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978-0-521-85343-9 - The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism

Edited by Samuel Fanous and Vincent Gillespie

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
MEDIEVAL ENGLISH MYSTICISM

The widespread view that ‘mystical’ activity in the Middle Ages was a rarefied enterprise of a privileged spiritual elite has led to the isolation of the medieval ‘mystics’ into a separate, narrowly defined category. Taking the opposite view, this book shows how individual mystical experiences, such as those recorded by Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe, are rooted in, nourished, and framed by the richly distinctive spiritual contexts of their period. Arranged by sections corresponding to historical developments, it explores the primary vernacular texts, their authors, and the contexts that formed the expression and exploration of mystical experiences in medieval England. This is an excellent, comprehensive introduction to medieval English mystical texts, their authors, readers, and communities. Featuring a guide to further reading and a chronology, the *Companion* offers an accessible overview for students of literature, history, and theology.

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A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book.

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PREFACE

Mysticism is innately mysterious. As an experience, it claims to have encountered mystery. As a theology, it attempts to analyse that mysterious encounter. As a text, it struggles to articulate mysterious experiences that resist and elude understanding and expression. A Middle English version of Jan van Ruusbroec asserts that mysticism in all its dimensions is always poised on the brink of paradox:

It maye not be lefte ne ȝit takyn; to wante it is intolerable, to folowe it impossible. It may not be schewed open ne ȝit hid in silence. It excedys alle resoun and witt, and it is abofe alle creatures, and perfore it may on no wyse be touched. Neuerpelesse, beholdynge ourselfe we feeles the spirit of God dryfe vs and put vs into þat incipient taryngne; bot beholdynge above ourselfe we persayve the spirit of God of oureselfe drawynge vs, and turning vs to nouȝt in hymselfe.¹

Mystical texts seek to understand or impressionistically describe moments of intense experience (or the transcendence of experience), and do so using an extraordinary array of rhetorical, poetic, and linguistic strategies and subversions. In modern times, the Welsh poet R. S. Thomas has perhaps most memorably expressed the delicate indirections and paradoxical imprecisions fundamental to the symbiosis between the restless yearning of contemplation and the ineffability of mystical experience:

Godhead
is the colonisation by mind
of untenanted space. It is its own
light, a statement beyond language
of conceptual truth.[...]

Resting in the intervals
of my breathing, I pick up the signals
relayed to me from a periphery I comprehend.²

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This book seeks to explore the texts and contexts that formed the expression and exploration of such experiences in medieval England. Because the terms *mystic*, *mystical*, and *mysticism* have a very limited currency in medieval religious writing, either in Latin or in the various European vernaculars, most of the essays here distinguish between the alleged experience of some transcendental Other (what is loosely often called a ‘mystical’ experience) which by its very nature is beyond earthly comprehension or articulation, and the lives, longings, and textual explorations of those seeking after or seeking to understand and articulate such apparent experiences. Whether such ‘experiences’ were actually products of supernatural intervention, acts of grace from an ineffable Godhead, or the highly enculturated outcome of a fertile and visually hyperstimulated subconsciousness (or a mixture of the two) is not necessary for us to assess or appraise. But the spiritual contexts that gave rise to them and the texts that resulted from them are a richly distinctive and challenging part of medieval religious culture. The lives, longings, and textual explorations that were engendered by the perception of such experiences are better described as taking place within the *contemplative life*, their spiritual aspirations yearning towards states of *contemplation* (in which mystical experience might, it was hoped, occur) and their struggles to articulate these complex and interrelated states resulting in *contemplative texts*.

Contemplation might usefully be thought of as a state (perhaps transient, only occasionally achieved, and often fleeting) or a way of life (vowed, professed, or aspired to) of preparing and readying the soul to receive whatever sight, sound, word, or revelation might appear to be offered in a mystical experience. The contemplative usually seeks to place the self in a state of heightened attentiveness and receptiveness (often described as yearning or longing), while at the same time yielding any desire to control, dictate, manage, or generate whatever it is that may (and just as often may not) manifest itself. Hence contemplative writing places great stress on obedience and humility, not (or not just) to generate servile submissiveness but to stress the radical loss of will and control that is a prerequisite of most contemplative states, and is linked to the theological concept of *kenosis* or self-emptying. Much contemplative writing explores these spiritual preparations and their aftermath and consequences. The ‘experiences’ themselves are often absent presences, traced by their effects and impacts rather than transcribed and analysed through reason and logic.

