

# Exemplary Intentions Two English Dominican Hagiographers in the Thirteenth Century and the Preaching through *exempla*

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## Abstract

The *exemplum* is a short edifying tale that uses a historical person's positive or negative character traits to make a moral point. Its homiletic suitability ensured the genre's widespread use throughout premodern Europe. Not only were *exempla* effective preaching instruments on which a travelling friar could rely, but they also were extremely elastic in their application. A closer look at two late thirteenth-century English texts, Ralph Bocking's Latin Life of St Richard of Chichester (*Vita sancti Ricardi*) and the Life of St Dominic in the anonymous *South English Legendary*, a Middle English cycle of saints' lives, will explore two original ways in which mendicant hagiographers attempt to conceal and yet betray their intentions through their choice of hagiographic *exempla*. The first, I argue, petitions the patron, Isabella of Arundel, for a gift to the Order of Preachers, whereas the second text shows evidence of having been composed by a Dominican friar.

## Keywords

*exemplum*, St Richard of Chichester, *South English Legendary*, Ralph Bocking, Dominican hagiography

Then, lying prostrate on the ground, he said: 'Lady, teach me to praise you, and love you and honour you.' While he dissolved in tears, she answered: 'Go to the friars, and they will teach you.' And when he said: 'Lady, there are many orders of friars, to which of them do you send me?' She said: 'Go to the Friars Preachers, because they are my friars, and they will teach you.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Tunc ille prostratus ad terram dixit: "Domina, doce me te laudare et amare et honorare." Cumque se in lacrimis funderet, respondit: "Vade ad fratres, et ipsi te docebunt."

When the young Swedish Dominican Peter of Dacia (d.1289) reads out to his protégé Christina of Stommeln the above *exemplum*<sup>2</sup> of the desperate Carthusian monk who yearns to learn more about the Virgin,<sup>3</sup> he employs a homiletic device which he could have had admired in Paris during one of St Thomas Aquinas' crowded lectures in the spring of 1269. As a gifted preacher Peter understands his audience's needs and expectations: having first kindled Christina's interest in hearing the young friar talk about God, he responds to her now burning desire by choosing a fervent and partisan *exemplum* from Gerard de Frachet's collection of model Dominican Lives. How gifted, perhaps too gifted, Peter shows in his enthusiasm for his own preaching. He became the initiator of Christina's cult, her most devoted disciple, and the composer of her first *Vita*, written while she was still alive.<sup>4</sup>

In the words of Stephan of Bourbon, a fellow Friar Preacher, the *exemplum* served the primary purpose of capturing the imagination of the uneducated audience: 'Ad [...] imprimenda in humanis cordibus maxime valent exempla, que maxime erudiunt simplicium hominum ruditatem et imprimerunt in memoriam tenacitatem.'<sup>5</sup> Some hundred years after Peter's death, another talented preacher, Chaucer's Pardoner, echoes Stephan's words in his native idiom:

Thanne telle I hem ensamples many oon  
Of olde stories longe tyme agoon.  
For lewed peple loven tales olde;  
Swiche thynges kan they wel reporte and holde.<sup>6</sup>

Et cum ipse diceret: "Domina, multorum ordinum sunt fratres; ad quos eorum me mittis?" ait: "Vade ad fratres predicatores, quia ipsi sunt fratres mei, et ipsi te docebunt." Gerard de Frachet, *Vitae Fratrum Ordinis Praedicatorum*, ed. B.M.Reichert, Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica, 1 (1886), 42. The translation is from Aviad Kleinberg, *Prophets in Their Own Country* (Chicago, 1992), p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> Although by no means an exclusively mendicant medium, the *exemplum* or emblematic anecdote was popularised by the travelling friars: R.F. Bennet, *The Early Dominicans* (Cambridge, 1937), pp. 76–77 and 90–91. *L'Exemplum*, by C. Bremond, J. Le Goff, and J.C. Schmitt (Tournhout, 1982) forms together with *Prêcher d'exemples – Récits de prédicateurs du Moyen Age présentés par J.C. Schmitt* (Paris, 1985) one of the most recent discussions of *exempla* in the preaching tradition of the Middle Ages. J.A. Mosher, *The Exemplum in the Early Religious and Didactic Literature of England* (New York, 1911) remains the pioneering study of *exempla* in medieval England.

