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Thinking Afresh about Thomas Wimbleton's Paul's Cross Sermon of c. 1387

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There are approximately 1,480 Middle English prose sermons in one hundred and sixty-two manuscripts from the late thirteenth to the late fifteenth century. Yet, of these, only the names of seven definite authors are known: Richard Alkerton, John Gregory, Hugh Legat, John Mirk, John Russell, William Taylor, and Thomas Wimbleton, and three probable authors: James Gloys, Thomas Spofford, and Simon Winter.¹ Virtually the only other clues about dates and venues are those that may be ascertained from the scribal hands and the dialectal variants used in the manuscripts. Even in the early printed era pre-1500 we know of only two authors' names: John Alcock and Richard Fitzjames.² Although this anonymity may seem a little strange, it can mostly be explained by the fact that the vast majority of English sermons are parochial ones, often produced for the priest's own benefit. In this respect there was no need to identify the sermons either authorially or scribally. Yet, in fact, it is more complicated than this. Essentially the real answer has as much to do with the issue of language as anything else. It would seem that in order to get noticed as a preacher it was essential to have a reputation built on Latin credentials. While there are quite a number of anonymous Latin collections of sermons from England, an examination of Siegfried Wenzel's *Latin Sermon Collections from Later Medieval England* will reveal the names of far more Latin preachers than vernacular ones: Thomas Brinton, Henry Chambron, John Dygoun, John Felton, Richard

¹ For the sermons in question see Veronica O'Mara and Suzanne Paul, *A Repertorium of Middle English Prose Sermons*, 4 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007) [hereafter *Repertorium*]. In this *Repertorium* the figure was given as 1,481 but this overlooked the fact that the same Lenten sermon occurs as London, British Library, MS Harley 2391 [007] and Oxford, University College, MS 28 [011]. In any case this figure can only ever be an approximate one. The query over the potential authorship of Gloys, Spofford, and Winter is because James Gloys, the Paston family chaplain, may or may not have been responsible for the sermon that he wrote out in London, British Library, MS Additional 34888; Spofford is probably the author of the sermons in London, British Library, MS Harley 2268 but it cannot be categorically proved; while Winter was the author of a Latin indulgence sermon, it is not definitely known if he was also the author of the English translation in London, British Library, MS Harley 2321. For further details see respectively *Repertorium*, I, 352–54; II, 1210–23; II, 1322–27.

² A list of the sermons attributed to them is available in the *Repertorium*, I, xxxvi and n. 40. For an edition of four other early printed texts see *Three Sermons for Nova Festa, together with the Hamus Caritatis*, ed. by Susan Powell, Middle English Texts, 37 (Heidelberg: Winter, 2007); although these texts are anonymous, Powell credibly argues that Thomas Betson is the probable author of the *Hamus Caritatis* and that the others are likewise associated with Syon (pp. xxxi–xliv).

Thomas Wimbleton's Paul's Cross Sermon

Fitzralph, Robert Holcot, Richard Kilvington, Nicholas Philip, Philip Repingdon, William Rimington, Robert Rypon, John Sheppey, John Waldeby, John Wyclif, and so on.³ This is not to say that none of these authors preached in English, because it is clear that many of them did. Rather, it has to do with the preservation of their work in Latin, a sort of medieval variant of Descartes's 'Cogito, ergo sum': 'I am a famous preacher, therefore my work is preserved in Latin; my work is preserved in Latin, therefore I am a famous preacher'. Indeed, although the argument is far more complex than this, it might be added that one reason we know the definite names of the English preachers above, Alkerton, Gregory, Legat, Mirk, Russell, Taylor, and Wimbleton, as well as Alcock and Fitzjames, is that they nearly all have reputations in Latin, and in the interlinked way already explained they were mostly high-profile preachers.⁴ But in the current instance part of the problem lies in working out how Wimbleton and the text described in the early printed tradition as 'A sermon no lesse fruteful then famous' fitted into this milieu.

Admittedly, Wimbleton's text apparently provides all the information that any student of sermons could want.⁵ We have an author, a date, a venue, and seventeen extant English manuscripts, dating from the late fourteenth to the mid fifteenth century, and dialectally ranging from Somerset to Lincolnshire and from Essex to Northamptonshire, as well as four Latin manuscripts, one abridged English text, and a printed history that extends from c. 1540 to 1745 (all listed in the Appendix).⁶ In other words, it is the single most famous Middle

³ Siegfried Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections from Later Medieval England: Orthodox Preaching in the Age of Wyclif*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁴ For some further information see the relevant entries in the *Repertorium* and the bibliography therein as well as Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections* for references to Alkerton, Legat, Mirk, Taylor, and Wimbleton; for Alkerton see V. M. O'Mara, *A Study and Edition of Selected English Sermons: Richard Alkerton's Easter Week Sermon Preached at St Mary Spital in 1406, a Sermon on Sunday Observance, and a Nunery Sermon for the Feast of the Assumption*, Leeds Texts and Monographs, n.s. 13 (Leeds, 1994), pp. 28–32; and for Mirk see *John Mirk's Festial, Edited from British Library MS Cotton Claudius A. II*, ed. by Susan Powell, EETS o.s. 334 (2009), I, xix–xxviii.

⁵ Editions of the sermon occur as follows: *A Famous Middle English Sermon (MS. Hatton 57, Bod. Lib.)*, Preached at St. Paul's Cross, London, on Quinquagesima Sunday, 1388, ed. by K. F. Sundén, Göteborgs Högskolas Årskrift, 31 (Göteborg: Elanders Boktryckeri, 1925); Nancy H. Owen, 'Thomas Wimbleton's Sermon: "Redde rationem villicacionis tue"', *Mediaeval Studies*, 28 (1966), 176–97; *Wimbleton's Sermon, Redde Rationem Villicacionis Tue: A Middle English Sermon of the Fourteenth Century*, ed. by Ione Kemp Knight, Duquesne Studies, Philological Series, 9 (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1967). Sundén provides an edition of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 57, with a very brief mention of four English and one Latin manuscript (which were brought to Sundén's attention too late to be used in the edition). Dismissing Sundén's base text as a 'careless or hurried copy' (p. 176), Owen provides an edition solely from Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 357, with only three of the other manuscripts used in the critical apparatus and only for the purpose of providing evidence for the tiny number of emendations to the Corpus text. In the edition of Knight 1967 one of the manuscripts listed by Owen (Dublin, Trinity College, MS 155) is omitted so that the edition, which again uses Corpus 357 as the base text, is only based on a total of fifteen rather than sixteen manuscripts. However, in all other respects Knight's edition is a very scholarly one and is the one quoted from throughout this essay. Otherwise the manuscript text is discussed in Patrick J. Horner, 'Preachers at Paul's Cross: Religion, Society, and Politics in Late Medieval England', in *Medieval Sermons and Society: Cloister, City, University*, ed. by Jacqueline Hamesse, Beverly Mayne Kienzle, Debra L. Stoudt, and Anne T. Thayer, Textes et études du moyen âge, 9 (Louvain-la-Neuve: FIDEM, 1998), pp. 261–82, and in Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, pp. 171–74. I am very grateful to Stephan Borgehammar for his kindness in giving me a copy of Sundén's edition.

