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*THE FIRE OF LOVE: MEDIEVAL MYSTICISM AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN
RELIGION AND THE PRODUCTION OF TEXTS*

Claire Siewert

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The Fire of Love: Medieval Mysticism and the Role of Women in Religion and The Production of Texts

Claire Siewert

I. Introduction

Mysticism inspired a large body of religious literature in later medieval England, from c. 1100 to c. 1530. Mystics claimed to have experiences with God that spiritually transformed them and revealed the nature of God, and mystical writers preserved their experiences with the divine not only to satisfy readers' interest, but also to help readers achieve similar experiences through their meditative engagement with their texts.¹ One of the most prolific and widely influential of these writers in later medieval England was Richard Rolle (d. 1349), who lived as a hermit, or religious solitary, in Yorkshire. The solitary life was believed to help cultivate mysticism, as confinement and constant devotion allowed a person to form a particularly close relationship with God. Rolle describes his mystical experiences and theory of divine love in one of his most popular works, *Incendium Amoris*. My edition presents selections of *The Fire of Love*, Richard Misyn's (d. 1462) Middle English translation of *Incendium Amoris*.

The text in my edition essentially is the work of two authorial hands. The first, Rolle, wrote the original Latin version, *Incendium Amoris*, in c. 1343, while the second, Misyn, translated the Latin text to Middle English nearly a century later, in 1435. Relatively little is known about Misyn beyond what he tells us in the colophon to *The Fire of Love*.² In this brief

¹ For a more comprehensive overview of medieval mystical writings, see Watson, "The Middle English Mystics."

² In the colophon to *The Fire of Love*, Misyn writes: "Explicit liber de Incendio Amoris Ricardi Hampole heremite translatus in anglicum instanciis domine Margarete Heslyngton recluse per fratrem Ricardum Misyn sacre theologie bachalaureum tunc priorem lincolniensem ordinis carmelitarum. . ." ["Here ends

statement, he writes that he was a member of the Carmelite order in Lincoln, although he also was active for some time in Yorkshire.³ Other evidence suggests that Misyn briefly lived as a hermit before serving as bishop at Dromore from 1457 to his death.⁴ He presumably had a university education, as he calls himself bachelor of theology in the colophon as well. Misyn translated another of Rolle's works, *Emendatio Vitae*, or *The Mending of Life*, in 1434, and translated *Incendium Amoris* just a year later. Misyn demonstrates his devotion to Rolle both by living as a hermit for a period of time and by translating two of his works. Misyn's engagement with Rolle and his texts provides a glimpse into the continued reception and influence of Rolle long after his death.

The chapters I selected to include in my edition (Misyn's preface, Rolle's prologue, and Chapters 5, 11, and 13–15) take up key elements of the text: questions of divine love, religious devotion, and the use of texts to support contemplation. Misyn's preface outlines his philosophy of translation and the justification and specific occasion of the work. Rolle's prologue introduces his literary persona to the reader through a first-person recounting of his sensual experiences with divine love. Rolle also explains here that the book that follows will guide the reader to become a lover of God who might also feel such physical love from the divine. Chapter 5 explores the ways that worldly knowledge impedes spiritual development, while Chapter 11 discusses the contemplative life, the experience of divine love, and the ways to love God and

the hermit Richard Rolle's book *The Fire of Love*, translated in English at the insistence of lady Margaret Heslington, recluse, by Brother Richard Misyn, bachelor of holy theology, at the time when he was the Prior of the Carmelite Order in Lincoln."] (**Am**, fol. 95^r; **Ya**, p. 134; **Co2**, f. 44^r)

³ Bergstrom-Allen, *Heremitam et Ordinis Carmelitarum*, pp. 33-5.

⁴ Karáth, *Fifteenth Century Translations*, p. 83.

express devotion without falling into empty asceticism.⁵ Chapters 13–15 discuss the life of hermits and Rolle’s specific understanding of divine love through the ecstatic experiences of *canor*, *dulcor*, and *fervor* (song, sweetness, and heat), and the section concludes with an autobiographical section that delves into Rolle’s personal history as a hermit.

There currently are no scholarly editions of Misyn’s translation apart from a rudimentary nineteenth-century printing. A scholarly edition of this translation would provide important insight into the reception of Rolle’s Latin work in the broader vernacular population. My thesis presents a sample of what such an edition might look like, with a selection of chapters that focus on various influential features of Rolle’s mysticism. To support the reading of these chapters, I will first provide an overview of Rolle’s theology and the composition of *The Fire of Love*. Next, I will discuss the impact of the book on both the individual reader and in the broader religious context, specifically in relation to the contemplative life and lay piety. Finally, I will explore the relationship between translation and the participation of women in medieval Christianity. My editorial rationale and discussion of the textual evidence will follow.

Rolle’s Affective Spirituality in *The Fire of Love*

Rolle’s religious writings span a broad range of topics and genres, including poetry, theological argumentation, and biblical commentary, but he returns to three essential bodily experiences of divine love throughout his œuvre. Rolle describes *canor* (angelic song), *dulcor* (persistent sweetness), and *fervor* (heat in his chest) as representing physical manifestations of God’s love. As the title suggests, the last sensation, *fervor*, figures prominently in *The Fire of Love*, but, as

⁵ Rolle argues that the extreme ascetic lifestyle actually can be deceptive in its depravity. Although the person might starve themselves and engage in various severe self-punishments, they might not actually gain God’s favor or learn about God. For more, see Chapter 11, lines 58–72.

Nicholas Watson explains, the progression of the text takes the reader through all three of the sensations and explores the hierarchy between them, with *canor* being the highest experience of divine love.⁶ Rolle describes these sensations using vivid, highly sensual language perhaps designed to persuade the reader to acknowledge the reality of Rolle's experience, and to encourage them to imagine what those sensations might feel like in their own bodies. This "affective evangelism," as Watson terms it, places Rolle's work in a didactic position that can inform, instruct, and shape the reader's religious beliefs and experiences.⁷

Rolle's didactic authority informs the very structure of *The Fire of Love*. Divided into forty-two sections (or chapters) with a prologue, *The Fire of Love* may at first seem to be a bewildering, disjointed text rather than a cohesive book. The sections range from formal theological treatises to autobiographical exposition, and from lyrical poems to sensual narrations of Rolle's mystical experiences. The complicated generic hybridity of *The Fire of Love* reflects the multitude of topics Rolle explores throughout the work. Rolle develops arguments against worldliness, crafts explanations of divine love, describes the solitary life, and provides a glimpse of his contemplative visions. Thus, while most of the individual sections could be read independently, they arguably contribute to the broader, cohesive whole. For Watson, this simultaneous independence and interdependence of the sections makes *The Fire of Love* a "collection of short didactic pieces" that is comparable to the Bible.⁸ He argues that the "array of affective literary modes, [fall] into separate sections, the import of which, like that of the

⁶ Watson, *Invention of Authority*, p. 121.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 120, 123.

Scriptures, adds up to a single message,” namely that of God’s love.⁹ Rolle discusses many different types and forms of love, both divine and worldly, and various ways that people can recognize and experience love. By reading the text in its entirety, one may know what it means to be a lover of God, how to love God, how God’s love manifests in the world, what worldly loves to avoid, and how to recognize their dangers.

As one of the only overtly autobiographical works within Rolle’s corpus of writing, *The Fire of Love* offers a unique glimpse into Rolle’s own life as a hermit and mystic. The book allows the reader to have a real sense of the authorial persona behind the text, unlike many other writers’ works of the time, as Rolle crafts a strong literary presence for himself within the text.¹⁰ The autobiographical details and perceptible authorial persona increase the didactic effectiveness of *The Fire of Love*. In the prologue, Rolle recalls his first experience with the fire of divine love:

I was forsoth meruayld as þe byrnyng in my saule byrst vp, and of an vnwont solas, for vncuthnes of slike helefull habundance, oft tymes haue I gropyd my breste sekandly, whedyr þis birnyng wer of any bodely cause vtwardly. Bot when I knew þat onely it was kyndyld of gostely caus inwardly, and þat þis brynnynge was nozt of fleschly lufe ne concupiscens, in þis I consaued it was þe gyft of my Maker. (Prologue, ll. 2-7)

⁹ Watson further explains the comparison of *The Fire of Love* to the Bible by suggesting that the sections progress in a “pattern of gradual revelation of truth,” or, in other words, as the reader works through the text, they ascend the spiritual ladder to the ultimate truth and experience of God’s love and love for God (Ibid., p. 123).

¹⁰ Watson describes this “narratorial personality. . . as passionate, audacious, frank; as sensual, charming, diffident, and ingenuous,” which he argues is perceptible because of Rolle’s “distinctive voice” that runs throughout *Incendium Amoris* (Ibid., p. 115).

[I was truly marveling as the burning in my soul burst up, with such a comforting abundance of extraordinary and unknown joy. I often kept searchingly grasping my breast to see whether this burning was of any outward bodily cause. But when I knew that it fully was kindled by a spiritual, inward force, and that this burning was not from fleshly love or lust, I realized that it was the gift of my Maker.]

The first-person speaker immediately draws the reader into the text with his forceful, expressive narration. By including details of the burning sensation, the way that he “gropyd [his] breste sekandy,” and the progression of his thoughts, from confusion to the realization that “it was þe gyft of my Maker,” Rolle crafts a moving and convincing account. Readers should respond to the vivid realness of the scene; they ought to be able to imagine Rolle gesturing, processing the experience, and finally writing it down for their benefit. Further, the indexical “I” allows readers to consider what it might be like to experience the burning, fiery love of God themselves.¹¹ In this way, Rolle uses his own mystical experience as an example for readers to strive to imitate. The experiential style of Rolle’s narrative prose thus teaches the reader how to recognize and experience the sensation of divine love.

We can see that Rolle’s primary aims in writing his mystical works must have been to instruct, guide, and make high levels of spirituality accessible to the wider population beyond the monasteries’ doors. Indeed, in his prologue to *The Fire of Love*, Rolle states:

¹¹ Barr, “Modeling Holiness,” p. 84.

Qwharefore þis boke I offyr to be sene noȝt to philisophyrs, nor wyes men of þis warld,
ne to grete devyens lappyd in questions infenyte, bot vnto boystus and vntaght, more besy
to con lufe God þen many þinges to knawe. (Prologue, ll. 39-41)

[Therefore, I offer this book not to philosophers, nor wise men of this world, nor to great theologians smothered by infinite questions, but to the simple and uneducated who are more desirous to love God than to know many things.]

By presenting his book to the “boystus and vntaght” (“simple and uneducated”) rather than “philisophyrs,” “wyes men,” or “grete devyens” (“philosophers,” “wise men,” or “great theologians”), Rolle argues that not only are uneducated laypeople able to love God and experience spiritual sentiments, they might actually be more able to do so than these religious authority figures whose pursuit of abstract knowledge causes them to lose focus on God. This argument of the impediment knowledge poses to loving God continues to emerge throughout *The Fire of Love*. The emphasis on feeling, both physical and emotional, allows for lay participation in religion, as lofty, secret knowledge does not prefigure sensual experiences. Anyone who devoutly contemplates the divine and ardently loves God may experience things like *canor*, *dulcor*, and *fervor* without necessarily joining a monastery or spending years in a university setting. As David Lavinsky suggests, by representing “sensory perception functions as both the means to, and evidence of, the proper love of God,” Rolle rejects the notion that only trained theologians may access God.¹² Instead, it is through this affective spirituality that a reader may learn of God’s love and learn to love God.

¹² Lavinsky, ““Speke to me be thowt,”” p. 346.

