

# Resurrection and reconstruction of *the Meditationes Vitae Christi* in early modern England

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This article traces the deployment of the 14th century devotional treatise, *The Meditationes Vitae Christi*, in late medieval and early modern England. Beginning with a discussion of Nicholas Love's 1409 translation of the treatise, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, the article examines how later editors and redactors reshape the treatise for new audiences. Not only does Love's treatise have a lively print history after the introduction of the printing press, but the later editions by Caxton, de Worde, and Richard Pynson were faithful reproductions of Love's translation. By the seventeenth century, however, the treatise underwent some drastic revisions under the hands of Charles Boscard and John Heigham. This article presents some much-needed attention to Heigham's 1622 re-presentation of the text as *The Life of Our Blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*. In reworking this treatise for a much later audience, Heigham deftly combines material from both the *Meditationes Vitae Christi* and *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, while also making some interesting additions of his own.

Keywords: *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, Nicholas Love, Charles Boscard, John Heigham, Poor Clares.

Writing sometime during the fourteenth century, the author of the *Meditationes Vitae Christi* could never have anticipated how influential his work would become for later generations of readers, nor would he have been able to foresee the religious changes that

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would necessitate an enduring series of the text's adaptations.<sup>1</sup> As a treatise originally designed to aid a Poor Clare in her religious devotions, the *Meditationes Vitae Christi's* trajectory underwent a remarkable shift shortly after the turn of the fifteenth century, when it was translated, revised, and redeployed by the Carthusian prior, Nicholas Love, as *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*.<sup>2</sup> In his 1409 adaptation, Love expanded the *Meditationes'* exclusive audience of a cloistered woman to include 'lewde men & women & hem þat bene of symple vndirstondyng'.<sup>3</sup> By reformulating his treatise to address a larger, more diverse group of readers, Love produced a didactic, inward model of devotion that early modern readers would later embrace. The establishment of the printing press facilitated the widespread circulation of Love's treatise, with nine different editions appearing between 1484 and 1530—two by William Caxton, five by Wynkyn de Worde, and two by Richard Pynson.<sup>4</sup> A. I. Doyle notes that each printed edition 'must have run to some hundreds of copies and possibly, in view of their frequency which points to its commercial success, up to a thousand or more each, although only one or two, or not more than a handful, of each are now known'.<sup>5</sup>

The overwhelming popularity of the *Mirror* in both manuscript and print establishes its significance to the genre of devotional literature. Although its reputation flourished in the first three decades of the sixteenth century, the Catholic underpinnings of the treatise were not

<sup>1</sup> Michael G. Sargent contends, 'the only convincing hypothesis is that the *Meditationes Vitae Christi* were written in Latin, in Tuscany, by a Franciscan author of the mid-to late fourteenth century . . . The "long" version of the text was the original, and the various shorter forms . . . all derive from it'. Michael G. Sargent, ed. *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2005), 15. Nevertheless, the issues surrounding the text's origins and authorship are still controversial. Sarah McNamer dates the treatise's composition to sometime between 1336 and 1364, and she proposes an intriguing argument in favour of female authorship. She claims that an 'earlier, livelier, and more radically "incarnational" recension [was] almost certainly [written by] a nun; probably, but not necessarily, a Poor Clare'. Sarah McNamer, 'The Origins of the *Meditationes Vitae Christi*', *Speculum* 84 (October 2009): 905-55, at 907. McNamer builds upon this argument in her recent translation of *Meditations on the Life of Christ* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018), stating: 'a Poor Clare was the original literary artist who created the *MVC*, and a Franciscan friar actively censored her authorial role and altered her text', cxviii. She claims the original MS is not the Latin edition recognized by Stallings-Taney, but rather the shorter Italian text of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Canon Ital. 174.

<sup>2</sup> Hereafter I will refer to the *Meditationes Vitae Christi* as the *Meditationes* and *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* as the *Mirror*.

<sup>3</sup> Sargent, *Mirror*, 10:6-7. All citations throughout will be listed by page and line number.

<sup>4</sup> Caxton printed his editions in 1484 (STC 3259) and 1490 (STC 3260). De Worde's editions were printed in 1494 (STC 3261), 1507 (STC 3263.5), 1517 (STC 3264), 1525 (STC 3266), and 1530 (STC 3267). Pynson's editions were from 1494 (STC 3262) and 1506 (STC 3263). For more information about these editions of the *Mirror*, see Lotte Hellinga, 'Nicholas Love in Print', in Shoichi Oguro, Richard Beadle, and Michael G. Sargent, eds. *Nicholas Love at Waseda: Proceedings of the International Conference 20-22 July, 1995* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), 143-162.

<sup>5</sup> A. I. Doyle, 'The Study of Nicholas Love's *Mirror*, Retrospect and Prospect', in *Nicholas Love at Waseda*, 163-174, at 164.

compatible with the reformist pursuits instigated by Henry VIII in the 1530s. Luckily, the treatise was not completely suppressed during the religious upheavals that followed, and A.I. Doyle notes that it ‘continued to be kept and known (yet not under his name) by Catholics in England and in exile on the continent of Europe, lay-people, clergy and members of religious orders, a mixed public, as in the middle ages’.<sup>6</sup> As the practice of Catholicism faded into the shadows, those looking to uphold the faith sought alternative means to supplement their devotion to the Church. This clandestine atmosphere provided a unique opportunity for readers and printers alike. Whereas Love turned to the *Meditationes* to uphold the values of the Church at a time when the teachings of John Wycliffe caused great concern among ecclesiasts, later editors would deploy the treatise as a bulwark for individuals who could not publicly engage in the Catholic rituals that remained an integral part of their spiritual regimen. The fact that later audiences repurposed the literature of the Middle Ages suggests they did not view the years separating the generations as an impenetrable wall; rather, they saw a bridge connecting them to a past that was vital to their existence as a religious minority in an increasingly powerful and vigilant Protestant realm. English Catholics became even more dependent on the inwardly focused spirituality that flourished in the fourteenth century, and scholars can gain a better understanding of changing devotional trends when manuscripts and their printed variations are read against one another, especially a treatise that enjoyed a lively print history like the *Mirror*.

Reprinted three times during the early years of the seventeenth century, these editions validate the continuing appeal of the *Meditationes* since its first modification by Nicholas Love two hundred years earlier. Often neglected by early modern scholars, Charles Boscard’s edition of the *Mirror*, printed c1606 in Douai, was the first to appear after the turn of the century.<sup>7</sup> According to A.F. Allison, the conditions of the book trade were more favorable for Catholic propaganda by the 1620s, which subsequently led to the publication of two more editions of the *Mirror* in a relatively short amount of time. The 1622 edition of the *Mirror* was published by John Heigham, a man whom Allison describes as being ‘the most important figure in the English Catholic book-trade’.<sup>8</sup> In fact, Paul Arblaster maintains that Heigham was ‘the most productive English Catholic publisher of the early seventeenth century after the English College press.’<sup>9</sup> The third,

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 164-165.

<sup>7</sup> This edition is catalogued as STC 3268.

<sup>8</sup> A.F. Allison, ‘John Heigham of S. Omer (c.1568-2632)’, *Recusant History* (hereafter *RH*) 4.6 (1958): 226-242, at 232. The 1622 edition is catalogued as STC 13034.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Arblaster, ‘Heigham, John [alias Roger Heigham]’, *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. online edn September 2004 [<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12868> Accessed 07.03.23]

and final, seventeenth-century edition is a reprint of the 1622 edition, issued by the English College Press in 1634, nearly three years after Heigham's presumed death.<sup>10</sup> With three editions appearing in this timespan, the treatise had clearly found an audience of devoted readers, along with printers who were willing to meet their demands. This article will explore not only how these revisions were undertaken, but in doing so, will explain what these modifications reveal about the perceived religious needs of later readers.