⁶ The surviving English manuscripts are all described in the *Repertorium*, with localization details where known. Helmingham Hall LJ II. 2. is in private hands but a microfilm (RP 13) is available in the British Library. The abridged English version in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS e Musaeo and related manuscripts will be edited by Stephen Morrison in the forthcoming edition of this collection for EETS. In the list of the printed editions there are inconsistencies between the printed STC, and online information for STC 25823.7 and 25827; the former is treated as a rogue entry in EEBO but not in ESTC, while in EEBO the latter is misidentified as 25827.5.

English sermon, the one found in more manuscripts than any other (with the exception of the *Festial* and the Wycliffite sermons, which, of course, are collections), and the one with the longest textual history in print.⁷

Taken at face value, the Wimbledon evidence all looks fairly clear-cut.⁸ The sermon was preached in the late 1380s and various manuscripts explicitly state either in English or Latin that the sermon was preached at St Paul's by Thomas Wimbledon; for example, in London, British Library, MS Harley 2398, fol. 140r, the heading is 'Sermo magistri Thome Wymyldoun, apud crucem in cimiterio Sancti Pauli London'. We have then a sermon that was preached at what was regarded as the most important preaching venue in the country from about 1330 until 1642, what Thomas Carlyle so evocatively called 'a kind of *Times Newspaper*, but edited partly by Heaven itself'.⁹ Not only do we know the venue, but there is also a graphic description of the drama that surrounded preaching at Paul's Cross from the much-quoted account given in John Stow's *Survey of London*:

And here it is to be noted, that time out of minde, it hath beene a laudable custome, that on good Friday in the after noone, some especiall learned man, by appoyntment of the Prelats, hath preached a Sermon at *Paules* crosse, treating of Christs passion: and vpon the three next Easter Holydayes, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, the like learned men, by the like appoyntment, haue vsed to preach on the forenoones at the sayde Spittle [St Mary Spital, that is, the Hospital of St Mary Bishopgate], to perswade the Article of Christs resurrection: and then on low Sunday [the first Sunday after Easter], one other learned man at *Paules* Crosse, to make rehearsall of those foure former Sermons, either commending or reproofing them, as to him by iudgement of the learned Diuines was thought conuenient. And that done, he was to make a sermon of his own studie, which in all were fiue sermons in one. At these sermons so seurally preached, the Maior, with his brethren the Aldermen were accustomed to bee present in their Violets at *Paules* on good Fryday, and in their Scarlets at the Spittle in the Holidayes, except Wednes[p. 168]day in violet, and the Maior with his brethren, on low Sondag in scarlet, at *Paules* crosse, continued vntill this day.¹⁰

And to complement Stow's description there is the iconic illustration from about 1616 that depicts the Cross as an octagonal wooden structure on a stone base, with the preacher standing between two pillars, with an hour-glass to his right, an audience seated in front and the dignitaries in covered galleries at the side, so that the whole gives the effect of an Elizabethan

⁷ The only other text that can compare with it in printing terms is Mirk's *Festial* but here the pattern is different as the *Festial* was first printed in 1483 and last printed in 1532, almost ten years before the first printed edition of Wimbledon was produced. For the most recent discussion of the printing of the *Festial* see *John Mirk's Festial*, ed. by Powell, pp. lv–lvii.

⁸ The work for this paper was considerably advanced before I discovered (through the good auspices of Alexandra Gillespie) the following invaluable article: Alexandra Walsham, 'Inventing the Lollard Past: The Afterlife of a Medieval Sermon in Early Modern England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 58 (2007), 628–55. In setting the scene below there is inevitably some overlap with Walsham because we are both drawing on the same materials and need to make the same sort of factual points. However, what I am interested in primarily are the overall textual relationships whereas Walsham's focus is on the motivation behind the printing of Wimbledon's sermon in the sixteenth century. In this way the articles may be seen as complementary.

⁹ This is quoted at the opening of Millar MacLure, *The Paul's Cross Sermons: 1534–1642*, University of Toronto, Department of English, Studies and Texts, No. 6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958); this seminal study has been updated by Jackson Campbell Boswell and Peter Pauls, *Register of Sermons Preached at Paul's Cross: 1534–1642, By Millar MacLure, Revised and Augmented*, Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, Victoria University, Toronto, Occasional Publications, 8 (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1989).

¹⁰ John Stow, *A Survey of London, Reprinted from the Text of 1603*, ed. by C. L. Kingsford, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), I, 167–68.

theatre.¹¹ Clearly the medieval cross would have looked considerably different, and it often suffered from damage from natural events such as lightning and storms, but Stow's description gives some insight into the sense of occasion at a Paul's Cross sermon.¹²

The medieval academic sermon that appears to have enthralled English listeners and readers continuously for almost four hundred years is in many ways a somewhat stereotypical account of the imminence of doomsday, falling neatly into two halves of some five hundred lines each in the modern edition. Basing his sermon on the theme, *Redde rationem villicacionis tue*, 'Give a reckoning of thy stewardship' (said to the unjust steward in Luke 16. 2), and following an explication of the parable of the vineyard in Matthew 20. 1–9, Wimbledon divides the workers into priests, knights, and labourers, the usual estates division into those who pray, fight, and work. The preacher says that as the vine needs to be tended in different ways, so there are three different offices: priests cut away the empty branches of sin with the sword of their tongues; knights prevent wrongdoing, defend God's law and the teachers of God's law, and preserve the land from enemies; and labourers toil physically for themselves and others. All such estates are mutually dependent and none should despise the other. Following a translation of the theme into English, Wimbledon then begins the first part of the sermon where each of the three workers in the vineyard is asked three questions: (1) how have you entered into your office?; (2) how have you ruled?; and (3) how have you lived?. These form the divisions (ll. 161–307; 308–402; 403–575) of Part I. In his questioning Wimbledon saves his most critical comments for the clergy, asking them quite bluntly if they have ruled as a shepherd or a hired man, a father or a wolf, and warning them that God will not overlook their sin if they have spent their goods 'in fedyng of fatte palfreies, of hondes, of hawkes, and, 3if it so be þat is worst of alle, on lecherous wommen' (ll. 260–62). He is similarly strict with the ruling classes, particularly when he alludes to the corruption of the legal process, giving the example of how a rich man will always win a legal action against a poor man but, if it is the other way round, there will be so many delays that for the want of money the poor man will have to abandon his case. This exploitation of the poor by the rich is similarly taken up in the questioning of the labourers where the dominant theme is that of covetousness. Towards the end of this section Wimbledon gives the example of a rich man with a field in the middle of which a poor man owns an acre, and of a rich man who owns a street on which a poor man has a house. In both cases the rich man will never cease until he obtains what rightfully belongs to the poor man.