The Contemplative Life, in Solitude and Communities

Contemplation, or fervent meditation on the nature of God, helps a person experience a mystical revelation of God, and thus unites this elect person with God.¹³ Throughout *The Fire of Love*, Rolle guides the reader through such contemplation or provides examples of his own contemplative visions. In Chapter 15, for example, he experiences *canor* (angelic song) while meditating in a chapel: “Qwhilst also prayand to heuyns with all desire I toke hede, on what maner I wote not, sodanly in me noys of songe I felt and likyngest melody heuynly I toke with me dwellyng in mynde” [“While praying to heaven with great longing, I became aware, in what manner I know not, that suddenly within myself I felt the noise of song, and I kept this most beautiful, heavenly melody in my mind”].¹⁴

Rolle specifies that the eremitic life is the ideal condition for contemplation, as hermits’ lives of solitude allow them to constantly engage in contemplation and reflect on their experiences. However, despite this ideal, Rolle seems to have imagined a wider audience for his work. As discussed in the previous section, Rolle addresses the book to anyone who is “more besy to con lufe God” [“more desirous to learn to love God”] and opens his theology to those who are willing to dedicate themselves to the pursuit of God, without stipulating that they must have formal training or be a hermit themselves. Rather than denouncing the ideal of the hermit,

¹³ Rolle is careful to explain that not all contemplatives will be blessed with mystical experiences. It is only those upon whom God elects to bestow such revelations, rather than by simply following a formula or trying hard enough. That is not to say that Rolle discourages readers; instead, readers must try fervently to engage in meaningful contemplation in the hopes of one day being chosen by God to experience a mystical sensation of divine love.

¹⁴ Chapter 15, ll. 41-3.

Rolle redefines solitude by expanding it to include not just physical seclusion but mental as well, thus opening the contemplative life to a wider population.

Rolle details his personal experience as a hermit in Chapters 13–15, and he demonstrates the broadening of solitude through his individual account. In Chapter 13, Rolle allows that “þof all emonges men full fare þa dwell, 3it fro heuenly desyrs þai stumbyll not, for þer myndis fro wickyd conuersacion ar full far” [“There are those that dwell among men yet do not stumble from their heavenly desires, as their minds are far from wicked conversation”], essentially stating that solitude does not necessarily require physical distance from others.¹⁵ This mental seclusion that allows for contemplation, and, perhaps, mystical experience of divine love, therefore becomes available to those who are not able to actually become hermits like Rolle himself. Rolle likely intended this sentiment to appeal to members of monastic communities who sought a higher degree of spiritual development, yet could not, for whatever reason, withdraw from the monastery.

The gradual widening of the concept of solitude is not Rolle’s invention, but instead has historical precedents. Saint Maglorius (d. c. 586), whom Rolle mentions in Chapter 13, actually abandoned his hermitage to found a monastery.¹⁶ Christina of Markyate (d. 1155) was an anchoress who lived with a group of women and ultimately rejected a more isolated withdrawal

¹⁵ Chapter 13, ll. 25-7.

¹⁶ Rolle reverses this order, claiming that Maglorius “hys archbeschoprik left, hermyts lyfe he chas” (“left his archbishopric and chose the life of a hermit”) (13.40-1). Rolle possibly presented the facts of Maglorius’s life in this manner to demonstrate the lofty pursuit of the eremitic life, for Rolle would not have argued that to be in a monastic community was preferable to living as a hermit. Rather, the section above demonstrates that Rolle acknowledges the barriers which some faced to becoming a hermit, without lowering the ideal of eremitism.

from society.¹⁷ Even as a hermit himself, Rolle engaged with the larger community around him through his writings. Among other things, we know he fostered a relationship with the nuns at Hampole, and he even wrote English devotional texts specifically for a recluse named Margaret Kirkeby.¹⁸ Rolle's interactions with these women illustrate his own imperfect isolation from others, which did not prevent him from leading a rich contemplative life.

Throughout *The Fire of Love* Rolle explores nontraditional (that is, lay and female) piety in terms of the solitary life. The structure of the work, its emphasis on affective devotion, and its denunciation of abstract, exclusive theology all make *The Fire of Love* relevant and impactful for readers who might not be highly educated or members of clergy. Rolle's proposition that one can be solitary while in the presence of others makes the hermit's level of spirituality more attainable for non-hermits.¹⁹ Indeed, scholars have suggested that Rolle's writings participated in the increase in lay piety and the desire to live a contemplative life. When describing such religious developments and Rolle's particular role in them, Jonathan Hughes states:

¹⁷ In *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, we learn that she was "uncertain whether she should remain in that place [in close connection to a church] or whether, as she had once thought, she should seek some remote spot," demonstrating the anxieties surrounding the proper proximity to society for a contemplative, devotional life. *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, trans. Talbot, p. 63.

¹⁸ Freeman demonstrates the difficulty in determining the exact nature of Rolle's supposed relationship with the priory of Hampole. She outlines the history as both somewhat lacking yet having sufficient evidence to say with relative confidence that at least some form of a relationship existed between them. Freeman, "The Priory of Hampole," pp. 10-5.

¹⁹ Even if the work was only originally read by learned people who knew Latin (likely monks or other clergymen), the concept of the validity of laypeople participating in high levels of contemplative, mystical devotion could still have been impactful and disseminated to those very people without access to books or the Latin language.

The career of Richard Rolle of Hampole was of fundamental importance in elevating the status of the recluse as someone who was consulted on spiritual matters by laymen, and who therefore initiated changes in religious sensibility by influencing the development of lay participation in the contemplative life.²⁰

Here Hughes touches on two important aspects of Rolle's contributions to lay piety: the position of the hermit as teacher and advisor, and the growth of contemplation within lay populations. Rolle certainly did not invent either of these phenomena; however, *The Fire of Love* does seem to participate directly in their development. Rolle as a mystical hermit-author clearly positions himself as a spiritual teacher to the readers, and encourages them to follow his contemplative guidance and example.

Two earlier solitaries who also demonstrated an interest in lay piety are Wulfric of Haselbury (d. 1154) and Christina of Markyate (d. 1155). Wulfric's holiness became famous, and "men and women of every kind started to flow towards him, not just from round about but from great distances," and these crowds of laypeople sought religious counsel from Wulfric.²¹ Christina attracted a different type of lay participation, as young girls and women came to live with her, and "as Christina's reputation grew so did the number of her maidens."²² These "maidens" did not constitute an institutionalized convent, but rather were a group of laywomen who devoted their lives to being disciples of, and living with, a contemplative mystic. These precedents demonstrate that Rolle's interest in expanding the contemplative life fits into a larger, ongoing movement to support lay piety within medieval Christianity. Rolle might not have lived

²⁰ Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries*, p. 78.

²¹ John of Forde, *The Life of Wulfric of Haselbury, Anchorite*, trans. P. Matarasso, p. 111.

²² *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, trans. C. H. Talbot, p. 62.

with or even regularly physically interacted with others, but he allows for that type of community in his writing. Rather than denounce communal living and insist that one must become a hermit to spiritually advance, Rolle proposes an alternative through text. It is by reading Rolle's work and mentally secluding oneself from others that one might follow his contemplative example and learn to become a lover of God.

This expanded concept of solitude allows for the type of contemplation that *The Fire of Love* propounds as a means to become closer to God and to witness the physical manifestations of God's love on Earth. Rolle argues in Chapter 15 that he writes this text so that the reader "to felow, not to bakbyt, may be stiryd" ["may be stirred to follow, not slander"] (15.77). By specifying that the reader should "felow" Rolle's mode of contemplation, particularly through solitude, Rolle positions the text itself as a means to achieve contemplation, and by extension, divine love. By reading the text, a person enters the spiritual solitude that Rolle argues is necessary to achieve affective devotion.

Translation and The Participation of Women in Later Medieval Christianity

Misyn's translation of *Incendium Amoris* to the vernacular language furthers Rolle's attempt to make spiritual development accessible. By translating the Latin text to Middle English, Misyn effectively brought the text to an even broader audience that "of Latyn vnderstandes noght" ["does not understand Latin"].²³ While the language barrier might have been dismantled, it must still be noted that the very textuality of the religious teachings presented another barrier, as one must know how to read, have privileged access to books, or at least be in social proximity to

²³ Prologue, ll. 1-2.

someone with those resources in order to access the written words. Still, the Middle English version of the text represents another move toward popular religious activity and contemplation.

Indeed, Misyn addresses his translation of *The Fire of Love* specifically to a woman named Margaret, and this particular reader demonstrates just one audience that particularly benefited from the Middle English translation: women. In his translator's prologue, Misyn explains that he translated the text in answer "to þe askynge of þi desyre, syster Margarete" ["to the inquiry of your desire, Sister Margaret"] (Prologue, l.1). In Misyn's colophon to *The Fire of Love*, he specifies that the text "translatu in anglicum instanciis domine Margarete Heslyngton recluse" ["was translated into English at the insistence of the lady Margaret Heslington, recluse"]. Here we learn Margaret's last name, and from this information, scholars have identified her as an anchoress at Saint Margaret's in York.²⁴ She seems to have served as anchoress from sometime in the 1430s until her death in 1439. Heslington and Misyn were both members of the Corpus Christi Guild, which Hughes describes as a religious fraternity that "attracted men and women of intellectual and social distinction" who almost always owned books.²⁵ Heslington's presumed book ownership, membership in the Guild, and position as anchoress all point toward the increasing involvement of women in religion beyond the conventional, institutional option of joining a convent.

Even during his lifetime, Rolle helped bolster this shifting role of women's participation in religion. Elizabeth Freeman argues that Rolle's relationships with the nuns at Hampole and Margaret Kirkeby suggest the importance of "the role of medieval English religious women in the facilitation of literary composition," as Rolle could have written to meet these women's spiritual needs—or at least, through these relationships, we can retrospectively see a correlation

²⁴ Jones, "A Mystic By Any Other Name," pp. 2-3

²⁵ Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries*, p. 122.

between women participating in religion and Rolle's composition of texts.²⁶ Thus Rolle either directly participated in or indirectly influenced the literary culture of religious women (or both). Nearly a century later, Margaret Heslington exemplifies the role of women in the production of books that Freeman proposes. She commissioned Misyn to produce a translation of the fairly well-known Latin text, *Incendium Amoris*, for her own use.²⁷ By doing so, Heslington directly influenced the textual market in response to her personal religious aspirations. Women thus became increasingly involved in contemplative religion not merely as passive recipients of the resources available to them, but in such a way that they actively participated in the very development of those resources through their growing demand for accessible (vernacular) books.

One of the manuscripts that preserves Misyn's translation, British Library MS Additional 37790, is a crucial piece of physical evidence of the market for texts on women's spirituality. Commonly referred to as the Amherst manuscript, MS Add. 37790 is an anthology of texts written by or about women's religious experiences, with a particular focus on contemplation. Written almost entirely in Middle English, the Amherst manuscript contains three sections of texts. The first presents Misyn's translation of *The Fire of Love*, the second has the short version of Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*, and the third contains a Middle English translation of the French text *Mirror of Simple Souls* by Marguerite Porete.²⁸ It is clear that the compiler of the Amherst manuscript valued the participation of women in contemplative

²⁶ Freeman, "The Priory of Hampole," p. 25.

²⁷ Heslington's commission of the translation suggests an awareness of the Latin text, despite the fact that she could not read it due to the language barrier. This awareness demonstrates the widespread influence of Rolle's texts, even among people who could not access the texts themselves.

²⁸ Porete, a mystic from the late 13th and early 14th centuries, was condemned of heresy for *Mirouer des simples ames* in 1310. For more on her heretical claims and their relation to the development of Continental mysticism, see Cottrell, "Marguerite Porete's Heretical Discourse;" Hanna, *The English Manuscripts*, pp. 80-2.

religious life. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton argues that the book is “not for novices, nor for the theologically faint of heart,” as the texts are complex and handle a range of complicated religious concepts and practices.²⁹ Kerby-Fulton points out this complexity to challenge the typical assumption that vernacular religious literature, especially works written for or by women, was simpler and less rigorous than Latin (or vernacular) texts written for or by men. This case study of the Amherst manuscript is especially useful to our understanding of Misyn’s translation of *The Fire of Love* as we can see how the text was received, what other texts were read in conjunction with *The Fire of Love*, and how it contributed to the broader religious society. The anthologizer(s) of the Amherst manuscript placed Misyn’s translation alongside complex theological texts written by women, and the book clearly suggests the legitimacy of women’s theology and the capacity of women to lead contemplative, mystical lives.