In order to understand better the transformation of these later manifestations, some crucial observations about their predecessors, both in manuscript and print, must be made. The most important issue concerns how anonymously authored works are handled. Love establishes a distinguished lineage for the type of spirituality propounded in the *Mirror* by naming Bonaventure as the original author. This misattribution occurs in the *Attende lector* passage, where he takes great care to explain which passages are original to the *Meditationes*, and which are his own elaborations: 'Note, reader of the following book written in English, that wherever the letter "N" is placed in the margin, the words are added by the translator or compiler beyond those in the Latin book of the *Meditation of the Life of Christ* written, according to common opinion, by the venerable doctor Bonaventure'.<sup>11</sup> Numerous manuscripts of the *Meditationes* claim Bonaventuran authorship, one of which Love may have been working from, and Michael G. Sargent asserts, 'so well does [the *Meditationes*] mirror the characteristically affective piety of the Franciscan movement, and particularly of Bonaventure, that it is little wonder that it passed for centuries under his name'.<sup>12</sup> Establishing this level of theological *auctoritas* legitimizes Love's translation, and he builds upon this Patristic focus by invoking the names of St. Augustine, St. Bernard, St. Paul, and St. Gregory in the *proheme*. Having comfortably situated his own translation within an orthodox framework, Love demonstrates a mindfulness of Archbishop Arundel's recently enacted Lambeth

<sup>10</sup> The 1634 edition is catalogued as STC 13035.

<sup>11</sup> 'Attende lector huius libri prout sequitur in Anglico scripti, quod vbicumque in margine ponitur litera N. verba sunt translatoris siue compileris in Anglicis preter illa que inseruntur in libro scripto secundum communem opinionem a venerabili doctore Bonaventura in Latino de meditatione vite Jesu Christi.' Both the Latin original and the English translation are from Sargent, *Mirror*, intro 38.

<sup>12</sup> Michael G. Sargent, 'A Survey of the Middle English Prose Translations of Early Franciscan Literature', *Spätmittelalterliche Geistliche Literatur in den Nationalsprache* 106 (1983): 145-176, at 149. In the essay, Sargent takes care to warn how 'the determination of the role of any religious order in the composition and transmission of such literature must depend upon the evidence of the manuscripts in which the literature survives, and not merely upon its perceived compatibility with the spirituality of the order', 147. Sarah McNamer dedicates an entire chapter to Franciscan literature in *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

*Constitutiones*, a series of regulations that aimed to combat the Lollard movement. Of particular note is the sixth article, which states,

For that a new way doth more frequently leade astray, then an old way: we wyll and command, that no booke or treatise made by Iohn Wycklyffe, or other whō soeuer, about that time or sithē, or hereafter to be made: be from henceforth read in scholes, halles, hospitals, or other places whatsoeuer, within our prouince of Canterbury aforesaid, except the same be fyrst examined by the vniuersity of Oxford or Cambridge.<sup>13</sup>

Rather than submitting his translation of the *Mirror* to any other official, Love goes above and beyond the sixth article by presumably submitting his treatise into the hands of the Archbishop himself:

Memorandum: that about the year 1410, the original copy of this book, that is, *The Mirror of the Life of Christ* in English, was presented in London by its compiler, N, to the Most Reverend Father and Lord in Christ, Lord Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, for inspection and due examination before it was freely communicated.<sup>14</sup>

The general uniformity of, and lack of significant editorial interference with, the *Mirror's* late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century incarnations may very well be linked to this *approbatio*. Later printers, recognizing the significance of this endorsement and seeking to emphasize its import, paired it with the woodcut image (Figure 1):

The inclusion of this woodcut, found in six of the first nine editions of the *Mirror*, may have been intended to emphasise Nicholas Love's

<sup>13</sup> Foxe, John. *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online or TAMO* (1570 edition), Book 5. The Digital Humanities Institute, Sheffield, 2011. Available from: <http://www.dhi.ac.uk/foxe> [Accessed: 07.03.23]. A concise version of the Constitutions can be found at <https://www.bible-researcher.com/arundel.html>. For more information on Arundel's *Constitutions* and Love's *Mirror*, see Nicholas Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409', *Speculum* 70.4 (October 1995): 822-864. Though many scholars still find flaws in Watson's argument concerning vernacular theology, Arundel's lasting presence cannot be overlooked.

<sup>14</sup> Memorandum quod circa annum domini Millesimum quadringentesimum decimum, originalis copia huius libri, scilicet Speculi vite Christi in Anglicis. presentabatur Londoniis per compilatorem eiusdem. N. Reuerendissimo in Christo patri & domino, Domino Thome Arundell, Cantuarie Archiepiscopo, ad inspiciendum & debite examinandum antequam fuerat libere communicata. *Mirror*, intro 36. Michael G. Sargent discusses the importance of Arundel's *approbatio* in 'Versions of the Life of Christ: Nicholas Love's *Mirror* and Related Works', *Poetica* 42 (1994): 39-70. According to him, 'the wording of the Memorandum [...] makes it clear that this was a face-to-face exchange between the two men, which occupied several days', 59. Fiona Somerset refers to the Arundelian *approbatio* as 'an exercise in self-promotion' in 'Censorship', in Alexandra Gillespie and Daniel Wakelin, eds. *The Production of Books in England, 1350-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 239-258, at 249. Michael G. Sargent asserts that the *Mirror* and *The Mirror of Our Lady* are the only two fifteenth century treatises that 'describe themselves as having been submitted to ecclesiastical authority in conformity with the stipulations of the Lambeth Constitutions', *Mirror*, intro 75. Sargent also details how Malcolm Parkes believes the memorandum was not appended to manuscripts of the *Mirror* until 'the archiepiscopate of Henry Chichele, [Arundel's] successor in the see of Canterbury (1414-43)', *Mirror*, intro 76.

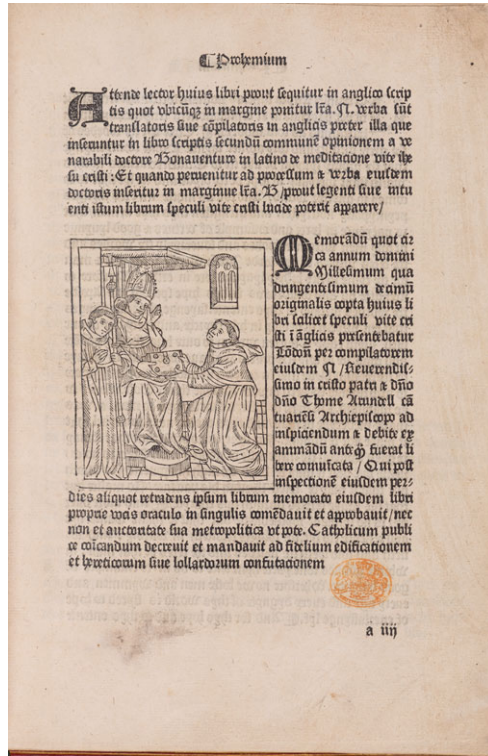


Figure 1. Depiction of a half-kneeling monk presenting a text to an archbishop. From William Caxton, *Incipit Speculum Vite Cristi*, alternate title *Meditationes Vitae Christi* (1490 edition). Reproduced by kind permission of the British Library Board.

submission of the treatise to Archbishop Arundel. The only texts missing this woodcut are Caxton's edition of 1484, and de Worde's editions of 1507 and 1517. Of these three, Caxton's 1484 edition and De Worde's 1507 edition are missing the opening leaves of the text, though Edward Hodnett notes 'it is certain that the first four cuts in this series were present in [Caxton's] first edition'.<sup>15</sup> De Worde

<sup>15</sup> Edward Hodnett, *English Woodcuts, 1480-1535* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1973), 141. Hodnett's description of this woodblock links it to eight different texts. These texts he cites are as follows: the 1486 edition of St. Bonaventura's *Speculum vitae Christi*; the 1490 second edition of St. Bonaventura's *Speculum vitae Christi*, printed by William Caxton (STC 3260); de Worde's 1494 edition of St. Bonaventura's *Speculum vitae Christi*; the 1502 second edition of *Ordynarye of Crystyanite*, printed by de Worde (STC 5198); the 1507 edition of *Boke named the Royall*, printed by de Worde (STC 21430); a second 1507 edition of *Boke named the Royall*, printed by de Worde, with Pynson's imprint (STC 21430a); the 1525 edition of St. Bonaventura's *Vita Christi*, printed by de Worde (STC 3266); and the 1530 edition of St. Bonaventura's *Vita Christi*, printed by de Worde (STC 3267). Hodnett's reference to the 1486 edition of St. Bonaventura's *Speculum vitae Christi* might be the second edition, printed by Caxton in 1484 (STC 3259).

maintained a level of faithfulness with his predecessor's editions, so it is possible that his 1507 edition was likely very similar in form to his first edition of 1494, which included the woodcut. It would be ten years before de Worde reprinted the *Mirror*, and in an interesting change to the 1517 edition, he substituted the image from Figure 1 with the two images in Figures 2 and 3 below.

