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0521841828 - Latin Sermon Collections from Later Medieval England: Orthodox Preaching in the Age of Wyclif

Siegfried Wenzel

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## Latin Sermon Collections from Later Medieval England

Until the Reformation, almost all sermons were written down in Latin. This is the first scholarly study systematically to describe and analyze the collections of Latin sermons from the golden age of medieval preaching in England, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Basing his studies on the extant manuscripts, Siegfried Wenzel analyzes these sermons and the occasions when they were given. Larger issues of preaching in the later Middle Ages, such as the pastoral concern about preaching, originality in sermon making, and the attitudes of orthodox preachers to Lollardy, receive detailed attention. The surviving sermons and their collections are listed for the first time in full inventories, which supplement the critical and contextual material Wenzel presents. This book is an important contribution to the study of medieval preaching, and will be essential for scholars of late medieval literature, history and religious thought.

SIEGFRIED WENZEL is Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania. He is a Fellow of the Medieval Academy of America and has held fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies and the Guggenheim Foundation. His many publications on medieval literature and thought include *Preachers, Poets and the Early English Lyric* (1986) and *Macaronic Sermons: Bilingualism and Preaching in Late Medieval England* (1994).

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# Latin Sermon Collections from Later Medieval England

## Orthodox Preaching in the Age of Wyclif

SIEGFRIED WENZEL



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gratefully to Grace and Philology

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## Preface

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Our knowledge of the preaching that took place in England during the later Middle Ages has over the past seventy years uniquely relied on the magisterial work of G. R. Owst. In his *Preaching in Medieval England: An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of the Period c. 1350–1458* (1926), Owst dealt with the various kinds of clergymen who preached, the occasions on which sermons were given, the various types of sermons and of related sermon books such as *artes praedicandi* and *exempla* collections, the forms that sermons took, and the “theory and practice of sacred eloquence” in general. A few years later, in a second volume entitled *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (1933), he continued to present the material he had gathered, but now argued that medieval preachers shared the same world as contemporary poets and pleaded that the former be read and studied as parallels to, and often even sources for, specific images, stories, and attitudes of social complaint that so delight the modern reader of *The Canterbury Tales*, *Piers Plowman*, and medieval drama. Both volumes were infused with a sometimes breathtaking amount of knowledge and information about late-medieval preaching: they quoted over four hundred manuscripts, brought for the first time the names of outstanding preachers of the period together, and provided a vast number of excerpts and snippets of interest to social historians and literary scholars. Their learning and collected material, which will retain its great value, was also clothed in a lively style. Owst could easily weave together samples from sermon texts, external information, illustrative stories, general reflections on medieval mentalities, and the like, which at least for a more general audience makes his work eminently readable (my favorite short example is his calling Richard Rolle “an English Jacopone, clad in his sister’s frock”).<sup>1</sup> Owst’s work was a great achievement for its time, especially when one considers that the sermon

<sup>1</sup> Owst, *Preaching*, p. 110. I hasten to say that I certainly would not endorse Owst’s style and approach in general, which, as Helen L. Spencer has aptly said, “with its grand panoramas . . . can distract a reader from the real and enduring value of his work,” *English*, pp. 13–14.

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editions by Devlin and Ross, Gwynn's work on FitzRalph, or Charland's study of the *artes praedicandi* were then still much in the future.<sup>2</sup>

But its shortcomings were immediately evident. Quite apart from his occasionally condescending tone and his frequent characterization of sermons and preachers as "quaint," substantive failures were felt to be serious enough to diminish his work's scholarly value. Neither volume contains an index of manuscripts cited. More importantly, although Owst subtitled his first book *An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts*, neither it nor its successor offers a detailed description of even a single manuscript. Hardly ever is any attention given to the affiliation (monastic? mendicant? secular? university?), audience (clerical? lay?), or occasion (Lent? post-Easter? saint's feast?) of quoted sermons. Then there is the constant confusion between sermons and sermon handbooks. To be sure, the latter were written to be used by preachers and thus do reflect preaching in later medieval England; but they cannot *tout court* be taken as evidence of actual preaching. And unfortunately Owst misplaced by half a century a sermon handbook from which he quoted most abundantly, Bromyard's *Summa praedicatorum*, which was produced in the 1330s, not at the end of the century as he believed.<sup>3</sup> At an even more important level, Owst completely undervalued monastic preaching in the period his two books covered. He opined that the pulpit "share[d] in the general decline of cloister fame and cloister influence" and ended his discussion by speaking of "the actual dearth of fresh monastic sermon literature for the period under our examination." Yet he was reasonably familiar with the sermons by Brinton, Repington, and Rypon from whom he quoted extensively – monastic writers who, as my book will show, made significant contributions to preaching in late-medieval England. Rypon particularly was clearly an important moral theologian, exegete, and orator, an intellect far above the purveyor of quaint stories we meet in Owst's pages. Given these shortcomings, it is no wonder that the call for a more scholarly and fundamental study beginning with a careful account of the surviving collections has been voiced again and again. As the author of a much-read survey of *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* said in 1955: "What we badly need is a systematic catalogue or repertory of mediaeval English preachers and their sermons."<sup>4</sup> Pantin's call has still not found a response, and it is symptomatic that the recent volume on the medieval sermon in the prestigious series "Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental" contains discussions of Latin sermons in the twelfth century, and after 1200 for the Continent and especially Italy, as well as of vernacular sermons in Old and Middle English, but lacks