Historically excluded from institutional piety, elite women began engaging in Christianity through devotional texts in the 14th and 15th centuries. As Susan Bell explains, “because women’s public participation in spiritual life was not welcomed by the hierarchical male establishment, a close involvement with religious devotional literature, inoffensive because of its privacy, took on a greater importance for women.”³⁰ Women like Margaret Heslington, who could afford books and who sought religious advancement, therefore commissioned or purchased books like the Amherst manuscript. Anne Dutton’s comprehensive study of medieval women and religious books demonstrates the difficulty in determining the exact nature of book ownership and women’s literacy. However, Dutton illustrates that it is clear some women did own and read devotional texts, with a marked “rise in the use of English devotional treatises by women during

²⁹ Kerby-Fulton, “The Fifteenth Century as the Golden Age of Women’s Theology,” p. 590.

³⁰ Bell, “Medieval Women Book Owners,” p. 752.

the fifteenth century.”³¹ Misyn directly participated in this growth of vernacular religious literature through his translation of *The Fire of Love*.

Bell and Dutton both highlight the fact that devotional texts were used by women differently than how they were used by men. Dutton explains that:

Devotional reading, therefore, serves several purposes for women: it is a means to avoid idleness and a remedy for temptation, it educates the reader, and it stirs up her affections to the love of God and desire for heaven, and to the dread and avoidance of sin. Women’s reading, unlike that of male religious and clerics, is not for intellectual achievement.³²

Women’s varied uses of religious texts thus emphasize the very affective spirituality that Rolle depends upon in his teachings. Misyn’s vernacular translation of Rolle’s Latin text therefore makes particular sense for a woman reader, as the content already reflected the affective ways that women were expected to read and understand devotional literature. Bell considers women’s affective reading culture to reflect the societal expectation that women serve as their children’s moral and religious teachers.³³ Although Dutton shows that devotional texts for women almost

³¹ Dutton, “Women’s Use of Religious Literature,” p. 145.

³² This quotation highlights one of the main issues in Dutton’s argument, namely her insistence that women read “not for intellectual achievement.” This position is countered by Kathryn Kerby-Fulton’s demonstration that many religious texts for or by women were theologically complex, and designed not just for surface-level religion (“Golden Age of Women’s Theology,” p. 190). Further, Dutton’s claim can be challenged by Rolle’s affective spirituality, as his texts were not necessarily designed for “intellectual achievement,” either, despite being mostly written for men (in Latin). This issue of gender and religion is complex and multi-faceted, but Dutton generally avoids a thorough discussion of such complications. Ibid., p. 132.

³³ Bell, “Medieval Women Book Owners,” p. 767.

always privileged chastity, and thus presumed their readers were unmarried and childless, Bell's suggestion of the influence of motherhood (whether conceptual or one's lived experience) on women's religious reading still provides insight into the general culture of medieval women's participation in Christianity.³⁴ The potential for the idea of motherhood to shape women's spiritual studies represents another way that their use of texts departed from men's. For men, religion was more likely to be an individual experience, evidenced by Rolle's own life as a secluded hermit whose mysticism was centered on himself. Although Rolle wrote his texts for wider audiences, the actual act of reading them and engaging in contemplation was meant to be an individual experience. As discussed in the previous section, Rolle allowed for an expansion of the solitary life. Women readers generally required that expansion to be taken a step further, as their access to books and literacy was more limited than men. Thus, women necessarily took up a more communal approach to religion and even mysticism, as they read together, "formed networks that facilitated the lending and sharing of books," and possibly passed their beliefs and readings to their children, should they have any.³⁵ Misyn's translation of *The Fire of Love* allowed Rolle's text to be able to circulate among women readers in a way that the original Latin text could never have done.

Misyn thus expanded the potential readership of Rolle's text, and it is possible to see that his awareness of the import of this task, "for edificacyon of many saules," as Misyn himself

³⁴ Dutton tends to conflate chastity with celibacy, though chastity more closely suggests abstinence from unlawful sex, rather than total abstinence. She says, "[t]he devout woman reader, actively seeking spiritual advancement, is thus constructed as a celibate woman" ("Women's Use of Religious Literature," p. 105). This "constructed" reader highlights the tension between the ideal and real audience. The real readers might not have been able to practice celibacy, but devotional texts like *The Fire of Love* present lofty ideals that readers ought to strive to achieve, even if their real experiences somewhat preclude those ideals.

³⁵ Dutton, "Women's Use of Religious Literature," p. 259.

described it, created an anxiety to get the translation exactly “right.”³⁶ Scholars have criticized Misyn’s translation for being too literal, rendering the Middle English rather awkward and inelegant.³⁷ Misyn translates the opening line of Rolle’s prologue to the text as “Mor haue I meruayled þen I schewe”³⁸ [the Latin reads, “Admirabar amplius quam enuncio”], and he thus maintains both the assonance of *admirabar amplius* through the alliteration of “mor” and “maruayled,” and, as closely as possible, the Latin syntax.³⁹ However, this literalness, extending even to the preservation of the Latin syntax, suggests the translator’s underlying intent to uphold Rolle’s words and the meaning of the text as closely as possible, to minimize any loss through translation. In the preface to *The Fire of Love*, Misyn protests that “the whilk boke [*Incendium Amoris*] in sentence ne substance I þink to chaunge” [“I do not intend to change this book in its meaning or substance”], neatly demonstrating this preservation of both “sentence,” in the sense of the Latin *sententia*, or meaning, and “substance,” the actual constitution of the text. With an instructional religious work like *The Fire of Love*, there might be a sense that the spiritual benefits to readers come not only from the meaning of the words and sentences, but also from the words themselves and the order and manner that they appear on the page. Thus, Misyn immediately establishes his intent to minimally alter or “reforme”⁴⁰ the Latin text while bringing it to a new audience of readers of Middle English.

³⁶ *Preface*, l. 4

³⁷ Bergström-Allen, “Heremitam et Ordinis Carmelitarum,” pp. xlviiii-xlix.

³⁸ “More haue I marveled than I show”

³⁹ In his 1972 translation of *Incendium Amoris*, Clifton Wolters translated the same line as “I cannot tell you how surprised I was,” illustrating the creative liberties needed to get, perhaps, a more elegant phrase (p. 45).

⁴⁰ *Preface*, l. 10

Conclusions

Separated by nearly a century, Rolle and Misyn contributed to the growth of the contemplative life and the inclusion of women in complex theology through their separate work on *The Fire of Love*, as author and translator, respectively. The didactic position of the text, shaped by its affectivity and narrative structure, must have influenced its popularity, translation, and survival, even to the present day. Readers recognized the potential for the text to guide them towards spiritual advancement through contemplation, of both the nature of God's love and Rolle's text itself. Rolle began the work of expanding the solitary life and mystical experience, and Misyn continued that work through his translation of the text to the vernacular language. The focus on women's spirituality is evident both in the original Latin text and by the very existence of the translation. Rolle himself proposed that "an olde wyfe of Goddes lufe is more expert and les of worldly likynge þen þe grete devin whos stody is vayne" ["an old woman is more of an expert of God's love and has fewer worldly desires than the lofty theologian whose study is vain"], clearly gesturing to the potential of women's spiritual efforts to be more effective than those of an educated religious man.⁴¹ Misyn took this potential further when he responded to the religious aspirations of Margaret Heslington by producing the vernacular translation, as now some women could read the text and benefit directly from it. Through *The Fire of Love's* new audience of women readers, we can witness the gradual increase in the authority and legitimacy of women participating in medieval mysticism.

⁴¹ Chapter 5, ll. 63-4.

II. Textual Evidence and Editorial Rationale

Misyn's Middle English translation of *The Fire of Love* survives in three manuscripts: London, British Library, MS Additional 37790; New Haven, Beinecke Library, MS 331; and Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 236. Henceforth, I will refer to these manuscripts as **Am**, **Ya**, and **Co2**, respectively. The previous printing of Misyn's *The Fire of Love* by Ralph Harvey was published in 1896, long before **Ya** had been acquired by the Beinecke Library in 1965.⁴² As such, a new edition of the text is overdue, considering the significant addition of a third manuscript to the corpus.

Manuscript Descriptions

Co2: Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 236

Co2 represents the earliest of the three manuscripts. Working in the second quarter of the fifteenth century, the scribe of **Co2** writes in a clear Anglicana Formata hand. Each chapter opens with a decorated initial and a chapter heading in red ink. The text largely is free from annotations or corrections, though that is not to say that it is free from errors. **Co2** exclusively contains Misyn's *The Fire of Love* (fols. 1^{ra}–44^{rb}) and *The Mending of Life* (fols. 45^{ra}–56^{rb}).⁴³ This presentation suggests a specific interest in vernacular Rollean works, whether on the part of the creator or commissioner. Many aspects of the manuscript allow us to see the deluxe quality of the copy. The decoration includes several expensive colors, including blue, purple, and gold. The regular quiring (1–7⁸) of the book clearly demonstrates that the book was produced as a single unit.

⁴² Shailor, "MS 331."

⁴³ Folios 44^v and 56^v are blank. These blank folios also demonstrate that **Co2** is a luxury copy, as the commissioner could afford to waste valuable space.

Am: London, British Library MS Additional 37790 (“Amherst”)

Am, also known as the Amherst manuscript, presents an extensive anthology of contemplative texts. The **Am** scribe, like the scribe of **Co2**, also writes in Anglicana Formata. The decoration largely consists of blue initials with red ink pen flourishes, as was standard for most manuscripts made in the middle of the 15th century. Chapter headings are written in red ink, and the paratextual details throughout the manuscript, namely incipits, explicits, initials, and quire signatures, consistently support the reader’s comprehension of the texts and demonstrate a surprisingly uniform presentation across the large anthology. Misyn’s translations appear sequentially, with *The Mending of Life* preceding *The Fire of Love*. This presentation reverses the order of the translated texts that the other two manuscripts have. There are annotations on nearly every page of **Am**, which scholars have identified as representing at least eight different annotators.⁴⁴ These numerous annotators represent a continued interest in and engagement with the texts for generations after they were produced. (For more on the Amherst manuscript, see “Translation and the Participation of Women in Later Medieval Christianity.”)

Ya: New Haven, Beinecke Library, MS 331

Ya is the latest of the three manuscripts, dating from the late fifteenth century. The **Ya** scribe utilizes a formal secretary hand with minimal decoration. This manuscript has been heavily annotated in the early modern period by readers who gloss obscure Middle English words or phrases and parse convoluted syntax. **Ya** also presents the most significant scribal anomalies, as the scribe seemingly “attempt[s] to clarify what he perceives as the sense of the opaque Latinate

⁴⁴ Cre, *Vernacular Mysticism*, pp. 281-96.

English,” by occasionally tweaking sentence structures to render them more readable.⁴⁵ These errors, however, are typically not substantive, and, Laing argues, while they might “sometimes produce a more readable sentence. . . [they] never [achieve] a better reading [of the Latin text].”⁴⁶ This failure can easily be attributed not to a poor understanding of Latin, but rather a possible lack of access to the original Latin text to translate. **Ya** contains Misyn’s *The Fire of Love* and *The Mending of Life*, with a rime royale stanza signed by Richard Hutton between the two texts, and an incomplete life of St. John of Bridlington following *The Mending of Life*.⁴⁷ The contents of **Ya** thus span a broader range than **Co2**, but not on the same scale as **Am**.

Manuscript Relationships and Editorial Rationale

My work editing these selected chapters of Misyn’s translation of *The Fire of Love* indicates that these three manuscripts are closely related, and that all three descend, ultimately, from a manuscript that already contained a variety of scribal errors. Therefore, my edition refers to the Latin to restore the text that Misyn wrote, and which is not preserved in any of the extant Middle English copies. For example, at Chapter 11, l. 58, all three manuscripts read “gude” [“good”] for the Latin *Deo*, meaning “God.” (My edition restores the correct reading.) A bit later in the same chapter, l. 60, all three omit *a Deo* [“from God”], which should serve as the antecedent to both “pat” and “hys”—again, my edition corrects the manuscripts to match the Latin source.