His intellect was the clear mirror
 he looked in and saw the machinery of God
 assemble itself? It was one that reflected

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the emptiness that was where God
 should have been. The mind's tools had
 no power convincingly to put him
 together. Looking into that mirror was a journey
 through hill mist where, the higher
 one ascends, the poorer the visibility
 becomes. It could have led to despair
 but for the consciousness of a presence
 behind him, whose breath clouding
 that looking-glass proved that it was alive.
 To learn to distrust the distrust
 Of feeling – this then was the next step
 for the seeker? [...]³

The medieval period was no less alert to the paradoxes and tensions of such spiritual longing. The thirteenth-century Franciscan Bonaventure expresses well the fundamentally affective tenor of Christian aspiration to contemplative life, and its counterintuitive need to 'distrust the distrust of feeling':

If you want to know how these things may come about, ask grace, not learning; desire, not understanding; the groaning of prayer, not diligence in reading; the Bridegroom, not the teacher; God, not man; darkness, not clarity; not light, but the fire that wholly inflames and carries one into God.⁴

Most of the texts discussed in this book are exploring and explaining these thresholds of 'mystical experience' (in preparing for it beforehand and in coming to terms with it afterwards) rather than that experience itself (whatever its cause or nature).

While texts about contemplation and mystical experience certainly circulated in England before the Conquest, the first text produced in England which introduces a radically new form of affective spirituality, Goscelin of St-Bertin's *Liber confortatorius* (*Book of Comfort*), dates from c. 1080. From the proliferation of Anselmian spirituality in the twelfth century, contemplative and mystical texts were produced, translated, copied, and circulated in an unbroken continuum until the dissolution of the monasteries and the Henrician reforms of the 1540s. This book explores these texts against the backdrop of changing attitudes to contemplation and mystical experience.

There is a widespread view that 'mystical' activity in the Middle Ages was a rarefied enterprise of a privileged spiritual elite. A consequence of this is that medieval mystical texts have too often been studied in a cultural and even literary vacuum. But the 'religious turn' in medieval studies over the

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last fifteen years has been dramatic. The study of ‘vernacular theology’ is a fast expanding area, and as its horizons of expectation have widened, the attractive if previously somewhat remote archipelago known as ‘the Middle English mystics’ (the works of Richard Rolle, Julian of Norwich, Walter Hilton, the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, and, at a push, Margery Kempe) has been revealed to be connected to the mainland of medieval religious writing and culture at multiple points. It is no longer intellectually defensible or culturally desirable to treat this cluster of texts seeking to describe mystical experience aside from the broad sweep of other texts that discuss, describe, and direct catechetical, devotional and contemplative theory and praxis in the period.

While ‘the mystics’ are widely studied, there is no modern, comprehensive single-volume work which delivers a sustained discussion of medieval English contemplative and mystical texts, authors, readers, and communities across the entire period. The aim of this *Companion*, therefore, is to provide readers who encounter the Middle English mystics with a broad interpretative guide to accompany their reading of primary texts. More importantly and centrally, this book regards mystical texts as a manifestation of contemplative activity practised by individuals or in communities, at particular moments in history, and as part of a wide spectrum of contemporary religious writing and practice. In other words, in this *Companion* medieval accounts of mystical experience and guidance on contemplative activity are firmly rooted in the society, culture, and intellectual environment in which they and their authors and readers were produced, and by which they were inevitably coloured and conditioned.

This *Companion* explores the impact on the medieval social imagination of popular and learned perceptions and preconceptions of the contemplative experience. The love of learning and the desire for God was never confined to the clerical cadres or specialist contemplatives. Mystical and para-mystical activity was far more widespread among every stratum of society and should be perceived as one of a range of experiences in the spectrum of ordinary daily life. An underlying contemplative outlook influenced literary tastes and conditioned social and private behaviour. The growing lay appetite to participate in ‘religioun of the herte’ is one of the recurrent motifs of this story. Social, political, theological, and linguistic change all contribute to these developments, as do developments in the pragmatic literacy of lay people. The spread (or perhaps simply the fuller articulation and recognition) of contemplative aspiration and mystical experience among lay merchants and gentry is one of the great cultural shifts of the later Middle Ages in England. But its roots lie in the affective spirituality and in the para-monastic practices of hermits and anchorites in the twelfth and thirteenth century.

