"Poema Morale": An Edition from Cambridge, Trinity College B. 14. 52

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“POEMA MORALE”: AN EDITION FROM CAMBRIDGE, TRINITY COLLEGE B. 14. 52

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is primarily focused on my modern edition and translation of “Poema Morale,” a late twelfth-century English homiletic poem. Not since Richard Morris’ great contribution to the study of early medieval literature has anyone produced a full translation of the poem from any of its seven manuscript variants. Because Morris worked 140 years ago when editorial and translation philosophies and practices were vastly different than twenty-first-century policies, a modern translation and edition are necessary, especially for an introductory student in medieval literature.

I begin my thesis with a four-part Introduction that covers the manuscripts in which “Poema Morale” is found; an analysis of Richard Morris’ edition and translation for a better understanding of Victorian practices and the poem; an overview of the history of the homiletic tradition that led to the production of this poetic homily; and finally, a discussion of textual variance and how our perception and understanding of “variance” dictates our interpretation and editing of a text. Following the Introduction, I present my Editorial and Translation Policies so that the reader may understand why I made certain choices. My edition and translation follow the explanation of my policies and appear alongside one another. I include endnotes on the text for further explanation of certain editorial or translation decisions that I made. Finally, I include my diplomatic transcription in the Appendix so that the reader may see the manuscript through my eyes. Although first-hand experience with the manuscript can never be replaced, it is my hope that my diplomatic transcription will not only bring the reader closer to the manuscript but will also provide further insight into my editorial decisions.

Having never undertaken such a tremendous task, I brought with me the beliefs I formed during my own beginning in the study of medieval literature. I began my medieval studies only two and a half years ago with a total of six courses, and my own frustrations with editions and translations led me to the desire to edit and translate the texts for myself. Through this thesis, I hope to present a modern edition and translation of a pivotal piece of early Middle English literature often forgotten in the medieval literary canon and, thus, the classroom.
INTRODUCTION

“Poema Morale” and Its Variants

As one of the earliest poems laid out as verse, and the only poetic homily in a manuscript comprised chiefly of prose homilies, “Poema Morale” holds great significance in the study of early Middle English literature.\(^1\) Besides being homiletic and didactic, the poem is among the first in the English language to contain rhyming couplets throughout the text. Previously, alliteration was the main poetic device of Old English poetry, and the use of rhyme was not common until the later Middle English period. Therefore, it is of great importance that this late twelfth-century, early Middle English poem consistently uses end-rhyme. Furthermore, “Poema Morale” shows the changing homiletic tradition in its conversational, personal style, which invites the reader to identify with the speaker.

The narrator of the text is obviously an old man—“I am now older than I was in winters and in knowledge”\(^2\)—who speaks of his “useless life” (5) with regret, and he reflects on his childish deeds with an air of someone who would change those acts if he could, to live a life devoted to God and free of sin. The poem moves from personal reflection to admonishing sermon in an attempt to save the souls of the audience by warning them against worldly pleasures; they can either forsake their sinful ways and follow the “narrow path and the green way” (343) that leads to eternal salvation, or they can walk the “broad street” (341) of their own will that leads to eternal damnation. The emotive eloquence of “Poema Morale” is apparent in the examples the speaker gives of the torments of hell:

There is wailing and weeping after each stretch;
They go from heat to cold, from cold to heat.
When they are in the heat, the cold seems like bliss to them;
When they come again to cold, they have need of heat.
Both do they suffer enough; they have no peace. (235-239)

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\(^1\) While there is still some debate about assigning specific dates to the periods of English, the dates may be approximated as follows: Old English c.900-1100, early Middle English c.1100-1250, and Middle English c.1250-1400.

However, if audience members heed the warning within the explication of hell’s torments—if they serve God and God alone—they will be rewarded with everlasting bliss, as the speaker states, “God alone shall be eternal life and bliss and eternal rest” (364).

Moreover, the speaker can be the “helper of their body and soul” (306) in their quest for salvation, but ultimately, the individual must not only turn to God and repent his sins—through fasts, prayer, and almsgiving—but he must also hold true to his word. The text makes clear that a person who is regularly guilty of drunkenness, gluttony, greed, or lust and repents only on Sunday has no place in heaven, as God rewards only those steadfast in not only their faith but also their actions. Thus, the earthly pleasures that lead to sin must be forsaken for the heavenly bliss that awaits true Christians, but in order to meet such a joyous end, one must listen to the words of the knowing preacher—the repenting elder—and apply the lessons to his life before death and the coming Judgment.

For such a critical early Middle English text, “Poema Morale” has not enjoyed much scholarly attention over the last 140 years, and although some scholars, such as Elaine Treharne, Betty Hill, and Margaret Laing, have focused upon it, no extensive work on the poem has been completed since the endeavors of Richard Morris. Fortunately, through Margaret Laing’s *Catalogue of Sources for a Linguistic Atlas of Early Medieval English*, I was able to learn that seven versions of “Poema Morale” survive\(^3\); furthermore, three manuscripts contain only fragments or a couplet of the poem. The variety of manuscripts that contain “Poema Morale” date from the twelfth century to the first quarter of the fourteenth century, which indicates an extended period of time in which the poem was known, beginning in the highly transitional period of the twelfth century and ending squarely in the later Middle English period. In order to understand fully the draw this homiletic poem had on three centuries of English audiences, another, more extensive study is required. However, what we can decipher from the Trinity version is the informal, personal nature of the poem—with its adaptability by a lack of period-specific references—that would allow its application to survive for a great length of time. Thus, what follows is a brief discussion of the contents of each manuscript in order to understand the context in which “Poema Morale” was found. The Trinity manuscript, as well as the Lambeth

\(^3\) Margaret Laing, *Catalogue of Sources for a Linguistic Atlas of Early Medieval English* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), 27. Although this is a great resource for finding the English texts of certain early English manuscripts, it does not shed much light on other important paleographical matters that may concern a student in manuscript studies, such as the content of other languages found in the manuscripts and the condition of the manuscripts.
manuscript because of its shared contents with Trinity, will be discussed in more depth than the other seven manuscripts.

Cambridge, Trinity College B. 14. 52 contains the longest version of the poem in 400 lines, and while London, Lambeth Palace Library 487 is almost contemporary to Trinity, most scholars believe Lambeth is slightly older. Trinity consists of 91 folios with “Poema Morale” occupying the first gathering—folios 2 recto (2r) to 9 verso (9v)—and pagination begins immediately after the homiletic poem, running from 1, which is also marked as page 10, to 157. Text is absent from pages 154 and 155, and Laing explains that the manuscript is composed in three hands, to which she refers as A, B, and C. The majority of the text appears to be written in the hand of B with A heavily contributing and C only adding text to pages 156 and 157, which contain a sermon on Isaiah. Because pagination begins after the poem, it may indicate that “Poema Morale” was later considered irrelevant compared to the prose homilies or that it had been added to the compilation of homilies at a separate time. I have not had direct access to the manuscript, and therefore cannot fully substantiate my theory of the inclusion of the poem at an earlier or later date; however, hand A composed folios 1r through 9v, as well as the first twenty-four pages of the prose homilies. Although hand B, according to Laing, was the main contributor to the manuscript compilation, I cannot know whether the two scribes were working simultaneously or whether one came after the other until I have been able to study the manuscript for myself. I believe, however, that the possibility of the earlier or later addition of the homiletic poem is significant to the way in which we view this manuscript. If the poem was part of the original compilation of homilies, why did pagination begin with the first prose homily? Might this represent a culture in which the use of poetry in sermons was not yet a popular idea? Moreover, if the poem was added to the homiliary later, thus possibly accounting for the lack of pagination on its folios, might this be an indication that the later manuscript users had need for poetry in their sermons? The poem’s date of inclusion in the manuscript might allow a better understanding of the use of poetic homilies in the changing homiletic tradition of early Middle English; this understanding would allow us to consider not only the changing style and tone that

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4 Laing places the Lambeth manuscript in the last quarter of the twelfth century (111) and suggests the Trinity manuscript originated sometime in the second half of the twelfth century (37). See also Richard Morris, Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century, Early English Text Society o.s. 53 (London: Trübner, 1873), who states, “The Lambeth MS. is older than the Trinity MS., and has far more archaic forms” (viii, footnote 1).
5 Laing, 37-8.
6 Because writing materials, especially vellum, were expensive and hard to come by, the lack of writing on these pages may indicate the amount of resources available to the scribe or the scriptorium in which he worked.
7 Ibid, 37-38.
serves a very different audience at this time but also the different, poetic genre in which the sermon was composed in our study of early Middle English homiletic compositions.

“Poema Morale” is written in 24 long lines on folios 2r through 4r, in 28 lines on folios 4v through 9r, and the last 20 lines appear on folio 9v; the poem contains capitalized letters at the head of each line with a space between the first letter and the remainder of the word. This might, thus, be the first example of capitalization in English poetry, now laid out as verse. The first letter, [i] in “Ich,” is four lines long and appears more ornate than the other letters. The lines are also written in septenary rhyming couplets throughout the text, and the scribe uses the punctus quite regularly at the end of the lines but rarely within the lines. Many scribal corrections can be seen written above words of the text where they were previously omitted, and erasures can also be seen quite clearly, such as in the case of line 153 where the scribe erroneously wrote the first four words of line 154 and then erased his mistake, demonstrating, of course, that he is working from an exemplar. Beside line 70, which ends with the word “manke,” the words “Manca” and “Mancus” have been written in a later hand, seemingly to remind the later user of the manuscript of the meaning of the word. What appears to be a Latin prayer is added at the bottom of folio 8v, and written in a different hand from the one that added the notation by line 70,. Additionally, the vellum appears quite thin in places as the ink has bled through to the other side, and the scribe seems to have been experimenting with the form of the [n] majuscule, the two forms of which can be seen in lines 187 and 189, as well as in lines 363 and 365.

Another important feature of the Trinity manuscript that must affect our understanding of its texts is its link to the Lambeth manuscript; Trinity not only shares “Poema Morale” with Lambeth, but also five sermons. As mentioned above, Lambeth and Trinity appear to be contemporaneous; the extent to which their contents are shared helps to illuminate the changing homiletic traditions of the early Middle English period. In the list below, I have indicated which homilies coincide with the Lambeth homilies by placing L and the homily number in parentheses after the translated titles, which were written in Latin originally. The homilies found in the Trinity manuscript, after “Poema Morale,” are as follows:

1. Of Advent
2. The Second Sunday in Advent
3. The Third Sunday in Advent
4. The Creed (L vii)
5. The Lord’s Prayer
6. The Nativity of Our Lord
7. Epiphany
8. The Purification of St. Mary
9. Septuagesima
10. Shrift
11. Ash Wednesday
12. The First Sunday in Lent
13. The Second Sunday in Lent
14. Mid-Lent Sunday
15. Palm Sunday
16. Easter Day
17. The First Sunday After Easter
18. The Fourth Sunday After Easter
19. Ascension Day
20. Whit Sunday
21. Sermon on Psalm LIII. 1
22. St. John the Baptist
23. St. John the Baptist
24. Mary Magdalene
25. St. James (L xvii)
26. St. Laurence (L xiii)
27. Assumption of St. Mary
28. Of the Dead
29. St. Andrew
30. Be Strong in War (L xvi)
31. Be Wary and Watchful in Prayer
32. Discourse Upon Mark VIII. 34 (L xv)
33. Discourse On Psalm CXIX. 110
34. Discourse on Isaiah XI. I

In relation to the shared homilies of Trinity and Lambeth, Richard Morris notes that the homilies of Trinity are more complete than those found in Lambeth; he explains, however, that “none of them […] seem to be copied, as some of the Lambeth Homilies are, from Ælfric’s
treatises. Most of them, perhaps, were originally translated from Latin Homilies, though a few have the appearance of original compositions.\textsuperscript{8} As Elaine Treharne notes, the work of Ælfric “would be as valid in the 1170s as it was in the 990s” by means of his “sparse or, at most, opaque references to contemporary events,” which allowed for easier adaptation and transmission in the Lambeth manuscript and may have influenced the composition of the Trinity homilies.\textsuperscript{9} Richard Morris also claims that the “religious instruction” in the Trinity homilies is “of a very simple character; and all the discourses, while not without interest, possess much quaintness in the mode in which the Scriptures were popularly expounded.”\textsuperscript{10} This simplicity and informality further link the Trinity manuscript to Lambeth, and even though Trinity may have no direct relation to Ælfrician texts, the five shared sermons may support the notion “that at least these, if not many other Homilies of this series are transcripts” from the Lambeth manuscript, which may imply the Trinity scribes’ access to the Lambeth manuscript or that these homilies were well known at the time.\textsuperscript{11}

London, Lambeth Palace Library 487 is composed of 67 folios; the seventeen homilies are found on folios 1r through 59v, and “Poema Morale” is found on folios 59v through 65r.\textsuperscript{12} The Lambeth manuscript is written in two hands, and “Poema Morale” is the last text written by hand A, who composed the texts on folios 1r through 65r; hand B, possibly an early thirteenth-century scribe, composed a version of “On Ureison of Ure Loverde,” which is found on the last folios of the manuscript, folios 65v through 67r.\textsuperscript{13} The homilies that make up the majority of the Lambeth manuscript focus mainly on shrift—confession—and the speaker urges his congregation “to renounce the devil, to repent of sin, and to determine to lead a better life for the future.”\textsuperscript{14} The narrator of the Lambeth homilies also speaks in a “familiar mode of address and homely illustrations,” and he refers to his congregation frequently as “dear men” and “good

\textsuperscript{8} Morris, \textit{Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century}, ix.
\textsuperscript{10} Morris, \textit{Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century}, x.
\textsuperscript{12} Laing, 111.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 111.
\textsuperscript{14} Richard Morris, \textit{Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises}, Early English Text Society o.s. 29, 34 (London: Trübner, 1867), xii.
men,” which “must have done much to secure him attentive listeners to the end of the sermon.”

As briefly mentioned above, “Poema Morale” is composed with an informal tone, as well as the homilies contained in the Trinity manuscript, and the shared conversational, relaxed form of speech further emphasizes the connection between Lambeth and Trinity as pivotal manuscripts in a transitional period of English literature and culture.

Most importantly, however, is the fact that “Poema Morale” is four lines shorter in Lambeth than it is in Trinity, even though the former is supposedly the older of the two.

Common medieval practice has held that the oldest version of a text is somehow more closely linked to the *Ur*-text, or original and authoritative text—a practice that has been under scrutiny recently—but Morris has referred to the occurrence of “Poema Morale” in Lambeth as “a *portion* of an old English poem known as ‘A Moral Ode.’” Does this mean, then, that the Trinity version is the complete text, and if so, why did Morris choose to translate the poem from the Lambeth—and therefore “incomplete”—version instead? Did Morris favor the age of the manuscript over the wholeness of the text? While these are important questions to address, the fact remains that the Lambeth version of “Poema Morale” has been favored in his translation, which means the Trinity poem has never been fully translated in its own right. In an attempt to understand the changing practice of homiletic composition to apprehend the evolving English culture of this period, we must study each of these texts separately and collectively.

I turn, now, to London, British Library, Egerton 613, which was composed in the first half of the thirteenth century and contains *two* copies of “Poema Morale” in two different hands, E and e, on folios 7r through 12v and folios 64r through 70v. Although Laing only mentions seven different hands in the production of the English texts in the Egerton manuscript, Betty Hill notes twelve scribes. Egerton contains texts not only in English but also in French and Latin in its seventy folios; folios 71r through 74v are “four half leaves about four inches wide containing [medical] recipes in a fifteenth-century hand” in English. Hill notes that the E text is 398 lines long and written in a mid-thirteenth-century hand whereas the e text contains only 367 lines and was written in the first quarter of the thirteenth century; however, Hill suggests that, based on the

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15 Ibid., xii.
16 Ibid., v, my emphasis.
17 Laing, 85.
19 Hill, 358, note 2.
condition of folios 1r and 70v, the rest of the e text may have been lost.\textsuperscript{20} We know that the scribe responsible for the e text also wrote some of the French texts, as the French piece immediately preceding “Poema Morale”—“Address to Our Lady”—was written by the e scribe. Before the E text, the manuscript contains “English phrases in macaronic (Anglo-Norman and Latin) prose,” which indicates an important cultural shift in the composition of manuscripts in England at the time.\textsuperscript{21} Moreover, Hill believes that the prose was “a tract for nuns under conventual discipline”—and not the last text in the manuscript clearly meant for the instruction of nuns—which would imply the religious use of the Egerton manuscript.\textsuperscript{22}

Previously, the Lambeth and Trinity manuscripts contained only homiletic compositions in early Middle English, and the use of the manuscripts were quite obvious to even the most casual of readers. The Egerton manuscript, however, contains three languages, which emphasizes the shift to a trilingual tradition in thirteenth-century England, and while there are certainly several religious texts in the compilation, they are not of the same exegetical and hortatory nature found in the homilies of Lambeth and Trinity. The sermons in the previous manuscripts were surely meant for an audience composed of the laity while the Egerton manuscript appears to have been composed to aid a religious audience, in both their preaching and the cultivation of their own religious lives.

Oxford, Jesus College 29 was composed in the last quarter of the thirteenth century and is a combination of two manuscripts. The first part of the manuscript consists of fifteenth-century paper and vellum that contains “a Latin chronicle of the Kings of England 900-1445”; the second part of the manuscript contains 114 folios and is written in one hand with twenty-seven English texts and a couple in French.\textsuperscript{23} “Poema Morale” is found on folios 242r through 247v and is only 390 lines long; line 388 appears to have been the last line originally—“Þat we mote to hime cume. hwene we heonne wendeþ. Amen”\textsuperscript{24}—which corresponds with line 400 in the Trinity version—“Þat we moten þider cumen þane we henne wende.” However, the scribe then added lines 389 and 390: “Bidde we nu leoue freond. yonge and ek olde. / Þat he þat þis wyrty wot. his

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 352. Hill writes, “Folios 1r and 70v are in a very worn condition and the binding must have been missing for some time. […] It is obvious from the extremely worn condition of f. 70v, the last leaf of e, that the rest of the text has been lost.”
\textsuperscript{21} Laing, 85.
\textsuperscript{23} Laing, 145-7.
saule be þer atholde. Amen,” which do not correspond to the Trinity version.\textsuperscript{25} In Specimens of Early English, Morris published editions of “Poema Morale” from the Jesus and Trinity manuscripts, opposite one another, to show the dialectical differences in the text. Otherwise, the Jesus version of the poem has received little attention, probably because a copy of “The Owl and the Nightingale” (folios 229r through 241v)—an important Middle English poem that humorously debates issues ranging from dirty jokes to religion, which survives in only two manuscripts and has become a part of the literary canon—has overshadowed the homiletic poem.

Nevertheless, the Jesus manuscript is an important occurrence of “Poema Morale” because of its context. As the Egerton manuscript is an important example of the growing trilingual tradition in thirteenth-century England, so the Jesus manuscript is an important example of the changing context in which “Poema Morale” was produced. The inclusion of “The Owl and the Nightingale” alone is a significant change in the surrounding texts of the poem, having first appeared amongst prose homilies in Lambeth and Trinity, but the proximity of the entertaining poem to the homiletic poem is of great importance as well. “The Owl and the Nightingale” appears immediately before “Poema Morale” and is preceded by “The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ,” but the manuscript also contains “prose on the shires and hundreds of England” in English, which would further suggest a different purpose for the manuscript than even the Egerton manuscript.\textsuperscript{26} The combination of religious prose and poetry, “The Owl and the Nightingale,” and the “prose on the shires” may suggest that the Jesus manuscript was used as an anthology of contemporary texts. Rather than having one specific purpose, such as aiding in the preaching to a congregation or the cultivation of steadfast faith in nuns, the multiple potential functions of Jesus College 29 seem to widen its range of use, thus influencing how we view the new context in which “Poema Morale” was reproduced.

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 4 was written in the first half of the thirteenth century. Its only text written in English is “Poema Morale”; the hand of the English text does not appear elsewhere in the text.\textsuperscript{27} Other than being partially printed by George Hickes in his Linguarum Veterum Septentrionalium Thesaurus (1703)—the first printing of the poem—the Digby manuscript is unique in the way in which the scribe copied the poem. Instead of the long rhyming couplets of “Poema Morale” in every other manuscript, the Digby scribe wrote the poem in “half lines arranged as quatrains—764 short lines the equivalent of 382 long lines,”

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\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 220. This ending does not correspond with the ending in Lambeth either.
\textsuperscript{26} Laing, 146-7.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 127.
\end{flushright}
which still renders the poem shorter than Trinity.\textsuperscript{28} Unfortunately, since I do not know the other contents of this manuscript, I am unable to discuss the changing manuscript context with any confidence; however, because this manuscript was written and compiled in a similar period to Egerton and Jesus, I believe it is accurate to assume that the use of French and Latin, as well as a growing variety of literature, can be found in the non-English texts of the Digby manuscript.