The second part of the sermon concerns: (1) who will be called to judgement; (2) before which judge; and (3) what the reckoning will be. The first issue is divided into two: particular judgement and general judgment; in each case there will be three summoners to judgement: sickness, age, and death; and these form the subdivisions. Effectively there are four divisions in Part II, with the first being devoted to particular judgement (ll. 593–763), the second to

¹¹ This is reproduced as the frontispiece to MacLure, *The Paul's Cross Sermons*, and in the revised version by Boswell and Pauls. There is some debate about the correct date of this image. MacLure, *The Paul's Cross Sermons*, p. 1, points out that in the caption usually accompanying the engraving (from a picture in the Society of Antiquaries) in *Londina Illustrata* by the publisher Robert Wilkinson (London, 1811) the image is said to depict a scene on 26 March 1620 with John King preaching to James I and his queen. However, MacLure notes: 'But Queen Anne died in 1619, and it seems clear that the picture represents an ideal rather than an actual occasion' and so he dates it to 'probably about 1616'; Boswell and Pauls simply reproduce the information from the caption. For further information see Mary Morrissey, *Politics and the Paul's Cross Sermons, 1558–1642* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 2–16.

¹² Examples of damage occurred in 1382 and 1449; see MacLure, *The Paul's Cross Sermons*, p. 6.

general judgment, concluding with a section on the meaning of the seven seals in Apocalypse 6–8 (ll. 764–993), the third to the judge (ll. 994–1026), and the fourth to the reckoning (ll. 1027–1101). The treatment of the particular judgement is fairly traditional in its catalogue of the miseries associated with old age: ‘He seeþ his hed hory, his bak crokeþ, his breþ stynkeþ, his teeþ falleþ, his eiȝen derkeþ, his visage reueliþ, his eren wexeþ heuy to here. What meneþ all þis but þat elde sommouneþ þe to þe dom?’ (ll. 725–28). It is in the discussion of the general judgement that the greater interest lies. In his examination of the second item, the age of the world, Wimbleton refers to various prophetic authorities on the timing of doomsday and in so doing gives the date of the end of the world as 1400 and thereby reveals the date of the sermon currently being preached as he tells us ‘So it semeþ to þis clerk þat þe grete Anticrist schulde come in þe fourtenþe hundred ȝeer fro þe birþe of Crist, þe whiche noumbre of ȝeeris is now fulfillid not fully twelue ȝeer and an halfe lackynge’ (ll. 895–98), that is, 1387. In my experience it is unprecedented for preachers to be so explicit and Wimbleton seems to have frightened himself with the apparent accuracy of his prediction as in the next sentence he backtracks by saying: ‘Þis resoun put I not as to schewe any certeyn tyme of his comynge, siþ y haue not þat knowlechyng, but to schewe þat he is nyȝ, but how nyȝ I wote neuere’ (ll. 898–901). He follows on then with an allegorization of each of the seven seals from Apocalypse 6–8, outlining the state of the Church at different points in history, before concluding with two short divisions about the identity of the judge, that is, God, who will appear bearing the books of people’s consciences and the book of life, and what, finally, the verdict will be when the wounded Christ will ask for a reckoning for the deeds of mercy.

Presented in this fashion, it seems that Wimbleton’s sermon is a very streamlined production with a very straightforward history. However, once one begins to delve a little more deeply, it soon becomes apparent that all is not as clear-cut as might at first appear. What is ultimately in question is how authorial reputations are made and textual-critical interpretations arrived at, and how the reasons for the enduring popularity of a certain text over six hundred years after the event may be reconstructed. In the rest of this paper, therefore, I ponder on some of these difficulties and queries, although, because research towards a new critical edition is at a very early stage, I shall not provide the answers, only the questions.¹³

First of all, even the basic information about authorial identity, occasion, and date are not absolutely secure. Although the preacher is always referred to today as Thomas Wimbleton, both in the manuscript and the printed tradition there was some uncertainty as to whether he was Robert, Richard or Thomas Wimbleton; the earliest manuscripts refer to him as ‘Thomas’ while the printed texts have no authorial attribution in the first ten extant editions. It is not until 1582 that the sermon’s occasion is given as Quinquagesima or that an author’s name is provided: ‘[...] Preached at Paules Crosse, on the Sunday of Quinquagesima by R. Wimbleton [...]’. Trivial as this may sound, such vagueness has hampered the search for the true identity of the preacher. Because most of the manuscript ascriptions tend to favour Thomas, modern critics have understandably accepted that these manuscript attributions will be more authoritative than the printed tradition and have therefore looked for Thomas

¹³ This edition is for Middle English Texts, a series Oliver Pickering was instrumental in founding and on which he brought to bear his incisive scholarship. It is also a cause for celebration that one of the copies of Wimbleton’s sermon is held in Special Collections at the University of Leeds; Brotherton Collection, 501 is one of the many manuscripts to which Oliver devoted so much time (see note 27) while working in the institution in which he spent all his academic life and where he was so helpful to so many, myself included.

Wimbledon but not Robert or Richard Wimbledon. This approach is no doubt right but it still means that one cannot be absolutely certain that the right man has been found.

As it happens, editors have discovered several Thomases and so it is unclear which of them, if any, may be the right one: a Thomas Wimbledon was made an acolyte (one of the Minor Orders on the way to the priesthood) in December 1381 in the Winchester diocese; another Thomas Wimbledon was ordained a priest in 1382 (again in Winchester), while three years later a Thomas Wimbledon became chaplain to Sir John Sandes and was granted a preaching licence in the diocese; and yet another Wimbledon was listed in the Bursars' accounts for Merton College Oxford in 1386–88.¹⁴ Critics, including most notably Siegfried Wenzel, have made much of the intriguing information that in the register of William Wykeham (the Winchester bishop who gave the preaching licence to the Thomas Wimbledon who became Sir John Sandes's chaplain) it is specified that he is not to 'assert or preach any heretical or erroneous opinions (*conclusiones*) that could subvert the state of our church at Winchester and the tranquility of our subjects'.¹⁵ This, of course, has opened up the possibility that this particular Wimbledon had heretical leanings, and I shall return to this fascinating suggestion later. For the moment it will suffice to say that commentators have been content to restrict the list of Wimbledon to those in the Winchester diocese and so overlook the fact that priests could easily move out of their own dioceses.¹⁶ More importantly, for some critics the emphasis on Wimbledon's potential Lollard associations have tended to obscure the telling, albeit fifteenth-century, evidence in the 'Catalogus Vetus' for Merton College that the Wimbledon cited there was 'famosissimus predicator fuit in toto regno Anglie' (he was the most famous preacher in the whole of England), something to which we shall also return later.¹⁷

Moreover, these days the sermon is always referred to as being for Quinquagesima, even though, as noted above, the 1582 printed edition is the first to give this occasion. No one

¹⁴ The most useful source of bibliographical information is Nancy H. Owen, 'Thomas Wimbledon', *Mediaeval Studies*, 24 (1962), 377–81; a concise version of the same information is also available in A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A. D. 1500*, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957–59), III, 2120. Some of the relevant records in Merton College that contain references to Wimbledon include, 3715, 3716, 3722, 3724, 3725, and the 'Catalogus Vetus'. I am very grateful to the archivist, Julian Reid, and the librarian, Julia Walworth, for facilitating access to these records at Merton College. A facsimile page from the 'Catalogus Vetus' may be found in *Merton Muniments*, ed. by P. S. Allen and H. W. Garrold, Oxford Historical Society, 86 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), Plate XVII, with transcription on p. 37. There it is pointed out that the Catalogue of Fellows was compiled from the account rolls by Thomas Robert, Fellow, c. 1422, and that Falconer Madan 'believes that the annotations also are in Robert's hand' (although this is questionable). Items concerning the library in some of these account rolls are briefly described in R. M. Thomson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Medieval Manuscripts of Merton College, Oxford* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2009), pp. 274–75.

