Homilies and sermons are by definition oral texts. Although they might be written down in manuscripts or books or on websites, they are for preaching, for oral delivery in a public context. The great model for preaching is of course Jesus in the New Testament, and it is hardly surprising that whenever preaching renovates itself it does so with a call to return to the biblical foundations of the genre, to engage with the scriptural approach to teaching the Christian truth. Thus, when the Second Vatican Council reinvented preaching in the early 1960s, it did so in the context of a return to the early Church, and more specifically to the approach of the early Church as based in the Bible and on the interconnectedness of preaching and the liturgy. The sermon or homily was not, for Vatican II, a break in the service, but an integral part of Christian rites from time immemorial. At the same time, this analogy of Vatican II and its attempts to reconceptualize the role of the sermon in the liturgical services of the Catholic Church demonstrates one fundamental point, which is that the history of homiletics is a history of both continuity and rupture. Sometimes the continuity is pretended, sometimes the rupture between one mode of preaching and another is less a matter of substance than of form, but frequently in the history of preaching there is discussion of a new approach, a new engagement, a new kind of thinking. In this chapter I examine one homily on the exegesis of tears, by some scholars argued to be an Anglo-Saxon text found in an early Middle English manu-

script and by others as a new composition in Middle English, to consider how these fault lines of continuity and rupture played out in one twelfth-century context—and, of course, in the scholarship generated concerning that homily in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Exactly what is truth and what is tale may perhaps be determined along the way.

How exactly homilies functioned in the early Church remains something insufficiently considered, at least in part because the evidence is uncertain. Some preachers must have improvised, taking the scripture readings of the day and elaborating and explicating them. Others must have looked for models to work from, or even complete sermons to deliver word for word. The latter would have been particularly happy to discover the useful and pragmatic homilies and saints’ lives prepared by Ælfric, and frequently copied in late Anglo-Saxon England and early Anglo-Norman England. These are the timeless concerns of those obliged to teach (or to lecture): finding material, delivering it well, finding or in a pinch inventing the next tranche of material. Still, the balance between oral invention and written prescription must have varied geographically and chronologically, as well as according to the tastes of a particular preacher and congregation.

Moreover, at various points in the history of medieval Christianity, different modes and approaches to preaching developed, if the written record is to be trusted. For example, the surviving preaching collections of Anglo-Saxon England are largely in the vernacular, and preaching in England before 1066 appears to have been in Old English. Some of the extant manuscripts of these vernacular preaching materials, written or adapted into the vernacular by Ælfric, Wulfstan, and others, are organized into a Temporale, chronologically reflecting the major feasts of the Christian year, and others suggest a Sanctorale. Other manuscripts have a considerably more miscellaneous content, suggesting perhaps that the copyist took material as and when it became available. We have, therefore, a considerable quantity of material from before the eleventh century, but only Wulfstan offers us a clear sense of how he reworked his material from occasion to occasion, offering a short version of his Sermo Lupi ad anglos in one codex, and various longer versions in others. Wulfstan also had what we would nowadays call an oral sensibility, with lots of rhythm, repetition, rhetorical balance and parallelism, and extensive use of alliteration and doublets in the various versions of his written texts. He must have been a powerful and evangelical preacher, in addition to an administrative wizard who organized extensive copying of his preaching texts and notes.

In the ensuing generations, these vernacular materials continued to be copied, and presumably preached. However, the twelfth century famously invoked a more formal rhetorical approach to the preparation of homilies.
and sermons, with commentary by such figures as Alain of Lille on the art of preaching itself, and with the addition of exempla, illustrative stories and anecdotes, to homilies based on scriptural or doctrinal materials. How exactly this shift took place in different areas of Christian Europe may perhaps be approached one text at a time. In England, that shift was complicated by the Norman Conquest and the continued copying, and presumably preaching, of texts in Old English through the twelfth century and perhaps into the early decades of the thirteenth century. One text, therefore, a brief homily on a psalm verse found in two interrelated vernacular manuscripts from Anglo-Norman England, offers both a range of political and linguistic complications and a clear sense of how preaching functioned in the transitional twelfth century.