The last full copy of “Poema Morale” is found in Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, McClean 123, which can be dated between the last quarter of the thirteenth century and the first quarter of the fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{29} Other than the homiletic poem, the only other English in the mostly French manuscript, with pieces of Latin, is on folio 114v, which are “names of four English graphs.”\textsuperscript{30} Folios 115r through 120r contain the poem, which Anna C. Paues found in her 1907 study.\textsuperscript{31} Paues notes that the first two lines of “Poema Morale” in McClean—“Þe holi gostes miȝte, us alle helpe & diȝte, us wissie & us teche, / Y-scilde us fram þe unwiȝte, bi daie & bi niȝte, þat þencheþ us bipeche”\textsuperscript{32}—are not actually part of the poem but are, instead, “the first stanza of the sermonizing poem Sinners Beware”; she ascertains that the two texts were probably both found in the original text from which “Poema Morale” was copied.\textsuperscript{33} She adds, however, that the lines may not have been corrected, as a blatant mistake may have been, because they were “placed as a suitable ‘motto’ at the head of the poem.”\textsuperscript{34} The McClean version of the poem also only contains 337 lines, which is the shortest version of the text we have.

The last three manuscripts that contain parts of “Poema Morale” include London, British Library, Royal 7 C iv; Maidstone Museum A.13; and Durham University Library, Cosin V.iii.2. Laing places Royal sometime between the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, and the partly erased lines of “Poema Morale” are on folio 106v. What is left of the lines reads, “elde me is bestolen on er[…] / Ne mæȝ ic ȝeseo before me […]”\textsuperscript{35} The Maidstone manuscript is from the first half of the thirteenth century and contains mostly Latin texts. Folio 93r, however, contains a short version of “The Proverbs of Alfred” and two lines of “Poema Morale,” which are repeated on folios 46v and 253r.\textsuperscript{36} Laing mentions that the lines begin with “Swines brede is Swiȝe Swete” and then “close to the version in Lambeth 487,” which read, “swa is of wilde dore. / alto

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 127.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{31} Anna C. Paues, “A Newly Discovered Manuscript of the Poema Morale,” \textit{Anglia} 30 (1907), 217.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 227.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 220.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 221
\textsuperscript{35} Laing, 101.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 120.
dore he is abuh ṛ þe þefō þer fore his swore” in lines 143 to 144 in Morris’ edition in *Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises*. The Cosin manuscript comes from the first quarter of the fourteenth century and is a collection of Latin sermons. The only two instances of English text in the manuscript occur on folio 127r, which is a short quotation from a Middle English lyric, and on folio 127v, which are a version of the same lines written above. The lines of “Poema Morale” read, “suete bet swines brede ant of Wilde dere. harde ye hus abiet hat haruore gift hiis swire,” and the English text is written in only one hand.

Although I have not commented on the various dialects present in these nine manuscripts, it is important for the reader to note that “Poema Morale” was reproduced not only with scribal interference, through additions and omissions, but also the dialects of the evolving language contributed to orthographical variations. I have not found a discussion of language necessary in my brief overview of each occurrence of “Poema Morale” in these Middle English manuscripts because the focus of this current work is not to conduct a philological study but rather to present a new edition and translation, accompanied with some historical, theoretical, and textual context, to a beginning student of early Middle English literature. While a few scholars have published editions of the poem from a few manuscripts, such as the first edition by Hickes, not enough work has been done on this remarkable homiletic poem, and in the section that follows, I will analyze Morris’ edition and translation of “Poema Morale” in an attempt to become better acquainted not just with the work that has been done on the poem but with the poem itself.

**Richard Morris and “Poema Morale”**

The most extensive work on “Poema Morale” to date was done by Richard Morris in the second half of the nineteenth century, which led to four editions and one translation of the poem. Morris’ editorial and linguistic work is of prime importance to Old and Middle English Studies, and most of his editions are still the standard scholarly works for the many individual texts he published. There is no doubt that his extraordinary expertise is masterful, and he would be the first, one imagines, to encourage new work on his editions. His first publication of the poetic homily in 1867, *Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises*, contains the homilies from the Lambeth manuscript; with each of the texts, Morris adds a nineteenth-century translation

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38 Laing, 53.
39 Ibid., 53.
opposite the early Middle English text, which includes the first, and only, full translation of “Poema Morale.” Additionally, the E text from the Egerton manuscript is included in one of the appendices, which came after the first edition of the Egerton poems by Frederick J. Furnivall in his 1862 publication *Early English Poems and Lives of Saints*. The second part of Morris’ series of Old English homilies, *Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century*, is an 1873 edition of all the texts in the Trinity manuscript, which is similar to the contents in the Lambeth manuscript, as I previously mentioned. The Trinity version of “Poema Morale,” however, is presented without a translation, unlike the translations Morris provides for the rest of the Trinity homilies, though Morris provides marginal glossing periodically; instead, the reader is referred back to Morris’ first installment of the *Old English Homilies* series for a full translation of the text from Lambeth. In 1882, Morris produced his final work containing the homiletic poem, *Specimens of Early English*, in which he presents an edition from the Jesus manuscript alongside the Trinity variant in order to emphasize the dialectical differences between the two manuscripts.

As is evident from this list of his works on “Poema Morale,” Richard Morris was an outstanding and crucial contributor to the study of not only early English literature, which includes Old English texts, but specifically early Middle English. However, despite these early editions, making texts accessible to a wide audience, early Middle English literature has struggled to be included in the medieval literary canon as a relevant point of discussion. Thus, many works remain untouched or ignored, save for a few that were able to make their way into anthologies, such as “The Owl and the Nightingale.” What is required now, and what I hope is only the beginning through this thesis, is more extensive work on early Middle English texts forgotten or disregarded, not only to finally dust off these unused manuscripts and bring them into the twenty-first century, but also to gain further insight into the people and culture that produced such texts. I hope to begin this endeavor with “Poema Morale” and the Trinity manuscript as first seen through a nineteenth-century reverend and then with a fresh view from a modern medieval student.

The edition of the Trinity variant with which Morris supplies the reader, in both of his works, at first glance appears to be the product of a conservative editor. He maintains all the

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40 Furnivall states that he referred to the later version of the poem in Egerton for “some of the metrical points,” which means the edition of the poem in his text is, essentially, a combination of the two copies, and consists of only 200 lines (22). Morris’ edition of the Egerton E text contains 272 lines (288).
42 A “conservative” editor attempts to replicate what is found in the manuscript, word for word, error for error, assuming the medieval scribe knew the language and material better than the modern scholar. By contrast, a
manuscript’s use of the punctus, at the end of the lines and within them, and only capitalizes the first letter of each line, as seen in the manuscript. Furthermore, Morris does not replace [u] with [v], or vice versa, nor does he replace [j] with [i], examples of which can be seen in words like “Vnnet,” which I have written as “Unnet” (5); “haueð,” which I have written as “haveð” (40); and “juel,” which I have written as “ivel” (19). He even supplies the reader with notes at the bottom of the page with the line number and the word as it appears in the manuscript, the first example of which can be seen in line 24 where he writes that “Nu” instead of “Ne” was written in the manuscript. Additionally, all the Tironian notae are expanded in italics throughout, as well as the scribal abbreviations and a few of his orthographical emendations. This is, however, just the beginning of his problem with inconsistency, when viewed through the lens of the modern editor.

Although Morris appears to practice a conservative editorial policy, there are several instances in which he takes the poem and makes it his own through unnecessary emendations, irregular editorial notations and indicators for changes to the text, and inconstant use of italics, among other problems. The first examples of inconsistency, however, come from two instances in which the word for Deity has been capitalized—in lines 8 and 26. Nowhere else may this manifestation of a majuscle, outside the first letter of a line, be witnessed. Since Morris made no comment about his purposes for capitalizing “God,” there are two assumptions that can be made, one more charitable than the other: on the one hand, Morris may have capitalized the first two instances of the word referring to Deity in order to distinguish it and its use from that of “god,” which can mean “good”; on the other hand, and of a less charitable postulation, he may have simply made typographical errors, though I do not believe this to be the case. Regardless of the purpose of these two instances of capitalization, the existence of “God” instead of “god” in the edition without editorial comment leaves the modern reader guessing and wondering, which should not be the case.

The subsequent problem I found in comparing Morris’ edition with my own was his desire to correct the endings of verbs, and other words, in their use of [d] instead of [ð]. The first

“liberal” editor takes the work into their own hands by trying to improve the text in their edition and translation to more fully emulate how the Urtext would have read, how the author originally intended. This can be done easily with works that have well known authors, like Chaucer, but this same tactic does not work on texts by anonymous authors, like “Poema Morale.”

43 This note, however, is inaccurate. Even with a facsimile of the manuscript, I can clearly read “Ne” where Morris is certain it reads “Nu.” The rest of his notes appear accurate, except for the note he makes for line 325; I believe, however, that this must have been a typing error on his part as he did correct the same word he attributes to line 325 in line 326.
instance of this apparent necessity is on line 70, where Morris writes “haueð” where the manuscript clearly reads “haued.” I have changed the [u] to a [v], but I have not altered the ending of the word in any way because I do not believe the change is required. Morris’ edition is obviously meant for scholarly use as it was not edited with the introductory student in mind, but changing the [d] to an [ð] does not further the scholarly agenda as both “haved” and “haveð” are accepted forms of the verb “haven” in the Middle English Dictionary. Therefore, Morris might have been of one of two minds: one, he was partial to the [ð] ending for certain verbs, particularly “haven,” since that is where he most often makes the correction; and two, because study of early Middle English was just beginning at the time the Trinity edition was published, Morris may not have known of the common occurrence of the [d] ending on verbs.

Morris has, however, changed the ending of the verb from [ð] to [d], such is the case for “idemð” in line 173. The following line concludes with the word “iquemd,” which suggest Morris made the correction to achieve the end-rhyme. His concern for maintaining the end-rhyme reinforces my opinion that Morris has strayed from the conservative approach to editing, and although the Middle English Dictionary does not include an entry for “idemð,” which means it very well may have been a scribal error that lead to a glitch in the rhyme scheme, I have left the word as it reads in the manuscript because it does not appear to have any detrimental effect in the translation process. Furthermore, the reader should already be acquainted with “idemd” in line 106, which turns the word into a verbal noun, and the presence of “idemð” should not impede the reader’s ability to make the connection to “idemd.”

Morris also adds words he believes are missing and required, but as with many of his emendations and additions, this practice has proven inconsistent. He first adds “is” in brackets, as he does most of his additions, in line 33, thus writing, “Wis [is] þe him selue biðencheð þe hwile he mótt libben,” and while the line does lack the necessary verb, it may also be implied by casually reading the line and through further translation. The edition itself does not need to include such additions in order to present the text accurately and intelligibly to the reader, and a translation that includes the verb may easily include a note on the addition to the text. The trouble, however, with Morris’ addition practice is only emphasized by the words he chooses to add and which he chooses to leave out. For example, the first instance in which I felt an addition might have been warranted is in line 43, where the manuscript reads, “For þarf he ben ofdrad of fure ne of þieue.” I have written this line in my edition as “For [þar ne] þarf he ben ofdrad of

44 Middle English Dictionary (University of Michigan, 2001), http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/.
fure ne of þieve” because the word “þarf,” which means “to be necessary,” must be negated, and the later use of “ne” after “fur” does not extend to the verb.

The rest of the additions Morris makes are words that are unnecessary because they are implied by the semantic and grammatical context of the line. Such words as “he,” “to,” “for,” “hem,” “we,” and “non” can be found in lines that imply their objects, subjects, negation, and prepositions through other words or verbal endings. Morris adds “he” after “Hadde” in line 49 so that it reads, “Hadde [he] fonded some stunde he wolde seggen oðer,” and from the ending of “Hadde” and the later appearance of “he,” the reader should be able to understand the missing “he” that Morris has found necessary to include. Furthermore, he adds “non” before “unsele” in line 201 so that the text reads, “Nare noman elles dead ne sic ne [non] unsele,” but again, the addition is nonessential to the reader’s comprehension of the line because of the abundance of negation. I do believe, however, that Morris brings many of these additions to the text based on his readings of the Lambeth and Egerton versions. However, the vast majority of these inclusions are unnecessary for the reader to understand the text, and although it may help the meter of the text, which is a practice more commonly seen in a liberal approach to a text, these words are not required.

A minor problem that is related to the bracketed additions mentioned above is the added letters to words that appear in brackets and sometimes in italics, as well as the occasional appearance of a corrected word without a note, which occurs more often than one would think. In line 72, the scribe wrote “rihtwinesse,” which means “righteousness”; a casual glance at this word is enough for a reader to know its meaning without consulting a dictionary, but Morris has found the need to include an [s], thus writing “rihtwi[s]nesse.” Further examples of this include “[a]londe” in line 196, “dru[n]ken” in lines 257 and 262, “Þa[n]” in line 324, and “Þa[t]” in line 349, all of which can be interpreted in their contexts without the help of an editor. For example, in line 257, the homilist lists vices—specifically plunder, theft, whoredom, and drunkenness—that would lead to the individual’s undoing in the afterlife, so it should not be too difficult to follow the homilist’s line of thinking. Again, in line 262 the homilist discusses what will happen to those who commit sin often in drinking and eating, and the reader should not have a problem understanding “druken” as it is written in the manuscript. It is possible that the consistent scribal errors, especially in the omission of [n], may indicate that the scribe forgot the macrons to indicate abbreviations. However, the main problem is not the fact that Morris found the need to
add these letters and words to already comprehensible words and phrases. but the inconsistent use with which he practices his policy.

In line 192, the scribe originally wrote “qca,” and then an [i] was added over the [q] to indicate a correction to the text, thus rendering the word “qica.” Morris has added a [u] after the [q], thus writing “quica” in his edition. Although I have not written the word as such in my own edition—I have included a note stating the obvious scribal error, as I have with “druken”—I do believe Morris is correct in addressing the spelling since it keeps with his own editorial policy. The problem arises when he wanders from his primary means of indicating an emendation or addition as separate from a scribal abbreviation or an expansion of the archaic ampersand; notice that I have written the word above with an italicized [u] instead of the familiar brackets, which Morris is fond of using. This creates some confusion in reading his text because of the ambiguous derivation of the letter [u]. Are we to understand it as a scribal correction? If so, why hasn’t he italicized any other form of scribal correction, such as the [i] in the same word? Are we to understand it as an emendation? If so, why has he strayed from his set pattern of using square brackets? Moreover, this is not the last instance of italicized letters in the middle of words; the two other cases, however, are found in the section of the manuscript that I was unable to obtain through facsimile, so I have only had Morris’ text at my disposal. In line 79, Morris writes “crist,” and in line 95, he writes “iqueme.” Since I experienced the same problem with the [u] in “quica” above, I have assumed that these two cases are also emendations to the text. Without notes or a facsimile of the manuscript, however, I have been left wondering about the use of the italicized letters, and this brings me to my next point in editorial inconsistency—notations.

I have found at least fourteen instances in which Morris has left out notes about his emendations and omissions to the poem, and there are several more missing regarding his additions of words and letters. Morris does, however, give periodic notes, which emphasizes the inconstant method with which he approached his job as editor. I thought, at first, that perhaps there was a pattern to the amount of notations he supplied; perhaps he became more industrious toward the end of the poem. Unfortunately, I have not found that to be the case, though there were certainly more comments in the last 150 lines than I had expected. Since Morris has made a habit out of replacing [d] with [ð], it is not surprising that his first emendation occurs on line 10 of the poem in the form of “ofðinkeð.” The manuscript reads “ofðinkeð” here, and as I have
written before, though it may be a scribal error,\textsuperscript{45} I have merely taken note of it while presenting the reader with the text as I found it. Morris, however, is at least true to his policy in making such changes, but his method of indication is completely absent. When he makes the first “haueð” correction on line 70, there is a note at the bottom of the page that shows the reader that the manuscript writes “haued” instead, and there is no other indication of the correction in the text—no italics and no brackets. However, in line 10, there are no italics, no brackets, and no comments at the bottom of the page, which leaves the reader with the false impression that the manuscript contains the $[\delta]$ instead of the $[d]$. As there are several other instances in which the textual emendations and omissions require, but lack, notes, I have found this to be perhaps the most significant inconsistency in Morris’ editorial practice, which he never truly explains to the reader. However, since the Early English Text Society\textsuperscript{46} produced his edition, it is to be assumed, as I mentioned earlier, that these texts were meant for scholars and serious students of medieval literature. Furthermore, nineteenth-century editorial practices surely dictated Morris’ own policy, especially in the additions he makes to the text, and while the Victorian practice might have found no need for explanation, I believe Morris’ edition would have benefited from a note to the reader regarding his editorial practice, as well as a more consistent application of his policy.

I turn now to a discussion of Morris’ translation of “Poema Morale,” with which I had several problems in the beginning. The first problem, perhaps, was my ignorance of the derivation of the poem’s translation, which was from the Lambeth variant. Once I had that matter sorted out and realized Morris was not, in fact, making up random lines not present in the Trinity text and omitting lines that were, I still found myself in a quandary. The first issue that any modern reader would have with Morris’ translation would be the archaic form with which he writes, which was standard writing in the nineteenth century and I, therefore, cannot fault him for what appear to be archaisms today, but the writing style would still cause some confusion for a modern student. As an example, I have presented the first ten lines of his translation below:

\begin{quote}
I am now older than I was in years and in lore,
I wield more than I did, my wit ought to be more.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{45} Although the use of $[d]$ instead of $[\delta]$ in this example may indicate a scribal error, like the examples above with the omitted $[n]$ and other letters, this may, in fact, be a case of dialectical variation in which the scribe moves fluidly between $[d]$ and $[\delta]$.

\textsuperscript{46} The Early English Text Society was founded by Frederick Furnivall in 1864 at the University of Oxford in an attempt to make accessible to students early English literature, and the society still produces important texts that we would otherwise be without today. For more information, please refer to the website: http://users.ox.ac.uk/~eets/.
Well long have I been a child, in words and in deeds,
Though I be old in years, too young am I in wisdom.
An idle life have I led, and still appear to lead;
When I bethink me well of it, full sore I am in dread.
Most all that I have done befalls to childhood (childishness).
Full late I have repented me, but may God have mercy upon me!
Many idle words I have uttered since I could speak,
Many childish deeds I have done, of which I now repent.\textsuperscript{47}

The use of the word “lore” would immediately discourage an introductory student as the word has several implications; in Modern English, we use the word in relation to myth, such as folklore, as well as to knowledge, such as baseball lore, but the former seems to be more common among twenty-first-century readers, and that definition simply is not accurate in the context of the sentence. The second problem with the archaic, nineteenth-century style is the use of the word “wield,” which would be understood by the reader, but it would still come across as antiquated. The purpose of my work is to present a twenty-first-century translation in Modern English, as best I can, alongside a modern edition; the word “wield” simply would not fit in a modern interpretation of the word “wealde.” Moreover, the words “bethink” (6) and “befalls” (7) have also fallen into disuse in Modern English, which only further emphasizes the obsolescence of these words in a modern translation.

Not only are the words outdated, though, but the phrases and syntax would also appear antiquated to a modern reader, which further begs for a new translation of the poem. The obsolete phrases that abound in Morris’ translation are evident in these ten lines with phrases like “Well long” (3) and “Full late” (8)—we would simply say “Too long” and “too slowly”—and the use of the subjunctive in line four—“Though I be”—simply is not used in Modern English. The subjunctive, in fact, has been dying out of English grammar for some time, and the best way to render this particular phrase subjunctive today would be to write, “Though I may be.” Furthermore, the best example of the antiquated syntax Morris uses in his translation would be in line six: “When I bethink me well of it, full sore I am in dread.” Especially when spoken aloud, this line sounds particularly stilted to the modern ear, and the modern editor would serve the reader best by writing something along the lines of “When I meditate carefully on it, I am deeply afraid.” Morris’ use of syntax is akin to “Yoda-speak” to modern readers, with his placing the

\textsuperscript{47} Morris, \emph{Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises}, 158 and 160, lines 1-10.
subjects and verbs after the objects; for example, line nine reads, “Many idle words I have uttered since I could speak.” In a Modern English translation, the line written as “I have spoken many idle words ever since I could speak” would better serve the reader because it is more straightforward than Morris’ stilted translation.

I include the same ten lines from my translation of the poem below for comparison to Morris’ translation:

I am now older than I was in winters and in knowledge.
I possess more than I did; my wit ought to be more.
I have been a child in words and in deeds too long;
Though I may be old in winters, I am too young in wisdom.
I have led, and still appear to lead, a useless life;
When I meditate carefully on it, I am deeply afraid.
Most everything that I have done is idleness and childishness.
I have reflected on myself too slowly, but may God have mercy on me.
I have spoken many idle words ever since I could speak,

And I have done many reckless deeds, of which I repent now. (1-10)

Although Morris and I have differing opinions on particular translations of the words, such as my use of the word “reckless” in line ten for “ʒeunge” where he writes “childish” for Lambeth’s “ʒunge,” the reader can easily see that my translation contains modern vocabulary, phrases, syntax, and punctuation in an attempt to make the text more accessible to a twenty-first-century student. I have not, however, agreed with some of the translation choices Morris has made in other places in the poem.