Of the three manuscripts, **Co2** is the better copy, as both **Ya** and **Am** introduce further errors. Margaret Laing determined that **Co2** served as the exemplar for both **Ya** and **Am**.⁴⁸ My

⁴⁵ Laing, “Linguistic Profiles,” p. 191.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Hanna, *English Manuscripts*, p. 121.

⁴⁸ Laing, “Linguistic Profiles,” p. 195.

own study of the manuscripts has confirmed this transmission history. As Laing demonstrates that **Ya** and **Am** contain errors that can only be explained by **Co2** being their exemplar, there are numerous instances when all three manuscripts share errors, like the two examples from above. Such shared errors, while they point to a close relationship between the manuscripts, also allow us to determine that **Co2** had an exemplar, and was not the original copy of Misyn's translation. The scribe of **Co2** made errors while copying from his exemplar, which then were perpetuated by the scribes of **Ya** and **Am**. Since this transmission history thus demonstrates that **Co2** is closer to the original than **Ya** or **Am**, and because it is a high-quality copy with minimal significant errors, **Co2** serves as the base manuscript for this edition. Any instances where **Am** or **Ya** presented a better reading than **Co2** in relation to the Latin are marked in the apparatus, and all instances when I rejected the readings of all three manuscripts and corrected the text based on the Latin (shown as ω in the apparatus) are similarly represented.

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III. Edition: Selections from *The Fire of Love*

By Richard Rolle, Translated by Richard Misyn.

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Editor's note: Spelling from the base manuscript **Co2** is preserved. Capitalization and punctuation are modernized.

Translator's Preface

{f. 1^r} At þe reuerence of oure Lorde Iesu Criste, to þe askyng of þi desyre, syster Margarete, couetyng a sethe to make, for encrece also of gostely comforth to þe and mo þat curiuste of Latyn vnderstandes nocht, I, emonge lettyrd men sympellest and in lyfyng vnthriftiest, þis wark has takyn to translacion of Lattyn to Englysch, for edificacyon of many saules. And sen it is so
 5 þat all Godes plesans and gostely life of mans saule standes in parfyte lufe, þerfore þis haly man Richard Hampole hys boke has named *Incendium Amoris*, þat is to say, *Þe Fyer of Lufe*. The whilk boke in sentence ne substance I þink¹ to chaunge, bot treuly aftyr myn vnderstandyng to wryte it in gude exposicione. Þerfore, all redars here-of I pray, if 3our discrecyon o3t fynde þanke-worthy, to God þerof gyf loueyng, and to þis holy man, and if any-þinge² mys-sayd, to
 10 myne vnconnyng wyet itt. Neuerþeles, to reforme³ I make protestacyon, with entent no þinge to wryte ne say agayns þe faith or determinacion of Holy Kyrk, God to wytnes.

Forþirmore, sister, haue in mynd deedlynes of þis lyfe, and allway in þi hande sum holy lesun kepe. For⁴ holynes if þou kepe, fleschly synnes þou salt no3t lufe, and holynes whare-in it standes before I sayde, in parfyte lufe. Bot⁵ parfyte lufe, what may þat be? Certan, when þi God,
 15 as þe aght, for hymself þou lufes, þi frende in God and þin enmy þou lufes for God, for nouþer God withoute þi neghburgh nor þi neghburgh withoute God treuly is lufed. Parfyte lufe þerfore in lufe of God and of þi neghburgh standes, and lufe of God in kepeyng of his

¹ þink] not *add. Ya sup.*

² any-þinge] be *add. Ya*

³ reforme] my warke *add. Ya in marg.*

⁴ for—kepe] *om. Ya*

⁵ bot parfyte lufe] *om. Am*

commaundementes. Kepe⁶ þerfore his commaundementes, and þi prayers or contemplacion when
 þou entres, all worldly þoghtes planely forsake, and chargh of all þinge outewarde forgett, and to
 20 God onely take hede. Doutes if þou fynde any, kall to þe sad counsell, for drede þou erre, namely
 in slyke⁷ þinges þat touches þe xii artikils of þi fayth, als of þe holy Trinite, and oþer dyuers als
 in þis holy boke filouynge is to our lernynge connyngly writtyn.

⁶ kepe—commaundementes] *om. Ya*

⁷ slyke] *suche Ya*

Prologue

{f. 1^{ra}}Mor haue I meruayled þen I schewe, forsothe, when I felt fyrst my hert wax warme, and
 treuly, not ymagynyngly, bot als it wer with sensibyll fyer byrned. I was forsoth meruayld as þe
 byrnyng in my saule byrst vp, and of an vnwont solas, for¹ vncuthnes of slike² helefull
 habundance, oft tymes haue I gropyd my breste sekandly, whedyr þis birnyng wer of any
 5 bodely cause vtwardly. Bot when I {f. 1^{rb}} knew þat onely it was kyndyld of gostely caus
 inwardly, and þat þis brynnynge was nozt of fleschly lufe ne concupiscens, in þis I consaued it
 was þe gyft of my Maker. Glad þefore I am moltyn into þe desyre of grettar lufe, and namly for
 influence of þe moste swete likyng and³ gostely swetnes, þe⁴ whilk with þat gostly flaume
 pythely my mynde has comfortyd. Fyrste treuly or þis comfortabil heet and in all deuocion
 10 swettyst in me wer sched, playnly I troued slyke hete to no man happyn in þis exill. For {f. 1^{va}}
 treuly so it enflaumes þe saule als þe element of fyer þer wer byrnyng. Neuerþeles, als sum say,
 sum þer ere in Cristes lufe byrnyng, becaus þai se þame þis world despisyng, with besynes
 giffyn onely to Godes seruys. Bot als⁵ it wer if þi fynger wer putt in fyer it suld be cled wyth
 feleyng⁶ byrnyng, so þe saule with lufe (als before sayde) sett o-fyer treuly felys moste veray⁷
 15 hete, bot sumtyeme more and more intens, and sumtyeme les, after þe sufferyng of þe frelety of
 flesch.

¹ for] *bis Ya*

² slike] *such Ya*

³ and] *of Ya*

⁴ þat] *þe Ya*

⁵ als] *alle Am a.c.*

⁶ feleyng byrnyng] *feleynges brynyngis Am, ambigua lectio Co2, feruorem sensibilem o*

⁷ veray hete] *trans. Ya*

O who is þat⁸ in dedely body þat þis grete hete in his he degre, als þis liff may soffyr,
 continuly beyng may longe bere? Defaute treuly hym behoues for swetnes and gretenes of so he
 desyre⁹ and lufe vtwarde. And no meruayll þofe many¹⁰ of þis warld passynge full gredely wold
 20 kache and with full hote desyre zern itt, þat in þis honyly flaume, with woundyrfull gyfts of
 mynde, his saule he myzt zelde, and so sone to¹¹ be takyn and entyr þe companyes of þaim þat¹²
 synge loueynge to þer Creator withouten ende. Bot some þinges¹³ to charite contrary happyns,
 for fylthis of flesch crepys, tempynge restful myendys, bodely nede also, and mans freyl
 affeccione, impryntyd with angwys of þis wrechyd exile, þis hete sumtyme þa lese, and þe
 25 flaume, whilk vndyr fygyre I cald fyer¹⁴ becaus it brynnes and lightes, þai hynder and heuy. And
 treuly zitt þai take it nozt fully away, þat away may not be takyn, for it has vmbelappyd all my
 hart. Bot for¹⁵ slyke¹⁶ þinges, þis moste happy hete at sum tymes absent apperis agayne, and I,
 als wer greuously cald abydyng, **{f. 1^{vb}}** þinke myself desolate to tyme it com agayne whiles I
 haue not, als I was wount, þat felynge of gostely fyer, to þe whylk all partyes of body and saule
 30 gladly aplies, and in þe whilk þai knawe þameself sekyr. Moreouer and slepe gaynestandes me
 als an enmy, for no tyme me heuys to loos, bot þat in þe whilk constrenyd I zelde to slepeynge.¹⁷
 Wakynand¹⁸ treuly besy I am to warme my saule, als wer with calde þirled, þe whilk sattyld in

⁸ þat in] *trans. Ya*

⁹ desyre] yern it þat in this only flaume *add. Ya*

¹⁰ many] man *add. Ya*

¹¹ to] *om. Ya*

¹² þat] *om. Ya*

¹³ þinges] thyng *Ya*

¹⁴ fyer] fygyre *Ya*

¹⁵ for] *om. Ya*

¹⁶ slyke] þ *add. Co2 a.c.*

¹⁷ slepeynge] slepynges *Am, dormicioni ω*

¹⁸ wakynand] wakyng and *Ya*

deuocion I know wele sett o-fyer¹⁹ and with full grete desire lyft abown all erthely þinges. Treuly
 affluence of þis euerlastynge lufe to me cummes nozt in ydilnes, nor I myzt fele þe gostely hete
 35 whils I was wery bodely for trauayll, or treuly vnmanerly occupied with worldly myrthes, or
 elles withouten mesure gyfen to disputacion. Bot treuly I haue felt myself in slyke þinges wax
 cald, to tyme all þinges putt o-bak in whilk vtwardly I myzt be occupied, onely to be in þe sight
 of my Savezour I haue stryfyne and in full ynhirly byrnyng dwelt.

Qwharefore²⁰ þis²¹ boke I offyr to be sene nozt to philisophyrs, nor wyes men of þis
 40 world, ne to²² grete devyens lappyd in questions infenyte, bot vnto boystus and vntaght, more
 besy to con lufe God þen many þinges to²³ knawe. For treuly not desputyng, bot wyrkand it is
 kunde, and loffande. For treuly I trowe þies þinges here contenyd of þies questionaries in all
 science moste hy in connyng, bot in þe lufe of Criste moste lawe may nozt be vnderstandyd.
 Þerfore to þame I haue not written, bot if all þinges forgettyn and putt o-bak þat to þis world is
 45 longyng, **{f. 2^{ra}}** onely to þe desyres of oure Maker þa to lufe onely be gyfen. Fyrst treuly þat þai
 fle all erthely dignyte, þat þai hate all pryde of connyng and vaynglory, and at þe last þame
 confourmyng to hyst pouerte, þinkand and prayand, besily gyfen to Goddes luffe. Þus no
 meruayl to þam sall appere withinforthe þe fyer of vnwroth charite, dressand þer hartes to take
 þe hete with²⁴ whilk all dyrknes is consumed, and þai lift vp into byrnyng lufely and moste
 50 mery, þat temporall þinges²⁵ þai sall pas and hald þameself in þe seet of endeles rest. Þe more

¹⁹ o-fyer and] of yernand *Ya*

²⁰ qwharefore] o wherfore *Ya*

²¹ þis boke I offyr] I offir this boke *Ya*

²² to] *om.* *Ya*

²³ to] k *add.* *Co2 a.c.*

²⁴ with] the *add.* *Ya*

²⁵ þinges] thing *Ya*

conynge treuly þai be, þe more abyll to lufe be lawe þai ar, if þai of odyr despisyd be glad and þameself gladly despyes. And sen I here to lufe styrri all maner of folk, and besy I am of lufe to schew hattist desyre and abown kynde, *Byrnnynge*²⁶ of *Lufe* þis boke his name sall bere.

²⁶ byrnnynge] byrnyngis *Am a.c.*

Chapter 5

{4^{vb}} Qwharfore is¹ it more to take entent to lufe of God þen to konyng or disputacion.