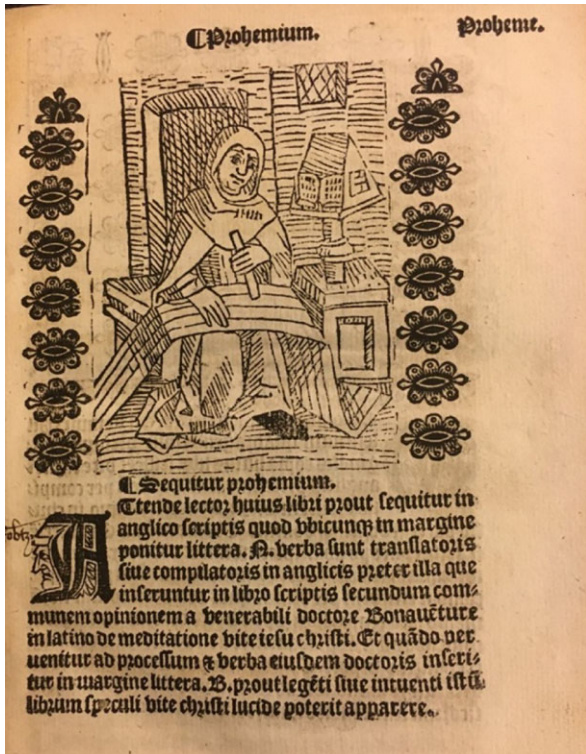


Figure 2. Seated monk holding a scroll. From Wynkyn de Worde, *Vita Christi*, alternate title *Meditationes Vitae Christi* (1517 edition). Shelfmark WN.5.9(1), f. Aiv r. Reproduced by kind permission of Christ Church Library.

The placement of the woodcut images is important, and the lone individual in Figure 2 could represent the author, Nicholas Love, with the prelate wielding a crozier in Figure 3 representing Archbishop Arundel. Considering the fact that his earlier 1507 imprint is imperfect, we do not know when de Worde introduced these two woodcut substitutions; however, by 1525 he returned to the image shown in Figure 1 for his final two editions.

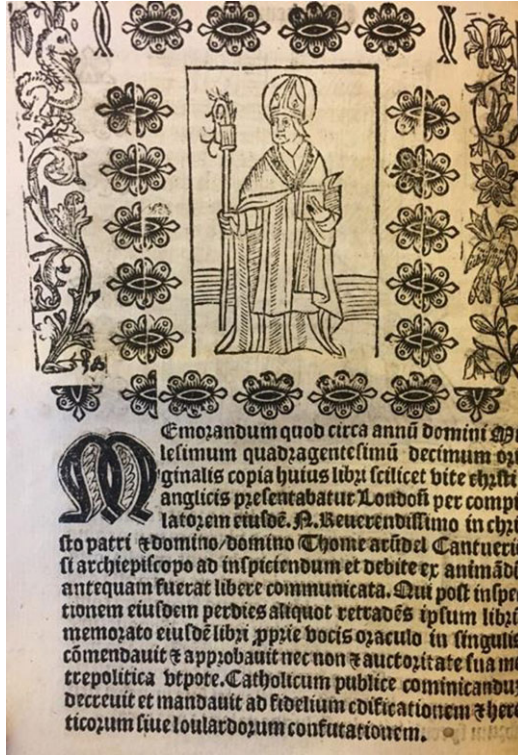


Figure 3. Bishop with crozier and open book. From Wynkyn de Worde, *Vita Christi*, alternate title *Meditationes Vitae Christi* (1517 edition). Shelfmark WN.5.9(1), f. Aiv v. Reproduced by kind permission of Christ Church Library.

### *The Mirror's Rebirth*

Whereas late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century readers were able to view themselves in relation to a constant religious tradition, the foundation of orthodoxy shifts considerably by the time of the *Mirror's* reappearance around 1606, providing different complexities for later redactors. Catholics were now a religious minority, and as the devout sought guidance in upholding the faith, access to devotional material like the *Mirror* became crucial for seventeenth-century readers, who 'felt that the changes in religion amounted to an attempt to sever them from a past that was still their heritage'.<sup>16</sup> Later readers continued to seek inspiration from prominent Church figures, and although Love bolsters the power of his own authorial status by touting a

<sup>16</sup> David Rogers, 'The English Recusant: Medieval Literary Links', *RH* 23 (1993): 483-507, at 484.



Bonaventuran pedigree, this misattribution worked against him in the centuries to come. Instead of preserving Love's authorial presence in the *Mirror* as Caxton, de Worde, and Pynson did by upholding the complete *proheme*, Boscard's redactor privileged the Bonaventuran history to the extent that he completely excised Love's name from the treatise. While this alteration diminished Love's role in contributing to the *Mirror's* longevity, the redactor was merely following Love's lead in championing Bonaventuran authorship by accepting it as a matter of fact. The decision to promote a strictly Bonaventuran product may also have been rooted in the fact that he had been canonized in the interim, on 14 April 1482, by Pope Sixtus IV. In addition, he was named a doctor of the Church as recently as 1588 by Pope Sixtus V, nearly twenty years before the printing of Boscard's edition (Figure 4).

The next modification also concerns the role of authority, but instead of including instances that advertise ecclesiastical approval, the redactor eliminated the *Attende lector* and the Arundelian *approbatio*. The missing passages might seem puzzling were it not for the incongruity of the times. Not only did Arundel approve of the treatise,

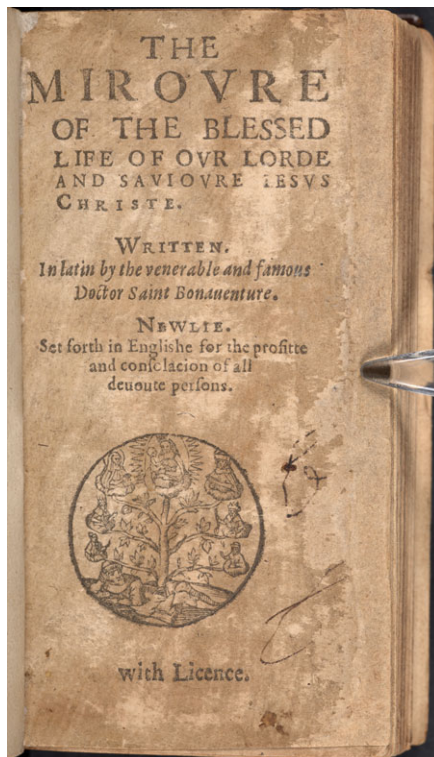


Figure 4. From Charles Boscard, *The Miroure of the Blessed Life of Our Lorde and Savioure Jesus Christe* (1606 edition). Shelfmark C.53.gg.17, title page. Reproduced by kind permission of the British Library Board.

