

## 25. Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*

s. xv<sup>1</sup>  
 England  
 2° fo and here kunnyng.

### CONTENTS

Fore- and endleaves: fol. i<sup>r</sup>, number; fol. i<sup>v</sup>, blank; fol. ii<sup>r</sup>, blank; fol. ii<sup>v</sup>, monogram and notes; fols. i<sup>r</sup>-ii<sup>v</sup>, blank.

Fol. i<sup>r</sup>. *This tretys ys called Scala Perfectionis. The first chapitle spekeþ that þe Jnner Hauyng of man. shuld be like to the vtter. Gostly broþer in jhesu crist. I preie the þat in the callyng Wyche oure lord hath called . . . [fol. 55<sup>r</sup>] . . . be with þe Amen Explicit liber primus. [fol. 55<sup>v</sup>] . . . Capitulum primum. That a man is seyde þe ymage of god after his soule and nouzt after the bodye. For als mochel as þu couettest . . . [fol. 134<sup>r</sup>] . . . þe abbaye of þe holi gost þat is founded in a place þat is cleped þe conscience. Explicit scala perfectionis.*

Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*; ed. in modernized spelling by E. Underhill, *The Scale of Perfection* (London, 1923). For early editions see *STC* 14042-5, and for other manuscripts *IPMEP*, no. 255. Our manuscript is categorized by H. L. Gardner, 'The Text of *The Scale of Perfection*', *Medium Ævum*, 5 (1936), 11-30, as one of two manuscripts with the B text, i.e. without the passage on the name of Jesus sometimes found as an addition to ch. 44 but with the numerous brief Christocentric additions found in some manuscripts (of which the example she quotes (p. 23) is found on fol. 28<sup>r</sup>/14-24). Almost five pages of text in the manuscript are not found in the 1507 edition printed by Julian Notary or in Underhill's edition, namely fol. 127<sup>v</sup>/8 'lewed men as azenis þe grace' (edn. 447/30) to fol. 129<sup>v</sup>/29 'the trewe felynge' (edn. 448/1) but the manuscript omits a passage between fol. 131<sup>r</sup>/9 'nouzt zit alle þe sobfastnesse' and 'the soothfastness' (edn. 451/4 to 454/17). Further, the text has an abridged ending (fol. 134<sup>r</sup>), two lines of manuscript corresponding to over a page of printed text (edn. 463), probably, as Gardner suggests, through the loss of the final leaf of the exemplar. In view of the reference in the abridged ending to 'þe abbaye of þe holi gost', Gardner further suggests that in the exemplar the *Scale* must have been followed by the text with that name. On bk. 2 see S. S. Hussey, 'The Text of *The Scale of Perfection*, Book II', *Neuphilologische*

*Mitteilungen*, 65 (1964), 75-92, in which this manuscript, A2, is considered to have a text that is probably conflated from more than one textual group.

S. S. Hussey, 'The Audience for Middle English Mystics', *De cella in seculum: Religion and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, ed. M. G. Sargent (Cambridge, 1989), 109-22 at 119, notes that this is one of three manuscripts where the text is not divided into ninety-two or ninety-three chapters but bears traces of a division into twenty-eight chapters, perhaps to make it easier to follow the argument or to indicate convenient sections for daily reading in a religious community. See also *IMEP* 2. In bk. 1 the first chapter number is lxxx in hardpoint on fol. 39, at the beginning of ch. 64 in the 1507 edition: the first number inserted by the scribe and given a paragraph mark by the rubricator is lxxxij on fol. 49<sup>v</sup>. In bk. 2 the rubricator supplied numbers to most chapters up to xx (fol. 76<sup>r</sup>).

In the margin of fol. 133<sup>v</sup>, written vertically, are some definitions of words in a hand of s. xvi/xvii: 'Clan, a linage Kindred, or stocke | Tume, empty, Cheslapp a gull or boby n<sup>th</sup>(?) a wanian n<sup>th</sup>(?) a pengangde(?)'.

STRUCTURE Written on 134 membrane leaves, trimmed, of which the last was once a pastedown, preceded by two flyleaves of post-medieval paper and followed by another two. Numbered in modern pencil. Overall size 227 × 170 mm. Written in one column, 180-90 × 115-20 mm, 32-4 lines. Pricked in outer, upper and lower margins. Frame-ruled in crayon. Folded FSOS. Collation: 1-12<sup>8</sup> 13<sup>8</sup> (wants 5, ?blank) 14-16<sup>8</sup> 17<sup>8</sup> (wants one leaf but collation impracticable: fols. 131/132 and 130/133 are conjunct pairs, fol. 134 is of very thin membrane which does not seem to match 129 or 130; text is uninterrupted). No quire numbers or signatures. Catchwords, written by the scribe, are on all quires except 12 (fol. 96<sup>v</sup>, unless minute traces of what may be the tops of letters are the remains), 14 (fol. 112<sup>v</sup>), and 16 (fol. 128<sup>v</sup>), and also, unusually, on every verso of quires 1 and 2 except fol. 1.



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**SCRIPT** Anglicana with single-compartment a, written by one scribe. Punctuation is by low point.

**DECORATION** Three- and four-line blue lombards flourished red at the beginnings of chapters, some with marginal extensions; red and blue paraphs; rubrics; biblical lemmata in red; red linefillers.

**BINDING** Sewn on five bands between pasteboards covered with 17th-century blind-tooled calf, rebacked.

**HISTORY** From Syon Abbey. On fol. 134<sup>r</sup> is '⟨Rose Pac⟩het professyd in Syon', the missing letters being recoverable by ultraviolet light. G. J. Aungier, *The History and Antiquities of Syon Monastery* (London, 1840), 82, 89, 97, records a Syon nun of that name in 1518, 1539, and 1557. (Loose inside the volume is a letter from Sir Edmund

Craster to Sir Charles Oman, 17 May 1930, about the reading of the Pachet inscription by ultraviolet light.) On the dispersal of the community and its library see *Syon Abbey, the History of the Bridgettine Nuns and their Perigrinations after the Reformation: An Essay by Christopher de Hamel* (Roxburghe Club, 1991). On fol. ii<sup>v</sup> is the stamped monogram of Narcissus Luttrell and the written date '1693', and at the top of fol. 1<sup>r</sup>, in his hand, 'Videre est apud Tho: James, in catalogo suo librorum manuscryptorum academïæ Cantab. et Ox. Claruit circa annum Domini 1430.' On fol. ii<sup>v</sup> is another note in his hand, on Hilton and the *Scale*. On the College's acquisition of his manuscripts see under MS 17 above. All Souls library identifications, on which see Introduction, are, on the front pastedown, 'vv.5.3.' (deleted), 'MS. 25' (figures added), '106' (pencil), 'L.R. 1.g.6' (pencil), and bookplate no. 10; on fol. 1<sup>r</sup> is '14,22' (pencil).

26. *Tract on the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin,*  
in Middle English

After 1484  
England  
2° fo *pis wrecced*.