<sup>2</sup> Brinton, *Sermons; Middle English Sermons*; Gwynn, "Sermon-Diary"; Charland, *Artes praedicandi*.

<sup>3</sup> Owst, *Preaching*, pp. 68–69.

<sup>4</sup> Pantin, *English Church*, p. 235.

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entirely a corresponding chapter on Latin sermon collections produced in later medieval England.

One result of this gap in our knowledge is that studies of specific aspects of late-medieval preaching, of the Church, or of the religious and devotional life in England during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries simply lack one if not the major basis that would be found in surviving sermon texts. To give but one example: Miri Rubin's rich study of the Eucharist in late-medieval culture<sup>5</sup> devotes some twenty pages to "Preaching on Corpus Christi" (pp. 213–232) and, after noting "the absence of specific preaching material for the most doctrinal of feasts" (p. 214), analyzes seven texts, of which only three or four are genuine sermons.<sup>6</sup> The collections surveyed in my book, however, include at least two dozen Latin sermons that are explicitly marked "in festo Corporis Christi" or "de Corpore Christi," and this number can be easily increased by unmarked sermons or sermons for Maundy Thursday or Easter that likewise deal with the Eucharist and Holy Communion – a substantial body of material that may or may not significantly alter our understanding of the topic but surely demands to be taken into consideration. Investigations of other topics, such as visitation or Good-Friday devotion, have similarly suffered from scholarly unawareness of source material.<sup>7</sup>

This book sets out to remedy this situation. In contrast to Owst's work it focuses not on *preaching* but more narrowly on the surviving *sermons*. It will provide, if not a formal catalogue or repertory, at least a survey and guide to the subject. My aim is to identify, describe, and analyze surviving collections of Latin sermons that were produced in England between c. 1350 and c. 1450.<sup>8</sup> I concentrate on Latin sermons for two reasons. As is generally known, even if medieval preachers had preached their sermons, or were about to do so, in the vernacular, they wrote them down in Latin, and they continued this practice at least to the end of the fifteenth century. Whatever the relation between a written sermon and its actual delivery may have been, the overwhelming majority of surviving texts are in Latin. My second reason is that in the past two or three generations, English sermons have been much better served than their Latin siblings – or, perhaps one should say, parents. Thus, at least half a dozen

<sup>5</sup> Rubin, *Corpus Christi*.

<sup>6</sup> Mirk's *Festial*, the *Speculum sacerdotale*, a sermon from collection A, and a sermon from the Lollard *English Wycliffite Sermons*. Rubin glances at Maundy Thursday sermons by Brinton and others at pp. 215–216.

<sup>7</sup> The rich material on Good-Friday preaching has begun to be opened up in the unpublished dissertation by Johnson, "Preaching the Passion."

<sup>8</sup> Of the collections analyzed in this book Owst does not cite Sheppey (mentioned but not examined) and Dygon, nor collections B, CO, D, E, F, G, H, J, N, P1, P2, R, S, U, X, Y, and Z.

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collections in English have been critically edited,<sup>9</sup> as against only one in Latin,<sup>10</sup> and it does not appear that this imbalance is likely to change in the near future. The collected sermons of such major figures as FitzRalph, Waldeby, Rypon, or Nicholas Philip, and at least some of the anonymous collections, still call for modern editions. Meanwhile, an account of what Latin collections exist and what they look like is indeed badly needed. Moreover, sermons in English have recently been receiving much attention from highly qualified students, notably H. Leith Spencer,<sup>11</sup> and by concentrating on Latin sermons my work wishes not to compete but to fill a real gap. It is my great hope that this account of manuscript sermon collections will lead other scholars to undertake more detailed investigations.

