, and so þei bien acombred, for ellis shulden þei nat falle into temptacioun.[558]

We might also consider this as a technique by Jacques to validate Marie's own unassailable chastity. As mentioned above, Beguines were suspect because of a lack of enclosure compared to cloistered nuns. Here a cloistered nun, and a virtuous virgin, falls to demonic incursion into her mind via intrusive thoughts (i.e., temptation to despair)—and it is Marie's prayers that deliver her. Though not physically enclosed, Marie is more mentally enclosed, and her faith allows her to deliver the nun from demonic assault. Cloistering becomes spiritualized in Jacques' recounting in order to justify the Beguine's sanctity.

One more thing to keep in mind is the use of "drede" both here and in Marie's case. Here "vnordynate drede" is the tool by which the devil casts the virgin into despair, but in Marie's case, it's the very method of her mental enclosure—they serve opposite functions, in fact. What is the difference? It might be for one, a level of sanctity. Elsewhere, Jacques expresses dismay at Marie's extreme physical ascetic practice, and Jacques justifies it as "I seye not this preisynge the exces, but tellynge the feruoure."[559] "Drede," for Marie, works within her hagiography to establish her sanctity, but it is not an example to be followed, as it can lead to disastrous results, as seen with the virgin she must save with her prayers and fasting. This is a trope we later see repeated in Catherine of Siena's *vita*, as discussed in the next section.

There is another miracle Marie works for a religious person tempted with despair, though the circumstances are slightly different and highlight the over-scrupulous, over-ascetic version of this problem rather than the intrusive thoughts version. The incident is related in book two,

[558] Bazire and Colledge, eds., *The Chastising of God's Children*, 155.
[559] Brown, ed., *Three Women of Liège*, 88.

chapter three ("on the spirit of pity"), in which a Cistercian monk "bisyed hym with fervour of spirite to come as to the euenlik state of the firste fadir, Adam."[560] This is an obvious example of unreasonable perfectionism, which Jacques highlights by the prelapsarian comparison; it is literally impossible for this monk to erase the effects of his fallen nature. Yet he tries

> with ful myche laboure (but veyne), turmentynge hymselfe in fastynge, wakynges, and prayers, hee myghte not recuuir the firste state of innocens, he felle first into an heuynesse and slouthe. ... He studyed also to kepe his lyfe in perfite clannes withouten any venyalle synne; and so, by entisynge of the myddaye fende, while he desyred impossibil, nor how so mykelle he hadde labored he myghte on no maner haue hadde that he wolde.[561]

Jacques's remarks about the monk's avoidance of venial sin to this absurd degree and his fear of even enjoying food to a normal extent clash with the author's previous statements about Marie's dread and inflation of venial sin as being spiritually beneficial. Most likely, this is meant to separate real, imitable behavior from Marie's exceptionalism as a saint. Dread and spiritual perfectionism, accompanied by extreme asceticism, have the opposite effect as that intended, in fact encouraging the "noonday demon" monastic version of "sloth," and ultimately "for sorowe, hee slode into the dyche of dispair."[562] Jacques diagnoses the problem in nearly identical terms as those used by Flete, as the monk "countid deedly synnes thoos that are venyalle."[563] (Compare to Flete's warning of "the spirit of error... showing that something is forbidden and sinful which is in itself indifferent or good, or that something is a mortal sin which is in itself a venial sin."[564]) Because of this he avoids the Eucharist, and he "that onys hadde forsaken his owne wille putte aweye fro hym the yok of obedyens."[565] Once again what Jacques writes connects well with

[560] Ibid, 141.
[561] Ibid.
[562] Ibid.
[563] Ibid.
[564] Lamothe, ed. and trans., *Remedies*, 175.
[565] Brown, ed., *Three Women of Liège*, 141.

Flete's point that ignoring the vow of obedience to a superior in order to follow a faulty, scrupulous conscience is itself a greater sin (comparable to heresy): "sometimes he [the fiend] drives one to consent to an erroneous conscience rather than humbly obey the discernment of another, which is heretical."[566] Eventually, his abbot realizes the problem and prays for him, but once more, it takes the miraculous intercession of Marie to deliver him. He brings the monk to Marie, and Jacques relates:

> whanne she bysoghte oure Lorde for the monke with terful sighes, in a meruelos maner, while the monke seyde Confitior byfore the offys of the Masse—and she prayed enterly for hym—as litl blake stonys were seen falle oute of the monkes mouthe atte ilke a worde of Confiteor. Than she, perceuiynge in that sighte that obstynacyone of despayre and blaknesse of sorowe and woo hadde lafte the monke, thanked oure Lorde that wole not the dethe of a synner but rathir that he be conuertid and lyue. The monke soothly after Masse, as fro a ferre contre, tornyd to hymselfe ageyne, receyuynge Cristes body, and, after he hadde taken heelful medecyne, perfitily recuueryd.[567]

Much as in the previous incident with the despairing nun, reception of the Eucharist completes the despairing monk's redemption. Black pebbles fall from his mouth as he confesses in ritual preparation for Mass, representing his "obstinacy of despair" and "blackness of sorrow and woe."The Confiteor admits fault on the part of the speaker in thought, word, and deed, as well as requests the intercession of the saints and angels, as well as one's brothers ("et vos, fratres, orare pro me..."). It is the very prayers of his sister, Marie, that allows him to fruitfully recognize and confess his despair, born of misplaced perfectionism. The black pebbles, meanwhile, recall the "black smoke" of a constitution over troubled by melancholy, as discussed in Flete as being more prone to this sort of spiritual anxiety.

One more thing to note is the gendered difference between the two *miracula*. It is the nun who is portrayed as "possessed" and suffering demonic incursion into her mind; while the fiend

[566] Lamothe, ed. and trans., *Remedies*, 175.
[567] Brown, ed., *Three Women of Liège*, 142.

is certainly responsible for the monk's suffering, his personal integrity is not called into question. It seems in general, it is his own scrupulous conscience responsible for his despair—the temptation is portrayed as primarily internally generated, while the nun's is almost entirely externalized. This reinforces assumptions of female versus male physiology, yet also sets Marie apart as somehow above all of them in her ability to administer to these related, but distinct temptations to despair as one who is not unaffected by "drede," but benefited from it in a superhuman manner.[568]

In sum, while Marie herself does not experience intrusive thoughts or scrupulosity, or any form of temptation to despair, several of her *miracula* related in the *vita* portray her as delivering monks and nuns from such temptation. As Jacques describes these "patients" of Marie, their spiritual tribulations closely echo Flete's and *Chastising*'s treatments of temptation to despair. Marie's miraculous interventions draw on the idea of prayer and community in treating these spiritual ills, but also serve to set Marie apart as untouched by temptation to despair herself, and highlights her "mentally cloistered" nature despite her physical freedom as a beguine.

In many ways, Christina of Markyate and Marie d'Oignies appear to be opposites. Christina is portrayed more vulnerably and realistically and Marie more idealistically; Christina's example is potentially imitable, whereas Marie's is only admirable. Yet both women are portrayed battling intrusive thoughts, despair, and demonic assault on the mind in their own ways—Christina for herself, an Marie for supposedly superior cloistered religious. These two saints, though they lived before the flourishing of despair-related literature, reveal that

[568] Book two also contains a chapter dedicated to the "spirit of strengthe" (chapter 5), which reiterates tribulation literature's emphasis on patience in the face of adversity rather than grucching. This is the chapter Brown focuses on in how it describes Marie's body as "strecchyd... and d[r]yed" (151). Yet much like the *Twelve Profits* texts the tribulations are by and far more focused on physical infirmities and such over temptation, which is not a huge issue for Marie herself in this text, as I have argued above.

temptation to despair was still a very real threat, especially for female religious of questionable enclosure/virginity. In relating their lives, their hagiographers explicitly include this form of "demonic incursion" into women's minds to ultimately prove their subjects' mental/spiritual continence. In the following chapter, I will continue to trace the development of these threads in female spirituality into the later Middle Ages, examining the hagiography of three mystics—Birgitta of Sweden, Catherine of Siena, and Margery Kempe—who likewise were "unenclosed" and clearly connected with temptation to despair.

Chapter 4: The Dark Side of Mysticism

Despite their privileged intimacy with God, female mystics often found themselves plagued with tribulation as often as they were blessed with revelations. As St. Birgitta of Sweden interprets the experience,

> If a fist were always held tightly closed, then either the muscles would be strained or the hand would grow weak. It is similar in spiritual matters. If the soul always remained in contemplation, then she would either forget herself and perish through pride, or else her crown of glory would be lessened. The reason why God's friends are at times comforted by the infusion of the Holy Spirit and are at other times, with God's permission, distressed is that their distress tears up the roots of sin and firmly plants the fruit of righteousness. [569]

The late medieval holy women I examine in this chapter—Birgitta of Sweden, Catherine of Siena, and Margery Kempe—all, at times, experience the open and closed fist in turns. Pertinently, the periods of desolation in this cycle are often consumed by temptation to despair via intrusive thoughts. It's no coincidence, as Catherine was friends with Flete, Birgitta is commonly associated with tribulation in the manuscript tradition, and Margery was an imitator of the latter.

As outlined in the previous chapter, intrusive thoughts as well as welcome revelations were both popularly believed to affect these mystics because of their supposed feminine "permeability." As such, *discretio spirituuum* was essential to parsing the origins of their spiritual experiences. Moreover, patience and practical remedies were employed to endure this "dark side of mysticism." In this chapter, I will not only discuss the hagiography of these female saints, and how their emotions and temptations to despair work into their *vitae*, but I will also look into the theology the women themselves present on this topic. For Birgitta and Catherine I will focus on their own accounts of their revelations, in addition to Raymond of Capua's

[569] Searby, trans., *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden: Volume 2*, 48.

Legenda major of Catherine. For the latter, I will pay special attention to how temptation to despair is represented differently in the Middle English translation of her *Dialogue* and her idealizing *vita*. I then progress to *The Book of Margery Kempe*, which I argue synthesizes the meta-temptation to despair through intrusive thoughts experienced by those pursuing a religious vocation and the lay temptation to despair that requires them to trust in God's mercy for their past sins, much in the same style of *Chastising* or ME3. This method is mirrored in Margery's mixing of lay and religious modes within her *Book*. As the culmination of this tradition, these three female mystics demonstrate the interconnectedness among chastity, *discretio spirituum*, and temptation to despair.

Birgitta of Sweden and Catherine of Siena

Near-contemporaries, female visionaries and authors, public figures, and laywomen—Catherine and Birgitta share many titles in common, as well as somewhat similar themes in their work. Despite being continental mystics who initially composed in their own vernaculars, they both accrued considerable popularity in Middle English translation. Birgitta was a Swedish noblewoman who lived 1303-1373. She married when she was 14 and had eight children; her husband "died when Birgitta was in her early forties... A few days after his death she received her 'vision of calling' to a spiritual life. She renounced her worldly possessions, made provision for her children and took up residence in the vicinity of the Cistercian monastery of Alvastra in Östergötland."[570] Shortly thereafter she left Sweden for Rome in 1349 and spent most of the rest of her life receiving visions and going on pilgrimages.[571] She was canonized less than two decades after her death, in part thanks to the dedication of her confessor, Alfonso of Jaén.[572] She

[570] Bridget Morris and Veronica O'Mara, introduction to *The Translation of the Works of St Birgitta of Sweden into the Medieval European Vernaculars*, eds. Bridget Morris and Veronica O'Mara, 1-24. Turnhout: Brepols, 2000.
[571] Ibid.
[572] Ibid, 5.

also wrote the rule for the Birgittine Order, starting in the 1340s.[573] One of the most famous and well-endowed monasteries in England, Syon Abbey, was a Birgittine house, which "gained a reputation as a centre of book-learning and book production."[574] Birgitta's influence in England does not end there; as Rosalynn Voaden notes, "versions of the *Revelations* were circulating [in England] even before the saint's death, and there is considerable evidence for an extensive readership of both Latin and vernacular versions in the early decades of the fifteenth century," though the eighth book was often missing in English copies.[575]

Catherine of Siena, on the other hand, lived from 1347-1380 and is famous both for her asceticism and commitment to virginity, her mystical visions and marriage to Jesus, and her campaign to persuade the papacy to return from Avignon to Rome.[576] Her primary text is *The Dialogue,* in which she dictated her visions in her native Italian, while her novelistic *vita* was written by Raymond of Capua in support of her canonization.[577] Jennifer Brown notes that Catherine's work was likewise highly popular in England, as evidenced by the proliferation of Middle English materials regarding Catherine, including a translation of the *Dialogue* entitled *The Orcherd of Syon*, excerpts from her *Legenda maior* by Raymond (eventually printed in full translation by Wynkyn de Worde), and *The Cleannesse of Sowle* ("a testimony of Catherine's").[578] *The Orcherd* was prepared, in fact, "for the nuns at Syon Abbey" indicating another manner of connection between Catherine and her predecessor's legacies.[579]

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[573] Ibid.
[574] Ibid, 8.
[575] Rosalynn Voaden, "Rewriting the Letter: Variations in the Middle English Translation of the *Epistola solitarii ad reges* of Alfonso of Jaén," in *The Translation of the Works of St Birgitta of Sweden into the Medieval European Vernaculars*, eds. Bridget Morris and Veronica O'Mara (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 172.
[576] Jennifer Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard: Reading Catherine of Siena in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 5.
[577] Ibid.
[578] Ibid, 13-14.
[579] Ibid, 6.

Most of the scholarship relevant to this pair of saints discusses their lives as public figures and how that undergirds their mysticism. Their *vitae* are typically depicted as a way to authorize their revelations or to protect them from accusations of heresy; the tension between their official hagiographies as told by their confessors and their own works also emerges as a major theme. However, temptation to despair does not feature prominently in the scholarship about either Birgitta or Catherine, perhaps as it is overshadowed by the many provocative incidents in Catherine's *vita*, and isn't included in Birgitta's *vita* at all. Still, several authors have noted their intersections with Flete. For instance, Roger Anderson explores Catherine's representation in Flete's sermons. Anderson does not focus on temptation in his article, but on Flete's portrayal of Catherine as a voice of Christ: "in Flete's homiletical discourse, a first person pronoun can refer to God, Christ, or to Catherine (potentially simultaneously). Thus, there is a linguistic counterpart to Catherine's transformation into Christ, her assisting Christ in the redemptory work for the sins of Man, and even her performing it herself through her sufferings."[580] Several scholars have also noted Birgitta's connection to Flete, specifically in the incorporation of her revelations in the Latin version of *Remedies* in Cambridge University Library MS Ii.vi.3.[581] The extent to which Birgitta's revelations and Flete's discourse intersect thematically is still yet to be studied, which I hope to remedy here.

Jennifer Brown treats this connection most fully and dedicates a chapter to Flete in her monograph on Catherine's legacy in England, *Fruit of the Orchard*. Brown contends that "one part of the 'Englishness' of Catherine of Siena is due to the fact that rather than solely

[580] Roger Anderson, "Saints Catherine and Birgitta as received by preachers," in *Sanctity and Female Authorship: Birgitta of Sweden and Catherine of Siena*, eds. Maria Husabø Oen and Unn Falkeid (London: Routledge, 2019), 143.
[581] Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 62, as well as Anderson, drawing on M. B. Hackett, "William Flete and the *De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*," in *Medieval Studies Presented to Aubrey Gwynn, S.J.*, eds. J. A. Watt, J. B. Morall and F. X. Martin (Dublin: Colm O Lochlainn, 1961).

representing a foreign Continental spirituality, Catherine mirrors an already familiar English devotion in part by channeling back to England the thoughts, ideas, and philosophies of William Flete."[582] This influence, essentially, Brown describes as a focus on "Temptations (and the penance for failure to resist them)," which finds its way into "Catherine's own doctrine of faith exemplified in her letters, her *Dialogo,* and her *Legenda major*."[583] On several points I profoundly disagree with Brown's reading of *Remedies,* as she ignores the meta-temptation and scrupulosity angle to the work, and portrays it solely as an inditement of worldliness and a call to penitence,[584] when largely, it assumes good-faith on the part of the reader, as discussed in the previous chapter of this dissertation. Despite her reductive reading of *Remedies*, I completely agree with her assessment that Flete and Catherine's mutual influence is underrated on the issue of temptation. She also briefly mentions, though does not pursue, Catherine's scrupulosity as detailed in her *Legenda major* by Raymond of Capua, a clear connection with Flete that I will explore fully below.[585]

Few scholars apart from Brown have commented on Catherine's scrupulosity, though Ann Astell does explore Catherine's intense sense of guilt in her *vita*:

> In his first prologue to the Life of Saint Catherine... Raymond calls special attention, as Catherine's confessor, to her pronounced sense of guiltiness, which undergirds her bond of charity with sinners and her purgatorial patience in suffering: 'She accused herself as guilty before the Lord, on behalf of all others and beyond all others,' regarding herself in

[582] Ibid, 60.
[583] Ibid, 67.
[584] Ibid, 67-68 primarily, but for instance, she also claims later in the essay "Flete most frequently calls the exchanges he describes in *Remedies* as counsel, and not confession, but given the climate within which he is writing, an intentional slippage between the two is suggested" (77). This claim seems to ignore the fact that Flete dissuades obsessive confession for scrupulous consciences, calling doubt in confession itself a form of tempatation (see Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones,*" 173). Moreover she tends to conflate the ME3 version with Flete's own thought when it is later and highly adapted and fluid in the translation of Flete's Latin—such as her observation of the ME3's special incorporation of *Twelve Profits* themes and language (74).
[585] Ibid 72-73.

> some mysterious sense "as the cause of all the wrongdoing that was committed by sinners."[586]

Astell is primarily concerned, here, with Catherine's patient suffering as an *imitatio Christi*, rather than the nature of her guilt. Still, Astell's observations connect Catherine to the themes of tribulation pastoralia, in which resisting impatience is a meta-temptation. While her sufferings are in part self-afflicted through extreme asceticism, and in part copied from the desert fathers in enduring physical beatings of demons,[587] Raymond comes to a similar solution of patience as a primary virtue: "patience is the virtue that enables perseverance in charity and in every other virtue (since it enables one to endure obstacles and daily hardships); and, finally, patience is the virtue by which one suffers the martyrdom that fortitude braves."[588]

Questions of patience, temptation, and despair have centered more around Catherine than Birgitta, partially because Catherine has garnered more critical attention in general. Although the aforesaid scholars have touched on temptation, connection to Flete, and patience as regards these two saints, there is a significant gap in the scholarship as regards temptation to despair specifically. What seems to be more commonly studied is their status as female preachers and their mysticism, both topics that intersect heavily with feminist studies. The topic of preaching is more relevant than it initially appears; as I noted in my discussion of Marie d'Oignies, being female and having the authority to preach or act publicly in the Church were often mutually exclusive. This dilemma also has roots in the misogynistic identification of the female with "the flesh." As I noted above, this female "openness" can authorize mysticism, yet it also opens the likelihood of demonic influence, necessitating *discretio spirituum.*

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[586] Ann Astell, "Heroic Virtue in Blessed Raymond of Capua's *Life of Catherine of Siena*," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 42, no. 1 (2012): 52.
[587] Ibid, 47.
[588] Ibid, 50.

For instance, Rosalynn Voaden takes this angle and connects Birgitta's *Revelations* to *Chastising*. Specifically, she discusses the *Epistola solitarii ad reges* by Alfonso of Jaén, "Birgitta of Sweden's spiritual director and editor," which she dubs "one of the most influential medieval treatises on *discretio spirituum*."[589] Voaden notes that among the many works *Chastising* draws upon, *Epistola solitarii* is one. As I mentioned in my previous chapter as well Birgitta is mentioned explicitly in *Chastising*, however, as Voaden is careful to note, not for her visions but "as an example of strict spiritual obedience."[590] This is part of a general program of *Chastising,* reflective of its late fourteenth-century milieu, to discourage aspiring visionaries and promote caution towards supernatural experiences.[591] This caution against the "dark side" of visionary and mystical spirituality is often remarked upon in the scholarship, especially given contemporary skepticism towards Birgitta and Catherine against which their hagiographers vigorously defended them. Brown, for instance, observes that Catherine's discussion of the *discretio spirituum,* found initially in the *Dialogue* and reinforced with emphasis on her orthodoxy in Raymond's hagiography, circulated widely as part of the *Cleanness of Soul* in Middle English.[592] We might interpret this anxiety over mystics as public figures as an evolution of the anxiety over female claustration that inflected the lives of Christina of Markyate and Marie d'Oignies in earlier centuries.

On that note, the framing imposed by Birgitta's and Catherine's hagiographers on their revelations has sparked much debate, similar to what I covered above vis-à-vis Marie d'Oignies. Alastair Minnis, for instance, discusses the way one of Birgitta's anonymous hagiographers and

[589] Voaden, "Rewriting the Letter," 170-171.
[590] Ibid, 177.
[591] Ibid, 176-178.
[592] Jennifer Brown, "The Many Misattributions of Catherine of Siena: Beyond *The Orchard* in England," *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 41, no. 1 (2015): 74-75.

Alfonso of Jaén negotiated her claim to authority when formal preaching was forbidden to women:

> Birgitta's anonymous spin-doctor denies that she preached in the formal sense of the term. ... [H]e compares her practice to that of Mary Magdalene, who announced the resurrection of Christ privately (*in silentio*). It was left to the male apostles to preach it publicly. Similarly, St Birgitta 'did not preach her revelations publicly in church, but wrote them down *in silentio* and through men presented to the populace those things that were to be manifest'. This claim seems to be supported by the historical record, inasmuch as on occasion Birgitta did indeed enlist 'clerics to serve as her mouthpieces in church pulpits', and such preaching by proxy saved the appearances. However, towards the end of her life, she felt moved to address assemblies on the island of Cyprus and in Naples. A degree of caution is necessary in assessing the significance of these events, however, given that on Cyprus Birgitta's distinguished confessor, Alfonso of Jaén, seems to have done at least some of the talking for her, and in Naples she remained silent while Alfonso read her prediction of divine wrath to the crowd. But it would seem that Birgitta sometimes overstepped the fine line which the ecclesiastical establishment tried to draw between public address and private instruction.[593]

Notably, Minnis's interpretation of Birgitta's public career expands on his discussion of Marie d'Oignies who he argues likewise "preached secondhand" through Jacques de Vitry. Minnis draws on the work of F. Thomas Luongo who wrote on the topic concerning both Birgitta and Catherine. Luongo notes the imperative for visions to be out of the visionary's control rather than "authored": "The expansion of visionary experience among laypeople, and women in particular, led clerical authorities to impose an understanding of visions and similar experiences according to which the authenticity of the visionary depended on a radical 'suppression of human agency' by the visionary herself."[594] For Birgitta, this meant framing her as similar to a biblical author: "It makes Birgitta present as author of the manuscript, with an authority defined both by her dependence on divine inspiration and her active role as producer of the text. Birgitta as author is mediator of the relationship between inspiration and vision, and the agent responsible for moving

[593] Minnis, "Religious Roles: Public and Private," 56.
[594] F. Thomas Luongo, "Inspiration and Imagination: Visionary Authorship in the Early Manuscripts of the Revelations of Birgitta of Sweden," *Speculum* 93, vol. 4 (2018): 1104.

inspiration and vision to text, and ultimately to the book we have before us."[595] Regarding Catherine, it seems the primary concern was validating the visions through assuring her "stability" despite the fact she worked publicly as a laywoman rather than being cloistered or bound to a specific religious rule.[596] Of course this is based in "anxiety about female sexuality expressed in the movements for strict claustration of religious women."[597] Raymond accomplishes this in her *vita* in several ways, for one, how he portrays and positions her marriage to Christ in the narratives:

> Catherine's vocation is sealed, in Raymond's account, by her espousal to Christ as an experience that finalizes her conversion to the religious life and validates her public persona. Raymond does not allow Catherine to leave home without having resolved issues such as her sexuality and independence so that no threat to her integrity can be entertained. Thus, in Raymond's story, the espousal serves as conclusive authority for Catherine's position in the world and as a preemptive response to any criticism of the social scandal of a young unmarried woman acting independently in public.[598]

On the other hand, Raymond repeatedly contrasts Catherine with "bad" women, especially her "hysterical" mother (likewise independent after being widowed), "contrasting Catherine's 'masculinity' and acceptably spiritualized female role with Lapa's problematic femininity."[599]

Catherine, of course, has received the lion's share of attention regarding her public life's intersection with her role as a woman. Heather Webb, for instance, examines Catherine's heart in her own writings versus Raymond's *vita*. On one hand, "Throughout her letters Catherine bases ideas of identity, and particularly her own identity, in the heart. Focusing on the hottest (and thus most 'masculine') part of her female body, Catherine expresses the wish to pass on her strength and to give new life to the church."[600] On the other,

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[595] Ibid, 1109.
[596] F. Thomas Luongo, "Cloistering Catherine: Religious Identity in Raymond of Capua's *Legenda Major* of Catherine of Siena," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 3, no. 3 (2006): 31.
[597] Ibid, 29.
[598] Ibid, 37
[599] Ibid, 52-53.
[600] Heather Webb, "Catherine of Siena's Heart," *Speculum* 80, no. 3 (2005): 812.

