

Manuscript Culture and Medieval Devotional Traditions

Essays in Honour of Michael G. Sargent



Edited by
Jennifer N. Brown and Nicole R. Rice



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from London Charterho

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Fig. 1 Column graph of
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century (A)

Fig. 3 Line graph of Mi
century (B-data r

Fig. 4 Column graph of
various forms

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quarter century

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Fig. 7 Data visualization
collocation graph

Fig. 8 Data visualization
collocation graph

Fig. 9 Data visualization
collocation graph

Appendix Figure A. *Scale*

Walter Hilton's Confessions in *De imagine peccati* and *Epistola de utilitate et prerogativis religionis*

MARLEEN CRÉ



If we think about the authors whose texts or books we read as *compagnons de route*, Michael Sargent has travelled long distances with Walter Hilton. Michael's 2017 EETS edition of Book II of the *Scale of Perfection* and his meticulous work on the manuscript tradition and reception of the *Scale* will be consulted by scholars for decades to come.¹ Hilton's *Scale* is one of 'those Middle English works that survive in large numbers of manuscripts', as with its forty-nine extant copies it comes in eighth place in the list offered by Sargent, who points out that 'we might critically deduce from the mere numbers not the "popularity or importance" in any direct, absolute sense, but at least the size of the possible readership'.² It would be inaccurate to say that there is a contrast between this large number of surviving manuscripts and the scholarly attention that Hilton has received over the last decades, as Hilton's works have all been edited, and his works have been studied by, among others, Helen Gardner, Stan Hussey, John Clark and Michael Sargent, and anyone approaching a text by Hilton stands on the shoulders of these giants. I do believe it is accurate, however, to say that Hilton, in spite of having a faithful band of scholarly admirers, deserves even more visibility, both as an author and as a spiritual adviser. In addition, I felt that, as a scholar, but also as a reader,

¹ W. Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection Book II, An Edition Based on British Library MSS Harley 6573 and 6579*, ed. S. S. Hussey and M. G. Sargent, EETS OS 348 (Oxford, 2017 for 2016). For a bibliography of Sargent's writings on Hilton see pp. clvii–clviii. References to this edition are by chapter and line numbers.

² M. G. Sargent, 'What Do the Numbers Mean? A Textual Critic's Observations on Some Patterns of Middle English Manuscript Transmission', in *Design and Distribution of Late Medieval Manuscripts in England*, ed. M. Connolly and L. Mooney (York, 2008), pp. 205–44 (p. 206).

I did not know Hilton. In this essay, I embark on letters, *De imagine peccati*.

It is debatable whether the author in the work. readers, and that we may and contextualize. As text in the texts. For instance *Love*, I can write an essay in the text, and about how literal meaning. Simultaneously on a different level, the emotionally. I do not believe texts the way we read also respond emotionally with the intellectual or *compagnons de route* not only and understanding of the become familiar.

A striking characteristic and wisdom as a spiritual first-person utterances the author's belief and truth.

If pou wilt wyte þan if
þat I haue seide þou may
loke what þi wil is, for
þat þou wuldest for no
of God, and for þat þa

³ *Walter Hilton's Latin Works Cartusiana 124* (1987). becomes *DIP*, followed by *gionis* becomes *EUPR*, etc.

⁴ I remain intrigued by the she is gravely ill in bed. 'For this sight, I laughed me, and then laughing laughter in the sickroom one, that I would argue *Julian of Norwich: A Vision* N. Watson and J. Jenkins.

I did not know Hilton enough, and decided to set out and reread his texts. In this essay, I embark upon this journey, focusing on Hilton's earliest Latin letters, *De imagine peccati* and *Epistola de utilitate et prerogativis religionis*.³

It is debatable whether, for scholars of literature, it is still allowed to look for the author in the work. Yet it is also undisputable that we, as scholars, are also readers, and that we may enjoy and be captivated by a text that we also analyse and contextualize. As texts are written by people, we read and hear their voices in the texts. For instance, when I read Julian of Norwich's *A Revelation of Love*, I can write an essay about how exactly she talks about illness and pain in the text, and about how pain becomes a metaphor for sin without losing its literal meaning. Simultaneously, I can be charmed by a passage or a sentence on a different level, the level of me as a reader who responds to Julian's text emotionally. I do not believe we read medieval spiritual, mystical or visionary texts the way we read a novel or another work of fiction, but I do believe we also respond emotionally, and that our emotions work in dynamic interaction with the intellectual or analytical.⁴ Thus, authors and texts can become our *compagnons de route* not only because our studies have added to our knowledge and understanding of them, but also because their voices are present to us, and become familiar.

A striking characteristic of *Scale II* is that this text reflects Hilton's patience and wisdom as a spiritual guide. Hilton addresses his audience directly in first-person utterances that are aimed at reassuring the reader and that express the author's belief and trust in God's mercy and love.

If pou wilt wyte þan if þi soule be reformed to þe ymage of God or non, *by þat I haue seide* pou mayght haue entre. Ransake þin owen conscience and loke what þi wil is, for þerin stondest al. If it be turned fro al dedly sinne þat pou wuldest for no þyng wytendly and wiffully breke þe comaundement of God, and for þat þat pou hast mysdone here before ageyns his byddyng

³ *Walter Hilton's Latin Writings*, ed. J. P. H. Clark and C. Taylor, 2 vols., *Analecta Cartusiana* 124 (1987). References to this edition are as follows: *De imagine peccati* becomes *DIP*, followed by line numbers, and *Epistola de utilitate et prerogativis religionis* becomes *EUPR*, also followed by line numbers.

⁴ I remain intrigued by the passage in which we get a look at Julian's sickroom, where she is gravely ill in bed. She is shown the devil's powerlessness, and laughs at this: 'For this sight, I laught mightely, and that made them to laugh that were about me, and ther laughing was a liking to me' (*A Revelation of Love* 13/20–21). The laughter in the sickroom makes this passage such an unexpectedly idiosyncratic one, that I would argue it shows us a glimpse of Julian as a person. *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman and A Revelation of Love*, ed. N. Watson and J. Jenkins (Turnhout, 2006), p. 171.

pou hast schriuen þe mekly, with ful herte to lefe it and with sorwe þat þou dedist it: *I seye þan sikirly* þat þi soule is reformed in feith to þe lyknes of God. (9/24–32; italics mine)

We see here that Hilton uses the first person singular in order to signpost, i.e. to refer to things he said earlier ('by þat I haue seide'), but it also often signals emphasis on his belief in his message, as when he uses the adverb 'sikirly' in the passage above. The many instances of the phrase 'I hope' in *Scale II* also need to be read as such.⁵ At times Hilton's authorial interventions are meta-textual; he reflects on his use of words, and his authority can be seen to derive from his thorough theological knowledge.

Bot perchaunce now bygynnes þu to wondren whi I sey o tyme þat grace werketh al þis, and anoper tyme I sey þat lufe werketh, or Jesu werketh, or God werketh. Vnto þis I sey þus, þat when I sey þat grace werkeþ, I mene lufe, Jesu and God. For al is one, and noȝt bot one: Jesu is lufe, Jesu is grace, Jesu is God; and for he werketh alle in vs by his grace for lufe as God, þerfore may I vsen what word þat I wil of þis foure after my steryng in þis writyng. (42/138–44)

In this essay I return to the roots of what Gordon Mursell has called Hilton's 'exceptional wisdom as a spiritual director' and 'warm and pastoral affectivity'.⁶ The Latin letters *De imagine peccati* and *Epistola de utilitate et prerogativis religionis*, two early works, record Hilton's answers to problems or questions raised by two masculine correspondents.⁷ Both letters address the correspondent as 'beloved brother in Christ' (*DIP* 1).⁸ This phrase signals the similarity of circumstance between Hilton and the correspondents, as well as the emotional involvement and connection Hilton feels with them. Whereas, in the *Scale*, Hilton addresses a feminine audience for whom he is a reassuring guide to the spiritual life, in the letters discussed here, presumably because they are originally written to men close to Hilton, there is greater scope for

Hilton to compare or contrast himself with their problems. The letters are addressed to feminine readers of the *Scale*, which is universal. It is in the letters that Hilton expresses himself most fully, in first-person plural.