¹⁵ Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, p. 173. See also *Wykeham's Register*, 2 vols (London: Simpkin and Co. Limited, and Winchester: Warren and Son, 1896–99), II, 370–71, for the full entry dated 28 April 1385, part of which reads, '[...] licenciam tibi concedimus tenore presencium [p. 371] specialem: inhabetes tamen tibi expressè, ne aliquas conclusiones hereticas seu erroneas, que statum nostre ecclesie Wyntoniensis et tranquillitatem nostrorum subditorum subvertere poterint asseras seu predices, publicè vel occultè [...].'

¹⁶ There are also other complications, for instance, the name Wimbledon is spelt in different ways in the sources, and, even more confusingly, there was also an Andrew Wimbledon in Merton College at the same time as Thomas; see Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A. D. 1500*, III, 2120. Moreover, at the end of the sermon in Cambridge, Trinity College, B.14.38, there is a garbled note saying that Thomas Wimbledon died on 1 November 1391, '[...] obiit in die omnium sanctorum amen. Ricardi terci [sic] post con[qu]estum xv cuius anime propicietur deus amen.'

¹⁷ 'Catalogus Vetus', p. 15; 'Wymyldon' is entered in a hand of the first half of the fifteenth century and the annotation in what I regard as a different hand (see further note 14).

seems to have thought to investigate this but in actual fact, as far as I am aware, none of the manuscripts cites Quinquagesima. Admittedly, there are two manuscript references to Quinquagesima in Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.14.38 and Sidney Sussex College, MS 74 but both references are post-medieval. The sermon may well have been intended for Quinquagesima but, of the 1,480 sermons cited above, Wimbledon's sermon is the only one to use this theme from Luke 16. 2; nor is the parable of the vineyard from Matthew 20. 1–9, which is explicated at the start, the standard reading for Quinquagesima.¹⁸ It might also be noted that the re-worked version of the sermon in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS e Musaeo and related manuscripts is for the Ninth Sunday after Trinity and not for Quinquagesima.

The date too is far from being fixed. As noted above, the internal reference for the date is 1387 (that is, not quite twelve and a half years from the year 1400 which was to be the end of the world). Yet, when specified in their incipits, the manuscripts give the date either as 1388 or 1389, and the early printed texts all use the date of 1388 apart from the first and the fourth extant editions which give the date as 1387. In fact the printed tradition changes the internal reference to read 'which number of yeres is now fulfilled, not fully xij yeres wanting' (F v verso), rather than twelve and a half years, to make the text match with the title-page.¹⁹ Because no real work has been done on the full manuscript relationships, commentators have been left to rationalize the evidence as best they can, and they usually do so, without any great degree of real conviction, by saying that 1387 represents the date of composition and that the sermon was probably preached in 1387, 1388, and 1389, though there is no evidence, as far as I know, for any sermon, no matter how famous, to be given in the same place three years running.²⁰ Furthermore, as soon as one begins looking at the evidence in the manuscripts, one finds that some of this is sixteenth- and seventeenth-century annotation and so is partly taken from the printed tradition. Yet no one has seriously examined this 'contamination' between manuscript and printed evidence. An example of this may be seen in Cambridge, Sidney Sussex College, MS 74 where the medieval colophon attributes the sermon to Thomas Wimbledon while the added seventeenth-century annotation, clearly influenced by the printed tradition, gives the occasion as Quinquagesima, as I have mentioned above, and attributes the sermon to R. Wimbledon but with the date as 1389, something only found in the manuscript tradition. Clearly such contradictory evidence needs to be disentangled and more attention paid to other factors. For example, we know that the old cross at St Paul's was blown down in the earthquake of 1382 and that a new cross was built around 1387, and it may well be that someone of Wimbledon's calibre was the first to preach at the new cross. So the date of the sermon's delivery and the date of the new cross may be one and the same, whether this is 1387, 1388, or 1389 — Quinquagesima or whenever it was preached.²¹

¹⁸ See the 'Occasions' and 'Biblical Citations' indices in the *Repertorium*, IV.

¹⁹ Unless otherwise noted, quotations throughout are taken from the 1575 edition (STC 25827.5), the copy in the Huntington Library; the capitalization and punctuation are that of the text.

²⁰ This is not to say that re-cycling did not occur. For instance, in 'Preaching to Nuns in Late Medieval England', in *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. by Carolyn Muessig, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, 90 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 93–119 (pp. 110–19), I demonstrate how a certain degree of plagiarism and re-cycling seems to have occurred in monastic visitation sermons.

²¹ An argument that the different dates simply represent confusion over the different starts to the medieval year does not hold. Admittedly, if the sermon were preached on Quinquagesima, this would have been on 17 February in 1387, 9 February in 1388, and 28 February in 1389 and so in all these cases the calculation could have been a year out depending on whether it was being reckoned from 1 January or 25 March. However, quite apart from the problem of the uncertainty over Quinquagesima as the occasion, the text actually says that the 'nombre of ȝeeris

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The next, and most important issue, is that critics speak of Wimbledon's sermon in a way that make the manuscripts seem like a monolithic group, whereas on closer examination one finds not only textual variants between different manuscripts but also more fundamental differences. In Ione Kemp Knight's edition she states that the manuscripts are very divergent and that of the thirteen manuscripts she examined the textual variants are so pronounced in eleven of them that none of the eleven is suitable as a base text, which leaves only one anomalous text (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 57) and the least divergent manuscript (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 357), which she chooses as her base text. Of all the manuscripts she is only able to isolate two related groups which she calls Group b (Oxford, Bodleian Library, English theology f. 39, London, British Library, Harley 2398, Cambridge, Magdalene College, Pepys 2125, and Cambridge, Trinity College, B.14.38) and Group c (the Helmingham Hall manuscript and London, British Library, Additional 37677). The differences between these two groups seem, in the large scale of things, relatively normal and consist of the usual changes, omissions, and additions.