> Raymond's story, in contrast, focuses on Catherine asking for and receiving Christ's heart. This conspicuous change in the episode can be attributed to Raymond's desire to make Catherine's excessively active life more acceptable to church authorities in order to speed her along to sainthood. In Raymond's version of this episode, Catherine becomes a martyr, giving up her heart. She is singled out by Christ to receive his heart as a mark of her sanctity. She is then miraculously returned to life but is no longer quite herself; her female body has become a container for Christ's will.[601]

In either case, the primary issue to be negotiated in establishing Catherine's authority in her public life is her bodily femaleness. The same trope of male and female physiology comes to the forefront of the text, in the depiction of male "heat" in Catherine's heart as well as female "permeability" in how Christ is portrayed as entering her, miraculously substituting her heart with his own. Karen Scott notes that Catherine's "death was so real that all the women of the neighborhood witnessed Catherine's passing, and then after four hours they all saw her miraculously return to life," and the experience of this death is described as her heart bursting like a cask of liquor.[602] Scott argues that this episode was designed to supply "Catherine's political and ecclesiastical action with the surest justification to possible detractors."[603] Yet something else to note here is again the implicitly gendered language in describing her heart: fluid, leaky, feminine, it was apparently replaced by Christ's. Raymond's negotiation of Catherine's femaleness is a consistent theme throughout the *Life* as I will discuss below, and influences Raymond's description of her temptation to despair. Gábor Klaniczay notes a similar sort of substitutive validation in regards to Birgitta: "The Christmas miracle, when Birgitta felt that Christ was born in her heart, compensated for the lack of virginity, a serious obstacle on the road of religious perfection. By regarding her body 'as similar to Mary's body,' by feeling Jesus

[601] Ibid, 815.
[602] Karen Scott, "Mystical Death, Bodily Death: Catherine of Siena and Raymond of Capua on the Mystic's Encounter with God," in *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and their Interpreters*, ed. Catherine Mooney (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 165.
[603] Ibid, 166.

inside herself, she could feel like she was both a mother and a virgin, like Mary."[604] While Catherine's heart is replaced with that of not just a man's but the Son of Man's, Birgitta's maternal body is compared with Mary's virginal maternal body, and symbolically, applies the corrective of virginity to her dangerous, unbounded femaleness.

I will first discuss the Birgittine prayers found in various manuscripts (also often associated with tribulation texts). Then I examine the *Revelations of St. Birgitta* as they discuss temptation to despair and intrusive thoughts in order to shed some light on the issues of gender and authority of visionaries as discussed above. Finally, I turn to Catherine—first, the narrative portrayal of her own scrupulosity and temptation to despair in Raymond's *vita*, and second, her own thoughts on the matter as conveyed in Middle English translation in *The Orcherd of Syon*. My overall argument for this section is that the portrayal of these women's visionary experiences, both authorizing and constricting, and highly gendered, is the other side of the coin of uncontrollable unwanted thoughts. Indeed, the prominence of the former lends visibility to the latter, and consolation and desolation are mutually constructive in the saints' spirituality.

First, it is notable that St. Birgitta is associated with *Profits*, Flete and *Chastising* in the English manuscript tradition. For one, as mentioned above, Birgitta's revelations are interpolated into the Latin Remedies in C.U.L. Ii.vi.3.[605] Likewise the "the Virgin's advice on temptation" to St. Birgitta, also quoted in *Chastising*, is written vertically in the margins of Cambridge, University Library, MS Ii.iv.9 (which also includes "Six Masters on Tribulation"), as discussed in Chapter 2 ("And I rede hou oure lady tauȝt seint bride, whanne she was temptid wiþ ony wickid spirit, þat she shuld seie wiþ a loude voice to þe fiende, dispisyng hym: Recede a me,

[604] Gábor Klaniczay, "The Mystical Pregnancy of Birgitta and the Invisible Stigmata of Catherine: Bodily Signs of Supernatural Communication in the Lives of Two Mystics," in *Sanctity and Female Authorship: Birgitta of Sweden and Catherine of Siena*, eds. Maria Husabø Oen and Unn Falkeid (London: Routledge, 2019), 170.
[605] Hackett, "William Flete and the *De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*," 338.

maligne spiritus: nolo uias tuas; þat is for (to) sei: Go from me, þou wicked spirite: I wil nat of þi weies"[606]). Another manuscript, Cambridge, University Library, MS Add. 3042, includes "prayers to withstand temptation provided by the virgin" attributed to St. Birgitta; this manuscript also seems to focus on tribulation given its inclusion of pseudo-Bonaventure's meditations on the passion, even in the same booklet.[607] Despite a similar title to that in Ii.iv.9, the sequence of prayers supplied and the style of the books are entirely different. MS Add. 3042 is a small book, easily held in one hand, stuffed with a variety of prayers and other texts, with red, blue, and brown ink, as well as decorated initials that include gold leaf. As Hanna observes, the rubrication of the prayers attributes them to Book X, Chapter IV of the *Revelations*, but there must have been some crossed wires along the way, as this chapter—part of the Birgittine Rule—only mandates the habits the nuns are to wear in different seasons.

However, the same prayers are found in London, British Library, MS Royal 17.C.xviii, with slight differences in wording that suggest each represents a different translation of the same unknown original source. This one, moreover, doesn't attempt to attribute the prayers to a specific book, but only begins with "þe modir of crist tawte seynt brigitte remedieȝ aȝeennes dywereȝ temptacyoneȝ." The scenario at hand seems to be that Birgitta is experiencing some temptations in her old age that she did not in her youth or even "in þi wedloke," so perhaps sexual temptations of some sort. After a reminder that it is only through Christ that she has been sustained through this tribulation, the Virgin Mary gives her three prayers: first, when tempted with "þi fleisch," "ih<u>es</u>u þe sune of god knowar of all, þings help me þ<u>a</u>t i delyyte not i<u>n</u> my fowle þowtts"; second, when tempted to speak, "Ih<u>es</u>u þe sune of god þ<u>a</u>t kepe sylence a foor þe iugge hold my tunge vn to i þink how and qwat i schall speke"; and third, "ih<u>es</u>u þe sune of god

[606] Bazire and Colledge, eds., *The Chastising of God's Children*, 204.
[607] Hanna, *English Manuscripts of Richard Rolle*, 35, 42.

þat wast boundon[608] rewle my handys and all my membere3 þat my warke3 cume to a good eende Amen." The prayers are clearly added in a later hand along with another set of prayers against temptation in mixed Latin and English for someone "in any greet tribulacyoun or aduersite," after the conclusion of a treatise on lust.[609] While the prayers are not concerned with meta-temptation to despair, they nonetheless expose a correlation between Birgitta and temptation. Important to note, as well, is that the Royal manuscript begins with the full *Profits* group observed by Hanna, as well as selections from Hilton and Pelagius's letter to Demetrius. In fact, Horstmann notes that this manuscript is likely related to the aforementioned Rawlinson C. 894, yet that manuscript, and its twin, Harley 1706 (I), do not include these Birgittine additions.

Besides the inclusion of Birgittine prayers into tribulation manuscripts, clear excerpts of Birgitta's *Revelations* can be found with relevant pastoralia. One example is in the MS Harley 6615, discussed at greater length in Chapter 2, which has two versions of the Middle English *Remedies*, plus *Chastising*, and an excerpt from Book VII Chapter 5 of *Revelations*, among other tribulation related texts.[610] As such I will begin my analysis of the *Revelations* themselves with this chapter from her visionary text. That said, other chapters of the *Revelations* address temptation directly, and even address intrusive thoughts more specifically, such as Book IV Chapter 12. I also include in my discussion Book IV Chapter 4, which deals with the effects of anxiety on the spiritual life, which we can understand as a natural consequence of these themes.

Book VII Chapter 5 was, like many of Birgitta's visions, communicated to her by the Virgin Mary, to give advice to a nobleman: "She says very beautifully that reason ought to be the

[608] Royal was unclear on this word, so this is supplied from Add. 3042.
[609] Here I refer to the British Library catalog entry, accessible at http://searcharchives.bl.uk/IAMS_VU2:LSCOP_BL:IAMS040-002107358
[610] Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones,*" 69.

doorkeeper and guardian of the soul in order to cast out all temptations and resist them manfully so that they do not enter into a person's inner home."[611] The revelation parallels the tribulations discourse of *Twelve Profits* and *Chastising*, and portrays a more basic temptation than the meta-temptation of intrusive thoughts. Birgitta presents the vision like a parable with courtly imagery:

> There was once a great and mighty king who built a house in which he settled his daughter, entrusting her to the guardianship of a certain man, saying: "My daughter has mortal enemies and you must therefore guard her with all care." To protect this princess in a tower, one has to look for enemies on four sides: "The first is not to let anyone undermine the foundations of the house. The second is not to let anyone climb over the top of the fence. The third is to let nobody break through the walls of the house. The fourth is not to let any enemy get in through the doors."[612]

This metaphor immediately recalls *Chastising*'s six types of temptation—above and below, before and behind, and left and right, indicating the different ways one might be tempted through spatial metaphor. Yet Birgitta envisions the portions of the tower as sites to fortify one own's person against temptation. The foundations are "a good, steady and firm intention"—the temptation in this case is doing potentially good deeds but for the wrong reasons.[613] By dismissing these dissenting voices, "your guardian, that is, your reason, will be able to drive away those struggling to undermine the foundation of your good intention."[614] As such the source of these temptations is externalized—mainly people giving bad advice trying to corrupt the believer with the ways of the world.

The second source of temptation is "over the top of the fence" by which "I mean Charity, which is above all other virtues."[615] Here the temptation is likewise externalized, but to the devil:

> You can be completely certain that the devil desires nothing more than to leap over this fence. This is why, as much as he can, he unceasingly tries to make worldly love and

[611] Denis Searby, trans. *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden: Volume 3, Liber Caelestis, Books VI-VII* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 211.
[612] Ibid.
[613] Ibid, 211-212.
[614] Ibid, 212.
[615] Ibid.

> carnal affections overtake divine charity. Thus, my lord, as often as worldly love attempts to take precedence over divine charity in your heart, immediately send your guardian reason out to meet it with the commandments of God and say that you would rather endure the death of soul and body than live in such a way as to provoke so merciful a God by word or deed. Indeed, say that, in order to please God alone in every way and honor him in all things, you would not in any way be sparing of your own life or goods or possessions nor of the esteem of relatives or friends, and that you would sooner freely submit to troubles of any kind than to cause any harm or scandal or trouble to your neighbor, high or low, and that you would rather love all your neighbors like a brother as the Lord commands.[616]

What the fiend uses against the Christian, again, is "worldly love," but working in a more direct way on one's virtues and vices. The way to defeat this is apparently arguing with this "worldly love" by signaling one's acceptance of worldly tribulation—perhaps suprisingly, she does not seem to suggest any actual ascetic practice but merely one's willingness to take on that suffering. This might be a function of the addressee of this vision being a layman.

The walls are "the four delights of the heavenly court, which the inner man should desire in earnest meditation," and being surrounded by these walls is enough to "be preserved unharmed" by temptation.[617] What are these walls?

> The first delight is to desire fervently in one's heart to see God himself in his eternal glory and those unfailing riches that are never taken away from one who has attained them. The second is to wish continuously to hear those sweet-sounding voices of angels with which, without end or weariness, they ceaselessly praise and worship God. The third is to long with all the burning desire of one's heart to praise God eternally as the very angels do. The fourth is to desire to obtain the everlasting consolations of the angels and holy souls in heaven.[618]

Like the fence, these walls are under assault primarily by the devil: "how much your enemy desires to break through such walls and take such interior delights away from your heart and inject and insert there others opposed to your desire, which can gravely injure your soul!"[619]

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[616] Ibid.
[617] Ibid, 212-213.
[618] Ibid, 212.
[619] Ibid, 213.

Once again the threat is essentially worldly desires overtaking these higher goods. Rather than simply climbing over, as with the fence, the devil attempts to breach the walls with "hearing" and "sight"—hearing of one's own praises and sight of all the fineries of noble life.[620] Yet it seems one's own desire for them is what "break[s] down the walls," rather than the devil himself, emphasizing the duty of the Christian to refuse consent to these temptations.

Finally, temptation tries to enter through the front door: "all the needs of the body... such as eating, drinking, sleeping and waking, as well as occasionally feeling upset or cheerful."[621] Birgitta urges moderation in both indulgence and asceticism lest either "renders the body feeble for any kind of activity" and unable to properly serve God.[622] The lay focus is apparent here too in its emphasis on the duties of everyday life in service of God and its moderation, yet the emphasis on moderation in asceticism connects well with monastic texts warning of excessiveness in that regard leading to acedia.

Ultimately, one's reason, as the guardian of the person's soul, is responsible for watching these four sites of temptation:

> If any trouble or rancor should arise, your guardian reason, along with his companion, the fear of God, must quickly run to their encounter lest it happen that, by anger or impatience, you should fail in divine grace and seriously provoke God against you. Moreover, whenever consolation or joy fills your heart, your guardian reason should more closely impress upon it the fear of God, which, aided by the grace of Jesus Christ, will regulate that consolation or joy as is best for you.[623]

The overall emphasis is on emotional moderation. Additionally, this chapter addresses basic, externalized temptation to succumb to worldly pleasures, rather than meta-temptation or temptation to despair as in *Chastising* or *Remedies*. While Birgitta uses a similar motif to

[620] Ibid.
[621] Ibid.
[622] Ibid, 214.
[623] Ibid.

Chastising's chapter six, Birgitta's approach is less abstract, more concrete and lay-oriented, and does not deal with meta-temptation or despair. Yet it was still grouped with *Chastising* and Flete in this excerpted form in Harley 6615. One interesting thing to note is her use of "enclosure" as a concept, even when giving the advice to a layman; within this metaphor, his soul is portrayed as a lady in need of protection. This use of metaphor indicates, as I discussed with "Against Wanhope," a general trend in how lay and religious discourses merged in the late Middle Ages.

Despite its apparent absence in her advice to a lay nobleman, mental tribulation, meta-temptation to despair, intrusive thoughts, etc. do make an appearance in Birgitta's *Revelations*. However they are found in a totally different place in the *Revelations*—primarily in Book IV, Chapter 12, which, based on the description at the beginning of the chapter, seems directed towards Birgitta herself rather than a particular follower: "The Virgin Mother's words to the daughter about the vicissitudes of God's friends in this world, who are at times spiritually distressed and at other times comforted, and about the meaning of spiritual distress and comfort, and about how God's friends must rejoice and be comforted in their time."[624] She defines these types of distress and comfort as follows:

> In this world God's friends must sometimes find themselves spiritually distressed, at other times spiritually comforted. Spiritual consolation means the infusion of the Holy Spirit, contemplating God's great works, admiring his forbearance, and putting all this cheerfully into practice. Spiritual distress is when the mind is involuntarily disturbed by unclean and vexing thoughts, when it suffers anguish over dishonor shown to God and over the loss of souls, when one's heart is forced to occupy itself with worldly concerns for a good reason.[625]

Note that in the Latin, "spiritually distressed" is "in tribulacione spirituali."[626] The modern English translation obscures a bit that this spiritual challenge is in fact described, as usual, as

[624] Denis Searby, trans. *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden: Volume 2, Liber Caelestis, Books IV-V* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 47.
[625] Ibid.
[626] St. Birgitta of Sweden. *Revelaciones, Book IV*, ed. Hans Aili (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1992), 94.

tribulation. There are then three types of tribulation enumerated, the first being the most obviously relevant to this project. Yet all three types of distress serve the same purpose, which, like the *Profits* tradition, locates the reason for tribulations in ultimate spiritual progress:

> If a fist were always held tightly closed, then either the muscles would be strained or the hand would grow weak. It is similar in spiritual matters. If the soul always remained in contemplation, then she would either forget herself and perish through pride, or else her crown of glory would be lessened. The reason why God's friends are at times comforted by the infusion of the Holy Spirit and are at other times, with God's permission, distressed is that their distress tears up the roots of sin and firmly plants the fruit of righteousness.[627]

Birgitta's metaphor of the "fist being closed," with which I began this chapter, is apparently novel. Pertinent, too, is that enclosure—here the closure of a fist—is the governing image to describe this consolation state or contemplation. Tribulation then is associated with the fist being open. Birgitta also touches on temptation again, noting the typical line used in the religious literature: "But God, who sees hearts and understands all things, moderates the temptations of his friends in such a way that the temptations lead to their progress, for he does everything and allows everything to happen with due weight and measure."[628] Temptation, the first kind of these tribulations, is only what God knows the person can withstand. Her parting thoughts on this topic are that God uses such tribulation like a shepherd trains his sheep to eat hay, and "That which before seemed unbearable and difficult to you has now become so easy that now nothing delights you so much as God."[629]

The section is quite brief and Birgitta does not talk more about these vexing thoughts. One might speculate though that this seems to have been a concern that might have affected her personally since the advice is given directly to her by the Virgin, rather than to someone else

[627] Searby, trans., *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden: Volume 2*, 48.
[628] Ibid.
[629] Ibid.

through her (much like her supposed tribulation prayers proliferating in manuscripts). That said, the issue does not appear in her *vita*. Regardless of the validity of these speculations, Birgitta still follows the pattern set by *Chastising* etc. by pitting these unwanted thoughts as a type of tribulation meant to reap spiritual profit. Moreover, she places them in balance so to speak with consolation, and contemplation, making manifest the connection between spiritual tribulation and unwanted thoughts with her mystic visions, both encouraging together a spiritual progress. This is eventually built upon by her devotee, Margery Kempe, as discussed below.

Yet Birgitta also acknowledges the threat that these tribulations might pose in leading the sufferer to despair. This is discussed in chapter 68 of the same book in which she likens the devil to a crafty fox, tricking people into evil sometimes even under the guise of good.[630] After listing several seeming virtues that may hide vice (like a prideful false humility), she notes: "Sometimes the devil also submits people to trials and tribulations [*tribulaciones et temptaciones*] in order to break them through excessive sadness [*ut homo nimia resoluatur tristicia*]. Sometimes, too, the devil fills people's hearts with anxiety and worry [*anxietates et sollicitudines*] so as to make them become lukewarm in God's service or, when they are careless in small respects, to make them fall in greater ones."[631] After dropping this very pertinent thought in the middle of her discourse on false virtues, Birgitta simply suggests turning to the Lord in times of such guileful temptations. Yet the inclusion shows her sensitivity to the effects intense tribulation and temptation can have on a sufferer, and the aspect of meta-temptation there—in tempting them to become lukewarm as a consequence of their anxiety or tempting them to despair. It is hard to make conclusive statements about Birgitta's own experience by reading her *Revelations*, yet she

[630] Ibid, 123.
[631] St. Birgitta of Sweden. *Revelaciones, Book IV*, 206; Searby, trans., *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden: Volume 2*, 124.

does give clues that temptations, especially unwanted thoughts, are in counterpoint with her mysticism. In the case of Catherine of Siena, though, this is a major theme in her *Life* leading up to her mystical marriage, and to a lesser extent, a concern in her *Dialogue* as we can see in *The Orcherd*.

Early in Raymond of Capua's *Legenda major*, Catherine of Siena experiences scrupulosity in a scene in which she visits him for confession. The sin troubling Catherine at the age of twelve concerns a family conflict in which her mother is trying to make her dress more attractively to appeal to potential husbands.[632] Eventually her older sister convinces her to comply, and "Later, in confession, she used to acknowledge this fault with so many sobs and tears that one would have thought she had committed heaven knows what sin."[633] About this tumultuous confession, Raymond observes: "Though experience has taught me that pious souls can find sins where there are no sins, and turn quite small ones into big ones [*ibi culpam agnoscere vbi culpa non est, et, ubi est parua ulto aplius aggrauare*][634], nevertheless, since Catherine was upbraiding herself as though she had committed some fault worthy of everlasting punishment I was constrained to ask her whether she had thought of breaking her vow of virginity."[635] Raymond's comments about inflating the severity of sin is clearly reflected in Flete, who warns of the temptation of a conscience seeing "something is forbidden and sinful which is in itself indifferent or good, or that something is a mortal sin which is in itself a venial sin."[636] Along these lines of guiltlessness, Catherine denies any such desire or intention in the

[632] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, trans. George Lamb (New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1960), 37.
[633] Ibid.
[634] Jörg Jungmayr, ed., *Die Legenda maior (Vita Catharinae Senensis) des Raimund von Capua: Edition nach der Nürnberger Handschrift Cent. IV, 75: Übersetzung und Kommentar* (Berlin: Weidler Buchverlag, 2004), 62.
[635] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, 37.
[636] Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*,"175.

slightest way, so Raymond asks why she is condemning herself so harshly.[637] Catherine responds that "the real trouble was that she had loved her sister more than she should have done, and in fact seemed to have loved her more than God; and that that was what made her cry and why she had to do such severe penance for it."[638] This is one of the first of many instances in the *vita* where Catherine's family is pitted against her spiritual calling, though usually, as noted by Luongo, her mother is the typical culprit. This scene begins a through line in the *vita* wherein Catherine is portrayed as otherworldly. Obeying one's parents and loving one's siblings would be a virtue for most medieval Christians; yet for Catherine, her primary temptation early in the *vita* and the constant misunderstanding of her family is to settle for this normal sort of holiness when she is called to something much stricter and stranger.

Tears and inflation of guilt is a typical occurrence for Catherine in confession, and Raymond explains:

> But the real purpose of this discussion had been to find out whether she had preserved her virginity of mind and body [virginitatem mentis et corporis][639] perfectly free not only from the sin of incontinence but from any other consummated sin, and before God and Holy Church I can render this testimony to her: I heard innumerable of her confessions, some of a general kind, and I never once discovered that she had failed to fulfil the divine commandments, unless it be in the case I have just described. But I do not believe that that was a sin, nor do I think that anyone else will think it as, either.[640]

Raymond relates this incident of scrupulousness primarily to validate her virginity; as many other scholars have observed, this rhetorical choice was necessary given anxieties over her public life and her lack of claustration. Moreover, portraying Catherine fixating on something a simple as dressing fashionably highlights the holistic concept of virginity; in fact, Raymond remarks on

[637] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, 38.
[638] Ibid.
[639] Jungmayr, *Die Legenda*, 64.
[640] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, 38-39.

her "virginity of mind" before mentioning "body." Emphasizing Catherine's scrupulousness makes the inherent dubiousness of one's spiritual/mental virginity crystal clear for Catherine.

Moreover, Raymond emphasizing her scrupulosity as a virtue, whereas her other follower, Flete, calls it a "spirit of error," creates another situation in which the normal rules of Christian life do not apply to Catherine. Raymond reports that "Catherine upbraided herself with such severity, and took on the burden of guilt so cunningly, that if her confessor had not been used to her violent way of treating herself he would have believed her to be at fault where there was no fault, and where indeed there was if anything merit in what she had done."[641] Raymond admits here that for everyone else, he would perceive this scrupulousness as a sin itself, but knowing Catherine specifically to be chosen by God, he views it as meritorious. This is one case in which hagiography as a genre, with its specific aims towards canonization of its subject, practically reverses the assessment of scrupulosity from the pastoral literature. It is often the case in Catherine's *vita*, much like Marie d'Oignies's, that its subject is meant to be admired, rather than imitated.

Elsewhere, Raymond is likewise careful to insist upon Catherine's spiritual claustration. Later, when her family actually finds her a suitor and pressures her to marry,

> [t]he age-old Adversary, whose guile and malignancy had started all this, imagined that he was triumphing [frangere] over the girl, but in fact he was only making Catherine stronger, for she was quite unperturbed by all these upsets and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit she began to build up in her mind a secret cell [cellam sibi secretam fecit... in propria mente][642] which she vowed she would never leave for anything in the world. She had begun by having a room in the house, which she could go out of and come into at will; now, having made herself an inner cell which no one could take away from her, she had no need to ever come out of it again.[643]

[641] Ibid, 39.
[642] Jungmayr, *Die Legenda*, 70.
[643] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, 43.

Unable to procure physical claustration, Catherine embraces spiritual claustration to protect and complete her virginity. She also receives a mental assurance, similar to Christina's mind and body being under Christ's protection, as Jesus instructs Catherine: "Daughter, think of me; if you do I will immediately think of you."[644] Raymond remarks that Catherine interpreted Jesus' words this way:

> Discussing them with me in private, she said that the Lord had commanded her to shut all other thoughts out of her mind and to retain only the thought of Him [omnem aliam cogitacionem de corde suo excluderet suamque vel de ipso tantummodo retineret][645]. And to prevent any anxiety [solicitudo] about herself or her spiritual condition from distracting her from the peace of the thought of Him, He added, "I will think of you," meaning, Do not fret [nichil sollicita sis] about the salvation of your body and soul, for I who know and can do all things will think of it and look after it most carefully.[646]

Jesus protecting Catherine from anxiety over sin echoes Jesus' reassurance of Christina about her anxiety over her virginity. Moreover, this anxiety and its solution recalls the meta-temptation to despair that is found in fretting over one's sins or possible damnation. Catherine and Birgitta share this rebuke of anxiety, seeing it as a stratagem of the devil to make one weary in the service of God (which occasionally creates contradictions in Catherine's text, as Raymond simultaneously uses that anxiety to evidence Catherine's extraordinary sanctity).