Both letters seem to be addressed to a male correspondent in mind. The broader applicability of the letters, just as Hilton's first letters (as constructed) as well as the letters, because they express Hilton's own experience. When Barry Windeatt translates the letters, *themselves* as still travelling, from which to describe vices, hints at the tension between the letters and the experience (themselves on the letters) expressions of these feelings as a contemplative than the letters with which Hilton will write that even though Hilton show his 'developing understanding of biblical grounding and i

This essay will argue that the confessions in both letters are an adaptation of his style and that the difference could also be religious. In *Epistola de utilitate* the letters are less rawly emotional and more like *De imagine peccati*. In *De imagine peccati* the correspondent more closely identifies himself as both like and unlike the universal religious life. In both letters the centre of the text (in the letters) effectively places himself

⁵ A good example of a passage in which Hilton repeats the phrase 'I hope' three times is *Scale II* (7/53–63–71).

⁶ G. Mursell, *English Spirituality from the Earliest Times to 1700* (Louisville KY, 2001), pp. 179, 210.

⁷ For a chronology of Hilton's works, see *Walter Hilton: The Scale of Perfection*, trans. J. P. H. Clark and R. Dorward, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York, 1991), pp. 13–19 and *The Scale of Perfection*, ed. Hussey and Sargent, pp. lxxiv–lxxvii.

⁸ *De imagine peccati* has 'dilecti in Christo frater' (*DIP* 1) in the vocative of address, and the *Epistola* 'Dilecto in Christo fratri' (*EUPR* 1) has the same phrase in the dative required by the grammatical structure of the address.

⁹ The *Epistola* expresses t

¹⁰ B. Windeatt, *English l* mine.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

and with sorwe þat pou
in feith to þe lyknes of

regular in order to signpost,
(seide'), but it also often
when he uses the adverb
the phrase 'I hope' in *Scale*
authorial interventions are
authority can be seen to

I sey o tyme þat grace
eth, or Jesu werketh, or
at grace werkep, I mene
esu is lufe, Jesu is grace,
grace for lufe as God,
after my steryng in þis

rdon Mursell has called
and 'warm and pastoral'
Epistola de utilitate et pre-
answers to problems or
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rituality (New York, 1991),
rgent, pp. lxxiv–lxxxvii.

in the vocative of address,
has the same phrase in the
ress.

Hilton to compare or contrast himself to his correspondents and to identify with their problems. This is not to say that Hilton does not identify with the feminine readers of the *Scale*, as he does by virtue of leading the religious life, which is universal. It is clear, however, that to his masculine correspondents Hilton expresses himself with greater candour, and that his presence in the letters, in first-person passages, has greater urgency.

Both letters seem to have been written with a wider audience than the original correspondent in mind, and even this audience was most likely masculine.⁹ The broader applicability of the letters does not invalidate their concrete occasion, just as Hilton's first-person passages are didactic (and as such can be seen as constructed) as well as autobiographical (hence 'confessions' in the title) because they express Hilton's authentic reflections, frustrations and beliefs. When Barry Windeatt writes that 'both Hilton ... and the *Cloud*-author *cast themselves* as still travelling towards a goal, and so having limited experience from which to describe what they nonetheless assist their readers towards',¹⁰ he hints at the tension between self-derogatory remarks and assertions of inexperience (themselves on the verge between being humility tropes and authentic expressions of these feelings) and the reality that Hilton was more experienced as a contemplative than he lets on, which is suggested by the level-headedness with which Hilton will go on to write the *Scale*. Windeatt also points out that even though Hilton denies being an experienced contemplative, his works show his 'developing understanding' of the spiritual life, its theological and biblical grounding and its psychological challenges.¹¹

This essay will argue that there is a difference in style between Hilton's confessions in both letters, which could be the result of Hilton's empathetic adaptation of his style and method to his correspondent and his theme. This difference could also reflect Hilton's own development as a solitary and religious. In *Epistola de utilitate* Hilton's first-person interventions seem to be less rawly emotional and more measured than his interventions in the earlier *De imagine peccati*. In *De imagine peccati*, Hilton identifies with the solitary correspondent more closely than in *Epistola de utilitate*, in which he positions himself as both like and unlike Horsley with regard to the choice of the regular religious life. In both texts, however, the first-person passages occur at the centre of the text (in the middle of their linear progression). Thus, Hilton effectively places himself in the middle of his letters as his correspondents'

⁹ The *Epistola* expresses this explicitly, as we will see later.

¹⁰ B. Windeatt, *English Mystics of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 7, italics mine.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

fellow traveller through the life they have chosen or are about to choose and the particular problems their vocation throws in their way. The confessions guide them, and Hilton too, beyond the low points of their experience to a promise of what a stable and rewarding religious life can bring them.

Balance and caution already feature in Hilton's early Latin letters, written when he had not yet become established in his life at Thurgarton and was still developing as a spiritual guide, even perhaps just setting out to be one. Though the letters remain silent as to their material context, they suggest that the letter writers sought Hilton out as someone who could help them.¹² We enter the realm of speculation here, but it is not unthinkable that Hilton was a regular letter writer who chose to reply to some questions he received in greater detail, in the form of a short treatise, because the issue interested him – possibly exactly because it touched upon his own questions and his own quest for the religious life that suited him.

Introducing De imagine peccati and Epistola de utilitate et prerogativis religionis

De imagine peccati, 'probably Hilton's earliest extant work', is a letter addressed to a solitary.¹³ The text has the image of sin in the soul as its focal point, and elaborates on how this image should be eradicated and replaced by the image of God in the soul.¹⁴ It breaks down this image, this idol, as composed of pride ('superbia', *DIP* 39), envy ('invidia', *DIP* 191), sloth ('accidia', *DIP* 237) and gluttony ('gula', *DIP* 345). When discussing gluttony, Hilton shifts his focus to the five senses, and comments on the dangers of taking delight in sensual pleasure – in gluttony of the senses, as it were (*DIP* 345–406). As in many of his texts, Hilton comments on 'pure intention' and how, in the spiritual life, for

laypeople, solitaires and p
rests on humility. In *De in*
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[V]era humilitas est vt
bus mirabilem et specta
(*DIP* 118–20)

(True humility is not
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It is not surprising th
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in which the disciples r
drive out demons.

Si michi non credis, cr
Numquid credebant po
Deo. Numquid pro me
ciebatur se habere quod
quasi gracias agebant l
ceteris inaniter, gloriant
Deo debitam sibi teme
dicens, Nolite gaudere,

(If you do not believe
disciples rejoice? Can i
miracles from themself
that they believed they
it freely. Can it be that

¹² On the circles in which Hilton moved, see M. G. Sargent, 'Bishops, Patrons, Mystics and Manuscripts: Walter Hilton, Nicholas Love and the Arundel and Holland Collections', in *Middle English Texts in Transition: A Festschrift Dedicated to Toshiyuki Takamiya on his 70th Birthday*, ed. S. Horobin and L. R. Mooney (York, 2014), pp. 159–62.

¹³ *Walter Hilton's Latin Writings*, ed. Clark and Taylor, p. 69. *De imagine peccati* survives in four manuscripts: London, British Library, MS Cotton Titus D ix (third quarter fifteenth century) and MS Royal 6 E III (third quarter fifteenth century), the manuscript that contains both texts discussed in this essay; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 115 (early fifteenth century) and MS Lat. th. D. 27 (third quarter fifteenth century), which also contains *Epistola de utilitate et prerogativis religionis*.