However, what is absolutely paramount and has not been highlighted before in discussions of this sermon is that three of the manuscripts of Group b (Harley 2398, Pepys 2125, and Trinity B.14.38) completely leave out divisions two and three of Part II of the sermon, ll. 764–1026 (which include the date of the end of the world), while one manuscript in Group c, Helmingham Hall LJ. II 2, lacks most of this section owing to missing pages. Since Knight's edition, four more English and two Latin manuscripts have come to light, in addition to the version for the Ninth Sunday after Trinity. There are variations in these new English manuscripts too. The text in Dublin, Trinity College, MS 155 is unfortunately deficient at this point so it is unclear whether or not this passage would have been included. Leeds, University Library, Brotherton Collection, MS 501 includes the omitted passage as does Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Miscellaneous 524, except for the important twist that all details of the precise date are left out; Durham, Cathedral Library, MS Hunter 15/2 is even more interesting in that it includes all the information but leaves a gap in the manuscript where the number of years lacking should be. In fact, these new manuscripts are not the only ones to make such changes: London, British Library, MS Royal 18. B.xxiii includes the sensitive passage but omits the reference to the twelve and a half years, while Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. th. f. 39 changes the figure to ten and a half. The remaining new English text, the reworked abbreviated version of Wimbledon's sermon found for the Ninth Sunday after Trinity in Oxford, Bodleian Library, e Musaeo 180, Gloucester Cathedral, 22, and in Lincoln Cathedral, 50 omits the whole section. The four Latin manuscripts are problematic because it is probable that most of them may be translated from the English, though here again it is striking that there are omissions and abbreviations in the Latin texts which may suggest other significant variant versions.²² The most obviously abbreviated text is that in London, British Library, MS Harley 331; it is so severely abbreviated that not only is there no trace of dates but it is actually difficult to see how the version connects with the text as we know it. Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 334/727 and Oxford, Trinity College, MS 42 are far more regular in this respect, though like the Laud 524 version, they keep the

is now fulfillid not fully twelue 3eer and an halfe lackynge' which would seem to indicate a date later in the year than February.

²² See Knight, *Wimbledon's Sermon*, pp. 32–34, where she argues that Cambridge, Gonville and Caius, 334/727 is a translation from an English text and that Cambridge, University Library, II.3.8, which has a great deal of omission, may either be a translation from an English text or a version of a lost Latin text.

apocalyptic passage but omit all reference to dates apart from the initial 1400. Finally, the apocalyptic passage is completely omitted in Cambridge, University Library, Ii.3.8. There is then a complicated relationship among the manuscripts and between the English and the Latin versions, and much work needs to be done before the precise nature of this relationship can be pronounced upon.²³

Yet the clearly deliberate omission about the precise end of the world and the variations on the passage in other manuscripts open up the possibility that even at the height of its fame in the Middle Ages there was a variant tradition of Wimbeldon's sermon that showed a particular sensitivity to the apocalyptic aspects that might in some quarters be associated with heterodox thinking.²⁴ For instance, Siegfried Wenzel has argued that in the 1380s and 1390s the belief that the end of the world was near could be particularly linked to Lollardy.²⁵ This is notwithstanding that in other respects the sermon was apparently perfectly orthodox, except for its explicit criticism of the clergy in front of a lay audience.²⁶ For instance, Wimbeldon talks of the 'abominacions' (l. 206) 'scaterrid in þe chirche nowadayes among prestis' (l. 207) who are 'lawles peple entrid into þe temple þat neyþer kepeþ in hemself þe lawe of God ne kunne teche oþere' (ll. 222–24). Be this as it may, that there was some tension between both major versions of the sermon is suggested by a correction in the Harley 2398 manuscript. At the point, on fol. 149r, where the Harley scribe is clearly set to omit the passage on general judgement with its flagrant apocalyptic reference, another hand has inserted the relevant introductory sentence necessary for its later inclusion in the sermon, although this same correcting hand either does not notice the omission of the passage later on or gives up because at that point there is no way it can be inserted owing to lack of space.

What this last point shows is that essentially Wimbeldon's sermon is on the one hand so particular and explicit about doomsday and the faults of the medieval Church and on the other hand such a general treatment of judgment that each scribe, compiler or printer could in effect become his own Wimbeldon and make the sermon stand for whatever was necessary. For instance, the scribe of the Brotherton 501 version gives a totally new, and somewhat confusing, slant to the sermon and its history by calling it 'a notabill matyr extracte in the maner of a sermoun [...] whiche was compilat to excite lay pepill to forsak here sennē [...] qwiche prefat [*sic*] sermon was aftyr this compilacion puplyshid and prechid at Poulis cros [...] (fol. 59r), with the implication being that it was just an ordinary sermon for simple layfolk that later happened to be delivered at Paul's Cross, rather than an important set-piece intended for delivery to all classes of society apparently by one of the major preachers of the day. Interestingly, he makes no mention of Wimbeldon and one cannot help but wonder if there is some attempt to pass the sermon off as his own or someone else's when he says 'Explicit iam sermo notabilis *secundum* M. R.' (fol. 67v).²⁷ Contextually too Wimbeldon's sermon is found in orthodox and heterodox manuscript contexts, for example, in Oxford, University College,

²³ As noted, even in those English manuscripts that include the sensitive passage about the dates there are other more subtle changes that may cast light on the development and copying of the text over time.

²⁴ The other possibility, of course, is a practical one: scribes writing after 1400 might have seen fit quite simply to omit the date. Yet this does not answer the whole question; as may be seen from some of the omissions above, it was perfectly possible to retain the strong apocalyptic elements while being circumspect about the precise timing.

²⁵ Siegfried Wenzel, 'Robert Lychlade's Oxford Sermon of 1395', *Traditio*, 53 (1998), 203–30.

²⁶ Of course, as noted in Horner, 'Preachers at Paul's Cross', pp. 276–77, Wimbeldon was also obliquely critical of Richard II and his friends.

²⁷ For a comprehensive study of this manuscript see O. S. Pickering, 'Brotherton Collection MS 501: A Middle English Anthology Reconsidered', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 21 (1990), 141–65.

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MS 97 where it occurs alongside a sermon by Friar John Gregory — and no self-respecting Lollard would ever be found in the company of a friar — while in Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.14.38 it shares space with a set of Wycliffite sermons, which is the most heretical context imaginable.²⁸

Wimbledon's sermon does not, therefore, have the streamlined literary history that one might first think. Unlike Mirk's *Festial*, which was being read from the earliest date of composition in the late 1380s right through to the late 1580s, there is no evidence of a Wimbledon manuscript later than the mid-fifteenth century or of a printed text before c. 1540.²⁹ In fact, as Alexandra Walsham has so painstakingly shown, the main reason why Wimbledon was published initially seems to have been because of a mistaken association not just with Lollardy but with John Wyclif himself.³⁰ In other words, the printing of Wimbledon's sermon with its criticism of certain aspects of the medieval Church had as much to do with the fact that in the Reformation period Wimbledon was seen as a spokesman for Protestantism as anything else.

As is now generally known, in the sixteenth century various medieval Wycliffite tracts were published in England and the continent, particularly in Antwerp, in order to bolster the Protestant cause.³¹ This went hand in hand with an effort in some quarters to rediscover those reforming medieval texts that could be used as evidence for historical continuity between the medieval Church and Protestantism. A very explicit example of this is the archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker, who from about 1560 began his search for manuscripts dispersed from monastic libraries. In 1568 the Privy Council even gave him express permission for his collecting activities.³² In this respect Wimbledon's sermon, with its overt criticism of the medieval Church, would have fitted the propagandist bill admirably. Indeed, one of the manuscripts of Wimbledon's sermon, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 357, ended up in Parker's library, and is the one on which most modern editions are based. To what extent the large number of surviving manuscripts (twenty-one) is likewise owing to the good fortune of reformist collectors' zeal we do not definitely know. Yet it can be categorically said that, so useful was the printed sermon for the Protestant argument that, as may be seen from the Appendix, there were no fewer than fifteen editions in the second

²⁸ For a description of the Trinity contents see Linne R. Mooney, *The Index of Middle English Prose, Handlist XI: Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995), pp. 11–12.