Catherine experiences not just scrupulosity, but the sort of unwanted and exhausting thoughts that amount to temptation to despair, leading up to her mystical marriage with Christ. Christ primes her for these trials by reminding her of the purpose of this temptation, which echoes quite closely the profits of tribulation discourse: "If you want to have the strength to overcome all the enemy's powers, take the cross as your refreshment as I did. For indeed I, as the Apostle says, ran to such a hard and shameful cross because I had been offered joy, so that you

[644] Ibid, 83.
[645] Jungmayr, *Die Legenda*, 132.
[646] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, 83-84.

would patiently choose pains and afflictions [penas et afflicciones][647] and embrace them indeed as consolations [refrigerio]."[648] Embracing this suffering "conforms" her to Christ so long as she "regard[s] sweet things as bitter and bitter things as sweet."[649] This discourse plays a huge role in the *Orcherd of Syon*, as I discuss below.

The devil then assaults Catherine with progressively more difficult forms of temptation in this sequence. For the first set of temptations, she faces "carnal temptations, tempting Catherine not only inwardly with thoughts and fancies and dreams but with actual visions, which they put before her eyes and ears [temptacione carnali, quam non tantum per cogitaciones immittunt interius, non solum per illusiones et fantasias in sompnijs, sed per apertas uisiones, quas... suis oculis et auribus ingerebant][650]."[651] Catherine responds with extreme asceticism. Important to note is that these are apparently not on the meta-temptation level yet, still tempting her to the quite literal carnal deeds. This trial progresses from the tempting of her body to the tempting of her reason, when the devil spawns illusory counselors giving her advice that seems reasonable but would lead to perdition: "You poor soul, why go on punishing yourself like this to no purpose? What good can all this suffering do you? Do you think you can go on with it? Never, unless you want to kill yourself and be the murderer of your own body. Better to stop being so foolish before you break down altogether."[652] These devils also advise that she take a husband "to please God," like Old Testament holy women, which Catherine ignores, placing her trust in God.[653] Raymond interrupts the narrative to gloss Catherine's method of dealing with this specific temptation:

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[647] Jungmayr, *Die Legenda*, 142.
[648] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, 89-90.
[649] Ibid, 90.
[650] Jungayr, *Die Legenda*, 144.
[651] Ibid, 90.
[652] Ibid, 91.
[653] Ibid.

> When she talked to us about this, she always told us as a general rule never to descend to the level of argument with the Enemy in times of temptation. Getting people to discuss the matter was exactly what he wanted, she said, for he has great faith in the subtlety of his wicked sophisms. As a chaste woman should avoid adulterers and refuse to speak to them, so a soul chastely united to Christ should refuse to discuss the Enemy's temptations but turn to its Bridegroom in prayer, relying on Him with absolute trust and faithfulness. All temptations, she said, could be overcome by virtue of faith.[654]

Here we can see some further crossover with Flete; his remedy to "illusory temptations" was the following: "Therefore, with regard to these fantastic errors that attack faith or morals, one should not wonder at nor dwell on them, or pursue or examine them or investigate much into the causes of such things, because the more he pursues things that are erroneous and false by inquiring into them, the more he casts himself away into error."[655] Catherine appears to be following the advice of ignoring these temptations, even if the temptations themselves do not strictly follow the pattern of "illusory" intrusive thoughts (yet). Still, the sentiment is the same, that arguing with the Enemy is only self-destructive, and the solution to these nagging doubts is to simply ignore them. Moreover, the fiend's urging her to marry like holy Old Testament women recalls Birgitta's warnings of the "crafty fox" stealthing temptations under the appearance of good.[656]

In the devil's final assault, however, we see Catherine's experience represent exactly this meta-temptation to despair via blasphemous intrusive thoughts:

> [T]he Devil gave up flattery and adopted another form of attack. He brought vile pictures of men and women behaving loosely before her mind, and foul figures before her eyes, and obscene words to her ears, shameless crowds dancing around her, howling and sniggering and inviting her to join them. [Effigiat siquidem ymagines mulierum et hominum turpissime ad inuicem se commiscencium actusque fedos et uerba inhonestissima tam visui quam auditui eius obiciencium. Sicque turis tam abhominabilibus circa eam discurrentibus vlulatibus et clamoribus ipsam ad turpia inuitabant.][657] O my God, what a torment it must have been for the holy virgin to be forced to see and hear such things, even when she closed her eyes and ears in utter abhorrence! And to these afflictions was added a further source of suffering, for her

[654] Ibid.
[655] Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones,*" 161
[656] Searby, trans., *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden: Volume 2*, 123.
[657] Jungmayr, *Die Legenda*, 146.

> Bridegroom, who had been in the habit of visiting her and bringing her many consolations [consolaciones], now seemed to have forsaken her and left her without assistance.[658]

Here the case is quite clear cut: she has already conquered the "carnal temptations" with asceticism—Catherine is not tempted to lustful thoughts at this point, but instead, to despair. This is further emphasized by the fact that these unwanted thoughts are accompanied by the apparent absence of Christ and of all consoling feeling that accompanies his presence. Catherine has much to say, similarly, about those who only pursue feelings of consolation from God's presence, rather than himself, in the *Dialogue*. Moreover, her experience echoes Birgitta's definition of consolation versus desolation quite closely, as well as Flete's main concern in *Remedies*—"fanciful ideas conceived, whether erroneous or foul" and "blasphemies, whether seen or heard," which the devil employs "when he cannot bring someone down out of the firmness of faith."[659] As observed above, Flete's point is that the very distress these thoughts cause is a sign that they are themselves involuntary and therefore not sinful: "To the faithful person, indeed, it is entirely involuntary and displeasing, and therefore painful and not a sin."[660] It is not difficult to imagine that Flete's friendship with Catherine might have influenced his practical writings on the topic. And fittingly, Catherine seems to follow Flete's advice, or perhaps, his advice was inspired by her actions:

> [A]t a suggestion from the Lord she adopted a defensive measure which she later taught me and many others as a means of warding off the Enemy's wiles. She said that all who love God experience tepidity [tepescit][661] at times; the fervour of the spirit grows cold, and this is either God's will for us or the result of some sin or an astute machination by the Devil. Some people, the less wise ones, finding themselves more or less deprived of the joys they have been accustomed to, abandon prayer, meditation, spiritual reading, penance, at this stage, and so become weaker and weaker—much to the Enemy's delight, for his whole aim is to get the soldier of Christ to lay down his arms. So when the wise

[658] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, 91-92.
[659] Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*," 161.
[660] Ibid.
[661] Jungmayr, *Die Legenda*, 146.

> "athlete of Christ" feels himself growing inwardly tepid, he should go on with his usual spiritual exercises and if anything increase them.[662]

The "tepidity" recalls acedia, slacking in one's spiritual duties because of spiritual dryness. Despair in this scenario is not a dramatic abandonment but a slow process of attrition. Continuing in one's accustomed religious practice is the way to ignore these temptations and persevere in spiritual growth.

Through her prayer and patience, these "vile thoughts" and "obscene visions" eventually subside.[663] When a demon threatens to "persecute her to death," Catherine responds she "shall enjoy" these persecutions in order to conform herself to Christ, in accordance with the conversation at the beginning of this episode.[664] Immediately this banishes the demons and Christ crucified appears. Their subsequent conversation again echoes *Remedies*. Catherine asks where Jesus was during this whole trial, and he responds he was in her heart. Catherine asks "...how can I possibly believe that you were in my heart when it was full of ugly, filthy thoughts?" to which Jesus responds "Did these thoughts and temptations bring content or sorry, delight or displeasure to your heart? [Causabant ne cogitaciones siue temptaciones ille in corde tuo leticiam an tristiciam, delectactionem an merorem?][665]" and Catherine answers "The greatest sorrow and displeasure!"[666] This language parallels Flete's assurance that the very distress the thoughts cause in fact proves their involuntary nature. Yet what is interesting here is Jesus' invisible protection or enclosure of Catherine from these thoughts, despite the distress they cause her:

> "Well, then," said the Lord, "who was it who made you feel this displeasure if not I, who was hidden at the centre of your heart? If I had not been there they would have entered

[662] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, 92.
[663] Ibid, 93.
[664] Ibid, 93-94.
[665] Jungmayr, *Die Legenda*, 150.
[666] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, 94.

> your heart and you would have felt pleasure in them [Si enim ego non affuissem, cogitaciones ille penetrassent cor tuum et fuisses delectata in eis][667], but my presence there caused them to displease you and when you tried to drive them away because they were upsetting you and you failed to do so, this made you unhappy and you suffered. But I, who was defending your heart from the enemies, was hidden there all the time, and though I permitted you to be attacked I was still there. Then when I decided that the time for battle was over I sent down my light and the powers of darkness took flight and vanished, for they cannot exist where my light is.[668]

Much as in the case of Christina it is Christ himself who banishes these unwanted thoughts, which puts a more fantastic spin on this apparently somewhat common spiritual problem for the purposes of hagiography. In this case as well, Christ is depicted as a sort of gatekeeper to Catherine's heart, allowing the visions to occur, yet preventing them from "delighting" her. In this way, the narrative solves the issue of the "permeable" femaleness of Catherine by revealing that Christ's permanent presence, however hidden, is still in control of the situation. Just as nothing could enter Christina's mind without his permission, the same policy is in effect with Catherine, where he lets these thoughts in to increase her fortitude, and dispels them after she proves her devotion. This temptation conquered, Catherine is mystically married to Christ in the very next chapter. Raymond's positioning of the intrusive thoughts and temptations section of Catherine's *vita* immediately before her marriage, and both before the commencement of her public life, serves to validate Catherine's "enclosure" and unassailable virginity.

I now turn to Catherine's own revelations in Middle English translation to assess how her experiences are reflected in the *Orcherd*. While Catherine does deal with despair, to an extent, and closely follows *Twelve Profits* in terms of emphasizing patience, the issue of intrusive thoughts is not as apparent as it is in her Life or Flete. Perhaps the most relevant sections are

[667] Jungmayr, *Die Legenda*, 150.
[668] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, 94.

found in the third part of the *Orcherd*. The first chapter echoes Catherine's own experience of temptation as described above, at least in purpose:

> The feend is a mynystre ordeyned of my riȝtwiisnes to turment soulis whiche greuously offenden me. And I ordeynede hem in þis liif þat þei schulden resceyue of me þe glorie of victorie þoru þe vertu þat is preuyd in hem. And þerfore no man schal drede þe temptaciouns of þe feend for ony batel þat schal falle hym, for I haue ordeyned men to be strong, and I haue ȝoue hem þe strenþe of a will which is maad myȝti in þe blood of my sone. Which wil may no feend ne creature remoue, for ȝoure wille is ioyned to þou of me wiþ a free choys.[669]

Similar to how Jesus resides in her heart to keep the temptations from truly touching her, according to *Orcherd,* he affords everyone the same protection and strength with their consent. His reassurance also highlights the importance of will and consent in determining the value of tempting thoughts, and it borrows language from the *Profits* tradition that depicts tribulation as purging and strengthening. Such a construction of temptation works into one of Catherine's favorite theological concepts—that self-knowledge is necessary for salvation. Temptations provide the most useful form of self knowledge—knowledge of one's own weakness—in their inability to "remoue and put awey þe peynes and greuauncis whiche he desiride to voyde," as well as knowledge of God in his strength, "forasmyche as he consenteþ not to siche wickide þouȝthis."[670]

Next Catherine remarks on "how the feend cacheþ [someone] with a fals hook of delectacioun vndir colour of good," recalling her own temptation to marry in the *vita*.[671] Catherine's ultimate pronouncement here is that the avoidance of suffering is the cause of this deception, and discourses at length about how suffering is literally necessary for salvation.[672]

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[669] Phyllis Hodgson and Gabriel M. Liegey, eds., *The Orcherd of Syon,* EETS, os 258 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 100.
[670] Ibid, 101. For a more thorough explanation of this theme, see Thomas McDermott, "Catherine of Siena's Teaching on Self-Knowledge," *New Blackfriars* 88 (2007): 637-648.
[671] Ibid, 102.
[672] Ibid, 103-105.

The solution, as usual, is patience—to "suffren full benyngnely wiþ þe cleer liȝt of resoun and liȝt of the holy feiþ."[673] Like Birgitta, she discusses dread or anxiety, though Catherine is careful to divide the good sort of dread from the detrimental, with more precision than other tribulation texts: "If þei ryse not wiþ loue of vertu, seruile dreede is not sufficient aloone to ȝeue hem euerlastinge liif, but if it be medlid wiþ holy, chast dreede; þat is, wiþ loue of vertu, for in loue and holy, chast drede þe lawe is sett."[674] Here she separates the "lawe of dreede" of the Old Testament from the "lawe of loue" in the New, explicitly posing love as the completion and fulfilment of this initial dread. The distinction she makes seems very similar to perfect versus imperfect contrition, in how it operates on either pure fear of punishment versus love and virtue. Refusing to progress from one form of drede to the other, however, "wiþoute ony remedy, he schul be drenchid in þe flood aforeseid by þe wawis of tribulaciouns comynge aȝeins hym."[675] With God "wiþdrawynge fro hem goostly cumfortis, but not my grace," tribulations can actually serve to push one to move from one form of dread to the other.

Catherine emphasizes these periods of desolation as particularly important, yet also dangerous, for those accustomed to spiritual comforts or visions:

> if his affeccioun be sette in comfortis and goostly visiouns, þe whiche oftentymes I ȝeue to my seruauntis, whanne þei ben wiþdrawe fro hym, þanne he falliþ into heuynesse and bittirnesse of soule. As ofte as I wiþdrawe my comfortis fro his soule, so ofte as I wiþdrawe my comfortis fro his soule, so ofte hym seemeþ þat I haue forsake hym, & þerfore hym seemeþ þat he is in helle, wherfore he falleþ into bittirnesse and into manye temptaciouns. He schulde not do so, ne suffere hym so to be disceyued of his owne spiritual delectacyoun, but he schulde lift up his iȝe to me, and knowe me verry souereyn good, the which reserue and kepe for hym good wil in tyme of dissesis.[676]

[673] Ibid, 107.
[674] Ibid, 131.
[675] Ibid, 132.
[676] Ibid, 153.

In this case, we have a more complex sort of temptation. The temptation, which tribulations help prevent, is loving one's own "spiritual delectacyoun" rather than God himself. The solution is found in God's withdrawing the feeling of his presence without actually abandoning the soul. Catherine suggests this is meant to be faced with patience and humility—specifically one should "holde himsilf vnworþi to haue pees and qwyetenesse of soule," something clearly reflected in Catherine's own attitude towards her tribulations in Raymond's *vita*. This is perhaps a harsher take than Flete's, which seems to itself encourage peace of mind regarding these tribulations. However, for Catherine, who was known for radically embracing suffering, this extreme disquiet is the other side of the coin to her ecstasies; her tribulations are necessary correctives to any pride and contentment that might result from the consolations she receives. The portrayal of these disturbances in her life are not just a way to prove her spiritual "enclosure" and imperviousness to these influences despite her womanhood, but also, from her perspective rather than her hagiographer's, as much a sign of love and guidance from God as her ecstatic visions. Catherine, like Birgitta, embraces the first both closed and open as inextricable aspects of spiritual life and uses it to authorize her mysticism.

A final important takeaway from the *Orcherd* is Catherine's remarks on scrupulosity, specifically. Catherine discusses the topic in a section dedicated to vocal prayers and contrasts an oversensitivity to one's sins with a prideful ignorance of them. While God instructs her to think on her sins, he places restrictions on how so: first to only think on her sins "generaly" rather than "particulerly" so as not to be dirtied in their remembrance, and second "þat I wolde þat she hadde neiþir consideracioun of her synnes in general ne in special without consideracioun and mynde of þe blood schad by my soothfast sone, Ihesu, and of myn large mercy, leste sche falle into

dispeir."[677] Without this primary focus on mercy, "oftentymes sche schulde dwelle stille yn þat schame and confusyoun, and so go to eendelees dampnacioun wiþ þe same confusyoun and wiþ þat feend þat haþ so lad her, vndir colour of contricioun and displesaunce of her synnes."[678] Recalling her earlier point about the devil masking evil with the appearance of good, this description seems similar to Flete's take on scrupulosity—where the obsession over one's sins is itself a temptation to despair, a form of tarrying by the devil. The solution, for Catherine, is not the reassurance offered by Flete or Raymond in the confession scene in the *vita* where she is reminded that she often overestimates actions as sins that are not, or venial sins as mortal, and trusting a confessor. Instead, she drives off the devil by this focus on Jesus' mercy and protection. In this way, actually, Catherine represents typical lay approaches to temptation to despair, as God's mercy is more prominent motif in the ME3 version of Flete, or in "Against Wanhope" and other despair texts focused on the deathbed. At the same time, this direction given by God to Catherine accomplishes a similar objective of refusing to argue with the scrupulous worries and becoming bogged down in anxiety.

Overall, Birgitta and Catherine exemplify that intrusive thoughts and temptations seemed to be of particular concern to devout women in the later Middle Ages. Catherine's case, especially, demonstrates how this experience of intrusive thoughts and scrupulosity is represented by her hagiographer to actually reinforce her as mentally/spiritually "enclosed" to make her virginity more concrete, as a third order Dominican. Catherine's own revelations speak to these issues, but, much as Raymond describes her, she is much harsher on herself and more apt to embrace the suffering caused by these mental tribulations than her confessor, Flete, would advise for his readers. Catherine especially seems to experience intrusive thoughts and

[677] Ibid, 148.
[678] Ibid.

temptations as intimately tied to her spiritual comforts and visions given from God; both, in the language of the *Profits* tradition, lead to her spiritual progress. Finally, for both women, the issue takes on much of more a "lay" flavor. For Birgitta, this means an emphasis on moderation and the secular life; for Catherine, a reliance on God's mercy, a theme that populates lay-oriented texts on temptation to despair (especially *ars moriendi* texts). In the next section, I will examine my final case study—Margery Kempe—and discuss how, as "unfiltered" as her experience seems to be reported in the *Book*, the narrative seems to draw upon these earlier saints and arguably also pastoralia in the depiction of her struggles with despair.

Margery Kempe: Visions of Genitalia

The final portion of this chapter will be dedicated to Margery Kempe, whose *Book* represents the culmination of temptation to despair discourse, both religious and lay. Born in 1373 to a wealthy merchant in Lynn, she lived a conventional life, marrying John Kempe, another merchant, when she was about 20, until a period of intense emotional and spiritual disturbance following the birth of her first child.[679] *The Book* then records her very busy life in between convincing her husband to embrace a celibate marriage agreement, giving birth to fourteen children, traveling on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Rome, Santiago, and shrines in Germany, narrowly escaping being burned as a Lollard, and of course, crying loudly in remembrance of the Lord's Passion. She likely died some time after 1438.[680]

The *Book* itself, though often called an autobiography, was not literally written by her; instead, she dictated her experiences to several clerical scribes.[681] Moreover, various additions and emendations were made in subsequent copies; as Anthony Bale expresses, "instead of

[679] Anthony Bale, introduction to *The Book of Margery Kempe*, trans. Anthony Bale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), xii-xiii, 11.
[680] Ibid, xiv.
[681] Ibid, xvii-xviii.

looking for a single 'author' for *The Book of Margery Kempe*, we would do better to acknowledge the collaborative, and sometimes haphazard, way in which medieval writing was produced."[682] To be sure, the *Book*'s composition seems a far stretch from, say, Raymond of Capua's *vita* of Catherine or Jacques de Vitry's of Marie d'Oignies. Yet the *Book* does seem less programmatically concerned with its subject's canonization, has less of an obvious authorial presence on the part of the confessor-hagiographer, and is written in a much closer third person perspective throughout most of the work. Generically, as well, the text is not strictly biographical, but includes lengthy sections of her revelations that function similarly to guided meditations (e.g., chapters 79-81). Nonetheless, Margery's text is highly intertextual, referencing explicitly several other works relevant to this dissertation. Bale mentions as a likely source pseudo-Bonaventure's *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, which, as observed in my previous chapter, is highly associated with temptation and tribulation literature.[683] In addition, Marie d'Oignies is named explicitly by Margery's scribe as a precedent for Margery's gift of tears.[684]

Most critically, "Seynt Brydys boke, Hyltons boke, Boneventur, *Stimulus Amoris, Incendium Amoris*, and swech other" are enumerated as texts read to her by her confessor.[685] While the text is unclear on which of Walter Hilton's works Margery heard, the editor Barry Windeatt suggests here and earlier she was referring to the *Scale of Perfection.* Note, however, that both St. Birgitta's revelations and *Stimulus Amoris* are included. As observed above, both of these works were at times integrated into Flete's *Remedies against Temptations*. Moreover, *Remedies* was often misattributed to Hilton. This makes me wonder if the book she refers to is

[682] Ibid, xx.
[683] Ibid, xxiii
[684] Barry Windeatt, ed., *The Book of Margery Kempe* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 292.
[685] Ibid, 280.

not *Scale of Perfection*, which is not mentioned by name but rather, *Remedies*.[686] Either way, given the thematic resonances with *Remedies* and Margery's *Book*, it seems likely she may have encountered the ideas from it first or secondhand.

Given the uniqueness of the *Book*, Margery's story has deservedly received a massive amount of critical attention since the manuscript's discovery in the 1930s. Nonetheless, the aspects of the text that have interested scholars have not really changed, even if their critical approaches to these issues have. Generally, academics have been obsessed with (1) her sexuality and (2) her mental health, which, thanks to Freud, have been continuously connected in the literature, regardless of Freud's later repudiation in psychology. The most common intersection between these discourses was labelling Margery as "hysterical," a misogynistic term for a supposedly sexually repressed woman with no real clinical meaning today, as observed by Phyllis Freeman and her coauthors (though, as they note, Margery does not even meet the diagnostic for this condition in medieval medical texts).[687]

More recent works have explored her sexuality with somewhat more subtlety. Perhaps the clearest way to analyze scholarly approaches to these issues in the *Book* generally can be observed how they respond to the incident in chapter 59, with which I began this dissertation, in which Margery has involuntary visions of men's genitalia while the devil mockingly incites her to choose the one she likes best. Confused and frustrated by being unable to dismiss these images

[686] Margery clearly has concerns in common with Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* as well—as Thomas Bestul mentions in the introduction to his edition of the text, for instance, the emphasis dividing the spiritual and the worldly, as well as the harsh take on Jews and Saracens and salvation are highly notable aspects of the work—see Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, ed. Thomas Bestul (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), 4-6. The latter is a large part of how Margery conceptualizes her spiritual journey and the latter seems to disturb her seriously enough to pray at multiple points for God's salvation for Jews and Saracens. However, I do not want to preclude the possibility that Flete's *Remedies* might have been at least one of "Hilton's" books she had read to her, especially considering how frequently temptations and despair feature in the text.