¹⁴ On this theme, central in all of Hilton's writings, see J. P. H. Clark, 'Image and Likeness in Walter Hilton', *Downside Review* 47 (1979), 204–20.

¹⁵ *Walter Hilton's Latin Wri.*

are about to choose and their way. The confessions of their experience to a can bring them.

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69. *De imagine peccati* sur- S Cotton Titus D ix (third d quarter fifteenth century), his essay; Oxford, Bodleian MS Lat. th. D. 27 (third la de utilitate et prerogatiuis

J. P. H. Clark, 'Image and), 204–20.

laypeople, solitaries and people living in monastic orders, this 'pure intention' rests on humility. In *De imagine peccati* humility is described as the recognition of oneself as a sinful wretch.

[V]era humilitas est vt magna te operantem magnum te nescians, et omni- bus mirabilem et spectabilem teipsum miserrimum et vilissimum cognoscas. (DIP 118–20)

(True humility is not to know yourself as great even while you do great things, so that you recognize yourself, extraordinary and noteworthy to all, as most wretched and sinful.)

It is not surprising that *De imagine peccati* mentions what Hilton calls imperfect humility (the recognition of one's sinful self) and uses the term 'miserrimum' ('most wretched') to describe what the correspondent should recognize himself to be. Perfect humility ('the humility which looks beyond the self to the greatness and love of God in Christ')¹⁵ is taught and described in *Scale II*, in which Hilton instructs his audience in the advanced spiritual life and contemplation. The movement from imperfect to perfect humility is essentially conversion: a movement away from the self in the world, to whom reputation and embarrassment matter, to God, in whose loving embrace the soul can find true rest. In *De imagine peccati*, however, this movement is subtly hinted at rather than explicitly named in the exegetical passage that follows the passage quoted above, offering a reading of Luke 10. 17 and 20, in which the disciples rejoice because they have been given the power to drive out demons.

Si michi non credis, crede uel Evangelio. [...] Vnde gloriabatur discipuli? Numquid credebant potestatem faciendi miracula ex seipsus? Non, sed ex Deo. Numquid pro meritis suis? Non, sed gratis. Numquid iactantes men- ciebatur se habere quod non habuerunt? Non, sed potius confitentes verum, quasi gratias agebant Deo. Cur ergo reprehensi, nisi quia preferebant se ceteris inaniter, gloriantes se hec dona pre aliis singulariter accepisse, gloriam Deo debitam sibi temere vsurpantes, quorum elacionem Christus repressit, dicens, Nolite gaudere, etc. (DIP 121–32)

(If you do not believe me, then believe the Gospel. [...] What made the disciples rejoice? Can it be that they believed they had the power to do miracles from themselves? No, they had this power from God. Can it be that they believed they had this power from their own merits? No, they had it freely. Can it be that they arrogantly pretended to have what they did not

¹⁵ *Walter Hilton's Latin Writings*, ed. Clark and Taylor, p. 343.

have? No, in truth, they acknowledged this, rather, and as it were thanked God. Why then were they reprimanded, if not because they foolishly preferred themselves to others, priding themselves on having exceptionally received these gifts before the others, usurping the glory owed to God to themselves? Christ restrained their exaltation, saying 'Do not rejoice', etc.)

In order to become truly Christ-like, the disciples have to turn away from their self-seeking pride of having received God's gifts for their own sakes and have to rejoice at living their lives for God. Hilton's exegesis in this passage rests on the game of questions and answers, the first three of which would seem to merit a positive answer. The triple repetition of 'non' creates curiosity and anticipation about what the real reason was for the reprimand the disciples received. Hilton subtly delays the gratification of the correct answer by first voicing the reader's likely question ('Cur ergo reprehensi?') before finally giving it (they prided themselves). In this intellectual game, Hilton cleverly draws the reader in as his direct interlocutor, creating identification and familiarity that allow both writer and reader to connect in thinking the Gospel reference through and, through that connection, to arrive at a deeper understanding of what true humility is.

De imagine peccati drives home the necessity to destroy the image of sin in the soul, the idol that the proud believer turns it into, and the necessity to carry within the soul the 'ymaginem celestis, scilicet Christi' (DIP 468–9) ('the heavenly image, indeed that of Christ') rather than the empty likeness of sin. Indeed, just as the taste of spiritual appetite is the antidote to the gluttony of the senses, the image of Christ in the soul destroys the idolatrous image of sin. If we were to use the language of the *Scale* to explain the conversion the text teaches, Hilton is clearly teaching the correspondent to reform in faith.¹⁶

Sed interim exclama in corde tuo vbi Deus audit, O quis liberabit me de corpore mortis huius, quis hoc ydolum comminuet? Et audias diuinum responsum, Gracia Dei per Ihesum Christum. (DIP 505–7)

(And in the meantime, call out in your heart where God listens, O who will release me from the body of this death, who will smash this idol? And may you hear the divine response, by God's grace through Jesus Christ.)

¹⁶ See, for instance, *Scale II* 9/8–10: 'We þat arn rygthtyd and reformed purgh feith in Crist han pes and acorde made betwixen God and vs, not ageynstondende þe vicious felynges of oure bodi of synne.'

Epistola de utilitate et copies, arguably making this letter was addressed Beauvale charterhouse in 1446, in which the Carthusian order lays out its argument of Adam Horsley, and rep for him.¹⁹

The religious life is ai one's neighbours 'cum ve ('with true humility and

¹⁷ London, British Librar Oxford, Bodleian Librar Rawlinson C. 397 and College MS 93; Durham College, MS 216.

¹⁸ The text itself does not 33 the colophon reads: postea canonico de Thunis Cartusie tunc futuro Merton College Librar 'Carthusian colophon' (Hilton de utilitate et pr quidem epistolam idem domini regis ordinem (Adam Horsley, qui eci in eodem perseuerau with a Coventry Cath information in the colof Coventry charterhouse. terhouse and Coventry copy of *De imagine pecc* Sheen charterhouse. Th the scribe of the manus the first page of the *Ep* 1446, with links to Cov Merton MS 47, writer the colophon on fol. 23 fellow of Merton until 160v. Most of this ma charterhouse in 1435, v 1444, and who donated Clark and Taylor, pp. 20

¹⁹ See *EUPR* 32, 560–2, 5

and as it were thanked
 cause they foolishly pre-
 n having exceptionally
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 ng the correspondent to

O quis liberabit me de
 t? Et audias diuinum
 505-7)

God listens, O who will
 h this idol? And may you
 s Christ.)

and reformed purgh feith
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Epistola de utilitate et prerogativis religionis survives in thirteen manuscript copies, arguably making it the Latin epistle with the largest readership.¹⁷ That this letter was addressed to Adam Horsley, an Exchequer official who entered Beauvale charterhouse in 1386, doubtless contributed to its wider dissemination, in which the Carthusians seem to have played a part.¹⁸ The text carefully lays out its argument of why entering the religious life is the right path for Adam Horsley, and repeatedly insists that the Carthusian order is suitable for him.¹⁹

The religious life is aimed at human perfection of perfect love of God and one's neighbours 'cum vera humilitate plenaque mentis deuocione' (EUPR 36) ('with true humility and full devotion of the mind'). Love of God is impeded

¹⁷ London, British Library, MSS Harley 3852, Royal 6 E III, and Royal 8 A VII; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MSS Digby 33, Lat. th. d. 27, Lat. th. e. 26, Lat. th. f. 20, Rawlinson C. 397 and Tanner 4; Oxford, Merton College MS 47 and Magdalen College MS 93; Durham, Dean and Chapter Library, MS B iv 41; Dublin, Trinity College, MS 216.