Because the Lambeth variant and the Trinity variant have many words, and even lines, that are not shared with one another,48 Morris’ translation often reads very differently from my own translation; however, there are enough instances in which the early Middle English word or phrase is common to both manuscript versions to indicate our different opinions on translating the text. For example, line 36 in the Trinity manuscript reads, “For mani mannes sore iswinc habbeð ofte unholde,” while the same line reads, “Monies monnes sare iswine habbeð ofte unholde,” in the Lambeth manuscript. Yet, even though his endnotes say otherwise, in the text

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48 I have listed the five extra lines found in Trinity that are not present in Lambeth, as well as the one line in the Lambeth, Jesus, and Egerton manuscripts that does not occur in Trinity, below in the last page of this section.
Morris still writes, “Many kinds of sore trouble have often the infirm.” In my translation, I have written the line, “For the unfriendly often have many a man’s suffering trouble,” and I am uncertain as to why Morris writes the text as such in his translation if he acknowledges the problem in his endnotes.

The majority of the problems I have had with Morris’ translation of the poem derive from single word definitions that alter the context or meaning of the line. One example of this comes from a scribal discrepancy rather than difference in translation practices by modern editors: line 68 in Lambeth reads, “þet is þe wunderlukeste chep; þet eni mon efre funde,” while the same line in Trinity reads, “Þis is þet wunderlukeste ware þat ani man funde.” The key difference between the two lines is the word “chep” in Lambeth and “ware” in Trinity. The meaning of the word “chep” comes from the Old English word “sceap,” which means “bargain” and translates as the “most wonderful bargain.” Translated literally, the Trinity version renders this same phrase the “most wonderful wares” or “protection,” depending on which literal definition, derived from the Old English “waru,” an editor accepts. In the context of the poem, however, the word “wares,” “merchandise,” and even “protection” do not fully portray the meaning of the line. The preceding lines discuss the ability for each person to “buy the kingdom of heaven with what he has” (65), whether he is rich or poor. Admittedly, the word “bargain” could work here, especially with the use of the word “buy” in line 65; according to the Middle English Dictionary, however, when “ware” is used in relation to God, the translation may mean “salvation,” which is ultimately the point of the sermon. Thus, the two words are vastly different from one another, and this difference can affect the meaning of the entire line.

The next few examples are of minor words in translation that do not change the entire meaning of the sentence, but have been noticeable enough to warrant comment. One example would be the use of the word “manke” in line 70 of both versions of the poem; “manke” refers to the Old English “mancus,” or a coin worth thirty-pence. Where I have translated the word to mean “piece,” having simplified it from thirty-pence piece, Morris instead renders it “heap”; thus his translation reads, “As well as he that hath of gold many a heap,” where my translation reads, “As well as he who has many a piece of gold.” Though the play in translation does not affect the reader’s understanding of the line too greatly, there is a significant difference between heaps and

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49 Ibid., 160. Morris’ endnote, however, states, “The rendering in the text is only right on the supposition that unholde = unhale. We ought, I think, to place a comma after ‘would’ in line 35, and so connect it with what follows:—‘He who does not well while he may, shall not be able when he would, for many a man’s hard affliction (i.e. grievous sickness) hath [been] often unfavourable’ (i.e. has prevented him from amending his life). Here unholde will have its proper signification, from [Anglo-Saxon] hold, favourable, friendly” (319).
pieces. Furthermore, Morris translates the word “ordlinges” in Lambeth’s line 103 as “whoremongers,” which specifically refers to those who have dealings with prostitutes, and I have translated “horlinges” in the same line in Trinity as “adulterers” because the Middle English Dictionary has given the definition of the word as “adulterers” or “fornicators.” Thus, Morris does not only give us another archaic word, but he has also given a translation that refers to a very specific type of vice, whereas “adulterers” refers to any married person having sexual relations outside of his or her marital union, and not necessarily with a prostitute. So, again, the central idea is not completely altered in the use of “whoremongers” or “adulterers,” but the specific nuances are.

My last example of how the translation of a single word can alter the meaning or context of a sentence can be found in line 227 in Lambeth as “edi” and as “eadi” in line 231 in Trinity. The term “edi,” which is how it is listed in the Middle English Dictionary, refers to a person of wealth, whether that is through financial wellbeing, good fortune, or God’s good graces. Morris has translated this term as “simple men” rather than “rich men” for no reason I can find, and he has not made a comment about this translation in his endnotes. In this case, the translation is a little more significant because the speaker is asking the audience to understand him, or “attend to” him as Morris writes, but by translating the second part of the line as “simple men and poor” instead of “rich men and the poor,” it seems like the speaker is pointing out only the simple-minded, poor folk as those who need preaching rather than the wealthy, to and about whom the homilist seems to be writing much of the time. We can see, therefore, that even the smallest words, when translated differently or inaccurately, can change the interpretation of any given line, and I believe the problem arises when Morris does this without comment, especially since he still appears to follow a conservative approach in his translation at first glance. Having said this, the corresponding en-face translation does allow the reader easy access to the Middle English text.

Before I conclude this section, I feel it is necessary to point out the five lines in the Trinity variant that will not be found in Morris’ translation because they are absent from the Lambeth text, and they are as follows:

Boðe ʒiemed þe his bien bi daie and bi nihte. (80)
Senne lat þe and þu nah him þan þu hit ne miht do no more. (129)
Forþi he is sot þe swo abit to habben Godes ore. (130)
Litel lac is gode lief þe cumeð of gode wille, (203)
Likewise, the following line is present in the Lambeth version, but it is not in the Trinity text: “Sunne and mone and houen fur boð þestre aþein his lihte” (76). There are also several words and phrases that make up the Lambeth poem that are different or merely absent from the Trinity text; they have not, however, severely altered the meaning of the poem, and I do not have the space required for such an inventory. I do believe that the added lines, as well as the omitted line, are important to reading the Trinity version of “Poema Morale” because some of these lines are shared with other manuscripts while the omitted line, among the Lambeth, Trinity, Egerton, and Jesus manuscripts, is excluded only from the Trinity text. A more in-depth examination of these discrepancies is required to understand each variation of “Poema Morale” in its more complete, cultural context, and I hope that this study acts as a precursor to such an endeavor.

Through this section, I have striven to present a brief analysis of Morris’ edition and translation of “Poema Morale” so that I might emphasize our need for a modern translation and edition. From the translation, it is evident that the antiquated language with which Morris writes needs to be brought into the twenty-first century, especially in a poem as significant as “Poema Morale.” The next section leaves behind the editorial debate, which will be brought up again in the last section of the Introduction, to focus on the homiletic traditions of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in an attempt to explain the origins of the tradition in Old English and show how it changed in the early Middle English period when this homiletic poem was commonly circulated.

Homiletic Traditions of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries

The early Middle English homiletic tradition was shaped by its precursors, like Wulfstan and Ælfric, in the Old English period, but the changing audience and culture also influenced the composition and compilation of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century homilies. Perhaps the greatest impetus for literary production in the English vernacular was King Alfred’s educational reform, which stemmed from a need to reach out to a distinctly English nation during a time of war and tribulation with the invasion of the Danes in the ninth century. Before Alfred’s educational program, the majority of the texts in England were written in Latin, and the result of
a “sustained use of the vernacular” in written texts led to the prolific homiletic tradition in the early medieval period.\(^{50}\)

Wulfstan and Ælfric were essentially literary contemporaries since Wulfstan lived from 1008-1095 and Ælfric completed his *Catholic Homilies* in the late tenth century, finishing in 995.\(^{51}\) Both men were monks, though Wulfstan ascended to the archbishopric of Worcester and Ælfric became an abbot of Eynsham near Oxford, and both contributed important vernacular homilies during their lives. Ælfric’s *Catholic Homilies* were composed in two series and seem to have stemmed from his contempt and disgust for the apocrypha, as Joyce Hill explains, that abound in his time.\(^{52}\) Although many scholars have called Ælfric’s texts orthodox, Hill refutes this claim, preferring instead to look at his texts as only a response to an unstable religious tradition of his time with what he himself believed to be proper Christian doctrine. Whatever the case may be, the eighty texts—forty homilies and hagiographies in each series—of his *Catholic Homilies* mark “him as a remarkable author in this period, and he clearly allies his educational aims with those of King Alfred in his programme of translating essential Latin works into the native tongue.”\(^{53}\) Furthermore, the contents of Ælfric’s work have proven themselves more adaptable to the changing culture in the early Middle Ages in England, something not easily done with the works of Wulfstan.

Wulfstan’s texts tend more toward the historically specific, which make them harder to recontextualize and adapt in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and one such example includes *Be godcundre warnunge* (“About divine admonition”), an early eleventh-century homily. David Crystal notes that a section of the contents in this text “relates to the military situation at the time,” during which “Danish rule had come about as a result of the Viking invasions,” and Wulfstan infers from these devastating results that the Anglo-Saxon people were being punished for their “sinful ways.”\(^{54}\) In comparison with the same text rewritten in a twelfth-century manuscript, it is apparent that the scribe has omitted several historically specific comments, thus severely shortening Wulfstan’s original text, and the fact that the scribe also “drops some of


\(^{51}\) Ibid., 411 and 116.

\(^{52}\) Joyce Hill, “Anglo-Saxon Orthodoxy,” *Old English Literature in its Manuscript Context* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2004), 37-65. In her article, Hill argues that Ælfric himself may not have been “orthodox,” but rather the doctrine of the time may have been “heterodox” in the fact that the church was decentralized. Only after the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 did Christian orthodoxy really claim a foothold in religious practice. Therefore, Hill believes Ælfric may not have been orthodox in his views, but rather unsatisfied with what he believed were the degenerate practices surrounding him and felt the need to rectify the situation.

\(^{53}\) Treharne, *Old and Middle English*, 116.

Wulfstan’s distinctive and (presumably by then) old-fashioned rhetoric” indicates the changing homiletic tradition that begins in the post-Conquest period.\textsuperscript{55} The Norman Conquest of 1066 instigated great change in the English vernacular literary tradition in England, which scholars have discussed in a variety of ways. Elaine Treharne, for example, describes one form of the cultural response to “Norman hegemony” as “literary resistance” through “the homiletic and hagiographic,” which is one of the more positive views of the literature that emerged from the early Middle English period.\textsuperscript{56} Thomas Hahn, however, believes that the “unchanging” and “recognizable voice of a single people or nation, whose identity is bound up in a racial core,” are the principles with which rereading vernacular literature “has made [early Middle English] out to be, on consensus, an incoherent, intractable, impenetrable dark age scarcely redeemed by a handful of highlights.”\textsuperscript{57} Moreover, Hahn continues in his discussion of early Middle English by referring to the \textit{European} twelfth century as a “precocious renaissance” and to the thirteenth century as the “greatest of centuries” in comparison with the literature of England at the same time.\textsuperscript{58} Instead of critically referring to textual examples of early Middle English to make his point of literary inferiority to the Continent—a period that gave way to La\'zamon’s “Brut,” “Poema Morale,” and “The Owl and the Nightingale” in England—Hahn chooses to discuss the “status and prestige” written French achieved in England that, he believes, “reflected the political, economic and institutional dominance of the Norman elite within England,” though their success was seemingly overshadowed by the likes of Chrétien de Troyes in France.\textsuperscript{59}

Therefore, Hahn asserts that the literature produced in the English vernacular in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was somehow inferior to not only the prestigious French texts from the Continent, but they were also of lesser value than the Anglo-Norman texts created in England, thus emphasizing the need for scholarly focus to remain on the more valuable Anglo-Norman and French literature. Furthermore, Hahn goes so far as to ask the reader, “If the [early Middle English] language is itself fragmented and multiform, if there is no single, stable or coherent English practice or in essence, what prospects remain for a distinctive account of

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 112.  
\textsuperscript{56} Treharne, “The Life and Times of Old English Homilies,” 205.  
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 62.  
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 65.
English literature during these centuries?" 

Although early Middle English is perhaps the most linguistically unstable stage of the evolution of the English language because of the drastic cultural changes that were instigated by the Norman Conquest—the likes of which have not been seen since the post-Conquest period—to regard the literary accomplishments in the English vernacular during early Middle English period as less important for scholarly attention than Anglo-Norman texts of the same time because of the instability of English does a disservice to the overall study of English literature. The fact that English was unstable at this time is the very “distinctive” quality to which Hahn refers and dismisses in the same argument. The “distinctive account” of English literature during this transitional period is evident in the changing homiletic traditions found in manuscripts like Lambeth, Trinity, Egerton, and Jesus. The period was not united or standardized, so why should one text be able to encapsulate a constantly and dramatically changing culture? The texts produced in the early Middle English period are significant not only because they are interesting adaptations of older texts but also because they reflect the instability of a nation. These various texts give modern scholars a better understanding of the English culture than a single, “distinctive account” from this time ever could. Hahn, however, is not alone in underestimating the value of early Middle English literature, as Seth Lerer prefers to attribute what little worth he does find in these texts to a nostalgic look to the previous glory of Old English.

In his discussion of the dissemination of Old English texts in the early Middle English period, Lerer gives the example of *The Rime of King William* as one of the works of this period that appears to have been attributed inaccurately to the early Middle English corpus; instead, he prefers to supply examples of the Old English qualities in the poem that would imply its link to the previous age rather than the early Middle English period. Lerer also believes that “the period is marked by minor forms” when viewed from a literary perspective since:

No single, long, sustained narrative survives from the time of the *Beowulf* manuscript (c. 1000) to that of Laȝamon’s *Brut* (c. 1200) and the *Orrmulum* (c. 1200). The great elegies of the Exeter Book seem to give way to political eulogies; the lyric voice of Old English personal poetry disappears into curiosities modelled on Latin schoolroom exercises.  

Therefore, I can infer from Lerer’s comments that what the early Middle English period lacks is a poem of epic proportions on which scholars would be able to focus much of their attentions

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60 Ibid., 67.
instead of other twelfth- and thirteenth-century creations. The distinctive Old English “lyric voice” disappears from English literature, only to be replaced by texts based on “Latin schoolroom exercises.” Thus, Lerer is concerned with the early Middle English period’s inability to produce something “original” and similar to the poetic accomplishments of the Anglo-Saxons. However, by making this assertion, Lerer appears to discredit the rest of the early Middle English literary corpus because nothing as substantial as *Beowulf* or the *Ormulum* was created while several pieces were adapted and recreated, from which it is possible that originals were produced, such as “Poema Morale.” Furthermore, are homilies and hagiographies not a form of a “sustained” literary narrative? Although these texts are meant to be read—aloud or silently—in a religious milieu and are rarely poetic, how would their contents and contexts take away from their literary worth as individual narratives, especially since they comprise the majority of the surviving English vernacular literature in the early Middle English period?

Though not nearly as condescending in his claims as Hahn, Lerer still asserts that much of the early Middle English literary corpus comes from “distinctively Anglo-Saxon religious foundations” that “sought to revive traditions through the making and remaking of texts.” Moreover, Lerer is not entirely wrong about the reproduction of Old English religious texts; I believe that he is, however, wrong about the reasons behind such decisions.

Although Lerer ascribes cultural nostalgia for the revival of Old English religious texts in the twelfth century, which implies that there is some specific point in which Old English stopped and Middle English began rather than a fluid transition from one period to the other, the reasons behind the reuse of these texts—many by Ælfric and some by anonymous authors—may be found in the religious literary tradition itself. Ælfric and Wulfstan, after all, were writing not far from the Norman Conquest, Wulfstan having died in 1095, and the homilies in London, Lambeth Palace Library 487 might have been written as early as 1170. With less than a century between Wulfstan and one of the major early Middle English homiletic compilations, it is hard to believe that nostalgia was the sole motivation, or even the main impetus, behind not only the reproduction but also the recontextualization and adaptation of Old English homilies in the early Middle Ages.

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62 Ibid., 19.
63 Although some scholars believe that the Old English period ended in 1066 with the Norman Conquest, the cultural change was not immediate. The Old English literary traditions should be expected to be evident in the following years.
The reuse and adaptation of the works by Ælfric and Wulfstan greatly differ, and through these differences, the continuity of an English religious textual tradition can be discerned during this post-Conquest period, one that began with the reproduction of texts and eventually became a tradition of recontextualization as the scribes began to make the former texts their “own.” As previously mentioned, the reuse of Wulfstan’s texts is greatly overshadowed by the prominence of Ælfrician reproductions and adaptations in early Middle English manuscripts; the *Catholic Homilies* alone survive in thirty manuscripts. In an attempt to further understand why the texts of Wulfstan were less adapted, and adaptable, than those of Ælfric, Jonathan Wilcox states:

In the eleventh century, Wulfstan’s sermons were copied extensively and extracts were often taken over and made new by re-use in a new context. In the twelfth century, on the other hand, there is only one surviving example of a manuscript copy of Wulfstan’s vernacular homilies and only one example of a Wulfstan homily made new through extensive borrowing in a new context. Wilcox believes the problem with recontextualizing Wulfstan’s homilies arises due to the importance the archbishop places on the political to match the concerns of his day, for which the twelfth century had little concern. Since the historical context in which Wulfstan was writing included the aftermath of the Danish invasion, as mentioned above, the political and social instability of tenth- and early eleventh-century England would have resonated with the English nation throughout the eleventh century, especially since the year 1066 brought the Norman Conquest. Moreover, the homilies and excerpts that were flexible enough to be reused and adapted at this time “tend more towards the general and enduringly doctrinal than the political” characteristics found in Wulfstan’s works. The “general and enduringly doctrinal,” then, have obviously gained more importance in the early Middle English period in England, in a time when foreign invasions were not at the mental forefront and an English cultural awareness was steadily increasing, for which purpose Ælfric’s sermons were more easily adapted.

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64 Mary Swan, “Memorialised Readings: Manuscript Evidence for Old English Homily Composition,” *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts and their Heritage*, ed. Phillip Pulsiano and Elaine M. Treharne (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 206. Swan reminds us that “twentieth-century notions of authorial and textual identity may well tempt us to make inappropriate assumptions about the attitudes of Anglo-Saxon homily compilers both to their source-material and to the status and ownership of the composite texts they produce.” Also, see Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). O’Keeffe believes that “the modern, critical reflex to recover an authorial text devalues the historical significance and meaning of the actual, realised texts which show us the poem working in the world” (193-4).


66 Ibid, p. 96
The “theological, exegetical, and expository framework” of Ælfric’s homilies, according to Elaine Treharne, would be just as resonant in the early Middle English period as it would have toward the end of the Old English period. Although the accessibility to Ælfric’s texts, namely his Catholic Homilies, is found in the rare references to contemporary experiences, which contrast with Wulfstan’s anachronistic concerns, Treharne believes that this characteristic “does not imply a permanent homogeneity among the audience or in the manuscript compilers’ interpretations of Ælfric’s texts, but rather, flexibility in their use and function and recognition of the homilies’ validity.” A manuscript scribe or compiler could easily address the changing needs of the English congregation in the early Middle English period by referring to Ælfric’s earlier texts and adapting his homilies as needed. In this post-Conquest England, the theological concerns, which seemingly began before and were codified during the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, found in the homiletic tradition prove to be a combination of those found in Anglo-Saxon England and those in the later twelfth century; confession, pastoral care, and the salvation of the individual were very much a part of contemporary concerns in this period, rather than the previous concerns of fasting and abstinence. Examples of such change in the homiletic tradition are evident in the Lambeth and Trinity manuscripts alike where confession and practical didacticism are the key elements in their texts. A theological shift in attention to the individual soul’s salvation and the “self-awareness of the sinner when faced with their sins” at the eminent Judgment during the twelfth century indicates the English need for adapting Old English religious texts.

In the homily “Estote Fortes in Bello”—“Be Strong in War”—which is one of the five homilies the Lambeth and Trinity manuscripts share, the speaker concentrates on aiding the soul in fighting the “war” against the devil. In Morris’ translation, the speaker urges his congregation to “be strong in battle and fight against the old serpent, and if ye be stronger than she (the serpent) ye shall receive for a reward the endless kingdom.” The form of self-awareness and self-reflection of the individual is reflected in the same homily later when the speaker states: “That man shows himself mercy who bethinketh of his sins and understands that he hath there-through lost heaven’s weal and merited hell’s torment, and sorely bemourneth it and forsaketh those sins and cometh to shrift. Truth he showeth, also, to himself when he showeth his sins [to

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68 Ibid., 213.
69 Ibid., 235.
70 Ibid., 236.
71 Morris, Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century, 184.
the priest] as they were done […]”\(^{72}\). It is important to note not only the self-reflective act of a person looking within in an attempt to repent and save themselves, but the act of showing is also important; the faithful not only show themselves their sins and repent, but they also show them “as they were done” to the priest, which indicates the significant shift in theological theory and practice to confession at this time. Because this homily is common in Lambeth and Trinity, it may be safe to assert that this was not an uncommon practice in the late twelfth century, and “the focus on guidance for daily, pious living […] might indicate a more personal approach by these homilists and homiliary compilers of the later period,” by which Treharne means that the people responsible for the production of such homiletic compilations might “have been in closer contact with their audiences.”\(^{73}\) The adoption of this “personal approach” indicates that the period was not only going through changes in theological philosophy and practice but also through changes in style.