In the Lambeth Homilies and the Trinity Homilies, large sections of which are copies of Anglo-Saxon homilies, there appears a short treatise explicating Psalm 126:6, in the Vulgate Psalms 125:6–7, which in the Douay-Rheims translation is:

125.5 Going, they went and wept, casting their seeds. 6. But coming, they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves. 2

The entire text of the treatise occupies just over three sides in both manuscripts; in the shorter version (Lambeth), after an opening discussion of the verse, the homilist draws four specific, largely biblical, links to explain situations of tears and weeping: to Mary Magdalene’s tears as she washed Christ’s feet, to Christ’s tears as he raised Lazarus from the dead out of compassion for Martha and Mary Magdalene [sic], to the tears of Job and David as they presented their disgust with the world and their desire to leave this strange land, and to the tears of every righteous man who wishes to go to heaven and send forth from himself his “hate teres” (hot tears). The last section of the text as it appears in the Lambeth Homilies item 17, as edited by Richard Morris, states:

Þos fure kunnes teres boð þe fuwer wateres; þa þe beoð ihaten us on to weschen þurh þaiam þe prophete þus queþende. beoð iweschen; and w[u]-nied clene. Lacrima compunctionis est amara sicut aqua maris. þe tere þet

mon wepð for his agen sunne; is alse salt water, and þer fore hit is inemned see water. Lacrima compunctionis comparatur aque niusis; que defluit contra calorem solis. Þe ter þet .Mon. schet for his emcristenes sunne; is inemned snaw water for hit melt of þe neche (nesche?) horte swa deð þe snaw to-geines þe sunne. Lacrima peregrinationis; comparatur aque fontis. quia sicut hec ebullit de terra; ita illa de cordis angustia. Þe ter þet .Mon. wepð for laðe of þisse liue; is inemned welle water. for he welleð of þe horte swa doð water of welle. Lacrima contemplationis comparatur aque roris. quia sicut aqua illa nutu dei trahitur ab imo in altum; ita illa emanat per alti desiderium. Þe ter þet .Mon. wepð for longinge to heouene; is inemned deu water for alswa se þe sunne drach up þene deu. and makeð þer of kume reines; swa makeð þe halie gast þe .Mon. bi-halden up to houene. and hwenne he ne mai þider cume alse rápe se he walde; he send þider his hate teres.

[These four kinds of tears are the four waters in which we are commanded to wash and become clean according to the prophet Isaiah who said this: The tear that one weeps for one’s own sin is as salt water, and therefore it is named sea water. The tear that one sheds for the sins of his fellow-Christian is called snow-water, for it melts from the tender heart as does the snow against the sun. The tear that one weeps for loathing of this world is called well-water, for that tear wells from the heart as does water from the well. The tear that one weeps through longing for heaven is called dew-water, for as the sun draws up the dew and makes rain come from there, so the Holy Ghost makes us look up to heaven, and when we may not come there as quickly as we might wish, we send there our hot tears.]

Morris omits the reference to the prophet Isaiah as the origin of this exegesis, presumably because he could not find such a passage in the biblical book.5

---

4. Richard Morris, ed., Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises (Sawles Warde, and þe Wohunge of Ure Lauerd: Ureisuns of Ure Louerd and of Ure Lefdi, &c.) of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, Early English Text Society, o.s., 34 (London: Trübner, 1868), 154–59, this passage pp. 158–59: for simplicity, I use Morris’s translation, with Latin omitted and a few additions and corrections. Morris is the first to state “it has never, I believe, been previously pointed out that these Homilies are a compilation from older documents of the eleventh century,” specifying that there are often transliterations directly from Old English manuscripts. He suggests that homilies 1 through 7 are all by the same author, and that 9 and 10 are both copies of Ælfric texts; see p. x of his preface. The most recent reconsideration of Morris’s emendations and editorial approach is E. G. Stanley, “Lambeth Homilies: Richard Morris’s Emendations,” Notes and Queries, n.s., 54 (2007): 224–31. See also Sarah M. O’Brien, “An Edition of Seven Homilies from Lambeth Palace Library MS 487” (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1985).

5. The book of Isaiah has much in the way of weeping and lamentation, but nothing that moves in the direction of this exegesis.
The same material occurs also in the Trinity Homilies, also edited by Morris, in a somewhat expanded form. At the end of this lengthier exposition the homilist states that St. James experienced these four kinds of tears, and the congregation must now follow this example. As a result, Morris titles the homily, number 25 in the Trinity manuscript, as being for St. James. The revised and expanded Trinity version improves in many ways on the Lambeth homily, with added poignant details: for example, the first kind of tears is given two biblical explanations as Peter's tears at his denial of Christ are added to Mary Magdalene's tears while washing His feet; and in the final explanation of the four kinds of water this weeping is specified as that which an individual does concerning his or her own sins, which is therefore very bitter, like salt water—thus, the tears of seawater. The exegesis of tears in these two homilies is both clever and sophisticated, moving through the four levels of medieval biblical exegesis seamlessly and potently. The Old Testament and the New Testament appear, as does an application that is specifically allegorical and tied to Christ, and the anagogical application to the life of every righteous Christian individual. Complex and elegant, the passage is also touching and quite beautiful. It offers a charming and deeply moving approach to the compunction of the soul that demonstrates itself in the gift of tears.