¹⁸ The text itself does not mention him as the recipient of the letter. In MS Digby 33 the colophon reads: 'Hec epistola scripta fuit a magistro Waltero de Hilton, postea canonico de Thurgarton, domino Ade de Horsley monacho de Beuale ordinis Cartusie tunc futuro.' Bodleian Library MSS Latin th. d. 27 and Latin th. e. 26, Merton College Library MS 47 and Magdalen College Library MS 93 have the 'Carthusian colophon' (with small differences): 'Incipit epistola magistri Walteri Hilton de utilitate et prerogativis religionis et precipue ordinis Cartusiensis, quam quidem epistolam idem Walterus primus direxit cuidam venerabili baroni scakkarii domini regis ordinem Cartusiensem intrare disponenti; nomenque eiusdem erat Adam Horsley, qui etiam dictum ordinem Cartusie postea ingressus, laudabiliter in eodem perseueravit.' MS Digby 33 is an early fifteenth-century manuscript with a Coventry Cathedral cleric ownership inscription. It is assumed that the information in the colophon mentioning Adam Horsley (fol. 31v) was provided by Coventry charterhouse. Evidence of shared use of manuscripts by Coventry charterhouse and Coventry cathedral can also be found in MS Digby 115, in which a copy of *De imagine peccati* survives. Latin th. e. 26 has an ownership inscription for Sheen charterhouse. The inscription, on fol. 145v, names John Feriby (d. 1444) as the scribe of the manuscript. The colophon naming Adam Horsley is on fol. 120v, the first page of the *Epistola de utilitate*. Latin th. d. 27 is a manuscript dated after 1446, with links to Coventry charterhouse. The colophon was written on fol. 131v. Merton MS 47, written in a hand of the second half of the fifteenth century, has the colophon on fol. 239r and carries an ownership inscription of William Romsey, fellow of Merton until 1485 (d. 1501). Magdalen MS 93 has the colophon on fol. 160v. Most of this manuscript was written by John Dygon, admitted to Sheen charterhouse in 1435, who dates the completion of his copying work to 1438 and 1444, and who donated this manuscript, with five others, to Magdalen College. Clark and Taylor, pp. 20-2, 26-33, 33-6, 41-3, 43-6, 103, 116, 361.

¹⁹ See EUPR 32, 560-2, 572-4, 734-6 and 862.

by 'concupiscencia carne, et concupiscencia oculorum, et superbia vite' (EUPR 45) ('the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes and pride of life'). The vices need to be replaced by the virtues enshrined in the religious vows: 'carnis continencia, paupertate voluntaria, et vera obediencia' (EUPR 56-7) ('chastity, voluntary poverty and true obedience'). Perfection should be sought with intention, but, as Hilton points out early in the text, 'Hanc intencionem habere facile est, ipsam vero perfectionem difficile' (EUPR 74-5) ('It is easy to have this intention, but to have perfection itself is difficult'). Leading the religious life helps the believer on the way to perfection.

After going over the history of the early Church and the place of the monastic life in this history (EUPR 100-80), Hilton discusses the three advantages of this life. First, the religious life destroys the great opportunity for vice (EUPR 181-226), in particular pride, avarice, sloth, gluttony and lechery. These vices are counteracted by virtues: humility, patience, meekness, sobriety and chastity. Second, those living under a rule are obedient and submit to the discretion and reasonable regulations of a superior (EUPR 228-340). The superior helps the religious when they are put to the test, supports them in their intention to lead a virtuous life and keeps them from holding heretical opinions. Third, entry into the religious life is like a second baptism that removes the stain of sin (340-449). It is a way of life that is deemed excellent by the Church on earth and that will be rewarded by the triumphant Church in heaven.

The images to describe entry into the religious life are rich and manifold. Entering a monastic order is like a spiritual baptism that returns the new religious to his childhood and gives him a second chance to grow and mature. The new religious's offering of himself to God is like Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac: he should offer up to God what he loves most.²⁰ This image links the themes of pure intention and conversion and obedience. Obedience to a superior is 'vera humilitas' (EUPR 586) (true humility), and the new religious should be prepared to carry out manual work and menial tasks 'velud asinus racionalis' (EUPR 591) (like a rational donkey).²¹

²⁰ The reference in the text is oblique: the charterhouse is like a mountain that will be scaled, 'et ibi filium tuum immolabis' (EUPR 574) (and there you will sacrifice your son). See Genesis 22. 1-18.

²¹ Isaiah 1. 3. Hilton anticipates that Horsley (and any reader after him) might well take offence at this comparison: 'Nec ducas ad iniuriam quod ego remitto te ad asinum, ut ab eo discas obedienciam, cum sapiens ceciam me stolidum remittit ad formicam, dicens michi sic: Vade ad formicam o piger, et considera opera eius et disce ab illa sapienciam; sic et ego in presenti dico tibi, vade ad asinum et disce ab eo obedienciam. Durum est quod dico opere adimplere, set amor Dei omnia dura et aspera mollia facit et plana' (EUPR 626-31). (Do not take it as an insult that I send you back to the donkey, so that you may learn obedience from it, because the

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Hilton anticipates Horsley's possible worries and anxieties. He (and any subsequent reader) might argue, for instance, that in the secular life he is freer to choose his own devotions, whereas in the religious life he will have to follow the observances required by the rule. If he persists patiently in the observances, Hilton teaches, they will bring him great humility: 'Verumptamen nunquam peruenies ad istam humilitatem nisi per talem humilacionem' (EUPR 787-8) ('Even so, you will never come to such humility unless through such humiliation'). Indeed, God prefers humble deeds. He was better pleased with David dancing before the Ark than he was with David's military achievements (his defeat of Goliath and of the Philistines).²²

Finally, Hilton invites Horsley to scrutinize his intentions and to take a leap of faith, which, ironically, is a leap away from the insecurity of doubt and fear to the secure foundation of the religious life in Christ.

Cur ergo trepidas? Quid temes? Ffundamentum securum est absque labe erroris vel heresis vel diuine transgressionis, quia supra petram, id est Christum, fundata est religio. (EUPR 888-9)

(Why then do you waver? What do you fear? The foundation is safe and away from the blemish of error or of heresy or of violation of the divine, because the religious life is founded on the rock which is Christ.)

First-person confessions in De imagine peccati

In both *De imagine peccati* and *Epistola de utilitate et prerogativis religionis* Hilton addresses his readers in first-person passages in which he reflects on his work as a writer and expresses his own feelings. Often the latter are moments of functional reflection. Though some of them read like spontaneous outbursts, Hilton does not indulge in them just for their own sake, but includes them to make a point or to lead his correspondents, and himself, to greater insight or to the making of a decision. Hilton uses these passages as a bridge between the theme of the text (the image of sin in the solitary's soul, the benefits and prerequisites of the religious life) and strong exhortations aimed at lifting the correspondent out of despair or doubt (how the image of God can be restored in the soul, what the religious life can bring Adam Horsley).

wise man also sends me, insensible, back to the ant, speaking to me thus: Go to the ant, o sluggard, and consider her ways, and learn wisdom from her; and in this way I tell you now, Go to the donkey and learn obedience from him. It is hard to carry out what I say in your work, but God's love renders all hard and bitter things easy and even.) The reference is to Proverbs 6. 6.

²² In 2 Sam. 6. 14 and 1 Sam. 17. 4, respectively.

In addition, Hilton often addresses the questions and issues in the reflective passages from a biblical perspective, showing himself as a keen and perceptive reader of the Bible, weaving relevant Old and New Testament verses into his text that offer clear reassurances to his correspondents' doubts. In *De imagine peccati* the first-person confessions occur in the first half of the text, in which Hilton discusses the sins that build the image of sin in the soul. From this low point of self-derogation, doubt and humility, the image of God in the soul can be built up.