Mary Swan confronts the stylistic changes made within the homiletic tradition of the twelfth century in a discussion of transmission of the \textit{Catholic Homilies}, and specifically in her examination of “In Die Sancto Pentecosten”—“The Day of Pentecost”—found in the Lambeth manuscript. Swan draws attention to the informal tone of the text in which the homilist often substitutes “rather heavy-handed extra phrases for Ælfric’s concise and balanced rhetoric.”\(^{74}\) The result of this “conversational style and looser syntax” is the feeling of an “unscripted oral delivery.”\(^{75}\) The substitution could, perhaps, be in response to a “different, and possibly less formally educated, audience,” an opinion that Bella Millet shares in her discussion of the \textit{Ancrene Wisse} Group. Whatever the reason, the readily available Ælfrician sources in monasteries contributed to this adaptation, reuse, and influence of Ælfric’s homilies, and the early Middle English prose homilies were not the only texts affected by this change in style.\(^{76}\)

“Poema Morale” adopts the conversational style found in the Lambeth and Trinity homilies, which should not be surprising. Because the speaker approaches the audience from the

\(^{72}\) Ibid., 188. The addition of “[to the priest]” is Morris’ addition, not mine.
\(^{73}\) Treharne, “The Life and Times of Old English Homilies,” 239.
\(^{75}\) Ibid, p. 72.
\(^{76}\) Ibid, p. 75. See also Bella Millet, “The \textit{Ancrene Wisse} Group,” \textit{A Companion to Middle English Prose}, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 1-17. The \textit{Ancrene Wisse} Group is a collection of early Middle English religious prose written for a group of anchoresses, or possibly a wider audience. Millet states, “It could be argued that there were fewer incentives for the development of vernacular writing in an enclosed religious community than in a milieu where the clergy worked closely with the laity” (7). This arguably would have increased the chances of religious texts being composed for a wider audience, thus changing the tradition from one aimed at mainly monastic audiences to one more intermingled with the religious and the laity.
status of an elder—thus having experienced many things, but still “too young in wisdom” (4)—the audience is able to identify with the human weakness evident in their speaker. The narrator is then able to more firmly incorporate the audience into his dialogue by switching to the first person plural pronoun when explicating the faults of all humans, himself included; he states, “We are slow to do good; to do evil, all too bold” (19). In the subsequent line, and for the majority of the poem, the speaker shifts from the conversational first person pronouns of inclusion to third person pronouns, which distance the audience and makes the text more formal: “More men stand in awe of men than they do of Christ” (20). What prevents this homiletic poem from falling into a more formal tone altogether is the reappearance of the first person pronouns—singular and plural—as well as the occasional emergence of the second person pronoun throughout the text. On such occasions the speaker seems to talk not to the audience as a whole but to the individual, thus making his message all the more personal: “I will tell you of the torments of hell and warn you against harm” (232). By this point, the speaker has transformed from the role of advising elder who has lived a life of regret to the paternal pastor concerned with the salvation of his flock. The concern with the individual adheres to the changing theological doctrine of the period, and although the poem is written in an informal tone and with less intellectually demanding content that appeals to the audience, the versified homily takes on a slightly more formal tone through its poetic structure.

As casually as a poem may be written, when its composition is formulaic, such is the case with the septenary rhyming couplets of “Poema Morale,” the poem inevitably takes on an air of formality. However, the formula used to write the poem was not meant to distance the reader from the audience by appearing to display his knowledge of Scripture or his ability to perform a 400-line religious poem, but rather, the end-rhyme plays a key role in making the sermon unforgettable to the congregation. H. L. Spencer writes, “The ground which is common to both literacy and readers is memory – sermons must be memorable, whether heard or read, if they are to have any effect.” The rhyming couplets in the lines below, first from my edition and then from a modified version of my translation, demonstrate how a rhyming poetic homily might have been more memorable to a congregation than a prose homily would be:

Nolde hit moʒe don for mai, ne suster broðer;
Nolde sune don for fader, ne no man for oðer.
Ure alre louerd, for his þralles, ipined he was arode.

Ure bendes he unbond and bohte us mid his blode.
We ʒieveð uneaðe for his luve a streche of ure breade;
Ne þenche we naht þar þat sal deme þe qica and þe deade.
Muchel luve he us kedde, wolde we hit understonde.
þat ure elderne misduden we habeð evel an honde.
Deað cam in þis middenærd þurh ealde develes onde
And senne and soreʒe and iswinch awatere and londe. (187-196)

Kinsman would not do it for kinswoman, or sister [for] brother;
Son would not do it for father, or any man for another.
Lord of us all, for his servants, he was tormented on the rood.
He unbound our bonds and bought us with his blood.
We give reluctancey for his love a bit of our bread;
We do not think then that he shall judge the quick and the dead.
He showed us great love, would we understand.
For what our elders did wrongly, we have suffering on hand.
Death came into this world through the old devil’s hand
And harm and sorrow and toil in water and on land. (187-196)

Though it is difficult to maintain the end-rhyme in a Modern English translation, with vocabulary and syntax very different from even the nineteenth century, from my modified translation here, it is clear that the cadence found in a rhyming homily would allow for easier memorization, which would translate, one would think, into more regular application of the teachings to an individual’s life. The end-rhyme is also significant in that “Poema Morale” is one of the first English poems that contains rhyme, and during the transitory stage from Old English to Middle English, the Anglo-Saxon tradition of rhythmic, alliterative poetry would have been more common. While the homiletic poem is found in the Jesus manuscript alongside “The Owl and the Nightingale,” which also contains end-rhyme, these texts are in a manuscript from the late thirteenth century, when the early Middle English period was very gradually evolving into forms that we now regard as (high) Middle English literature that was heavily influenced by the styles of French literature. Therefore, the significance of the rhyme scheme in “Poema Morale” deserves attention because its presence marks an important element of the poem in terms of its historical context and its need to be a memorable sermon.
Finally, the use of visuals, as Spencer explains, was also important in making a sermon memorable, and although we have no way of knowing with any certainty if the speaker of “Poema Morale” ever used physical visual aids, the poem itself contains imagery of what sinners can expect in hell once the Last Judgment is upon us, among other things. Apart from invoking the pains of hell in forms of perpetual thirst and hunger, as well as excessive heat and cold from which the damned souls may never gain a reprieve, the poem also presents images of a “fire that eternally burns” (251), a bath of “seething pitch,” and a bed made of “burning coal” (222). The most dreadful images the poem invokes, however, are of hell itself, where “adders and snakes, lizards and frogs” (277) worry at the damned souls in the dark, as “the sun never shines there, or the moon or the stars” (279), and the “evil smoke, darkness, and awe” (281) never dissipate where the “horrible fiends in strong chains” dwell (283). And unlike later religious texts, especially those written for women like “The Letter on Virginity,” which detail all the wonders and delights of heaven in store for the faithful, virtuous, and chaste, “Poema Morale” gives the most detail in its attempt to strike fear into the hearts of the audience. The little details given about God and his heavenly reward to faithful Christians are at the end of the poem, after the repetitive admonitions of the necessity for true repentance and for walking the “narrow path” (343) of God’s will; the images of the depths of hell are enough to convert any person, especially in the cultural context of an early Middle English congregation. Imagine, for a moment, that you are an illiterate member of the laity in late twelfth-century England, and your preacher is explaining, in explicit detail, the horrors of hell in stark contrast with the vague descriptions of heavenly bliss that await at Doomsday. These techniques are strangely reminiscent of modern political smear campaigns in which a politician may win a given race by making numerous scurrilous comments about his or her opponent; although these tactics do not always result in a victory, they have been used for years for good reason—sometimes they work. Therefore, the preacher is effectively “smearing” the devil and hell and frightening the audience into following the Christian way he has set before them, and from a twenty-first century perspective, “Poema Morale” still has the ability to strike fear into my heart, which proves the images in the poem are effective even today.

The form and contents of “Poema Morale,” therefore, follow the changing homiletic tradition that occurred in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. I have briefly discussed Wulfstan and Ælfric, as well as their influence on early Middle English homiletic compositions, which I hope has helped elucidate the importance of the changes made during the time in which “Poema
“Morale” was composed, both in form and in content. In the following section, I will present the history of “textual variance” as a platform from which I will begin a discussion of editorial practices of medieval texts. This section is important to understanding the policies that I undertake in my Editorial and Translation Policies because it presents differing opinions on what an editor should and should not do when interfering with a medieval text.

**Textual Variance and the Editing of Medieval Literature**

In his 1972 publication of *Essai de poétique médiévale*, Paul Zumthor coined the term “textual *mouvance*” in relation to texts derived from the oral culture in medieval French literature to approach the textual mobility of medieval French poetry. Bernard Cerquiglini further explains Zumthor’s theory of textual *mouvance* by stating, “In effect, this notion, which followed the ever more ‘oralist’ evolution of Zumthorian reflections, came to designate the effects of the nomadism of the voice, of the concrete and original voice, on texts whose writing is no longer thought of as anything but secondary and reductive.” Therefore, a text that is transmitted through an oral culture, like that of medieval French or Old English, to the written word becomes open to alteration and adaptation. In the Middle Ages, Cerquiglini writes, “Meaning was to be found everywhere, and its origin was nowhere,” and the constant urge of previous medieval scholars to find the authoritative text, the Urtext, highlights this concern with authority in the modern world. Furthermore, Cerquiglini reiterates this modern compulsion to devalue the variants of medieval texts by stating:

The theory that the copy represents degeneration presupposes a flawless original; the author has no right to any lapsus. Similarly, the idea that language becomes degraded implies an impeccable origin: the author has no right to bad language either, or to dreadful puns, or, indeed, to the diversity of his way of speaking.

What Cerquiglini argues is the lack of a true authorial presence in medieval literature or even an “impeccable origin” in language, to which grammarians sought to return beginning in the

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80 Ibid., 33.
81 Ibid., 61.
sixteenth century. The lack of origins is especially true in “Poema Morale,” and several of the anonymously written homilies contained in manuscripts like Trinity, as there is no known author, no known source.

The idea of the author, or the authorial, is the driving factor of editorial practice, in medieval literature and modern literature. Although contemporary writers and editors have copyright laws to which they must adhere, no such laws existed in the tenth, eleventh, or twelfth centuries, and the manufacturing of the printing press led to the legal and psychological changes in our view of the text, as well as the theories and practices of editing. The very act of editing “always puts a literary theory into practice,” as the editor constructs his or her policy based on some guiding principle and then attempts to stringently adhere to it. Tim Machan notes that textual criticism within the medieval tradition began out of a humanist tradition. The humanist approach focused on “lexically exact texts” that derived from a cultural context of Middle English after the Renaissance in combination with “the objectives of philology” and consequently “created the canon of Middle English.” The emphasis on “lexically exact texts” may remind one of the theories of the New Critics, who “required the pronouncement that all historically determined (and determining) evidence—including evidence about the author and the genesis of the work—was irrelevant,” and Machan even asserts that William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, who were great proponents for New Criticism, essentially “killed off the author long before Barthes got around to reporting the death.” From this theoretical mindset, it is not difficult to see how editorial practice eventually began to favor the earliest, more “authorial” text. Clearly, this concern did not originate with the exclusion of the author from critical analysis of a text, as with a New Critical approach, but rather, with the desire to return to the “lexically exact” text, and perhaps this aspiration led to the inevitable search for author, for within the author, the originator, one might hope to find the origin.

For many medieval scholars, like Michael Lapidge, this search for origins is in vain primarily because these texts originated in an oral culture, unless the object of scrutiny comes from a well-known author with multiple versions of a single text, such as Ælfric, Chaucer, or

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83 Cerquiglini, 22.
84 Tim William Machan, Textual Criticism and Middle English Texts (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 50.
even Shakespeare. By attempting to bring a text closer to its origins, what the editor actually performs, instead, is a reconstruction of the text based on his or her own prejudices and interpretations, which further removes the modern reader from the physical text in the manuscript. R. M. Liuzza explains that:

A good edition, like a good translation, is supposed to enable a better appreciation of the text, not the editor. Objectivity is an ideal of recuperation, almost anti-interpretive: its goal is to present the text fully legible, but still poised at the moment before the mob of readers and critics have left their muddy boot-prints all over it.\(^{86}\)

Furthermore, the two schools of thought regarding the improvement of a text rather than a representation of the text include the Recensionist and best-text practices. Following the Recensionist practice, an editor “hopes to excavate a more correct authorial text from its overlay of scribal, typographical, and temporal corruption,” which appears to be Lapidge’s own theoretical approach to editing Old English texts; the best-text approach may lead an editor “to scoff at such fantasies of authorial presence” while he or she “similarly aspires to produce a text without prejudice, neither misrepresenting the evidence nor misleading the reader.”\(^{87}\)

According to Liuzza, these approaches inevitably fail because without some knowledge of the history of the text, and the manuscript in which it is found, the editor would have a difficult time creating a reliable edition, one based on the concept that the text has already undergone a process of reading and interpreting.

Lapidge believes, however, that the best service an editor of Old English can do for a text is to endeavor to restore it to what the author originally intended, which “will inevitably fail if the evidence of manuscripts is not treated with appropriate suspicion,” and in order to do this, the editor must necessarily rewrite the text in the best way he or she sees fit.\(^{88}\) The recreation of the text through the methods that Lapidge earnestly advocates may work for an author like Chaucer, whose *Canterbury Tales* are known for its various fragments, but in the larger context of Old and Middle English textual variation and transmission, this theoretical ideology of textual re-composition only further removes the modern reader from what the physical manuscript


\(^{87}\) Ibid., 248.

contains. In his response to Lapidge’s essay regarding this liberal approach to editing medieval literature, Allen J. Frantzen states that his own editorial practices are based on the “belief in the value of medieval manuscripts as testimony to lived language experience” because “we can be sure that the text of this manuscript is the written and spoken language of a speaker of some form of Old English; we cannot make the same claim about the text of Lapidge’s reconstruction.”

Here, Frantzen refers to the “lived language” of a text in order for us to understand the social and cultural contexts surrounding a text within a manuscript so that we may understand the text as it appears rather than how an editor thinks we should understand and interpret it. However, what Frantzen takes for granted, which Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe tries to rectify, is the past tense of the word “lived.”

O’Keeffe asks the reader of her essay an important question at the end: “Does the text still live?” She believes the answer is yes, but only if we “understand the text to exist in a dialogue with the present” because texts gain meaning by the readers who consume them, or the audiences to which they may be read. If we cease to interact with medieval texts, only then will they be “dead.” The survival of a work is only possible through a practice of reuse, and the variant texts of a work that survive represent the physical realization of something that would otherwise be abstract. The advent of the printing press may have instigated great change in the way people perceived the works and role of author, editor, and copyist, but the tradition of the scribe in hand-written texts first made material what was only sound before: the spoken word manifested in vellum and ink, an abstract thought made solid. These physical, “realized texts” are, therefore, prone to “corruption” or “variation”—depending on one’s perception of the text--because the very act of transferring the oral tradition to a written one implies physically manifested change: “each manuscript text is place and time specific and embodies” the work, whether it is a homily, poem, or romance, “as a particular reading” because the work “cannot exist without the medium which transmits it.” Therefore, despite what a New Critic or a scholar of the same mind as Lapidge may believe, the manuscript context, as well as the historical and cultural contexts, of a work like “Poema Morale” are important for our understanding—for our ability to make meaning—of the specific occurrence of a text out of a

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91 Ibid., 154.
92 Ibid., 151, her emphasis.
“variety of texts [that] represent the same work,” which may or may not fully represent the work of the author, whoever that may be.\textsuperscript{93}

Thus, the role of the editor, as I understand it, is not necessarily to improve an occurrence of a specific work within a manuscript so that it may more closely coincide with authorial intent—about which an editor can hardly be certain when he or she is removed from the textual tradition by almost a millennium—but rather, the purpose of an editor is to act as a modern scribe. Liuzza compares the job of a medieval scribe to that of a modern editor by stating:

[S]cribes acted […] like modern editors, mediating between an earlier version of a text and its later readers, tailoring the text for its new context. If these copyists were not concerned about the integrity and inviolability of their exemplar, a modern editor cannot hope to separate a hypothetical “original” version from the work of its scribal collaborators; such editions would create a text where none existed.\textsuperscript{94}

The process of reuse and adaptation, in which editors indubitably participate by formulating their edition for a specific audience, allows the continuation of a literary tradition that began with Old English authors and scribes. Additionally, the very forms with which we continue to circulate these texts—facsimiles, editions, and translations—have evolved to such a state that we may actually be able to participate more fully in the tradition of recontextualization and adaptation. From photograph images of the manuscript pages in a facsimile produced by the Early English Text Society to the scholarly edition that contains marginalia and footnotes—not unlike the manner with which medieval manuscripts have been used and reused—on the textual variants of a single work, the process of reading Old and Middle English texts is far from a linear process, and the introduction of modern technology through the use of the computer and hypertext allows this nonlinear tradition to continue.\textsuperscript{95}

The introduction of editions, translations, and facsimiles—as well as further scholarly comment on the works—to CD-ROMs and the Internet has presented a fascinating new way to approach the study of medieval English literature. Such programs and websites not only present the modern edition(s) and translation(s) of the particular work in question, such as \textit{Beowulf}, but

\textsuperscript{93} Machan, 168.
\textsuperscript{94} Liuzza, 271.
\textsuperscript{95} When an average, modern person reads a book, they start at the beginning and finish at the end—a fairly linear process. Rarely does the individual steer from a linear path, unless they have a scholarly book with marginalia from previous users. The marginalia, emendations, omissions, and variations of a manuscript do not allow for a linear reading, and therefore, the reader participates in a nonlinear process. From reading interlinear and marginal notes to consulting other manuscript versions of the same text, the reader of a medieval text must take a multifaceted, perhaps circular, approach to reading.
they also allow for easier use, jumping from page to page and subject to subject with the click of a computer mouse. Searching for a particular object in a manuscript is facilitated by websites that contain facsimiles, some in full color, such as the University of Leeds’ digital manuscripts collection, and many times the image available online or in these computer programs is better than one might even expect from first-hand experience with the manuscript as the images have been—and if not, can be through the tools available online or on the program—magnified.96

There have been, however, a few scholars who approach such technological advances with wariness.

Alexander R. Rumble agrees that the handling of medieval manuscripts is important to understand the “codicological context” of a manuscript text—something no amount of editorial interference can replace—but he believes that the use of digitized manuscripts “will never be a satisfactory substitute for a facsimile produced in book form,” even though he acknowledges the need for production of more affordable facsimiles.97 The future of medieval textual transmission, however, seems to be on the Internet, as an increasing number of libraries and scholars are making manuscripts, as well as editorial and academic commentary, available in digitized form. Liuzza also shares Rumble’s doubts about the use of computerized manuscripts because he believes that no matter how well a manuscript may be represented in a computer image, it “can never be more than a two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional object.”98

Unfortunately, access to these manuscripts is hard to come by, especially for beginning students of medieval literature and those further separated from institutions that house such manuscripts by geographical barriers, such as the Atlantic Ocean. Therefore, although I understand Liuzza’s fear of “the superabundance of information without an organizing structure” in hyperlinked editions and facsimiles, it appears to be an unavoidable necessity in order to bring the manuscript into the classroom. Furthermore, Liuzza believes that although such an edition—one that includes as much contextual and original materials as possible—may give an editor the feeling of finally being “invisible” and the edition of being “truly objective,” he asserts that this is not, in fact, “an abdication of editorial control but another form of it: the experience it offers is not the ‘original text’ but a kind of hyper-real imaginary text that is both more complete than any

96 See the Medieval Manuscripts Collection of University of Leeds’ University Library website at https://ludos.leeds.ac.uk/?func=search-simple&local_base=gen01-medmss.
98 Liuzza, 274.
medieval version and more fragmented than any modern reconstruction.” There are, however, some scholars who believe the use of new technologies will allow the increased accessibility of previously unavailable manuscripts for many readers, which I believe will only further promote the nonlinear reuse of an old literary tradition.