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Aspects of contemplative theory and practice came to be reflected in much of the spectrum of religious writing, as lay readers and writers took advantage of monastic contemplative texts newly available in their vernaculars. The dissemination of the idea of contemplation outside the cloister is evidenced not only by the large number of surviving texts but also by the large number of works which, while not theologically classified as contemplative, nevertheless clearly show the influence of the contemplative tradition. The influence of this on private reading and lay meditation in church, for example, can be traced in lyrics and other devotional writings. So, while maintaining a primary focus on the major contemplative authors, this *Companion* also therefore engages with a wide range of related medieval devotional texts. Recognizing the trans-generic nature of mystical expression, the chapters also draw on various genres, including lyrics, treatises, meditations, *regulae*, pastoral compilations (*Book of Virtues and Vices*), poetry, and drama. Throughout, our aspiration has been to situate contemplative and mystical theory and practice in the broad context of the religious life of the period.

The primary emphasis is on vernacular texts written in England. However, medieval readers made little if any distinction between native texts produced in English and foreign translated texts. Translated texts, of which Nicholas Love's early fifteenth-century translation of the *Meditationes vitae Christi* (*Meditations on the Life of Christ*) is perhaps the best known, circulated widely and had a large impact on the contemplative culture of England. Consequently, texts translated into English in the Middle Ages will be given equal footing with original compositions. Medieval religious texts, in whatever language, are part of a supra-national, supra-linguistic confederation of cultural and spiritual values embodied in and policed by the institutional church. Post-Conquest England was a tri-lingual culture, with significant transfers of cultural capital between Latin, Anglo-Norman, and Middle English over the centuries that followed. Religious texts moved from Latin into French and English, from French into Latin and English, and from English into Latin and French. These moves speak more of the pragmatic literacies of different target audiences than of the status or cultural worth of the different languages. So, Anglo-Norman texts circulating in England in the high Middle Ages form an essential part of the spectrum of religious writing considered here, and Latin works of theology formed and developed the intellectual environment in which vernacular contemplative and mystical texts were produced. The book hopes to address all the major cultural and intellectual strands that had a significant impact on the contemplative culture of medieval England.

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The *Companion* is framed into five main sections corresponding to five major periods defined organically by historical developments (c. 1080–1215, 1215–1349, 1349–1412, 1412–34, 1534–50s). Each of these periods is characterized by unique cultural and socio-religious concerns which directly influenced the circumstances surrounding authorial activity, distinctly shaping the nature, content, and reception of the contemplative texts produced or read in that era. The context for understanding the texts produced in each era is therefore addressed by a chapter describing the main political, cultural, and religious developments which influenced and impacted on contemplative activity and the production and circulation of contemplative works. These chapters provide an historical and cultural meta-narrative. In each section, they are followed by chapters on the contemplative and mystical texts themselves, offering ways of approaching the texts as well as discussions of the textual communities and environments which produced, read, and transmitted them.

Vincent Gillespie

NOTES

- 1 *The Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God* (Ruusbroec) in Amherst (London, British Library MS Additional 37790), cap. 11, in Joyce Bazire and Eric Colledge (eds.), *The Chastising of God's Children; and the Treatise of the Perfection of the Sons of God* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), p. xxx.
- 2 From 'Night Sky', in R. S. Thomas, *Collected Poems: 1945–1990* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000).
- 3 From 'Perhaps', in R. S. Thomas, *Collected Poems*.
- 4 Bonaventure, *The Mind's Road to God* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), VII, 6.

CHRONOLOGY*

c. 500	Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, a Neoplatonic Monophysite whose writings were hugely influential on medieval contemplative theory, and were partly translated by the author of <i>The Cloud of Unknowing</i>
961–984	Edith of Wilton, princess and nun
1007–72	Peter Damian, hermit, Cardinal, church reformer, Doctor of the Church
c. 1032–1101	Bruno, founder in 1084 at La Grande Chartreuse of the Carthusian Order; the order was notable for its eremitical asceticism and contemplative aspiration. The order is prominent in the production, transmission, and reception of English contemplative writing
c. 1033–1109	Anselm of Aosta, Benedictine prior of Bec, and later archbishop of Canterbury (1093–1109); author of philosophical and theological texts, and contemplative works, including <i>Prayers and Meditations</i>
c. 1035–c. 1107	Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, author of <i>Life of Edith</i> , and <i>Book of Comfort</i> , both associated with Wilton nunnery
c. 1060–1128	Eadmer, Benedictine monk, historian, and theologian, whose <i>Life of Aelred of Rievaulx</i> fostered the reputation of his spirituality
1066	Death of Harold; accession of William I

* For further information on the Latin writings of British authors mentioned here, see Richard Sharpe, *A Handlist of the Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland before 1540*, Publications of the Journal of Medieval Latin, 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997).