The specific context of this treatise has been much discussed in recent years, since the “third wave” of concern with the twelfth century broke upon the field of medieval English studies. The first wave, as scholars of this period
are well aware, was the historian Charles Homer Haskins’s evocation in 1927 of a twelfth-century renaissance and vigorous new life for architecture, literature, iconography, and everyday living; while the second—lamenting the failure of the first wave to take hold—was the collection by Giles Constable and Robert Benson Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century, published in 1982. As with other third waves, this third wave of twelfth-century approaches rejects the sense of rupture and new life invoked in the first two waves in favor of anchoring the English twelfth century in its Anglo-Saxon past, and arguing for a much closer connection between late Old English texts and their copying and reworking in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. There have been a number of elements to this third and highly English rediscovery of the twelfth century, including a preliminary collection of essays, a conference, and at least one major research grant. The culmination of the current wave appears to be the work of Elaine Treharne, Mary Swan, and Orietta Da Rold in their online project entitled “The Production and Use of English Manuscripts, 1060 to 1220.” The three scholars argue implicitly against the traditional notion of a rupture at the Norman Conquest after which the scriptoria were purged of their dusty Anglo-Saxons and replaced

11. The ferment of this third wave has not affected the reference texts on the period; thus Christopher Cannon in The Grounds of English Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) begins with a chapter entitled “The Loss of Literature: 1066,” and turns classically through the Brut, the Ormulum, The Owl and the Nightingale, the texts of the Ancrene Wisse and the Katherine Group, and the early romances. These texts, and generally speaking all of the other texts in which Old English materials are copied in the Middle English period, are absent. The trajectory is remarkably like that in R. M. Wilson, Early Middle English Literature, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen, 1968), although Wilson does prove a point about the historiographical tradition in his fifth chapter, “The Continuity of the Homiletic Tradition,” pp. 106–27, discussing both the Trinity Homilies and the Lambeth Homilies in terms solely of continuity from Old English to Middle English homiletic texts.
12. The groundwork for the project is laid in Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century, ed. Mary Swan and Elaine M. Treharne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), which has the editors’ introduction and ten papers, largely divided by genre (gospels, saints’ lives) or author (Wulfstan, Ælfric). Susan Irvine in a wide-ranging article argues that the main issue is whether these Old English texts were just copied, perhaps with antiquarian tendencies or a veneration of history, or compiled for use; see “The Compilation and Use of Manuscripts Containing Old English in the Twelfth Century,” pp. 41–61.
with the cold and clear thoughts of Norman monastics, old vernacular sermons jettisoned in favor of new European thinking in Latin, and so forth. Trehearne, Swan, and Da Rold present very detailed codicological descriptions of the manuscripts in English in England for the first hundred and fifty years of Norman and Plantagenet rule, so that new initiatives in manuscript layout can be analyzed and the continuing presence of Anglo-Saxon materials placed in a more coherent context.¹³ Their work remains deeply significant, its tendrils of meaning as yet not fully analyzed.

The Lambeth and Trinity homilies therefore stand as something of a proving ground for this notion of the continuity of Old English materials, for copying and for preaching, for adapting, and for remembering. Both are early manuscripts among the surviving examples of Middle English, either late twelfth century or early thirteenth century. Both include a considerable number of Old English homilies, sometimes heavily reworked and sometimes in copies that would have been approved by Ælfric himself. Both also include five texts common to the two manuscripts (one of which is the treatise on tears that is our focus) that do not appear to derive from Anglo-Saxon originals, at least not surviving Anglo-Saxon texts.¹⁴ Other texts in both manuscripts are certainly Ælfrician; Celia Sisam was the first to point out, followed by Swan, that the copies and redevelopments of homilies by Ælfric are a separate set in the Lambeth manuscript (Sisam has three subsets with detailed explanations for each).¹⁵ Ælfric in general seems to attract post-Conquest

---

¹³. See “The Production and Use of English Manuscripts 1060 to 1220,” ed. Orietta Da Rold, Takako Kato, Mary Swan, and Elaine Treharne (University of Leicester, 2010), available at http://www.le.ac.uk/ee/em1060to1220/, ISBN 095323195X. The final work of the project is an e-book that offers brief introductory discussions and the catalog of just over 200 manuscripts that is the centerpiece of the work to date. The Lambeth manuscript is described by Mary Swan, and the Trinity by Elaine Treharne. The catalog builds on and supplements, with very full palaeographical and codicological descriptions, the work of Richard Gameson, notably in his The Manuscripts of Early Norman England c. 1066–1130, British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship Monograph (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). See also the magisterial catalog of N. R. Ker, the original starting-point for the Leicester project, which includes manuscripts containing Old English written before circa 1200: Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957).