Frantzen tells his reader not to fear technology because, thanks to the “most interesting developments in our age” in “hypertext and hypermedia formats,” “editors no longer need to end somewhere but can instead […] end somewheres.” This notion of needing to end somewhere at the end of a scholarly edition may indicate a problem within the established modern editorial practices through an editor’s need to present one, final representation of a text that is perpetually fluid, not only in its textual variants, but also in the interpretations of the consumers of such texts. To conclude “somewheres,” as Frantzen suggests hypermedia will allow, is to negate the editor’s need to find one decisive meaning and interpretation of a literary work. Frantzen further states that these “new technologies allow us to make and remake choices from a storehouse of material that is all but endlessly adaptable,” which implies the previously stated notion of the living medieval text through modern use, reuse, and adaptation.

Similarly, the accessibility of modern editions online, which are not only available for public consumption but also available for public revision and adaptation, will promote the Old English literary tradition of reuse and transmission. One example may be Elaine Treharne’s Old and Middle English anthology, which will be uploaded to the Internet and made available to readers to use as they wish. By printing the texts they want from the web, they can put together their own version of the text, and this ability promotes the constant reuse of texts through a nonlinear fashion, which is a practice in which every editor participates, consciously or unconsciously.

I have presented the first discussions of textual variance within the medieval literary tradition, which inevitably progressed to an overview and examination of the editorial practices of the past and present that have shaped not only the Old and Middle English literary canon but also our perceptions of text, variance, and materiality. With developing technologies on hand, it is important for the modern editor to remain open to the various media available to us for the transmission of our versions of the text—for they are versions—as well as the evolving editorial policies that seem to permeate scholarly discourse on editing medieval manuscripts. Through a continuous endeavor of making meaning in texts whose origins may never be recovered, we are

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99 Ibid., 274.
100 Frantzen, 176, his emphasis.
101 Ibid., 177.
constantly making a very poignant request of the manuscript text first voiced by Cerquiglini: “Tell me how you repeat yourself and make use of your repetition.” \(^{102}\) Through our constant interaction with these texts, like “Poema Morale,” we hope to find the meaning of these texts, or make it for ourselves, as well as perpetuate a tradition of nonlinear reading and textual variance.

\(^{102}\) Cerquiglini, 36.
EDITORIAL AND TRANSLATION POLICIES

This thesis is primarily aimed at the introductory student of early Middle English literature, and I have not included an elaborate discussion of the mechanics of the language because I have included a translation of the text. The Introduction mentions that the different dialects in which “Poema Morale” was transmitted throughout the early Middle English period affected the orthographical variations of the text. Additionally, as my edition is directed at the beginning student, I found a substantial glossary insufficient, and chose to include a full translation of the text instead. Because the only full translation available in print was done 140 years ago by Richard Morris, I believe it is crucial to the study of early Middle English to revisit the poetic homily through a translation based on modern editorial practices.

My translation policy, therefore, is based, first, on my interpretation of a diplomatic transcription from a facsimile of “Poema Morale” from Cambridge, Trinity College B. 14. 52, scanned images of which are available in the Appendix. I used the edition of the poem from Specimens of Early English by Richard Morris, along with his edition of the poem from Oxford, Jesus College 29, to help guide my transcription. Even before I began translating my poem, I found certain discrepancies in Morris’ edition and translation, discussed in the second section of the Introduction, and for that reason, I have endeavored to produce a modern, literal translation that is more accessible to the introductory reader by replacing the archaic words and syntax through modern practices. I have, however, kept the poem in verse form, as it appears in the manuscript, and although I have not attempted to maintain the rhyming couplets, except where the end-rhyme is unavoidable, it is important to note that the original text adheres to the rhyming couplets. Because of the homiletic, didactic nature of the poem, “Poema Morale” was obviously meant to be easily remembered by the audience in order to apply its teaching to their own lives and salvation, and this is apparent not only in the consistent rhyming couplets but also in the repetition of content—believing in Christ, repenting, fasting, and almsgiving. The importance of these stylistic elements must not be lost on the student of early Middle English literature, especially since “Poema Morale” is among the first English poems to implement such use of rhyme, but an introductory edition must also facilitate an understanding of the content of the text. Thus, while a pure translation of “Poema Morale” might supply a closer representation

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of the archaic meanings and syntax and a creative reworking of the text might present a closer poetic resemblance to the rhyme and meter, the most important principle must be of comprehension for a beginning student. Additionally, as with most languages, some early Middle English words contain multiple meanings, and I have interpreted these words to the best of my ability through the use of not only the Middle English Dictionary but also the Bosworth & Toller Anglo-Saxon Dictionary and A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary. I have included endnotes where I felt more explanation was required, such as my translation of “ware” in line 68. It is my hope, however, that such examples of the multiplicity of early Middle English will inspire readers to interrogate the original text for themselves and continue further study of early medieval literature on their own.

My editorial policy has been based primarily on the idea that the scribe knew what he was doing better than I ever could, and save for a few obvious errors of repetition or omission, I have tried to keep the text as exactly as I found it in the facsimile of the Trinity manuscript. I have expanded all the Tironian notae—which resemble a 7 in the manuscript and represent a standardized abbreviation for ‘and’. I have also expanded all other abbreviations in italics, as well as scribal corrections. I have also included comments in Textual and Lexical Notes, which contain a section for the edition and one for the translation, when the emendation was my own, such as the case of “par ne” in line 43, which appears in brackets. Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain folios 3r and 4v, which contain lines 73 to 120, and I have had to include the text from Morris’ edition from Specimens of Early English. Although I have had to rely on Morris’ text, I have altered the punctuation in my edition based on modern practices and syntactic commonsense. In Textual and Lexical Notes, I have also included comments on the italicized letters and hyphenated words that indicate emendations in Morris’ edition—though whether these are scribal corrections or his own, other than the hyphenations, is unclear because of his inconsistent practice—and he has expanded all the Tironian notae in the same manner as I have. Furthermore, in folios 6v, 8v, and 9v of the transcription, some of the first letters of the lines have been obscured by the objects that hold down the pages; therefore, I have used Morris’ edition as well as my own knowledge of the rest of the word that follows the hidden letter.


Moreover, in keeping with the manuscript, I have retained the early Middle English graphemes—[æ] “æsc” or “ash,” [b] “thorn,” [ð] “eth,” and [ʒ] “yogh”—but I have transcribed [ƿ] “wynn” as [w]. I believe the ash, thorn, eth, and yogh are easier for the beginning reader of early Middle English than the wynn because of its similarity to [p], and while the wynn was a standard letter in Old English—which is evident in its common use in the late twelfth-century Trinity manuscript—it eventually died out in the 1300s. However, the reader should not conclude that the wynn is to be disregarded in early Middle English literature, and the simultaneous use of the wynn and the [w] in “Poema Morale” should emphasize the changing orthographic tradition within that of homiletic composition at this time. I have also replaced [u] with [v] and vice versa, as well as [j] with [i], when necessary—such as the case of “Unnet” (previously “Vnnet”) in line 5 and “ivel” (previously “juel”) in line 19—because the use of these letters appears to have been graphemic and subjective rather than phonemic; and unless the introductory student has a knowledge of the interchangeable nature of [u], [v], [j], and [i], which can be gained through a study of Latin, the words as found in the manuscript may cause unnecessary confusion. Furthermore, although the yogh, which may represent a /y/ or /gh/, also fell from common use in Middle English, I believe it is visually distinct enough to keep the letter throughout my edition in order to familiarize the reader with the grapheme. Additionally, the eth was later replaced with the thorn, which seems to indicate their interchangeability nature—both represent the two /th/ sounds found in words like “bath” and “bathe”—and the fluid use of both graphemes in this manuscript indicate that the eth had not yet died out. The ash is perhaps the most enduring of the Old English graphemes in Middle English, and it survives today in the expanded [ae] to represent a sound between /a/ and /e/, which is most popular in Latin.

Finally, I have included modern punctuation to render the text more accessible to the new reader of early Middle English. I have not standardized the spelling in the poem, mainly because standardized spelling did not exist in early Middle English, and I believe that in order to represent the text to the best of my ability to a novice, I should keep all orthographic variations as found in the manuscript. I have also kept the capitalized letters at the beginning of the lines, as I found them in the manuscript, and I have capitalized the first word of a new sentence contained within a line, which occurs only once in my edition, but I have not capitalized any other word or pronoun. I have capitalized “Wi” in line 90 to indicate the preceding period is indeed a full stop and not a punctus, which may indicate a less forceful pause. Otherwise, I would have left the word as “wi” to keep with my belief that one’s first experience with a
medieval text, especially if it is through an edition, must maintain as much of the manuscript’s integrity as possible. As the early Middle English scribe did not find it necessary to capitalize any word other than the first word of each line, I am, therefore, reluctant to introduce modern capitalization practices. However, because I was unable to transcribe the text from the two missing folios and must follow Morris’ edition, which includes nineteenth century punctuation, a conservative edition would be most beneficial to the introductory student. Thus, the first person singular pronouns, for example, appear as “Ich” and “Ic,,” instead of “ich” and “ic,” and I have capitalized all of the words that refer to God, such as “Gode,” “Criste,” and “Drihte”; proper names, such as “Eve” and “Belzebub”; and words referring to Doomsday, such as “Dome” and “Domesdai.” The modern translation contains capitalized versions of these words because it is modern practice to place significance in such terms. As I stated earlier, I have included my diplomatic transcription in the Appendix for the folios I was able to see in facsimiles, and although my edition is conservative, the Appendix ought to give the introductory student a better idea of what the manuscript contains.

Clearly, it would be ideal for students to be able to read the early Middle English for themselves, preferably from a facsimile or even the manuscript itself, but that simply is not realistic for a new student. Instead, I have presented my edition of the text, which has been interpreted by my understanding of the homiletic poem and thus affected by my editorial interference, with a diplomatic transcription available in the Appendix, and a new translation beside the edition. Thus, even with the effects of my interference with the text, which arguably further removes the reader from the original text, I believe this work will provide the novice with a better introduction to the subject of early Middle English literature than would an edition alone, literal or otherwise.
“POEMA MORALE”

Ich am nu elder þan Ich was a wintre and a lore.
Ich wealde more þan idude; mi wit oh to be more.
To longe Ich habbe child iben a worde and a dade;
Þeih ibie a winter eald, to jung Ich am on rade.

5 Unnet lif Ich habbe ilad and ʒiet me þincheð ilade;
þan ibiðenche me þar on wel, sore ime adrade.
Mast al Ich habbe idon is idelnesse and chilce.
Wel late Ich habbe me bipoht, bute me God do milce.
Fele idel word Ich habbe ispeken seðen Ich speken cuðe,

10 And fele ʒeunge dade idon, þe me ofðinkeð nuðe.
Alto lome Ich habbe igult a werke and a worde.
Alto muchel Ic habbe ispend, to litel ileid on horde.
Mast al þat me liked ear, nu hit me mislicað.
þe michel fölgðed his iwil him selfen he biswicað.

15 Ich mihte habben bet idon, hadde Ich þo iselðe;
Nu Ich wolde, ac ine mai for elde and for unhalðe.
Elde me is bistolen on a rich hit iwiste.
Ne mai Ich isien bifore me for smeche ne for miste.
Arʒe we beð to don god; to ivel al to þriste.

20 More eie stondeð man of man þan him do of Criste.
þe wel ne deð þe hwile he mai wel ofte hit sal him rewen,
þan alle men sulle ripen þat hi ear sewen.
Do al to Gode þat he müʒe ech þe hwile he beð alive.
Ne lipne noman to muchel to childe, ne to wive.

25 þe þe him selfe forþijet for wive oðer for childe
He sal cumen on evel stede bute him God be milde.
Sende god biforen him man, þe hwile he mai, to hevene
For betre is on almesse biforen þan ben after sevene.
Ne bie þe levere þan þe self ne þi mæi ne þi mowe;
I am now older than I was in winters and in knowledge.
I possess more than I did; my wit ought to be more.
I have been a child in words and in deeds too long;
Though I may be old in winters, I am too young in wisdom.

I have led, and still appear to lead, a useless life;
When I meditate carefully on it, I am deeply afraid.
Most everything that I have done is idleness and childishness.
I have reflected on myself too slowly, but may God have mercy on me.
I have spoken many idle words ever since I could speak,

And I have done many reckless deeds, of which I repent now.
All too frequently I have done wrong in acts and in words.
I have spent all too much, saved too seldom.
Most everything that flattered me before, now it offends me.
The one who follows his desire deceives himself.

I might have done better, had I the good sense;
Now I would, except I am unable because of old age and ill-health.
Old age has stolen upon me before I learned of it.
I may not see before me because of smoke or mist.
We are slow to do good; to do evil, all too bold.

More men stand in awe of men than they do of Christ.
those who do not act well while they may shall regret it very often,
When all men should reap what before they had sown.
Do everything for God what each person might while he is alive.
Let no man trust too much to children or to women.

He who forgets himself because of women or children
Shall come upon an evil place unless God is merciful to him.
May man send good before him, while he is able, to heaven
Because one alms before is better than are seven afterwards.
May he not love himself more than either his kinswoman or his kinsman;
Sot is þe is oðer mannes frend betere þan his own.
Ne hopie wif to hire were, ne were to his wive;
Be for him self afric man þe hwile he beð alive.
Wis þe him selve biðencheð þe hwile he môt libben,
For sone willeð him forȝjete, þe fremde and þe sibbe.

þe wel ne doð þe hwile he mai ne sal he þan he wolde,
For mani mannes sore iswine habbeð ofte unholde.
Ne solde noman don a furst ne laten wel to done
For mani man bihoteð wel þat hi forȝjeteð sone.
þe man ðe wile siker ben to habben Godes blisse,

Do wel him self þe hwile he mai, þanne haveð hes mid iwisse.
þe riche men wene ðe siker ben þurch wallen and thurh dichen.
He deð his aihte an siker stede þe hit sent to heveriche,
For [þar ne]³ þarf he ben ofdrad of fure ne of þieve.
þar ne mai hit him binime, þe loðe ne þe lieve.

þar ne þarf he habben care of here ne of þielde.
þider we sendeð and ec bereð to litel and to selde.
þider we solden drawen and don wel ofte and ilome,
For þar ne sal me us naht binime mid wrongwise dome.
þider we solde þierno drawen; wolde þie me ileven,
For ne mai hit us binime, no king ne no syrreve.
Al þat beste þat we habbeð her, þider we solde sende,
For þat we mihte ðinden eft and habben abuten ende.
Se þe her doð am god for to haben Godes ore
Al he hit sal eft finde þar and hundredfealde more.

Se þe aihte wile holde wel þe hwile hes muþe wealden,
þiene hes for Godes luve; þanne doð hes wel ihealden
For ure swinch and ure tiløe is ofte wuned to swinde,
Ac al þat we þieveð for Godes luve, al we hit sullen eft ðinden.
Ne sal þar non evel ben unboht ne god unforȝolden.

Evel we doð al to muchel and god lasse þan we solden.
Se þe mast doð nu to gode and se last to lothe,
He is a fool who is another man’s friend better than his own.
Let no wife trust to her husband, or husband to his wife;
May every man be for himself while he is alive.
He is wise who considers himself while he may survive,
For they will immediately forget him, the stranger and the kin.

He who does not act well while he is able shall not when he would,
For the unfriendly often have many a man’s suffering trouble.
No man should delay or be slow to do well
Because many a man promises well what he immediately forgets.
The man who wishes to be certain to have God’s bliss,
Let him do good himself while he may, then he will have it with certainty.

The rich men believe to be safe through walls and ditches.
He who sends his possessions to heaven put them in a safe place,
For there it is not necessary that he be afraid of fire or thief.
There no one is able to take it away from him, the enemy or the friend.

There it is not necessary that he have concern of reward or tribute.
We send and also carry [ourselves] to that place too little and too seldom.
We should turn to that place and do good often and frequently,
For there no one shall deprive us of anything with wrongful judgment.
We should eagerly turn to that place; believe you me,

For no one is able to deprive us, no king or sheriff.
All the best that we have here, we should send to that place,
For there we might find it again and have it without end.
He who does any good here to have God’s mercy
Shall find it all there again and a hundredfold more.

He who will keep his possessions carefully while he may enjoy them,
Let him give them away for God’s love; then does he keep them well
Because our labor and our profit are often accustomed to waste way,
But all that we give for God’s love, we shall find it all again.
There shall be no evil without retribution or any good unrewarded.

We do evil all too much and good less than we should.
He who does the most now for good and the least for evil,
Eider to litel and to muchel hem sal þunche boðe.
Þar me sal ure werkes weiðen before þan heven Kinge,
And zieven us ure werkes lean after ure erninge.

65 Africh man mid þat he haveð mai bugge heveriche,
þe þe more haveð and þe þe lasse boðe iclehe;
Alse on mid his þeni, se oðer mid his pande.
Þis is þet wunderlukeste ware þat ani man funde,
And se þe more ne mai don mid his gode iþanke,

70 Alse wel se þe þe haved goldes fele manke.
And ofte God can more þan þe him zieveð lasse;
Al his werkes and his weies is milce and rihtwinesse.
Litel lóc is Gode lef þe cumed of gode wille,4
And eðlate muchel zive þan his herte is ille.

75 Hevene and erðe he over sihð; his eien boð ful brihte.
Nis him no þing forholen; swo muchel is his mihte.
Ne bie hit no swo derne idon ne on swo þuster nihte,
He wot hwat þencheð and hwat doð alle quike wihte.
Nis loverd swilch is Crist,5 ne king swilch ure Drihte.

80 Boðe ziemeð þe his bien bi daie and bi nihte.
Hevene and erðe, and al þat is, biloken is in his honden.
He doð al þat his will is awatere and alond;
He makeð þe fisses in þe sa, þe fueles on þe loft.
He wit and wealdeð alle þing and he sop alle safte.

85 He is ord abuten ord and ende abuten ende.
He is one afre on eche stede, wende þar þu wende.
He is buven us and bineðen, biforen and bihinde;
þe Godes wille doð aihware he maiʒ him finde.
Elche rune he hereð and he wot alle dade;

90 He þurh-sihð6 elches mannes þanc. Wi hwat sal us to rade,
We þe brekeð Godes has and gulteð swo ilome?
Both too little and too much shall both seem to him.
Our acts shall be weighed there before the King of heaven,
And recompense shall be given to us for our acts according to our merit.

Each man is able to buy the kingdom of heaven with what he has,
He who has more and he who has less both alike;
So he with his penny, as the other with his pound.
This is the most wonderful salvation\(^2\) that any man might find,
And he who may not do more [may do it]\(^3\) with his good will,

As well as he who has many a piece\(^4\) of gold.
And often God shows more grace when one gives him less;
All his deeds and his ways are mercy and righteousness.
A little gift is favorable to God that comes of good will,\(^5\)
And worthless are great gifts when his heart is ill.

He observes heaven and earth; his eyes are very bright.
Nothing is hidden from him; his might is so great.
Whether it is done so secretly or in so dark a night,
He knows what we think and what all living creatures do.
There is no lord like Christ, or king like our Lord.

He keeps his favor that is both by day and by night.
Heaven and earth, and all that is, are guarded in his hands.
He does all that is his will in water and on land;
He makes the fishes in the sea, the birds in the sky.
He protects and rules all things and he shaped all creation.

He is beginning without beginning and end without end.
He alone is eternally in each place, wherever you may turn.\(^6\)
He is above us and beneath, before and behind;
He who does God’s will may find him everywhere.
Each secret he hears and he knows all deeds;

He sees through each man’s thoughts. What shall save us,
We who break God’s commands and sin so frequently?

\(^{†}\) “Manke” refers to money in the value of thirty pence, which comes from the Old English “mancus.” I have simplified the meaning to “piece” here for ease of reading.
Hwat sulle we seggen oðer don ate muchele Dome,
We þe luveden unriht and evel lif ladden?
Hwat sulle we seggen oðer don þar ængles beð ofdradde?

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Hwat sulle we beren us biforen; mid hwæn sulle we iqueme,7
We þe nafre god ne duden þan hevenliche Deme?
þær sulle ben deflen swo fele þat willeð us forwreien;
Nabbeð hie no þing forȝieten of þat hie her iseien.
Al þat hie iseien her, hie willeð cuðen þare,

100 Bute we hebben hit ibet þe hwile we here waren.
Al hie habbeð on here write þat we misduden here.
Þeïh we hes ne niseien, hie waren ure iferen.
Hwat sullen horlinges don, þes wichen and þe forsworene?
Wi swo fele beð icleped, swo fewe beð icorene?

105 Wi hwi waren hie biȝjete, to hwæn waren hie iborene,
Þe sulle ben to deaðe idemd and afremo forlorene?
Elch man sal þar biclepien himselfen and ec demen.
His œʒen werce and his þanc to witnesse he sal temen.
Ne mai him noman alse wel demen, ne alse rihte,

110 For non ne cnoweð hine alse wel buten one Drihte.
Man wot him self best, his werkes and his wille.
Se þe last wot he seið ofte mast; se þit al wol is stille.
Nis no witnesse alse muchel se mannes œʒen hierte.
Hwo se seið þat hie beð hol him self wol his smierte.