[687] Phyllis Freeman, Carley Rees Bogarad, and Diane E. Sholomskas, "Margery Kempe, a New Theory: The Inadequacy of Hysteria and Postpartum Psychosis as Diagnostic Categories," *History of Psychiatry* 1, no. 2 (1990): 173-174.

from her mind, Margery finds herself "ner at dispeyr."[688] As I will discuss below, Margery's temptation is not primarily carnal, or carnal at all here, but rather, as noted in the text, a meta-temptation to fall into despair of God's mercy because of the anxiety caused by these unwanted and distressing thoughts. Yet because of the lurid nature of Margery's visions here, this episode in chapter 59 is often trotted out in support of the idea of Margery's continued lustfulness and/or sexual repression, ignoring the meta-aspect of this temptation. Liz Herbert McAvoy, in her article "Virgin, Mother, Whore," applies Judith Butler's gender as performance theory to Margery's behavior in the book, arguing Margery's "re-appropriation of such roles, in particular those of the virgin, the mother and the whore, becomes a major source of agency in her re/construction of self with which much of her text is occupied."[689] She uses a line from this scene in chapter 59 as a subtitle for her "whore" section, but does not actually analyze the scene; nonetheless, she essentially argues that Margery embraces "self-abjection" in being seen as a "whore."[690] The implication, of course, is that Margery is meant to be seen as a "whore" in this tribulation. More common is how scholars simply refer to this scene as another incident of carnal temptation and imply that it offers some sort of proof that she never left lust behind. Roy Porter claims, "The earlier sexual temptations which she had undergone were not, however, entirely a thing of the past; and in time she was visited by 'abominable visions,' conjured up by the Devil, of being beset by threatening male genitals and being commanded to prostitute herself to them."[691] Similarly, Peter Pellegrin, who reads the *Book* as representative of positive mysticism, lumps in this scene with her supposed over-enjoyment of her husband's body: "Virginal in soul

[688] Windeatt, ed., *The Book of Margery Kempe,* 283.
[689] Liz Herbert McAvoy, "Virgin, Mother, Whore: The Sexual Spirituality of Margery Kempe," in *Intersections of Sexuality and the Divine in Medieval Culture: The Word Made* Flesh, ed. Susannah Mary Chewning (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 122.
[690] Ibid, 131-134.
[691] Roy Porter, "Margery Kempe and the Meaning of Madness," *History Today* 38, no. 2 (1988): 42.

but not in body, Kempe continued throughout her life to wrestle with the 'sin' of her sexuality and with sexual temptations, represented in her visions of clerics and their genitalia."[692]

Some authors go so far as to claim sexuality or lust as the primary or only struggle of Margery's spiritual life. Rosalyn Voaden, for instance, claims that for Margery, all sin was sexual: "In Margery's perception sin was always sexual, therefore her identification of herself as a sinner, albeit a reformed sinner, meant identifying herself as sexual. In addition, just as transgression was sexualized, so too was punishment."[693] As such, the incident in chapter 59 is "her own damnation, in which the torment was located in the genitals and the punishment specifically identified as sexual."[694] Her claim is tenuous, since Margery does not touch or have relations with the men or the genitals in the vision, and only portrays herself as seeing them; however Voaden does make the pertinent observation that this incident is in fact painful for Margery and works as a chastisement. Robert Stanton builds on Voaden, but softens her claim about lust. According to Stanton, both "Lust and pride are clearly Margery's besetting sins" throughout the *Book,* and he organizes his whole article around the two; this preconception about Margery's lust causes him to similarly oversimplify the chapter 59 incident and lump it in with her youthful lust.[695] When discussing her contemplation of adultery early in the *Book,* he classifies it exactly the same: ""At the worst point of this painful episode, Margery says she fell "half in dyspeyr" (1.4.471); the "half" seems very like a deliberate attempt to defend herself

[692] Peter Pellegrin, "'I wold þou wer closyd in a hows of ston': Sexuality and Lay Sanctity in *The Book of Margery Kempe*," in *Lay Sanctity, Medieval and Modern: A Search for Models*, ed. Ann Astell (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 96. He does go on to argue that she does not suffer "sexual repression," as she incorporates her sexuality positively in her relationship with Christ, and claims her as a representation of "sainthood" for laypeople both of her time and Pellegrin's (97, 104).
[693] Rosalynn Voaden, "Beholding Men's Members: The Sexualizing of Transgression in *The Book of Margery Kempe*," in *Medieval Theology and the Natural Body*, ed. Peter Biller and Alistair Minnis (York: York Medieval Press, 1997), 176.
[694] Ibid, 180.
[695] Robert Stanton, "Lechery, Pride, and the Uses of Sin in *The Book of Margery Kempe*," *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 36, no. 2 (2010): 176.

against the charge, even though she has previously been afflicted with it and is "ner at dispeyr" during her subsequent sexual temptation (1.59.4881; again, she takes care not to portray herself as fully desperate)."[696] In general Stanton's description of this later episode is strange, as he claims "in addition to saying that the temptation was against her will, she claims that she would not have acted on it for all the world. Consent of the will, essential for mortal sin, is being carefully denied here"—although that consent is necessary for *any* sin, not just mortal sin. Nonetheless, he emphasizes the fact that this experience is meant to be a "punishment" for her, which is essential to its portrayal as a tribulation.[697]

I think that approaching this scene primarily from the angle of sexuality risks obscuring the complexities of Margery's situation, and my reading looks more toward Margery's emotions. Recent scholarship on her emotions tends to be more incisive, as these articles often note her distress at the unwanted thoughts, drawing on Voaden's point about the thoughts being a "punishment." Yet efforts must be made to steer clear of diagnosing Margery in modern medical terms. Most recently Corinne Saunders and Charles Fernyhough have argued, for instance:

> While her early illness can persuasively be placed as post-natal psychosis, and while some of her unusual experiences may have had physiological causes, these bio-medical models, which replace the explanatory frame of the supernatural with the language of delusion and hallucination, are reductive: they do not reflect Margery's or her contemporaries' understandings of her experiences and may, indeed, render them more alien. Contemporary non-medical accounts of voicehearing and unusual experience in the healthy population provide closer analogues, particularly accounts of religious experience in evangelical communities and in non-Western tradition.[698]

Their article nonetheless seems to be attempting to "diagnose" Margery according to a specific current phenomenon even if that phenomenon is not formally classified as a mental illness.

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[696] Ibid, 180-181.
[697] Ibid, 188.
[698] Corinne J. Saunders and Charles Fernyhough, "Reading Margery Kempe's Inner Voices," *postmedieval* 8, no. 2 (2017): 211.

Moreover they have a tendency to read the narrative completely literally, ignoring the literary quality of the work. They touch on the chapter 59 incident, but merely use it to illustrate that Margery "is also alert to different identities of the voices she hears."[699] They are apparently uninterested in the emotional consequences the episode has for Margery.

Other authors have been more tuned into the emotional import of her different visions. An older article by Phyllis Freeman, Carley Rees Bogarad, and Diane Sholomskas in *The History of Psychiatry* does attempt to "diagnose" Margery, including her emotional experiences, but according to medieval sources rather than 1990s psychology. As noted above, they are highly critical of claims that Margery was hysterical, not just because the misogynistic overtones of the diagnosis but also because she does not fit the Galenic definition of hysteria.[700] They likewise challenge "postpartum psychosis" diagnoses for Margery, mainly because of how her visionary experience would not have been regarded "hallucinations and delusions" by "Margery Kempe and her contemporaries" but rather "actual perceptual experiences of satanic inspiration."[701] Ultimately Freeman and her coauthors turn to "medieval nosology" and observe that Margery seems to alternate between states of melancholia and mania.[702] I have written above about melancholic physiology's connection to this topic of temptation to despair, and the aforesaid scholars observe much of the same, attributing chapter 59 to melancholia specifically. (Alternately, her emotional state precipitating her attempt at adultery constitutes "a manic state with heightened sexuality and delusions."[703]) The fact that they refer to Margery's emotional patterns as "bipolar" at the conclusion of their article demonstrates they still clearly have modern

[699] Ibid, 212.
[700] Freeman, et al., "Margery Kempe, a new theory," 174, 177.
[701] Ibid, 181-182.
[702] Ibid, 184.
[703] Ibid, 187.

psychology in mind, but their use of primary sources in "diagnosis" and their separation between Margery's libido and her intrusive thoughts is key, I believe, to understanding her experience of the latter.[704]

Perhaps the closest approach to mine in interpreting the *Book* is that of Rebecca Krug in her 2017 monograph *Margery Kempe and the Lonely Reader*, though there are still several important points I will address where I will dispute or build upon her work. Krug notes in her chapter entitled "Despair" that despair or "wanhope" is a major factor in Kempe's *Book* (she also refers to Kempe as the author "writing" the book throughout) and sees her in conversation with the very "books offering consolation" I have addressed previously in this dissertation.[705] Krug suggests against the grain that Margery's unnamed sin might in fact be one of "despair," perhaps even attempted suicide, given that (1) Margery has no problems confessing sexual sin elsewhere in the *Book* and (2) her failure to confess in the opening chapter and subsequent tribulation is accompanied with self-harm.[706] That said, my reading of the *Book* and temptation to despair departs from Krug's when she subsequently turns to the books of consolation. Krug specifically mentions *Chastising* as one such example, noting its limitations in refusing to specify the contents of horrible thoughts, in contrast to Kempe.[707] Moreover she criticizes *Chastising* as being ineffective because of its supposedly harsh advice:

> Its author goes on to suggest various failures that may have caused the reader's despair and advises her to confess her sins openly and frequently. Although the *Chastising* follows this up with gentler advice—work hard no matter how you feel; eat sufficient food and get sufficient rest; seek out spiritual advisers who will help you with these problems—this moderation is followed by renewed emphasis on personal worthlessness.[708]

[704] Ibid, 190.
[705] Rebecca Krug, *Margery Kempe and the Lonely Reader* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 61.
[706] Ibid, 62-63.
[707] Ibid, 67.
[708] Ibid, 68.

Part of what might be baffling Krug here about the huge variety in tone and advice is the fact that the text is composite, as discussed above, and its laicized *ars moriendi* sources lead *Chastising* to assume a sin has been committed at the root of despair. Despite the great variety of remedies offered by books of consolation, as I discussed in Chapter 2, Krug reduces them to ineffectual invectives to confession: "Not only does confession fail to offer a solution to her [Margery's] problems, but also, in her first chapter, it precipitates the episode in which she falls into despair."[709] Clearly, confession (or attempting it) failed for Margery given the harsh attitude of the priest. She also takes *Remedies* to task, or at least, the exemplum added into the ME3 version about the knight who fell into despair and plays a game of dice with an angel to prove he should hope. Krug thus categorizes *Remedies* as "confessional discourse," arguing the tale

> is exemplary and, although promoting conversation to ward off despair, is in fact entirely unconvincing in regard to the usefulness of talking things over for the despondent individual. The conversational sharing found in Kempe's Book, as we will see, is, in contrast, insistently focused on drawing author and reader together as if they were one and the same. The experience of the miraculous as an antidote for despair, in her estimation, has to be shared and discussed.[710]

While it is clear that sharing her own story is an important "remedy for despair," as I expand upon below, Krug is perhaps a bit too hasty to dismiss *Remedies* and *Chastising* in this way, as those texts likewise encourage discussing one's tribulations with a spiritual advisor and engaging in communal activity.

Krug is clearly also inspired in her reading by the concept of Thought-Action Fusion and how that can be avoided, noting that Margery seems to accept emotions without giving them value:

> Revelation can come only after despair. Recognizing the extreme nature of the first chapter's opening allows us to understand just how far Kempe has come by the fifth chapter: she falls into despair (at least 'half' despair) again and again, but by this point

[709] Ibid, 70.
[710] Ibid, 77, 84.

> she does not feel that her life is over (or wish that it was over). Instead, although she can hardly bear the experience of these 'wondyrful'—meaning 'dreadful' or 'horrible'—temptations, she copes with her feelings of desolation, albeit with 'mourning and sorrow.'[711]

This is another major point at which my assessment departs from Krug's. Here, and in her discussion of chapter 59, Krug conflates Margery's temptation to despair with actually being in despair. Nonetheless, she notes the distressing and intrusive nature of her visions of men's genitalia: "She is unable to stop the visions, just as she was unable to control her speech in chapter one, and she finds herself powerless to understand or change what is happening to her."[712] Her reading of the scene is complex, but I think a bit off-base in assuming this scene is one of consummate despair:

> Critics sometimes read the scene in chapter fifty-nine as "comic." Although this seems to me entirely wrongheaded—at least if the passage is read from Kempe's perspective—such readings evoke the essential lack of moral judgment that the chapter requires of readers. Instead of categorizing her thoughts as sin or sickness—the two options that Kempe's unsympathetic contemporaries offer to explain her experiences—the narrative demands that the reader take part in Kempe's inability to choose how she feels about the onslaught of obsessive imaginings of the penises belonging to "dyvers men of religyon," both Christians and non-Christians. Refusing categorization entirely, judgment itself is associated, in chapter fifty-nine, with the devil: he forces Kempe to choose "in hir mende" which of the men's "bar membrys" she found most pleasing. In contrast with her "enemy," Kempe refuses to make the relative attractiveness of the men's private parts the issue. Instead, the emphasis is placed on her inability to choose how to feel about the experience: "Hir thowt that he seyd trewth." The passage represents her as helpless and incapable of resisting: "sche cowde not sey nay; "sche must nedys don hys byddyng" (chap. 59, 142, emphasis added). Even as she desires, emphatically, not to go along with the devil's prompting, she nevertheless "thowt that thes horrybyl syghtys and cursyd mendys wer delectabyl" (chap. 59, 143, emphasis added). Although this was all "ageyn hir wille" (chap. 59, 143), and although she tries to avoid such thoughts, they "abedyn wyth hir" and follow her. Nothing can stop them.[713]

[711] Ibid, 71.
[712] Ibid, 87.
[713] Ibid, 87.

As such, Margery compels "the reader... to reflect on this experience, identify with the feeling, and become complicit in this conflicted desire."[714] This rhetoric, according to Krug, accomplishes Margery's goal in the text of saving her reader from despair: "It is as though she 'discusses' the subject with the reader—a reader who, like Kempe herself, understands that describing despair as sin is neither true to experience nor helpful to the person in despair."[715]

What is the problem with conflating these "half in despair" or "near despair" scenes with actual despair? The primary issue I take with Krug's argument is that she uses this to demonstrate that Kempe does not see despair as a sin. But framing despair not a sin but just a neutral emotional state takes out the quality of *temptation* inherent in these scenes and its connection to the *temptation to despair* discourse. Stanton, for instance, noted well as mentioned above that Margery is very careful in her points here that she was tempted but not actually in despair. Cutting out the issue of temptation entirely, Krug skims over "books of consolation" (i.e. texts about temptation to despair) a bit reductively. In fact, many of the critiques she makes about tradition and pastoralia on despair do not in fact apply to *Remedies*, and very tellingly she only addresses an exemplum found in the ME3 version of *Remedies*—none of Flete's actual ideas. Something that she does detect, in both *Chastising* and ME3, the emphasis on confession and God's mercy, is a result, as noted before, of the collision of two types of temptation to despair—the lay version where one is worried about a past sin, unconfessed,[716] and the daily struggle with scrupulosity or unwanted thoughts that a religious person might experience. Obviously, confession would relieve someone worried about a past sin that has already been

[714] Ibid, 88.
[715] Ibid.
[716] I do appreciate Krug's point about Margery's chapter 1 despair, as this lay version of despair clearly applies here—though note it is not that confession fails to satisfy her worry but that she never actually gets to confess it because of a bad priest, and Margery throughout the text has plenty of criticisms of bad clergy. Moreover I would like to reiterate that I am not trying to "defend" the advice of the pastoralia, but I think that Krug's dismissal of it can somewhat obscure the reading of despair in Margery's text against said pastoralia.

committed. That requires a different treatment to relieve the emotions than someone with uncontrollable thoughts who has worried God has abandoned them. Despair has multiple valences in Margery's text, which is lost when it is flattened in Krug's reading.

A final way in which I would like to diverge from Krug's work is setting Margery against hagiography to a greater extent. Krug mentions the religious struggling with despair in Marie's text in a brief line, but otherwise ignores it. Observing the patterns of temptation to despair for Catherine and others can enlighten Margery's own tribulations, even if Margery did not directly access those texts. While the *Book* is multi-generic as mentioned above, it is still the story of her life, a *vita*, and was influenced by hagiography and the popularity of certain female saints. Thus we ought to also understand it among other hagiography rather than as simply a guidebook for a "lonely reader." That said I do agree with Krug that despair is critically overlooked as regards *The Book of Margery Kempe*.

I argue that Margery exhibits both kinds of temptation despair as explored in my previous chapter—lay and religious—the former of which she falls into for a time. Margery experiences many tempting thoughts but the intensity over the course of her journey, from simple carnal temptation to a meta-temptation to despair, much how Catherine does before her mystical marriage. Like Marie, Margery herself then ministers to people who experience similar temptation and is quoted in the *Book* as praying for them regularly; moreover, the *Book* itself is a ministry, both in terms of her example, but also in its emphasis on contemplation of the Passion as a remedy for despair.

I begin my analysis with Margery's actual episode of despair with which the narrative begins. As if *in media res*, the *Book* begins with Margery around age 20, during a difficult pregnancy with her first child: "And aftyr that sche had conceyved, sche was labowrd wyth grett

accessys tyl the chyld was born and than, what for labowr sche had in chyldyng and for sekenesse goyng beforn, sche dyspered of hyr lyfe, wenyng sche mygth not levyn."[717] Important to note here is that she is in despair of her life, not of her salvation, and accordingly, thinking she was on her deathbed, she calls for her confessor to relieve her conscience. Here we see our first connection with Margery's temptation to despair, and that is the *ars moriendi* temptation to despair, in which the weight of a sin "sche haad nevyr schewyd beforn that tyme in alle hyr lyfe" makes her doubt her salvation.[718] The narrator explains that she had put it off at the prompting of the devil, as she figured she could simply do private penance, but "whan sche was any tym seke or dysesyd, the dvyl seyd in her mende that sche schuld be dampnyd, for sche was not schrevyn of that defawt."[719] This doubt is externalized to the devil, and Margery uses a similar device as *Against Wanhope* and *The Craft of Dying*—in the latter, even, the text reminds the reader that the devil will specifically bring up unconfessed sins to try to get the sinner to despair, even if that person cannot or does not have time to confess, "ffor in such a cas verry contricion of herte with-in, with wyll to be schreven if tyme sufficed, is sufficient & acceptable to god for to saue hym with euerlastyngly."[720] Margery seems to be familiar with the routine and the language of this *ars moriendi* tradition because she is tortured by the devil on an identical account and calls for confession, but "hir confessowr was a lytyl to hastye and gan scharply to undyrnemyn hir, er than sche had fully seyd hir entent, and so sche wold no mor seyn for nowt he mygth do."[721] Yet it is ambiguous how "The Craft of Dying" might deal with this scenario, in which she technically

[717] Windeatt, ed., *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 52.
[718] Ibid.
[719] Ibid, 52-53.
[720] "The Craft of Dying," 409.
[721] Windeatt, ed., *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 53-54.

had time to confess, but the aggressive attitude of the priest unfortunately caused him to cut her off and deter her full confession.

Margery's resulting fear both of her confessor's reproval and her damnation drive her "owt of hir mende" and cause her to be "vexid and labowryd wyth spyritys half yer, viii wekys and odde days."[722] This has been often been viewed as postpartum psychosis, as discussed above. But what is more interesting to me is that her disturbance by these spirits—tempting her to blaspheme and alienate herself from her friends and family—is verified by her own will:

> And also the develys cryed upon hir wyth greet thretyngys, and bodyn hir sche schuld forsake hir Crystendam, hir feyth, and denyin hir God, hys modyr, and alle the seyntys in hevyn, hyr goode werkys and alle good vertues, hir fadyr, hyr modyr, and alle hire frendys. And so sche dede. ... lych as the spyrytys temptyd hir to sey and do, so sche seyd and dede. Sche wold a fordon [have killed] hirself many a tym at her steryngys and a ben damnyd wyth hem in helle, and into wytnesse therof sche bot her owen hand so vyolently that it was seen al hir lyfe aftyr.[723]

Margery presents temptation to despair in a very similar way that she does later on, when she does not fall. The devil's minions invade her mind, present her with blasphemous thoughts, and urge her to act on it—yet instead of being shocked and upset by these thoughts, she complies with them entirely. The conclusion of this is her consent to suicide; though she is physically restrained from it, she harms herself—the only way she can to prove that consent. From the guilt of a sin already committed, to despairing of the mercy of God, to hastening that supposedly inevitable damnation through suicide—Margery's picture of this early deathbed despair echoes closely the narrative of sin warned of in "Against Wanhope." Moreover, Margery's spiritual trial here recalls one of Marie d'Oignies' "patients," the nun who was troubled with the devil in her thoughts, fell into despair, and at its natural conclusion, considers suicide, although, for Margery, the spark that began it was distress over a previously committed sin on her (supposed) deathbed,

[722] Ibid, 54.
[723] Ibid, 54-55.

as opposed to the nun's apparent daily intrusive thoughts unrelated to past sin.[724] Yet the result is the same. This is the first instance in which *The Book* blends the two separate types of temptation to despair, representing Margery's own liminal status between lay and religious.

Ultimately the situation is resolved when Jesus appears to her the first time, asking her "why hast thow forsakyn me, and I forsoke nevyr the?"[725] This simple question—with the reassurance of Jesus' support, similar to the one he offers Catherine of Siena after her tribulation—is enough to restore Margery to mental and emotional health. Yet she does not actually confess that sin, which had started her whole ordeal, until much later when she receives her second revelation (which also sparks her desire to eliminate sex from her marriage).[726] When she does confess this sin, she goes to extremes: "Sche was schrevyn sumtyme twyes or thryes on the day, and in specyal of that synne whech sche so long had conselyd and curyd, as it is wretyn in the gynnyng of the boke."[727] Here we start to see Margery's slight transition into temptation similar to scrupulosity, typical of more advanced religious practitioners. Her obsessive repetition of confession is actually warned of in Flete, who reminds the reader that a genuine confession works the first time, though the devil may try to throw this into doubt; however, the operating point here is that the devil's throwing that into doubt is not meant to encourage penance but anxiety.[728] The difference in Margery is that this appears to be part of her penance, rather than an anxiety or despair of her salvation separating her from God. This is a function of the text as hagiography. Much as Raymond of Capua excuses Catherine of Siena's intense scrupulosity in confession, or Jacques de Vitry excuses Marie d'Oignies over-asceticism, Margery's *Book*

[724] Brown, ed., *Three Women of Liège*, 106.
[725] Windeatt, ed., *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 56.
[726] Ibid, 63.
[727] Ibid, 63-64
[728] Lamothe, "*De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*," 173.

displays a sort of hyperbolic correction of her past despair of God's mercy and fear of confession with her practice of re-confessing, which sets Margery as a figure to be admired rather than imitated.[729]

The next major incident of temptation to despair is her close brush with adultery. Here we can observe Margery's discrete experiences of basic carnal temptation and meta-temptation to despair. The incident is precipitated by Margery becoming prideful after several years of her devotion to God; thus God sends her three years of "greet temptacyon" to humble her.[730] In framing the episode in this way, Margery is clearly aware of the temptations-as-chastising discourse wherein God allows this tempting to perfect souls and purge sin. Moreover the text reminds us "For no drede owyr gostly enmy slepyth not, but he ful besyly sergyth [searches] owr complexions and owyr dysposycioyns, and wher that he fyndyth us most freel, ther, be owyr Lordys sufferawns, he leyth hys snar."[731] The *Book* also recalls the tradition, as articulated by St. Birgitta for instance, of the devil seeking individuals' weak points to tempt them with, whether that be a disposition inclined towards melancholy or any other tendency. For Margery, it is apparently "the snar of letchery, whan sche wend that all fleschly lust had al hol ben qwenchyd in hir."[732] Of importance here is how she frames temptation to adultery as a punishment, specifically, for being proud about having supposedly conquered her sexual temptation, rather than for a sexual transgression. The operative issue is her pride, rather than her lust.

The incident comes to a head when a male friend tells her he will have sex with her one time or another, and she has no choice in the matter, supposedly to test her, though she takes him

[729] It is interesting to note that Margery's account basically avoids the scrupulosity version of this issue, and she doesn't seem to over-worry about sin. Her temptation to despair is almost exclusively of the intrusive blasphemous/sexual thoughts kind.
[730] Windeatt, ed., *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 66.
[731] Ibid, 66-67.
[732] Ibid, 67.

seriously.[733] This weighed on her mind so heavily she fails to follower her prayer regimen "er thynkyn ony other good thowt," and seems to become obsessed.[734] This is when the devil gets involved, and the temptation takes on a meta-quality—it stops being about the actual act of adultery, but rather, whether she trusts God: "The devyl put in hir mende that God had forsakyn hir, and ellys schuld sche not so ben temptyd. She levyd the develys suasyons and gan to consentyn for because sche wode thynkyn no good thowt. Therefor wend sche that God had forsake hir."[735] The temptation to adultery, which in retrospect God actually allowed and sent to her to beat down her pride, turns into a temptation to despair of God in real time as she assumes he has abandoned her. Margery's temptation has multiple levels—first, on the base carnal level, she seems to want to actually have sex with her acquaintance, but the meta-temptation to despair is present as well, and in fact, a consequence of the first. Margery mixes these two levels early on in her spiritual journey. Nonetheless she only began to consent here, and has not fully acceded to despair (she was only "half in dyspeyr"[736]). Her reasoning for this is, likewise, a lack of control over her thoughts (being unable to think good thoughts), a continuing theme in the *Book*.

Ultimately, she "consentyd in her mend [to the adultery], and went to the man to wetyn yf he wold than consentyn to hire."[737] Yet this ends in a complete and harsh rejection of her agreement with his supposed proposition. Nonetheless, Margery is aware that a grave sin has been committed. Following the program of "Against Wanhope," Margery's consent proceeded from mental to physical, in her actually trying to enact this sin, and then finally, temptation to despair: "Then fel sche half in dyspeyr. Sche thowt sche wold a ben in helle for the sorw that

[733] Ibid, 68.
[734] Ibid.
[735] Ibid.
[736] Ibid, 69.
[737] Ibid.

sche had. Sche thowt sche was worthy no mercy, for hir consentynge was so wylfully do, ne nevyr worthy to don hym servyse, for sche was so fals unto hym."[738] Despite this temptation and these proddings of the devil, Margery does not despair; she follows the standard prescription for lay despair which is to make a confession, which she does "many tymes and oftyn."[739] Likewise, as advised in Flete and *Chastising*, she entrusts herself to authority rather than her own thoughts, being "governd aftyr the rewelys of the Chirch."[740] Nonetheless, the temptation only increases, and she "was labowrd wyth horrybl temptacyons of lettherye and of dyspeyr ny al the next year folwyng."[741] Margery experiences two separate temptations: the carnal temptation to adultery, and the temptation to despair of God's mercy, though the former gives rise to the latter. Ultimately, Jesus returns the feeling of his presence to her on Christmas, promising her salvation, and gifting her with "contrysyon into thi lyves ende."[742] Margery's struggle in this episode mixes carnal and meta-temptation to despair based on the intensity of that carnal temptation. It is only removed with Jesus' miraculous permission, as it was there to refine her spiritually (apparently, gift her with salvific contrition, as well as beat her pride). The episode also follows the hagiographic examples as enumerated before, and the general advice of the *Profits* tradition, which is to suffer such temptation patiently.