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1065–1170	Godric of Finchale, English hermit, whose <i>Life</i> was written c. 1160 by Reginald of Durham. Some very early vernacular devotional lyrics (with music) are attributed to him
d. 1078	John of Fécamp, Italian Benedictine author of <i>On Divine Contemplation and the Love of Christ</i> , and other works including <i>Prayers</i> and meditations (often attributed to Augustine); very widely circulated, and hugely influential in emergence of affective spirituality
c. 1080–1154	Wulfric of Haselbury, hermit; his life was written by John of Forde
1087	Death of William I; accession of William II
1090–1153	Bernard of Clairvaux, early member of the new Cistercian order (a form of reformed Benedictinism established at Cîteaux in 1098); founding prior of the new monastery at Clairvaux (1115); exponent of affective contemplation, and author of a hugely important and influential <i>Sermons on the Song of Songs</i> , completed by others after his death
c. 1096–c. 1160	Christina of Markyate, hermit and prioress; associated with the major Benedictine house at St Albans (she probably owned and used the <i>St Albans Psalter</i>), her <i>Life</i> is an important early witness to the visionary experiences of a English holy woman
1100	Death of William II; accession of Henry I
1109	Guigo (d. 1173), O Carth, elected prior of La Grande Chartreuse, the first Carthusian foundation, author of <i>Ladder of Monks</i>
1109–66	Aelred, Cistercian abbot of Rievaulx, author of <i>The Mirror of Charity</i> , <i>On Spiritual Friendship</i> , <i>When Jesus was Twelve</i> , <i>Pastoral Prayer</i> , <i>On the Soul</i> , and other works of ascetic and contemplative guidance, including <i>Instructions for Enclosed Women</i>
1126–64	Elizabeth of Schönau, German contemplative, whose life was sent back to England by the Cistercian Roger

CHRONOLOGY

	of Forde (<i>fl.</i> c. 1182), and was later part of an important fifteenth-century repertoire of translated lives of holy women from Liège (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 114)
1128	first English Cistercian foundation at Waverley (Surrey); Rievaulx founded in 1131
1135	Death of Henry I; accession of Stephen
d. 1141	Hugh of St Victor, author of <i>On Contemplation and its Varieties</i> , and many other influential works of theological, contemplative, and catechetical analysis
1145	William of Saint-Thierry, O Cist, <i>Letter to the Brothers of Mont-Dieu</i> , often called <i>The Golden Epistle</i> ; frequently attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux; praises the Carthusian way of life
c. 1150–1214	John, Cistercian abbot of Forde, author of <i>Life of Wulfric of Haselbury</i> ; continuator of Bernard's <i>Commentary on the Song of Songs</i>
1154	Death of Stephen; accession of Henry II
<i>fl.</i> 1163–1200	Clemence of Barking, author of <i>Life of St Catherine</i>
c. 1165	Nun of Barking (? Clemence of Barking), Anglo-Norman <i>Life of King Edward the Confessor</i>
c. 1170–1253	Robert Grosseteste, Oxford theologian, and reforming bishop of Lincoln (1235–53)
d. 1173	Richard of St Victor, Parisian mystical theologian and author of <i>On the Trinity</i> , <i>Benjamin Major</i> , also known as <i>The Mystical Ark</i> , the <i>Book of the Twelve Patriarchs</i> , the <i>Four Degrees of Violent Love</i> , and many other contemplative and theological works; influential on Richard Rolle, among other English writers
c. 1174–1221	Dominic, founder in 1220 of the Order of Preachers (Dominicans)
1179	Third Lateran Council