<sup>3</sup> A. Kleinberg, *Prophets in Their Own Country* (Chicago, 1992), pp. 79–80.

<sup>4</sup> Peter of Dacia, *De gratia naturam ditante sive de virtutibus Christinae stumbelensis*, ed. M. Asztalos (Stockholm, 1982).

<sup>5</sup> Stephan of Bourbon, *Anecdotes, historiques, légendes et apologues*, ed. A. Lecoy de la Marche (Paris, 1877). Quoted from M. Goodich, *Vita perfecta: The Ideal of Sainthood in the Thirteenth Century*, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters, 25 (Stuttgart, 1982), p. 7, n. 18.

<sup>6</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, VI, ll. 435–38, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. L.D. Benson (Oxford, 1988).

Surely Christina belongs to the ‘lewed people’ for whom such *exempla* of ‘tales olde’ were collected. ‘Holde’, it appears, refers to the mnemonic value of often short, similarly patterned, edifying tales that served the wandering preacher as moral illustrations of homiletic themes. The Pardoner points to a further and often underestimated merit of those ‘ensamples’: people can ‘reporte’ them. *Exempla* can be passed on without the preacher’s intermediation, and this is one of the reasons why so many have filtered into the popular imagination and have reached us in the form of fairy-tales.<sup>7</sup> Not only were *exempla* effective and convincing preaching instruments on which the travelling friar could rely, but they also were extremely elastic in their application. A closer look at two late thirteenth-century English texts – one written in Latin, the other in the vernacular – will attempt to explore the way in which two mendicant hagiographers conceal and betray their intentions through their choice of *exempla*. At the same time, I hope to show for how broad a literary spectrum hagiographic *exempla* could actually be employed.

Among the second generation of English Dominicans, Ralph Bocking is best remembered for his Life of St Richard of Chichester.<sup>8</sup> Like the great thirteenth-century Dominican hagiographers,<sup>9</sup> he writes with remarkable confidence, and, if sometimes overblown, his Latin can be elegant and reveals his thorough scriptural training. Ralph composed his Life after Richard’s canonisation,<sup>10</sup> and, hence, his motives differ from Peter’s engaged plea for Christina’s hoped-for canonisation. The *Vita Sancti Ricardi* is prefaced by Ralph’s dedication to Isabella, countess of Arundel, who is known to have been a passionate reader of hagiographic literature.<sup>11</sup> In this dedicatory letter he addresses her as a young widow who has chosen to spend the remainder of her life in chastity:

<sup>7</sup> R.F. Bennet, *The Early Dominicans* (Cambridge, 1937), p. 91. On the question of the origin of fairy-tales, Bennet lists Lecoy de la Marche, *La Chaire française au moyen âge*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1885) and Owst, G.R., *Preaching in Medieval England, 1350–1400* (Cambridge, 1926) and *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1933).

<sup>8</sup> It has been edited and translated together with an array of sources for the saint’s life by David Jones in *Saint Richard of Chichester: The Sources for his Life*, Sussex Record Society, vol. 79 (Lewes, 1995). All quotations from Ralph’s *Vita Sancti Ricardi* are taken from Jones’ edition.

<sup>9</sup> Although not as prolific as their Franciscan colleagues, the Friars Preachers have produced many works and collections of hagiography in their first century of existence, most notably Jacobus de Voragine’s *Legenda aurea*. Gerard de Frachet’s *Vitae Fratrum Ordinis Praedicatorum* is also a substantial anthology of Lives, albeit, as the title betrays, it limits itself to Dominicans.