In the next and most notable incident of temptation to despair, the aforesaid notorious chapter 59, we can measure Margery's spiritual progress by how her temptation is depicted. While the first temptation to despair was the lay form based on a previously committed sin troubling her on her (supposed) deathbed, and the second was based on actually existing carnal

[738] Ibid, 69-70.
[739] Ibid, 70.
[740] Ibid.
[741] Ibid.
[742] Ibid, 71.

temptation to adultery, this incident marks where her temptation to despair is more "pure"—the demonic harassment is not based on any actual sins or desire for sin. This is akin to the final stage of Catherine of Siena's temptation-gauntlet before her mystical marriage, or Christina's second scene of temptation, or the type we see in Flete, which is more oriented towards people of religious vocation. Suitably it can also mark her spiritual progress and "de-laicization." The incident occurs when God tells Margery she has to "wel heryn of the dampnyd as of the savyd," and Margery, doubting this, questions whether it is God talking to her or an "evyl spiryt."[743] As a chastisement, the Lord withdraws from her mind "alle good thowtys and alle good mendys of holy spechys and dalyawns, and suffyrd hir to have as many evyl thowtys as sche had beforn of good thowtys."[744] The *Book* sets up a direct parallelism between the evil, intrusive thoughts and the good revelations in this sentence; we can see directly Margery's understanding of this temptation to despair as the "other side of the coin" to her mystical communication. This is particularly relevant because *discretio spirituum* as a practice is meant to divide demonic incursion from divine revelation; it is her very failure at *discretio spirituum* that actually leads to God withdrawing from her mind and allowing evil spirits to play rampant with her thoughts. Note too, Margery frames this as specifically a chastising. For Catherine, it follows her prayers for fortitude, and it is posed as a purification in the *Profits* tradition. For Christina, it seems to be portrayed as the testing of the devil, much like the desert fathers experienced as a result of their holiness. Margery, though, articulates it in penitential terms similar to *Chastising*, perhaps unsurprising considering her sinful past life.

[743] Ibid, 281.
[744] Ibid, 281.

These thoughts include many forms, including some graphic memories of her past sex life.[745] That said, the most vivid description includes totally novel unwanted thoughts:

> And so the devyl bar hyr on hande, dalying unto hir wyth cursyd thowtys, liche as owr Lord dalyid to hir beforntyme with holy thowtys. And, as sche beforn had many gloryows visyonys and hy contemplacyon in the manhod of owr Lord, in owr Lady, and in many other holy seyntys, ryth evyn so had sche now horybyl syghtys and abhominabyl, for anythyng that sche cowde do, of beheldyng of mennys membrys, and swech other abhominacyons. Sche sey, as hir thowt veryly, dyvers men of religyon, preystys, and many other, bothyn hethyn and Cristen, comyn befor hir syght, that sche myth not enchewyn hem ne puttyn hem owt of hir syght, schewyng her bar membrys unto hir. And therwyth the devyl bad hir in hir mende chesyn whom sche wolde han fyrst of hem alle, and sche must be comown to hem alle. And he seyd sche lykyd bettyr summe on of hem than alle the other. Hir thowt that he seyd trewth; sche cowde not sey nay; and sche must nedys don hys byddyng, and yet wolde sche not a done it for alle this worlde. But yet hir thowt that it schulde be don, and hir thowt that thes horrybyl syghtys and cursyd mendys [thoughts] wer delectabyl to hir ageyn her wille. Wher sche went er what so sche dede, thes cursyd mendys abedyn wyth hir. When sche schulde se the sacrament, makyn hir prayerys, er don any other good dede, evyr swech cursydnes was putte in hir mende. Sche was schrevyn and dedde al that sche myth, but sche fonde no relesyng, tyl sche was ner at dispeyr. It can not be wretyn, that peyn that sche felt and the sorwe that sche was inne.[746]

As Krug notes, Margery's description here spares no detail compared to *Chastising*, which seems to describe a similar phenomenon of the sort of lurid thoughts that might tempt one to despair, but refuses to specify them for fear of corrupting a mind that had never conceived of such thoughts. The contents of Margery's are sexual, including visions of many different men's genitals, with the extra suggestion of sacrilegious tones with them belonging to "dyvers men of religyon, preystys, and many other." Margery is emphatic, moreover, about how distressing and unwanted these thoughts are; though she freely refers to "delighting" in her husband's body in the past, for instance, here the thoughts are "horybyl," "abhominabyl," and "cursyd," and she emphasizes her "peyn" and "sorwe" at being unable to rid herself of these anti-visions.

[745] Ibid, 281.
[746] Ibid, 282-283.

Moreover, Margery is careful to emphasize her lack of consent, in contrast with her incidents of temptation in chapter 1 and 4, such as when the devil mocks her with having to choose which genitals she liked best: "sche cowde not sey nay; and sche must nedys don hys byddyng, and yet wolde sche not a done it for alle this worlde." She is careful to circumscribe her agency such that she cannot control her thoughts and feelings; this also makes it clear she is not falling into sin. Moreover, she does not say she likes these abominable thoughts but rather is forced to think she does "ageyn her wille." As she has made abundantly clear in retrospect, these thoughts are not themselves delightful, but instead, the devil makes her think, against her will, that they are so. The temptation is not for her to enjoy these thoughts, but instead, to despair, being unable to rid herself of thoughts that she fears may sully her chastity against her will. Her regular routine of prayer, Eucharist, and confession prove unhelpful to her and do not dispel the thoughts, though she maintains her reception of the sacraments, similar to Catherine's advice in *Orcherd*.

Margery appeals to the Lord for why this has happened to her, and an angel appears, reminding her that the Lord "hath not forsakyn the, ne nevyr schal forsake the," but that she must endure twelve days of this temptation to despair as chastisement for her refusing to hear of the damned and doubting her revelations came from God.[747] She still tries to barter with the angel, but he does not relent, "So sche suffryd that peyn tyl xii days were passyd" and her "holy thowtys" return.[748] Margery can only patiently endure, and await the return of God's consolation in his own time. As with all the other female saints who experience this, Margery's text confirms that despite these mental incursions, she remains protected, enclosed in some way, by the Lord who does not abandon her, as explained by the angel above. This confirms her conversation with

[747] Ibid, 283.
[748] Ibid.

God in chapter 35: "dowtyr, thu art as sekyr of the lofe of God, as God is God. Thy sowle is mor sekyr of the lofe of God than of thin owyn body, for thi sowle schal partyn fro thy body, but God schal nevyr partyn fro thi sowle, for thei ben onyd togedyr wythowtyn ende."[749]

The structure of Margery's temptations to despair closely parallels Catherine of Siena's journey of temptation before her mystical marriage. While it is spread out much more in time and in the text, her carnal temptations for adultery, for instance, subside; but the next level is, likewise, mockingly sexual thoughts, despite her lack of desire for such a thing. Margery's being told by the devil she must choose between genitals echoes Catherine's illusory lustful couples in her mind telling her to join in. And likewise, these temptations are clearly not ordered toward getting these women to go out and prostitute themselves, but instead, to get them to abandon their faith in God just through the intensity of their temptations and the anxiety produced by them. In both cases, the tribulations are in fact ordained by God to a greater purpose—for Catherine, to increase her fortitude, for Margery, to chastise her and correct her imperfect trust. Comparing Margery's case to Catherine's, as well as the examples given through pastoralia of intrusive thoughts and temptation to despair, it is clear this is not just another case of Margery being lustful, but a more advanced spiritual challenge, on par with her spiritual progress at this point in her *vita*. The fact that unholy memories are mixed in, of course, is a product of her past life as a wife, something Margery never erases. Nonetheless, her temptations to despair accord more with the "religious" type experienced by the nun in Marie's *vita* or Flete's tract, than with the lay version of despair based on her previous sins she experiences in chapter 1 and 4, a trial that accords more with the *ars moriendi* tradition.

[749] Ibid, 194.

Margery seems to experience this pattern of consolation and desolation cyclically. The *Book* comments in chapter 83 that "sche lakkyd no grace but whan sche dowtyd er mistrostyd the goodnes of God, supposyng er dredyng that it was the wyle of hir gostly enmy to enformyn hir er techyn hir otherwyse than wer to hir gostly hele."[750] This mistake in *discretio spirituum* leads to a similar conclusion, and God withdraws "alle good thowtys and alle good mendys" until she renews her faith that it is God talking to her.[751] This pattern of consolation and desolation is similar to Birgitta's discussion of consolation and desolation in her *Revelations*, which seems to have a similarly oscillating nature, with the metaphor of the fist sometimes open and sometimes closed, depending on what the person needs. In particular, the *Book*'s description of God using tribulation as a shepherd to train his sheep to stay in his barn seems particularly relevant to Margery's experience; God is quite literally trying to train her to remain in trust of his revelations by chastising her when she doubts. It is the reassurance that this pattern of distress and doubt was toward her "encres of vertu wyth perseverawns" that concludes the first book of the *Book*.[752]

Margery does not just experience periods of desolation and temptation to despair, but she actively ministers to those with that experience as well, mimicking Marie d'Oignies. This occurs to a limited extent in her life story as told in the *Book*, as well as the prayers she offers for such people within the *Book*, and finally, the use of the *Book* itself as a comfort for those tempted with despair. In the account of Margery kissing and comforting female lepers to persevere in their illness, we learn that one such leper is plagued with mental temptations:

> Sche was so labowryd wyth hir gostly enmy that sche durst not blissyn hir, ne do no worschep to God, for dreed that the devyl schuld a slayn hir. And sche was labowryd wyth many fowle and horibyl thowtys, many mo than sche cowde tellyn. And as sche

[750] Ibid, 361.
[751] Ibid.
[752] Ibid, 384.

> seyd, sche was a mayde. Therfor the sayd creatur went to hir many tymys to comfortyn hir and preyd for hir, also ful specialy that God schulde strength hir ageyn hir enmye, and it is to belevyn that he dede so, blissyd mote he ben![753]

Margery's prayers and companionship quite literally relieve the woman of her mental temptation, which seems geared towards getting her to abandon God in despair, since she is afraid to worship on account of it. Yet while Margery's prayers seem to be especially effective as a treatment for despair, these are included not just in the narrative but also, breaking the fourth wall, for the readers. In the conclusion to the second and final volume of the *Book*, presented in the first person as Margery's typical prayer to God, one of her prayers is: "I cry the mercy, Lord, for alle tho that arn temptyd and vexid wyth her gostly enmiis, that thu of thi mercy yefe hem grace to withstondyn her temptacyons and delyvyr hem therof whan it is thi most plesawns."[754] The prayer, presented in the first person, demonstrates her priority for helping those with similar tribulations as herself. Moreover, the reader, following the example and script of this text, is then drawn into praying that prayer themselves as well as being the recipient of it.

Perhaps the most impactful ministry Margery offers toward those troubled with temptation to despair is the production of the *Book* itself. The proem refers to the *Book* as "a schort tretys and a comfortabyl for synful wrecchys, wherin thei may have gret solas and comfort to hem and undyrstondyn the hy and unspecabyl mercy of ower sovereyn Savyowr Cryst Jhesu."[755] Her dedication implies she is primarily targeting a lay audience that might be tempted to despair through memory of past sins and need to be reminded of God's mercy. The issue of a potentially despairing audience is made more clear in chapter 77: "what creatur wil takyn as mech sorwe for my Passyon as thu has don many a tyme, and wil sesyn of her synnys, that thei

[753] Ibid, 327.
[754] Ibid, 425.
[755] Ibid, 41.

schal have the blys of hevyn wythowtyn ende.... any creatur in erthe, haf he be nevyr so horrybyl a synner, he thar nevyr fallyn in dispeyr yyf he wyl takyn exampil of thy levyng and werkyn sumwhat theraftyr as he may do."[756] Once more, the emphasis on mercy as a solution to despair that might be the result of many sins designates Margery's intended audience as primarily lay; the very example of her life story offers a potential solution and reminder of that mercy.

In the tradition of temptation to despair pastoralia, Margery places emphasis on meditation on the Passion, which often sparks her intense tears throughout the narrative. Chapter 77, in which the purpose of the book is spelled out, is immediately followed by three chapters that detail Margery's meditation on the Passion, where she is placed within the scene and ministers to the Virgin Mary in her sorrow, as well as copiously crying herself. Margery's recommendation and incorporation of meditation on the Passion as a solution to lack of trust in God's mercy follows the pattern established in tribulation-manuscripts, as I observed in the previous chapter, which were often found with ps.-Bonaventure's *Meditations on the Life of Christ* (which Margery herself was inspired by). Even as Margery experiences, eventually, the temptation to despair that was usually experienced by the spiritually advanced of religious vocation, she administers to lay people challenged with despair based on previous sins, like her younger self.

Margery Kempe's journey as a laywoman exposes the multiple versions of temptation to despair that evolve as she spiritually advances. As observed in the scholarship on the *Book*, Margery's purpose for her *Book* largely seems to be consoling others who might experience despair–likely, those who are doubting the mercy of God based on their previous sins, placing it in conversation with more lay-oriented texts like "Against Wanhope" or *ars moriendi*. As such,

[756] Ibid, 335.

Margery imitates the pattern of other female saints both in her experience of temptation to despair, and her ministration to people with similar tribulations. Though Margery is often portrayed in scholarship as an unhinged and ineffective imitator of Birgitta and Catherine, her *Book* represents an innovation building on their revelations. Margery's *Book* fuses multiple genres—hagiography, mystic revelations, meditation on the Passion, *ars moriendi*—into her own unique book of consolation, drawing on the tradition represented by *Chastising* and *Remedies*. Arguably, her work represents the culmination of the intermingling of lay and religious discourses around temptation to despair.

Ultimately, all three these saints seem to be cognizant of and in conversation with the pastoralia discussed in the previous chapter, though they are often set as admirable exceptions to the advice given, rather than imitable figures. Furthermore, the texts in this chapter all manifest a similar anxiety over the "openness" of the female body/mind, necessitating *discretio spirituum* within the mystical experience. Enclosure is as relevant to Birgitta, Catherine, and Margery as it was to Catherine and Marie, but their revelations and *vitae* handle it primarily through the binary of consolation and desolation: periods of God's obvious presence and his seeming absence, both of which are necessary in balance to promote spiritual advancement. Through embracing these periods of the "open fist," rather than repudiating them, these three late-medieval women cope with their own temptations to despair and reframe these dangerous mental intrusions as authorizing their mystic experiences.

Chapter 5: Julian of Norwich on Sin and Loneliness

Perhaps above all else, Julian of Norwich is a religious woman known for hope, expressed by her most famous line, "al shal be wel, and al shal be wel, and al manner of thyng shal be wele." In the final chapter of this dissertation, I switch gears to discuss Julian of Norwich, the most prominent English mystic of the late Middle Ages, to explore her complex and emotionally charged discussion of despair. Rather than investigating intrusive thoughts and temptation, as has been my focus thus far, I attempt to untangle the webs of sin, despair, emotion, loneliness, and hope that weave throughout her text, which I argue ultimately illuminate her relational depiction of God at its very heart. Like the other women I have covered in this dissertation, Julian is concerned with enclosure (perhaps even more so, given her career as an anchoress); however, she flips the script by portraying God as an "enclosing," protective mother. In her *Revelations*, she transforms discourses from the *Profits*, *Chastising*, *Ancrene Wisse*, and others to reckon with despair as both an emotion and a significant concept in moral theology.

Little is known about Julian's life. Based on a note in the first copy of her book and attestations in wills, we know the author was Julian, an anchoress at St. Julian's Church in Norwich in the early fifteenth century.[757] She establishes in her book itself that she received her visions at age 30 in 1373.[758] Julian wrote two versions of the revelations—one supposedly soon after she received them, and a longer version as an older woman with the benefit of two decades of contemplation.[759] Julian's text focuses on the question of human sin and suffering against visions of the Passion of Christ, attempting to reconcile the mercy and justice of God, the

[757] James Walsh, trans., *The Revelations of Divine Love of Julian of Norwich*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961): 1-2.
[758] Ibid, 47, 49.
[759] Georgia Ronan Crampton, ed., *The Shewings of Julian of Norwich*, (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994), 1.

judgment of the Church and the love of Christ. To that point, much ado has been made about her orthodoxy or lack thereof. It seems that scholars in both the orthodox and heterodox camps seem entirely assured that their position has been conclusively proven, which gives the impression their opinions on Julian rely more on their own feelings towards the current Catholic Church than the text itself.[760] My goal in this chapter is not to measure Julian's text by the criterion of orthodoxy, or feminism, or anything else, but rather to unpack her theology of suffering, sin, dread, and despair in the context of the writings of other female mystics and pastoralia.

Julian and Temptation Pastoralia

The first thing I would like to establish is Julian's connections to the texts I have already discussed in the previous chapters. Nicholas Watson connects her (and Walter Hilton) to William Flete and *Chastising*: "the *De remediis*, brief as it is, stands at the head of a series of accounts of despair that include passages of Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love* (1380s–?1400s), *Fervor Amoris* (c. 1400), *The Chastising of God's Children* (?1390s)," and the ME3 version of *Remedies*.[761] Watson also goes over her taxonomy of "drede," terming it as "Fletian interest in doubt" and says the section "associates 'doughtfulle drede' with scrupulosity... more than intellectual doubt or fear of reprobation."[762] "Intellectual doubt," he insists, is treated in Julian's texts "as legitimate, not sinful" and answers it merely with the assurance that all shall be well.[763] Vincent Gillespie also sees connections between Julian and Flete (and Suso's *Horologium*

[760] For instance, William Zehringer is utterly convinced of her orthodoxy; of course, he's also writing for the American Benedictine Review. On the other hand, George Tolley boldly claims ""She does not reflect the teaching of the Church of her day; she follows her own inner convictions and presents thoughts that are much more in keeping with modern than with medieval theology..." and he happens to be himself a modern Anglican minister (102). See William Zehringer, "Words Formed in My Understanding: Speech and Thought in Julian of Norwich's *Showings*," *American Benedictine Review* 61, vol. 4 (2010): 347-359 and George Tolley, "'Love Was His Meaning': Julian of Norwich and Atonement," *Theology* 111, no. 860 (2008): 102-107.
[761] Nicholas Watson, "Despair," in *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*, eds. Brian Cummings and James Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 353-354.
[762] Ibid, 355.
[763] Ibid.

Sapientiae, a major source for *Chastising of God's Children* as well as *Stimulus Amoris*, often appended to Flete), claiming that "Julian tactically synthesizes generic tropes to posit Christ as 'the ultimate double signifier,' at once physical and metaphysical, and the comfort proffered by his 'destroying of death.'"[764] He also points out similarities between Julian's work and the *ars moriendi* tradition, in how the entire Revelations starts on her apparent deathbed and turns to contemplation of the passion.[765] Moreover, Julian often interprets suffering through a similar lens to the *Profits of Tribulation* texts, though Gillespie argues: "the hugely popular XII Profits of Tribulation asserts in a very Julianish way that 'more mede is in desirande and sekande god þen likande in hym.' ... But Julian's development of these stock ideas is endlessly synthetic and inventive, balancing the aspiration of the human soul against the sole agency of the Trinity in bringing about such changes."[766]

Anna Baldwin, too, I have previously discussed above, but her emphasis on the persistent, patient love of God in Julian's *Revelations* is worth returning to in more detail. Baldwin points to Julian's discussion of Christ's motherhood as a key example: "the willingness and generosity of Jesus' suffering in these passages invites direct comparison with the *Remedia* text's... account of the Crucifixion as an act of patience, releasing 'the life-giving water' for mankind. Julian relates this sacramental flow from Christ's body to the mother's patient offering of her own milk."[767] (The *Remedia* in question is not Flete's, but rather a treatise used as an inspiration by Chaucer for the *Parson's Tale)*. She also connects Julian to *Ayenbite of Inwit* and

[764] Vincent Gillespie, "Seek, Suffer, and Trust: 'Ese' and 'Disese' in Julian of Norwich," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 39 (2017): 129.
[765] 131, 137
[766] Ibid, 140.
[767] Anna Baldwin, "The Triumph of Patience in Julian of Norwich and Langland," in *Langland, the Mystics and the Medieval English Religious Tradition: Essays in Honour of S.S. Hussey*, ed. Helen Philips, 71-83 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990), 75.

Somme le Roi, major sources for *The Profits of Tribulation* and related texts, thus enmeshing Julian in tribulation and despair discourse.[768]

Besides Julian's emphasis on tribulation, several authors have noted her connection to various texts with her "double will" concept. Nicolette Zeeman, for instance, observes similarities between the ME3 version of Flete and Julian's separation of the will into godly and fleshly.[769] Watson, too, makes this connection, especially in conjunction with both texts' emphasis on mercy.[770] Other authors have sought instead to distinguish Julian as separate from contemporary discourse. Steven Fanning notes that other authors such as Barbara Newman have noticed the variety of late-medieval female mystics who have particular sympathy for souls suffering in purgatory, including Catherine of Siena and Margery Kempe; Fanning argues, however, that "Julian seems to be in an entirely different category from the others discussed for she never portrayed herself as freeing any soul from hell or purgatory or personally lightening their torments, nor at any point did she question the justness of the infernal or purgatorial punishments." [771] Rather, Jesus must reassure her that "he would keep his word and make all things well. ... The cumulative effect of Julian's teachings—she had seen no hell or purgatory, all would be saved in some mysterious action, the devil was a laughable creature who could only do what God permitted—removed the element of fear as the motivating force in the life of the Christian and replaced it with an awareness of God's love and compassion for humankind."[772] Ultimately he connects her with the lesser-known mystic Catherine of Genoa, but otherwise the

[768] Ibid, 74, 72.
[769] Nicolette Zeeman, "Willing," in *Medieval Literature: Criticism and Debates,* eds. Holly Crocker and Vance Smith, 470-479 (London: Routledge, 2014): 472.
[770] Watson, "Despair," 353-354.
[771] Steven Fanning, "Mitigations of the Fear of Hell and Purgatory in the Later Middle Ages: Julian of Norwich and Catherine of Genoa," in *Fear and its Representations in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, eds. Anne Scott and Cynthia Kosso, 295-310 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 305.
[772] Ibid.

two women's ideas "are not reflective of popular religious attitudes or of religious instruction available to ordinary Christians. At times one can best understand mystics by indeed regarding them as mystics."[773] Fanning goes against the grain of cultural studies scholarship to find differences between the revelations of Julian and those of her near contemporaries. Even so, her innovations are clearly grounded in tribulation texts.

Perhaps the closest that Julian reaches to scrupulosity and intrusive thoughts is her taxonomy of dread, studied at length by scholars, occasionally in conjunction with mental illness. Anna Kelner argues that Julian, in conversation with *discretio spirituum*, reframes diabolic temptation not as something to be eliminated but endured for spiritual growth.[774] Regarding Julian's taxonomy of dread, in which the mystic distinguishes between holy and hurtful dread, Kelner obscures this difference, arguing "in the act of repudiation, diabolical forms of dread can be come sources of spiritual profit, ultimately eliding their distinction from the divine kind."[775] Kelner's analysis strikes me as too hasty to dismiss the other Profits of Tribulation texts—she calls out *Chastising* specifically as detrimental because the repeated refrain to pray that you do not fall into temptation—yet *Chastising* advocates the exact same program of temptation and tribulation being turned to spiritual progress.[776] Yet it does demonstrate further scholars' tendency to criticize other texts in elevating Julian's.

Tinsley too addresses Julian's taxonomy of dread, specifically pointing to the dread that seems to be similar to scrupulosity: "She warns her readers of the dangers of contrition, the most infernal instrument of all. The fiend works with human folly to engender a state of 'false drede of

[773] Ibid, 310.
[774] Anna Kelner, "Trusting Women's Visions: The Discernment of Spirits in Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 51, no. 2 (2021): 202.
[775] Ibid, 203.
[776] Ibid.

oure wrechydnesse, for payne that he thretyth vs by.... For it is his menyng to make vs so hevy and so sory in this pat we schuld lett outt of mynde pe blessydfull beholdyng of oure evyrlastyng frende.'"[777] It is odd that he terms this "contrition" rather than what it is, "scruples," as Julian has elsewhere explicitly insisted on the importance of contrition and penitence for spiritual growth. Yet Tinsley also argues that this dread is apparently unavoidable, but should be combatted with hope: "Julian wishes here to reassure her readers that, even for the elect, bliss becomes eternal only after death and entry into the kingdom. The sinner on earth, even one assured of salvation, remains in the temporal pit bound to the pendulum of Paul's rapture and Peter's despair. Julian finds consolation in the promise of salvation and in visions of beatitude."[778] Here he points to Julian's apparent balancing act between consolation and desolation, similar to the open and closed fist image in Birgitta's revelations. The threat, however, according to Tinsley, is still despairing, beyond a feeling of desolation: "For Julian, the devil's greatest threat lies in his ability to engender contrition, so that the blinded soul focuses on its sinfulness and falls away from the promise of salvation."[779] Once again, though I dispute his use of the word "contrition" to describe this phenomenon, Tinsley highlights the importance of despair in Julian's text. Abram Van Engen also sees Julian's caution of despair as connected with her theology of sin. Reckoning with Julian's parable of the servant, where God reveals he holds humans as blameless for sin, despite the Church's teaching otherwise, Van Engen argues:

> Julian suggests, sinners should put themselves in the keeping of Holy Church: God 'wille that we take us mightly to the faith of holy church, and find there oure deerwurthy mother in solas and trew understanding' (61:47–9, 317). Holy Church prevents despair (providing 'solas'), even as it accuses—an accusation which ultimately leads back to a love that does not accuse ('trew understanding'). ... They are both true because both are

[777] David F. Tinsley, "Julian's diabology," in *Julian of Norwich: A Book of Essays*, ed. Sandra J. McEntire (Milton Park: Routledge, 1998), 226.
[778] Ibid, 230.
[779] Ibid, 231.