¹⁴. Swan, “Preaching Past the Conquest,” p. 406. Later in the article Swan notes that “the confident and creative recasting of a pre-Conquest Old English devotional text seen in Lambeth 487 makes it clear that the necessary conditions for such vernacular homiletic production were all in place in at least one part of the country in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century” (p. 422). She also discusses on pp. 407–9 the interleaving of Latin quotations, which occurs in many of the homilies, as a Middle English technique that in her view is being applied to the pre-Conquest material; by this argument, the five texts in question, which all seamlessly interweave Latin and early Middle English in the mode of the Middle English sermon, could be part of this reworking of pre-Conquest materials.

annotation and updating, both by the tremulous hand of Worcester and in other manuscripts copied and used after the Conquest. As Richard Morris originally argued, and Sisam and Swan have more recently, Ælfrician texts appear in items 1 through 5 and 9 through 13. Sisam notes orthographical evidence that separates this Ælfrician group from Group B, including items 7, 8, 14 through 17, and the eighteenth work, a copy of the Poema Morale. She excludes item 6, a rhyming and nonalliterative poem on the Pater Noster (assigned by Swan and Morris to the first group of specifically Anglo-Saxon and clearly Ælfrician works), both because orthographically it has elements of both groups and because its use of rhyme makes it unlikely to be Anglo-Saxon in origin. In these respects it matches the last of the eighteen original items in the manuscript, the Poema Morale, although the scribe breaks off in the middle of this text, leaving room for the end. The other texts in Sisam’s Group B, including the treatise I am focusing on here, are in her analysis not Anglo-Saxon in origin. Sisam’s further conclusions largely agree with Swan’s more recent argument: that the dialectal and orthographical evidence suggest that Group A is from an older but not wholly different linguistic tradition than Group B, that the scribe copying this material from two source manuscripts probably did revise and update the language so that a dialect coloring of the West Midlands was imposed on the entire text as first written, and that the material was intended for a preacher. Unlike Swan, Sisam argues for a letter-for-letter scribal tradition of copying, and adduces various examples where the scribe of 1200 or slightly later had trouble understanding the letter forms of the copy-text.

Ralph Hanna addresses the Lambeth Homilies palaeographically, stating after his preliminary description of the manuscript and its contents that “the book is the product of literatim copying brilliantly reconstructed in Sisam’s study.” He also argues for two discontinuous sources, and further suggests that Sisam’s largely orthographical argument replicates itself in the shifts in copying procedure that are to be identified in the production of the book. Hanna corrects the collation of the manuscript by M. R. James, arguing for six quires, and proposing that the original plan for largely Old English material

16. Elaine Treharne uses Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 162 to make this point, a collection of Ælfric homilies written at the beginning of the eleventh century but annotated through to the middle of the fourteenth century; see “Making Their Presence Felt: Readers of Ælfric, c. 1050–1350,” in A Companion to Ælfric, ed. Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 399–422; the consideration of CCCC 162 is on pp. 406–19.

had been added to and expanded sequentially. In other words, the manuscript developed as a series of accretions. The little treatise on tears falls at the end of Hanna’s quire 5, folios 57v–59v. The copying practice in this quire, with a full twenty-nine lines on a small page and the length of the copying line expanded at both margins to fit in all of items 14 to 17, suggests to Hanna that this section was also intended to be discrete and sufficient unto itself; Hanna concludes that “Lambeth 487 has been pieced together out of (at least) two pre-existing books . . . supplemented sequentially as additional interesting exemplars became available.”

Hanna sees a compiler impelled by expediency, seizing and copying, with appropriate changes to dialect and language use, texts that seemed appropriate and useful. Moreover, Hanna sees the manuscript as wholly of the early thirteenth century, placing it firmly in a Middle English context, not an afterlife of pre-Conquest materials but—judging by his final comparison of the Lambeth Homilies with the copying procedures in London, British Library MS Cotton Titus D. xviii (a manuscript with a copy of the Ancrene Wisse and three of the Katherine group texts)—as a Middle English compendium of useful texts found along the way. Margaret Laing concurs from a historico-linguistic point of view, noting that differences in the language used by the single scribe of the first eighteen items coincide with the beginnings and ends of the individual sermons, and fits the language of both the predecessor texts and this manuscript “provisionally in NW Worcs.”

Her pictogram of the dimensions of the scribe demonstrates, as she puts it, “one man representing one place at two different times.” Laing agrees with Hanna that this scribe works literatim, faithfully copying his exemplars, which themselves represented local modifications of the texts they included. This scribe is no reviser, no careful reworker of these texts.