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c. 1180–1240	Edmund of Abingdon, archbishop of Canterbury (1233–40); author of sermons, prayers and moralities, and of <i>The Mirror for Religious</i> , reworked as <i>The Mirror of the Church</i> , a hugely popular and influential amalgam of catechetical and contemplative teaching, circulating extensively in Anglo-Norman, Latin and Middle English recensions and translations, which taught contemplation of God through nature, Scripture and in God himself
1181–1226	Francis of Assisi, founder in 1209 of the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans)
1189	Death of Henry II; accession of Richard I
d. 1193	Bartholomew of Farne, hermit and contemplative
1196	reported date of <i>The Revelation to the Monk of Eynsham</i> , translated into English in the early fifteenth century
1199	Death of Richard I; accession of John
c. 1200	Adam the Carthusian, O Carth, <i>The Fourfold Exercise of the Cell</i>
1215	Fourth Lateran Council, whose decrees included <i>Omnis utriusque sexus</i> , introducing mandatory annual confession, and stimulating rapid developments in pastoral psychology and theology
1216	Death of John; accession of Henry III
c. 1215–30	<i>Ancrene Wisse</i>
c. 1217–74	Bonaventure, Franciscan theologian and contemplative theorist; author of <i>The Mind's Road to God</i> , <i>On the Tripartite Way</i>
	Early thirteenth century, <i>Wooing Group</i>
1221	Dominicans arrive in Oxford
1224	Franciscans arrive in Oxford
c. 1225–74	Thomas Aquinas, Dominican theologian and Parisian master

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c. 1230–90	Hugh of Balma, O Carth, <i>The Ways of Sion Mourn</i> , influential Carthusian work of contemplative theory and praxis
1234–72	<i>Love Rune</i> composed by Franciscan friar Thomas of Hales
d. 1246	Thomas Gallus, abbot of St Andrews, Vercelli; influential translator and commentator on the works of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite
Before 1250	Guillaume Peyraut (Willelmus Peraldus), OP, <i>The Summa of Virtues and Vices</i> ; enormously influential codification of penitential theology and moral psychology
c. 1260	William of Waddington, <i>Manuel des péchés</i> (<i>The Handbook of Sins</i>)
1272	Death of Henry III; accession of Edward I
1280	Laurent of Orléans, OP, <i>Somme le roi</i> (<i>Royal Summa</i>); fountainhead of a huge sequence of vernacular texts of catechetical instruction
1281	Lambeth Council and Provincial Decrees of Archbishop John Pecham, OFM, including <i>Ignorantia sacerdotum</i> (<i>On the Ignorance of Priests</i>), the template for future catechetical education of the laity
?–1282	John of Howden's <i>The Nightingale</i> , version in Latin (<i>Philomela</i>) and French (<i>Li Rossignos</i>)
Late 1200s	James of Milan, OFM, <i>The Goad of Love</i> , translated into English by Walter Hilton as <i>The Pricking of Love</i>
1293–1381	Jan van Ruusbroec, Dutch contemplative and mystagogue; used by compiler of the <i>Chastising of God's Children</i>
c. 1295–1366	Heinrich Suso, OP, German contemplative and mystagogue; author of <i>The Hourglass or Clock of Wisdom</i> , later translated into English in the fifteenth century
c. 1300–50	Johannes de Caulibus, OFM (Pseudo-Bonaventure), <i>Meditations on the Life of Christ</i>

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1303	Robert Mannyng of Brunne, <i>Handlyng Synne</i>
1307	Death of Edward I; accession of Edward II
c. 1320s	William of Pagula's <i>The Eye of the Priest</i> ; influential Latin handbook for parish clergy
c. 1323	William of Pagula's <i>The Sum of all Sums</i> ; influential Latin handbook of canon law and difficult cases
c. 1300–49	Richard Rolle, hermit, and contemplative teacher; major English works produced late in 1340s
c. 1303–73	Birgitta of Sweden, visionary and prophet
d. 1310	Marguerite Porete, author of <i>The Mirror of Simple Souls</i> , burned for heresy
1327	Deposition and death of Edward II; accession of Edward III
c. 1330–84	John Wyclif, theologian and heresiarch
1337	beginning of the Hundred Years' War against France
1340–84	Gert Groote, founder of the Brethren of the Common Life, and leading figure of the Low Countries para-mystical movement <i>devotio moderna</i> (the 'modern devout')
1340	<i>Ayenbite of Inwit</i> (<i>The Biting of Conscience</i>)
c. 1340–96	Walter Hilton, OSA, canon lawyer, solitary and later Augustinian canon; contemplative teacher
c. 1343–c. 1416	Julian of Norwich, visionary and anchorite
c. 1347–80	Catherine of Siena, Italian visionary, contemplative teacher
1348–9	Black Death arrives in England
c. 1350s	<i>Speculum Vitae</i> (<i>Mirror of Life</i>), erroneously attributed to William of Nassington (d. 1359)
c. 1355	Henry, duke of Lancaster, <i>Livre de seyntz medicines</i> (<i>The Book of Holy Medicines</i>)