Amonge al þinges² þat we wirk or þinke, to þe lufe of God be we more takand hede þen to connyng or disputacion. Lufe treuly delytes þe saule and conscience makes swete, drawand it fro lufe of lusty þinges here beneyth and fro desyre of mans awen excellence. Connyng withoute
 5 charite beldes not to endeles heel, bott bolnes to moste wreched vndoing. Strong þerfore be our saules in takyng |{5^{ra}} of harde labours for God, and be it wyes with heuenly sauour, nozt³ worldly. Desire it⁴ to be lyghtynd with wysdome endles and with þatt fyer to be enflaumed, with whilk som⁵ ar styrd onely oure Maker to luf and desyre, and myztely is made strange to despisyng of all transitory þinges.⁶ In þies þinges þat abyde nozt comitand þies þer moste
 10 solace, þat þai here haue⁷ no duellyng heuenly place nozt made with hand, withouten cessyng þai seke and cries, *Michi uiuere Christus est, et mori lucrum. Criste to me is lyfe, and grete wynnynge⁸ to dy* [Phil. 1.21].

Treuly forsothe he lufys God þat to no⁹ wicked likeyng consentis. In als mykyll certainly is man fer from Cristes lufe, als he hymself delytes in worldly¹⁰ þinge. Qwarfore if þou lufe God,
 15 þi werk þat scheuys, for he neuer is proued to lufe God, whils to wicked desyres he is made to consent. Therefore to all þat ar in þis exil þis dar I schewe, þat all þai þe Maker of all þinge þat

¹ is it] *trans. Am*

² þinges] thing *Ya*

³ nozt] with *add. Ya*

⁴ it] *om. Am*

⁵ som] son *Ya*

⁶ þinges] thing *Ya*

⁷ haue] haueand *Co2 a.c.*

⁸ wynnynge] wynnyngis *Am*

⁹ no] *om. Co2 a.c. in marg.*

¹⁰ worldly] þ *add. Co2 a.c.*

wil¹¹ not lufe into dyrknes endles þai sall be kest, and þer sall fele withouten ende byrnyng of
 þe fyer of hell, þat here with lufe of þer gaynbyar wald nozt be lyghtynd. Sondyrd¹² þai sall be
 fro þe company of syngars in charite of þer Maker, and besily þai sall sorow, fro myrth kest oute
 20 of synngand in Ihesu, wantynge þe clernes and þe ioy of þame þat sall be crounyd. For leuyr
 þame was a litill whyle in worldly softnes tary þen soffyr penance þat þer synnes myzt be
 clensed and þai kume¹³ full of pyte before þe defendar of all gode. In þe slippy way treuly and
 þe brode in þis vale of wepyng þai haue bene delityd, wher is no place of gladnes bot of labour.
 Wharefore withouten relese in tourmentes þai sall sorow, when pore to pes euerlastyng sal be
 25 borne and be made glade in þe **{5^{rb}}** delites of þe Godhede gifand lyfe, þe whilk with vertues
 wer arrayed, full treuly seand, and in gostely hete happily has florisched, þof all in worthy heght
 of þis world þai haue takyn no solace nor emang vnholsum wyemen þai haue not sawen pride,
 bot of wikkyd men þai haue born greues, and temptacyons þai haue exclude fro þe saule, þe
 trone of þe Trinite, þat in pes þai myzt be haldyn. And treuly þai haue wodid old vnthriftynes of
 30 venemus lyfe, clerly loueand and most gladly gostly beute, and plays of softnes, þe whilk zonge
 age¹⁴ acceptis and vnwyse worldly men desyrs, þai haue demyd worþi reprefe, þinkand with
 continuance charitefull sange into our Makar ascendyng.

For whilk þinge takars of lufly ioy, and heete consauand þat may not be consumyd, in
 songe þai ryn of clene companys and lufly armony, and in f[r]endely¹⁵ myrth heuenly þai haue in
 35 zett a schadow agayne all hete of lychery and fylth. Qwharfore in byrnyng of swetest lufe þai
 ar takyn vp to þe behaldyng of þer lemman, and be flaume happyest florischand þai ar in vertew

¹¹ wil] sall *Co2 a.c. in marg.*

¹² sondyrd] sonder *Ya*

¹³ kume] kunne *Am*

¹⁴ age] *Co2 in marg., Am sup.*

¹⁵ frendely] feendely *Co2*

and frely loues þer Maker, and þer mynde now gos into melody chaungyd¹⁶ þat lastys. And þe
 thoythis fro hens furth ar made songe, and þe haull of þe saule, heuynes kest oute, with
 wondyrfull musyk is fulfillyd, so þat prikkynge before playnly it has lost and hole in hee swetnes
 40 euermore it abydis, full meruellusly syngand in heuy[n]ly¹⁷ swete meditacion. Forþermore, when
 þai go fro þis hardnes and fro disesys þat here happyns, þen þe tyme comys þat þai sal be takyn
 and withouten doute to God be borne withouten sorow and¹⁸ emong seraphyn haue þer setys. For
 þai alltogydyr sett on fyer with fyer **{5^{va}}** of lufe moste heghe and within þer saules byrmand, so
 swetely and¹⁹ deuoutely þai ha louyd God, þat what some euer þai felt in þame self heet, it was
 45 gostly heuenly songe and Godly swetnes. Herefore treuly it is þat þai withouten heuynes dy,
 sothely with ioy passand, vnto so grete degre in endles worschip þai ar lyft and ar crounyd in
 behaldynge moste plenteuous of þer Makar,²⁰ syngand with clerist wheris, þe whilk also more
 byrnyngly desiris into þat Godhede þat reulys all þinge. And forsoth þof þai now clerely behald
 þe chere of treuthe and with likyngest swetness of þe Godhede be moistyd, 3it no meruayll after
 50 a litill whyle þai sall be made more meruellus. Qwhen bodis of sayntes þat in erth þis tyme ar
 haldyn fro þer grauys sall be rased, and þer saules with þame sall be knyttyd in þe last
 examinacion, þen forsoth sall þai take principalite emang pepyls and vnryghtwes þai sall deme²¹
 to be dampned. And þai sall schew þat menly goyde wer blyst to come to blistfulnes. Þe generall
 dome sothely þus done, into songe euerlastynge þai sall be borne and with Criste go vp þe heght
 55 of treuyth, þe fas of God vsand with lufe withouten end. Of þis it is scheuyd þat swetnes

¹⁶ chaungyd þat lastys] þat lastys chaungyd *Co2 a.c. Ya*

¹⁷ heuynly] heuyly *Am Co2*

¹⁸ and] *om. Ya*

¹⁹ and deuoutely] *om. Ya*

²⁰ Makar] makand *Ya*

²¹ deme] be demed *Ya*

euerlastyng mostis þer myndes, þe whilk vnabilly to be lousyd þe bynde²² of trew charite byndis.

Qwarfor rather latt vs seke þat lufe of Criste byrn vs within, þen we take hede to disputacion vnprofetabill. Qwhyls we treuly take hede to sekyng vnmanerly, þe swetnes of
 60 euerlastyng smellynge we fele nozt. Wharfore many now sauours in so mykyll in brynnynge of connyng and nozt of lufe, þat playnly what luf is, or of what sauour, þai knaw nozt, þof all þer laboure |{S^{vb}} of all þer stody þame aght to sprede vnto þis ende, þat þai myzt byrne in Goddes lufe. Alas, for schame! An olde wyfe of Goddes lufe is more expert and les of²³ worldly likyng
 þen þe grete devin whos stody is vayne. For why, for vanite he studys, þat he glorius may apere
 65 and so be knawen, þat rentes and dignites he mo gett, þe whilk a foyle and not wis²⁴ is worþi to be halden.

²² bynde] bonde *Am*

²³ of] w *add. Co2 a.c.*

²⁴ wis] wisis *Am a.c.*

Chapter II

{9^{vb}} Þat lufars of God with hym sall deem, and of lufe of konyng be labour gettyn and of God, and þat a trew lufar nowder with fastynge nor abstinence or counsel and presumption erris not nor is begillyd.

Mans saule, of God¹ onely takar, anyþinge les þen God may not fulfyll. Wharfore erthly lufars
 5 neuer ar fulfillyd. **{10^{ra}}** Rest þerfore of Cristes² lufars is, qwhils þer hartes in lufe of³ God be desire and þoght is festynde, and lufand and byrnand and syngand it behaldes. Swetest forsoth is þe rest, whilk þe spirit takys qwilst swete sownd godly cums doun, in whilk it is delityd, and in moste swete songe and playfull⁴ rauschyd is þe mynde to synge likenges of lufe euerlastynge. Now forsoth in mouth sowndis agayne þe loueynge of God and of þe blist Maydin, in qwhome
 10 more þen may be trowed it is ioyd, and þis no meruail happis, whilst þe hart of þe singlar groundly with heuenly fyer is byrnde, and into his lyknes is figurde in þe whilk all swete songe is and mery, in sauour heuenly moystand⁵ ovr affeccion.

And wherfore with inward delitys he folowes, and in songe and þoght he ioyes in byrnyng of lufe. Þis treuly to all dedely is vntrowabyll, and he þat has þis not trowes not þat
 15 anyþinge so swete and full of swetnes a man to take 3it beand in body, þat will rote and with þe fetyr of dedlynes is greuyd. Þe havar also meruails, bot for þe gudenes of God vnabyll to be tald he is gladynd, þat plentevosly gyfis his gude and not vmbraydes of whome he takes all þat he felis. Forsoth when he þat grete þing (and treuly it is cald grete, for varely to dedely nehand it is

¹ God] gude *Am Co2*, Dei *ω*

² Cristes] Criste *codd.*, Christi *ω*

³ of] *om. Ya*

⁴ playfull] playnly *Ya*

⁵ moystand] most and *Ya*

vknawen) if it want neuer he trouys in prosperite to be. Alway in lufe he longis, whilst þat he
 20 wakis besily oudyr he synges or of lufe he þinkes and of his lufer, bot and he be allone, more
 swetely he synges. Truly for þe tyme þat any man þis haf takyn, aftirward fully sall neuer go fro
 itt, bot euermore sall byde heet, swetenes or⁶ singinge, **{I0^{rb}}** if all þis be noght nere.

Treuly al þis bidys to-gidyr, bot if þai be repressyd with full grete sekenes of þe hede or
 of þe breste or of þe syde, or with grete hongyr or þirst, with þe whilk þe flesch is brokyn, or
 25 with to mykill cold or hete or with trauayl þai be⁷ lettyd. Hym þefore it behoues þat in Godes
 lufe will synge, and syngandly lufe and byrne, in wildernes to be and into mykill abstinence not
 to lyfe, nor to be gifyn on any wyse to superfluite or waste. Neuerþeles bettyr it wer to hym in
 lityll þinge vknawynge mesure to passe, whils he with gude ententt dose it to sustene kynde,
 þen if he for to mikyll fastynge began to fayll, and for febilnes of body he myght not synge. Bot
 30 withoute doute⁸ he þat to þis is chosyn with falshede of þe fende noudyr in ettynge nor in
 absteneynge is ouercomen. Þe trew treuly lufer of Criste, and of Criste taght, with no les stody is
 war of to mikyll þen of to lityll. Withoutyn comparison treuly more mede sall he be worthy with
 songfull ioy prayand, behaldand, redeand, and þinkand, well bot discretely etand, þen if he
 withouten þis euermore suld fast, brede allone or herbys if he suld ete, and besily suld pray and
 35 rede.

Ettyn I haue and dronkyn of þis þat semed best, not for I lufed likynges,⁹ bot for kynde in
 Godes seruys suld be sustenyd and in loueynge of Ihesu Criste, conformand me to þame with
 whome I dwellyd in gude maner for Criste, and þat I suld nott fene holynes wher none es, nor þat

⁶ or] and *Ya*

⁷ be lettyd] bettid *Ya*

⁸ doute] *om. Am a.c.*

⁹ likyng] *codd., delicias ω*

men suld not me prays to mykil wher I wer full litill to prays. Fro dyuers also I haue gone, not
 40 for þai fed me comonly or on hard maner, bot for we haue not acordet in maners, or $\{10^{va}\}$ for
 som oþer cause resonabyll.¹⁰ Neuerþeles I dar say with blissyd Iob, *Folis haue despisyd me,*
and¹¹ when I had gone from þame, þai haue bak-bittyn me [Job 19.18]. Neuerþeles aschamyd sall
 þai be when þa se me, þat haue sayd þat I wald not abyde bot wher I myght be delicately fed.
 Better treuly it is to se þat I despise þen to desire þat I sall not se.