Hilton repeatedly includes himself in his correspondent's predicament, as in the opening address of the letter.

Dilecte in Christi frater, inter cetera que michi scripsisti ostendere tuam miseriam verbis quibus potueras conatus es, et ymaginem tue fedditatis representare mee mentis oculis, non, puto, vt *a me auxilium* posceres, *qui in eadem miseria sum*, *velut cecus qui seipsum curare non poterit*, sed vt a Domino nostro Ihesu Christo propter quem te humiliter subicis, tuam miseriam veraciter recognoscens misericordiam et gratiam recipere merearis. (DIP 1-7; italics mine)

(Beloved brother in Christ, among other things that you have written to me you have tried to show your wretchedness with words as you were able, and you have tried to represent the image of your foulness to the eyes of my mind, not, I think, because you are asking help of *me, who am in the same wretchedness, just as a blind man who could not even take care of himself*, but because you, who truly recognizes your wretchedness, deserve to receive the mercy and grace from our Lord Jesus Christ, because of whom you humbly subject yourself.)

The similarity between Hilton and his correspondent is made clear not only by the application of the word 'miseria' to both, but also in the use of the image 'velut caecus qui seipsum curare non poterit'. This image is a telling adaptation of Luke 6. 39 ('Can the blind lead the blind? Do they not both fall into the ditch?') and Matthew 15. 14 ('Let them alone: they are blind and leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit'). In both Luke and Matthew, the saying is related to masters and disciples. Whereas the vulgate uses the noun 'dux' (leader) and the verb 'ducere' (to lead), Hilton uses 'curare' (to take care of), which describes the relationship between a spiritual adviser and the person in his care (just as the noun is used in the expression 'cura pastoralis'). Moreover, Hilton does not write 'velut caecus qui *caecum* curare non possit', but 'qui *seipsum* curare non possit'. His wretchedness prevents him from taking care of himself. How then could he be his correspondent's spiritual adviser? He clearly doubts his suitability.

When Hilton describes the proud man how much his thoughts deceive him (*De* *ence*).²³ Likewise, when he speaks in exclamatory language of the spiritual adviser, but of his own lack of action (*DIP* *solitary* knows he should

Scio quid vis: vis enim vult humilis reputari, pauper, nomen pauperis beata paupertas sit pauper est libenter gaudere de sine prouisione. Omnis membrorum incolumit preparat. (DIP 296-30)

(I know what you want because the truly humble wants to be considered and, adopting the name from it, while happy poverty, and when it is necessary anxiety, and to dress with who has soundness of life and success.)

Again, Hilton connects the opening phrase 'Scio quid vis' with the verbs – used only once in *Epistola de utilitate*, as well as it suggests that Hilton desires to transcend the f

²³ Hilton describes this spirit that you carry against your filios Adam'), characteris score his point. (See *Wal*

²⁴ See, for instance, the ex tibi familiaris' (DIP 265- familiar to you), in which

When Hilton describes spiritual pride and the inner voice that tells the proud man how much better he is than all the others and how his own thoughts deceive him (*DIP* 109–14), he might also be speaking from experience.²³ Likewise, when he discusses the sin of sloth, the struggles he describes in exclamatory language suggest the fervour and passion not just of Hilton the spiritual adviser, but of Hilton the solitary who might be questioning his own lack of action (*DIP* 265–77),²⁴ and the sorry contrast between what the solitary knows he should do and what he manages to.

Scio quid vis: vis enim esse humilis sine despectu, cum verus humilis non vult humilis reputari, sed vt vilis confundi. Vis enim esse sine defectu pauper, nomen paupertatis vsurpans, miseriam vero horrendo refugis, cum beata paupertas sit pacienter tollerare miseriam corporis, et cum necesse est libenter gaudere de illa. Vis bene pasci sine solitudine, bene vestiri sine prouisione. Omnis enim homo in presenti mundo conuersatus, habens membrorum incolumitatem et vsum rationis, ad laborem et profectum se preparat. (*DIP* 296–304).

(I know what you want: you want to be be humble without contempt, because the truly humble person does not wish to be thought humble, but wants to be considered as worthless. You want to be poor without scorn, and, adopting the name of poverty, you flee wretchedness, truly shrinking from it, while happy poverty is to patiently tolerate the wretchedness of the body, and when it is necessary gladly to rejoice in it. You want to eat without anxiety, and to dress without foresight. Every man who dwells in this world who has soundness of limbs and the use of reason, prepares himself for work and success.)

Again, Hilton connects and seems to identify with his correspondent here. The opening phrase 'Scio quid vis' not only uses the strongest of the first-person verbs – used only once in *De imagine peccati*, but cropping up more often in *Epistola de utilitate*, as we will see – but also serves to link writer and receiver, as it suggests that Hilton knows what the reader wants exactly because he, too, desires to transcend the frustrations of an imperfect religious life and dreams

²³ Hilton describes this spiritual pride as 'iugum tuum quod invitus portas' (your yoke that you carry against your will), a reference to Ecclus. 40. 1 ('et iugum grave super filios Adam'), characteristically weaving scriptural references into his text to underscore his point. (See *Walter Hilton's Latin Writings*, ed. Clark and Taylor, p. 341.)

²⁴ See, for instance, the exclamation 'O quam delicata et tenera est hec amica tua tibi familiaris' (*DIP* 265–6) (O how delicate and infirm is this friend of yours, and familiar to you), in which he may be speaking both to the solitary and to himself.

of developing from a flawed into a more patient and humble contemplative. The triple repetition of the verb 'vis' in sentence-initial position combines with the qualifiers 'sine defectu', 'beata paupertas', 'pacienter', 'libenter', 'bene', 'sine solitudine' and 'sine provisione', which define the desired mode of life. This language emphasizes Hilton's identification with his correspondent and his desire to be a better religious free from the image of sin, while at the same time expressing that the desired goal has not been reached.

Laypeople, secular clerics and regular clerics, Hilton continues, all have their work and duties. Laypeople work to provide for themselves and try to please God by performing the works of mercy. Secular clergy serve their parishioners in administering the sacraments and working spiritual works of mercy. Regular clergy serve God and their superiors in works of obedience, in vigils and prayers. Solitaries run a much greater risk of falling into idleness and sloth. Hilton's outbursts regarding this particular sin simultaneously spur his correspondent into action and voice the frustrations that he, too, feels as a solitary, for whom, for lack of external occupation, the challenges to find his place in the Church are much greater than for laypeople, secular and regular religious.²⁵

Quid ergo facimus tu et ego, nostrique similes, homines pigri et inutiles, tota die stantes ociosi? Non laboramus in vinea domini sacramenta ecclesiastica ministrando, nec discurremus per parochias verbum Domini predicando, nec cetera misericordie opera exhibemus spiritualiter, neque iugum obediencie sub alterius imperio tanquam vitula Effrahim docta diligere trituram voluntarie portamus, nusquam occupamus locum alicuius ministri eciam minimi in ecclesia ordinati, sed quasi liberi, relictis nostro sensui nostreque voluntati, quasi in nullo ordine sumus. (DIP 319–26)

(What then do you and I do, and those similar to us, lazy and useless men, who stand idle all day? We do not work in the vineyard of the Lord in order to administer the sacraments of the Church, nor do we roam our parishes in order to preach the word of the Lord, nor do we perform other works of mercy spiritually, nor do we voluntarily carry the yoke of obedience under the command of someone else like the heifer Ephraim, taught to love the treading of corn. On no occasion do we occupy the place of some other ministry even of the lowest ordained person in the church, but we are like children, having abandoned our senses and our will, as if we are in no order.)