A “collection” is a group of similar objects gathered as such for a purpose that concerns the entire group. A stamp collection brings together stamps. These may be from different periods, or from different countries, or may depict a common topic such as flowers or artists, or they could just have been kept as the collector received envelopes with pretty stamps from foreign countries. But they are all stamps, not railroad tickets, and what has caused them to be brought together is the collector’s delight in having such a collection, or perhaps his curiosity in what they may reveal about a given time or place, or simply their potential monetary value. Keeping a few current stamps in the drawer of one’s desk to put on the monthly bills is not the same as making a collection. The same applies to sermons. It would be otiose to specify a minimum number of sermons a manuscript must hold in order to be considered a collection. The important factor is that a small or large number of sermons were brought together to form a collection of texts intended for use in the pulpit, not as parts of a book that gathers material for such different purposes as meditation on the Passion of Christ or arguing for the Immaculate Conception. In the absence of an author’s prologue it is of course often impossible to say what motivated an anonymous scribe to copy a number of sermons, and the defining lines between sermon collection, notebook, and anthology are vague and fluid.<sup>12</sup> But by and large, as the following chapters will show, sermon collections contain substantial numbers of sermons – certainly more than one or two separate items – in close proximity, whether they fill a section of a medieval manuscript, a booklet, or an entire codex. I should add

<sup>9</sup> *Middle English Sermons*, ed. Ross; *Mirk’s Festial*, ed. Erbe; and *Speculum sacerdotale*, ed. Weatherly; the *English Wycliffite Sermons*, ed. Hudson and Gradon; and another group of *Lollard Sermons*, ed. Cigman. A revised and expanded version of Mirk’s *Festial* was edited in an unpublished dissertation by Steckman, “Fifteenth Century Festival Book,” and sections of that collection have been edited by Powell in *Advent and Nativity Sermons*.

<sup>10</sup> Brinton, *Sermons*.

<sup>11</sup> Spencer, *English Preaching*.

<sup>12</sup> See Wenzel, “Sermon Collections.”

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that although I generally disregard manuscripts that contain only a few scattered sermons, I have now and then paid attention to several that have preserved single items that enjoyed some currency elsewhere.

A few words should be said about how one recognizes a handwritten medieval sermon. The question has vexed a number of scholars.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, not all sermon texts are in their manuscripts marked as sermons, whether by titles, subscriptions, or rubrics, and the potential difficulty in identifying a sermon is further compounded by the fact that sermons share a number of formal characteristics with religious treatises, especially an initial quotation from the Bible, sometimes followed by a division. The best-known example is Chaucer's Parson's Tale, which opens with a quotation of Jeremiah 6:16 and then divides its main topic, penitence, into six parts.<sup>14</sup> None the less, there are additional formal features that are characteristic of the medieval sermon in the period with which we are concerned, and their combination will usually allow us to count a text as a sermon without much doubt. These are the structural features of what I call the scholastic sermon, to be further described in my "Prolegomena." A text, therefore, that begins with a (usually biblical) *thema*, leads to a division whose members are then developed, and typically (though not always in concrete cases) ends with a closing formula such as "to which may he lead us who reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit" can be confidently considered to be a sermon. A further characteristic would be an address ("Beloved"), after the initial *thema*, or in the body of the sermon, or in both places.

The chronological limits of this survey – c. 1350 and c. 1450 – were set by the fact that, as was already recognized by Owst, this was the golden age of preaching in post-Conquest England before the Renaissance. To be sure, there were preachers in England before 1350, and several collections, generally of the thirteenth century, have been preserved in one or more manuscripts. But this very limited earlier material furnishes nothing like the concentrated, systematic, vigorous, and rhetorically crafted sermon literature of the hundred years under consideration. At the other end, after 1450, preaching of course continued and even became a major concern of English bishops and theologians, but it has left few if any traces in surviving manuscripts. Most of the collections here studied were therefore made during the period in which Wyclif and his followers, whose moral seriousness and attention to the biblical text inspired and infused their own preaching, exerted a major impact on the intellectual and spiritual life of the period. Given that sermon texts from the time of Brinton to about 1450,

<sup>13</sup> See for instance the repeated definitions of "sermon" in the collective volume Kienzle, ed., *The Sermon*, pp. 144–159, 203–212, 325–327, 449–450, 562–565, 761–763, 862–864.

<sup>14</sup> See further discussion and examples of religious treatises that similarly begin with a biblical quotation in Wenzel, "Notes," pp. 248–251.