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1356	Richard FitzRalph's sermons against the mendicant friars
1357	Provincial Constitutions of John Thoresby, archbishop of York, translated into English at his command by Benedictine monk of St Mary's abbey, York, John Gaytrigge [de Caterik] (The so-called 'Lay Folk's Catechism')
1363–1429	Jean Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris; theologian, orthodox reformer; notable sceptic over the validity of female visionary activity
c. 1363–71	The Monk of Farne (?John Whiterig), <i>Latin Meditations</i>
c. 1370	<i>Prick of Conscience</i>
c. 1370s	<i>Book to a Mother</i>
1373–after 1438	Margery Kempe
1373	Julian of Norwich receives her showings; death of Birgitta of Sweden
d. 1377	Ludolph of Saxony, O Carth, author of <i>The Life of Christ</i>
1375–6	Alfonso of Jaen, <i>The Letter of the Solitary to Kings</i> , defence of the authenticity of Birgitta of Sweden's revelations by one of her advisers, confidantes and compilers of her <i>Revelations</i> ; offers shorthand guide to technique of <i>discretio spirituum</i> ('the discernment of spirits') used by compiler of <i>Chastising of God's Children</i>
1377	Death of Edward III; accession of Richard II
1378–1417	Papal Schism
1379–1471	Thomas à Kempis (van Kempen), author of <i>The Imitation of Christ</i> (c. 1420–4)
d. after 1380	William Flete, OESA, English Augustinian hermit; disciple of Catherine of Siena in Italy; author of the Latin <i>Remedies against temptations</i> , which circulated widely in England in three Middle English recensions, and of other spiritual and contemplative defences

CHRONOLOGY

1382	Blackfriars Council, and condemnation of teachings of John Wyclif
1380s	Walter Hilton, <i>Epistle on the Mixed Life</i>
c. 1380–1400	<i>Cibus anime</i> (<i>Food of the Soul</i>); pastoral summa, the third book of which contains contemplative teachings from Rolle and Hilton
c. 1385	John de Burgo, <i>The Pupil of the Eye</i>
c. 1390s	compilation of the Vernon and Simeon manuscripts in West Midlands; important collections of orthodox vernacular catechetical and devotional materials
c. 1390s	<i>The Cloud of Unknowing</i> and related works, including <i>The Epistle of Discretion of Stirrings</i> and <i>The Treatise of Discretion of Spirits</i>
c. 1390s	Walter Hilton, <i>The Scale of Perfection</i>
c. 1390s	<i>The Chastising of God's Children</i>
1391	first canonization of Birgitta of Sweden
c. 1393–1461	Reginald Pecock; bishop, catechist; tried for heresy 1457, deprived of his see, and imprisoned
1399/1400	Deposition and death of Richard II; accession of Henry IV
1401	Statute <i>On the burning of heretics</i>
1402	Jean Gerson, <i>On Distinguishing True from False Revelations</i>
c. 1400	<i>Liber celestis</i> , translation of Birgitta's <i>Revelations</i> into English; fragmentary Birgittine material had been circulating in England for several decades by this date
c. 1401	Oxford debate on Bible translation
c. 1400	Hilton's <i>Scale of Perfection</i> translated into Latin by Thomas Fishlake, O Carm
c. 1400	<i>Speculum Christiani</i> (<i>A Christian's Mirror</i>)
c. 1400–25	<i>Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God</i> (<i>Fervor amoris</i>)