45 Fastinge no meruayll is full gude desires of fleschly lust¹² forto kest downe and wylde
 lychery of mynde forto make taame. In hym treuly þat goos into þe heght of contemplacion be
 songe and byrnyng of lufe, liggis als wre slekkyd fleschly desyres. Dede treuly of yll affeccion
 to hyme longis þat to contemplacion takes hede, whos saule also within into¹³ anoþer ioy and
 anoþer forme now is turnyd. He lyvis now not hymself: Crist treuly in him lyvis [cf. Gal. 2.20].
 50 Wharfore in his lufe he meltis, in hymself he longis, and nerhand he faylis for swetnes, vnneth he
 is for lufe. His saule it is þat sayes, *Nunciate dilecto, quia amore languo* [Cant. 5.8], þat is to
 say, *Schew to my lemman þat I for lufe longe*. To dy I desire, to be loused I couet, to go ful
 gretely I ʒerne. Behald, for luf I dy! Lorde, cum downe! Cum, my lemman, lyft me from
 heuynes. Behald, I lufe, I synge, I am ful hote, within myself I¹⁴ byrne. Haue mercy on me,
 55 wrech, bidding me before þe to be broght.

He þat þis ioy has and in þis lyfe þus is gladdynd; of þe Holy Goste he is inspiryd; he
 may not erre; whateuer he do, leefful it¹⁵ is; no man dedely so gude counsayle to hym may gyfe,

¹⁰ resonabyll] *bis Co2*

¹¹ and] *om. Ya*

¹² lust] *lustes Ya*

¹³ into] *in Ya*

¹⁴ I] *bis Co2*

¹⁵ it is] *trans. Ya*

als þat is þat he in hymself has of God¹⁶ vndedly. Odyr treuly,¹⁷ if þa¹⁸ to hym wald gif counsale,
 {10^{vb}} withouten doute þai sall erre, for þa ha not knawen hym. He truly sall nott erre, and if he
 60 wald to þer skyllyis gif assent of gude, he sal not be suffyrd be God,¹⁹ þat to hys will constrenys
 hym, þat it²⁰ he pass not. Wharfore of slike is sayde, *Spiritualis omnia iudicat, et a nemine
 iudicatur* [I Cor. 2.15], þat is to say, *Pe gostely man all þing demys, and of no man he is demyd.*
 Bot no²¹ man of so greete presumpcion be þat he hymself suppois sliken to be, þof all þe warld
 parfityly he haue²² forsakin, and þof he haue led solitary lyfe vnabilly²³ to be repreued, and þofe
 65 he haue gone into behaldyng of heuenly þinges.

 Þis grace treuly to all contemplatife is not grantyd, bott seldome and to moste few, þe
 whilk hy rest of body takand and of mynde, to þe wark²⁴ of God be strenght of lufe onely are
 chosyn. Full hard it is sothely slike a man to fynde, and for þai ar fewe, full dere þai ar had,
 desirabyll, and louyd before God and man, bot aungels also ioys in þer passinge²⁵ fro þis warld,
 70 to whome becumes aungellis cumpany. Many forsoth þer ar þat²⁶ oft in gret deuocion and
 swetnes to God þer prayers offyr, and swetnes of contemplacion prayand and þinkand þai may
 fele, þe whilk also rins not about bot bidys in rest.

¹⁶ God] gude *codd.*, Deo *ω*

¹⁷ treuly if] *om. Ya*

¹⁸ þa] that *Ya*

¹⁹ be God] *om. codd.*, a Deo *ω*

²⁰ it he] *trans. Ya*

²¹ no] *om. Ya*

²² haue] *om. Ya*

²³ vnabilly] vnable *Ya*

²⁴ wark] warkis *Am*, opus *ω*

²⁵ passinge] passynges *Am*

²⁶ þat oft] þat of *Am Co2*, *om. Ya*, qui sepe *ω*

Chapter 13

{II^{va}} þat¹ lyfe solitary or hermetis comon lyfe and mengyd passys, and how it comys to fyre of lufe, and of swetnes of songe.

Swm has bene, and zit paraunter on lyue ar, þat comon lyff alway² settis before solitary lyffe, sayand vs³ aw to gedyrryng to rynne, if we to he perfeccion desyre to cum. Agayns qwhome it is not mikill to despute, because þat lyfe only þa bere vp with loueynge, þe whilk ouder þa couet to kepe or at þe lest full lityll þa knew. Solitary lyffe treuly þefore þai prays not,⁴ for þai know it not. A lyffe treuly þer is þe whilk no man in flesch lyfand may know, bot he to whome of God it is gifyn to haue, and no man sothely of þis þinge treuly demys, of þe whilk zit he is vnsikyr, what and on what maner it wyrkis. Withouten doute I wote, if þa it knew, more þen oþer þai suld
10 it prays.

Odyr wars erre, þat solitary lyffe to repreue and sclaunder⁵ |{II^{vb}} cessys⁶ not, sayand, *Ve soli* [Eccles. 4.10], þat is to say, *Wo be to⁷ man allone*, not expownyng þat “allone” “withoute Gode,” bot “withoute a fela.” He treuly is allone, with whome God is not, for when he fallys into dede, belyue to turmentry he is takyn and fro þe ioyfull syght of God and of his sayntes he is
15 spard. Forsoth⁸ he þat for God solitary lyffe chesys and it ledys in gude maner, not wo bot fayr vertu is nere, and mynde of Ihesu name besily sall delyte, and þe more þat lyfe withoute mans⁹

¹ þat—songe] *om. Ya*

² alway settis] *trans. Ya*

³ vs aw] vs not aw *codd.*, nos debere *o*

⁴ not] *om. Ya*

⁵ sclaunder] *shamed Ya*

⁶ cessys] *sessed Ya*

⁷ to] *a add. Ya*

⁸ forsoth] *for Ya*

⁹ mans] *man is Ya*

solace to take þa drede not, þe more sall be gyfyn with Godes¹⁰ comforthinge to be glad. Gostly visitacion forsoth oft tymys þa take, þe whilk in cumpany set playnly knawes not.

Wharfore to a lykand saule it is said, *Ducam*¹¹ *eam in solitudinem*,¹² *et ibi loquar*¹³ *ad cor*
 20 *eius* [Hosea 2.14], þat is to say, *I sall it lede to wyldernes, and þer sall I speke vnto*¹⁴ *his hartt.*
 Sum treuly be¹⁵ Gode ar taght for Criste wildyrnes to desire, a singuler purpos to hald, þe whilk
 soyne þat þa more frely and more deuoutly to God may saryf, comon clethinge of þe warld
 forsakyn, all transitorii þinges þai despise and kestis away, and temporall in heght of mynde þa
 go abowne, euerlastynge ioy onely þai desyre, to deuocion and contemplacion only þai ar gifyn,
 25 and to lufe Criste all þe stody of þer lyfe þai cesse not to occupi. Of whome full many, þof all
 emonges men full¹⁶ fare þa dwell, 3it fro heuenly desyrs þai stumbyll not, for þer myndis fro
 wickyd conuersacion ar full far.

Rightwes hermytes also singuler purpos haue, in¹⁷ charite of God and of þer neghburgh
 þai lyfe, warldly praysynge¹⁸ þai despis, als mykill as þai may **{12^{ra}}** mans sight þai flee, ylk
 30 man more worthy þen þameself þai hald, to deuocion contynuly þer myndes þa gyff, ydelnes þai
 hate, fleschly lustis manly þai gaynstand, heuenly þai sauour and byrnyngly sekys, erthly þai
 couet not bot forsakes, in swetnes of prayer þai er delityd. Treuly som of þam swetnes of endles
 refreschyng felys, and treuly,¹⁹ chaste in²⁰ hart and body, with þe vnfilyd ee of mynde heuenly

¹⁰ Godes comforthinge] gode comforth *Ya*

¹¹ ducam] perducam *Ya*

¹² solitudinem] desertum *Ya*

¹³ loquar—eius] cordi eius loquar *Ya*

¹⁴ vnto] to *Ya*

¹⁵ be] er *Ya*

¹⁶ full—dwell] thai dwell ful faire *Ya*

¹⁷ in] *om. Ya*

¹⁸ praysynge] praysynges *Am*

¹⁹ treuly] *om. Ya*

²⁰ in hart] hart *codd.*, corde *o*

citesens and God þai behald, for by²¹ þe bitter drynke of penance grete labour²² þa haue bowyd,
 35 now with lufe of he contemplacione sett on²³ fyer, onely to God to take hede and Cristes
 kyngedome to byd þa were worthi.

Hermetes lyffe þerfore is grett, if it gretely be done. And treuly blissyd Maglorius, þe
 whilk was full of miraclys and fro his childhod with sight of aungels glade, qwhene after þe
 profecy of his fourme-fadyr, Saynte Sampson, was made archebyschop and Goddes kyrk
 40 worthely longe has gouyrnd, warnyd be an awngell hym visitynge, hys archbeschoprik left,
 hermyts lyfe he chas, and in þe ende of his lyfe his passynge to hym betokinge was. Also Sant
 Cuthbertt fro hys byschopryk to²⁴ ankyr life he went. Slike men þerfore, if þai for more mede to
 haue þus haue done, who of gude mynde will be hardy any state in holy kyrk solitary lyfe to sett
 before? In þis treuly with none vtward þinges²⁵ þamself þai occupy, bot onely to heuenly
 45 contemplacion þai take hede, and þat in Cristes lufe besily þai be warme and worldly besynes
 perfutely sett behynd. Qwharfor within þamself heuenly noyes soundes and full swete melody
 makis mery þe **{12^{rb}}** solitary man, for þe whilk emonge many seet clateringe distractes and bot
 seldome sofyrs to þink or pray.

Of whilk solitary þe²⁶ psalme²⁷ in songe of lufe spekes, sayand, *I sall go into þe place of*
 50 *þe meruellus tabernakyll, into þe hous of God* [Ps 41.5], and þe maner of going in songe and
 songely loueynge he descryues, sayand, *In*²⁸ *uoce exultacionis et confessionis* [Ps. 41.5],²⁹ þat is

²¹ by] *om. codd.*, per *o*

²² labour] labours *Am*

²³ on] *o codd.*

²⁴ to] *an add. Ya*

²⁵ þinges] thing *Ya*

²⁶ þe] *om. Ya*

²⁷ psalme] Psalmista *o*

²⁸ in] *i Am a.c.*

²⁹ confessionis] sonus epulantis *add. o*

to say, *In voys of gladnes and of schriftt*. And þat onelynes is nedfull withouten noys and bodily songe to þat, þat mane þat sowndly ioy may take and hald, ioyand and syngand, in anoþer place opinly he scheuys: *Elongaui*,³⁰ *inquit, fugiens, et mansi in solitudine* [Ps. 54.8], þat is to say,

55 *Fleand myself I haue withdrawen, and in wildyrnes I haue dwelt.*

In þis lyfe treuly he is besy to byrn in fyre of þe Holy Goste and in ioy of lufe takyn and be Gode comfortid to be glad. Treuly þe onely³¹ perfite man in Godes lufe hugisly³² byrns, and qwhils abown hymself in³³ passynge of mynde be contemplacion he is takyn, vnto þe swete sownd and heuenly noys ioyand he is lyft. And slike one forsothe to³⁴ seraphin is likind, byrnand
60 forsoth³⁵ within hymself in charite withoute comparison and most stedfast, qwhos hart is figurd to godly fyre, byrnand and lyghtand ful byrnandly into his lufe is borne. And forsoth he sall be takyn sodanly aftyr þis lyfe to þe he setis of heuenly citesens, þat in place of Lucifere full briztly may be, for so grete byrnnand in lufe, more þen may be scheuyd, only ioy of his Makar has soght, and mekely goand abowe synnars hymself not rasyd.