but his endorsement also explained that he ‘decreed and commanded [...] that it rather be published universally for the edification of the faithful and the confutation of heretics or lollards’.<sup>17</sup> The anti-Lollard focus of Love’s *Mirror* was a timelier issue for early fifteenth-century readers, who were trying to protect the faith from heretical outsiders. By the 1520s, the continental beliefs of Zwingli, Luther, and Tyndale began to find favor among dissidents, gathering more influence after the appearance of Tyndale’s 1526 translation of the *New Testament* into the vernacular. Seventeenth-century heresy was different from medieval interpretations of such, and Catholics occupied the opposite side of the battle, fighting for their survival instead of defending the faith as they had done in the preceding centuries. An advertisement championing Arundel’s endorsement may have reinforced the religious persecution seventeenth-century Catholics were facing after England’s break with Rome, leading the redactor to excise it.<sup>18</sup> The elimination of this passage also resolves a minor inconsistency regarding Love’s intended audience of ‘lewde men & women & hem þat bene of simple vndirstondyng’, who would not be able to read Arundel’s Latin endorsement.<sup>19</sup> While the *approbatio* is of great historical significance, it was intended for learned audiences and authoritative figures, who could rest assured that the *Mirror* conformed to Arundel’s articles. Boscard’s edition ultimately fulfills Love’s vision of a communal audience nearly two hundred years after the *Mirror’s* initial appearance by deleting passages that might prove difficult for the average lay reader.

Another noteworthy redaction concerns Love’s reference to Walter Hilton, whose *Scale of Perfection* and *The Mixed Life* promote a disciplined form of meditative interiority akin to what Love advocates in the *Mirror*.<sup>20</sup> Love praised Hilton, noting,

<sup>17</sup> ‘puplice communicandum fore decreuit & mandauit, ad fidelium edificacionem, & hereticorum siue lollardorum confutationem’. *Mirror*, intro 36-37. Vincent Gillespie notes how there was ‘a wider concern in fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century religious writing about issues of authorship, attribution, and orthodoxy’: Vincent Gillespie, ‘Fatherless Books: Authorship, Attribution, and Orthodoxy in Later Medieval England’, in Ian Johnson and Allan F. Westphall, eds. *The Pseudo-Bonaventuran Lives of Christ: Exploring the Middle English Translation* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 151-196, at 152.

<sup>18</sup> Acknowledging Catholic detractors was still a concern for seventeenth-century readers, and Boscard’s redactor softened Love’s harsh anti-Lollard rhetoric by referring to religious detractors as ‘men [...] who are of the contrary opinion to so many Catholikes’, 240.

<sup>19</sup> *Mirror*, 10:6-7.

<sup>20</sup> Both treatises are presumed to have been written in the late 1380s. *The Scale of Perfection* is composed of two separate books, *Scale I* and *Scale II*. Initially, *Scale I* was written to provide religious guidance for a woman who had recently entered an anchorhold, but in *Scale II*, the intimacy between an anchoress and her spiritual advisor is broadened to welcome new readers. Hilton’s willingness to include the laity in his spiritual vision is substantiated by his later spiritual treatise, *The Mixed Life*. Despite the fact that ‘only three manuscripts attribute’ *The Mixed Life* to Hilton, his authorship is accepted on the basis that ‘doctrinally it echoes or complements much of the Scale’s teaching’ in S. J. Ogilvie-Thomson, ed. *Walter Hilton’s Mixed Life, Edited from Lambeth Palace MS 472* (Salzburg, Austria: Institute Für Anglistik und Amerikanistik Universität, 1986), viii.

Who so wole more pleyntly [be] enfourmed & tauht in english tonge lete him loke þe tretees þat þe worþi clerk & holi lyuere Maister Walter Hilton þe Chanon of Thurgarton wrote in english by grete grace & hye discrecion & he shal fynde þere as I leue a sufficient scole & a trew of alle þees.<sup>21</sup>

Hilton's work was still circulated among recusants throughout the volatile religious climes of the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries. Dom Augustine Baker (1575- 1641), a leading spiritual figure of the seventeenth century who valued the works of the Middle English mystics, once solicited Sir Robert Cotton's help in acquiring works of Catholic devotion for his company of nuns. In his letter to Cotton, Baker laments how:

There were manie good English books in olde time, whereof though they [the nuns] have some, yet they want manie. And therevpon I am in their behallf become an humble suitor vnto you, to bestowe on them such bookes as you please, either manuscript or printed, being in English, containing contemplation, Saints lives or other devotions. Hampoole's workes are proper for them. I wishe I had Hillton's Scala perfectionis in latein.<sup>22</sup>

The sense of loss Dom Baker expressed for the literature of the past reveals a desire for Catholics to reconnect with their medieval forebearers, and his praise for Hilton echoed that of Love's. Why, then, would the redactor of Boscard's edition abridge chapter thirty-three, where Love's recommendation for Hilton appears? Similar to the redaction of the Arundelian *approbatio* and memorandum, Hilton's discussion about active, contemplative, and mixed lives did not hold the same weight as it did for Love's and Hilton's medieval audiences. Seventeenth-century readers were living a pseudo-reclusive lifestyle, practicing the faith in secret, although those who wished to pursue the strict, contemplative life espoused by Hilton could flee the country and seek sanctuary in monastic communities abroad. An inconvenient historical timeline provides another important reason for the commendation's disappearance. Bonaventure died in 1274,

<sup>21</sup> *Mirror*, 122:38-42. Much like the *Meditationes*, *Scale I* was written to provide religious guidance for a woman who had recently entered an anchorhold. By the time he wrote *Scale II*, Hilton broadened the intimacy between an anchoress and her spiritual advisor to welcome readers outside the environs of the cloister. De Worde appended a copy of the *Mixed Life* to his *Scale* edition of 1494, STC 14042, leading it to become overwhelmingly known and marketed as a third installment of the *Scale*.

<sup>22</sup> Helen Gardner, 'Walter Hilton and the Mystical Tradition in England', *Essays and Studies* 22 (1937): 103-127, at 124. In all, there are seven printed editions of the *Scale of Perfection*, ranging in dates from 1494 to 1659. By far, Wynkyn de Worde is the most regular printer of the text, with four editions released between 1494 and 1533. His editions are listed as follows: STC 14042, printed in 1494; STC 14043.5, printed in 1519; STC 14044, printed in 1525; and STC 14045, printed in 1533. The only other sixteenth-century printer of the *Scale* is Julian Notary, and his 1507 edition, STC 14043, is derived from de Worde's. Similar to the *Mirror's* trajectory, the *Scale's* last sixteenth-century printing was in 1533, but it was back in the bookstalls in 1659 (Wing 3882), when it was printed by T.R. for T. Garthwait, a London bookseller.

approximately sixty years before Hilton's birth, which most scholars place between 1340 and 1345. Acknowledging Hilton by name, then, would have negated the claim for Bonaventuran authorship. Love's homage to Hilton was quite brief, so new readers were not losing a great amount of substance with the deletion of this passage, and it also saved readers the trouble of searching for a treatise that might prove difficult to obtain.

### *Heigham Assumes Control of the Treatise*

The continued recirculation of the *Mirror* fostered a spiritual community that Love sought to cultivate across great expanses of time, and it underwent a dramatic metamorphosis in the hands of its next editor, John Heigham (c.1568-died in or after 1634). The title page alone reveals a wealth of information about the manner in which Heigham approached his revision of the treatise. First and foremost, the *Mirror* is rebranded as *The Life of Our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, though its title is still very much in line with the treatise's original name.<sup>23</sup> Like his predecessors, Heigham continued to promote Bonaventuran authorship, acknowledging that he also interpolates work from 'divers other rare, renowned and Catholique Doctors'.<sup>24</sup> As Ian Johnson explains, Heigham's use of the word

'rare' could at this time mean 'excellent' and 'refined', as well as expressing the property of seldom being found. If this last sense is in fact present, it could be referring to the difficulty of access that an exiled, impoverished, de-institutionalized and sparse recusant community might have to repositories of learned theological works.<sup>25</sup>

Dom Baker's letter to Sir Robert Cotton bears witness to the difficulty later readers had in acquiring suitable reading material, and Heigham's reconstruction of the treatise may have been an effort to alleviate that problem. In addition to renaming his treatise, Heigham enriched the *Life* with a series of expansions, advertised as 'Twentie five whole Chapters: each one enriched with manie most excellent and divine documents' (Figure 5) and he ends each chapter with sections

<sup>23</sup> Hereafter referred to as *Life*.