<sup>10</sup> Richard was canonised in 1262. On the dating of Ralph’s Life see Jones, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> ‘[...] vite sanctorum, que penes vos copiose habentur in unum [...]’, David Jones, p. 84. Jones lists the following sources for Isabella’s interest in hagiography: C.H. Lawrence, *St Edmund of Abingdon: a Study in Hagiography and History* (Oxford, 1960), pp. 74–6 and M.R. James, E.F. Jacob, and W.R.L. Lowe, eds., *Illustrations to the Life of St Alban in Trinity College, Dublin, MS E.i.40* (Oxford, 1924).

What, I ask, will such a woman do save what God inspired you to do from the time when you were first widowed, and, like the turtle-dove, eschew all thoughts of marrying again, not because any solemn vow required this but simply out of your own decision to remain chaste [...]<sup>12</sup>

This infringement of *discretio* is not just the result of unrestrained flattery. As the following passage shows, Ralph hopes to support and instruct the countess in her new way of life by means of offering her Richard's *Vita* as an *exemplum*:<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, to adorn the inner aspect, *accept* this worthy Life of the venerable Richard, hold it up like a mirror to your mind's eye and, following the example which it sets, shun what is defiled and impure and gather together whatever you need to clothe yourself in virtue [...]<sup>14</sup>

He ventures on to explain why Saints' Lives are so precious. The countess, says Ralph, has been collecting Saints' Lives for two reasons: 'ad decorem domus Dei et edificationem animarum.'<sup>15</sup> Since his view of hagiography's purpose coincides with Stephan of Bourbon's and the Pardoner's praise for the instructive qualities of the *exemplum*, it is not surprising that Ralph chooses to call his Life exemplary, i.e. a *Vita perfecta*.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, Ralph's idiosyncratic notion of perfection transforms the ensuing Life of Richard into an elaborated *exemplum* of Dominican piety reminiscent in its flagrantly self-advertising tone of Gerard de Frachet's anecdote of the Carthusian monk cited above:

And, so that he might more closely adhere to these rules of life and more effectively persuade others to do the same, he bound himself to enter that excellent order of the Friars Preacher [...]<sup>17</sup>

Ralph goes on to say that the saint would have had entered the order were it not for the fact that the pope called him to the see

<sup>12</sup> 'Quid, inquam, faciet nisi quod vos Dei inspiratione a tempore viduitatis, facere concepistis, ad turturis similitudinem iteratam copulam maritalem respuendo, non voti necessitate set casti propositi sola voluntate [...]', p. 83. The translation is from Jones, p. 161.

<sup>13</sup> Most *exempla* are short anecdotes suited for sermons, but brevity is not a sine qua non as Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale* proves.

<sup>14</sup> 'Ad interiorum ergo faciem exor[n]andam, accipite venerabilis Ricardi vitam egregiam, quam speculi vice mentis vestre oculis apponite et, exemplo eius, quod fedum et sordidum est deponite et morum ornatu quicquid necesse est componite [...]', p. 84. Translation, p. 162.

<sup>15</sup> Jones, pp. 84–5.

<sup>16</sup> The fascinating topic of the imperfect or sinning saint is dealt with at length in E. Dorn, *Der sündige Heilige in der Legende des Mittelalters* (Munich, 1967).

<sup>17</sup> 'Et ut vitae consilia in se artius custodiret et aliis efficacius suaderet, artioris vite semitam servare disponens, illi excellenti Ordini Fratrum Predicatorum [...]', p. 86. Translation, p. 164.

of Chichester. Later, when Richard's negotiations with the king prove disastrous, the saint returns as a humbled beggar: 'pauper et mendicus a rege recedens'<sup>18</sup> Ralph is quick to celebrate Richard's accidental poverty as a yearned-for state:

O Richard, servant of Christ, remember that state and way of life which in your younger days you purposed in your prayers and in your vow to follow and which, had not God ordained otherwise, you wished with all your heart to undertake! But rejoice nevertheless that you still deserved to follow it!<sup>19</sup>

At this stage Ralph cannot restrain his enthusiasm any longer and bursts out into an euphoric accolade of mendicant poverty:

What state and what life was that, you ask? I refer to the life of the Friars Preacher, which is selflessly to preach Christ in poverty, to save souls and, trusting in His grace, to labour diligently and without payment at the Lord's harvest.<sup>20</sup>

With Dominican acumen, Ralph defuses all situations that could compromise the saint's mendicant reputation. Sometimes the result is comic: when Richard reclaims his episcopal perquisites he does so meekly – and matches the condition of his manors: 'Nudus igitur et spoliatus maneria et predia nudata Ricardus ingreditur'.<sup>21</sup> At this moment Ralph smoothes over the ethical conflict between Richard's purported dedication to poverty and his accepting of those substantial estates by declaring, in the words of Gregory the Great, all material possessions vain: 'Set quia sole divitie sunt, sicut dicit Gregorius, que nos divites virtutibus faciunt'.<sup>22</sup> Ralph ingeniously resolves this apparent contradiction on a rhetorical level as he reaches for a mixed metaphor in making Richard's saintly spirit fill the 'vacua maneria', ennobling his otherwise worthless possessions with that which is really valuable according to Gregory. The attentive reader will notice that this does not render the estates valueless, but for the wealthy countess, one might presume, the relativity of poverty was a sufficient explanation. Thus, the exemplary Life remains intact.

So, why did Ralph devise a Dominican hagiographic *exemplum* for a wealthy widow? If one takes his dedication to Isabella at face value,

<sup>18</sup> Jones, p. 99.

<sup>19</sup> 'O serve Christi Ricarde, statum et vitam recole quam junior quondam votis et voto tenere proposuisti et, nisi Deus aliter ordinasset, quantum in te fuit asumere voluisti et gaude nichillominus quia iam tenere meruisti', p. 99. Translation, p. 176.

<sup>20</sup> 'Quem, inquis, statum vel quam vitam dicis? Vitam dico Fratrum Predicatorum, que est absque proprio in paupertate Christum predicare, animarum salutem procurare et, in Domini messe gratis de sua gratia confidentes, alacriter laborare', p. 99. Translation, p. 176.

<sup>21</sup> Jones, p. 101.

<sup>22</sup> Jones, p. 101.

one can presume that he wrote it with the intention of providing an edifying and at times entertaining example of the *Vita perfecta* for her to follow. The unlikely possibility that Ralph wanted to chastise the countess and composed this Life as a means of ‘correcting’ Isabella’s *modus vivendi* can be safely put aside, I think. The dominant tone of the letter is complimentary despite the odd slip in *discretio*: he knows very well for whom he writes: ‘Nobilis generositatis ac generose nobilitatis domine, *attavis regibus* patre et matre comititiae dignitatis *edite*, Yssabelle comitisse de Arundelia’.<sup>23</sup>

One less spiritual motive remains: Ralph wrote this Life at the behest of Robert Kilwardby, who was prior provincial of the Dominican order from 1262–72. Therefore, this Life of Richard represents at least to a certain extent the interests of the order. It is also known that Isabella of Arundel founded Marham abbey, and that she was indebted to Richard who had cured one of her friends of blindness.<sup>24</sup> By portraying Richard as someone who desperately wanted to be a Dominican friar dedicated to a life of selfless poverty, Ralph creates the ideal petitionary *exemplum*. Now she could add his Life to the other illustrious Lives adorning her library, and, at the same time, she is given an opportunity to show her gratitude to her canonised friend by helping Richard’s favourite friars. It is not too much of a conjecture to suppose that if the countess wanted to follow the example of generous Richard who loved and helped the mendicant order, she would have had already seen the price for this *imitatio*: 20 shillings and 1 book, which Richard bequeathed in his will to each of four Dominican priories.<sup>25</sup> Besides, it was well known that the order had been instrumental in procuring Richard’s canonisation. Tempting as it is, this speculation remains to be explored.