CHRONOLOGY

c. 1405	<i>Dives and Pauper</i>
1406/9	<i>The Vision of William Stranton</i>
1407	Council of Oxford, to examine heterodox thought and the continuing influence of Wycliffism at Oxford University; first promulgation of Archbishop Thomas Arundel's Provincial Constitutions
1409	Council of Pisa
1409	definitive publication of Provincial Constitutions of Archbishop Thomas Arundel
Before 1410	Nicholas Love's <i>Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ</i>
After 1410	<i>The Book of Ghostly Grace</i> , translation into English of Mechtild of Hackeborn's <i>Liber specialis graciae</i>
1413	Death of Henry IV; accession of Henry V
1413	beginning of the events later described in <i>The Book of Margery Kempe</i> ; meeting between Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe
1414	death of Archbishop Thomas Arundel; appointment of Archbishop Henry Chichele
1414/15	Foundation of Sheen Charterhouse and Birgittine Syon Abbey by Henry V
1414–18	Council of Constance; resolution of the Schism; confirmation of Birgitta of Sweden's canonization; condemnation of Wyclif's teachings, executions of Jan Hus and Jerome of Prague
1419	latest date for translation of Heinrich Suso's <i>Hourglass or Clock of Wisdom</i> as the <i>Treatise of the Seven Points of Trewe Wisdom</i>
1421	Death of Henry V; accession of Henry VI
1422	Council of Pavia-Sienna
1427	Thomas Netter, O Carm, <i>Doctrinale fidei antiquitatum ecclesiae catholicae</i>
1428	remains of John Wyclif exhumed and burned

CHRONOLOGY

1431-49	Council of Basle
?1420-35	<i>The Mirror for Devout People</i> composed by anonymous Carthusian of Sheen, probably for a nun of Syon
?1420-35	<i>The Doctrine of the Heart</i> , English translation of thirteenth-century guide for nuns, <i>De doctrina cordis</i>
1431	execution of Joan of Arc
1425-1430s	composition of <i>Myroure of Oure Ladye</i> for the nuns of Syon; translation and reworking of Catherine of Siena's <i>Dialogo</i> as <i>The Orchard of Syon</i> , for the nuns of Syon; ?campaign by Syon to produce orthodox vernacular texts
1434	visit of Margery Kempe to Syon Abbey for the Lammastide indulgence
1434-5	translation of Latin Rolle texts into English by Richard Misyn, O Carm
1436	beginning of clerical revision of Margery Kempe's <i>Book</i> on feast of Birgitta of Sweden; book 2 begun in 1438
1438	<i>Gilte legende</i> , translation of the <i>Legenda aurea</i>
1443-7	Osbern Bokenham, OSA, <i>Legendys of Hooly Wummen</i>
1451/2-1527/8	Richard Methley, O Carth, author of Latin contemplative diaries and autobiographies
1461	Deposition of Henry VI; accession of Edward IV
1465	<i>The Vision of Edmund Leversedge</i>
1469-1535	John Fisher, bishop of Rochester, spiritual adviser to Lady Margaret Beaufort; catholic apologist and martyr under Henry VIII
1470	Restoration of Henry VI, finally deposed 1471; accession of Edward IV
1478-1535	Thomas More, Christian humanist; catholic apologist and martyr under Henry VIII
1482	first foundation of the Observant Franciscans in England

CHRONOLOGY

1483	Death of Edward IV; accession, deposition, and death of Edward V; accession of Richard III
1485	Death of Richard III; accession of Henry VII
c. 1485–1540	Thomas Cromwell, administrative genius in service of Thomas Wolsey and then Henry VIII; architect of the dissolution of the monasteries; eventually earl of Essex before his precipitate fall
1489–1556	Thomas Cranmer, protestant-inclined archbishop of Canterbury from 1533; author of the new vernacular liturgies under Henrician reform movement
c. 1491–1556	Ignatius of Loyola, Spanish founder of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), who were at the forefront of the catholic Counter-Reformation after the Council of Trent
c. 1501	<i>A shorte treatyse of contemplacyon taught by our lorde Ihesu Cryste, or taken out of the boke of Margerie Kempe of Lynn</i> , printed by Wynkyn de Worde; reprinted by Henry Pepwell in 1521 as part of a longer anthology of contemplative and para-mystical texts known as the <i>Cell of Self-Knowledge</i>
1509	Death of Henry VII; death of Lady Margaret Beaufort; accession of Henry VIII
d. 1521	John Norton, O Carth, prior of Mountgrace from 1509, author of Latin contemplative texts
1521	Henry VIII, <i>A Declaration of the Seven Sacraments, against Martin Luther</i> ; Henry rewarded with Papal title of <i>defensor fidei</i> (<i>Defender of the Faith</i>)
1520s–1541	printed works of devotion, contemplation and orthodox catechesis published by brethren of Syon such as Richard Whitford, William Bonde, and John Fewterer in attempt to address Lutheran teachings
1529	Thomas More, <i>Dialogue Concerning Heresies</i>
c. 1530s	<i>Myroure of Oure Ladye</i> printed (composed c. 1430)
1533/4	John Fewterer, <i>The myrrour or glasse of Christes passion</i>