<sup>24</sup> *The Life of Our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus* (Saint-Omer, J. Heigham: 1622), STC 13034, title page. This edition is at the Jesuits in Britain Library, shelfmark ALBSI/A/24.

<sup>25</sup> Ian Johnson, 'From Nicholas Love's *Mirror* to John Heigham's *Life*: Paratextual Displacements and Displaced Readers', in Sabrina Corbellini and Margriet Hoogvliet, eds. *Discovering the Riches of the Word: Religious Reading in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 190-212, at 204-205. Scholarship on the *Meditationes* and the *Mirror* has established that both authors borrow rather extensively from the Psalms, Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Gregory, and William of St. Thierry, to name a few. Michael G. Sargent explains how Love incorporate ideas from *The Treatise on the Seven Points of True Love and Everlasting Wisdom*, *The Meditationes de Passione*, and *The Privy of the Passion* in 'Versions of the Life of Christ'.

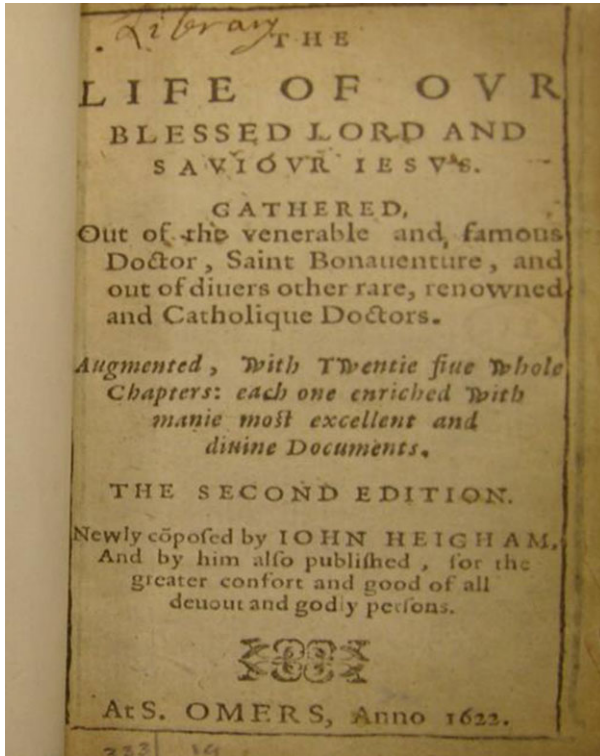


Figure 5. Title page of *The Life of Our Blessed Lord and Savior Jesus*. From John Heigham, *The Life of Our Blessed Lord and Savior Jesus* (1622 edition). Shelfmark ALBSI/A/24. Reproduced by kind permission of the Jesuits of Britain archive.

called ‘Documents for Us’.<sup>26</sup> These documents act as an aid to a self-guided religious instruction in the sense that they ‘regulate and interpret the meaning and application of the life of Christ for its community of readers’.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, this treatise is identified as a second edition of the *Life*, although there are no extant copies ascribed to Heigham before this year. Of course, it is within reason that a lost copy might exist, but, if Heigham was acting as the redactor for Boscard’s earlier imprint, he may have considered that to be his first edition.<sup>28</sup> This scenario is certainly feasible, for Heigham came into contact with Boscard when he left England for Douai, with Allison placing him in Douai in 1603.<sup>29</sup> In 1609, a number of books were

<sup>26</sup> Heigham, *Life*, title page.

<sup>27</sup> Johnson, ‘Paratextual Displacements’, 204.

<sup>28</sup> A.I. Doyle comes to the same conclusion in ‘Recusant Versions of *The Meditationes Vitae Christi*’, *The Bodleian Library Record* 15.5-6 (October 1996): 411-413, at 412.

<sup>29</sup> Allison, ‘John Heigham’, 228. Allison notes that while Heigham is known today as John Heigham, he went by the name Roger ‘in his earlier years at Douai,’ 229. Soetaert claims Heigham continued the work of Richard Verstegen, who ‘had been the main agent for shipping Catholic books into England’ in the 1590s. Alexander Soetaert, ‘Catholic Refuge

confiscated from Heigham's wife, Marie Boniface, one of which was believed to be the *Mirror*. Heigham's involvement in this exchange was likely more than acting as a go-between, and he would later become a prolific translator, with a total of twenty-two works of recusant literature accredited to him.<sup>30</sup>

Heigham was a meticulous editor, and, like his predecessor, he was very selective about which parts to keep, which passages to delete, and which areas to expand upon. Their differences, however, lie in the handling of their respective audiences. Love envisioned a readership of 'symple creatures þe whiche as childryn hauen nede to be fedde with mylke of lyzte doctryne', and he excised the overt Franciscan nuances in the *Meditationes* to broaden the appeal for a secular audience that was not seeking to cultivate the same type of meditative practice a woman professed to a religious order might.<sup>31</sup> As a more didactic model of piety, the *Mirror* restricted the boundaries of the readers' imagination with frequent warnings to 'go no ferþer' than Love's carefully scripted guidance.<sup>32</sup> Love's methodology also reflects the challenges of writing in a post-Wycliffite era, when Catholics were actively fighting the Lollard movement as the Arundelian *approbatio* clearly establishes. Heigham, on the other hand, writes from an entirely different position—as an expatriate English Catholic defending the one true Church after the religious turmoil of the sixteenth century.<sup>33</sup> Heigham's newly updated treatise is an example of how eager and willing the devout were when it came to supporting the Catholic cause. The fact that another printing was issued in 1634 suggests a community

and the Printing Press: Catholic Exiles from England, France, and the Low Countries in the Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai', *British Catholic History* (hereafter *BCH*) 34.4 (2019): 532-561, at 555-556.

<sup>30</sup> The list of books confiscated by John Wolstenholme can be found in P.R. Harris, 'The Reports of William Udall, Informer, 1605-1612 [pt.2]', *RH* 8 (April 1966): 252-284. For a complete list of Heigham's works, consult *The Contemporary Printed Literature of the Counter-Reformation Between 1558 and 1640*, ed. by A.F. Allison and D.M. Rogers (Brookfield, VT: Gower Publishing Company, 1989). One of the earliest printings ascribed to Heigham is a 1612 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *A Memoriall of a Christian Life*, printed at Douai (STC 16905). One of Heigham's earliest compositions is *A Devout Exposition of the Holie Masse, with an ample declaration of all the rites and ceremonies belonging to the same*, published in 1614 in Douai (STC 13032). Soetaert explains that while Heigham 'did not operate a press himself [he] issued 85 editions in the period 1604-34', 'Catholic Refuge', 558. Allison claims 'there are over sixty books in existence today, printed between 1609 and 1631, that bear [Heigham's] imprint', Allison, 'John Heigham', 226.

<sup>31</sup> Sargent, *Mirror*, 10:14-15.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 23:38-39.