³⁰ elongaui—solitudine] fugiens me ipsum subtraxi et in deserto habitauit *Ya*

³¹ onely perfite man] perfectus ... solitarius *o*

³² hugisly] hugely *Ya*, uehementer *o*

³³ in] his *add. Ya*

³⁴ to] þe *add. Ya*

³⁵ forsoth] forsoith *Co2*

Chapter 14

{12^{va}} Of¹ praysynge of solitari lyfe and of fyrst lufars þerof, and þat Godes lufe in heet, songe, and swetnes standes, and þat reste is nedefull, and² slike fro iapis ar savyd and in prelaci ar not sett.

- 5 Sant Iob, emonge turmentry taght of Holy Goste, comendacion of many maner³ of harmetes knyttis in one sayand, *Quis*⁴ *dimisit onagrum liberum* [Job 39.5–6], etc., þat is to say, *Qwho left þe wylde asse free and hyr bandys lousyd*, etc. Fyrst þerfore he comendes of þe frenes of grace, when he says, *Who leet þe wild ass lows*. Þe secund, of puttyng away fleschly desyrs, when he sayes, *And his bandes lousyd*. Þe þird, of solitary conuersacion, qwhen he putt to: *To hir he gaf a*
 10 *hous in wildyrnes*. Þe fowrt, of desyr of endeles blystnes, when he sayes, *And his tabernakyll in lande of saltnes*. Salt treuly þirst slekis not bot encressis. And so þis, þe more þat anyþinge of sweetness of lyfe euerlastyng þa haue now takyun, þe more to haue and taste more þa desyre. Forsoth Iohan⁵ Baptist, prince of hermytes after Criste, in no desyre tariand solitary lyfe chasse,⁶ and odyr also has chosynne, like a bresse, þe whilk Salomon⁷ sayinge, *Ledar and comawnder he*
 15 *has not, and be cumpanys he gos furth of giftys and vertew* [cf. Prov. 30.27]. Bandis treuly þer ar of kynde and synne, þe whylk in þame our Lorde has lowsyd, and bandys of charite has

¹ of—sett] *om. Ya*

² and slike] *bis Am*

³ maner] *maners Ya*

⁴ quis—lousyd etc.] *om. Ya*

⁵ Iohan] *þe add. Ya*

⁶ chasse] *chase Am p.c. Ya*

⁷ Salomon] *Salmon on Ya*

confermyd. Þe hous also of wildyrnes may be⁸ sayd rest of a synnar, for holy {I2^{vb}} hermyts fro
 worldly stryues and synnys ar sondyrd swetnes of clere conscience Criste itt gyfand þa take, and
 ioy of lufe euerlastyng syngand in meriest heet refreschyd þai rest, and þof all with scharp and
 20 fraward in body þai be prykkyd, neuerþeles songe and byrnyng in saule þai hald without
 birsyng.

Anoþer il wildernes þer is, of pryde, when any man awdyr hymself⁹ before all oþer
 prefers, or þat he has to myght of his fre will ascris. Of whome is sayd, *Ve soli. Wo to allone: If*
he fale, he has no helpar vp [Eccles. 4.10]. In begynyng treuly of an harmetis turnyng – I say
 25 not of rynnars about, þat ar sclauderes¹⁰ of hermyts – with many and diuers temptacion¹¹ ar
 made wery, bot after þe tempest of yll menyng, God schedis in bryghtnes of holy desyrs, þat if
 þa manly þamself vse in wepyng,¹² þinkyng, and prayng, Cristis lufe onely sekand, after a
 litill whyle to þamself more sall þai be sene to lyue in likyn þen in wepeyng¹³ or straytnes of
 labour. Haue treuly þai sall qwhome þai loueyd,¹⁴ whome þai soght, whome þai desyrde, and þen
 30 þai sall ioy and not be heuy. Qwhat is it treuly to ioy, bot goyd desiryd to haue, of it to þink, in it
 to rest? Swete no meruayl is þat myrth wher trew lufers acorde, and mery solas of lufely
 touchyng is vnabyll to be tolde. Truly it is desyre of brynd lufars, and sight ayder of odyr and
 spech to þame is swete abowe hony and hony-kombe.

⁸ be sayd] *om. Ya*

⁹ -self] *om. Ya*

¹⁰ sclauderes] *sclauderers Ya*

¹¹ temptacion] *temptacions Ya*

¹² wepyng] *and add. Ya*

¹³ wepeyng] *wepyngis Am*

¹⁴ loueyd—whome] *om. Ya*

Jeremy treuly solitary lyfe commendand says, *Goyd it is to a man when fro hys zonge age*
 35 *he has borne þe zok of God. [13^{ra}] He sall sytt solitary and be in pes, for he (be desyre and*
behaldyng of þinges euerlastyng) hymself has raisyd abown hymself [Lam. 3.28]. Qwharof¹⁵ in
Scripture¹⁶ it is writyn, Natus non est in terra quasi Enoch, þat is to say, In erth als Enok is none
borne: forsoth fro þe earth¹⁷ he¹⁸ is takyn [Ecclus. 49.16]. For men contemplatyfe ar odyr hear,
 both in excellence of wark and hartlynes of lufe. Lufe forsoth in hart dwellis of þe solitary, if he
 40 of vayn lordschip no þinge seeke, here groundly he byrnis and to lyght longes,¹⁹ qwhils he þus
 clerely heuently sauys and honily²⁰ syngis withoute heuynes, als seraphin cryinge offerand to his
 nobil lufer, for lyke in lufely mynde.

Behald, loueand I byrne, gredily desireand. Þus with fyer vntrawd²¹ and þirland flawme is
 byrnyd þe saule of a lufer. All þinge²² it gladins and hevyntly sparkyls, nor ende I make happily
 45 desirand, bot allway goand to þat lufe. Dede vnto me is swete and sikyr. The holy solitari
 forsoth,²³ for he²⁴ for hys Sauyour in wildyrnes suffyrd to sytt, an excellent goldy seet in heuyns
 he sall take emange²⁵ ordyrs of aungels, and for he with foule clothes for lufe of his Lorde is
 cled, a kirtill to his helis euerlastyng and in clerenes of his Makar wrought he sall do on, and

¹⁵ qwharof—writyn] *om. Ya*

¹⁶ Scripture] *Ecclesiastico o*

¹⁷ earth] for *add. Am Co2*

¹⁸ he is] *his Ya*

¹⁹ longes] *long Ya*

²⁰ honily] *homely Ya*

²¹ vntrawd] *vtrawd Ya*

²² þinge] *thyngis Am*

²³ forsoth] *sothe Ya*

²⁴ he] *is add. Ya*

²⁵ emange] *emangys Am Ya*

schynyng²⁶ in face ful meruellus he sall take, for his flesch tamand his face pale and lene to
 50 haue he schamyd not. A mantill also moste fayre with precius stones in-wovyn for despisyd²⁷
 clothes emonge þe myghty of paradis he sall bere withouten **{13^{rb}}** end. And treuly for he, vyce
 vodinge and in iolite of þis lyfe not borionand, specis of synne playnly has out-caste, in
 bynyng²⁸ of lufe of God Allmyghty heuenly sounde moste swete in hymself he toke, and sound
 of syngars in charite full songes into his mynde swetely was worþely insched. Boldly þerfor
 55 withoutyn dreed from þis exyle he goys, aungels songe in his²⁹ eend herand and he þat
 byrnynglyest lovyd with ioy³⁰ goand³¹ in þe hall euerlastyng full worthely to most ioyfull degre
 sall be takyn, þat he may be with seraphin in a full heghe seett.

Als I forsoth in Scripture sekand myght fynd and knaw þe hy lufe of Criste sothely in thre
 þinges standis: in heet, in songe, in suetnes, and þies thre I am expert in mynde may not longe
 60 stand withoute grete rest, as if I wald standand and goand in mynde behald or lygandly, me þoght
 myself I wantyd full mikyll þerof, and as me semyd desolate. Wharfore strenyd be neyd, þat I in
 he deuocyon þat I myghte haue myght abyde, I chase to sytt. Caus of þis I know well, for if³² a
 man sumtyme stand or walk, his body waxis wery, and so þe saule is lett and in maner yrk for
 charge, and he is nott in hee rest and feloandly nor in perfytnes, for after þe Philosophir sittyng
 65 or restyng þe saule is made wys. Knaw he þerfore þat zitt more standyng þen sittyng in Godd
 is delityd, þat fro þe height of contemplacion he is full fare. Qwhen **{13^{va}}** he treuly in þis thre,

²⁶ schynyng] shyne *Ya*

²⁷ despisyd] dispisyng *Ya*

²⁸ bynyng] byndyng *Am p.c.*, birnyng *Ya*

²⁹ his] song *add. Ya a.c.*

³⁰ ioy] aun *codd.*, gaudium *o*

³¹ goand] grand *Am*

³² if] *om. codd.*, si *o*

þat ar tokyns of lufe moste perfyte, þe he perfeccion of Cristyn religyon withouten all doute is
 fun, and I now after þe litylnes of my capacite þo thre, Ihesu grauntyng, has takyn, neuerþeles
 to sayntes þat in þam has schinyd I dar not myself make evyn, for þa paraunter more parfityly
 70 þame has takyn, zit sall I be besy with vertew, þat I may more birnyngly to lufe, to synge more
 swetely, þe swetnes of lufe more plentuously to fele. Ze err, bredyr, if ze trowe none now so holy
 as prophetes or appostilles has bene.

Heet sothely I call qwhen mynde treuly is kyndyld in lufe euerlastyng and þe hart on þe
 same maner to bryn not hopingly³³ bot³⁴ verraly is felt. Þe hart treuly turnyd into³⁵ fyre gifys
 75 felyng of byrnnyng lufe. Songe I call when in a plenteus saull swetenes of euerlastyng lovyng
 with byrnnyng is takynn, and thoyth into songe is turnyd³⁶ and mynde into full swete sounde is
 chaungyd. Þis to³⁷ in ydilnes ar not gettyn, bot in he deuocion, of the whilk þe þird (þat is to say,
 swetnes vntrowyd) is nere. Heet treuly and songe in þe sawle causes a³⁸ meruellus swetnes, and
 also of full grete swetnes þai may be causyd. Þer is not treuly in þis plentevusnes any deseytt,
 80 bot raper of all dedis endly parfytene, als sum of lyfe contemplatyf vnkonyng be þe feend of þe
 mydday in a fals swetnes and fenyd ar desauyd, for þa trow þamself full hee when þai ar law.
 Bot þe saule in þe whilk þe forsayd thre þinges togidyr ryne³⁹ | {13^{vb}} playnly bidys vnhabill to

³³ hopingly] openly *Ya*

³⁴ bot] bo *Ya a.c.*

³⁵ into] in *Ya*

³⁶ is turnyd] inturned *Am Co2, conuertitur o*

³⁷ to in] *trans. Ya*

³⁸ a—causyd] *om. Ya*

³⁹ ryne] pl *add. Co2*

be þirlyd with arowys of our enmy, besily to þe⁴⁰ louer whills it is þinkand with mynd⁴¹
vnsmytyn to heuyns þe self itt raises and stirris to lufe.

85 And meruail 3e nott if to þe saull ordand in loue melody be send, and þof it take
continuly comfurthabill songe of þe lemman. It lifys treuly heuynly cled, als it wer not vndyr
vanite, 3a, so þat it byrnys withouten end into heet vnmade and neuer fallis. When also it
vncese yng and byrnyn gly lufys, þat (as before it is sayd) in þe self it felis happiest heet, and it
knawes þe self sotelly byrnyd with fyre of lufe endles, feland his moste belouyd in swetnes
90 desyrd into songe of io y meditacion is turnyd, and kynde enuwid in heuynly myrth⁴² is
vnbelappyd. Qwharfore þe Maker to it has grauntyd, whome with all hart it has desiryd
without⁴³ drede and hevines to pas fro þe body abill to royt, þat withoute heuynes of dede þe
ward it may forsake, þe whilk frende of light and enmy⁴⁴ of dyrknes no þing bot lyfe has louyd.
Þis maner of men forsoth, þat so hee to lufe ar takyne, nowdyr to⁴⁵ office nor prelacy
95 withoutforth aw to be chosynn, nor to any seculer herand to be callyd.