²⁵ A similar exclamation occurs when Hilton comments on gluttony ('gula', 345): 'O quam sepius palliat et excusat se voluptas sub colore necessitatis et infirmitatis!' (367–8) (O, how more often does pleasure cloak itself and excuse itself under the guise of need and infirmity!)

The strands of biblical gold thread that is woven both reinforce and contrast and indulgent lamentation carries the weight of disorder with absence of order, though used to bevel to a more positive reading. A lical householder finds at the end of the parable number of hours, all work even 'idle' solitaries will surprisingly, Hilton argues ... sed ad humilacionem 328–29) ('not to confound to teach'). However, the in the subsequent description Great's *Moralia in Job*, and as it were infirm or the same time it reflects

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²⁶ 'A land of misery and lasting horror dwelleth.

²⁷ See *Walter Hilton's Lati* out that this verse 'for Dead', which deepens are dead to the world.

²⁸ Note the reference to corn), which also occurs obedience to a monasti

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y and useless men, who f the Lord in order to roam our parishes in rform other works of te of obedience under m, taught to love the place of some other church, but we are like s if we are in no order.)

a gluttony ('gula', 345): 'O necessitatis et infirmitatis!' and excuse itself under the

The strands of biblical quotation that Hilton weaves into this passage, like a gold thread that is woven through a piece of fabric and is visible only in places, both reinforce and contradict the moment of the writer's apparent weakness and indulgent lamentation. The use of Job 10. 22 at the end of the passage carries the weight of despair,²⁶ and associates not being a member of a religious order with absence of order, or chaos,²⁷ yet the opening references to Matthew 20, though used to bewail the solitary's condition, point the perceptive reader to a more positive reading of the solitary life. 'About the third hour', the biblical householder finds some workers in the marketplace standing idle, yet at the end of the parable and even though not all of them worked the same number of hours, all workers receive the same payment, which suggests that even 'idle' solitaries will be rewarded in heaven.²⁸ In the following passage, not surprisingly, Hilton argues that he writes this 'non ad confusionem nostrum ... sed ad humilacionem, non ad exprobacionem sed ad instruccionem' (*DIP* 328–29) ('not to confound us ... but to make us humble, not to reprove but to teach'). However, the ambivalence expressed about the solitary life remains in the subsequent description of solitaries, in a passage based on Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job*, as 'teneros et quasi infirmos vel subtiles' (341–2) ('frail and as it were infirm or delicate').²⁹ As such, this is a negative appraisal, yet at the same time it reflects the humility taught earlier in the text.

First person confessions in Epistola de utilitate et prerogativis religionis

As in *De imagine peccati*, the opening passage of the *Epistola de utilitate et prerogativis religionis* suggests that Hilton is responding to an earlier letter, possibly one of several written to him by Adam Horsley. Unlike *De imagine peccati*, *Epistola de utilitate* does not really start out as a text that explains a theological point (the image of sin in the soul and how the vices should be

²⁶ 'A land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth.'

²⁷ See *Walter Hilton's Latin Writings*, ed. Clark and Taylor, p. 348 n. 327f. They point out that this verse 'forms the conclusion of the last reading for the Office of the Dead', which deepens the richness of meaning of this line in Hilton, as solitaries are dead to the world.

²⁸ Note the reference to Hosea 10. 11 (Ephraim is a heifer taught to love to tread corn), which also occurs in *Epistola* to underscore the importance and benefits of obedience to a monastic superior.

²⁹ Note the repetition of this vocabulary of delicacy and infirmity, which also occurs in passages quoted in footnotes 22 and 23.

replaced by the virtues in order to start restoring the image of God in the soul). Instead, the text aims to help Horsley to follow his heart, and to act on his desire to join the Carthusian order. *Epistola de utilitate* has fewer emotional exclamations than *De imagine peccati*, which may be the case because exclamations worked better with the solitary for whom *De imagine peccati* was written.³⁰ Also, it may have seemed more suitable to bewail one's sinfulness than the advantages of the religious life. Hilton does not name Horsley in the text, but addresses him as 'brother in Christ', the same address he used in *De imagine peccati*. This form of address suggests that, just as he did the unknown solitary who was the recipient of *De imagine peccati*, Hilton saw Horsley as someone who shared the religious life with him. It also renders the letter universal, which is exactly what Hilton seems to have intended. It can be read by any 'brother' wishing to join a monastic order.

Though the use of the word 'brother' and the greeting and benediction 'salutem et Spiritus Sancti gratiam' seem to cast Hilton as Horsley's equal (and possibly even signal his somewhat more elevated spiritual status), in the first-person confessions Hilton stresses the similarities as well as differences between them.

Dilecto in Christo fratri, salutem et Spiritus Sancti gratiam. Quia vero ex tenore cuiusdam litere michi nuper transmissae, clare intellexi propositum animi tui ad religionis ingressum, inspirante Deo, a diu conceptum, eiusdem gracia co-operante per assensum mentis tue quasi confirmatum, exultavit cor meum in Domino (*EUPR* 1–5)

(A greeting and good health and the grace of the Holy Spirit to my beloved brother in Christ. Because I clearly understood from the tone of a letter you sent me recently the intention of your soul towards an entry into religion, inspired by God and conceived from long ago, and as it were confirmed through co-operant grace by the ascent of your mind, my heart rejoiced in the Lord.)

³⁰ In only one instance in this text does Hilton insert an exclamation, in which he asserts his inability to explain the extent to which true humility pleases God: 'O quam multum placet Creatori talis humilacio cordis voluntarie suscepta; vere explicare nequeo' (*EUPR* 805–6) (O how much does such humiliation of the heart voluntarily undertaken please the Creator; truly I am unable to explain it). Characteristically, Hilton turns to the Bible (Isaiah 66. 2) to look for the words he lacks: 'Querit enim Dominus per Prophetam Super quem requiescet spiritus meus? et respondet, Nisi super humilem et contritum spiritu, et tremmentem sermones meos'. (*EUPR* 807–8) (Indeed, God asked through the Prophet 'On whom will my spirit rest?' And he answers, 'Except on him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at my words.')

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Parce michi *miserio*, que
ego arrogauerim michi
scio quia non eget con
commendat, si quis illa
450–54; italics mine)

(Bear with me, *who am*
give me my foolishness.

³¹ *Walter Hilton's Latin Writ*

As someone who recognizes the problems someone questioning their vocation might have, Hilton comments on the reasons for writing the letter:

vrget me nimis feruens affeccio quam ad te sencio scribere aliquid modicum quod per Dei gratiam desiderium tuum scintillatum validius accendere posset ad eiusdem execucionem, omni fluctuosa anxietate remota, expulso- que pariter timore nocturno, celeriter perficiendam. (EUPR 10-14)

(the fervent affection I feel for you urged me to write something small that, by God's grace, could powerfully stir up the spark of your desire into the carrying out of this desire, in order to bring it about quickly, when all stormy anxiety is removed and, equally, nocturnal fear is banished.)

From the beginning of this letter, Hilton pits fervent feelings against more negative, destructive emotions. We will see that he does not always evoke these feelings in the same configuration. At the opening of *Epistola*, he seeks connection and mutual identification with Horsley. He professes 'fervent affection' for him and suggests that he shares 'stormy anxiety' and 'nocturnal fear' with him, using language to refer to spiritual aridity and doubt due to lack of trust.

As pointed out before, Hilton first offers Horsley a discussion of the general utility of the religious life, a brief history of the monastic life and a description of its three advantages. Before Hilton leaves this more general account, and 'turns to the needs of his reader',³¹ he inserts a sequence of passages of functional introspection in the first person, longer than in *De imagine peccati*. First, he comments on himself as a writer, placing himself beneath both the religious life, which can be its own advocate, and the Church Fathers, who have written about the religious life 'quia eam experti sunt' (EUPR 460) ('because they are experienced in it'). It is important to note that in this passage Hilton describes himself as wretched, and as being foolish ('insipiente' can also mean 'lack of knowledge'). In doing so, he does not position himself against his correspondent but against the better authors who teach the religious life much better than he does.