<sup>33</sup> For more information about this particular audience and the history of the printing press in Douai, see Soetaert, 'Catholic Refuge'. As Soetaert notes, 'the overall number of English Catholic texts rose significantly, increasing from less than fifty between 1596 and 1600 to almost ninety in the following five years. This increase would continue until the mid 1620s, dates that apply to the first early 17<sup>th</sup> century reprinting of the *Mirror* by Boscard, 552. Soetaert further maintains, 'presses in Douai and Saint-Omer produced over 450 Catholic texts in English in the period 1601-40, covering nearly eighty percent of the total production in these years', Soetaert, 'Catholic Refuge', 552-553.

of English Catholic readers who are not only mindful of how books can enrich one's spiritual needs, but also how they are 'powerful tools to remedy irregular access to pastoral care, since books could go where missionary priests could not'.<sup>34</sup>

In an interesting departure from Love's purpose in undertaking his translation—to reach a wider, more diverse readership—Heigham hearkened his adaptation to the more contemplative origins of the *Meditationes* by dedicating the *Life* to 'The Reverend and Religious Mother, Clara Mariana, Right worthie Abbesse of the poore Clares of Graveling: and to all her devout and Religious daughters'.<sup>35</sup> This dedicatory epistle not only replaced Love's original *proheme* in the *Mirror*, but also the Bonaventuran *incipit*, which underscores Heigham's description of the treatise being 'newly composed'. His rhetoric reveals a powerful authorial presence, despite the insecurity he expresses about undertaking such a lofty project:

The feare that I had of myne owne insufficiencie, to touche, or handle any further that sacred Historie, moved me with all sinceritie to beseeche them, to take and burne them [the pages of his text], to the end I never more might ether see them, or thinke upon them: fearing even from that first abord, to spot or blemishe the praises of that worthie life, with my prophane and unworthie pen.<sup>36</sup>

His use of the humility topos forges a connection with the author of the *Meditationes*, who, in his own prologue, voiced a similar sentiment: 'I did wish you would receive this introduction from someone more experienced and learned, because I am quite inadequate for such things'.<sup>37</sup> No matter how much Heigham may question his ability to fulfill the women's wishes, he understands how important books are to those who choose to live a cloistered life, whose 'daily cycle of worship was increasingly predicated upon and penetrated by print'.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, Heigham explains how the Poor Clares played an active role in bringing his work to fruition:

Notwithstanding, so far did their most pious desires prevayle with me, depending much (next after God) upon the assistance of their holy prayers, that I promised them to employ therein, all the litle talent which God had lent me.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 553.

<sup>35</sup> Heigham, *Life*, A2.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, A2. I have changed all the long *s* in Heigham's edition to regular forms, along with replacing the letter *u* with *v* and *j* for *i* where needed. I have also silently transcribed Heigham's superscript macrons that abbreviate the letters *m* or *n*. All other spelling variations have been maintained.

<sup>37</sup> 'Sed uellem quod hoc a magis experto magisque docto acciperes, quia talibus maxime insufficiens sum'. C. Mary Stallings-Taney, ed. *Meditationes Vitae Christi* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 9:78-79. Translated passages provided here and throughout are from Francis Taney, Sr, Anne Miller, O.S.F., and C. Mary Stallings-Taney, eds. *Meditations on the Life of Christ* (Asheville, NC: Pegasus Press, 1999), 3. Further references to these editions will use Stallings-Taney ed., *Meditationes* and Taney, Sr., et. al. *Meditations*.

<sup>38</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 273.

Confessing my selfe, therefore, both encouraged, & assisted, by these your devout and religious daughters, I could in dutie doe no lesse, then dedicate the same unto your selfe, their worthy Mother.<sup>39</sup>

While Heigham's dedication does not function in the same regulatory way as Love's Arundelian *approbatio*, he actively solicits Clara Mariana's approval by imploring her to 'Receive then (Right virtuous and Religious Mother) this my poore and unworthie present, under the winges of your protection, to whom my pen, my hande, and hart, hath wholie devoted this divine treatise'.<sup>41</sup>

Heigham reinforces the humility topos by recycling the phrase 'poore and unworthy', used earlier to describe his pen, to refer to the actual text itself. Asking Clara Mariana to receive the *Life* 'under the wings of [her] protection' portrays her as a seventeenth-century version of Saint Cecilia, a tradition carried over from the *Meditationes*, where the author praises how 'de sanctissima uirgine Cecilia [...] Euangelium Christi absconditum semper portabat in pectore' ('The most holy virgin Cecelia [...] always carried Christ's Gospel hidden in her heart').<sup>42</sup> Heigham expands and reworks St. Cecilia's spiritual devotion by urging Clara Mariana to

Lodge it, love it, and looke often into it. Lodge it nere unto you: love it as deare unto you: looke often into it as delighting you. Lodge it, because it cometh to you for harbour: love it, because it is your Spouses picture: looke often into it, because it is a most perfect mirour.<sup>42</sup>

Clara Mariana's role in lodging the *Life* close to her heart safeguards its success and survival, and it also reflects her bond with Heigham, who, much like the nuns who placed themselves in her care at Gravelines, 'judged it to be my securest course, humbly to fly to you' for spiritual aid.<sup>43</sup> The exchange between the Poor Clares, Heigham, and Clara Mariana mirrors the experience of English Catholics, and the need for spiritual guidance speaks to the immediacy of all its readers. Not only was Heigham fulfilling the demands of the Poor Clares, but he was also ministering to readers across the Channel, who depended on treatises like this to help fill the spiritual void they felt as a religious minority. Heigham thus reshaped the meditative practices of seventeenth century Catholics at home and abroad by accentuating the parallels between his two readerships on either side of the Channel, and his comparison of the text to a mirror is a powerful metaphor that strengthens the connections between the *Meditationes*, Love's *Mirror*,

<sup>39</sup> Heigham, *Life*, 4.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>41</sup> Stallings-Taney, *Meditationes*, 7:4-6; Taney, Sr., *Meditations*, 1.

<sup>42</sup> Heigham, *Life*, 6.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.



and his own *Life*. In the *Meditationes*, the author encourages a contemplative life that focuses on Christ, and he directs the novice to emulate Saint Francis, who

was so ardently drawn toward that life that his own life became a mirror resemblance of Christ's life. For as perfectly as he could he strove toward him in all the virtues; and finally, with Jesus himself compelling and perfecting him through the impression of the sacred wounds, Francis was totally transformed into him.<sup>44</sup>

Nicholas Love heightened the analogy of the mirror by using it as the title for his translation, and even though Heigham added his own authorial flourish by renaming his adaptation, the 'Documents for Us' at the end of each chapter produced a mirroring effect by reinforcing the most valuable information from each chapter.

Heigham rechanneled the *Mirror's* didactic focus through the use of apostrophe, evoking a greater sense of pathos as the reader contemplates the life of Christ. Although he used this figure of speech throughout the entire text, he employed it more frequently toward the latter half of the treatise, which is also when he favored the *Meditationes'* account of Christ's final days over Love's depiction. For example, chapter sixty-nine details the conspiracy of the Jews against Christ, explaining how Caiaphas and the council

resolved to kill such a very innocent lamb. O vicious council! O most evil leaders of the people and most wanton councilors! What are you wretches fomenting? Why is your fury at such fever pitch? What is this ordinance? What are you proposing? What reason can there be for the murder of our Lord? Is he not the same person living in your midst, who understands everything you say and all that is in your hearts as well, but whom you do not know?<sup>45</sup>

Heigham's tirade against the council mirrored the emotional intensity presented in the *Meditationes*, though he did not soften the injustice of Christ's death by reminding his readers that it was an act ordained by God. Instead, echoing Psalms 2, he intensified the apostrophe of his predecessor:

Thus those wicked Princes & Pharises, in that ungratious consultation, agreed to murder that most innocent lamb our Lord Jesus, for feare lest all the people should believe & follow him, and so the Romans setting both them & their law at nought, should come and destroy them. O wicked councell, ô pernicious

<sup>44</sup> 'propterea sic ardentem afficiebatur ad ipsam, ut quasi sua similitudo fuerit. Nam in cunctis uirtutibus quam perfectius poterat innitebatur eundem, et tandem ipso compellente et perficiente Iesu per impressionem sacrorum stigmatum, fuit in eum totaliter transformatus.' Stallings-Taney, *Meditationes*, 9:67-72; Taney, Sr., *Meditations*, 3.