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other than those by Wyclif and the Lollards,<sup>15</sup> have been very little studied, the question naturally arose for me how these texts compare with those by Wyclif and the Lollards, and thus the reader will find brief remarks about their orthodoxy in the individual descriptions. One may wonder whether, with respect to the sermon collections of this period, “Latin” and “orthodox” are synonymous. It turns out that they are nearly so, for apart from Wyclif’s work, I know of only one Latin collection that takes doctrinal positions characteristic of Lollardy.<sup>16</sup> This relation of the material this book investigates to Wycliffite preaching is indicated in the book’s subtitle.

After discussing and defining a number of larger issues concerning late-medieval sermons in the “Prolegomena,” the first major part of this study offers detailed accounts of over thirty collections I have identified, and considers such aspects as the nature and composition of the respective manuscript, the sermons in the collection, and what is known or may be deduced about their occasion, authorship, date, important structural features, affiliation, and orthodoxy. The collections fall easily into two major types, unified and miscellaneous, a distinction that will be explained later, and they are in Part One examined in the order of their date of composition as far as this can be established. In Part Two I evaluate this material in terms of the occasions when sermons were preached, and discuss, for each separate occasion, first the official requirements for delivering such sermons, next what evidence we have that sermons for the specified occasion were indeed preached, and finally what actual sermons for this occasion have survived in the collections. In doing so a few words will be said about their specific contents. These two major parts, on collections and occasions, lead in Part Three to a series of chapters that focus on several controversial issues raised by Lollard preachers or by modern historians and cull relevant material from the sermons found in the collections. Thus, “An English theology,” after scanning the astonishing breadth and chronological range of sources that have been directly or indirectly utilized by the sermon writers, examines more closely major English authors whose works are frequently cited, particularly Bromyard, Holcot, and – most importantly – Grosseteste, who with FitzRalph had a deep influence on moral concerns voiced from both orthodox and heterodox pulpits. “Preaching and the pastoral office” discusses specifically the concern that orthodox preachers of the period had for the priestly office and particularly for the demand to instruct and guide their flocks. “The word of God and *pastoralia*” addresses the

<sup>15</sup> Foremost is the work of Anne Hudson, as it can be found in many publications, especially in *Premature* and her new edition, with Pamela Gradon, of *English Wycliffite Sermons*, and further by several of their students, including H. Leith Spencer.

<sup>16</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud misc. 200 and related manuscripts; see Von Nolcken, “Unremarked,” and below, Part One, section 16.

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relation, in the orthodox sermons, between preaching the gospel and furnishing instruction on the basics of Christian faith and morals. “The preacher’s voice” asks how much freedom a preacher had in shaping and presenting his message and deals at some length with the putative revival of the ancient homily form, which, in contrast to the scholastic sermon, dealt with the entire text of the lection. The next chapter in this part, “Orthodox and heterodox,” examines how Lollard teaching and agitation are reflected in the orthodox sermons. A concluding section, “Final reflections,” then draws together some major insights into late-medieval preaching in England for which the Latin sermon collections provide new material. Lastly, in “Inventories,” I furnish lists of all the sermons contained in the respective collections, to give a sequential account of the material and to provide other investigators of sermon literature with a database for future identifications.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> An electronic list of all sermons in alphabetical order may be obtained at nominal cost from <swenzel@email.unc.edu>.

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## Acknowledgments

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As this book is the fruit of prolonged research in many libraries, it is my first and most pleasant task to thank the libraries that hold the manuscripts described here, their librarians and staff, for giving me access to their holdings and for providing me with microfilms of the sermon collections. I am especially grateful to Christine Ferdinand (Magdalen College, Oxford), Julia Walworth (Senate House, London, and now Merton College, Oxford), and Joe Wisdom (St. Paul's Cathedral Library, London) for facilitating the work. I thank A. Ian Doyle, Malcolm Parkes, Anne Hudson, Jeremy Catto, Mary McLoughlin, and Ralph Hanna for sundry pieces of relevant information, and Christina Von Nolcken has kindly shared photographic material with me. Richard W. Pfaff has been a constant source of information on matters related to the medieval Church in England and its liturgy. I am further grateful for permission to draw on material that was previously published in *Macaronic Sermons* (University of Michigan Press) and in *History of Universities* 14 (1995/96; Oxford University Press).

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This book is dedicated to the two who, at the moment in my life when retirement from teaching and relocation were joined by the untimely death of my beloved wife, gave me much strength and consolation.