Celia Sisam and Ralph Hanna, then, construct this treatise as a new work, perhaps contemporary with the manuscript, which they all date at the end of the twelfth century or beginning of the thirteenth. Sisam and Laing do not draw firm conclusions about the date, although Hanna does, assigning a

18. Ibid., pp. 84–85.
19. See Margaret Laing, “Multidimensionality: Time, Space and Stratigraphy in Historical Dialectology,” in Methods and Data in English Historical Dialectology, ed. Marina Dossena and Roger Lass (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), 49–93, p. 73.
20. Ibid., p. 73.
21. Laing’s argument with respect to the Trinity Homilies manuscript is more complex, arguing for a shift in exemplar coinciding with a shift in linguistic usage just before the treatise on tears; in general, Laing concludes for the codex as being from Suffolk, to the east and north of the East Midlands. See “Multidimensionality,” pp. 67–71. Laing suggests that the Trinity Homilies’ date is the last quarter of the thirteenth century, but this is probably a typographical error for the last quarter of the twelfth century, as the Trinity Homilies are generally dated before the Lambeth Homilies.
firmly thirteenth-century context to the text. Mary Swan, on the other hand, argues for a continuing tradition of largely Old English devotional material for reading and preaching in the late twelfth century. Some fifteen manuscripts produced between the later eleventh century and the early thirteenth century include Old English homilies; Lambeth 487, she proposes, includes “devotional texts of a variety of kinds: some framed with the rhetorical markers of homilies, and others not.” Moreover, she argues that the first eighteen items in the Lambeth Homilies, all written by the same scribe around the year 1200, were all created by the same mind as well. That is to say, one individual reworked earlier materials in various ways through the first eighteen texts, reframing and rewriting along the way. In particular, three of the adapted reconstructions of Ælfric’s homilies might not have been reworked from a written original but were memorialized reconstructions. This is a bold claim, as it suggests that a writer in 1200, a hundred and fifty years after the Conquest, was thinking in English and reading extensively in English to reframe and rethink a collection of Old English homilies. Elsewhere, Swan posits concerning the “mobile libraries” in the West Midlands and Worcester that Lambeth 487 “is an example of ongoing activity” in “post-Conquest West Midlands Old English manuscript production.” In addition to this ongoing

---


23. See Mary Swan, “Preaching Past the Conquest: Lambeth Palace 487 and Cotton Vespasian A. XXII,” in The Old English Homily: Precedent, Practice, and Appropriation, ed. Aaron J. Kleist (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 403–23, p. 405. Elsewhere, Swan argues with regard to Lambeth 487 that it is “a collection of homiletic and devotional texts” in a small manuscript that could have been prepared as devotional reading for the use of a pious individual, perhaps—following the argument of Sarah Foot about secular vowesses in late Anglo-Saxon England—a pious woman in Worcestershire, an inheritor of the eleventh-century Worcester tradition of accommodation for female religious; see Mary Swan, “Imagining a Readership for Post-Conquest Old English Manuscripts,” in Imagining the Book, ed. Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 145–57. The argument concerning Lambeth 487 is Swan’s only example of this kind of devotional reading, and appears to depend on the small size of the manuscript and its irregular approach to copying; see pp. 154–57. Swan does also point out that the usually unmentioned nineteenth item in the manuscript, copied in during the middle of the thirteenth century, is a devotional text, the prayer “On Ureisun of oure Louerde,” which is generally seen as an example of the new approach of affective piety and passionate involvement in the Crucifixion.


25. Mary Swan, “Mobile Libraries: Old English Manuscript Production in Worcester and the West Midlands, 1090–1215,” in Essays in Manuscript Geography: Vernacular Manuscripts of
capacity to compose Old English, there are cases of “texts newly composed in English after 1066 of which literary style and sensibilities, as well as the language, fit much more closely with Old English traditions than with Middle English ones.”26 With respect specifically to the Lambeth Homilies, Swan cites in this category the rhyming *Pater Noster,* and some of the other “Old English-affiliated items”; on the five items without clear Old English antecedents she argues carefully that although the Christocentric devotion that they move toward did occur in late pre-Conquest texts, these trends “gather momentum in the Henrician period” and are “more a feature of post-Conquest Old and Middle English, rather than pre-Conquest Old English literary traditions.”27 Swan’s final conclusion, then, is significantly more nuanced and careful on this small group of homilies than at various points earlier in her work, but she still ties the material firmly to Old English literary traditions.