<sup>45</sup> 'deliberauerunt ipsum agnum innocentissimum occidere. O pessimi duces populi et consilarii nequissimi! Quid agitis miseri? Quid uos furor exagitat tantus? Que ordinatio hec? Que propositio? Que causa occisionis Domini nostri? Nonne ipse in medio uestrum est quem tamen nescitis et intelligit omnia uerba uestra et corda?'. Stallings-Taney, *Meditationes*, 234:10-16; Taney, Sr., *Meditations*, 220.

guides, ô curfed councellors, ô impious wretches, what will you doe? What rage doth thus torment you? What decree is this? What designe? And why pretend yee the death of our Lord Jesus? <sup>46</sup>

The present-tense verb form allows the weight of these questions still to resonate, investing readers with a more purposeful role in their meditative process than Love's *Mirror*, which offers significantly less detail: 'And so by comune assent þoo fals princes & pharisees in þat consele ordeynet vtterly to sle þat innocent lambe Jesu, & to þat ende, leste alle þe peple shuld beleue & trowe in [to] him'.<sup>47</sup> In comparing these passages, we see how strategically Heigham interpolated material from both the *Meditationes* and the *Mirror* for his narrative. He engaged in a vitriolic accusation the likes of which is evidenced in the *Meditationes*, while borrowing almost verbatim from Love in his rebuke of the Romans and their laws, creating a richer, more developed scenario than presented in the works of both his predecessors.

#### *Embracing the Medieval Mystical Tradition*

Heigham's vision for the *Life* extended beyond the boundaries of the *Meditationes* and the *Mirror*, and his reflections bear a striking resemblance to another text that was once thought to have Bonaventuran origins, *The Stimulus of Love*. Although the *Stimulus* is now believed to be the work of James of Milan, an English version of it, known as *The Goad of Love* or *The Prickyng of Love*, is thought to have been translated by Walter Hilton. Allan F. Westphall notes that 'of the sixteen manuscripts that contain *Prickyng* (as complete text or excerpt), at least six ascribe it to Hilton'.<sup>48</sup> If, as suggested earlier, Heigham was involved with Boscard's c1606 *Mirror*, he may very well have heeded the redacted passage from Love's *Mirror* to 'loke [to] þe tretees þat þe worþi clerk & holi lyuere Maister Walter Hilton' wrote to complement his expansions.<sup>49</sup> Whereas Love's wariness of affective piety leads him to temper his narrative in the *Mirror*, the author of the *Prickyng* embraces it wholeheartedly. Heigham followed the latter's direction, and his language became increasingly more expressive as he chronicled the events leading up to and beyond Christ's passion.

<sup>46</sup> Heigham, *Life*, 482-483.

<sup>47</sup> Sargent, *Mirror*, 134:21-23.

<sup>48</sup> Allan F. Westphall, 'Walter Hilton's *The Prickyng of Love* and the Construction of Vernacular "Sickness"', in *The Pseudo-Bonaventuran Lives of Christ*, 457-502; see footnote 27, at 473. Most critics date *The Prickyng of Love* to the late fourteenth century. The treatise was printed in 1642 in Douai by the widow of Mark Wyon, not too long after Heigham's final edition of the *Life*.

<sup>49</sup> Sargent, *Mirror*, 122:39-40.

Consider, for example, Heigham's use of apostrophe in his description of Mary's response to her son's fate:

(ô my soule) be inwardly moved, and deplore the greate sorrowe of this pensive Lady, for she who was so pittiful towards all, is now her selfe left a widdowe, is forsaken of her only Sonne; A Sonne who went innocently to dye a shamfull and violent death, and that in the flower of his age. A Sonne that was most virtuous and obedient. And finallie a Sonne, upon whom she had set her whole affection. And if the contemplation of these thinges, cause not teares to issue forth of thine eies, I doe not know what may doe it: take heede therefore that thou assist not with dry eies, nor with a hard and obdurat hart, nor without pittie at a spectacle so full of pittie.<sup>50</sup>

The invocation of the soul amplifies the interiority of the passage, and Heigham's concern about eliciting a proper reaction to these meditations resembles the *Prickyngge*, which encourages its readers to be 'stired be þyn [. . .] herte in his peynys als ȝif þou hem sufferide and spare not for to melte al in-to watir of teris'.<sup>51</sup>

The two authors differ, however, with their reactions to those who cannot produce tears of compunction. The author of the *Prickyngge* guided readers to advance their devotional practices by instructing them to 'make ȝif þow wolt a good sharpe schourge [. . .], and goo into a pryuey place and scourge þi body nobli wel'.<sup>52</sup> Heigham, on the other hand, expressed bewilderment for individuals whose emotions are not properly stirred by claiming, 'if the contemplation of these thinges, cause not teares to issue forth of thine eies, I doe not know what may doe it', he ultimately employs visionary spectacle in lieu of encouraging acts of self-mortification.<sup>53</sup> The stunning imagery that abounds in his *Life* surpasses some of the most graphic representations of the Passion in the literature of the Middle Ages, such as the *Prickyngge*, Richard Rolle's *Meditations on the Passion*, Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*, and *The Book of Margery Kempe*.<sup>54</sup> Even though Love's

<sup>50</sup> Heigham, *Life*, 521-522.

<sup>51</sup> Harold Kane, ed. *The Prickyngge of Love* (Salzburg, Austria: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1983), 15:22-24. As with my other citations, passages are identified by page and line numbers.

<sup>52</sup> Kane, *Prickyngge*, 16:2-4.

<sup>53</sup> Heigham, *Life*, 522.

<sup>54</sup> Richard Rolle was a religious recluse whose teachings appeared in the 1340s and quickly gained popularity among the laity. Most of Rolle's earlier works were written in Latin, and it was not until later in his career that he began to write in the vernacular, addressing a significant corpus of work to women solitaries. His *Mediations on the Passion* is found in nine manuscripts, though early modern printers did not look to this treatise with regularity. There are two different versions of Julian of Norwich's work—the shorter version, *A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman*, and the longer *A Revelation of Love*. Julian's *Vision* is the earliest English treatise written by a woman, sometime in the mid 1380s, fifteen years after the near-death experience that produced her vision. She is thought to have begun expanding her *Vision* into its longer, theological form in the 1390s. Interestingly, Margery Kempe's treatise documents how she once sought the counsel of Julian of Norwich after being accused of Lollardy and false visions. There is only one extant manuscript of *The Book of Margery Kempe*, which is believed to have been transcribed in the middle of the fifteenth century.

*Mirror* is situated within the timeframe of when these treatises were composed, he actively eschews the violence that abounds in them. Heigham, on the other hand, bombards the reader with one grisly image after another as Christ is nailed to the cross:

The paine of this nayling, made the sinnowes of that arme and hand so to shrinke up, that the other hand could not reache to the other hole. They, rather then they would stand to make a new, persisting still in their former hastines, and perversenes, to cause unto him the greater paine, with al their force drew that arme, to make it come and reache to the place; and this with such force and furie, that the very joynts dislocked themselves, the breast plat opened, and the woundes were enlarged (even that of the hand already nayled) yea so far forth, that litle wanted that they did not rent the same asunder: thinke then what cruell dolor all the body did endure.<sup>55</sup>

This is a minor deviation from the narrative of the *Meditationes*, which presents two different versions of how Christ was nailed to the cross. One is the description noted above, and the other gives Christ more agency over his death, presenting him as a heroic figure: ‘Without protest, without resistance, he humbly does whatever they wish. Then when he reached the cross on the uppermost step of that short ladder, he twisted his body around; he opened up those royal arms and stretched out his most beautiful hands, extending them high for his crucifiers’.<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, Love’s *Mirror* offers both of the *Meditationes*’ versions, granting the meditant more imaginative freedom than he usually supplies with his carefully scripted instructions to ‘beholde [Christ] here in maner as I seide’.<sup>57</sup>

As readers draw nearer to the culmination of the Passion, Heigham continues his use of grotesque imagery in another apostrophe that details the effects of the crucifixion on Christ’s body:

O incomprehensible charitie! ô abisse of mercie, ô unheard-of-clemencie of our Saviour! His whole members are puld asunder upon the Crosse, his sinewes are broken, his joyntes are dissolved, his handes and feete are cruelly pieced, he is on every side mocked, scorned and blasphemed, and he amongst all these paines and torments, murmurs not, is not angrie, commands not fire to descend from heaven, nor the earth to open to swallow up his enimies, but both with teares,

Margery’s treatise was printed two times in the early sixteenth century—once by Wynkyn de Worde in 1501, and then by Henry Pepwell, who formatted it as a spiritual anthology, in 1521. For more information about the history of Margery Kempe’s treatise in early modern print, see Melissa Crofton, ‘From Medieval Mystic to Early Modern Anchoress: Rewriting *The Book of Margery Kempe*’, *Journal of the Early Book Society* 16 (Fall 2013): 89–110.