CHRONOLOGY

1534	Act of Succession; Act of Supremacy; execution of Elizabeth Barton ('The Holy Maid of Kent'); John Leland commissioned to examine and report on monastic libraries
1535	Thomas Cromwell appointed Vicar-General and 'vicegerent in spirituals'; orders Visitation of monasteries, resulting in <i>Valor ecclesiasticus</i>
1535	Thomas More, <i>Dialogue of Comfort</i> ; execution of Birgittine Richard Reynolds and three Carthusian Priors; execution of Thomas More and John Fisher
1536	Act for the Suppression of Lesser Monasteries; establishment of the Court of Augmentations to administer goods and estates of suppressed houses
1536–7	Pilgrimage of Grace
1539	second Act of Suppression
1540	last monasteries dissolved or surrendered; fall and execution of Thomas Cromwell
1545–63	Council of Trent; beginning of the Counter-Reformation
1547	Death of Henry VIII; accession of Edward VI
1553	Death of Edward VI; accession, deposition, and death of Jane Grey; accession of Mary I
1553–8	Marian restoration; refounding of some austere contemplative and monastic communities; Cardinal Reginald Pole as archbishop of Canterbury
1555	refounding of Carthusian community at Sheen
1558	Death of Mary Tudor; accession of Elizabeth I
1558	death of Cardinal Reginald Pole; end of Marian restoration of Catholic hierarchy and institutions
d. 1569	Robert Parkyn, reader of medieval contemplative books

CHRONOLOGY

1575–1641	Augustine Baker, Benedictine and spiritual guide to women religious, preserver and re-worker of medieval contemplative texts; prolific spiritual author
d. 1582	Teresa of Avila, O Carm, Spanish Carmelite contemplative; author of contemplative and spiritual works; Doctor of the Church; influential (with Ignatius of Loyola and John of the Cross) in the codification of contemplative experience as part of the Counter-Reformation
1585–1645	Mary Ward, founder of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary
d. 1591	John of the Cross, O Carm, Spanish Carmelite contemplative; author of many contemplative and spiritual works such as <i>The Ascent of Mount Carmel</i> and <i>The Dark Night of the Soul</i> ; Doctor of the Church
1596–1665	foundation of recusant Benedictine convents for English catholic women: Brussels (1596), Cambrai (1623), Ghent (1624), Paris (1651), Boulogne (1652), Dunkirk (1662), and Ypres (1665).
1603	Death of Elizabeth I; accession of James I/VI
1606–15	foundation of Benedictine priories for recusant English men: Douai (1606), Dieulouard (1608), St Malo (1611), and Paris (1615)
1609	Benet of Canfield, <i>Rule of Perfection</i>
1625	Death of James I/VI; accession of Charles I
1670	Serenus Cressy's printed edition of Julian of Norwich's <i>Showings</i> .

ABBREVIATIONS

ANTS	Anglo Norman Text Society
EETS	Early English Text Society
SS	Supplementary Series
OS	Original Series
ES	Extra Series
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
EMTS	<i>Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
MMTE I–VII	<i>Medieval Mystical Tradition in England</i> , 7 vols., 1980– (vols. 1–6 ed. Marion Glasscoe, vol. 7 ed. Eddie Jones; vols. 1–2: (Exeter: Exeter University Press), vols. 3– (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer))
O Carm	Carmelite
O Carth	Carthusian
O Cist	Cistercian
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
OESA	Augustinian Hermit
OFM	Franciscan
OP	Dominican
OSA	Augustinian Canon
OSB	Benedictine
PBA	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
PL	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina</i> , ed. J. P. Migne <i>et al.</i> 221 vols. (Paris 1844–64)
RSTC	A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave (eds.), <i>A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland and Ireland, and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475–1640</i> ; second edition, revised and enlarged, begun by W. A. Jackson and F. S. Ferguson, completed by K. F. Pantzer (London: The Bibliographical Society), vol. 1 (A–H) (1986), pp. 620; vol. 2 (I–Z) (1976), pp. 504; vol. 3 (indexes, addenda, corrigenda).
TRHS	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
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