Parce michi *miser*, queso, frater karissime, ignosce insipiente mee, quod ego arrogauerim michi ad presens commendacionem religionis; certissime scio quia non eget commendacio mea. Ipsa pro se respondet et seipsam commendat, si quis illam oculo recto et simplici voluerit intueri. (EUPR 450-54; italics mine)

(Bear with me, *who am wretched*, I beg you, my dearest brother, and forgive me my foolishness, because I claim for myself in person the praise of

³¹ Walter Hilton's *Latin Writings*, ed. Clark and Taylor, p. 105.

the religious life. Most certainly I know that my recommendation is not required. The religious life speaks for itself, and commends itself, if one would consider it with an honest and simple eye.)

Hilton then mentions Gregory the Great, Bernard of Clairvaux, Anselm, Hugh of St Victor and 'specialiter' (EUPR 458) ('especially') Thomas Aquinas as experts – not coincidentally, the authors he draws on in his writings.³² Though Hilton's letter is but a small stutter ('balbutire' EUPR 463) in comparison, he writes it anyway, 'si quomodo prouocem te et alios quoscumque ad religionis feruenciorum emulationem' (EUPR 463–4) ('if in this way I may challenge you and whatever others to a more fervent ambition for the religious life'). As an assertion of his unsuitability for the task at hand, the passage quoted above is somewhat disingenuous, because Hilton has just proved himself to be eminently capable of writing a convincingly structured and well-balanced apology for the religious life. He is also confident enough to see that 'alios quoscumque' could benefit from his text. Yet he does position himself as wretched against his readers, who are already fervent, but whom his text can make even more so.

Hilton's continuing search in his own spiritual life rises to the surface in the next passage as he ponders his own vocation, as well as the question of whether he is the suitable person to provide guidance to Horsley. Here he positions his own wretchedness against Horsley's fervent desire for the religious life more explicitly than in the previous passage:

Set forsan cogitacio tua dicit tibiipsi mirando forsan, cur alios tam instant-
ter ad religionem prouocem, eamque religionem commendem ut sanctam,
et tamen eiusdem religionis habitum me suscipere minime dispono. Huic
cogitacioni ut estimo respondere plene non esset michi conveniens, neque
necessarium tibi, nec forsan multum vtile. Verumptamen aliquid dicam et
confitebor *miseriam meam*. Ffateor me *miserum* illud spirituale et *feruens*
desiderium ad ingressum religionis ex diuine gracia inspiratum minime sen-
tire sicut sentiri necesse est ab eo qui zelo deuocionis et puro mentis affectu
religionem ingredi disponit. Tu vero desiderium religionis gracia Dei sem-
inatum in corde tuo concepisti, ideoque tibi expedit tanquam specialiter a
Deo ad hanc vocato istud desiderium nutrire, vt prodeat in maturam spicam
realis execucionis. (EUPR 465–76; italics mine)

(But perhaps your thinking tells you that perhaps you have to wonder why
I will call others so instantly to the religious life, commending this life as

³² In this reference to Bernard, William of St Thierry would have been included, as his *Epistola ad Fratres de Monte Dei*, which Hilton draws upon, circulated under Bernard's name. *Walter Hilton's Latin Writings*, ed. Clark and Taylor, p. 372, n. 457.

holy, and nevertheless,
religion. To answer to
comfortable for me, no
I will say something ar
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the divine grace as it i
to enter the religious
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(EUPR 477–91).³⁴ God

³³ The Latin 'in maturam s

³⁴ The biblical references w
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recommendation is not commends itself, if one

ard of Clairvaux, Anselm, specially") Thomas Aquinas in his writings.³² Though (EUPR 463) in comparison, he quoscumque ad religionis this way I may challenge for the religious life'). As the passage quoted above proved himself to be emind well-balanced apology see that 'alios quoscumque' himself as wretched against t can make even more so. rises to the surface in the s the question of whether ley. Here he positions his or the religious life more

a, cur alios tam instanmmendem ut sanctam, minime dispono. Huic ichi conveniens, neque amen aliquid dicam et d spirituale et feruens spiratum minime senet puro mentis affectu gionis gracia Dei semtanquam specialiter a eat in maturam spicam

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uld have been included, as ws upon, circulated under and Taylor, p. 372, n. 457.

holy, and nevertheless, I am not at all disposed to take up the habit of this religion. To answer to this thought, as I estimate it, would clearly not be comfortable for me, nor necessary for you, nor perhaps very useful. Even so I will say something and I will confess *my wretchedness*. I say that I, *wretched person*, do not greatly feel the desire to enter the religious life, inspired by the divine grace as it is necessary to be felt by the person who is disposed to enter the religious life with the fervour of devotion and a pure state of mind. You have really received the desire for the religious life, sown in your heart by God's grace, and for that reason it is expedient that you, as it were called by God to this life, nourish this desire so that it will sprout into the fruitfulness³³ of being truly carried out.)

Hilton repeatedly revisits these feelings in the first-person confessions in this text. His wretchedness is a lack of fervour, and a lack of any clear desire to enter the religious life (i.e. to join an order), which in turn points to a lack of being inspired by divine grace. Hilton calls himself wretched because he has not received this gift. Thus, the contrast between Hilton and Horsley is considerable: Hilton does not feel the fervent desire that, if nourished and turned into action, could lift him out of his wretchedness. Horsley really has ('vero ... concepisti'), which is why he should heed the call and nourish the gift so that it can flourish.

This introspective moment is poignant in that Hilton both expresses that it is impossible for him to fully identify with Horsley because of his own lack of fervour and uses this expression of his own feeling of wretchedness to spur Horsley into action. Horsley does not need to feel wretched, because he was given the fervent desire for the religious life that can fill the soul instead. Hilton does not sink into despair, however, as his frank admission that he was not given the grace of the fervent desire of a vocation to the religious life leads to a clear insight that forms the foundation of his wisdom as a spiritual guide: everyone has their gift from God, and if we work in that gift steadily and humbly, God will reward us. Hilton expresses this insight in a virtuoso passage that weaves together various verses from the Pauline epistles, again showing his firm grasp and love of biblical knowledge and his talent for making the Bible provide answers for his own and his correspondent's predicaments (EUPR 477-91).³⁴ God gives each of us different gifts that he calls upon us

³³ The Latin 'in maturam spicam' literally translates as 'into a mature ear (of corn)'.

³⁴ The biblical references worked into this passage are 1 Cor. 7. 7 (But every one hath his proper gift from God, one after this manner and another one after that), Rom. 12. 4 (For as in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office), 1 Cor. 12. 17 (If the whole body were the eye, where would be the

to cherish. All have been given a way to come to perfection in life. This means that not all are called to the religious life, and that it would be foolish to try to live a life to which God has not called you. Equally, it would be foolish to try to dissuade anyone with a true vocation from pursuing it. Hilton understands that this insight has direct results for his own state of life.

Item econuerso, si Deus ordinauerit michi misero et abiecto, sic uocauerit per gratiam suam ut solitarius sedeam, seruiamque, et taliter prout ipse michi donare dignatur, quare non in hac uocatione perseuerabo? Dicit enim Apostolus, Vnusquisque in qua uocatione vocatus est, in ea permaneat; tantummodo sciat quisque uocationem suam quo a Deo sit, et tunc in ea perseueret. Scio quia non omnibus conuenit solitudo, ac etiam scio quod aliquibus non expedit congregacio, et ideo paratus sis tu et quilibet alius obedire diuine uocationi. (EUPR 504–11)

(In the same way, if God ordained me, wretched and humble, and called me in this way by his grace so that I would sit as a solitary, and I would serve him, and in such a way exactly as he thought me worthy to give this gift to, why will I not persevere in this vocation? Indeed the Apostle says, each person who is called to any vocation should remain in it; only everybody should know why his vocation comes from God, and then should persevere in it. I know because solitude does not suit all, and I also know that living in a community is not expedient for everyone, and because of this you and whoever else should be ready to obey the divine vocation.)