> necessary—at least for now. When all is said and done, though, the lower 'sothnes' disappears.[780]

Van Engen then, while asserting that God's view of humanity overrides the Church's in Julian's *Revelations,* recognizes that both are necessary to "raise sinners back to a knowledge of his [God's] love."[781] Placing it the wider context of the fourteenth century, Van Engen describes the *Revelations* as "a corrective text for a community that took too strictly and too severely God's all-too-real wrath."[782] Here Van Engen draws upon Joan Nuth, who characterizes Julian as a woman of her time, "an age preoccupied with sin, guilt, and eternal punishment" due to the Fourth Lateran Council's requiring confession and lay education about sin, as well as the anxiety caused by the Black Death.[783] Thus, when God reveals he holds humans blameless, Julian argues with him—but "[t]hrough her experience and long years of reflection upon an eternally loving God who does not look with wrath upon sinners, Julian became convinced that her revelations were given as a remedy for the excessive preoccupation with sin characteristic of her age."[784] Nuth goes so far as to describe this, as I do, as "fear and scrupulosity regarding sin."[785] She primarily discusses Julian's approach to sin in a section devoted to mercy, asserting that "It is only in the protection of God's love that the sinner can 'see... sin, profitably, without despair'" and "God reveals sin so that the proper balance can be maintained to avoid both presumption and despair."[786] This is because of Julian's emphasis not on cataloguing sin, but rather the good God works from human sin.[787] Returning to the seeming eschatological point of conflict between

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[780] Abram Van Engen, "Shifting Perspectives: Sin and Salvation in Julian's *A Revelation of Love*," *Literature and Theology* 23, no. 1 (2009): 9.
[781] Ibid, 12.
[782] Ibid, 13.
[783] Joan Nuth, *Wisdom's Daughter: The Theology of Julian of Norwich* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 117-118.
[784] Ibid, 119.
[785] Ibid.
[786] Ibid, 131.
[787] Ibid, 130.

Church teaching and God's revelation, Nuth argues that Julian does assent to the Church's teaching that "eternal damnation... [is] a possibility" but that "we can hope that God will effect the salvation even of those whom human judgment deems irrevocably lost."[788]

C. E. Banchich notes the same tension between the Church's judgment and God's, noting, likewise, that especially by the writing of the Long Text, "from contrition to prayer to forgiveness, all facilitated by the Holy Spirit, Julian now drops the church from the sequence and obliquely hints at a devotee's greater independent agency in confession."[789] Yet it is this focus on the higher judgment of God that "relates to a keener and more careful articulation of layerings of fear. For, as Julian acknowledges, the Holy Spirit is the source of holy dread on earth and in heaven."[790] While Banchich spends much of her article detailing the "fear and awe" gift of the Holy Spirit type of dread, she turns, at the end, to "doubtful dread," against which Julian cautions. For one, she connects Julian's encounter with the devil with her caution against doubtful dread, as she describes it as a sort of spiritual dryness.[791] Sloth and impatience are included in this section, but as Banchich argues, are secondary to dread.[792] Such "spiritually crippling dread mistaken for humility" she ascribes as Julian's motivation in calling her visions "raving."[793] And while previous theologians have classified dread before, "what is... unprecedented in Julian's systematization of fear is that she will undermine and efface connotations of gender or class in her typology while she turns each kind of dread to positive effect."[794] This apparently includes even this most dangerous "doubtful dread" in the long text,

[788] Ibid, 168.
[789] C. E. Banchich, "'A hevynly joy in a dredefulle soule': Julian of Norwich's Articulations of Dread," in *Fear and its Representations in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, eds. Anne Scott and Cynthia Kosso (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 315.
[790] Ibid.
[791] Ibid, 335-336.
[792] Ibid, 337.
[793] Ibid, 338.
[794] Ibid, 339.

where doubt can lead to truer understanding of love.[795] (The lack of gendering Banchich describes is that Julian supposedly refers to parental/child metaphors with gender neutral terms rather than father or son.[796]) Ultimately, she ends the section, however, on "the spiritual level of most of her readers as she circles back to the matter of 'false drede"... any dread that inhibits our turning to God, and how to cope with it on earth, namely and simply, to endure God's chastisements meekly with faith in his love and to recognize that 'alle lyvyng is penaunce profytable.'"[797] Banchich observes well Julian's connection between her personal experience and this dread, though for all her innovations, Julian's solution seems to be traditional in the vein of *The Profits of Tribulation*.

Julian and Gender

It is clear Julian is partaking in the same discourse as many of the other texts I have mentioned. That said it is also clear that her status as a female mystic of the late Middle Ages raises questions about gender and *discretio spirituum*, much as in the saints' lives discussed previously. Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa notes the importance of *discretio spirituum* both in Julian's text, and her advice to Margery in *The Book of Margery Kempe*:

> Perceiving intuitively the goodness of God in Margery's spiritual experience, Julian gives Margery a sympathetic counsel. In emphasizing the impotence and barrenness of the devil, she assures Margery of the indwelling of God in the human soul and demonstrates the centrality of the working of the Holy Spirit in a soul. Julian's counsel is illuminated by the Long Text of *A Revelation of Love,* which shows how she is led into a new awareness of redemption by interpreting the showings and elucidates the psychological dynamic of Julian's struggle to attain faith in the creative work of the Trinity in time.[798]

[795] Ibid, 339.
[796] Ibid.
[797] Ibid, 340.
[798] Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, "'Discretio Spirituum' in Time: The Impact of Julian of Norwich's Counsel in the *Book of Margery Kempe*," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium VII. Papers Read at Charney Manor, July 2004*, ed. Eddie Jones (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), 124.

Likewise, Yoshikawa sees temptation or intrusive thoughts as the dark side of this; though she reductively terms Margery's unwanted visions of genitals "sexual temptation," she nonetheless connects it to Julian's own combat with the devil in chapter 69.[799] However, for both mystics, this is resolved with "confidence" that God is always present in their souls.[800] David Tinsley, too, emphasizes the importance of *discretio spirituum* in Julian's text: "Nor was each vision, no matter how nurturing, an occasion for unambiguous harmony of the soul within the Divine. Each encounter, each 'shewyng' could just as easily become an occasion for self-deception, temptation or terror, and therefore had to be carefully analyzed."[801] Consequently he too examines Julian's encounter with the devil after telling a priest she had "raved" in response to her revelations. On one hand, he interprets the devil's attempt to asphyxiate her as meant to stop her speech, i.e., "one of the weapons of God against demons."[802] The appearance of the devil himself, Tinsley likewise interprets metaphorically:

> If one proceeds from this association and also considers that Julian's devil appears as a "yonge man ... longe and wonder leen," whose visage is marred by "foule blacke spottes" and "here was rede as rust," it is entirely possible that Julian's readers might have associated the darkness and stench she describes with "thoughts of the delights of the flesh." According to this reading, Julian's fall into blindness is the supremely painful sin of turning away from God, her outer enemy is Lucifer, and her inner enemy is the deadly sin of lust.[803]

Even without explicitly saying it herself, there is reason to believe that women's perceived sexual impurity or vulnerability is connected in Julian's text to demonic assault, rectified only by properly discerning visions—here, it would have been prevented by properly discerning her

[799] Ibid, 128.
[800] Ibid, 131.
[801] Tinsley, "Julian's Diabology," 211.
[802] Ibid, 214.
[803] Ibid, 215.

revelations as coming from God, as the intervention of the devil here is allowed by God as chastising.

As discussed, such encounters with demons are thoroughly gendered in medieval spirituality. Liz Herbert McAvoy explores the incident of diabolic attack in the *Revelations* in this context of medieval female spirituality, noting:

> Ostensibly, of course, these episodes of diabolic onslaught are recognisable in their apparent adherence to the topos of diabolic assault so prevalent in the writings about or by medieval women, the *Vitae* of Christina of Markyate, Saint Margaret, or Christina Mirabilis, for example. Diabolic assault in the narratives concerning these female precursors to Julian tends to function as a signifier of intense suffering and thus prioritises the superlative *imitatio Christi* of the protagonist. Indeed, the author of *Ancrene Wisse* which was written specifically for women, makes it clear to his audience that such attacks by the fiend are to be expected by holy women, even suggesting that visionary experiences are more likely to be of diabolic origin rather than divine.[804]

Like Tinsley, she picks up on sexual overtones in the devil's physical assault, likewise noting the black spots of impure thoughts from *Ancrene Wisse*.[805] What McAvoy most interestingly observes is how the devil is set as a direct foil to Christ in his appearance, such as his similar long hair style, used to different effects: "The difference is, however, that in the case of the former it invokes love and pity because of its association with the maternalistic love of Julian's Christ, and in the case of the second it results in revulsion and fear because of its representation of an excessive and aggressive masculinity."[806] This contrast between a feminine Christ and hyper-masculine devil accords with Julian's incorporation of the divine feminine:

> It is precisely because Julian's fiend is lacking that the desirability of her feminised Christ becomes paramount in her text, but it is a lack, not of masculinity, but of all characteristics traditionally associated with the female which renders her fiend so threatening and - eventually - impotent. In the same way, the fiend's functional and intensely masculine sexuality serves to throw into relief the perfection of a relationship

[804] Liz Herbert McAvoy, "'The fend set him in my throte': Sexuality and the Fiendish Encounter in Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*," *Reading Medieval Studies* 30 (2004): 34.
[805] Ibid, 43.
[806] Ibid, 47.

> with a feminised Christ which also incorporates the sexual female in its movement towards an expression of transcendence.[807]

How Julian does or does not measure up to such expected tropes of female mysticism and virginity has inevitably garnered considerable critical attention. Alexandra Barratt compares Julian's work to Passion meditations, including Margery's, which were often retellings of the events of the passion with emotive reactions to the different scenes; Barratt dismisses these as "manipulative and disempowering" because they tell the reader what to think or how to react.[808] Margery's meditation from chapter 79-81, for instance, she argues was probably based strongly in this tradition, and she dismisses it as poorly written.[809] Julian's meditations, however, "do not take a narrative form or have any of the literary shaping of the prayers and meditations we have considered so far. Julian eschews the narrative and prefers the detailed, telling, close-up" of Christ's face.[810] Barratt is only one author who uses Julian's proximity to other late medieval female mystics to set her apart, and indeed, as superior to them, in terms of literary quality, theology, and often, she is implied to be more "feminist" or at least more palatable to modern feminists.

Sandi Hubnik takes a similar approach in parsing "hidden" and "subversive utterances" about virginity and female sexuality in the *Revelations*, mainly, Julian's supposedly "feminine desire" for Christ and his wounds being vindicated.[811] As such, Hubnik asserts that though Julian may have remained orthodox to the church, she

> works within the hegemonic discourse of the church; doing so is essential if a change within the hegemonic system is to be achieved. She states that her purpose in writing the

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[807] Ibid, 47-48.
[808] Alexandra Barrat, "*Stabant Matres Dolorosa*: Women as Readers and Writers of Passion Prayers, Meditations and Visons," in *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture*, eds. A.A. MacDonald, H.N.B. Ridderbos, and R.M. Schlusemann (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), 58.
[809] Ibid, 66.
[810] 68.
[811] Sandi J. Hubnik, "(Re)constructing the Medieval Recluse: Performative Acts of Virginity and the Writings of Julian of Norwich," *Historian* 67, no. 1 (2005): 45, 49.

> texts is simply to send a God-ordained message to the Christian populous and that her readers should accordingly forget the wretch who acts as that message's courier. Yet, she teaches her audience a new theology (one that appears overtly in her text) that opposes the very decrees sanctioned by the church, decrees that render the recluse's femininity invisible—silent. This new theology promotes bodily, vocal, and spiritual activity in the recluse.[812]

Here again, Julian represents a revolt against the contemporary female spirituality of her time. In another article, McAvoy makes a similar point in terms of Julian's connection to female saints' lives, particularly, that of St. Cecilia, arguing "whilst drawing initially upon the abject hagiographic body of the female saint in what appear to be conventional ways, Julian converts her into a type of smokescreen from behind which she is able to develop an alternative, authoritative, female-focused exegetical frame of reference - an attempt at a female Imaginary even - with that same body, redefined and predicated firmly on her own, located at its core."[813]

Like Catherine, Margery, and many other female mystics, a major vein of scholarship seems dedicated to interpreting Julian through the lens of mental illness. Two in particular demonstrate the difference in approach to this method of interpretation. One is Richard Lawes, who essentially tries to diagnose Margery Kempe, Thomas Hoccleve, and Julian of Norwich based on their writings. Lawes justifies this by asserting that "recent research suggests that those disorders whose manifestation is most stable across cultures are those whose aetiology can most firmly be linked to biological factors in brain function. Hoccleve's bipolar affective disorder would certainly come into this category."[814] The supposed "autobiographical" quality of these texts makes them akin to modern talk therapy, in his opinion, and therefore usable for

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[812] Ibid, 61.
[813] Liz Herbert McAvoy, "'For we be doubel of God's making': Writing, Gender and the Body in Julian of Norwich," in *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008): 170.
[814] Richard Lawes, "Psychological Disorder and the Autobiographical Impulse in Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe and Thomas Hoccleve," in *Writing Religious Women: Female Spiritual and Textual Practices in Late Medieval England*, eds. Denis Renevey and Christiania Whitehead (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 226.

diagnosis.[815] (His argument about Hoccleve is based on Hoccleve's poems about winter seeming to be depressing—which he notes has a symbolic quality but "is much more complex than a simple 'either-or' dichotomy."[816] Though, this seems to me a failure on his part to use Occam's razor.) Margery he diagnoses with "temporal lobe epilepsy" because of her visions and frequent crying.[817] As to Julian, Lawes reads her encounter with the devil and diagnoses her with brain disease:

> If Julian's recollection of sleep is correct, then this is not a hallucination but a dream, the kind of vivid nightmare common in states of high temperature, or possibly that form of half-waking hallucination known as 'hypnagogic' or 'hypnopompic'. The wetting of her temples confirms ongoing fever, and her report of heat and fire is consonant with this. The sensation of choking may be related to whatever was causing the breathlessness, probably a respiratory infection, possibly involving her throat, and the 'foule stinke' is very likely to have a correlate in her own infected mucus or the general smell of the sickroom. ... Interpretation of this passage could not exclude awareness that such sounds are highly suggestive of auditory hallucinations explicable in terms of organic brain disease. But the medieval convention of the Holy Spirit as a dove speaking into the ears of saints, and the tradition of Rollean mystical sounds and melodies are no less relevant, just as Julian's devil must be related to the artistic conventions of medieval diabology. To exclude the theological, the artistic or the biological levels of interpretation is to exclude intriguing dimensions of ambiguity in the text and to truncate the fullness of its meaning. This is not only because, as McIlwain rightly states, the content of dreams or hallucinations of organic origin usually reflects the subject's waking preoccupations.[818]

Essentially Lawes argues that the theological aspects of the text are not suddenly irrelevant, but that these explanations can coexist with the diagnosis of a modern mental illness. Ultimately his point seems to be that "psychological disorder, at least that of 'bodily' origin, may have been a stimulus to autobiographicality itself," again classifying the three texts as "autobiographical," already a fraught term to apply to these texts.[819]

[815] Ibid, 233.
[816] Ibid, 223.
[817] Ibid, 230.
[818] Ibid, 238.
[819] Ibid, 239.

Juliette Vuille, on the other hand, critiques Lawes' (and others') diagnosing line of reasoning, arguing:

> In their interpretations, psychiatrists and psychologists have often lacked the contextual knowledge of medieval medical understandings of madness, while medievalists have tended to misuse psychiatric diagnostics manuals. Further, critics have failed to take into account the socially constructed nature of most disorders that have no proven aetiology in the body, as well as the literary, religious and mystical traditions that constituted the basis for these women's re-interpretation of their visions as they dictated them or wrote them down.[820]

In fact the supposed madness of Margery and Julian in particular, she argues, was "a source of authority and expertise in their medieval community," as "Margery Kempe draws upon her... bout of madness and her subsequent return to sanity to become an expert in madness, teaching and helping others who are similarly affected" and likewise, "Julian envisions her altered state as a 'raving', but her re-interpretation of it as a heavenly vision enables her to be sought after for her ablities in *discretio spirituum*."[821] This assessment echoes Krug's point about Margery's *Book* potentially being interpreted as a manual for despair, given the mystic's own brushes with hopelessness. Vuille is also careful to point out that by Julian and Margery as well as their communities, "madness rooted in the body" was seen as a distinct category from their divine (or diabolic) visions.[822] She does not mean to suggest that spirituality was unconnected from the body or mental state, but rather that mysticism was in a category of its own.[823] Vuille also responds to other specific previously cited authors, for instance, critiquing Freeman, Bogarad, and Sholomskas' diagnosis of Margery as a sort of medieval bipolar as ignoring the cyclical

[820] Juliette Vuille, "'Maybe I'm Crazy?' Diagnosis and Contextualization of Medieval Female Mystics," in *Medicine, Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture*, ed. Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2015): 104.
[821] Ibid.
[822] Ibid, 106.
[823] Ibid, 107-108.

rather than strictly linear structure of her *Book*.[824] As to Lawes, she astutely observes that he blatantly misuses the modern psychiatric manuals, as per their own instructions:

> The main reservation one can have with regard to Lawes' approach is his choice to enlist the help of contemporary psychiatric statistical manuals, such as the DSM and the SADSL-L, in order to formulate a diagnosis.44 This is a problematic endeavour, as the caveat in the introduction to the DSM-IV (used by Lawes and Farley) points out that it should only be used in a clinical context, by trained professionals. ... One may remark, in addition, that the DSM-IV precludes diagnosing a mental illness when the behaviour of the subject is considered habitual or acceptable in his or her culture.[825]

Moreover, she also criticizes his classification of the texts as autobiography, since despite his protestations to the contrary, his approach neglects mysticism as a genre.[826] Vuille instead contextualizes the visions against other saints, including some of those studied in this dissertation: "Both Julian and Margery share with other mystics, for instance Catherine of Siena, the pattern of having visions of God and then visions of fiends or demonic temptations in order to prove the authenticity of their first encounter with the divine."[827] While Vuille does not focus on despair specifically, her thorough critique of modern psychiatric terms being applied to these medieval women is effective and emphasizes the importance of viewing their distress in conversation with other mystics of the period, as well as the use of "madness" in the texts to authorize their work as saints.

Loneliness, Sin, and Despair

Given many of the central issues have been explored at length in the scholarship—Julian's remarks on scrupulosity, her role as a female mystic, etc.—my analysis will focus on a neglected aspect of Julian's approach to despair, temptation and sin: loneliness. Julian's identification of loneliness, suffering, and sin both challenges the idea that despair is reclassified

[824] Ibid, 111.
[825] Ibid, 113-114.
[826] Ibid, 114.
[827] Ibid, 119.

as an emotion apart from sin in the late Middle Ages; at the same time, however, Julian's identification of sin with loneliness and suffering takes some of the agency or sting out of sin itself, in accordance with her description of humans as "blameless" in God's eyes. Her doubt, however, in the authenticity of her revelations and the subsequent demonic attack accords with her uneasy equivocation between suffering and sin. Uniting all of her exploration of emotional distress is her concept of Jesus's Motherhood, a method of enclosure, and a solution to loneliness and the tribulation of sin.

Much of Julian's theology of sin, despair, and loneliness is founded in Augustinian principles. This is established as early as the fifth chapter, after Julian introduces the memorable metaphor of creation as a hazelnut: "till I am substantially onyd to Him I may never have full rest ne very blisse; that is to sey, that I be so festined to Him, that there is right nowte that is made betwix my God and me."[828] She expands, "For this is the cause why we be not all in ease of herete and soule, for we sekyn here rest in those things that is so littil, wherin is no rest, and know not our God that is al mighty, al wise, all gode; for He is the very reste."[829] Julian's language clearly echoes Augustine's plaint opening his *Confessions* that he is restless until he rests in God, unsatisfied with material pleasures. This end-goal of communion with God underlies her conceptualization of sin and suffering. For one, she follows the neo-Platonic line of thought of sin being a *lack* of being or a non-deed. According to her reasoning, all deeds are done through God, and He obviously does not sin; thus "synne is no dede, for in al this was not synne shewid."[830] Julian expands this is a difference between God's perception and human perception:

[828] Crampton, *The Shewings of Julian of Norwich*, 43.
[829] Ibid.
[830] Ibid, 53-54.

> For a man beholdith some dedes wele done and some dedes evil. But our Lord beholdyth hem not so. For as al that hath being in kinde is of Godds makyng, so is al thing that is done in propertie of Gods doing. For easye to understone that the best dede is wele done. And so wele as the best dede is done and the heiest, so wele is the lest dede done, and al in propertie and in the ordir that our Lord hath it ordeynit to form withoute begynning, for ther is no doer but He. ... And al this shewid He ful blisfully meneing thus: Se I am God; se I am in al thing; se I doe l thyng; se I left never myne hands of myn werks, ne never shall withoute ende; se I lede al thing to the end I ordeyned it to fro withoute beginnyng be the same might, wisdam, and love that I made it. How should anything be amysse?[831]

Julian's position smacks of determinism but is the natural conclusion of God as the source of all being. This leads to the conclusion that sin, being absent of God, is fundamentally absent of "being" or "deed." This closely follows Augustine's definition of evil as a lack of good, rather than a thing in itself.

Julian's definition of sin as a lack—of God, deed, community—is fundamental to her subsequent discourse on hell, despair, and loneliness. Given the often cyclical nature of the text, I will attempt to disentangle it in an organized fashion, though the complicated conceptual connections between these topics will mean my argument, likewise, will contain some repetition of her ideas. First, I will discuss how Julian equates sin with tribulation. Then I want to discuss how sin is yet distinct from hell in her theology, but how hell is equated with despair. Yet sin, though it is supposedly worse than hell, can prevent despair through inspiring contrition and dependence on God. This is partially because of her use of the *Profits* tradition in how she discusses sin as a tribulation.

Though sin is a non-entity, it is nonetheless equated to a physical force in Julian's text—a scourge of tribulation, used for spiritual progress. This closely relates to the tradition of tribulation texts. For one, the idea of tribulation underlying spiritual growth is the foundation of the text, as her suffering and illness are granted to her through her prayers for it:

[831] Ibid, 54.

> The second [desire, i.e. that for serious illness] came to my mynde with contrition frely desireing that sekenesse so herde as to deth that I might in that sekeness underfongyn alle my rites of Holy Church, myselfe weneing that I should dye, and that all creatures might suppose the same that seyen me, for I would have no manner comfort of earthly life. In this sekenesse I desired to have all manier peynes bodily and ghostly that I should have if I should dye, with all the dreds and tempests of the fends, except the outpassing of the soule. And this I ment for I would be purged be the mercy of God.[832]

Julian here imitates the *ars moriendi* tradition popular among laypeople of her time, with the benefit of living through the experience to grow from it. Still, it shows her consciousness of the spiritual and bodily pains inflicted during the process of dying, as well as the spiritual profit that can come from it. Moreover, we can note the importance of contrition in inspiring this desire to suffer tribulations for spiritual profit; ultimately, her desire to suffer unto death comes from her consciousness of her past sins. Julian's theology of sin is thus reflected in her narration of her own experience of demonic assault. This framing exposes Julian's integration in the tradition of female mysticism. Julian's prayer for a period of tribulation recalls Catherine of Siena who likewise prayed to face her gauntlet of tribulation, though for the latter it comprised purely mental temptation, as I discussed above. This passage integrates Julian's text into both the mystical tradition and the *Profits of Tradition* and the related *ars moriendi* discourse.