On the other hand, the antecedents for this treatise derive from the learned and Latinate tradition of Christian devotion, not from a literary or vernacular milieu of a much earlier generation. The second of the four kinds of tears in the text, the tears of snow water, derive from Job 9:30, “If I be washed as it were with snow waters, and my hands shall shine ever so clean,” though the usage does not depend directly on the biblical text but on its exegesis, which is where the liquid involved becomes tears. As Sandra McEntire points out, Gregory refers to the tears of snow water as the tears shed in humility in his analysis of this verse in the *Moralia in Job: Aquae enim nivis sunt lamenta humilitatis* (“For ‘snow water’ is the weeping of humility”).28 The *Moralia* was one of the most well-known patristic texts of medieval Europe; the *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici* website lists seventy-nine uses to date, mostly in Bede and Ælfric.29 It appears to have been readily available in Anglo-Saxon England, according to Michael Lapidge listed in three different inventories of libraries, quoted by many of the major authors of the period, and surviving in fully thirteen manuscripts of fragments from the eighth century to the end of the eleventh (sixteen if manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon mission to Germany

---

27. Ibid., p. 163.
are included). So readily available was this text that David Bell describes it casually as “the ubiquitous Moralia of Gregory the Great” in his discussion of the fourteenth-century inventory of the library of the rather small Benedictine priory of St. James at Deeping. Gregory’s construction of tears of compunction as efficacious, as flowing from the process of purification of the soul, is clearly the impulse that gives rise to the further development of the exegesis. Given the early ubiquity and frequent reference to the Moralia from the earliest Anglo-Saxon times onward, tracing when and how the further development of this particular exegesis took place—derived as it is from Gregory’s single mention of tears as snow water—may be difficult.

This treatise is one of five texts in both the Lambeth Homilies and the Trinity Homilies that do not have obvious Anglo-Saxon antecedents. Celia Sisam states of these that “some were perhaps translated from Latin in the twelfth century.” Bella Millett concurs, arguing that the five texts in both manuscripts are without question post-Conquest productions, in no way “backward-looking” but rather the product of a new kind of vernacular spirituality. Millett places these texts in the modern sermon context of the

---


34. See Bella Millett, “The Pastoral Context of the Trinity and Lambeth Homilies,” in *Essays in Manuscript Geography: Vernacular Manuscripts of the English West Midlands from the Conquest to the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Wendy Scase (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 43–64. Millett is exercised by the term “backward-looking,” which she reviles on p. 50 and again on p. 64. This argument is developed throughout the chapter, although it is restated most firmly on p. 64.

35. Although she addresses a different complex of texts, Cate Gunn makes surprisingly similar points about the Ancrene Wisse and its allied materials in her *Ancrene Wisse: From Pas-
The Exegesis of Tears

To swell tenth century, the scholastic tradition with its Latin model sermons such as those in Alan of Lille, Alexander of Ashby, and Thomas of Chobham. These five texts, she argues, have Latin elements whose sources are yet to be traced; some even have traces of instructions to the preacher. She is not interested in arguments for the continuity of pre-Conquest and post-Conquest vernacular texts. Instead, Millett focuses on what she terms the disjuncture between Old English and Middle English homiletic prose. In fact, it could almost be argued, albeit rather fancifully, that her goal is to detonate the traditional notion that sermons in particular continued across the pre-Conquest divide, stalwart soldiers of the Christian faith, while other texts and genres failed at the breach. Millett notes that Sarah O’Brien had previously argued for Lambeth 1 (generally seen as one of the clearly Anglo-Saxon texts) as owing a debt “to an early twelfth-century Continental Latin source” and for the use of later twelfth-century preaching techniques in two of the five overlapping texts. Millett argues with respect to this treatise that its main distinctio has a relatively close parallel in a sermon by Peter Comestor for All Saints’ Day, in which he discusses tears as being the bread that God feeds to Christians and divides tears into four kinds of bread based on the four causes of weeping. Comestor’s structure certainly resembles the distinctio at work in the first part of the sermon, but the closest analogue to the concluding section on the aqueous origins of the four kinds of tears seems to be Garner of St. Victor’s Gregorianum and its book 7, which has many scattered parallels in expression, especially for the well water and snow water. Both Peter Comestor and Garner of St. Victor were among the Victorines, the core of the University of Paris.

38. Ibid., p. 130.
40. Millett offers other references linking tears with different types of water, including Peter of Blois, Thomas of Chobham, Thomas the Cistercian, and Alan of Lille; none of these, however, has a distinctio that offers a source for the four kinds of tear-origins in the concluding paragraph. Nicholas Watson very kindly suggested a parallel in Garner of St. Victor’s Gregorianum, a rethinking of Gregory’s Moralía in Job (surprisingly not listed in Wasselynck referred to above), which follows the early work of Paterius in reconstructing Gregory’s text into an encyclopedia. Book 7 concerns waters; the closest parallels occur in cols. 283D–284A on snow water and col. 300B on well water, both of which make the relevant link to tears and to humility; see Patrologia Latina 193, cols. 279–304 at http://pld.chadwyck.com.
in the second half of the twelfth century, which makes Victorine involvement in the Latin source of this text certain. The Victorines, like many before them, found Gregory’s *Moralia in Job* a central exegetical and moral text for their spiritual lives.\(^{41}\)