Here Hilton comes to terms with his wretchedness (his absence of fervour), as he understands he cannot conjure up a grace he has not been given. He should persevere in the life he has been called to, even if it is hard. It is significant that in this passage we see the strongest first-person verb Hilton uses, 'Scio' (EUPR 509), which confirms that he knows that every vocation comes from God. I would argue that in the instances in which he uses this verb he does not just 'say' or 'believe' certain things because he read accounts by the Church Fathers, but because he lived them and thus 'knows' them. The use of the verb 'scio', here and elsewhere, gives Hilton's confessions extra forcefulness.³⁵ He may

hearing? If the whole were the hearing, where would be the smelling?), 1 Cor. 7. 17 (the Lord hath distributed to every one), 1 Cor. 12. 11 (But all these things, one and the same spirit worketh, dividing to every one according as he will), 1 Cor. 2. 12 (Now, we have received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is of God, that we may know the things that have been given us of God).

³⁵ Compare the verb 'Scio' to other first-person verbs in this exhortative part of the *Epistola*, which lack this force: 'antequam procedam, volo quod intelligas' (520–1), 'Dixi enim supra' (526–7), 'Satis enim confido de te' (530–1), 'et etiam dico' (535),

regret his wretchedness, but Moreover, it is because of instruct and guide his cor

Si enim et ego, omnibus existerem, et tale desiderium effectum perduceretur p

(And indeed, if I, having which is similar now, and [I would say that] any d far off by means of entri

As in *De imagine peccati* of the text, as a bridge bet first section of the text and correspondent's needs in t away all possible objection accepted the contrast bet Hilton devotes himself to follow his desire to enter successful religious life: th so that it grows into an e action springs. Pure inter the world so that his soul

Just as it does in *De i* fervour runs through the docta diligere tritiram' (A to tread out corn'),³⁶ the spiritual work 'cum gaudi cionis' (EUPR 656–7; ital the mind and fervour of the practice of immoderat and flagellation. Interesti (as he uses the verb 'Scio' practices of penance early be discouraged by them.

'Minime dubio est michi dico' (704), 'Alio modo di 'Et confido de te' (788), a

³⁶ Hosea 10. 11. Note that

perfection in life. This means it would be foolish to try to achieve it, it would be foolish to try to attain it. Hilton understands the nature of life.

et abiecto, sic uocauerit
que, et taliter prout ipse
perseuerabo? Dicit enim
is est, in ea permaneat;
a Deo sit, et tunc in ea
udo, ac eciam scio quod
is sis tu et quilibet alius

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this exhortative part of the
lo quod intelligas' (520-1),
30-1), 'et eciam dico' (535),

regret his wretchedness, but he knows that the religious life is not his vocation. Moreover, it is because of this experiential knowledge that he is well placed to instruct and guide his correspondent:

Si enim et ego, omnibus consideratis, tue conuersacioni que iam est similis
existerem, et tale desiderium religionis haberem sicut tu, procul dubio ad
effectum perduceretur per religionis ingressum. (*EUPR* 512-14)

(And indeed, if I, having considered all things, came to your conversion
which is similar now, and had such a desire for the religious life as you have,
[I would say that] any doubt about carrying out one's vocation would be led
far off by means of entry into the religious life.)

As in *De imagine peccati*, the confessional passages here occur in the middle of the text, as a bridge between the exposition of the theme of the letter in the first section of the text and the build-up of the call to action tailored to the correspondent's needs in the closing sections of the letter. Thus, having cleared away all possible objections why he would be an unworthy teacher, and having accepted the contrast between his own wretchedness and Horsley's fervour, Hilton devotes himself to helping Adam Horsley make the final decision to follow his desire to enter the religious life by elaborating on the basis of a successful religious life: the nourishing of his desire to enter the religious life so that it grows into an eager will and pure intention, from which all fruitful action springs. Pure intention will help the new religious to turn away from the world so that his soul can be made free for God.

Just as it does in *De imagine peccati*, Hilton's insistence on humility and fervour runs through the *Epistola*, as when he teaches that, like 'vitula Ephraym docta diligere tritum' (*EUPR* 651-2) ('the heifer Ephraim taught to love to tread out corn'),³⁶ the religious should learn to carry out all corporeal and spiritual work 'cum gaudio spiritus ex pura mentis affectione et *fervore dilectionis*' (*EUPR* 656-7; italics mine) ('with joy of spirit from pure affection of the mind and *fervour of love*'). Also, patience and humility are preferred to the practice of immoderate bodily penance through fasting, wearing hairshirts and flagellation. Interestingly, Hilton signals that he knows from experience (as he uses the verb 'Scio', *EUPR* 816) that many choose immoderate bodily practices of penance early in the religious life, and hopes that Horsley will not be discouraged by them.

'Minime dubio est michi' (565), 'Illum tibi propono in exemplum' (625), 'ad istud dico' (704), 'Alio modo dico et credo' (721), 'De isto impedimento tango tibi' (761), 'Et confido de te' (788), and 'Modicum dico' (790), etc.

³⁶ Hosea 10. 11. Note that this verse is also used in *De imagine peccati*.

Scio quia multi sunt opinione et fama sancti et religiosi qui cicius vellent ieiunare vsquequo deficerent per abstinenciam, vigilare et orare et cetera penitencie opera grauiora, videlicet cilicii, flagellorum et ceterorum similia facere. (EUPR 816–20)

(I know that there are many, saintly and religious through opinion and reputation, who immediately want to fast until they can no longer function through abstinence. They want to keep vigils and pray and perform other weightier works of penance, such as wearing the hairshirt, flagellations and similar things.)

Conclusion

De imagine peccati contains an interesting passage in which Hilton identifies justified anger (in his discussion of envy):

Iusta ira in causa Dei est odire et persequi ore et opera vicium et diligere hominem, compati illi, condolere illi et adiuuare, et tamquam pius medicus consolari illum. (DIP 214–16)

(Justified anger for God's sake is to hate and attack expressions and works of vice, and to love the human being, to feel compassion for him, to empathize with him and to help him, and like a pious physician to alleviate his pain and comfort him.)³⁷

If this description of the pious physician who loves the sinner but hates the sin seems perfectly applicable to Hilton's tone and presence in his later works, and especially in the *Scale of Perfection*, in Hilton's confessions in *De imagine peccati* and *Epistola de utilitate et prerogativis religionis* we see his progression from being a 'cecus qui seipsum curare non poterit' to the 'pius medicus' who shows his correspondents the role in life they have to take on. He moves from occupying the position of the blind man who cannot even take care of himself because he is stuck in the wretchedness of sin, unable to recognize and accept God's grace, as well as the role they have to strive for, to the position of the pious physician who, in fervour of love and humble purity of intention, can transcend wretchedness by God's grace and can comfort and reassure people, taking care of himself as well as of them. Hilton shared his correspondents'

³⁷ In the text this is a response to lines 202–3: 'et quasi colore iusticie dum peccatum te odire simulas, ipsum hominem potius odis et contempnis' (and as if under the colour of justice you then pretend to hate sin, yet the sinner himself you hate and despise more).

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sinner himself you hate and

journeys by identifying with them and by connecting his experience to theirs, especially in his first-person confessional passages, in which he tells them about his own struggles in powerful language. This would seem to be at least part of the answer to the question why his texts were popular in late medieval England, and why as a *compagnon de route*, even for present-day academics, he is excellent company.