Ralph Bocking’s Life of Richard is a conventional Latin *Vita* with petitionary overtones written to please a collector of hagiographic literature and carefully offer guidance in spiritual matters. It is a custom-made *exemplum* composed for an aristocrat. The *South English Legendary* (henceforth: SEL) rests at the other end of the literary spectrum of thirteenth-century England. It is, most likely, a manual of Saints’ Lives for travelling mendicants.<sup>26</sup> The wide

<sup>23</sup> Jones, p. 83.

<sup>24</sup> Jones, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> Jones prints Richard’s will on pp. 66–70.

<sup>26</sup> Beatrice D. Brown’s theory of mendicant authorship (in B.D. Brown, *The Southern Passion*, EETS o.s. 167 (London, 1927), p. cv) has been generally accepted and the ensuing discussion has centered on determining whether the author was a Dominican or a Franciscan friar. Charlotte D’Evelyn and Anna J. Mill, eds., *The South English Legendary*, vol. 3, EETS o.s. 244 (London, 1959), pp. 16–7, cautiously suggest a Dominican author on the grounds of the later inclusion of Peter the Dominican, and W.A. Hinnebusch, *The Early English Friars Preachers* (Rome, 1951) notes ‘that it is inconceivable that a Franciscan should have praised St. Dominic in warmer tones than St. Francis’, p. 311. Theodor Wolpers, *Die*

dissemination of the compilation – there are 51 extant manuscripts of the SEL written down at various stages of its growth – and the inclusion of saints associated with local cults support this theory.<sup>27</sup>

To begin with, it is written in English, which makes it ideally suitable for preaching to the laity and, second, it is composed in septametric couplets that, despite their length, are relatively easy to memorise because of the simple syntax, their clear caesurae which break the lines down into catchy phrases, and their effective end-rhymes. Furthermore, the highly irregular prosody emulates the natural pattern of speech – all this could support the suggestion that the Saints' Lives of the SEL served as homiletic vehicles.<sup>28</sup> In addition, the comparably similar length of most pieces, with the notable exception of St Thomas Becket,<sup>29</sup> renders the individual Saints' Lives convenient *exempla* for sermons or other preaching occasions.<sup>30</sup>

The structure of the SEL and its emphasis on preaching as a holy activity<sup>31</sup> further corroborate this theory. MS Laud 108, which is presumed to be the oldest of the surviving manuscripts, signals in its prologue that the book is built around the *temporale* which in itself is a strong argument for its homiletic use: 'Al þis bok is i-maked of holi dawes : and of holie mannes liues / [...] þei ich of alle ne mouwe nouȝt telle : ichulle telle of some, / Ase euerech feste after oþur : In þe zere doth come -'.<sup>32</sup> At the end of the euphoric *Banna Sanctorum*, which opens the SEL in MSS Harley 2277 and Corpus

*englische Heiligengeschichte des Mittelalters* (Tübingen, 1964) argues that while the clear structure of the SEL hints at Dominican design, the emphasis on *humilitas* points to the use by the Friars Minor (pp. 244–46). Wolpers proposes the involvement of both orders, at least in the later stages of the text's development: 'Für das Gesamtunternehmen jedoch scheint es das Wahrscheinlichste, daß an ihm – wenigstens in späterer Zeit – beide Orden gemeinsam beteiligt gewesen sind', p. 246. Recently, the theory of Franciscan authorship has resurfaced in Karen Bjelland's essay 'Franciscan versus Dominican Responses to the Knight as a Societal Model in the Case of the *South English Legendary*', in *Franciscan Studies*, 48:24 (1988), 11–27.

<sup>27</sup> Wolpers, *Die englische Heiligenlegende des Mittelalters*, pp. 240–1.