Julian's concept of sin, contrition, and tribulation is expanded upon in the revelations themselves, though tempered with the optimistic notion of "all shall be well." In Chapter 27, the beginning of the thirteenth revelation, Julian sees that the only thing separating humanity from God is sin, and wonders why humans were allowed to sin in the first place, which Jesus answers with one of the most memorable quotes from the text: "Synne is behovabil, but al shal be wel, and al shal be wel, and al manner of thyng shal be wele."[833] This arguable non-answer to her theological quandary, requiring childlike trust in Jesus, transitions to her discussion of the profits

[832] Ibid, 39.
[833] Ibid, 72.

of the tribulation caused by sin. She reinforces her earlier point about sin's non-entity, saying that in all these revelations, "I saw not synne, for I beleve it hath no manner of substance ne no party of being, ne it myght not be knowin, but by the peyne that it is cause of; and thus peyne—it is somethyng, as to my syte, for a tyme, for it purgith and makyth us to knowen our selfe and askyn mercy."[834] Thus, tribulation is itself a deed, unlike the sin that causes it, as evidenced by Christ's Passion. The suffering of the Passion was caused by human sin, but that suffering itself constituted a godly deed since it accomplished purgation for humanity.[835] Just so, humans can experience spiritual growth through the suffering caused by sin. The subsequent chapter then treads much of the same ground as the *Profits* texts, with Christ promising that through tribulation, "I shall al tobreke you for your veyn affections and your vicious pryde, and after that I shal togeder gader you, and make you mylde and meke, clene and holy, by onyng to me."[836] The purification or forging metaphors are embedded into this idea, of physically breaking the sinner in order to rebuild them in purity for His kingdom. This is expanded further in a later chapter in that, even one's own sin can eventually lead to spiritual growth that might prevent despair (which she identifies with hell, as I will cover shortly). Here sin becomes a "scourge" in keeping with the metaphor from which *Chastising* takes its title:

> Synne is the sharpest scorge that any chousyn soule may be smyten with, which scorge al forbethth man and woman and noyith him in his owne syte, so ferforth that otherwhile he thynkyth hymselfe he is not worthy but as to synken in Helle, til whan contrition takyth hym be touchyng of the Holy Gost and turnyth the bitternes in hopes of Gods mercy; and than he begynnyth his woundis to helyn, and the soule to quickyn tunyd into the life of Holy Chirch.[837]

[834] Ibid, 72.
[835] Ibid.
[836] Ibid, 73.
[837] Ibid, 85

Even with a different metaphor, Julian describes the same process—sin, and the suffering caused thereby, breaks a person's pride and through contrition, eventually draws them into proper dependence on God's mercy. In keeping with contemporary teaching, Julian notes the Church's role in this process by administering the sacrament of confession.[838] As such Julian classifies contrition, as well as temptation, alongside the more common physical tribulations: "this is on mekenes that mekyl plesyt God; and also bodely sekenes of Gods sendyng, and also sorow and shame from withoute, and reprove and dispyte of this world, with al manner grevance and temptations that wil be cast in, bodily and gostly."[839] Enduring these tribulations, Julian concludes, leads to salvation.

Despite Julian's clear sense of sin as necessitating contrition and penance, she seems to reduce the human agency in sin by arguing that God "holdyth synne as sorow and peyne to His lovers, in whome He assigneth no blame for love."[840] The use of sin as a scourge, moreover, is contrary to despair: "our curtes Lord wil not that His servants dispeir for often ne for grevous fallyng. For our fallyng lettyth not Hym to love us."[841] Julian instead contends that God's love and peace persist, even though "we be not alway in pese and in love. But he wil that we takin hede thus: that He is ground of al our hole life in love, and furthermore that He is our everlestyng keper and mytyly defendith us ageyn our enemys that ben ful fel and fers upon us; and so mech our nede is, the more – for we gyven Hym occasion be our fallyng."[842] Thus Julian, while seeing the practical use in contrition, inextricably links it to sin, which we cannot see as blameless for this process to work, but that she assures God sees as blameless for us. The state of God's

[838] Ibid.
[839] Ibid.
[840] Ibid, 86.
[841] Ibid.
[842] Ibid.

presence is carefully separated from the human's emotions. As seen in the other mystical accounts I have examined here, God might withdraw His presence while actually remaining with the Christian as a protector for the saints undergoing tribulation. Despair, however, is not fruitful even during these periods of contrition—rather, the sinner ought to trust in this process of the sin-to-grace pipeline. While negative emotions around one's failings are necessary, if the sinner is fixated on them rather than moving through them as part of this process, that constitutes despair. This is underlined by her earlier question, in which Julian contemplates Christ's Passion and asks if there is any greater suffering, and is answered: "Helle is another payne, for there is despayr. But of al paynes that leden to salvation, this is the most payne: to se thy love suffir."[843] Thus, despair is apparently one of the only pains that does not lead to salvation—in fact, it actively impedes it. In this sense, despair is more of a sin than sin itself.

Another interesting thing to note here is how she talks about human sin as an "occasion" for God's mercy. This recalls traditional language about "occasion" usually in terms of human agency, like avoiding "occasion for sin." Yet just as she takes the onus off of human agency in describing sin as "blameless" in God's sight, she likewise puts the agency on God in terms of his opportunities to act in human lives. This accords with her earlier point about sin being a non-deed, and the only deeds being done by/through God; yet it also emphasizes the relational quality of her portrayal of God. Rather than focusing human desire for God, usually the expected trope in affective spirituality, Julian consistently instead centers God's desire for humans, and *His* emotions and affect surrounding this relationship. Again, if we return to her comment that Hell is characterized by despair, the very next sentence proclaims: "But of al paynes that leden to salvation, this is the most payne: to se thy love suffir." Although Julian writes here about her

[843] Ibid, 62.

own suffering watching Jesus' Passion, the inverse is also intended, as we can see illuminated throughout the text—that Jesus' greatest pain, likewise, is watching his love (humans) suffer—which is His primary motivation in undergoing the Passion.

This takes us to the topic of loneliness in Julian's text. I will discuss how loneliness is integrated in each of these steps, and how this emotion is embedded in her description of God's motherhood. Sin causes loneliness in severing this relationship—not just the loneliness humans experience in being separated from God, but also loneliness on God's part in lacking his children. This idea is first introduced explicitly in chapter 47, where Julian questions how God's mercy comes into play if He does not view humans wrathfully. Her answer is that the sinner "is onmytye and onwise of hymself, and also his wil is overleyd, and in this tyme he is in tempest and in sorow and wo. And cause is blindhede, for he seith not God. For if he sey God continuly, he shuld have no mischevous felyng, ne no manner steryng the yernyng that servyth to synne."[844] Julian is careful to note that God is not literally absent from the sinner's life, but human blindness to his presence causes tribulation and temptation. Julian then outlines five emotions that she terms "werkyngs" of God—"enjoying, morning, desir, drede, and sekir hope."[845] Most of these are fairly straightforward—enjoying is knowing God's presence, mourning is contrition for sin, desire is desire to see him in Heaven, and secure hope is trust in his mercy and salvation. Dread, most relevant to this dissertation, is defined in the following way: "Drede was for it semyd to me in al that tyme that that syte shuld fayle and I ben left to myselfe."[846] Dread, then, is identical with the blindness to God she identifies previously; moreover, it signifies a feeling of

[844] Ibid, 97.
[845] Ibid.
[846] Ibid.

loneliness (whether or not that's based in the reality of God's persistent mercy). Tribulation, temptation and dread are all then a result of this loneliness caused by blindness to God's mercy.

Julian explores this at more length in her famous parable of the fall of man, sometimes interpreted as a parable about human sin more generally. This parable describes a lord and servant, in which the servant is sent to do the lord's will but in his haste falls into a ditch and cannot complete his mission. Julian uses this to explain the chasm between human feelings of guilt and God's perception of humans as blameless for having a good will. The only fault she sees in the servant, in fact, is "faylyng of comforte. For he cowde not turne his face to loke upon his lovyng lord which was to hym ful nere, in whom is ful comfort; but as a man that was febil and onwise for the tyme, he entended to his felyng, and induryd in wo, in which wo he suffrid seven grete peynes."[847] Part of her examination of the servant involves a categorization of the pain caused by his fall:

> The first was the sore borsyng that he toke in hys fallyng, which was to hym felable peyne. The second was the hevynes of his body. The third was febilnes folowyng of these two. The fourth, that he was blinded in his reason and sonyed in his mend so ferforth that almost he had forgotten his owne luf. The fifth was that he myte not rysen. The sixth was most mervelous to me, and that was that he lay alone. I lokid al aboute and beheld, and fer ne nere, hey ne low, I saw to him no helpe. The seventh was that the place which he lay on was a lang, herd, and grevous. I merveled how this servant myte mekely suffren there al this wo.[848]

These are the pains that are brought on by sin, supplying us with a categorization of how Julian discerns different types of suffering and negative emotions: physical pain/injury, tiredness of body, exhaustion from both, mental blindness and sorrow, fear of being unable to right oneself, and loneliness. The seventh is about the ditch he is stuck in (general hardness of the world, perhaps natural evil). Julian too spends the most time above remarking on the loneliness and fear

[847] Ibid, 102.
[848] Ibid.

that comes with "lack of help" as the servant lays in the ditch. Now we know that God actually holds him blameless and has not abandoned him, but his fear stems from his blindness. Nonetheless, the greatest pain of the fall of man, or the many fallings of individuals, is being alone and apparently helpless. This connects the man of the parable's loneliness to the "werkyng" dread God allows in all people, a sort of blindness leading to tribulation, which is nonetheless a step on the way to hope in salvation. Accordingly, the Lord assures Julian that "Lo, lo my lovid servant, what harme and disese he hath takeyn in my service for my love, ya, and for his good will; is it not skyl that I reward hym his afray and his drede, his hurt and his mayme, and al his wo? And not only this, but fallith it not to me to gevyn a geft that be better to hym and more worshipfull than his own hole shuld have ben?"[849] Julian presents what is essentially a *felix culpa* argument. What stands out the most to me is that suffering on earth is portrayed as a matter of perspective. While these negative emotions and dread and loneliness are used by God to achieve a greater reward for the servant in the end, they are also fundamentally a result of the servant's blindness upon tripping, rather than any real abandonment by God. They can only be corrected by properly viewing sin from God's perspective.

Julian continues this examination of sin and emotion and loneliness in the next chapter, which, mainly focuses on God's varied relationship metaphors with humanity. She begins the chapter referring to God as "fader," "moder," "spouse," and Jesus as "broder" and "Savior."[850] As she develops these familial metaphors, she draws on various roles of God as a parent (and especially as a mother) that were used in other texts dealing with this issue. For one, her revelations seem to accord with Birgitta's "open and closed fist" metaphor. Though "be Criste we are stedfastly kept, ... by Adams fallyng we arn so broken in our felyng... in which we arn

[849] Ibid, 102-103.
[850] Ibid, 110.

made derke and so blinde that onethys we can taken ony comfort."[851] Continuing her discussion of God's point of view versus humans', she reassures the reader that even as we experience cycles of consolation and desolation, in reality God is always playing the part of the protective parent:

> But in our menyng we abiden God, and faithfully trosten to have mercy and grace. And this is His owen werkyng in us, and of His godeness He poynyth the eye of our understondyng be which we have syte, sumtyme more and sumtyme less, after that God gevyth abilite to takyn. And now we arn reysid into that on, and now we are suffrid to fallen into that other. And thus is this medle so mervelous in us that onethys we knowen of ourselfe or of our evyn Cristen in what wey we stonden, for the merveloushede of this sundry felyng, but that ilke holy assent that we assenten to God whan we felyn Hym, truly willand to be with Him with al our herte, with al our soule, and with all our myte. And than we haten and dispisen our evil sterings and all that myte be occasion of synne, gostly and bodily. And yet nervertheles whan this sweteness is hidde, we falyn ageyn into blindhede, and so into wo and tribulation on divers manner. But than is this our comfort, that we knowen in our feith, that be the vertue of Criste which is our keper we assenten never therto, but we grutchin ther agen and duryin in peyne and wo, prayand into that tyme that He shewith Him agen to us. And thus we stonden in this medlur all the dayes of our life.[852]

The cycle of feeling the "sweetness" of God's presence and the blindness of tribulation is a lifelong process, cycling from one to the other—yet both are works that draw the human closer to God. Julian and Birgitta put forth similar ideas in their attempt to explain how God can be omnipresent but feel distant or absent, though Julian apparently views sinfulness as part and parcel with simple emotional desolation, as evidenced by her use of the word blindness and our propensity for "grutchin" during these times. However, Julian also introduces this idea of loneliness as the primary emotion of desolation in this cycle; rather than experiencing suffering or temptation, the primary pain inherent in the "closed fist" is perceived separation from God.

Julian demonstrates this paradigm not just in her abstract visions, but in her own experience later in the text, recounting her temptation by the devil. Much like Margery Kempe,

[851] Ibid, 110.
[852] Ibid.

she doubts and denies the divine origin of her visions, saying she "ravid" while receiving her visions.[853] Julian immediately recognized that she sinned in dismissing the showings but is too embarrassed to ask the priest visiting her for Confession. Subsequently, the devil attacks her in her sleep: "methowte the fend set him in my throte puttand forth a visage ful nere my face like a young man... Body ne honds had he none shaply, but with his pawes he held me in the throte and wold have stranglid me, but he myte not."[854] After she awakens, God sends her another vision, counteracting the previous one: "our Lord opened my gostly eye and shewid me my soule in midds of my herte. I saw the soule so large as it were an endles world and as it were a blisfull kyngdom; and be the conditions I saw therin, I understode that it is a worshipful syte. In the midds of that syte sitts our Lord Jesus, God and man, a faire person and of large stature, heyest bishopp, solemnest kinge, worshipfulliest Lord."[855] Julian's language mirrors her famous hazelnut metaphor; there, whereas all of creation is a nut in her hand, here, her soul is an expanse within her heart. This depiction emphasizes the soul as of one nature with God, as she explains quite extensively.

Moreover, Julian's image of God within the soul (as humans are likewise within God) gives first person witness to her revelations about His abiding presence, even despite human blindness to that presence: "The place that Jesus takith in our soule, He shal never removen it without end, as to my syte. For in us is His homliest home and His endles wonyng, and in this He shewid the lekyng that He hath of the makyng of manys soule."[856] His reassurance that she "shalt not be overcome" follows the theme of the mystics before her, and the concept of God's protection of the mystic's soul. This reassurance is followed by more temptation (perhaps the

[853] Ibid, 132.
[854] Ibid, 133.
[855] Ibid, 133-134.
[856] Ibid, 134.

template Margery followed of being tempted and comforted by an angel, and then enduring for several days thereafter). Though her temptation is not explicitly sexual (though perhaps implicitly so, as argued by many scholars), Julian is harassed by heat, stink, and murmurs she cannot make out, recalling the multimodal intrusive thoughts described in *Chastising*.[857] Julian remarks that "al this was to stirre me to dispeir" and deter her from prayer.[858] Trusting in the earlier vision, Julian relies on Christ to deliver her, strengthening her prayer and meditation on the Passion, and is subequently delivered, thinking to herself that "Thou hast now grete bysynes to kepe the in the feith, for thou shuldst not be taken of thi enemy; woldst thou now for this time evermore be so bysy to kepe the fro synne, this were a good and a soverain occupation."[859] Julian acts out her own advice on times of tribulation and temptation: using her experience to rely more heavily on God's mercy and trust in Him, as well as strengthening her spiritual practice when His fist is closed, so to speak.

Julian's emphasis on trust and oneness with God is tied together ultimately with her entire concept of God's motherhood, which, as I mentioned earlier, is typical for such texts. However, Julian integrates it fully into her theology in a novel way. For one, Julian eventually incorporates the enclosure motif into her spirituality, which has been largely absent in the text so far, despite her vocation as an anchorite. On a more abstract philosophical level, Julian observes, "I saw no difference atwix God and our substance, but as it were al God; and yet myn understondyng toke that our substance is in God; that is to sey, that God is God, and our substance is a creture in God."[860] This meditation on substance shifts to the metaphorical level soon after, and Julian's choice is God's parentage over humans, a new use of this imagery in the

[857] Ibid, 135.
[858] Ibid, 136.
[859] Ibid.
[860] Ibid, 114.

context of tribulation literature: "For the almyty truth of the Trinite is our fader, for He made us and kepith us in Him. And the depe wisdam of the Trinite is our moder in whom we arn al beclosid."[861] Julian fuses the protective "enclosure" of the soul in God, the unspoken (so far) question regarding her position as mystic, and the role of God as a parent. Being "beclosid" in the motherly Trinity has connotations of pregnancy—a concept she expounds upon subsequently with reference to Jesus' motherhood specifically. Julian argues:

> We wetyn that all our Moders beryng is us to peyne and to deyeng. And what is that but our very Moder Jesus? He, al love, beryth us to joye and to endles lyving. Blissid mot He be. Thus He susteynith us within imselfe in love and traveled into the ful tyme that He wold suffre the sharpist throwes and the grevousest peynes that ever were or ever shall be, and dyed at the last. And whan He had don, and so born us to bliss, yet myte not al this makyn aseth to His mervelous love, and that shewid He in these hey overpassing wordes of love: *If I myte suffre more, I wold suffre more*.[862]

Of course Julian also explains how Jesus "nurses" us with the Eucharist, much in the traditional vein of maternal depictions of God. But as far as I know, the image of Jesus giving birth through His Passion is novel. Moreover, Julian's metaphor breaks the typical gendered reading of this imagery. For one, enclosure is not limited to the female mystic, but extended to all of humanity; second the protective enclosure in God from sin is depicted as a function of the female body. While "all of creation" has often been compared to being in labor to birth God's kingdom, here God himself is the mother and protector, giving birth to humanity.

Of course this metaphor extends to include the *Profits* rhetoric as well, about God as a disciplinarian parent. Julian names one "profite" of human failure to be a knowledge of human frailty and our dependence on God, echoing *The Profits of Tribulation*.[863] She connects this back to God's motherhood subsequently: "The Moder may suffre the child to fallen sumtyme, and be

[861] Ibid, 114.
[862] Ibid, 124.
[863] Ibid, 125.

disesid in dyvers manners for the owen profitt, but she may never suffre that ony maner of peril cum to the chld, for love."[864] This recognition of frailty ought not lead the sinner to abandon God, but rather, "usen the condition of a child, for whan it is disesid or dred, it rennth hastely to the Moder for helpe with al the myte."[865] Julian's metaphor thus recalls the "game of love" motif where a mother, i.e. God, hides Her face or puts a small amount of stress on Her child in order to enhance their love for her[866]. This demonstrates Julian's integration into the tribulation literature tradition, though note she is careful not to show the mother as whipping or punishing her child in that way—rather, it emphasizes love and a difference of perspective. Ultimately understanding the motherhood of Jesus in this way will prevent despair. Julian ties up her section on God's motherhood with a reflection on sin. Julian claims that with the help of God's grace aiding our sight, we see that "synne is very viler and peynfuller than Helle."[867] This seemingly contradicts her claim earlier that nothing is worse than Hell because hell includes despair, but Julian asserts that sin is "contrarious to our fair kinde. For as sothly is it onkinde, and thus an horrible thing to sen to the lovid soule that wold be al faire and shynand in the syte of God, as kinde and grace techyth."[868] Nevertheless, Julian encourages the reader not to be "adred of this, but inasmuch as drede may spede us"—connecting it into her greater metaphor of "falling" working into a greater plan for salvation. The way, according to Julian, this "drede" can be put to use is that we "make our mone to our dereworthy Moder, and He shal... hele us ful faire be proces of tyme."[869] As we can recall, Julian defines sin as a no-thing, and moreover emotionally conceptualizes it as loneliness in this separation from God. Naturally, the solution is found in relying on that

[864] Ibid, 126.
[865] Ibid.
[866] "The maternal game of love," according to Lagorio, "Variations on the Theme of God's Motherhood in Medieval English Mystical and Devotional Writing," 25.
[867] Ibid, 128.
[868] Ibid.
[869] Ibid.

relational connection to God—especially Jesus as mother—one of the most intimate and protective relationships given the mother's role in gestating, birthing, nursing, and raising her child: "in the takyng of our kinde, He quicknid us; in his blissid deying upon the Cross, He bare us to endless life; and fro that time and now, and ever shall onto domysday, He fedith us and fordreth us, and ryte as that hey sovereign kindness of Moderhede and as kindly nede of childhede askith."[870] Ultimately, God's motherhood and human trust in it leads to salvation and prevents despair: "kindly the Child dispeirith not of the Moder love; kindly the Child presumith not of the self; kindly the Child lovith the Moder, and ilke on of the other."[871] Jesus, as mother, finally delivering us to the Father, will fulfill the promise that "Al shall be wele, and thou shalt sen thyselfe that al maner thyg shal ben wele."[872] The motherhood of Christ constitutes the center of the text, the knot the ties these multiple theological threads together—her teachings on sin, hell, despair, the fall of man, suffering, salvation and God's love.

Conceptualizing God in this sort of intimate human relationship resolves her meditation on sin as loneliness. Near the end of the text, Julian muses once more on tribulation and one's response to it, as God tells her to "Accuse not selfe overdon mekil, demandand that tribulation and thy wo is al for thy defaute, for I will not that thou be hevye ne sorowfull undiscretely."[873] Thus, dread of sin, misery, and suffering is curable only through a relationship with Him: "This place is prison, and this life is penance; and in the remedy He will we enjoyen. The remedy is that our Lord is with us, kepand and ledand into the fulhede of joye."[874] Julian's language recalls that of Flete's; in both cases the advice is not to excoriate oneself for her own fault, though

[870] Ibid.
[871] Ibid, 129.
[872] Ibid.
[873] Ibid, 146.
[874] Ibid.

Julian's remedy is administered on a more abstract than practical level, reframing the relationship with God as one of keeping and loving, rejoicing in his persistent presence. Moreover, this demonstrates again the key factor of loneliness in suffering and despair, illuminated through its solution: recognizing the constant presence of God, dispelling feelings of being all alone.

Julian finally fully explores the other side to this relationship in chapter 80, describing the worship of God. Here Julian expresses that not only humans, but Jesus, feel the sufferings of loneliness when we sin:

> I leve and understond the ministration of angells, as clerks tellen, but it was not shewid me. For Himselfe is nerest and mekest, heyest and lowest, and doith all. And not only all that us neds, but also He doith al that is worshipfull to our joy in Hevyn. And wher I sey he abidith swemefully and monyng, it menyth all the trew felyng that we have in ourselfe in contrition and compassion, and all sweming and monyng that we are not onyd with our Lord. And all swich that is spedfull, it is Christ in us. And thow some of us fele it seldam, it passith never fro Criste till what tyme He hath browte us out of all our wo. For love suffrith never to be without pite. And what tyme that we fallen into synne and leve the mynd of Him and the keping of our own soule, than kepith Criste alone al the charge of us, and thus stondith He swemely and monyng. Than longith it to us for reverence and kindeness to turne us hastely to our Lord and levyen Him not alone. He is here alone with us all; that is to sey, only for us, He is here. And what tyme I am strange to Him be synne, dispeir, or slawth, than I let my Lord stonden alone in as mekill as it is in me.[875]

It is not unusual to suggest that humans unite their sufferings with God, nor that their sin is responsible for Jesus' Passion. Yet Julian transforms the this message from one of guilt to one of empathy by emphasizing the reciprocal nature of this suffering. If humans are turned away from God through sin and suffer loneliness, Jesus suffers loneliness too, as his side of the relationship is likewise neglected. The suffering of Christ, while first portrayed quite literally in her text, is brought around to literally mirror the suffering of mankind through sin. This rhetorical move allows a greater identification on the part of the reader with Christ, as well as changing their

[875] Ibid, 150.

perspective to God's perspective—the frequent goal of the text. Julian reminds the reader, once again, that despite this mutual loneliness, God's "goodnes suffrith us never to be alone, but lestingly He is with us, and tenderly He excusith us, and ever sheildith us fro blame in His syte."[876]

Julian of Norwich is firmly rooted in the tradition of tribulation literature and is one of the most iconic mystics in that literary tradition. However, she goes beyond both traditions in her revelations, exploring at length despair, tribulation and temptation not just to offer practical advice or to validate hagiographically her own spiritual status, but as the cornerstone of her theology of a persistently loving God. Reframing the relationship between God and the sinner from God's perspective and emphasizing the mutual relationship between humans and God, Julian ties together the emotions of loneliness and suffering caused by sin, all the while taking away the blame and intense guilt around sin itself and replacing it with love and trust in this relationship. Her emphasis on Christ as mother accomplishes many of the same theological points as other texts employing the same metaphor, such as God nursing humans or disciplining them (though gently, here), but it also underlines her emphasis on the oneness of humans and God—enclosed and birthed to salvation through a "pregnant" Christ-Mother, protected from any permanent damnation. The central message of her text—that all shall be well, despite the suffering caused by sin—is articulated through a reliance on a mutual relationship between God and humans to overcome each other's loneliness through love and trust and to defeat despair.

[876] Ibid.

Conclusion

In this dissertation I have explored temptation to despair in medieval pastoralia, hagiography, and mysticism. Though scrupulosity and despair have been conceptualized as primarily Early Modern problems, my work has traced their origins in the Middle Ages, especially the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. My discussion focused particularly on intrusive thoughts, the negative emotions associated with them and their effects on the spiritual life, and the remedies used to treat them. In Chapter 1, I argued that later medieval discourse on temptation was conceptually rooted in tribulation as spiritually profitable. This tribulation discourse originated with the desert fathers and developed significantly in anchoritic material such as *Ancrene Wisse*. It further acquired weight from moral theologians such as Peraldus. before becoming popular as a topic in itself in the *Profits of Tribulation* family of texts. The message of patience in *Profits* invites the reader to actively reframe their mindset about their sufferings to put them to spiritual benefit rather than detriment. *Profits* was moreover connected to temptation to despair, specifically, given its close grouping with *The Craft of Dying* in manuscripts, though the temptation to despair portrayed therein is of a somewhat different genre and audience than that discussed in most of Chapter 2.