Treuly þai are lyke þe stone þat is callyd topazius, þe whilk seldum is fun and þerfore
more precius and full dere it is had, in⁴⁶ whilk too colors ar: one is moste pure als gold and þe
toþer clere als hevyn when it is bright, and all clernes of all stonys it ouercomys, and no þinge

⁴⁰ þe] be *Ya*

⁴¹ mynd] my *codd.*, intencione *o*

⁴² myrth] mrth *Co2*

⁴³ withoute—pas] withoute drede to pas hevines *codd.*, transire sine timore et tristicia *o*

⁴⁴ enmy] envy *Ya*

⁴⁵ to] of *Ya*

⁴⁶ in] þe *add. Ya*

fayrer⁴⁷ is to behald. If any treuly it wald polysch, it is made derk,⁴⁸ and treuly⁴⁹ |{I4^{ra}} if it be þe
 100 self be left, his clerenes is withhaldyn. So holy contemplatyffe, of whome before we spake,
 seldomest ar and þerfore moste dere. To gold þai ar lyke for passynge hete of charite, and to
 heuyn for clernes of heuenly conuersacion, þe whilk passys all saynts lyuys, and þerfore clarar
 and bryghtar emonge precius stonys (þat is to say, chosynn), for þis lyfe only louand and hauand,
 clarar þa er þen all odyr men þat ar or ellis⁵⁰ has bene. Who treuly slike will polysch (þat is to
 105 say, with dignite⁵¹ worschip), þe heet of þame þai ar besy to lessynn, þer fayrnes and þer clernes
 in maner to make dyme. If þa treuly worschip of principalite gett, forsothe fowlar and of les
 mede þa sall be made. To þer stodys þerfore to take hede þai sall be left, þat þere clerenes
 may encres.

⁴⁷ fayrer is] *trans. Ya*

⁴⁸ made derk] made *codd.*, *obscuratur o*

⁴⁹ and treuly] *bis Co2*

⁵⁰ ellis] *sal be or add. Ya*

⁵¹ dignite] *and add. Ya*

Chapter 15

{14^{ra}} How¹ and in qwhat tyme it is comyn to solitary lyfe and songe of lowe, and of chawngynge of placis.

Qwhen² I suld florisch vnhappily and zouth of wakir age was now cumen, grace of my Makar was nere, þe whilk luste of temporall shape restrenyd and vnto vnbodily³ halsynge to be desird
 5 has turnyd, and þe saule fro law thinges lyftand to heuyns is borne, þat treuly more in desyre I schuld byrne to myrth of euerlastynge þen euer before in any fleschly cumpany or ellys wardly softnes I was gladdynde.

þe proces treuly if I will schew, solitary lyfe behouys me prech. þe spiryt forsoth þis to haue and to lufe my mynde has sett on fyre, þe whilk hensforth for þe maner |{14^{rb}} of my
 10 sekenes I haue charged⁴ to lede. Neuerþeles I duellyd emange þam þat in world has floryschyd, and of þam food I haue takyn, flaterynge also, þat oft sythes worthy feghtars fro he to law myght drawe, I haue harde. Bot þis for one oute-castande, my saule is takyn to lufe of my Makar, and desirand with swetnes endlesly to be delityd my saull I gaf, þat in deuocion it suld lufe
 15 Criste, þe whilk forsoth of þe lemman it has takynne, þat now to itt onlines swettist aperis and all solas in whilk mans errour encreassis for noght itt⁵ countes. Wont I was forsoth rest to seke, þof all I wentt fro place to place. Cellis forsoth to leue for cause resonable to harmetis is not ill and eft (if it accorde) to þe same to turn agayn. Some treuly of holy fadyrs þus ha done, þof all þa

¹ how—places] *om. Ya*

² qwhen] when *Am* : O when *Ya*

³ vnbodily] bodilie *Ya*

⁴ charged] changed *Ya* : curauī *ω*

⁵ itt] *om. Ya*

suffyrd þerfor mans grochyng, neuerþeless not of goyd. Yll treuly yll spekis, and þat also þa
 suld do if ryght þer þa had abyd, for to þame custum it is. Of a prevay, þe coueringe put by, bot
 20 stynk no þing⁶ fleys out, and yll spekand of hartes plente spekys, in whome lurkes venum of
 neddyrs. Þis haue I knawen, þat þe more men ha fonnyd⁷ with wordys of bakbyttynges agayns
 me, so mykill þe more in gostely profett I haue grown. Forsoth þame most bakbitars I haue had,
 whilk faithfull frendis I trust before. 3itt cessayd I not fro þo þinges þat to my saull was
 prophetabyll for wordis of þame, treuly stody I more vsyd, and euer God fand I fauorabyll. I cald
 25 to mynde þat is writtyn, *Maledicent illi, et tu benedices* [Ps. 108.28], þat is to say, *Þai sall*
curs hym, and þou sall blys, and be proces of tyme to me is gyfyn grete profett of gostely ioyes.⁸

Fro⁹ þe begynnyng forsoth of my lyfe chaungyng and of my mynde, to þe opinyng of
 þe heuenly dore, þat þe fase scheuyd þe e¹⁰ of hert heuenly þinges myght¹¹ behald, and se what
 way my lufe it myght seeke and to hym besily desyre, thre 3ere ar ryn except thre monethes or
 30 four. Þe dore forsoth 3itt byding opyn vnto þe tyme in whilk in¹² hart werely was felt heet of lufe
 euerlastyng, a 3ere nerehand is passyd.

I satte forsoth in a chappell, and qwhilst with swetnes of prayer or meditacion mikyll I
 was delityd, sodanly in me I felt a mery heet and vnknawen, bot when fyrst I wondred,¹³
 dwtand off whome it suld be, be longe tyme I am expert not of creature bot of my Makar it was,

⁶ no þing] *bis Ya*

⁷ fonnyd] foundyd *Am*

⁸ ioyes] noyes *Am*

⁹ fro] for *Ya*

¹⁰ e] *om. codd., oculus o*

¹¹ myght behald] *trans. Ya*

¹² in] *om. Ya*

¹³ wondred] *sic. Am p.c., won Am a.c. Co2 Ya, fluctuarem o*

35 for more hote and gladdar I fonde itt. Pat heet treuly sensibily swete smellynge vnhopingly I was
 besy vnto þe inscheddyng and takynge of heuenly sounde or gostly, þe whilk to songe longis of
 louynge euerlastyng and swetnes of melody vnsene, for knawen or harde may itt not be bot of
 hym þat it takys, whome behouys clene to be and fro þe erth departed, half a zere, thre monethis
 and sum wekys ar outryn¹⁴

40 Whils treuly in þe same chappell I satt, and in þe nyzt before sopar als I myght psalmes¹⁵
 I songe, als wer þe noyes of redars¹⁶ or rather singars abowen me I beheld. Qwhilst also prayand
 to heuyns with all desire I toke hede, on what maner I wote not, sodanly in me **{14^{vb}}** noys of
 songe I felt and likyngest melody heuynly I toke with me dwellyng in mynde.¹⁷ Forsoth my
 thoyth¹⁸ continuly to myrth of songe was chaungyd and als were loueynge I had þinkand, and in
 45 prayers and saluys¹⁹ sayand þe same sounde I²⁰ scheuyd, and so²¹ forth to synge þat before I sayd
 for plente of inward swetnes I bryst oute, forsoth priuely, for allonly befor my Makar I was not
 knawen of þame þat me saw, als in awnty²² if þa had knawen abowne mesure þai wald haue
 worschippyd me, and so part of þe floure fayrist I suld ha lost and into forsakynge I suld ha
 fallyn. Emonge meruayll has kachid me, in þat þat I was takyn to so grete myrth whilk²³ I was
 50 exill, and for God to me gafe gyftis þat I couth nott nor I²⁴ trowed any slyke þinge any man, not

¹⁴ outryn] our-ryn *cod.*, effluxerunt *o*

¹⁵ saluys] *sic. Am a.c. Co2 Ya*, psalmes *Am p.c.*, psalmos *o*

¹⁶ redars] *sic. cod.*, psallencium *o*

¹⁷ mynde] me *Ya*

¹⁸ thoyth] toyth *Am a.c. Co2 Ya*, toyn *Am p.c.*, cogitacio *o*

¹⁹ saluys sayand] *sic. codd.*, psalmodia *o*

²⁰ I scheuyd] *trans. Ya*

²¹ so forth] forsothe *Ya*

²² awnty] a wynter *Ya*

²³ whilk] whis *Ya*

²⁴ I] *om. Ya*

holiest, in þis life ha takyn. Þerfor I trowe þis to non medfully gyfyn, bot frely to whome Criste wyll. Neuerþeles I trowe no man þat takis bot if he specially þe name of Ihesu lufe and in so mikyll he worschip, þat neuer fro his mynde except in slepe he lat itt pas. To whome is gifyn þat to do, als I trow, þat þat²⁵ same he may fulfill.

55 Qwharfore fro þe begynnyng of my chaungyd saule vnto þe he degre²⁶ of Cristes lufe, þe whilk God grauntyng I myght atene, in whilk degre with ioyfull songe Godes loueyng I myzt synge, fowre zere and aboute iii monethes I had. Here forsoth with first degres to þis disposinge bydis to a trew ende. After þe dede also it sall be more parfyte, for here ioy of lufe er byrnyng of charite is begun, **{I5^{ra}}** and in þe heuenly kyngdome endyng most glorius it sall
60 take, and forsoth in þis lyf in þis degres sett not litil profettis, but into anodyr degree itt ascendes not, treuly als itt were in gras confermyd, als a dedely man may, he restis. Qwharfor gras to God, louynges²⁷ to hym withoutyn cesyng²⁸ desire I to gyff, þe whilk both²⁹ in dises, heuynes and persecucion gyfis me solas, and emonge prosperites and flateringes with sikyrnes makis me abyde a crowen endles.

65 Perfore to Ihesu ioyand besily louynges³⁰ I zeld, þe whilk me leest and wrech has woched safe with swete ministirs to munge, þe whilk songes³¹ of melody of þe spirit bot hewynly spryngis. Thankynges³² besily with ioy I sall do, for me like he has made to clerely syngars be

²⁵ þat] *om.* *Ya*

²⁶ degre] *desyre Am*

²⁷ louynges] *louyng Ya, laudes ω*

²⁸ cesyng] *cesyngis Am*

²⁹ both] *om.* *Ya*

³⁰ louynges] *louyng Ya, laudes ω*

³¹ songes] *song Ya : modulus ω*

³² thankynges] *thankyng Am Ya : gracias ω*

clerenes of consciens in saule byrnand in lufe endles. Whilst it loues and bolnes in byrnynge, þe mynde chaungyd sittand, with hete warmand, with desire gretly spread, and trew lufly bewte of
 70 vertew it spryngis³³ withoute strife or vyce in þe sight of our Maker, þus songe þe self in-berand with mery songe gladdys þe longar and labors refreschys. Many ar þe meruellus giftys and grett, bot non ar slike emonge þe gyftis of þis way, þe whilk full derely confermys in figure of schaplynes of lyfe vnsene in loueand saule, or þe whilk comforthys so swetely þe sittar and comforthyd þa rauysch to þe heght of contemplacion or acorde of aungels loueynge.

75 Behald, bredyr, to zou I haue talde to³⁴ byrnynge of lufe how I com,³⁵ not **{15^{rb}}** þat ze suld prayns me, bot þat ze my God suld glorify, of whome I toke ilke gude dede þat I had, and þat ze þinkand all þinge vndyr sone³⁶ vanyte, to felow, not to bakbyt, may be stiryd.

³³ spryngis] spryng *Ya*

³⁴ to byrnynge] *bis Ya*

³⁵ com] *con Ya*

³⁶ sone] *om. codd., sole ω*