²⁹ The latest known use of the *Festial* was controversial as John Mynet, a lay-reader in East Drayton in Nottinghamshire, preached the John the Baptist sermon at some point in 1589 and was subsequently charged with heresy. For a preliminary account of this case see V. M. O'Mara, 'A Middle English Sermon preached by a Sixteenth-Century "Atheist": A Preliminary Account', *Notes and Queries*, 232 (1987), 183–85. I am currently preparing a longer study of this case.

³⁰ See Walsham, 'Inventing the Lollard Past'. Walsham's argument is a detailed and intricate one and so is not reproduced here.

³¹ Walsham, 'Inventing the Lollard Past', pp. 640–41, summarizes the research of Margaret Aston and Anne Hudson in this area.

³² See Timothy Graham, 'Matthew Parker's Manuscripts: An Elizabethan Library and its Use', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, Volume 1, to 1640*, ed. by Elizabeth Leedham-Green and Teresa Webber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 322–41 (p. 326); see also Timothy Graham and Andrew G. Watson, *The Recovery of the Past in Early Elizabethan England: Documents by John Bale and John Joscelyn from the Circle of Matthew Parker*, Cambridge Bibliographical Society Monographs, 13 (Cambridge, 1998). Forty-eight of these prose manuscripts owned and/or collected by Parker are indexed in Kari Anne Rand, *The Index of Middle English Prose, Handlist XX: Manuscripts in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009); she also provides a useful bibliography of works on Parker's library and his collecting activities on p. xix, n. 1.

half of the sixteenth century, many produced by avowedly reformist printers.³³ To emphasize its crusading value a preface addressed 'To the Christian Reader' was added to each of the printed texts, as follows:

LOe, Christian Reader, while the worlde not slumbred, but routed and snorted in the deepe and dead sleepe of ignorancie, some liuely spirits were wakyng, and ceased not to call vpon the drousy multitude of men, and to styrrer them vp from the long dreames of sinful liuing [...] Reade therefore diligent[Aij verso]ly this litle Sermon so long sithens written, and thou shalt perceiue þe same quicke spirite in the Authour therof, that thou now marueilest at in other of our time. He sharply, earnestly, and wittely rebuketh the syns of all sortes of men, and speaketh as one hauing authoritie [...] wherefore eftsoones I exhort thee to reade this litle treatise diligently, and not onely to reuerence antiquity, and þe lyuely spirit, and word of God therin, but also to learne both to acknowledge, and more ouer to amende the wyckednes of thy lyfe, which God graunt for his sonne Cristes sake (Aij recto–verso).³⁴

As Walsham demonstrates, as time went on, the link with John Wyclif and his followers became more pronounced and this was particularly so with the version published in 1562–63 annexed to the fiercely Lutheran scriptural *Commonplaces* of Patrick Hamilton, the first Scottish Protestant martyr who was burnt at the stake for heresy in St Andrews on Saturday 29 February 1528.³⁵ Most interestingly, this (apparently lost) sermon is described as 'the sermonde in the wall' which sounds very odd to modern ears but is yet another way of adding even greater mystique and authority to the text. From the 1572 edition at least each print of Wimbledon's sermon carried the notice on the title page that it was '[...] *founde out hyd in a wall* [...]' and it was even added by hand to a copy of the 1550 edition.³⁶ Walsham says that 'The claim to have discovered a holy text concealed within an architectural structure had both biblical and medieval precedents' and was 'a classic authenticating fiction' to link Wimbledon's sermon with history and scripture.³⁷ As she so eloquently puts it, 'the resurrection' of this text was to aid in the 'regeneration and renewal' of the Protestant Church.³⁸ Even as late as the eighteenth century when Wimbledon's sermon appeared in 1732 in the *Phoenix britannicus*, the Wycliffite associations resurfaced even more pointedly as the editor John Morgan 'strongly presumed' that the author was Wyclif himself and in a letter printed with the volume an anonymous reader was so enthralled by its merits that he argued that 'all of them concur, in almost demonstrating John Wycliffe to be the sole probable Author of so admirable a Sermon'.³⁹ Of course, he knew that it could not have been by Wyclif because, by the time the sermon was said to have been preached, he was already dead, on 31 December 1384 to be precise; but even this was explained away with the suggestion that Wimbledon may have tried to have passed off Wyclif's text as his own. This shows how hard it is to relinquish a good idea, even if it is groundless.

³³ See Walsham, 'Inventing the Lollard Past', pp. 642 and 650, for a most interesting discussion of the Protestant and reformist credentials of printers such as John Mayler, Edward Whitchurch, Richard Kele, and John Awdely.

³⁴ This quotation is taken from the 1575 edition (see note 19).

³⁵ I owe the discovery of this version to Walsham, 'Inventing the Lollard Past', p. 645 and to my mother, Mary O'Mara, the discovery of Hamilton's initials on the pavement in St Andrews marking the spot where the burning took place with a nearby plaque explaining that he was a member of the University and the 'First Martyr of the Scottish Reformation'. For further information on Hamilton see Alec Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 31–33.

³⁶ This occurs on the title page of the 1550 edition (STC 25824) held in Emmanuel College Cambridge.

³⁷ See Walsham, 'Inventing the Lollard Past', pp. 647 and 648 respectively.

³⁸ See Walsham, 'Inventing the Lollard Past', p. 649.

³⁹ Quoted in Walsham, 'Inventing the Lollard Past', p. 652 and n. 91.

Much of what we think we know about Wimbleton's sermon, while not being exactly groundless, is definitely unproven. Quite apart from the elementary issues of our not being entirely sure about the author's identity (was he Thomas? was he Robert? was he perhaps Richard?) or the date of the sermon (1387, 1388, 1389?), more seriously, modern critics do not know whether to regard Wimbleton's sermon as an orthodox or heterodox product, to the extent that either of these terms can be meaningful.⁴⁰ Furthermore, it is far from clear to what extent medieval people themselves regarded it as orthodox or not, as testified by the fact that it occurs in both so-called orthodox and heterodox manuscripts. But whatever the perceptions of the sermon were in the Middle Ages, those Protestant reformers in the Reformation period who championed Wimbleton's sermon were in no doubt of its heterodox and therefore proto-Protestant credentials. Although the title-pages note that no changes were made to the text, 'sauē the old *and* rude English here and there amended', as it says in the 1575 edition, there are some small attempts to draw out this proto-Protestantism, for example, by changing an early reference to priests needing to exterminate sin 'wiþ þe swerd of here tonge' (ll. 40–41), that is, preaching, to 'with the sword of Gods worde' (Aiiij verso), that is, scripture or, at least, scripturally based preaching. Ironically, had it not been for the reformers' certainty, we would not have the only example in Middle English of a sermon with a vibrant history extending into the eighteenth century. Moreover, without the hint of heresy associated with Wimbleton in the Winchester bishop's register, critics like Siegfried Wenzel might be more than happy to accept the fact that the Merton College Thomas Wimbleton (the one labelled the most famous preacher in all England) may be a far more likely candidate than the chaplain being warned off heresy in the Winchester register but, of course, a heretic makes for a more interesting story for us modern critics as well as for Elizabethan polemicists.