<sup>28</sup> Vernacular calendars of Saints' Lives for homiletic purposes date back in England to at least the tenth-century *Blickling Homilies*, a collection of nineteen partly fragmentary pieces to fit the *sanctorale*. *The Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century*, 3 vols, EETS o.s. 58, 63, 73 (London, 1874, 1876, 1880).

<sup>29</sup> Becket was the most popular English saint of the Middle Ages, and a number of his Lives were in circulation. It was impossible to avoid detailed treatment of this paradigmatic political saint in the SEL.

<sup>30</sup> Incidents and miracles from Saints' Lives could also be instrumentalised as *exempla* as an anonymous thirteenth-century collection of *exempla* by a Cambridge Dominican shows. His *exempla* #18 (p. 119) and #218 (p. 144), for instance, tell of St Edmund of Canterbury. 'A Cambridge Dominican Collector of Exempla in the Thirteenth Century', ed. Stephen L. Forte OP, in *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 28 (1958), 115–48.

<sup>31</sup> Wolpers notes the emphatic references to preaching in the Life of Peter the Dominican and observes that even St Benedict is portrayed as a preacher, p. 239.

<sup>32</sup> C. Horstmann, *The Early South English Legendary*, EETS o.s. 87 (London, 1887), p. 177, #28, ll.1–6.

Christi College, Cambridge, 145 (as well as in many of the later redactions), the redactor announces that the guiding principle of the collection remains the *temporale*: ‘Telle ichelle bi reuwe of ham. as hare dai valþ in þe 3ere / Verst bygynneþ at þeres day. for þat is þe uerste feste / And fram on to oper so areng. þe wile þe 3er wol leste’,<sup>33</sup>

Because of the many different versions and the substantial variations in their contents, it is very problematic to offer a comprehensive appreciation of the prevailing tone or inquire into the shared concerns of the Lives. What can be said about the language, it seems to me, is that it reveals traces of deliberate provincialism. I cannot rid myself of the impression that the author or redactor of MS Laud 108 is trying to adjust his language to the limitations of his audience’s microspatial<sup>34</sup> knowledge. For instance, one can assume that the average inhabitant of southern England in the late thirteenth century would have had no direct or even mediated experience of the ocean. Neither would he have met anybody who has sailed the ocean nor would he have known where to look for it. In his macrospatial imagination it was the place where St Brendan encountered all his outlandish adventures. When the writer of the SEL talks of the ocean, he translates it into terms familiar to his listeners: ‘In þe grete se of Occean’.<sup>35</sup> That which is not known, ‘Occean’, is rendered through that which can be conceived, ‘þe se’. At other times he incorporates details that would be recognised by his listeners. Talking of St Edmund of Canterbury he says that:

: þis holie man al-soþ  
prechede a day at Oxenford : ase he ofte hadde i-do,  
In alle halewene church-3erd : In þe norþure side,  
with þe Baneres at onderne : a-se men doth a-londe wel wide.<sup>36</sup>

Not only does the writer place St Edmund on the northern side of All Saints cemetery in Oxford, but he adds in the present tense that preaching under banners is still being practised.

Almost all instances of preaching are placed at pivotal moments in success stories. St Edmund, for instance, is so irresistible and compelling a preacher that whilst preaching the crusade one day people wanted to join him straightaway: “‘Womman,” quath þis holie man

<sup>33</sup> Charlotte D’Evelyn and Anne J. Mill, eds., *The South English Legendary*, vol. 3, EETS o.s. 244 (London, 1959), p. 3, 11.66–8.

<sup>34</sup> Dick Harrison, *Medieval Space – The Extent of Microspatial Knowledge in Western Europe During the Middle Ages*, Lund Studies in International History, 34 (Lund, 1996), passim, defines microspatial knowledge as the sum of all information available about the known world.

<sup>35</sup> Horstmann, p. 220, #36, l.16. The same phrase recurs in the account of St Michael, p. 303, #45, l.133.