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## Editorial conventions

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In transcribed passages I keep the spelling of the manuscripts but add modern punctuation. Cardinal numbers of books and chapters are given as Arabic numbers (“1 Cor 6”) regardless of their original form in the transcribed text (e.g., “primo Cor. vi”). Ordinal numbers in the original texts are consistently expanded (e.g., “v” as “quinque”). Biblical references are to the Latin Vulgate, but for the names of the books I follow modern English practice. Translations are my own except where otherwise indicated. I have used the following diacritical marks and abbreviations:

- Square brackets enclose material not in the quoted text.
- [!] Used for “*sic*” to indicate that a word or spelling is thus found in the quoted text.
- <> Angle brackets indicate material found in the margin.
- \ / Slashes enclose material that in quoted texts appears written between the lines.
- / The single slash in excerpts indicates change of folio or page.
- f., ff. folio, folios

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## Notes on the text

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In referring to specific Sundays of the Church year, I occasionally use an abbreviated form, such as “3 Lent” for the third Sunday in Lent. The Sundays with their sigla (as used in the inventories) are listed on pp. 403–405. Individual sermons are referred to by the siglum of the respective collection (listed below) and sermon number (for example, “A-50,” “RY-6,” etc.).

Documentation in the footnotes is given in a simplified form, referring the reader to the “Works cited” on pp. 672–698, where full bibliographical data can be found. There I distinguish between manuscripts and printed material (including dissertations), but do not separate printed sources from secondary literature.

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## Sigla for the sermon collections

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- A Cambridge, University Library, MS Ii.3.8
- B Cambridge, University Library, MS Kk.4.24
- BR Thomas Brinton, *Sermons*: London, British Library, MS Harley 3760; edited in Brinton, *Sermons*.
- C Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 356/583
- CA Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 334/727
- CO Oxford, Magdalen College, MS 96 ("Collectarium")
- D Toulouse, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 342
- DY Oxford, Magdalen College, MS 79, probably by John Dygon
- E Hereford, Cathedral Library, MS O.iii.5
- F Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct. F. infra 1.2
- FE John Felton, *Sermones dominicales*: Lincoln, Cathedral Chapter Library, MS 204 (B.5.1)
- FI Richard FitzRalph, *Sermons*: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 144
- G Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg.6.26
- H London, British Library, MS Harley 331
- I London, British Library, MS Harley 2388
- J Cambridge, Jesus College, MS 13
- K Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 392
- L Oxford Bodleian Library, MS Laud misc. 200
- M Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS 367
- N Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Barlow 24
- O Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 649
- P1 Cambridge, Pembroke College, MS 199
- P2 Cambridge, Pembroke College, MS 257
- Q Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Lat. th. d. 1
- R Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud misc. 706
- RE Philip Repingdon, *Sermones dominicales*: Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 54

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*Sigla*

RY	Robert Rypon, Sermons: London, British Library, MS Harley 4894
S	Oxford, Balliol College, MS 149
SH	John Sheppey, Sermons: Oxford, New College, MS 92
T	Oxford, Magdalen College, MS 93
U	London, University of London, MS 657
V	Oxford, Trinity College, MS 42
W	Worcester, Cathedral Library, MS F.10
WA	John Waldeby, <i>Novum opus dominicale</i> : Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud misc. 77
X	Worcester, Cathedral Library, MS F.126
Y	London, St. Paul's Cathedral Library, MS 8
Z	Arras, Bibliothèque de la Ville, MS 254

# Abbreviations

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BL	London, British Library
BN	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale
BRUC	Emden, <i>A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500</i>
BRUO	Emden, <i>A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to AD 1500</i>
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
Coxe	Coxe, <i>Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum qui in collegiis aulisque Oxoniensibus hodie adservantur</i>
CUL	Cambridge, University Library
EETS	Early English Text Society, original series
EETS, es	Early English Text Society, extra series
Friedberg	<i>Corpus iuris canonici</i> , ed. Aemilius [Emil] Friedberg
Pantin, <i>Documents</i>	<i>Documents Illustrating the Activities of the General and Provincial Chapters of the English Black Monks, 1215–1540</i> , ed. William A. Pantin.
PL	J. P. Migne, ed., <i>Patrologiae cursus completus, Series latina</i> , 217 vols. (Paris, 1844–1864)
SC	Madan et al., <i>A Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford</i>
Schneyer	Schneyer, <i>Repertorium der lateinischen Sermones des Mittelalters für die Zeit von 1150–1350</i>
Wilkins, <i>Concilia</i>	<i>Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae, AD 446–1718</i> , ed. David Wilkins.