<sup>55</sup> Heigham, *Life*, 584–585.

<sup>56</sup> ‘Ipse autem sine rebellione et contradiccione humiliter facit quidquid uolunt. Cum igitur in superiori gradu illius scale parue peruenit ad crucem, renes uoluit; et aperit illa regalia brachia, et expandit manus pulcherimas, et excelsas eas porrigens crucifixoribus suis.’ Stallings-Taney ed., *Meditaciones*, 271:26–30; Taney, sr et. al eds. *Meditations*, 252. For more information on the sources of these two crucifixion versions, see footnote number one in *Meditaciones*, 253.

<sup>57</sup> Sargent, *Mirror*, 171:1–2, italics mine.

with blood, and with his venerable wordes, prayeth to his Father for their pardon.<sup>58</sup>

The long sentence structure prolongs the fervor of the aside, and leaving Christ figuratively hanging on the cross allows Heigham to intensify the cathartic element of the vision by embracing the influence of affective piety:

O most pretious wounds of our Lords side, stricken, not with that steely launce, but with the launce of divine love, which thou so faithfully borest unto our soules! O gate of heaven, ô fountaine of paradise, ô cave of most delicate and daintie wines, ô doore of the sheeppould of our Lord, by which who soever entereth is saved, and going in, and coming out, doth finde most fat and fertile pasture! Open (ô sweete Jesu) also to my soule, this holie gate, and by the same grant me a passage into that celestially wine-cellar, even to the bowells of thy love, that I also may drinke of that most sweete fountaine, and being inebriated with that most pure liquor, my soule may sweetly sleepe therin, saying with the prophet: *This is my resting place for ever and ever, here will I dwell because I have chosen the same.*<sup>59</sup>

This passage echoes the *Prickyng*, with its romanticization of the meditant's desire to find solace in Christ's wounds:

A 3ee woundes of ihesu. crist. þat are so ful of loue. & þat mai I wel seie. For on a time as i entrid in him. with myn e3en opened. me thou3te þat myn y3en were filled ful of his blod. & so i 3eode in gropande til I come to þe innerest of his herte. and þer I wonne. and soche mete as he vseth I vse & drynke of þe self drynke. Charite is bothe mete and drynke. þat hath he. & pereoffe 3euethe he me. þere I habounde in swetnesse of his loue. and of his charite. so mikel þat I mai [not] telle þe. & him þat i eer fonde in his modres wombe. I fele now how he voucheth-saf to bere my soule as his child. with-inne his blessid sides.<sup>60</sup>

The protracted language of Heigham's *Life*, combined with the sensuality he borrowed from the *Prickyng*, demonstrates how adept he was at integrating the literature of the Middle Ages to enhance his own agenda. Despite the cruel injustice Christ endured at the hands of his enemies, his death presents hope for all of his followers. Christ's body is transformed into a symbolic womb, and his 'most fat and fertile pasture' is reproductive in the sense that his bloodshed grants everlasting life through the miracle of transubstantiation. Seeking sanctuary in Christ's wounds is a devotional tradition that, at the time of the *Life's* composition, reflects the harsh reality of being an English Catholic at the time. Practising the faith entailed a degree of risk, and withdrawing into closed, secure areas was the safest way to cultivate one's spiritual development; it also reinforces the necessity of fostering

<sup>58</sup> Heigham, *Life*, 591-592, italics mine.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 611-612.

<sup>60</sup> Kane, *Prickyng*, 9:14-25.

a more inwardly driven devotional practice. The intensely affective meditations of Heigham's *Life* act as an intermediary between the literal safety of closed doors and the metaphorical safety of Christ's open wounds. Heigham advances the metaphor about Christ's open wounds a step further to expound upon the importance of a thorough and honest confession, encouraging the reader to 'Learne thou that as Christ opened his side very largely in his passion, so to open thy conscience very largely and sincerely in Confession'.<sup>61</sup> By presenting the act of confession as analogous to the Passion, Heigham fosters both knowledge and understanding of traditional Catholic doctrine in his quest to inspire seventeenth-century audiences.

Whether or not the anonymous writer of the *Meditationes* expected his text to reach such a great variety of audiences across hundreds of years and extreme religious divides, the treatise underwent some remarkable resurrections throughout its long history. Each revision breathes new life into a work that could have easily been forgotten, and the text's modifications reveal each redactor's effort to meet the spiritual needs of his readers, however much things might have changed. As the first major writer to add unique touches to the *Meditationes*, Nicholas Love sought to harness the power of affective piety and reformulate it within a more institutionally approved framework, and the Arundelian *approbatio* remains a testament to his success with this endeavor. The traditional spirituality of the *Mirror* rendered it a valuable resource for later readers who were caught in the middle of escalating tensions about Church reform, such as Sir Thomas More, who urged his fellow Catholics to consult the treatise for devotional guidance:

The people unlearned [should] occupye them selfe beside theyr other busynesse in prayour, good medytacyon, and redynge of suche englysshe bookes as moste may norysse and exncrease deuocyon. Of whyhce kynde is Bonauenture of the lyfe of Cryste, Gerson of the folowynge of Cryst, and the deuote contemlpatyue book of Scala perfectionis.<sup>62</sup>

The texts More recommended were popular, easily accessible, and, more importantly, they provided the autonomy that reformers wanted while simultaneously preserving the authority of the Church. By invoking the name of an author from the medieval past that was well-known and venerated by Catholics, More demonstrated how looking back in time can empower the devout.

<sup>61</sup> Heigham, *Life*, 613.

<sup>62</sup> Louis A. Schuster, Richard C. Marius, and James P. Lusardi, eds. *The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St. Thomas More: Volume 8, Parts I-III, The Confutations of Tyndale's Answer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 37:26-33.

*Conclusion*

Religious controversy intensified throughout the sixteenth century, with the entire foundation of spirituality shifting dramatically in the two hundred years separating the introduction of Nicholas Love's *Mirror* in 1409 and the time it resurfaced in print *c*1606. Individuals continued to enhance their spirituality with the aid of books, and printers and translators knew exactly where they could find suitable material for them—from the past. These seventeenth-century editions may look very different from Caxton's, de Worde's, and Pynson's imprints, but the manner in which Boscard and Heigham approach their commissions demonstrates the remarkable adaptability of medieval literature. In spite of the complex editorial processes involved, their recensions preserve the spirit of their predecessors, though Heigham's fullscale revision is more ambitious in scope than Boscard's. Heigham's fluid integration of material from the *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, and other seminal texts of the medieval period promotes a longstanding tradition that was vitally important to a new generation of English Catholic readers. Recusant piety found a safe haven in the literature of the Middle Ages, and the continued recirculation of the treatise shows how important it was to Catholics both in the secular world and in the environs of the cloister.