<sup>36</sup> Horstmann, p. 441, #63, ll.359–62.

: “woltþu þe croiz take?” / “3e louerd,” he seide, “3if ich mi3hte : i-nelle hire nou3t for-sake.”<sup>37</sup>

None of the above arguments are expressly favouring Dominican attitudes to preaching, and some of them could be exploited in favour of Franciscan authorship.<sup>38</sup> The story of St Dominic is perhaps the most revealing as concerns an inquiry into the significance of preaching in the SEL.<sup>39</sup> It is through preaching that Dominic saves souls:<sup>40</sup> ‘So þat þe ordre of frere prechours : seint Domenic bi-gan þo, / þat hath i-saued wel mani a man : and zeot it schal wel mo.’<sup>41</sup> The association of preaching with the procuring of salvation runs through the entire Life of Dominic: ‘[. . .] he scholde bringue / to godes lawe Mani a man : þoru3 is guode prechingue’.<sup>42</sup> Dominic is not merely an exemplary preacher but his Life is an *exemplum* of the redemptive power of preaching as he works his miracles through words. And from a closer look at the text it becomes increasingly likely that the composer could have been a Dominican himself. First, the Virgin declares Dominic her champion: ‘Ich habbe ane guode Caumpiun : to þine bi-hofþe i-founde, / þat schal muche del of þat folk : onder þine wille do’<sup>43</sup> Her words are even clearer later: ‘Mi chaumpiun and his felawe’<sup>44</sup> (the ‘felawe’, of course, is St Francis, and the text makes sure that SS Francis and Dominic are not confused as equal in rank: ll.137, 144, and 145). The fact that Dominic is the Virgin’s ‘champion’ is not surprising – we find it also in the above quotation from Gerard de Frachet’s *Vitae Fratrum* – but what strikes me as unusual is that in lines 35–6 the end-rhymes (italised below) seem to prefigure the Virgin’s patronage of Dominic:

Wel luyte tole þe holi Man : of is grete power.  
þare weren false *cristine* Men : a-boute in þe londe,  
þat nolden nou3t *clanliche* : þe ri3te bi-leue onder-stonde,  
Ne huy ne bi-lefden nou3t þat ore louerd were i-bore : of þe  
maide *Marie* -  
Swuch manere fals bi-leue : Men cleopeden *heresie*’.

Heresy is explained, and, again simplified so as to be ‘under-stonde’, by the example of the Virgin. Throughout the *Vita* she is

<sup>37</sup> Horstmann, p. 441, #63, ll.353–4.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. n. 26.

<sup>39</sup> W.F. Manning argues convincingly that the Life of Dominic is based on the *Legenda aurea* and adds that it has been composed by a Dominican. W.F. Manning, ‘The Middle English Verse Life of St. Dominic. Date and Source’, *Speculum* 31 (1956), 82–91.

<sup>40</sup> This quintessentially Dominican belief is also found in Ralph’s Life of Richard, cf. n. 20.

<sup>41</sup> Horstmann, p. 280, #41, ll.100–1.

<sup>42</sup> Horstmann, p. 278, #41, ll.17–8.

<sup>43</sup> Horstmann, p. 281, #41, ll.133–4.

<sup>44</sup> Horstmann, p. 282, #41, l.139.1

addressed as 'lauedi' but here she appears as 'Marie' only to rhyme with 'heresie'. Finally, line 344 gives away a possible slip of the author: whereas at other instances in the Life of Dominic he names the order that the saint founded, suddenly the crucial reference is missing: 'bidde we zeorne seint Dominic: þat þe ordre hath i-wrou3t'. What order, one might ask? The last reference to the Order of Preachers as such occurs some forty lines earlier. It is unlikely that the composer expected his listeners to make this connection instantly since he shuns no effort at enabling his audience to follow him in other places. The answer, I think, lies with the Dominican habit that the author might have worn himself.

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