The meta-temptation to despair was caused by typically a vowed religious experiencing unwanted thoughts about blasphemy or sexuality (themselves described as "temptations"); these base-level "temptations" cause the person to fear for her spiritual purity, worry whether she has been abandoned by God, and or simply contemplate giving up out of exhaustion. Out of the pastoralia I covered, this is discussed in its most focused form in William Flete's *Remedies Against Temptation*. The eponymous remedies include talking candidly with a spiritual advisor, ignoring and refusing to engage with the unwanted thoughts, and reminding the reader of their

lack of consent to these thoughts. Flete's approach addresses, in a similar way to modern psychotherapy, what is now called Thought-Action Fusion in dissuading the reader from despair. That said, disentangling this "scrupulous" form of temptation to despair, primarily aimed at vowed religious, from the *ars moriendi*, mercy-focused form that assumes previous sins committed is complicated. For one, *The Chastising of God's Children,* the third Middle English version of Flete's *Remedies*, and *Against Wanhope* all incorporate lay models alongside meta-temptation in their somewhat eclectic guides on overcoming such mental tribulation. For this closely connected textual group, medieval readers seem to have found not just these texts, but the books they were collected into as consoling objects.

With this basis in (mostly) vernacular theology via pastoralia, I progressed to discuss how the issue of temptation to despair was treated in the literary context of hagiography and mysticism. It is clear from the evidence that temptation to despair was seen as an overwhelmingly female problem, or at least, it gained visibility in female saints' lives due to humoral theory that suggested women were more "impressionable" or "open" to spiritual influences (whether divine or demonic). In Chapter 3 I explored scholarship on medieval virginity and enclosure in order to analyze the *vitae* of Christina of Markyate and Marie d'Oignies, two saints from the high Middle Ages, and I argued that contemporary cultural anxieties over female claustration led to temptation to despair appearing as a threat in both of their narratives. In both cases, their respective hagiographers used different techniques to establish the subjects as either dominant over or unaffected by this temptation.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I shifted my focus to the late Middle Ages, while following these threads of female enclosure and chastity. The former chapter explored the lives and or revelations of Birgitta of Sweden, Catherine of Siena, and Margery Kempe. Connected as

Birgitta and Catherine are to Flete, their revelations overlap significantly with his observations on meta-temptation. Yet as all three were laywomen, they also laicized their depictions of temptation to despair in their texts vis-a-vis the *ars moriendi* tradition—especially Margery. Moreover, for each of these holy women, female "openness" to temptation holds significant concern, yet their texts reframe that temptation to be as much of a gift from God as their holy revelations. The final chapter evaluates these issues with respect to Julian of Norwich's *Shewings*. Ultimately, I argue that she identifies sin with loneliness, on the part of the sinner, as well as God, but by emphasizing *God's* loneliness and his role as mother, she delivers a message of hope that can overcome the despair caused by sin.

In composing my dissertation, due to space constraints, I have had to make difficult choices on which primary sources to include or exclude. Future work on this topic would involve extending my analysis to include some of the texts I had to set aside, in particular, the secular literature and romance that deals heavily with despair, such as Chaucer's "Clerk's Tale" or Mallory's *Morte Darthur* (especially Lancelot's struggle with despair in the Grail Quest). I might also expand my discussion of the *Vitae Patrum* to include the various translations that circulated in England in the Middle Ages, to better understand how the text family's portrayal of despair and temptation changed over time, alongside the pastoralia that I did focus on in this dissertation. A final way to expand upon this study would be to conduct more thorough work tracing the lines of influence surrounding ME3 of Remedies, *Against Wanhope*, and other hitherto unedited tribulation and temptation treatises that populate extant manuscripts.

The question remains, after I have spent the better part of three years researching this topic, and you have perused nearly 300 pages about it, as to why medieval temptation to despair matters outside of our narrow scholarly community? If you excuse my indulgence in less than

scholarly discourse, I believe this may be best answered anecdotally. I was diagnosed with OCD in college, with the major themes being religious/scrupulous. However, I first began to experience distressing intrusive thoughts when I was 13. Being raised Catholic, my parents ensured that I continued going to Church and confession, as *The Chastising of God's Children* would condone, but every Mass was spent in agony and every Confession was an occasion of dread and self-hatred over my supposedly sinful yet unwilling thoughts. Even though I knew from my religious education that consent was necessary for sin, who was to say that for the split second a thought was in my mind that I didn't choose or enjoy it? The few times I managed to admit to priests that I experienced what seemed like an endless deluge of intrusive, sinful thoughts, they either treated it as a sin and administered the sacrament or gave me a prayer to say (i.e., a new compulsion). The closest thing I had to consolation in this period was a prayer card that vaguely mentioned Saint Rosa was tortured with sinful thoughts—it was the closest thing I could get to solidarity.

After years of suffering, I finally realized the root of my problem was a treatable condition when I made a friend in college who also had OCD. Through therapy and medication, I have been managing it much better for the past few years, with next to no help from the Church. However, when I first read the *Book of Margery Kempe*, I was immediately drawn to the passage with which I opened this dissertation. In a seminar in my master's program, most of my classmates found the passage funny, however, for me it was all too easy to relate to. As I progressed in my education, I began to think, if only over the whole course of my Catholic upbringing anyone had handed me Margery Kempe, Christina of Markyate, Julian of Norwich, or even Catherine of Siena, outside of the short, idealized summaries included in the children's saint books found in every Catholic household, I would have felt less isolated. Yet as I read the

scholarship surrounding these sources, I realized that the vast majority of scholars approached these women with the same attitude as the priests I confessed to or my classmates at Western Michigan—that these women were merely sinful, or repressed, or even humorously unhinged. It was the empathy I have for them, despite our separation by hundreds of years, and despite the historically/culturally relevant differences between "temptation to despair" and OCD, that led me to write this dissertation—not to judge, belittle, or marvel at them, but to try to understand them compassionately. It is my hope that my love's labor here will likewise help move our academic conversation in a more compassionate direction. Perhaps, through the slow trickle of the scholarly discourse into the popular sphere, this discussion might help another young person, tempted to despair in her own way, to know at least she's not alone.

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Appendix: A Reading Edition of *Against Wanhope*[877]

For ȝee schulen undirstonde þat al a mannes lyf, from þe furste poynt ynto þe laste, þe fende is aboute to brynge a man or a womman to þe cursid synne of wanhope. For undirstondiþ weel þat in þis maner þe deuel steriþ to synne and þus synne is doon and fulfillid.

Furst is suggestioun or profer to synne, riȝt as þe fende proferide to Eue þe appil, and Eue to Adam. But in þis ȝit wiþ outen more is no synne.

But þis is on assay, and if it be wiþstonden, þat is wondir medeful. And in siche wiþstondynge and aȝen fiȝtyng stondiþ oure gostly chyualrie here in erþe. The secunde is likyng in ony of alle þe fyue wittis of þat profer and þat is þe firste degree of synne.

But if þis likyng be in þe sensualite in likynge of any of þe fyue wittis aloneli, ȝit þe synne is uenial.

But þan furþer[878] ȝif a man laste in þis likyng so longe til his resoun accord and assente to þis likyng, þanne is þe synne dedly.

And if a man furþer after þe yuel assent fulfille after in dede þat yuel work þat his wille bifore assentid to, þan is wers and þe synne more perelous.

And ȝif a man forþer aftir his yuel wille and his yuel werk for likyng þerinne falle in to wickid custom, þan is wel wors.

And ȝif a man þan out of wicked custum falle so depe in to synne þat him þinkeþ þat he moste nedis synne, þanne he dispisiþ god and his lawe and al godenesse, and stifly maynteneþ and defendiþ his synne, and þan in þe laste degree of alle whan a man haþ forsaken God and al goodenesse, þanne he fallyþ to wanhope. And he falsly weneþ þat oure god may not or kan not or wil not forȝeue him his synne, and þerfore he hopiþ no mercy and he wole no mercy. And þan as a beest he foloweþ his lustis and abideþ his dampnacioun. And to þis laste cursid ende is þe deuel aboute to bringe ȝou alle þe daies of ȝoure lyf fro þe first poynt to þe laste. For he slepiþ neuer, but he is euer aboute to make a man to crie crauaunt[879] and to speke þis laste loþ[880] word to forsake god and his mercy uttirly. To þis ende is þe deuel and synne aboute to brynge ȝou to. But Cristen children, þouȝ ȝoure synnes and myne ben grete, ȝut þe mercy of God is wiþ outen mesure more.

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[877] This reading edition is primarily based on the text found in Hunter 520, with reference especially to Harley 2398 as needed for clarification. I have modernized the punctuation and capitalization to form more legible sentences. However, I have broken up paragraphs according to punctuation in Hunter to try to preserve the oirignal divisions in the text. Even though Harley seems to me to be divided more clearly, it was presented as part of the full sermon, so I wanted to represent how a version of the treatise was divided. I have expanded abbreviations from the text but retained original spelling where possible.

[878] "furþer" and "forþer" below are supplied from Harley 2398 for clarity; Hunter 520 uses "fure" consistently.

[879] i.e., "cry craven"

[880] i.e., "loath"

And þerfore þouȝ ȝoure synnes haue ben neuere so grete, nor so manye, leue hem now, for euere more tristyng in þe mercy and in þe grace and in þe goodnesse of God. And þrouȝ þe grace of god, I schal telle ȝou a lessoun to comforte of ȝou alle þe daies of ȝour lyf, and at ȝoure deeþ day most of al þrouȝ þe myȝt of God.

Than[881] at þe bigynnyng it is to suppose þat þe fend þat slepiþ neuere, and þat euere is enemy to mannes soule, he is euere aboute to combre mannes soule and to brynge him to euerlastyng dampnacioun of helle.

And it is to suppose þat þees fendis ben most aboute to tempte men and wymmen in þe houre of here deeþ, and neuere in here lyf so faste aboute to combre men as at þe laste stonde to make hem to haue an yuel ende and so to be dampnyd. And it is licly þat þan þei wolen most tempte men to þat synne þat þei ben þan most enclyned to, and þat licly is most to synne of wanhope and for to uttirly for sake God.

And it is licly þat þre resones or þre argumentis, or ellis summe of hem, þe fendis schulen make to men at her deeþ day.

And whoso wolde lerne bi tyme to answere to þes þre resouns and kepe hem in his mynde, þrouȝ goddis grace he schulde fynde a grete comfort in þis lessoun of alle lessouns þat euere he lerned and specially in þe laste dredeful stounde of his lyf.

The firste of þes þre argumentis or resouns þat licly þe fend schal make to ȝou is þis. Þi synnes wole þe fende perauenture seie ben so many, so foule, and so greuous þat oure God may not, or kan not, or wole not forȝyue hem to þe, nor take þee to his mercy.

And siþen[882] it so is þan þou mustist nedis be dampned.

Here for to knowe hou ȝee schulen answere generally to alle þe fendis resouns and disseitis. Ȝee schulen vndirstonde þat as[883] þis hard storme[884] of þat perelous assauȝt of þe fende come vttirly, þre þinges ben nedeful to ȝou for to arme ȝou and to dispose ȝou aȝens his giles.

First eueri man and womman schulde in here lyf reule hem resonably and mesurably in mete and drynke and slep: nouþer notably to miche nor to litel, neiþer to be glotouns ne lorels[885] to lye as swyn to longe in here beddes in slouþe and lust of here fleisch, nor in to myche wakyng or fastyng or oþir penaunce doyng til þei waxe wood.

For noon of þis is tauȝt nor approued of God, but mesure and resoun in alle þees.

[881] Hunter places a punctuation mark before “and” in the previous sentence, but the T in than is noticeably capitalized, so it makes more sense to break the text here.
[882] i.e., subsequently
[883] Hunter has “or,” “as” supplied by Harley for clarity.
[884] Supplied from Harley.
[885] i.e., a rogue or a fool. Harley has the alternate form “loseles.”

Þe secunde disposicoun ful nedeful to wiþstonde þis assauȝt of þe fende is þat a man nyȝt and day trauele to grounde him and stable him in good vertues and specialiche in þes þre vertues:[886] feiþ and hope and charite. For al a mannes lyf schulde be to lerne a lessoun to dye wel.

For þer is no better remedye to scoumfite[887] þe fende þan is þrouȝ þe grace of God stedfast bileue on Crist and his lawe.

For bi þat lawe Crist scoumfitide þe fende þries in his þre temptacions as witnessiþ þe gospel of Seint Matheu ui . iiii^{o} . ca^{o}. And þer is no better wey nor mene to ouercome þe fende þan is þe ensaumple and þe dede of oure lord Ihesu Crist.

Siþen no man may ouercome þe fende but bi techyng and uertu of Crist. The þridde disposicioun and nedeful to wiþstonde þe hard assauȝt of þe fend is þat a man nyȝt and day bisily trauele him in good occupacions and seruyce of God, as now deuouȝt preiynge, now bodily worchyng. And specialy þat a man or womman drawe hem bisily to good compaignye and to good and wis karpyng and lernyng, and þat a man be not to myche alone in solitarie lyuyng, in musyng to miche and to fer[888] of goddis myȝt and his priuetees.

For so þe fend of helle toke him a leiser to tempte Eue whan sche was alone, and he bigiled here. And þer fore als fast as suche foule stiryngis fallen upon a man, he schulde a noon putte hem away from him and drawe him to wys and deuouȝt compaignye.

And ȝif a man wole þus dispose him before, he schal liȝtly answere to alle þe resouns and disceites of alle þe fendes of helle.

And as anentis[889] redi helpe and socour in a mannes nede ȝif he lette not him silf þrouȝ synne he schal haue God and his angelis most redy helpers.

For as seiþ Seint Poul prima ad corinthios x^{o} ca^{o} “Fidelis autem deus qui non pacietur uos temptari super id quod potestis set faciet cum temptacione etiam proventum.”[890] This is to seie God is trewe whiche schal not suffre ȝou to be temptid ouer þat þat ȝe may, but he schal make wiþ þe temptacioun ȝe[891] a profit.

So þat a man lette not him silf wiþ derknesse of synne.

And þan ȝif a man stonde stifly in þe liȝt of vertues and grace, let se what colour haþ þis argument of þe fend, seþþe we wute wel þat he is euer redy to lye.

And þerfore seie here boldely to þe fende þat he lieþ upon God falsly. For we must bileue þat God is endeles myȝtti, endeles witti and, endeles welwilly.

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[886] Hunter omits “specialiche in þes þre vertues,” perhaps by mistake. I added it in from Harley for clarity.
[887] i.e., overcome
[888] i.e., “fear”
[889] i.e., with respect to, concerning
[890] Harley has “Fidelis autem deus qui non pacietur vos temptari super illud quod potestis sed faciet cum temptacione etiam prouentum.” The full quote from the Vulgate is “fidelis autem Deus est, qui non patietur vos tentari supra id quod potestis, sed faciet etiam cum tentatione proventum ut possitis sustinere.”
[891] Harley has “to ȝow”

And þerfore bileue stedfastly þat God is wiþoute mesure more miȝtti to forȝyue þi synne þan þou art of power to synne.

Cura peccatum in spiritum sanctum.[892]

And þerto God is wiþouten mesure more witti and connyng to forȝiue synne þan þou art to synne.

And also God is wiþoute mesure more welwilly to forȝyue synne and also of his goodnesse is more redy to forȝyue synne þan þou art to aske forȝeuenesse of þi synne.

Wher is þan any mater of wanhope or desperacioun?[893]

Hou schulde any man þan leue þe fend fadir of lesynges þat seiþ þat þi synne is so myche, or so many, þat God may not or kan not or wil not forȝyue hem?

And þerfore vttirly seie þat he is fals and wiþstonde and aȝeyn seie his fals and his feyned resoun.

But ȝif þe fende faile in þis resoun, perauenture he wole assaye þee in þe secounde resoun and may be þis:

God is al witti & al knowyng and þer fore he ordeyneþ alle þyng þat schal falle.

But þyn synnes ben so grete and so many þat for hem god haþ ordeyned þe to be dampnyd, and goddis ordenaunce must nedis be fulfillid. And þerfore nedis þou must be dampned.

As to þis fals resoun of þe fend, ȝe schal undirstonde þat as crist seiþ in þe gospel of Seynt Matheu xxiiii^{o} ca^{o}:

“De die autem illa nemo scit neque angeli nisi pater solus.” “Of þat day,” seiþ Crist “and of þat houre no man woot nor angelis but þe fader alone.”[894]

But syn þe day of dome is so priuey þat noon pure man nor aungel woot þer of but God alone, and as myche or more priuey and hid fro hem it is what schal be doon singulerly to euery man at þat day, than myche raþer and miche more þe cursid fende of helle knoweþ no þing of þat grete priuete of God.

How knoweþ he þan what schal be doon on þat day of þee or of any oþir of whom þe dome of God is not ȝut fulfillid?

And þerfore aske þat fals lier where he lerned þat þou schalt be dampned bi þe ordenaunce of God.

[892] This Latin quotation is excluded in Harley.
[893] Harley has “despeyer.”
[894] Harley’s citation is more complete: “in þe gospel of Seynt Matheu. iij^{t}xxiiij^{to}.ca^{o}: De die autem illa et hora nemo scit neque angeli nisi pater solus.”

And ȝif he kunne not schewe it þe in þe lawe and word of god þat is souereyne treuþe, leeue him not syn þou wost wel þat he is a lier, and for a lesyng he felle out of heuene into helle.

Also wolde þau be so greet a fool to leeue so fals a schrewe in so gret a lesyng siþen for his lesyng he is dampned worlde wiþ outen ende. And ȝit he is not aschamed to lie, þouȝ his dampnacioun for his lesyngis be þe more.

And heer it is a wondir combraunce þouȝ þat God be souereyn trewe, and so trewe þat he may not lie. And ȝut vnneþe[895] wole any man leeue him.

But þe fende is souereyn fals and ful of lesyngis. And ȝut so many wole so liȝtly leeue him and forsake God.

And þerfore ȝif þou be temptid anytyme to þis synne of desperacoun, anoon put it awey and triste not to þat fals gilour, but be in stedfast purpos to serue God euere continuely in loue and charite and clennesse and þerwiþ in stedefast hope of perseueraunce and aylastyng

And als tristily as þou felist þi silf þus disposid, so tristily knowe þou þat þe fend falsly lieþ whan he seiþ þat nedis þou schalt be dampned. For it may not be þat þou be dampned wiþ þis lyf and þis hope in Crist and stedefast good purpos to þi lyues ende. And þerfore leeue not þe fend ȝit in þis secounde resoun. The þridde resoun most sleiȝe and most perelous may be þis.

Perauentur þe fend wole seie to þee, “God is souereyn riȝtwis and þi synnes ben so grete and so manye and so longe contynued þat god siþen he may nouȝt leue his riȝtwisnesse must nedis of his riȝtwisenesse dampne þee for hem.”

And þat þe fende wole proue þus.

God takiþ no persone man nor womman one to fore anoþer but euen aftir þat þei disseruen. But many men for lesse and lasse synnes þan þou hast don ben dampned.

As is semeþ soþe of Caym þat dide but one synne of one manslauȝt in sleynge his broþer Abel.

Judas also dide one synne in bitraiynge ones Crist.

And also kyng Saul and oþere þat diden lesse and lasse synnes þan þou and ȝut þei ben dampnyd. For þou perauenture hast doon many manslaughtes boþe bodily and goostli.

And also perauenture ofte siþes þou hast bitraied Crist falsly and so of many oþere synnes.

Than siþen þes ben riȝtwisly dampnyd for lesse and lasse synnes þan þou hast don, whi schuldest þou not be dampnyd as riȝtfully for many mo synnes and more? And þerfore seiþ þe fende utterly þou schalt be dampnyd.

But here for loue of him þat for ȝou schedde his blood answere here ȝut to þat false traytor and seie þat he lieþ lesyng upon lesyng as he is wont.

[895] i.e., not easily

And heer triste þer to stedfastly þat euery synne of hem þat ben dampnyd is as wiþ oute mesure more in enduryng þan þe synnes of hem þat schulen be safe.

For þe synnes of hem þat schulen be safe, be þei neuer so grete nor so manye, ȝut þei schulen be quenchid and washen awey þrouȝ vertu of þat blood and watir þat cam out of Cristis side

And so alle þe synnes of hem schulen haue an ende. But þe synnes of hem þat schulen be dampned schulen neuer be wasschen awey, nor neuer haue ende, but þei schal laste and dwelle in helle world wiþ outen ende.

And þer fore þer as þe fend seiþ þat þin synnes ben mo and more þan þe synnes of siche as ben dampned.

Seie aȝeyn to him þat þou tristest so myche in goddes goodnesse and in þe vertu of þe harde passioun and in þe precious blood of Crist þat siþ þou hast lafte þi synne; þi synne haþ an ende and is or schal be fully washe awey

And þerfore sei þou bi goddis grace tristely þat he lieþ falsly. And þerfore bidde þat deuel þat he leue his lesyngis and kepe þee in stedefast feiþ hope and charite and in Goddis seruice contynuely lastyng. And it is not possible þat þe fend make to þee ony resoun þe to falle in dispeir, but þat þou myȝt liȝtly answere to alle his disseites.

But þes men and wymmen þat leden here lyf in dedely synne and ben not i nwille to amende hem: þei may sore drede lest þe fende at þe laste schal ouercome hem an haue his wille of hem. And þerfore in a mannes owene[896] herte and wille and in his lyuynge may he fele wheþer he be in weye of sauacioun or dampnacioun. And but ȝif þine oune wickid lyf contynued be in cause, alle þe deuelis in helle kunne not make to þee o byndyng resoun hou or whi þou schuldist be dampnyd.

And þer fore putte awey alle þes disseitis of þe fend and bi þenke þe bisili on þe feiþ of Goddis lawe hou[897] þe holy prophete Dauid and Seint Petre, Seint Poule, and Marie Magdaleyne synnede so horribly and so grisely bifore god. And ȝit for þei lafte here synnes wiþ gret sorow and forþinkyng, þrouȝ þe merci of God þei ben sett now hiȝe in heuene blis. And of hem specialy makiþ al holy chirche myche ioie and solempnyte for cause þat alle synful men and wymmen after þe ensaumple of hem schulden leue here synne and triste þan in þe endeles mercy of god.

For siþ Dauid þat was so foul auoutrer and after þat a mansleer, siþen was so holy a prophete.

And siþ Seint Petre so foule and so falsly forsook crist, and ȝit aftir was so holy apostil. And also Seint Poul þat was first so foul a pursuer of cristen men, and after he was þe chosen vessel of god to preche and to bere aboute goddis lawe to þe folke.

And also siþen Seint Marye Magdaleyne was furst so synful a womman þat as seiþ þe gospel Crist kest out of hir seuene deuelis. And ȝut heuene and erþe makiþ ioie and blisse of hir. And

[896] supplied from Harley
[897] the punctuation in both manuscripts actually comes before How, not “and þer fore,” but I moved it for clarity of reading.

siþen Goddes goodnesse and his mercy is not dryud ne drunken up for mercy schewed to hem, but siþen he is als redy to vs as he was to hem ȝif we leuen synne and turne us holly to him, alweldynge God, where is any mater of wanhope or desperacioun? And þer fore ȝif any man be dampnyd it is holly long on him silf and God is not to blame. For his grace and his mercy is euer redy þer fore fynaly ȝif any temptacioun of synne falle in ȝoure hertis, eiþer bi stiryng of þe fende or þe flesshe or þe world.

And siþen þer is no man nor woman in erþe of age to do synne be þei neuer so olde, but ȝut þei may synne more and more while þer lyf lastiþ.

And also þei may haue stirynges to do synne, or ellis to delite hem in foule synnes þat þei han don in her ȝong age, or in pride or in lecherie or in any oþere synne. Þer fore þe best general lessoun þat I han is þat god himsilf techiþ. Psalmo cxxxvi: “Beatus inquit qui tenebit et allidet parvuulos suos ad petram.” Þat is so seie, “Blessid be he þat schal holde and knocke his smale or his ȝong children to a stoon.”

For þis ȝe schulen vndirstonde þat a mannes werkis and his dedis ben as his children geten and brouȝt forþ of his body and his soule togidere. Þes ben calde smale and ȝonge children while þei ben wiþinne conseyued and nouȝt wrouȝt nor fulfillid in dede wiþ oute. And þan blessid be he þat whan stirynge of synne comeþ in to his soule holdiþ him þat he go not furre in to þe dede. But also blessid be he þat takiþ þat stiryngis þat ben as smale children and anoon knockeþ hem to þat stoon of riȝtwisnesse þat is Crist Ihesu, þe whiche is als stedefast as any ston, and whiche for oure sake was persid and thirlid[898] upon þe cros wiþ a scharp spere. Þerfore siþen noþyng is more in oure pourer þan þe dedis of oure wille, holde us þanne faste to þe ston of riȝtwisnesse þat is crist ihesu þenkyng on his mercy on his myȝt and of his godnesse and of his lyf here in erþe, and schape we vs to folowe him and his passioun and reste finaly in him. And alle þe fendis of helle schule not þe while haue power to putte vs doun in to synne and specially in to þe synne of wanhope, but ȝif þei ben strenger þan crist and þat may not be. And so reste in Crist triste in Crist and lyue in Crist and ende in Crist. And as siker as he is trewe God and Crist he schal at þi laste ende brynge þee to himsilf in to ioie and in to blysse þat neuer schal haue ende. To whiche Ioye and to which blisse Crist Ihesu brynge ȝou þat for ȝou schedde his blood. Merciful God, Amen.

[898] a synonym for pierced

Vita

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