115 Elch man sal him selfen demen to deaðe oðer to live.
Þe witnesse of his œʒen werce to oðer þan hine sal drive.
Al þat afri man haveð idon seðen he cam to manne,
Swo he hit iseie abóc iwrite, he sal hit þenche þanne.
Ac Drihte ne demeð noman after his biginninge,

120 Ac al his lif sal ben teald after his endinge.
ʒieve þe endinge is god, al hit is god, and evel ʒieve evel is þe ende.
God ʒieve þat ure ende be god and ʒieve þat he us lende,
Se man þe nafre nele don god ne nafre god lif lade,
What shall we say or do at the great Doom,
We who have loved wrongly and have led an evil life?
What shall we say or do when angels are afraid?

What shall we bear before us, with what shall we be pleasing,
We who never did any good for the heavenly Judge?
There shall be so many devils that will accuse us;
They have not forgotten anything of what they have seen here.
All that they have seen here, they will know there,

Except we have repented it while we were here.
They have all that we did wrong here in their writing.
Although we did not know or see them, they were our companions.
What shall adulterers do, the witches and the forsworn?
Why are so many summoned, [and] so few are chosen?

Why were they begotten, for what were they born,
Who shall be doomed to death and forever lost?
Each man shall accuse and also condemn himself there.
He shall call his own acts and his thoughts as a witness.
No man may judge him so well, or so rightly,

For none knows him so well except the Lord alone.
Man knows himself best, his acts and his will.
He who knows the least often says the most; he who knows all is still.
There is no witness so great as a man’s own heart.
Whoever says that he is whole himself knows his pain.

Each man shall condemn himself to death or to life.
The witness of his own acts shall drive him to that place.
All that every man has done ever since he came into manhood,
As if he saw it written in a book, he shall think it then.
But the Lord condemns no man according to his beginning,

But all his life shall be judged according to his ending.
If his end is good, it is all good, and evil if evil is the end.
May God grant that our end is good and may we keep what he has given us.
The man who will never do good or ever lead a good life,
Are Deað and Dom cumeð to his dure, he maiʒ him sore adrade

125 ṭat he ne muʒe Ḷanne bidden ore, for ṭat itit ilome;
For ṭi he wis ṭe bit and bizjet and bet bifore Dome.
Ṷanne ṭe Deað is ate dure, wel late he bidded ore;
Wel late he lateð evel werc ṭan he hit ne mai don no more.
Senne lat ṭe and ṭu nah him ṭan ṭu hit ne miht do no more;

130 For ṭi he is sot ṭe swo abit to habben Godes ore.
ἇeiŋ hweðere we hit leveð wel for Drihte self hit sade.
Elche time sal ṭe man ofpunche his misdade,
Oðer raðer oðer later, milce he sal imete,
Ac ṭe Ŧer naveð ibet muchel he haved to bete.

135 Mani man seið, hwo reche pine ṭe sal habben ende,
Ne bidde ich no bet bie ich alesed a Domesdai of bende?
Litel wot he hwat his pine and litel he sneweð
Hwitlch hit is þar sowle wunieð, hwu biter wind þar bloweð.
Hadde he ben þar on oðer two bare tiden,

140 Nolde ne for al midden eard þe þridde þar abiden.
Þat habbed isaid þe come þanne; þit wiste mid iwisse.
Wo wurðe soreʒe seve źier for seve nihte blisse,
And ure blisse, þe ende haveð, for ende lease pine.
Betere is wori water þan atter imengd mid wine.

145 Swines brade is wel swete, swo is of wilde diere,
Ac al to diere he hit abuið þe źiefð þar fore his swiere.
Ful wombe mai lihtliche speken of hunger and of fasten,
Swo mai of pine þe not hwat is pine þe sal ilasten.
Hadde fonded sume stunde, he wolde seggen oðer.

150 Eðlate him ware wif and child, suster and fader and bröðer.
Al he wolde oðerluker don and oðerluker þenche,
Þan he biðohte an helle fur, þat nowiht ne mai quenche;
Afre he wolde her in wo and in wane wunien,
Wið þan he mihte helle fur biflen and bisunien.
Before Death and Doom come to his door, he may be greatly afraid

That he is unable to ask for mercy then, for that happens frequently;
Therefore, he is wise who prays and converts and repents before the Doom.
When Death is at the door, he asks for mercy too late;
He hates evil acts too late when he may not do it anymore.
You give up sin and you do not own it when you might not do it anymore;

Therefore, he is foolish whoever waits to have God’s mercy.
Moreover, we should truly believe it because the Lord himself said it.
Each time the man shall repent his misdeeds,
Either sooner or later, he shall meet mercy,
But he who has not repented here has much to repent.

Many a man says, who understands the pain that shall have an end,
May I not pray any better to be released from bonds on Doomsday?
He knows little what is pain and he knows little
What is heat where his soul dwells; how bitter the wind blows there.
Had he been there one or two bare hours,

He would not for all middle earth abide there the third.
Those have said this who come from that place; they knew it with certainty.
Misery worth seven years’ sorrow for seven nights’ bliss,
And our bliss, which has an end, for endless pain.
Dirty water is better than poison mixed with wine.

Swine’s meat is very sweet, so is [that] of wild deer,
But he who gives his neck for it there buys it all too dear.
A full stomach may speak lightly of hunger and of fasts,
As he may of pain who knows not what is pain that shall last.
Had he experienced it for some time, he would say otherwise.

Worthless to him were his wife and child, sister and father and brother.
All he would otherwise do and otherwise think,
When he thought of the fire of hell, which nothing may quench;
Always would he live here in misery and in misfortune,
Unless he might flee from and avoid the fire of hell.
Eōlate him ware al wele and erðeliche blisse
For to þe muchele blisse cume þis murie mid iwisse.
Ich wulle nu cumen eft to þe Dome, þe Ich eow ar of sade.
On þe daie and on þe Dome, us helpe Criste and rade.
Þar we muʒen ben sore offerd and harde us ofdrade.

Þar ilch sal al isien him biforen his word and ec his dade.
Al sal þar ben þanne cuð þat men luʒen her and halen.
Al sal þar ben þanne unwriŋ þat men her hudden and stalen.
We sullen alre manne lif icnowen alse ure وهاen.
Þar sullen eftinges ben to þe heie and to þe lose.

Ne sal, þeih, no man samie þier, ne þarf he him adrade.
3ieft him her ofþincheð his gult and bet his misdade,
For hem, ne sameð ne ne grameð, þe sulle ben iboreʒe,
Ac þoðre habbed same and grame and oðer fele soreʒe.
Þe Dom þał ben sone idon ne last hit nowiht longe.

Ne sal him noman mene þar of strenðe ne of wronge.
Þo sulle habben harden dom þe here waren hardde;
Þo þe evel hielden wrecþe men and evel læʒe arerde,
Elch after þat he haveð idon, sal þar ben þanne idemð.
Bliðe mai he þanne ben þe God haveð wel iquemd.

Alle þo þe sprunge beð of Adam and of Eve,
Alle hie sulle þider cume, for soðe we hit ileved.
Þo þe habbed wel idon after here mihte,
To heveriche hie sulle fare forð mid ure Drihte.
Þo þe develes werkes habeð idon and þar inne beð ifunde

Hie sulle fare forð mid hem in to helle grunde.
Þar hie sulle wunien abuten ore and ende.
Brecð nafrœ eft Crist helle dure for lesen hem of bende.
Nis no sellich, þeih, hem be wo and þeih hem be uneaðe;
Ne sal nafrœ eft Crist þolien deað for lesen hem of deaðe.8

Ænes Drihten helle brac, his frend he ut brohte.
Him self he þolede deað for hem; wel diere he hes bohte.
All worldly wealth and earthly bliss were worthless to him
Because to come to that much bliss is mirth with certainty.
I will now return to the Doom, of which I told you earlier.
On that day and at that Doom, may Christ help and guide us.
There we might be sorely afraid and deeply in dread.

There each shall see before him all his words and also his deeds.
All shall there be known then what men lied and concealed here.
All shall there be uncovered then what men hid and stole here.
We shall know the lives of all men as our own.
There shall be equals among the powerful and the poor.

No man shall, however, be ashamed there, and it is not necessary for him to fear.
If he grieves his sins here and repents his misdeeds,
For he who shall be saved, there is neither shame nor wrath,
But the others have shame and wrath and other great sorrows.
The Doom shall be done immediately and it will not last long.

No man shall remind him there of violence or of wrong.
Those who were hard here shall have a hard judgment;
Those who cruelly ruled poor men and set up evil laws,
According to what he has done, each shall be judged then.
He who has pleased God well may be happy then.

All those who are sprung of Adam and of Eve,
They all shall come to that place, for truly we believe this.
Those who have done good according to their ability,
To the kingdom of heaven they shall go forth with our Lord.
Those who have done the devil’s works and are found therein

Shall go forth with him into the bottom of hell.
There they shall live without mercy or end.
Christ will never again break hell’s door to free them of bonds.
It is not surprising, though, that they are miserable and are troubled;
Christ shall never again suffer death to free them of death.

Once the Lord broke into hell, he brought out his friends.
He himself suffered death for them; he bought them very dearly.
Nolde hit moʒe don for mai, ne suster broðer;
Nolde sune don for fader, ne no man for oðer.
Ure alre louerd, for his þralles, ipined he was arode.
190
Ure bendes he unbonð and bohte us mid his blode.
We ʒieveð uneaðe for his luve a streche of ʒre breade;
Ne þenche we naht þat sal deme þe qica9 and þe deade.
Muchel luve he us kedde, wolde we hit understonde.
Þat ure elderne misduden we habeð evel an honde.
195
Deað cam in þis middenærd þurh ealde develes onde
And senne and soreʒe and iswinch awatere and londe.
Ure formes faders gult we abugeð alle;
Al his ofspung after him in harem is bivalle,
Þurst and hunger, chele and hete and alle unhalðe.
200
Þurh deað cam in þis middeneard and oðer unisalðe;
Nare noman elles dead ne sic ne unsele
Ac mihte libbe afremo ablisse and an hale.
Litel lac is gode lief þe cumeð of gode wille,
And edolate muchel ʒieve þan his herte is ille.
205
Litel hit ʒunceð maniman, ac muchel was þe senne,
For hwan alle þolieð deað þe comen of here kenne.
Here senne and ec ure ʒeðen, us muʒen rewen, sore ofþunche.
For senne we libeð alle her in soreʒe and in swunche
Seðen God nam swo mukel wrache for one misdeed.
210
We þe swo ofte misdoð we muʒen us eaðe ofdrade.
Adam and al his ofspreng for one bare senne.
Was fele hundred wintre an helle a pine and unwenne.
þo þe ladeð here lif mid unrihte and mid wronge,
Bute her Godes milce do hie, sulle wunie þar longe.
215
Godes wisdom is wel mulchel and alsse is his mihte,
Ac nis his mihte nowiht lasse ac biðer ilke wihte.
More he one maiʒ forʒieve þan alle folc gulte cunne.
Self deuel mihte habben milce ʒief he hit bigunne.
Kinsman would not do it for kinswoman, or sister [for] brother;
Son would not do it for father, or any man for another.
Lord of us all, for his servants, he was tormented on the cross.

He unbound our bonds and bought us with his blood.
We give reluctantly a bit of our bread for his love;
We do not think then that he shall judge the quick and the dead.
He showed us great love, would we understand it.
We have suffering on hand for what our elders did wrongly.

Death came into this world through the old devil’s hand
And harm and sorrow and toil in water and on land.
We all suffer for our first father’s sin;
All his offspring after him have fallen into harm,
Thirst and hunger, cold and heat and all disease.

Through him death came into this world and other miseries;
Nobody else was dead or sick or miserable
But might live evermore in bliss and in health.
Little gift that comes of good will is a good friend,
And worthless is he who gives much when his heart is ill.

Little it seems to many a man, but great was the sin,
For which all who come of their kin suffer death.
We might regret, greatly repent, their sin and also our own.
We all live here in sorrow and in toil for their sin
Ever since God took such great vengeance for one misdeed.

We who so often do wrong might be easily afraid.
Adam and all his offspring for one bare sin
Was many hundred winters in the torments of hell and misery.
Those who lead their life with wickedness and wrong,
But may God have mercy on them, shall remain there long.

God’s wisdom is very great and so is his might,
But his might is not less but is the same weight.
He may forgive more to one than all folk can sin.
The devil himself might have mercy if he had begun it.
Þe Þe Godes milche secð iwis he mai hes ñînden,
220  Ac helle king is oreleas wið þo þe he mai binden.
Se deð his wille mast he sal habbe werest mede;
His bað sal be wallinde pich, his bed barnende glede.
Wërse he doð his gode wines þan his fiendes.
God silde alle Godes friend wið swo evele friende.
225  Nafre an helle Ine cam, ne cumen Ich þar ne reche,
Þeih Ich aches worldes wele þare mihte feche.
Þeih Ich wille seggen eow þat wise men us saden,
And boc hit is write þar me hit mai rade.
Ic wille seggen hit þo þe hit hem self nesten
230  And warnin hem wið here unfreme, þieþ hie me willeð hlesten.
Understondeð nu to meward, eadi men and arme:
Ich wille tellen eow of helle pine and warnin eow wið harme.
An helle hunger and þurst, evel two iferen;
Þos pine þolieð þo þe ware meteniðinges here.
235  þar is woning and wop after ache strate;
Hie fareð fram hate chele, fram chele to hate.
Þan hie beð in þe hate, chele hem þuncheð blisse;
Þan hie cumeð eft to chele, of hate hie habbeð misse.
Eider doð hem wo inoh; nabbeð none lisse.
240  Niten hweðer hem doð wers to nafre none wisse.
Hie walkeð afre and secheð reste, ac hie hes ne muþen imeten
Forþi þe hie nolde, þe hwile hie mihten, here senne beten.
Hie secheð reste þar non nis ac hie hies ne muþen ifinden,
Ac walkeð weri up and dun, se water doð mid winde.
245  þat beð þo þe waren her an þan unstedefaste,
And þo þe Gode biheten aihte and hit him ilaste,
And þo þe god werc bigunnen and ful endin hit nolden
Nu waren her and nu þar, and nesten hwat he wolden;
þar is pich þat afre walleð þar sulle wunien inne.
Those who seek God’s mercy certainly may find it,

But hell’s king is merciless with those who he may bind.
He who does his will the most shall have the worst reward;
His bath shall be seething pitch, his bed burning coal.
He does the worst to his good friends than his enemies.
God protects all God’s friends against such evil friends.

I have never come into hell, or care to come to that place,
Though I might fetch each world’s wealth there.
Though I will say to you what wise men said to us,
And it is written in a book where one may read it.
I will say to those who do not know it themselves

And warn them against their own detriment, if they will listen to me.
Understand me now, rich men and the poor:
I will tell you of the torments of hell and warn you against harm.
In hell [are] hunger and thirst, two evils together;
Those who were meat-miserly here suffer this pain.

There is wailing and weeping after each stretch;
They go from heat to cold, from cold to heat.
When they are in the heat, the cold seems like bliss to them;
When they come again to cold, they have need of heat.
Both do they suffer enough; they have no peace.

They do not know which of them does worse with any certainty.
They walk eternally and seek rest, but they are unable to find it
Because they would not, while they could, repent their sins.
They seek rest where there is none and they are unable to find it,
But walk weary up and down, as water does with wind.

They are those who were wavering in their thoughts,
And those who vowed wealth to God and [would not] fulfill it,
And those who began good deeds and would not fully complete them
Who now were here and now there, and knew not what they wished;
There is pitch that eternally boils for their souls to dwell in.
250  Þo þe ladeð here lif on were and an unwinne,
þar is fur þis hundredfeald hatere þan be ure,
Ne mai hit quenche salt water, ne auene stream ne sture.
þis is þat fur þat afre barneð ne mai no wiht quenche.
þar inne beð þe was to lef wrecche men to swenche,
255  Þo þe swikele men and ful of evele wrenchen,
And þo þe mihten evel don and lief hit was to þenchen,
Þe luveden raving and stale, hordom and druken,10
And an defles werkes bliðeliche swunken.
Þo þe waren swo lease men þat mes ne mihte leven,
260  Medʒierne domes men and wrongwise reven;
Þo þe oðer mannesc wif was lief her œzen eðlate,
And þo þe sunegeden muchel on druken and on ate;
Þe wreche men binnomen here aihte and leide his on horde,
Þe litel lete of Godes bode and of Godes worde;
265  And þe his œzen nolde ʒieve þar he iseih þe niede,
Ne nolde ihere Godes men þan he sat at his biede;
Þo þe was oðer mannes þing levere þan hit solde
And waren alto gradi of silver and of golde;
Þo þe untrewnesse deden þan þe he solden ben holde
270  And leten al þat hie solden don and deden þat hie wolden;
Þo þe waren ʒietceres of þis werelde aihte
And dûœ al þat þe loðe gost hem tithe to and taiht;
And al þo þe ani wise devel iquemde;
Þo beð mid hem in helle, fordon and demde,
275  Bute þo þe ofðuhte sore here misdade
And gunne11 here gultes bete and betere lif lade.
Þar beð middren and snaken, eveten and fruden
Þe tereð and freteð þo evele swiken, þe niðfule and þe prude.
Nafre sunne þar ne sineð, ne mone ne store.
280  Þar is muchel Godes hete and muchel Godes œerre.
Afre þar is evel smech, þiesternesse, and eie;
Those who led their life in war and in sorrow,
There is fire that is a hundredfold hotter than is ours,
And salt water cannot quench it, neither its own stream nor river.
This is that fire that eternally burns and nothing is able to quench it.
Therein shall be those who delighted to oppress miserable men,

Those who were deceitful men and full of evil tricks,
And those who might do evil and delighted to think of it,
Who loved plunder and theft, whoredom and drunkenness,
And happily toiled in the devil’s acts.
Those who were such false men that none might believe them,

Bribe-greedy judges and wicked reeves;
Those who loved other men’s wives and were indifferent to their own,
And those who sin greatly in drinking and in eating;
The wretched men took their wealth and saved it,
Who granted little of God’s message and of God’s word;

And he would not give of his own what he saw was required,
And would not hear God’s men when they sat at his table;
Those who loved other men’s things more than they should
And were all too greedy for silver and gold;
Those who exhibited dishonesty when they should be morally upright

And gave up all that they should do and did what they would;
Those who were desirous of this world’s wealth
And did all that the loathsome ghost granted and taught to him;
And all those who pleased the devil in any way;
Those are with him in hell, destroyed and condemned,

Except those who greatly repent ed their misdeeds
And began to atone for their sins and to lead a better life.
There are adders and snakes, lizards and frogs
That tear and fret those evil traitors, the envious and the proud.
The sun never shines there, or the moon or the stars.

There is much of God’s hatred and much of God’s wrath.
There is evil smoke, darkness, and awe eternally;
Nis þar nafre oder liht þan þe swarte leie.
þar ligeð ateliche fiend in stronge raketeie;
þat beð þo þe waren mid God, angles swiðe heie.

285
þat beð ateliche fiend and eiseliche wihten,
þo sulle þe wrecche sowle isien þe sinegeden þurh sihte.
þar is se loðe Sathanas and Belzebub se ealde;
Eaðe he mužen ben sore ofdrad þe sullen hes bihealde.
Ne mai non herte hit þenche ne tunge hit ne mai telle

290
Hwu muchele pine ne hwu fele senden in helle.
Of þo pine þe þar bieð, nelle Ich eow naht lie;
Nis hit bute gamen and glie of þat man mai here drie,
And ziet ne doð hem naht alse wo in þe loðe bende,
Swo þat he witen þat here pine sal nafre habben ende.

295
þar beð þe haðene men þe waren laʒelease,
þe nes naht of Godes bode ne of Godes hease.
Evele Cristene men hie beð here iferen,
þo þe here Cristendom evele hieldon here,
And ziet he beð a worse stede anþer helle grunde,
Ne sullen nafre cumen ut, for peni ne for punde.
Ne mai hem noðer helpe þar ibede, ne almesse,
For naht solden bidde þar ore ne forþievenesse.
Silde him elch man þe hwile he mai wið þos helle pine,
And warnie his frend þar wið, swo Ich habbe ido mine.

300
þo þe silde hem ne cunnen, Ich hem wille tache.
Ich can ben aiðer, þief isal, lichame and sowle lache.
Late we þat God forbet alle mankenne,
And do we þat he us hat and silde we us wid senne.
Luve we God mid ure herte and mid al ure mihte

305
And ure em Cristen alse us self, swo us tached Drihte.
Al þat me radeð and singed bifore Godes borde,
Al hit hangeð and halt bi þese twam worde.
Alle Godes¹² laʒes hie fulleð, þe newe and þe ealde,
There is never other light than the dark fire.
There lie horrible fiends in strong chains;
There are those who were with God, angels extremely high.