Millet’s argument arrives at the heart of the difficulty. The treatise is in a context that appears to suggest some continuity of thought from eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon England to late twelfth-century Anglo-Norman England. It is short and relatively direct, its exegesis simple and straightforward. The Lambeth Homilies version is not quite as coherent as the Trinity Homilies version, which has a stronger sense of balancing the different ways of constructing tears in the Old and New Testaments and in the life of the ordinary Christian of the time. Given the brevity of the text, its technique of offering a clause in Latin and then a careful translation into the vernacular might suggest a close translation of a Latin original. That Latin original most probably came from St. Victor but is not yet fully identified, as the *Patrologia Latina* offers no really close parallels for any of the Latin in the text. For Millet and other scholars of Middle English, this technique of quoting the Latin and then providing careful exegesis suggests only a context of the twelfth century or later. It remains worth noting, however, that Anglo-Saxon sermons also have this kind of presentation, and in the same amount of careful detail.\(^{42}\) Similarly striking is the fourfold exegesis, which seems somewhat precise and ordered. Traditionally, sermons have been divided rather firmly into the “ancient form,” in which following the fathers of the Church the homilist expounds the entire gospel, generally to a lay congregation, and the “modern form,” from the twelfth century onwards, in which the homilist divides and subdivides the question at issue, a scriptural theme which is then expatiated upon using distinctions that are inherent in the text but not obvious.\(^{43}\) Most of

---


\(^{42}\) See, for example, Joyce Hill, “Reform and Resistance: Preaching Styles in Late Anglo-Saxon England,” in *De l’Homélie au Sermon: Histoire de la Prédication Médiévale*, ed. Jacqueline Hamesse and Xavier Hermand (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1993), pp. 15–46, an excellent overview of the extant homiletic literature, very little of which conforms to the “ancient form” explicating a gospel or epistle, and most of which is exegetical or moral, often with enumerative structures.

\(^{43}\) A fine explication is H. Leith Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), chap. 6, “Sermon Form” (pp. 228–68). See also *Medieval Sermons and Society: Cloister, City, University*, ed. Jacqueline Hamesse et al. (Louvain-La-Neuve: Fédération
the sermons in the Lambeth and Trinity Homilies demonstrate the organizational sense of Ælfric, and derive directly or indirectly from his work, which is in the “ancient form.” The exegesis of tears as a treatise certainly has a very specific and clear-cut structure, but it is also so short that it remains difficult to determine whether it really is the modern form with *distinctiones*, a clear advancement from the *divisiones* that marked the early stages of the genre. Bluntly put, it could be either.

Moreover, as many writers on the sermon point out, the genre is intended to be oral; this manuscript, as all its students agree, develops in accretive stages that suggest a local preacher adding texts and reworking them along the way. The Lambeth Homilies therefore testify to the truth of Thomas Amos’s statement about the difficulties of sermons prepared by the literate for oral delivery to a largely nonliterate audience: “Much of the literature produced by this literate group—sermons, poetry, legislation, saints’ lives, even charters—can be regarded as written records of primarily oral forms or transactions.” That is to say, we are looking at the work, or the transcription, by a relatively literate preacher, or by a scribe on behalf of a preacher, providing material that might already have been preached at the same or a greater or a lesser amount of detail, or that might have been worked out as something that could be preached. In other words, the best parallel in the modern day might not be a book of sermons, but a PowerPoint deck or draft of a lecture. Some notes are to be expanded in a lecture, others condensed, and some simply serve as a jumping-off point for the oral gyrations of the lecturer. Without knowing personalities and practices in some detail, we simply cannot tell.

Whatever else might be said about this short homily and its four fellows in the Lambeth and Trinity Homilies, the language of continuity as against