And yet there are more twists in the narrative. At the beginning of this paper, it was stated that there were seventeen English manuscripts, plus one abbreviated text, four Latin ones, and a printed history extending from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries. What was not mentioned was that Wimbleton's sermon also appears in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*. This in itself is not unexpected as Foxe was an important part — perhaps *the* most important part — of the process of rescuing medieval writers for the Protestant cause. What is significant, however, is what happens between the first (1563) and second (1570) editions of Foxe. In the first edition Foxe is clearly dependent on the printed tradition for his text of Wimbleton,⁴¹ but in the second and most subsequent editions he makes the following startling statement:

[...] Whereunto I thought also to annexe, a certaine godly and most frutefull Sermon, of like antiquitie, preached at Paules crosse much about the same time, which was in the yere of our Lord. 1388. by a certaine learned clerke, as I finde in one olde monument, named R. Wimbleton. Albeit, among the auncient registers and recordes belongyng to the Archbishop of Canterbury: I haue an old worne cople of the sayd Sermon, written in very old English, and almost halfe consumed with age: purporting ye said autor hereof bearing also the foresayd name. The true cople of whiche Sermon, in his owne speache wherein it was first spoken and preached at the crosse, on the sonday of quinquagesima, and after exhibited to the Archbishop of Ca~~n~~terbury (beyng then as it seemeth William Courtney) here foloweth.⁴²

⁴⁰ For a useful brief discussion in the present context of what has come to be known as the 'grey' area between orthodoxy and heterodoxy see Walsham, 'Inventing the Lollard Past', pp. 637–39, and references therein.

⁴¹ More work remains to be done to isolate which printed text Foxe is using.

⁴² I quote from a 1570 edition (London: John Day) (STC 11223) in the Folger Shakespeare Library; I have compared this text with that in the 1583 edition (London: John Day) (STC 11225), from the copy in the Huntington Library.

In other words, Foxe is arguing that he is now using a manuscript version of Wimbledon's sermon and that this 'old worne copye' has been found with Archbishop William Courtney's episcopal register (1381–96). But whatever one makes of Foxe's additional points about the sermon being by R. Wimbledon and being for Quinquagesima, which, of course, predate their 'earliest' mention in the 1582 printed edition, it is certainly true that Foxe's editions from 1570 onwards would seem to be derived from a manuscript copy rather than the printed tradition used in the 1563 edition, with the exception of the 1576 edition which lacks the sermon completely.⁴³ Essentially, what makes all this so fascinating is that via Foxe's 1570 edition, we may have discovered another 'medieval' manuscript. But still the story does not end here.

It might be expected that any eighteenth-century edition of the text would be based on earlier printed editions rather than manuscripts, and so it proves with those of 1731/2 and 1738.⁴⁴ However, although the title page of the 1745 edition, with its mention of the author as 'R. Wimbledon', suggests a connection with a printed copy, the rest of the title page says that the text was '*Published from the Original MSS. found in the Records of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Revised and Corrected by a late eminent Preacher: And humbly inscribed to the Clergy of the Church of England*'. This apparently far-fetched claim clearly implies that this is an edition of a manuscript text. Sure enough, when this previously unknown text is examined, it turns out to be based on a manuscript rather than a printed source. The obvious assumption is that it is merely a copy of Foxe's 1570 edition and this looks to be the case, although the spelling is different and a major section of the sermon (although not the part about the end of the world) is omitted. Unfortunately, we cannot prove the veracity of the association of the text with Courtney's register made by Foxe and the 1745 writer, as no such text may currently be found.⁴⁵ One way or another, if a copy of Wimbledon's sermon were once amongst Courtney's

Apart from the smallest of spelling and typographical changes, the two editions are the same. The main editions of the work date from 1563, 1570, 1576, 1583, 1589, 1596, 1597, 1610, 1615, 1632, 1641, and 1684, although only the first four date from Foxe's lifetime, and there was a considerable number of 'little Foxes' or 'bastard Foxes' printed right into the nineteenth century, for instance, the so-called edition of 1589 is actually Timothy Bright's *Abridgement of the Acts and Monuments* (see below). There is much literature on Foxe but for a concise description of the earliest editions see Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas S. Freeman, 'John Foxe, John Day and the Printing of the "Book of Martyrs"', in *Lives in Print: Biography and the Book Trade from the Middle Ages to the 21st Century*, ed. by Robin Myers, Michael Harris, and Giles Mandelbrote (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, and London: The British Library, 2001), pp. 23–54. For a useful discussion of Foxe-derived publications from 1660–1837 see Eirwen Nicholson, 'Eighteenth-Century Foxe: Evidence for the Impact of the Acts and Monuments in the "Long" Eighteenth Century' in *John Foxe and the English Reformation*, ed. by David Loades, St Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1997), pp. 143–77. Because my research is at a very early stage I have as yet only begun to check out the various Foxe editions and Foxe-related texts for evidence of Wimbledon's sermon. The editions of Foxe so far examined (in the Huntington Library) are: STC 11222 (John Day, 1563); STC 11223 (John Day, 1570) (fragment); STC 11224 (John Day, 1576); STC 11225: (John Day, 1583); STC 11226 (Peter Short, 1596); STC 11226a (Peter Short, 1597); STC 11227 (Humphrey Lownes, 1610). The Foxe-related material very briefly looked at includes: STC 11229, Timothy Bright's *Abridgement of the Acts and Monuments* (I. Windet, 1589); STC 17622, Thomas Mason, *Christ's Victory over Satan's Tyranny* (George Eld and Ralph Blower, 1615); STC 5849, Clement Cotton, *Mirror of Martyrs* (T. P. for Io. Budge, 1615); and STC 23733, John Taylor, *Book of Martyrs* ([John] B[eale], 1639), as well as various modern collections of essays on Foxe and Foxe-related material that are not of immediate relevance here.

⁴³ An initial comparison between the openings of Foxe's 1563 (STC 11222), and 1570 (STC 11223) editions and the manuscript and printed texts show that the former is definitely linked to the printed tradition and the latter to the manuscript tradition. For the 1563 edition I used the copy in the Huntington Library; for the 1570 text I used the copy in the Folger Shakespeare Library. Much more research must be carried out on this comparison.

⁴⁴ It is clearly stated at the end of the 1731/2 edition that the text is the 1561 version (STC 25825.3); the 1738 text is said to be the fourteenth edition which shows that the author was using the 1634 text (STC 25838).