285 There are horrible fiends and dreadful creatures,
The wretched souls that sinned through sight shall see these.
There is that loathsome Satan and Belzebub the old;
They who shall behold them may be readily, deeply afraid.
No heart may think it and no tongue may tell

290 How much pain or how many are in hell.
Of those pains that there are, I will not lie to you;
And what men may tolerate here is not without games and glee,
And yet it is not so with them who live in those hateful bonds,
As they know that their pain shall never have an end.

295 There are those heathen men who were lawless,
Who do not know of God’s command or of God’s behests.
Evil Christian men are their companions,
Whose Christianity badly endured here,
And yet they are in a worse place in the bottom of hell,

300 And they shall never come out, for a penny or for a pound.
Prayers may not help them there, or alms,
For nothing shall offer mercy or forgiveness there.
Let each man shield himself while he may against those torments of hell,
And warn his friends against that, as I have done mine.

305 Those who cannot shield themselves, I will teach them.
I know how to be both, if I may, the helper of the body and the soul.
Let us leave behind what God forbade to all mankind,
And let us do what he commands us and let us shield ourselves from sin.
May we love God with our hearts and with all our might

310 And our fellow Christians as ourselves, as the Lord teaches us.
All that I have read and have sung before God’s board,
It all hangs and holds by these two words.
He fulfills all of God’s laws, the new and the old,
he þe þos two luves halt and wile hes wel healde,

315  Ac hie bieð wel arefeð healde swo ofte we gulteð alle
For hit is strong te stonde longe and liht hit is to falle.
Ac Drihte Cist13 þeve us strengðe stoned þat we moten
And of alle ure gultes þeve us cume bote.
We wilnieð after wereldes wele, þe longe ne mai ilaste,

320  And legeð mast al ure swinc on þing unstedefaste.
Swunke for Godes luve half þat we doð eihë;
Nare we naht swo ofte bicherd ne swo evele bikeihte.
þief we serveden God half þat we doð for erminges,
We mihten habben more an hevene þa þierles and kinges.

325  Ne muþe we werien naðer ne wið þurst ne wið hunger,
Ne wið elde14 ne wið deað, þe elder ne þe þeungær,
Ac þar nis hunger ne þurst, deað ne unhalde ne elde.
Of þesse riche we þenched ðe ofte, of þare alto selde.
We solden þenchen us wel ofte and ilomo15

330  Hwat we beð, to hwan we sullen, and of hwan we come;
Hwu little hwhile we bieð her, hwu longe elles hware;
Hwat we muþen habben her and hwat we findeð þare.
þief waren wise men, þus we solden þenchen,
Bute we wurðen us iwar þis wereld us wile drenchen.

335  Mast alle men hit þieved drinken of on evele senche;
He sal him cunnen silde wel, þief hit nele scrench.
Mid Almihtin Godes luve, ute we us biwerien
Wið þesses wreches woreldes luve þat hit ne muþe us derien.
Mid almesse, mid fasten, and mid ibeden werie we us wid senne;

340  Mid þo wapne þe God haved þieve alle man kenne,
Late we þe brode strate and þane weg bene
þe lat þe nieðe dal to helle of manne, me mai wene.
Go we þane narewe pað and þene wei grene,
þar forð fareð wel litel folc, and eche is fair and isene.
He who holds these two loves and will rightly uphold,
Except they are very difficult to keep, as we all sin often
Because it is arduous to stand long and it is easy to fall.
But Lord Christ gave us strength that we may stand
And allow us to come to redemption from all our sins.
We yearn for the world’s wealth, which may not last long,
And we lay most all our toil on transitory things.
We toil for God’s love half what we do for wealth;
We should not be so often diverted or so evilly trapped.
If we served God half what we do for wretches,
We might have more in heaven than earls and kings.
We may not protect against either thirst or hunger,
Or against old age or death, the older or the younger,
Except there is no hunger or thirst, death or sickness or old age.
We think of this kingdom too often, of there all too seldom.
We should reflect on ourselves very often and frequently
What we are, to what place we shall [go], and from what place we came;
How little while we are here, how long elsewhere;
What we may have here and what we find there.
If we were wise men, we should think of this,
But may we live aware that this world will drown us.
Most all men it gives drink of an evil draught;
He must shield himself well, so that it will not ensnare him.
With Almighty God’s love, let us protect ourselves
Against this wretched world’s love that it may not hurt us.
Let us protect ourselves from sin with alms, fasts, and prayers;
With these weapons that God has given to all mankind,
Let us leave the broad street and the pleasant way
That leads the ninth part of men to hell, [and] I believe more.
Let us walk the narrow path and the green way,
Very few folk travel to that place, and each is fair and clear.
Be brode strate is ure wil, be is loð te læte;
Þo be folgðe here iwil hie fareð bi þare strate.
Hie muþen lihtliche cumen mid þare niðer helde
Þurh one godelease wude to one bare felde.
Þa narewe pað is Godes has; þar forð fareð wel feawe.

345

Dat beð þo be hem sildeð þierne wið achen unðecawe.
Þos goð uneáðe þien þe clive and azien þe heie hulle;
Þos leten al here iwil for Godes luve to fülle.
Go we alle þane wei, for he us wile bringe
Mid þe feawe faire men bifore þe heven Kinge;

350

Þar is alre blisse mast mid angles songe.
Þe is a þusend wintre þar ne þuncheð hit him naht longe;
Þe last haveð blisse he haveð sswo muchel þat he ne bit no more.
Þe þat blisse forgoð hit sal him rewen sore.
Ne mai non evel ne non wane ben in Godes riche,

355

Þeið þar ben wuminges, fele elch oðer uniliche;
Sume þar habbeð lasse blisse and sume þar habbeð more,
Elch after þat he dude her, after þane þe swanc sore.
Ne sal þar ben bread ne win ne oðer kennes este;
God one sal ben ache lif and blisse and ache reste.
Ne sal þar ben foh ne grai ne cunin ne ermine,
Ne aquerne ne metheschele ne bever ne sabeline.
Ne sal þar ben naðer scat ne srud ne wereldes wele none.
Al þe blisse þe me us bihat al hit sal ben God one.
Ne mai no blisse ben alse muchel se is Godes sihte;

360

365

He is soð sunne and briht and dai abute nihte.
He is aches godes ful nis him no with uten.
Nones godes hem nis wane þe wunied him abuten.
Þar is wele abuten wane and reste abuten swunche.
Þe muþen and nelleð þider cume hit hem mai ofþunche.

370

375

þar is blisse abuten treiðe and lif abuten deaðe.
Þo þe afre sulle wunie þar bliðe hie muþe ben eaðe.
The broad street is our will, which is loathsome to forsake;
Those who follow their will travel by this street.
They may come easily with the downward hill
Through a barren wood to a bare field.
The narrow path is God’s commands; very few travel there.

They are those who shield themselves earnestly against every vice.
These walk with difficulty along the cliffs and upon the high hill;
These forsake all their will to satisfy God’s love.
Let us all go that way, for it will bring us
Before the King of heaven with the few fair men;

There is greatest of all bliss with angels’ songs.
He who is a thousand winters there will not think it long;
He who has the least bliss has so much that he asks for no more.
He who forgoes bliss shall regret it greatly.
And no evil or any misfortune may be in God’s kingdom,

Yet there are many dwellings, each unlike another;
Some have less bliss there and some have more,
According to what they did here, according to how they worked greatly.
There shall be no bread or wine or other kinds of delight;
God alone shall be eternal life and bliss and eternal rest.

And there shall be no spotted or gray or rabbit or ermine [furs],
And no squirrel or marten’s skin or beaver or sable fur.
There shall be neither sheet nor shroud nor any of the world’s wealth.
All the bliss that is promised to us all shall be God alone.
And no bliss may be as great as the sight of God;

He is the true sun and bright and day without night.
He is full of eternal good and there is nothing he is without.
He who dwells about him lacks nothing that is good.
There is wealth without deprivation and rest without toil.
He who may and will not come to that place may regret it.

There is bliss without suffering and life without death.
Those who shall dwell there eternally may easily be blithe.
Þar is þieuð abuten elde and hale abuten unhalðe,
Nis þar sareʒe ne sor non ne nafre unisalðe.
Þar me Drihte self isien swo se is mid iwisse.

He one mai and sal al ben angles and manne blisse,
And þeih ne beð16 here eien naht alle iliche brihte;
Hi nabbeð naht iliche muchel alle of Godes lihte.
On þesse liev he naren naht alle of ore mihte,
Ne þar ne sullen habben God alle bi one wihte.

Þo sullen more of him isien þe luveden hine more
And more icnownen and ec witen his mihte and his ore.
On him hie sulle finden al þat man mai to hleste;
On him he sullen ec isien al þat hie ar nesten.
Crist sal one bien inoʒð alle his derlinges.

Þe one is muche more and betere þan alle oðer þinges;
Inoh he haveð þe hine haveð þe alle þing wealdeð.
Of him to isiene nis non sæd; swo fair he is to bihelden.
God is swo mere and swo muchel in his godcunnesse
Þat al þat elles was, and is, is fele verse and lasse.

Ne mai hit nafre noman oðer seggen mid iwisse
Hwu muchele murihðe habbeð þo þe beð in Godes blisse;
To þare blisse us bringe God, þe rixeð abuten ende.
Þane he ure souwe owl unbint of lichamliche bende,
Crist þieve us laden her swilch lif and habben her swilch ende

Þat we moten þider cumen þane we henne wende.
Amen.
There is youth without old age and health without infirmity,
And there is never grief or distress or misfortune.
There the Lord himself is seen as he is with certainty.

380 He alone may and shall be the bliss of all the angels and men,
And yet their eyes shall not be all alike bright;
They do not possess anything much like all of God’s light.
In this life they were not all of one virtue,
And there none shall have God all by one measure.

385 Those shall see more of him who loved him more
And know more and also learn of his might and his mercy.
In him they shall find all that man may desire;
In him they shall also see all that they did not know here.
Christ alone shall be enough for all his darlings.

390 He alone is much more and better than all other things;
He has enough who has him who rules all things.
It is not tiring to look upon him; he is so fair to behold.
God is so glorious and so great in his godliness
That all else that was, and is, is much worse and less.

395 And no other man may ever say with certainty
How much mirth they have who are in God’s bliss;
May God, who rules without end, bring us to that bliss.
When he unbinds our souls from their bodily bonds,
May Christ grant that we lead here such a life and have here such an end

400 That we might come to that place when we leave from here.
Amen.
The Edition

1. It appears “ofdinkeð” in the manuscript. Even though it is clearly an error for “ofðinkeð,” as there is no record of “ofdinkeð” in the MED, I have left it as I found it because it is not difficult for the reader to make the connection to “ofðinkeð.”

2. The facsimile of “horde” does not clearly show the [e] at the end, but there is a dark area just beside the end of the word that could possibly be an [e]. As the poem is structured in a rhyming couplet, I have included the [e] to match “worde” in the line above; moreover, there is not enough evidence against the [e] existing in the facsimile for me to dismiss it.

3. I have added “þar ne” before “þarf” in order to render the phrase negative—and thus comprehensible—which is implied by the second part of the line—“ne of þieue”—as well as the repetition of the sentence structure in line 45.

4. Lines 73-120 are taken from the transcription in Specimens in Early English edited by Richard Morris, as I was unable to procure the facsimile of folios 3v-4r.

5. As the [r] is italicized, I’m assuming this was an editorial emendation, but as I noted in Section B of the Introduction, I cannot be absolutely sure since I do not have the facsimile and Morris’ own practices are inconsistent.

6. Morris writes “þurh-sihð,” which he has done before to signify that two clearly separate words in the manuscript should be together, and sometimes the words he hyphenates appear conjoined to me. In my own practice, I have written the words as they appear in the manuscript, either conjoined or separate; however, as I do not have access to the facsimile for this line, I have chosen to follow Morris’ hyphenation.

7. The italicized [u] here raises the same problem as the italicized [r] in line 79.

8. As “dorðe”, which is written in the manuscript, does not exist as a word in the MED, I agree with Morris’ emendation of deaðe, especially since the rest of the line mentions Christ never again suffering death in order to free us from death, and the preceding line ends with “uneaðe.”

9. The manuscript reads “qca,” with the [i] being a scribal correction above the [q], but the word was obviously meant to be written as “quica” in order to complete the phrase “the
quick and the dead.” I have commented in the Introduction on this scribal error in relation to Morris’ own editorial choice in this matter.

10. “Druken” is clearly a scribal error, but just as was the case with “qica,” I think the proper word “drunken” is easily discernible, especially in the larger context of the line; therefore, I have left it as I found it in the manuscript. Also note that this same spelling is repeated in line 262.

11. For some reason, “gunne” was written with a [g] majuscule in the manuscript, which was probably a scribal error since the scribe may not have immediately taken notice of the Tironian nota that he had just written.

12. The manuscript reads “godel” here, but unless there is an “-es” ending, how will the beginning reader make the connection to the genitive case? Instead, he or she may believe this is a completely different word rather than “God’s,” which is why I have emended it.

13. The manuscript contains “cst” with an [i] written above the [c], and Morris has written “crist” here. I have kept “cist” because the word “drihten” immediately precedes the word and should help the reader with the meaning, just as “deade” would have helped the understanding of “qica” in line 192.

14. The phrase “ne wid elde” was repeated after the first instance, but I have removed it from my edition. It appears to have been a scribal error, as it does not make sense in translation.

15. Although the word “ilomo” cannot be found in the MED and Morris has changed it to “ilome”—for orthographical and schematic reasons—there are three other occurrences of “ilome”—lines 47, 61, and 125—that should have informed the reader of its meaning by this point.

16. I have omitted the first “clive,” which appears between “uneade” and “ʒien” in the manuscript, as it seems to be the scribe merely getting ahead of himself.

17. This word was obviously meant to be “swo,” but I have left it as it I found it in the manuscript because the meaning is still clear to the reader without altering the spelling.

18. Morris writes “wuniinges,” but I believe the manuscript shows “wuminges.” While “wuniing” is a form of the gerund “woning(e)” from the verb “wonen”—“to dwell”—the MED also shows the form “wominge.” The scribe may very well have been correct in writing “wuminges.”
19. Unlike the various endings of verbs, like “haveð,” and other words, like “wið,” that we’ve seen, the difference between “bed” and “beð” is great, ranging from “bed” to “bid” to “be”; it is important to get the form of this word correct, or else we risk confusion, which is why I have made the emendation.

The Translation

1. There is no object of “send” or “carry” in the manuscript, but both the Lambeth and the Jesus versions contain some form of the reflexive pronoun. Therefore, I have inserted “ourselves” after “carry” to fulfill the object required by the two preceding verbs.

2. As I discussed in the second section of the Introduction, the Lambeth version includes “chep” instead of “ware,” which renders it “bargain” in Modern English, unlike the Trinity version with “ware,” which literally means “wares” or “merchandise.” Even though I believe “salvation” works best here because of the note in the Middle English Dictionary about its religious connotations, I also believe “conclusion” or simply “wares” would be suitable, though not as poignant.

3. In comparison with the Lambeth version, “do hit” appears just before “mid his gode þonke”; thus, it appears the Trinity scribe erroneously omitted the necessary verb to fulfill the meaning of this line. Otherwise, the line would read, “And he who may not do more with his good will,” which does not fit into the context of the immediate lines.

4. The verb “can” may be translated from a variant of “gan,” a past tense conjugation of “ginnen” from Norse that means “do” in its present form. The verb “to do” often means to “perform” or “show,” and I have translated it as “shows” in line 71. Thus, God “shows” his grace to those who deserve it.

5. As mentioned in the Editorial and Translation Policies, lines 73-120 come from Morris’ edition of the Trinity manuscript in Specimens of Early English.

6. The line reads “He is one afre on eche stede, wende þar þu wende,” which literally translates to “He alone is eternally in each place, turn where you may turn”; I have, however, translated as “wherever you may turn” for ease of reading as it maintains the same meaning as the literal translation.
7. Similar to earlier cases of scribal omissions, I believe a negative word is missing here, not only because line 247 contains a similar sentence structure but also because Lambeth and Jesus contain “nolde” before the rest of the phrase, “hit him ilaste” in Trinity.

8. The word “bene” means “good” or “pleasant,” but Morris translated this as “open.” In the comments of his Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises, Morris has written, “Does this mean the well-trodden way? […] I have translated as if bene were another form of O.E. bain, ready, also easiest, nearest” (321). I believe this word is a derivative of French, either Continental or Anglo-Norman (the MED listed both), which would be appropriate to the time period, and the “pleasant way” implies a path of least resistance and tribulation in one’s earthly existence, thus an easy way.

9. The word “godelease,” which is listed as “godles” in the MED, can mean “worthless,” “miserable,” or “barren” (when referring to a wood, which is the case of this line). However, because “gode” can also mean God, I see no reason why this might not also be translated as a “Godless wood”; the term “barren” implies a lack of life, and a place lacking God could conceivably be devoid of life as well.
Poema Morale
m. 1-84 (2)

1 Ich am nu elder þan ich was a wintre 7 a lore.
2 Ich wealde more þan iduðe mi wit oh to be more
3 To longe ich habbe child iben a worde 7 a dade.
4 Peiñ iþie a wintur eald to junþ ich am on rode
5 Vnnet lif ich habbe ilad 7 ſiet me þincþe ilade
6 Pon ibëdrëche me þar on wel sore ime adrade.
7 Most al ich habbe idon is idelnesse 7 chilce.
8 Wel late ich habbe me bitþoht bule me god do milce.
9 Fele idel word ich habbe ispeken seþen ich speken cõde.
10 7 fele þeunjge dade idon þe me ofþinkëd nude.
11 Alto lome ich habbe igult a werke 7 a worde.
12 Alto muchel ic habbe ispend to litel ileid on hord(e?)
13 Most al þat me likede ar nu hit me mislicoð:
14 Pe michel folgæg his iwal him selfen he biswicoð.
15 Ich mihte habben bet idon hadde ich þo iseide.
16 Nu ich wolde ac ine mai for elde 7 for unhalde
17 Elde me is bistolen on ar ich hit iwiste.
18 Ne mai ich isien bïfore me for smeche ne for misle.
19 Ar we bed to don god to juel al to priste.
20 Moræ eie stonded man of man þan him do of Criste.
21 Pe wel ne deð þe huile he mai wel ofte hit sal him rewen.
22 Pan alle men sule ripen pat he ar sewen.
23 Do al to gode þat he muþe och þe huile he bedd alvæ.
24 Ne lipne roman to muchel to childe ne to wiue.
Poema Morale
LL. 25 - 48 (24)

25 Pe he him selfe forgiet for wiue ouer for childe
26 He sal cumen on euel stede bute him god be milde.
27 Sende god biforen him man pe huile he mai to heuere
28 For betre is on almesse biforen pan ben after seuene.
29 Ne bie pe leuere pan pe self ne pi mai ne pi moue
30 Sot is pe is ouer mannes frend betere pan his owen.
31 Ne hopie wif to hire were ne were to his wiue
32 Be for him self afric man pe huile he bed aluie.
33 Wis pe him selue biuenchid pe huile he mist libben
34 For sone willid him forgiete pe fremde 7 pe sibbe.
35 Pe wel ne do pe huile he mai ne sal he pan he wolde.
36 For mani mannes sare iswinc habbed ofte unhole.
37 Ne solde noman don a furst ne laten wel to done.
38 For mani man bihateid wel pat hi forgieteid sone.
39 Pe man pe wile sikar ben to habben godes blisse.
40 Do wel him self pe huile he mai panne haude hes mid iwis.
41 Pe riche man wened sikar ben purcch wallen 7 thurh diichen.
42 He deo his aihte an sikar stede pe hit sent to heueriche.
43 For *far* den ofdrad of fure ne of pieu.
44 Par ne mai hit him binime pe lod ne pe lieue.
45 Par ne parf he habben care of here ne of fielde
46 bidder we sended 7 ec beraed to litle 7 to selde
47 bidder drawen 7 don wel ofte 7 ilome.
48 For far ne sal me us rait binime mid wrongwise dome.
Poema Morale

ll. 49-72 (Br)

Pider we solde jienne drouwen wolde jie me ileuen.
For ne mai hit us binime no king ne no syrne.
Al pat beste bat we habbed her bider we solde sende.
For pat we mihtne finden eft 7 habben abuten ende.
Se þe her doð am god for haben godes ore. * (þe bor, grene ?)
Al he hit sal eft finde þar 7 hundredfoalde more.
Se þe aihte wile halde wel þe huile hes muige weakden
Jiene, hes for godes luve þanne doð hes wel inealden.
For ure swinche þe þilpe is ofte wuned to swinde.
Ac al þat we jieueð for godes luve al we hit sulen eft finden.
Ne sal þar non euil ben unkloht ne god unforðelden.
Euel we bodd al to muchel 7 god losse þan we solden.
Se þe mast doð nu to gode 7 se last to lote.
Eider to litel 7 to muchel hem sal punche boðe.
þar me sal ure werkes weigen bifoere þan heuen kinge.
7 jieuen us ure werkes lean after ure ernige. * cringe
Afriuch man mid þat he haueð mai bugge heueriche
Pe þe more haued 7 te þe lasse boðe iliche.
Alse on mid his peni se oðer mid his punde
þis is þet wunderwikste ware þat ani man funde.
7 se þe more ne mai don mid his gode iþanke.
Alse wel se þe haued goldes fele manke. * (Manca Mencay)
And ofte god can more þane þan þe him jieueð losse.
Al his werkes 7 his weies is milce 7 rihtwinesse.
Poema Morale

ll. 121-145 (4v)