---

44. Thomas L. Amos, “Early Medieval Sermons and Their Audience,” in *De l’Homélie au Sermon: Histoire de la Prédication Médiévale* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1993), 1–14, pp. 13–14. A surprisingly similar point is made by Thomas N. Hall in the unusual context of sermons written in Latin that appear to have been intended for preaching to a lay audience that would have been likely to have somewhat limited knowledge of Latin; see “Latin Sermons and Lay Preaching: Four Latin Sermons from Post-Reform Canterbury,” in *The Power of Words: Anglo-Saxon Studies Presented to Donald G. Scragg on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Hugh Magennis and Jonathan Wilcox (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2006), 132–70, p. 155. Hall notes that we should give heed “to the varieties of literate practices and experiences that were available to the laity and to the possible contexts of Latin preaching in the late Anglo-Saxon period.” Mary Swan also considers the preacher’s engagement with the audience, analyzing the point of view in three homilies written in Old English in “Constructing Preacher and Audience in Old English Homilies,” in *Constructing the Medieval Sermon*, ed. Roger Andersson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 177–88.
rupture does not well explain this material. Other homilies in the same manuscripts have been reworked, perhaps from memory, by the twelfth-century adaptor, by the scribe, or by the preacher (perhaps all in one). The most interesting feature of the homily remains its Englishness, for the use of the vernacular suggests that at this point in the twelfth century someone was at work rethinking this material. What we have here are, pretty evidently, wholly new translations in early Middle English, probably prepared in the Midlands and certainly worked out in the last third of the twelfth century. They are clearly not new compositions, and especially not new compositions harking back to a mode of explication popular in late Anglo-Saxon England. They are translations, but translations that rework the material into early Middle English. They suggest a clear and unfettered effort to render Christian thinking, late twelfth-century doctrine such as the exegesis of tears, into English. There is no sense of anxiety about having these texts in the vernacular; it is their proper language as far as the compiler of this manuscript was concerned. What these texts do reflect quite precisely, therefore, amid their inscrutabilities, is what happens in the one set of texts that hardly ever gets mentioned in discussions of vernacular materials in the early Middle English period: the psalms. Several of the bilingual psalters generally discussed as Old English were written at or well after 1100, with the Eadwine Psalter’s interlinear vernacular version belonging, at the very earliest, to the middle of the twelfth century. Tessa Webber states of the script of that text that it “represents a remarkable fusion of elements from the Anglo-Saxon past with developments of the twelfth century.”

She places the manuscript in the 1150s, so the interlinear Old English version of the psalms appears in a manuscript that is at the center of Anglo-Norman Christianity, prepared at Christ Church Canterbury, nearly a hundred years after the Conquest. Moreover, Christ Church Canterbury was the most highly sophisticated scriptorium in Anglo-Norman England, with its own house style both in script and in illustration, and with a clear set of changes to the house script that allow paleographers to track documents through the decades of the twelfth century. Moreover, the Eadwine Psalter of the 1150s connects to an even later manuscript, the Catalan Paris Psalter, or the Great Paris Psalter, now Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale

45. See, for example, Elaine Treharne, “The Life and Times of Old English Homilies for the First Sunday in Lent,” in The Power of Words: Anglo-Saxon Studies Presented to Donald G. Scragg on His Seventieth Birthday, pp. 205–40. She argues that “twelfth-century English texts were dynamic, usable, and current” (p. 207).
MS lat. 8846, written just before 1200. In that manuscript there are odd and fitful glosses of the Roman Psalter into Old English, not many of them, but enough to suggest that the scribe both saw Old English in the exemplar and knew it well enough to copy it—before suddenly remembering that it was not intended to be in this manuscript. In other words, we can date relatively precisely that point at which, in Canterbury, Old English was no longer wanted in a manuscript—between 1190 and 1200. On the other hand, with these two manuscripts of homilies we have far less sophisticated productions possibly done by individuals for their own use rather than produced in a major and highly disciplined scriptorium.

Written in a period falling precisely in between the Eadwine Psalter and MS lat. 8846, the Trinity and Lambeth homilies demonstrate that preparing materials in the vernacular for worship and for devotional purposes continued through the second half of the twelfth century. These two scruffy and unsophisticated manuscripts, practical compilations for use by preachers or for reference, mostly likely produced by individuals for their own use, were absolutely not prepared in a major and highly disciplined scriptorium. Both, however, reflect mainstream intellectual traditions concerning preaching in the twelfth century, although from a vernacular English perspective. And with MS lat. 8846, at the turn of the thirteenth century, that perspective changed and, at least at Canterbury, English was no longer wanted. What all four manuscripts reflect, therefore, is a changing attitude to the vernacular in the second half of the twelfth century. What had been continuity, to some a surprising continuity, was no longer. Nonetheless, all four productions reflect a fusion of Continental and Insular thinking that moves our consideration of Christian vernacular spirituality in England significantly farther forward. The two great psalters were triple psalters, both heavily illuminated and heavily glossed, with extensive Latin notes reflecting the long tradition of psalter commentary. The Eadwine Psalter had two sets of vernacular translations, in Old English / early Middle English and in Anglo-Norman. The Great Paris Psalter had only Latin glossing. The Trinity and Lambeth homily manuscripts reflect learned and Latin traditions, but do so in a relatively fluent English vernacular. Perhaps neither manuscript, both pragmatic works intended for quotidian use, was unusual or unexpected. Preachers do need homilies, and they use the material that comes to hand.