⁴⁵ In 'Inventing the Lollard Past', pp. 635–36, n. 28, Walsham (who does not mention the 1745 text) speculates that

papers, it could strengthen the argument that there was always something unorthodox about Wimbledon or why else would his sermon have been presented to the archbishop? But the outside possibility remains that this manuscript, 'almost halfe consumed with age' in Foxe's day, may actually have survived into the eighteenth-century at least and so perhaps the 'late eminent Preacher' (if this is not some coded way of referring to Foxe) may have been working from the actual manuscript.⁴⁶

Indeed, if this is a copy of the 'lost' version said to have been associated with Courtney, then ironically the latest printed text may provide evidence of one of the earliest manuscripts and so bring almost full circle this story of '*A Sermon no lesse fruteful then famous*' or in this case '*No less Godly than Learned*', a sermon that in one form or another and for one reason or another, was continuously popular from the late fourteenth to the mid-eighteenth century. Ultimately, the 'real' Wimbledon may well continue to prove elusive and his text somewhat of a mystery, but in this new edition I hope to engage with the complexities discussed here as I disentangle the textual relationships and work through the cross-currents between the manuscript and printed traditions in an effort to cast Wimbledon and his text in a new light.⁴⁷

'If the "olde worne copy" was a loose manuscript kept with the register, it is likely to have been [p. 636] separated from it and to have since perished.' This may well be so but it may have survived into the eighteenth century. Indeed, there is also a possibility, given the textual differences, that there was not one but two manuscripts of Wimbledon's sermon in Courtney's register. Only a full comparison of the Foxe 1570 edition, the 1745 text, and the manuscript tradition will elucidate the textual relationship.

⁴⁶ Research on this newly discovered version from 1745 has only begun and it is not known yet how it fits with the other 'medieval' manuscripts, apart from the fact that it contains the sensitive passage about the date of the end of the world discussed above. I am very grateful to Dawn Holland of the Brynmor Jones Library at the University of Hull for her kindness in helping me access this 1745 edition.

⁴⁷ The extent of the changes to the medieval text in the printed tradition will be examined in the new edition. In addition to a full study of the manuscripts, I also hope to investigate all extant versions of the printed sermon (some sixty copies) for evidence of ownership and annotation. In the conduct of this research I am very grateful for the financial support given by the Bibliographical Society (the Falconer Madan Award), the British Academy Neil Ker Memorial Fund, and the Huntington and Folger Shakespeare library fellowships. Earlier versions of this paper were given at an international sermon conference at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in January 2009 and to the Liverpool Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at the University of Liverpool in April 2009; I am grateful to both sets of organizers for their kind invitations and to the respective audiences for their interest. I also wish to express my gratitude to Sue Powell for her very useful comments on this paper, and to Janet Burton and William Marx for all their help.

Appendix: Manuscripts and Early Printings of Wimbledon's Sermon

English Manuscripts

Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 357
Dublin, Trinity College, 155
Durham, Hunter, 15/2
Cambridge, Magdalene College, Pepys 2125
Cambridge, Sidney Sussex, 74
Cambridge, Trinity College, B.14.38
Helmingham Hall, LJ II 2
Leeds, Brotherton Collection, 501
London, British Library, Additional 37677
London, British Library, Harley 2398
London, British Library, Royal 18. A.xvii
London, British Library, Royal 18. B.xxiii
Oxford, Bodleian Library, English th. f.39
Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 57
Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Miscellaneous 524
Oxford, University College, 97
San Marino, Huntingdon, HM 502
Abridged version for the Ninth Sunday after Trinity found in a cycle extant in: Gloucester, Cathedral Library, 22; Lincoln, Cathedral Library, 50; Oxford, Bodleian Library, e Musaeo 180

Latin Manuscripts

Cambridge, University Library, li.3.8
Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, 334/727
London, British Library, Harley 331
Oxford, Trinity College, 42

Early Printed Texts

STC 25823.3 *A sermon no lesse fruteful then famous Made in the yeare of our LORDE GOD. M.CCC.lxxvij. in these oure latter days moost necessary to be known. Nether addyng to, neyther demynshynge fro. Save tholde and Rude Englysh ther of mended here and there* (London: John Mayler, 1540?)

STC 25823.7 (London: Edward Whitchurch, c. 1548)

STC 25824 (London: Richard Grafton for Richard Kele, c. 1550)

STC 25825.3 (London: John Kynge, 1561?)

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- STC 11222 John Foxe, *Actes and monuments of these latter and perillous dayes [...]* (London: John Day, 1563)
- STC 11223 John Foxe, *The first uolume of the ecclesiasticall history contaynyng the actes and monuments [...]* (London: John Day, 1570) [with other editions in 1576, 1583, 1589, 1596, 1597, 1610, 1632, 1641, 1684]
- STC 25825.7 (London: John Awdely, 1572)
- STC 25826 (London: John Awdely, 1573)
- STC 25827 (London: John Awdely, 1575)
- STC 25827.5 (London: John Awdely, 1575)
- STC 25828 (London: John Charlewood, 1578)
- STC 25829 (London: John Charlewood, 1579)
- STC 25830 (London: John Charlewood, 1582)
- STC 25831 (London: John Charlewood, 1584)
- STC 25832 (London: John Charlewood, 1588)
- STC 25833 (London: John Charlewood, 1593)
- STC 25834 (London: James Roberts, 1593 that is, 1599)
- STC 25834.5 (London: James Roberts, 1603)
- STC 25835 [...] *The eleuenth Edition* (London: William Jaggard, 1617)
- STC 25836 [...] *The twelfth Edition* (London: William Jaggard, 1617)
- STC 25837 [...] *The thirteenth Edition* (London: Thomas Cotes and Richard Cotes, 1629)
- STC 25838 [...] *The fourteenth Edition* (London: Thomas Cotes, 1634)
- STC 25839 [...] *The fifteenth Edition* (London: Thomas Cotes, 1635)
- Phaenix Britannicus: Being a Miscellaneous Collection of Scarce and Curious Tracts. Some of very Ancient Dates, and most of the rest long since out of Print [...]* Number I, ed. by J. Morgan (London, 1731)
- Phaenix Britannicus: Being a Miscellaneous Collection of Scarce and Curious Tracts, Historical, Political, Biographical, Satirical, Critical, Characteristical, &c. Prose and Verse [...]* Vol. I, Containing Numbers I, II, III, IV, V & VI, ed. by J. Morgan (London, 1732)
- Richard Wimbledon, *The Regal, Clerical, and Laical Bayliffs Cited by three Som'ners, to give a Reckoning of their Bayliwicks* (London: printed for A. Jackson, 1738)
- The Antient Method of Preaching; As delivered in a Sermon, No less Godly than Learned, Preach'd at St. Paul's Cross, in the Reign of King Richard II. Anno 1389. By R. Wimbledon [...]* (London: printed for J. Robinson, 1745)

Lost/uncertain copies

A medieval English text said to have been preserved with the episcopal register of William Courtney, archbishop of Canterbury. This actual text is apparently no longer extant but may be linked to John Foxe's 1570 and later editions, as well as the 1745 edition above.

A reference to a possible edition is found in the Stationers' Register for 1562–63 where 4d is recorded as being 'Recevyd of master loble [Michael Lobely] for his lycense for pryntinge of a boke intituled the sermonde in the wall there vnto annexed the common places of Patryk Hamylton'; see *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London; 1554–1640 A. D.*, ed. by Edward Arber, 5 vols (London (I–V); Birmingham (V): Privately printed, 1875–94), I, 88. This edition, said to have been added to the *Commonplaces* or *Patrick's Places* of Patrick Hamilton, is apparently no longer extant, although STC notes of the 1572 edition that it was 'Ent. to W. Lobley 1562–63'.