121. Jief pe endinge is god al hit is god. 7 euel jief euel is pe ende.
122. God jieve pat were ende be god. 7 jieve pat he us lende.
123. Se man pe nafre nele don god ne nafre god lit lode.
124. Are dead 7 dom cume9 to his dure he mai j hlin9. Sore adrade.
125. Pat he ne muge panne bidden ore for pat it til ilome.
126. For pi he wis pe bit. 7 bijiet 7 bet before dome.
127. Panne pe dead is ate dure wel late he bidded ore.
128. Wel late he late8 euel were pan he hit ne mai don no more.
129. Senne lat pe 7 pu nah hlin9 pan pu hit ne, micht do no more.
130. For pi he is sat pe swo obit to habben godes ore.
131. Behi hwedeere we hit lewe9 wel for drihte self hit sode.
132. Elche time sal pe man of punche his misdade.
133. Odare ra9 der o9 der later mile he sal ime10.
134. Ac pe pe her nau9 e9 ibet muchel he haued to bete.
135. Mani man se10 huo reche pine pe sal habben ende.
137. Litel wot he h11. wat his pine 7 litel he crowe12.
138. Hwileh hit is par solew wunie19 huu biter wind par blowe19.
139. Hadde he ben par on o9 der two bore tiden.
140. Nolde he for al midden eard pe fridde par abiden.
141. Pat habbed isaid pe come panne hit wiste mid isisse.
142. Wo wurde sorese seue zier for seue ninte blisse.
143. 7 ure blisse be ende haued for ende lease pine.
144. Betere is wort water pan etter imerged mid wone.
145. Swines brade is wel swete swo is of wilde diere.
Poema Morale
ell. 146-170 (AV-5r)

146 Ac al to diere he hit abuið pe Jiefð ðar forðe his swiere.
147 Ful woniæ mai lihtliche speken of hunger ðat of fasten
148 Swa mai of pine pe not huwat is pine ðe sal ilosgen.
149 Haddæ fonded sume stude he wolde segen ðær
150 ðælæte him wære wif 7 child suster 7 fader 7 broðer.
151 Al he wolde oðerluker don 7 oðerluker þencne
152 Pan he biðæte an heele fur þat nowiht ne mai queneche.
153 Aftre he wolde her in wære 7 in wære wunniæ
154 Wif þæn he mihte heele fur biþlen 7 biseunen.
155 ðælæte him wære al wele 7 erdeliche blisse
156 For to þæ michele blisse cumpe þis murie mid iwisse.
157 Ich wulle nu cuunen ðæf ðett to þe dome þe ich ewar of sade.
158 On þe daie 7 on þe dome us helpe crist 7 rade.
159 Þar we muþen ben sore offerd 7 harde us ofdrade.
160 Þar ich sal al isien him biþreni his wurð 7 ec his dade.
161 Al sal þar þen þanne cuð þat men luþen her 7 halen.
162 Al sal þar þen þanne unwunien þat men her hudden 7 stalen.
163 We sullen æle manne lif scrowen else we oþen
164 Þar sullen eþinges ben to þe heil 7 to loge.
165 Ne sal þeið no man samæ ðier ne þarf he him adrade.
166 Jief þim her ofþinchæ ðis guút 7 bet his misdade.
167 For hem ne sameð ne ne granieð þe sulle ben ðeoreze.
168 Ac þöðre habbeð same 7 grame 7 oðer fele soreze.
169 Þe dom þal þen sone idon ne last hit nowiht longe
170 Ne sal him noman mene þar of strenæ þe ne of worgæ
Poema Morale

line 171-195 (5r-5v)

171 Po sulle habben hardne dom þe here weren harðde
dom þe here weren harðde
172 Po þe euel hilden wrecche men 7 euel laze arerde.
173 Elche after þat he hauð idon sal þar ben þanne idom à
174 Bliðe mai he panne ben þe god hauð wol iguern.
175 Alle þo þe sprunge bed of adan 7 of eue
176 Alle hie sulle þider comen for soo þe hit ileuþed.
177 Þat þe habbæd wel idon after here mihte
178 To heuerniche hie sulle fare forð mid ure drithte.
179 Þo þe deueles werkes hauð idon 7 þar inne bed ifunde
180 Hie sulle fare forð mid hem in to helle grunde.
181 þar hie sulle wunien abuten ore 7 ende.
182 Breð nafre eft crist helle dure for lesen hem of bende
183 Nis no selich þe þem hem be wo 7 þe þem hem be uneade
184 Ne saþ nafre eft crist polien dead for lesen hem of dorþe.
185 Ænes drithen helle brach his þrend he ut brohte
186 Him self he tolæde dead for hem wel diere he hes bohte.
187 Nolde hit moȝe don þar me nusser brōðer
188 Nolde sume don for fader ne no man for ðer:
189 Vre aier louerd for his þralles ipined he was orade
190 Ure bendes he unbonð 7 bohte us mid his blode.
191 We gieueu uneade for his luwe a streche of ure breode
192 Ne þreþ þe ne nahte þar þat sal dom þe ðoþ 7 þe deade.
193 Muchel luwe he us kedde wæle we hit understonde.
194 þat ure elderne midþen we hauð euel an honde.
195 Dead cam in pis middenþat purh calde deueles onde

80
Poema Morale

141. 7 senne 7 forege 7 iswinch awatere 7 bonde.
142. Vre forenes foderes gult we abugad alle.
143. Al his ofspring after him in harem is bawalle.
144. Byst 7 hunger. chele 7 hete 7 alle unhalde.
145. Turh deod cam in bis middeneard 7 der unisalde.
146. Nare namen elles dead ne sic ne unsele.
147. Ac mihte libbe ofremo oblisse 7 an hale.
148. Litel lac is gode lief pe curned of gode wilde.
149. 7 edlate muchel sieve than his herte is ille.

205. Litel hit punchea manum an ac muchel was pe senne.
206. For hwan alle polied deod pe cemen of here kenne.
207. Here senne 7 ec ure ogen us muige rewen sore ofpunche.
208. For senne we libed alle her in sorege 7 in swunche.
209. Seiden god na swu mukel wrache for one misdeede.
210. We pe swo ofte misdo we muigen us eode ofdrade.
211. Adam 7 al his ofspreng for one bare senne.
212. Was fele hundred wintre an helle a pine 7 unwenne.
213. To pe laden here lif mod unrihte 7 mid wraige.
214. Bute her gode milce do hei sulle wunie par longe.

215. Godes wisdom is wel multchel 7 alise is his mihte.
216. Ac nis his mihte nowihet lasse ac biher ilke wihte.
217. More he one maig forgieue pe alle folc guile cumne.
218. Self deuel mihte habban milce gief he hit bigunne.
219. Pepe godes milche se, wiwis he mai hes finde.
220. Ac nelle king is overeas wi od pe he mai binden.
Poema Morale

221 Si deȝ his wille most he sal habbe worrest mede
222 His baȝ sal be wallinde piche his bed bannende glede.
223 Wese he deȝ his gode winnes pan his fiended
224 God silde alle godes friend wiȝ swo eule friended.
225 Nafre an helle ine cam ne cumen ich par ne reche
226 Þei ði aches woreldes wele þare mihte feche.
227 Þei ði wille seggen eow þat wise men us saden.
228 * bokeh hit is write þar me hit mai rade.
229 Þi wille seggen hit þo þe hit hem self nesten.
230 7 warnin hem wiȝ here unfreme ȝief hie me willeð hlesten.
231 Unnderstandeð nu þo meuward eadi men 7 arme
232 Þi wille tellen eow of helle pine 7 warnin eow wiȝ harme.
233 An helle hunger 7 purst euel two iferen
234 Þos pine tolde þo þe ware metenidinges here.
235 þar is woning 7 woor after ache strate
236 þe fareð fram hate chele fra þe chele to hate.
237 Þan hie beð in þe hate chele hem punced blisse
238 Þan hie cumed ef þo chele of hatte hie habbed misse.
239 Eider død þo inoh habbed none lisse.
240 Ñiten hweðer hem død wers to nafre none wisse.
241 Hie walkèd afe 7 seched reste ac hie hes ne muȝen imeten.
242 For þi þe hie nolde þe huile hie mihlen he rese beneth.
243 Hie seched reste þar non nis ac hie hies ne muȝen ifanden.
244 Ac walkèd weri up 7 dun se water død mid wilde
245 þat beð þo þe woren her an pance unwistedefoste.
Poema Morale

ll. 246–270 (vn–fr)

246 I po be gode biheten aihte 7 hit him ilaste.
247 I po be god were bigunn 7 ful erdin hit nolden.  
248 Nu waren her 7 nu par 7 mesten hwat he wolden.
249 Par is pich pat afre walleð par sulle wunnen inne.
250 Po be ladeð here lif on werre 7 an unwinne.
251 Par is fur bis hundredfeald hatere pan be ure.
252 Ne mai hit queneche salt water ne auene stream ne sture.
253 Bis is pat fur par afre barneð ne mai no wih queneche.
254 Par inne beð he was to lef wreche men to swenche.
255 Po be swikele men 7 ful of euele wrenche.
256 7 po be mihken euel don 7 lief hit was to benchen.
257 be luweden raying 7 stale horn dom 7 druken
258 7 on defles werkes bliðeliche swunken.
259 Po be waren swo lease men pat mes ne mihke leuen.
260 Medgiere domes men 7 wongwise reuen.
261 Po be oðer mannes wif was lief her ogen oðlate
262 7 po be sunegeden muchel on druken 7 on ate.
263 be wreche men binomen here aihte 7 leide his on horde.
264 be litel lete of godes boote 7 of godes worde.
265 7 be his ogen holde tieue bar he iseih pe niede
266 Ne holde ihere godes men pan he sat at his biede.
267 Po be was oðer mannes ping leuere pan hit solde
268 7 waren alto gradi of siluer 7 of golde.
269 Po be untreuennesse deden pan pe he solden ben holde.
270 7 leten al pat hie solden don 7 deden pat hie wolden.
Poema Morale

l. 281-295 (fr.-3v)

291. po ðe wæren zietceres of pis wereldes aihete

292. 7 ðuðe at hát be lode gost hem thite to 7. tainhte.

293. 7 at ðo ðe ani wise deuel iquemde

294. ðo bêd mid hem in helle fordon 7 demde.

295. Bute ðo ðe ofduhte sore here misdade

296. 7 Gunne here gultes bete 7 betere lif lade.

297. ðar bêd naddren 7 snaken euoten 7 fruden

298. ðe tered 7 freeted ðo euene swiken þe nĩsule 7 þe prude

299. Nafre sunne þar ne sineð ne more ne sørre.

300. ðar is muchel godes here 7 muchel godes æerre.

301. Aftre ðar is euel smegh piesternesse 7 eie

302. Nis þar nafre oder liht þar þe swarte leie.

303. ðar liged ðeteliche fiend in strange raketeie

304. ðat bêd ðo ðe wæren mid god angles swiðe leie.

305. ðat bêd ðeteliche fiend 7 eiselich wihten

306. ðo sulle þe wrecche sowile isien þe sinegeden purh siht

307. þar is se lõde sathanas 7 belzeloubo se ealde

308. Eðe he mugen beon foro ofdrod þe sullen hes bihealde.

309. Ne mai non herte hit þenche ne tunge hit ne mai telle

310. Hiuu muchele pine ne huu fele senden in helle

311. Of þo pine ðe þar bêd nelle ich eow naht lie

312. Nis hit bute gamen 7 glie of þat man mai here drie.

313. 7 ziet ne ðod hem naht alsæ wo in þe lõde bandæ

314. Swiþo þat he wihten þat here pine sal nafre habben ende

315. ðar bêd þe hâdene. men þe wæren lagelæse
Poema Morale

ll. 296–320 (8v–9r)

296
Be nes raht of godes bode ne of godes heose.

297
Euele cristene men hie beð here iferen

298
Po pe here cristendom euele hieldon here.

299
7 giet he beð a worse stede an iðer helle grunde

300
Ne sullen nafre cumen ut for peni ne for purde.

301
Ne mai hem nøder helpe þar ibede ne almesse

302
For naht solden bidde þar ore ne forgijeunesse.

303
Silde him elch man þe hwile he mai wið þar helle pine.

304
7 warnie his frend þar wið swo ich habbe ido mine.

305
Po þe sulde hem ne cuñnen ich hem wille tache

306
Ich can ben aîder jief sal lichame 7 sowle lache.

307
Late we þat god forbet alle markenne.

308
7 do we þat he us hat 7 silde we us wið senne.

309
Luue we god mid ure herte 7 mid al ure myhte

310
7 ure emcristen alse us self swo us tached drihte.

311
Al þat me raed 7 singed biferre godes borde

312
Al hit hangað 7 halte bi þese twam worde

313
Alle godel laþes hie fulled þe hwe 7 þe ealde

314
Þe þe þos twou luues halt 7 wiþ hes wel healde

315
Ac hie beð wel arefeð heald swo ofte we guideð alle

316
For hit is strong þe stonde longe 7 liht hit is to faile.

317
Ac drihte ðast zeue us strengþe stonde þat we molen

318
7 of alle ure guiles zieue us cumue bote.

319
We wiþnið after wereldes wele þe longe ne mai iloste

320
7 leged most al ure swinc on þing unstedefaste.
Poema Morale

M. 321-345 (8r-8v)

321 Swunke for godes luwe half þat we doð for eihne.

322 Nare we naht swo ofte bicheord ne swo euelc bikuinhe.

323 Jief we servelden god half þat we doð for eerminges.

324 We mihen habben more an heuene þa þierles 7.Kinges

325 Ne muȝe we wervien ngær ne wiȝ purst ne wiȝ hurger

326 Ne wiu elde he wiȝ elde/ne wiȝ deȝað þe elde ne þe zeunger

327 Ac þar nis hurgre ne purst. deȝað ne unhalde ne elde.

328 Of þ esse riȝhe we þenched ða ofte of þare alþe selde.

329 We solden bitenchen us wel ofte 7 ilmo.

330 Hwuat we beð to hwian we sullen 7 of hwian we come.

331 Hwu late huile we bieð her huill lung elles huare.

332 Hwuat we we muȝen habben her 7 hwat we finde ðare.

333 Jief waren wise men þus we solden þenchen.

334 Bute we wurrin us iwat þis wereld us wiȝ drenchen.

335 Mast alle men hit zieued drinen of on euelc serche

336 He sal him cuppen silde wel zief hit nele serchen.

337 Mid admiȝin godes luwe ute we us biwerien.

338 Wiȝ pessis wreiches wureldes luwe þat hit ne muȝe us derien.

339 Mid almesse, mid fasten. 7 mid iheren ware we us wiȝ senne.

340 Mid wu wapne þe god haued zieue alle mani kenne.

341 Late we þe brade strate 7 þane weg bene

342 þe lat þe niȝe daul to helle of manne ne mai wene.

343 Go we þane narewe það 7 þene wei grene

344 þar forð farð wel lihel folc 7 eche is fair 7 iseine.

345 þe brade strate is ure wil. þe is loð þe laete.
Poema Morale
ll. 346-370 (8v-9r)

346. To be folgeð here iwil hie fareð bi tarde strate.
347. The muȝen lihtliche cumen mid pare nider helde.
348. Purh one godelese wude to one bare felde.
349. Tȝa narewe pȝ is godes hos. pur ford fareȝ wel feawe.
350. Þat bȝ to þe hem siddeȝ gierne wȝi achen undeawe.
351. Þos gode ȝeneð [cluȝe]ȝiȝen þe cluȝe ȝajen þe heie hulle.
352. Þos leteþ al here iwil far godes luwe to fulle.
353. Þo we alle þane wȅi for he us wile bringe.
354. Mid þe feawe fare men biforn þe hewen kinge.
355. Þar is alre blisse most mid angles sone.
356. Þe is a fusend wintre þar ne puneche ðit him naht longe.
357. Þe lyste hauȝ ði blisse he hauȝ ȝswa muchel þat he ne bit no more.
358. Þe þat blisse forȝȝ hit sal him rewen sore.
359. Ne mai non euȝel ne non wane ben in godes riche.
360. Þal þar ben wuminges fele elah ðeðe uniliche.
361. Sume þar habbeȝ lasse blisse ȝ sume þar habbeȝ more.
362. Elah after þat he dude her after þane þe swaȝe sore.
363. Ne sal þar ben brcyd ne win ne oðer kenneþ este.
364. God one sal ben achen lif ȝ blisse ȝ achen reste.
365. Ne sal þar ben foh ne grai ne curnin ne ermine.
366. Ne euȝerne ne metheȝeþe ne beuere ne saibeline.
367. Ne sal þar ben noðer soat ne smud ne Wereldes wele none.
368. Al þe blisse þe me us bihat al hit sal ben god one.
369. Ne mai no blisse ben alse muchel se is godes siȝte.
370. He is sóȝ sunne 7 brieȝt 7 daȝ albote riȝte.
Poema Morale
ll. 331-395 (9r-9v)

331 He is aches godes ful nis him no wiht uten.
332 Nones godes hem nis wane pe wunied him abouten.
333 Par is wele abouten wane 7 reste abouten swunche.
334 Be mugen 7 nelte pider cume hit hem mai ofpunche.
335 Par is blisse abouten treize 7 lif abouten deade.
336 Po pe ofre sulle wunle par bliede hie muze ben eode.
337 Par is yierd abouten olde 7 hale abouten unhalde.
338 Nis par sarege ne sor non ne nafre unisalde.
339 Par me drihte self isien swo se is mid iwisse.
340 He one mai 7 sal al ben angles 7 manne blisse.
341 7 peih he bed here eien naht alle iliche brikhte.
342 Hi nabbe ð naht iliche muchel alle of godes lihte.
343 On pesse liue he naren naht alle of ore mihte.
344 Ne par he sullen habben god alle bi one wihte.
345 Po sullen more of hym isien pe luueden hime more.
346 7 more renouwen 7 ec witen his mihte 7 his ore.
347 On him he sulle finden al fat man mai toistle.
348 On him he sullen ec isien al fat hie ar resten.
349 Crist sal one bien inogh alle his derlinges.
350 Be one is muche more 7 betere þan alle oðer pinges.
351 Þinoh he haude þe hine haude þe alle ping wealdeð.
352 Of him to isiene nis non saed swo fair he is to bihelden.
353 God is swo mere 7 swo muchel in his godcunnesse.
354 Fat al fat elles was 7 is is fele werse 7 lasse.
355 Ne mai hit nafre noman oðer seggen mid iwisse.
Poema Morale

246 Hwu muchele murihœ habbed ðo ðe beð in godes blisse
247 Ìo ðare blisse us bringe god ðe rixlœð abuten ende.
249 Þane he ure sole unbint of lichamliche bende
249 Ërist zieue us laden her swîch lif 7 habben her swîch ende.
400 Ëat we moten ðider cumen Þane we henne wende.

AMEN
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Carla M. Thomas received her Bachelor of Arts in English Literature, with a minor in Spanish, at Florida State University with Honors in August 2006, and she began her graduate study at Florida State that Fall semester. Originally interested in Latin American literature, feminist theory, and magical realism, she soon changed her concentration to medieval literature, thanks to Professors Nancy Warren and Elaine Treharne. After teaching First-Year Composition courses for two years—and being nominated twice for the Excellence in Teaching First-Year Composition Award—she began researching early Middle English homilies in the Special Collections of Florida State’s Robert Manning Strozier Library. It was during this preliminary research that she came across “Poema Morale,” and the first stirrings of an idea for her thesis began. Carla graduated in the Fall of 2008 with a 3.94 GPA after having successfully defended and submitted her thesis to the department.

Her future plans include uprooting her family—her husband and calico cat—and moving them to either the Midwest or the Northeast to continue her study in early Middle English literature in a PhD program. She then hopes to teach at a small university while continuing her work in editing medieval texts, thus adding to the growing number of books on her overrun bookshelves.

In her free time, Carla likes to read anything but realism (unless it’s magical realism) – from vampires and werewolves to faeries and witches. Lately, her green papazan chair has been occupied more by her snoozing cat than her with a good book. She hopes to use the break she has to catch up on some frivolous reading and to pick up her own creative endeavors.